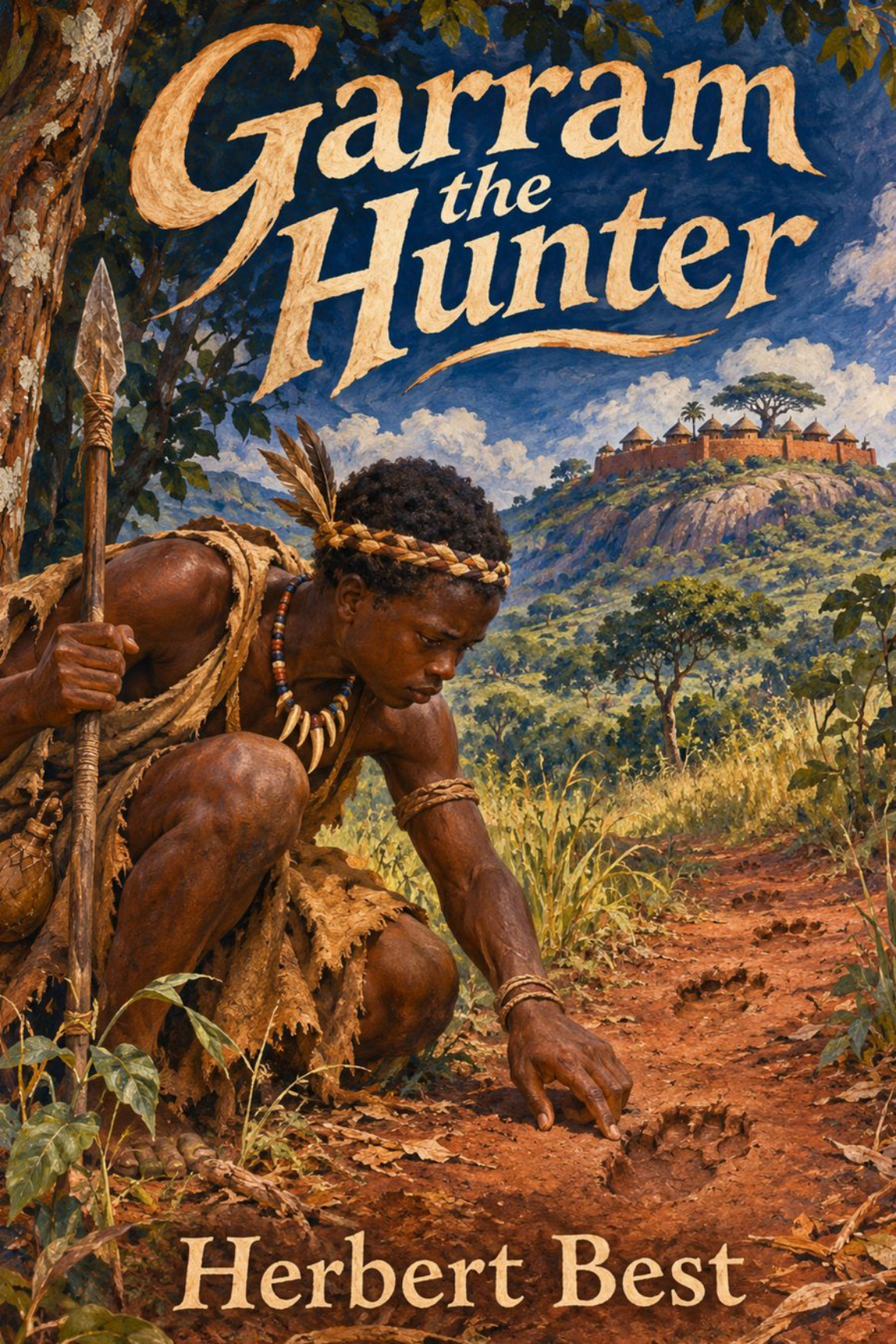
