
Kidnapped

“**T**he entire affair is mysterious,” said D’Arnot. “Neither the police nor the military investigators have the faintest idea how it happened. All that anyone knows is that Nikolai Rokoff has escaped.”

John Clayton, Lord Greystoke—who had been “Tarzan of the Apes”—sat in silence in the apartment of his friend, Lieutenant Paul D’Arnot, in Paris. The escape brought back many memories, for the ape-man’s testimony had sent his archenemy to a French prison for life. Rokoff had gone to great lengths to try to kill Tarzan before, and having escaped, would likely now try twice as hard.

Tarzan had recently brought his wife and infant son to London to get away from the rainy season on their vast estates in Uziri—the land of the fierce Waziri warriors whose broad African domains the ape-man had once ruled. He had just arrived to visit D’Arnot, but the news about Rokoff made him want to return immediately to London.

“I do not fear for myself, Paul,” he said at last.

“Rokoff has tried and failed many times to kill me. But he knows that he could hurt me most through my son or my wife. I must return to guard them until Rokoff is recaptured—or dead.”

As these two talked in Paris, two dark, sinister-looking men were talking in a little cottage on the outskirts of London. One was bearded; the other had only a few days' growth, and his face was pale from long confinement indoors. He spoke:

“You must shave off that beard of yours, Alexei,” he told his companion, “or he will recognize you immediately. We must split up, and when we meet again on the deck of the *Kincaid*, hopefully we shall have with us two honored guests who have no idea of the pleasant voyage we have arranged for them. In two hours I should be on my way to Dover with one of them. By tomorrow night, if all goes as planned, you should arrive with the other.”

Alexei Paulvitch nodded.

“This will be profitable and satisfying, my dear Alexei. The French were stupid to conceal my escape for so long; they gave me plenty of time to work out every detail. There is very little chance that anything will go wrong. And now good-bye, and good luck!”

Three hours later, a messenger climbed the steps to the apartment of Lieutenant D'Arnot.

“A telegram for Lord Greystoke,” he said to the servant who answered the door. “Is he here?”

The servant answered 'yes,' signed for the message, and took it to Tarzan, who was already preparing to depart for London. The ape-man tore open the envelope. As he read the message, his face went white.

"Read it, Paul," he said, handing the slip of paper to D'Arnot. "It has come already."

The Frenchman took the telegram and read:

Jack stolen from the garden with help of new servant. Come at once.

— JANE

As Tarzan leaped from the car that had met him at the station and ran up the steps to his London town house, he was met at the door by his frantic wife. Quickly Jane Porter Clayton, Lady Greystoke, told all that she had learned of the boy's kidnapping.

The baby's nurse had been wheeling him in the stroller, in front of the house. A taxicab had pulled up, and almost immediately the new house-servant, Carl, had come running from the house to tell the nurse that Lady Greystoke wanted to speak with her inside. He would watch little Jack until she returned. The nurse went, but at the top of the stairs, she turned to remind Carl not to let the sun get in the baby's eyes.

When she did so, she had been horrified to see Carl handing the baby to a dark-bearded stranger inside the cab. As she ran shrieking down to the vehicle, Carl jumped into the cab. While the driver

tried to get it into gear, the frantic nurse jumped onto the running board, trying to reach in and grab the baby. As the cab finally got under way, Carl had slugged the nurse in the face and knocked her to the pavement. The vehicle sped off.

Her screams had attracted onlookers, including some from the Greystoke home. Lady Greystoke had witnessed the girl's brave battle, and had also tried to reach the rapidly accelerating vehicle, but had been too late.

That was all that anyone knew. Lady Greystoke had no idea who might be responsible until her husband told her of Rokoff's escape from prison.

As Tarzan and his wife considered what to do, the telephone rang in the library. Tarzan quickly answered it.

"Lord Greystoke?" asked a man's voice.

"Yes."

"Your son has been stolen," continued the voice, "and only I can help you recover him. I am familiar with the plot to kidnap him, for I was involved in it. They are now trying to cheat me out of my share of the reward. To get back at them, I will help you get your son back on one condition: that you will not prosecute me for my part in the crime. What do you say?"

"If you lead me to where my son is hidden," replied the ape-man, "you need fear nothing from me."

“Good,” replied the other. “But you must come alone to meet me. I cannot take any chances.”