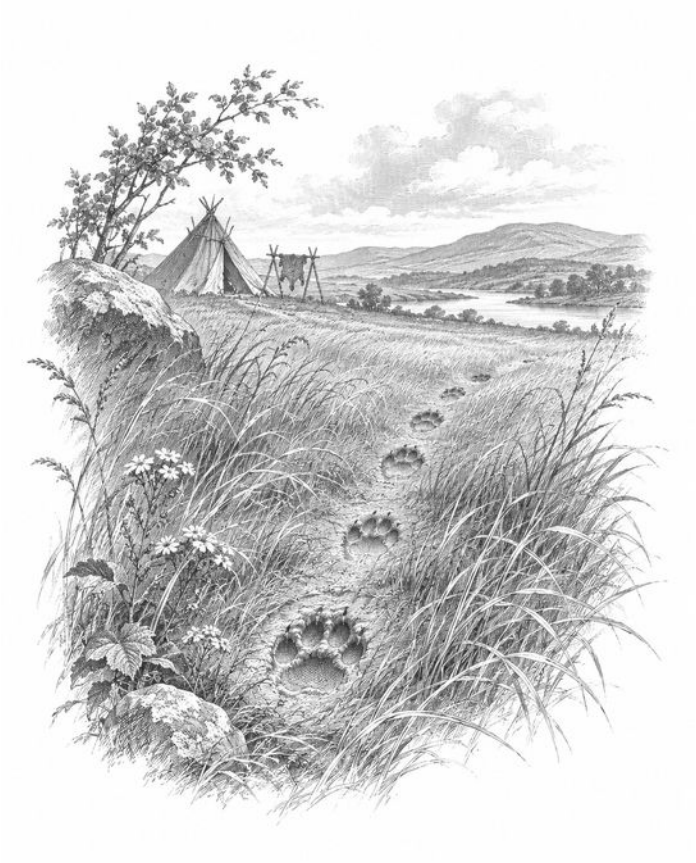

Garram the Hunter
Herbert Best

PIPCUB EDITIONS

# Garram the Hunter

Herbert Best

THE AUTHOR



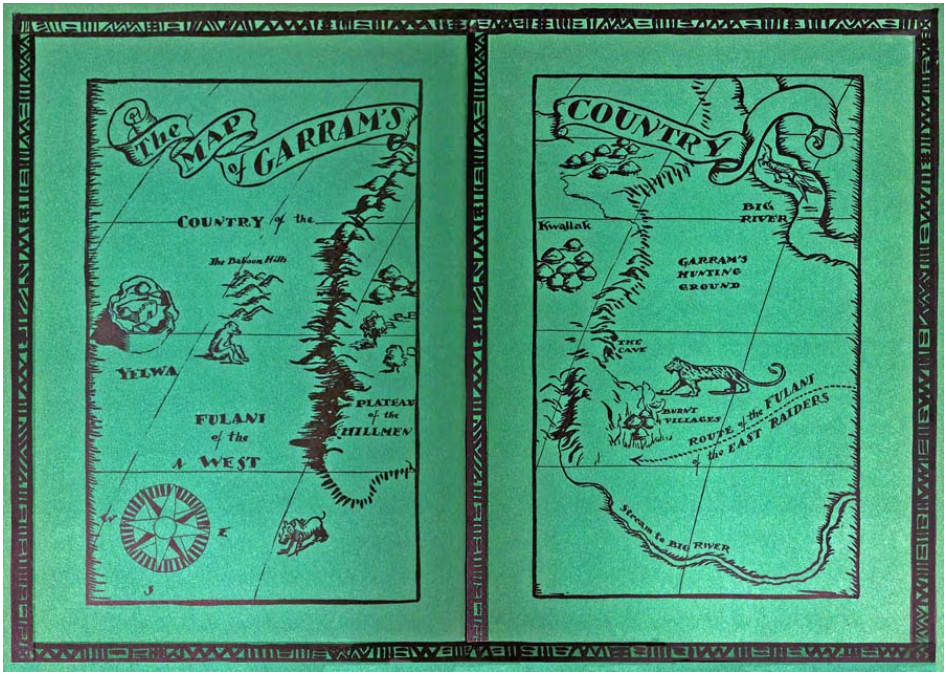
# Herbert Best

1894 – 1980

*An original vignette inspired by the author's work.*

# Herbert Best

Herbert Best wrote adventure stories for young readers as well as science fiction. Garram the Hunter received a Newbery Honor. The novel makes observation and acquired skill, rather than simple daring, central to its young protagonist's progress.


The MAP of GARRAM'S
COUNTRY of the
The Baboon Hills
YELWA
FULANI of the WEST
PLATEAU of the HILLMEN
COUNTRY
BIG RIVER
Kwallak
GARRAM'S HUNTING GROUND
THE CAVE
BURNT VILLAGES
ROUTE of the FULANI & the EAST RAIDERS
Stream to BIG RIVER



**THE YOUNG HUNTER STOOD MOTIONLESS BEFORE HIM LOOKING INTO THE DISTANCE. TO FIGHT—AH, THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN GOOD! BUT TO FLY FROM ONE'S ENEMIES—IT SEEMED TOO HARD A THING TO ASK.**

# GARRAM THE HUNTER

*A BOY OF THE HILL TRIBES*

BY

HERBERT BEST

ILLUSTRATED BY
ERICK BERRY



PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK BY
THE JUNIOR LITERARY GUILD
IN THE YEAR 1930



TO
JOHN DUGDALE BEST

FROM E. B. AND
O. H. B.



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# A HUNTER AND HIS DOG





# CHAPTER I
## A HUNTER AND HIS DOG

GARRAM stopped silently in midstride and listened. On each side the narrow path beaten through the parched, straw-like grass by the feet of different game animals, trees, gnarled and stunted by the annual forest fires, hid all the view. Heat from the midday tropical sun beat down into the breezeless African bush and made the perspiration run down the silken black skin of the young hunter, down the uplifted foot as he paused, leg raised in midstride, down the worn hollow of the path in the red brick-like clay.

He was bare except for a soft leather loincloth and the knife at his waist, the quiver and hunting ax slung over his shoulder. Everything in his clean-cut build, even his long thin muscles, seemed in an attitude of attention as he turned his head first this way, then that, to locate more accurately the sound he had just heard.

As usual Garram hunted to-day far away from his father's tribe in the Hills. Deep in the country of the Plains, he was as a stranger liable to be killed on sight if discovered.

As Garram waited for the sound to be repeated, Kon, his dark brown, smooth-coated hunting dog, also waited. In the same attitude of strained attention, one foot raised, he suppressed with difficulty his panting so that he might hear the better. Then clear through all the mingled and various sounds of the hot jungle, the bursting of seed pods, the chirping of insects, the rustle of dried leaves and twigs stretching and twisting in the heat, came the faint but unmistakable click of hoof on stone.



Kon's huge head swung round to the boy, awaiting orders.

The young hunter's right hand went up to the quiver over his left shoulder, drew an arrow, and with a sweeping movement placed it across the bow in readiness. Swift, almost too swift to follow, but the swing of the arm and the pointing of the arrow had given the dog his orders. As the arm had swung round to the right Kon plunged into the bush in the direction indicated.

Then began a method of hunting probably unique, invented after long practice by the boy and his dog. Hidden from each other by the dense bush, Garram began to move Kon cautiously toward the game by sound signals. Where Kon and the boy had waited listening, a pool of scent would hang on the hot, stagnant air. The buck, probably a male kob by the sound, could not be got to approach this place. So, swiftly but silently as ever, Garram sought another station.