“Where and when may I meet you?” asked Tarzan.

The caller gave the name and location of a sailors’ bar on the waterfront at Dover. “Come alone, about ten o’clock tonight,” he concluded. “Do not arrive earlier. Your son will be safe enough in the meantime, and I can then lead you secretly to where he is hidden. Under no circumstances notify Scotland Yard, or I will know. If you bring anyone else, or if I see anyone suspicious, I shall not meet you, and you will never get your son back.”

The man hung up without another word.

Tarzan told Jane what the caller had said. She begged to go with him, but he insisted that she stay home, reminding her that the man had said he must come alone. She reluctantly agreed. Tarzan left immediately for Dover while she waited at home, impatient to learn the outcome of his mission.

Little did either dream of what either would experience before they saw each other again.

After her husband had left, Jane Clayton paced restlessly across the silken rugs of the library. She was a mother, deprived of her firstborn, and her mind and heart ached with hopes and fears. Though reason told her that all would be well provided her husband went alone as directed, she

sensed that they were both in grave danger.

As she fretted, she began to believe that the phone call was likely just a trick to keep them from alerting the police until the boy was safely hidden away—or gotten out of England.

Or maybe it had been a trap to lure Tarzan into the hands of the hateful Rokoff.

This was a terrifying thought, but it made sense. She glanced up at the clock in the library; it was too late to catch Tarzan's train to Dover, but there was a later train that would get her there in time. Jane summoned her maid and chauffeur, and ten minutes later she was being whisked through the crowded streets toward the railway station.

It was 9:45 that night when Tarzan entered the squalid waterfront pub. As he entered the evil-smelling room a muffled figure brushed past him toward the street.

"Come, my lord!" whispered the stranger.

The ape-man turned to follow him into the dark alley. Once outside, the fellow led the way into the shadows of the high-piled bales, boxes, and barrels on the wharf. Here he halted.

"Where is the boy?" asked Greystoke.

"On that small steamer whose lights you can just see yonder," replied the other.

Tarzan was trying to recognize the man, but the darkness prevented it. Had he guessed that it was Alexei Paulvitch, he would have realized that only treachery and danger lurked ahead.

“He is unguarded now,” continued the Russian. “The kidnappers think no one can find them, and the only members of the *Kincaid’s* crew aboard have been given enough gin to keep them occupied for several hours. We can go aboard, get the child, and return without the slightest fear.”

Tarzan nodded. “Let’s be about it, then,” he said.

His guide led him to a small boat by the dock. The two men got in, and Paulvitch rowed rapidly toward the steamer. At the time, Tarzan did not notice the black smoke pouring from the *Kincaid’s* funnel; he thought only of the hope that in a few moments he would again have his little son in his arms.

At the steamer’s side they found a rope ladder dangling close above them, and both climbed stealthily up it. Once on deck they hastened aft to where the Russian pointed to a hatch.

“The boy is hidden there,” he said. “You had better go down alone to get him. There is less chance that he will cry in fright in his father’s arms. I will stand guard here.”

In his anxiety to rescue little Jack, Tarzan did not consider the strangeness of the whole picture. The ship’s deck was deserted, but its engines were thrumming and smoke was rising from the funnel—sure signs of a vessel about to sail. Intent on recovering the precious little bundle of humanity, the ape-man swung down into the darkness below.

Scarcely had he let go of the edge of the hatch when it fell shut with a clatter.

Instantly he knew that it had been a trap. Instead of rescuing his son, he had himself fallen into the hands of his enemies. He immediately tried to push the hatch open, but it would not budge. He struck a match and looked around. He discovered that he was in a little compartment separated from the main hold. The hatch was the only way in or out of the empty chamber. If the child was aboard, he was in another part of the ship.

For over twenty years, from infancy to manhood, the ape-man had roamed his savage jungle haunts among the beasts. He had never learned to rage over a bad situation, as humans do. Like an animal, he simply waited patiently while trying to figure a way out. He examined his prison carefully, tested the heavy planking of its walls, and measured the distance of the hatch above.

As he did so, he suddenly felt the ship move. Where—and to what fate—was it carrying him? Then, over the noise of the engines, he heard a sound that made his blood run cold with worry.

Clear and shrill from the deck above him rang the scream of a frightened woman.