A hundred paces up the trail was a tree. Rather taller than the rest, its boughs overhung the narrow clearing made by the game track. With the ease of a forest monkey the boy swung himself up and lay, arrow on bow, along a bough, waiting. Listening for occasional sounds made by the buck's horns striking against branches, or the rustle and crackle of dry grass beneath his hoofs, Garram could follow the general line taken by the grazing animal. With faint bird-like whistles he moved the well-trained dog first to one side then the other, backward and forward, but always edging the now suspicious quarry backward toward the tree by the path.

The hunt continued, Garram motionless, eyes half shut, every atom of attention concentrated in his ears. The bush grew more still as the terrible heat seemed to increase and bludgeon into silence even the sound of the insects. But even so, sounds needed sorting from each other, locating, and, above all, understanding. A lizard dropped from a height with that flat flop which saves him from damage but makes him sound like a much larger animal. Bent grass straightened in the blazing heat. A snake rustled in some cool undergrowth. These sounds, once understood, could be dismissed as not likely to disturb the game or complicate the hunt. But to the left was a faint crackle of some larger game moving along a dry reed bed. A faint whistle from Garram ordered the dog around to that side. This would edge the kob away from threatened complication.

The little sweat bees of the bush were clustering in dozens and hundreds in the corners of the boy's mouth, the corners of his eyes, anywhere where there was moisture. Garram was used to this. Moreover, he was too intent even to notice them at the moment. He could picture Kon, wriggling with eagerness, ears pricked, crawling from cover to cover, almost flat bellied on the ground. The kob, he knew, would be tossing his head in defiance of the unknown danger, reaching down occasionally for a promising tuft of grass or leaf, but steadily moving away from the suspicious sound made by Kon in his stalk, steadily moving toward where Garram lay perched above the line of his sight, above the range of his nose.




**Drove the knife into the kob's neck**

Then the kob emerged into the game trail. He sniffed for a moment and got the full body scent left by Garram and Kon as they had stood listening and waiting. With a snort the tawny yellow beast broke into a

swift but lumbering gallop, following the track that passed beneath Garram's tree. Now, from a slow painstaking stalk the hunt had reached its phase of the last tearing split second of tense action. Thrusting his bow and quiver swiftly among some boughs which would hold them, the hunter prepared to launch himself flat upon the game.

The beast was two lumbering strides away when the lithe black body dropped through the leaves, straightening itself as it fell. By a miracle it seemed to miss impalement on the needle-sharp lyre-shaped horns, and Garram's weight, as he fell astride the shoulders, drove the point of his outstretched knife deep between the vertebræ of the heavy neck!

A blow instantly fatal. The great beast, killed in full gallop, thudded upon the ground. The boy with one spring alighted unhurt and smiling in the dust of the fall. For a moment he stood so, half sorry for his fine opponent, then turned to the work on hand.

# GARRAM FINDS TROUBLE



# CHAPTER II
## GARRAM FINDS TROUBLE

GARRAM had first been attracted to hunting by the thrill of the risk, by the pitting of skill against skill. He had now, for some time, given up the noisy, ineffectual hunts of the other youths of the tribe, who were led by that clumsy boaster, Menud.

Solo hunts with their greater risks but greater gains had become essential. Somehow, he knew he must prepare for the time when, on the death of Warok, his father, he would be the next candidate for chieftainship of the tribe of Hillmen. He would then be expected to offer great feasts of oxen and much beer brewed from the native corn. By exchanging with neighboring villages meat and skins from his game Garram had accumulated a hidden store of brass rods and rolls of native cloth, the currency of the country.

The young hunter was at work even before Kon arrived. With the point of his knife he slit the skin along chest and belly and up the inside of each leg. Fine tawny skin, verging on white on the underside, soft to the touch and in excellent condition. Had Kon been an ordinary village dog he would have sprung upon the game or run around barking in excitement. But careful training had made him as silent and undemonstrative as his master. Noise has no place in serious hunting.

The same careful training now showed in another way. As the huge dog stood waiting, Garram held out a fold of the skin which he had been working loose.

As he worked at the skinning, deftly and with no waste movement, Garram's thought turned to the past, to those happenings which had made him train Kon by contraries so that he seemed the most disobedient dog in the village. He had trained him to come to heel when waved forward, and to rush forward when called to heel. So now, as they worked, an order to pull meant to let go, and "Let go" resulted in the dog's digging in his paws and pulling the hide away while Garram's knife eased it from the underlying tissue.

"*Let go!*" Garram ordered and Kon caught hold and began to pull, as the young hunter eased the skin loose with the knife point. Then another whisper: "*Pull!*" and, the need for assistance over, the huge jaws relaxed, and the dog sat back on his haunches again, waiting for the next order.

Twice before Garram had trained dogs in the ordinary way. The first was, perhaps, stolen by a stranger but the second, adopted as a stray and starving puppy, had almost reached Kon's perfection of understanding when Menud, relying on his clumsy strength and his following of loutish village youths, had stepped in and appropriated him.

That was the last Garram had seen of his dog. Later he had been killed by a chance arrow in one of those hunting parties of yapping curs and still noisier half-grown men which Garram despised.

The boy's face took on the hard outline and fixed expression of a grown man as, with recollection, anger rose within him. Some time surely would come a day of reckoning for this and many other wrongs he had endured at Menud's hands.

Meanwhile the skin had come clear and was spread out on the ground, hair downward. The hunter was now occupied partly with knife, partly with hunting ax, dismembering the joints in the manner of a professional butcher. Kon, useless at this work, lay in the deeper shade some paces away, having a noisy but a most enjoyable time with a bone.

After a night and a day spent over the drying fire, Garram wrapped the meat, much reduced in weight and size, in the skin, and tied it with long slivers of supple bark torn from near-by trees. Even then it

was a heavy load he carried in to a distant village, where he exposed it for sale beneath a shady tree in the market place.

Sale was slow and tedious. No native buys more meat than his personal needs for the day, and Kon, though asleep most of the time, looked so threatening on account of his huge size, that the meat was safe from a thieving villager or half-starved cur. Garram woke up from time to time just sufficiently to exchange a few words with his customers and effect a sale.

The chattering market was breaking up, and it was evening before the meat was all gone. The proceeds were stowed securely in the worn leather of Garram's hunting bag. But the air was cooling now, and their seemingly slow trot covered the ground with surprising speed on their homeward journey. Refreshed by their long sleep they had reached the spot halfway up the hillside where, in a cave, Garram had his cache of riches, before the sun began to sink behind the Hills.

Above them but out of sight was the cluster of huts which was the principal village of the Hillmen. Here ruled Warok the Leopard, Garram's father. Far below them the gray granite hillside dipped into the plain which stretched, far as the eye could see, toward the Great River of the east. From the height where Garram and Kon strode, the forest of the Plains looked like smooth-spread moss. Somewhere in this the boy and dog had made their successful hunt, but already the Plains lay in the shadow of the Hills, and nothing could be distinguished.

Now something more urgent than the view suddenly gripped Garram's attention. Here a turned pebble, there a bent grass showed that someone had approached his cave. Cautiously the boy skirted the bush which hid the opening and entered. For perhaps a minute he remained out of sight. As he reappeared Kon greeted him with a wagging tail, then, at sight of the hunter's face, was still. Someone, obviously no beast, had robbed the hiding place of all its wealth.



Garram stood thinking for a moment, balancing on one leg, the bare big toe of the other scratching ruminatively at an instep. Frowning a little, he rubbed one hand over his smooth-shaved head as if to aid thought.

"No one of our tribe would rob another of our tribe," he informed Kon. The dog, gravely regarding, seemed to agree. "Yet who is it we have seen watching us from a distance? Several times. Who but Menud? Menud, *always* Menud!"

After another visit to the cave to make sure that nothing remained, not a copper rod, not a stitch of cloth, the two started again on the long bare climb.

Here and there was a tuft of moss-like vegetation in the hollow of the rock. Less frequently a rod of green cactus forced its way up between boulders from some hidden pocket of soil far below. The bare granite was still hot from the all-day blaze, and the cooler evening breeze seemed painfully long in coming. Garram, with set and angry face, marched steadily upward. The dog was openly panting and lolling out his tongue as he toiled up the long ascent.

Then quickly Kon's tongue was withdrawn, the panting ceased, and nervously he began to sniff the air. At first Garram did not notice his strange behavior. Kon was hanging back, sniffing uneasily, as though some danger threatened from the front. Then, tail between legs, he gallantly overcame his fear sufficiently to catch up with his young master.

Sickened by the loss of the profits of several years' hard work, Garram had put out his hand to pull Kon's ears, wanting to feel the touch of a sympathizer. But at the touch the dog, hackles up, pointed. They were facing a small cave in the side of the hill. Garram stopped.

Then, shifting the hunting ax from his shoulder, his face set with the grim killing urge, the boy went in.

# THE CULPRIT



# CHAPTER III
## THE CULPRIT

THE gray-bearded councilors waited, seated in a ring on the ancient stone seats of the Hill of Assembly. Uncomfortable seats they were, too, each made of two slabs of uncut rock, one piece serving as a back. But so had the council of the tribal elders sat in the days before their father's fathers. Completely surrounding the stone seats of the council was a thick ring of trees which crowned the bare flat-topped hill, the sacred grove which no one might cut, and dedicated to the tribal gods. On the east the treetops still showed, reddened by the setting sun.

On the hill opposite the Hill of Assembly clustered the hundreds of round grass-thatched mushroom-like huts of the village of Warok, the chief. It was the chief town of the Hillmen and well named Kwallak the Stony.

Warok sat now, spear planted by his side, on the western edge of the ring of the elders, a gray-bearded warrior, scarred with ancient wounds, wearing the universal leather loincloth, and with a leopard skin slung like a cape from his shoulders. The elders were similarly clad, but their capes were of goatskin or of the smaller buck.

The speaker before them, his rapid gesticulations contrasting sharply with the quiet dignity of the Assembly, drew near to the end of his harangue.

"Whilst daily these goats, which I have counted before you, were being stolen, you, who are the chief, do nothing!" He paused to point an insolently accusing finger at the old chief, his voice rising to an ill-

natured sneer as he continued: “But I, Sura, whom you will not permit to sit in the Assembly, no doubt because of my riches, I, and Menud my son, have discovered the thief whom you wished to hide.”

Warok’s voice, low toned but authoritative, cut in: “I hide no wrongdoers. I envy no man his riches, for I am too old to use them. You do not sit in the Assembly both because you are not of the age and because you are not of the true descent of the tribe. For such is the law. Continue!”

Sura, his thick lips thrust forward with malicious eagerness, his fat, weak-legged body quivering with fear and hate, had scarcely been able to hold back the climax of his speech.

“This same law, then, which is so rigid that for all my wealth in cattle and goats I may not sit in council, this same law will punish your son with death!” Sura paused, almost happily, to deliver his final blow.

“The penalty for stealing is death?”

Warok inclined his head in assent.

“Good! Since the thief, as Menud my son can prove—the thief whom you have protected but who must now die is—your son Garram!”

The soft fat hand of the speaker made a gesture of slaying, and for a moment there was silence. Then a scarred old warrior leaped to his feet.

“No man should be accused behind his back. Moreover, I have known the boy since he was a child. He is no thief!”

But his voice was drowned by the clamor, for Sura, with his wealth, had his own backing, and the voices of his supporters increased. Then at a sign from the chief, the sound gradually lessened.

“This is no matter of opinion. Not so do we do justice. O elder of the people.” The quiet voice of Warok further calmed the Assembly. “But having heard the charge, let us now hear the evidence. Let Menud speak.”

Menud, a tall, gangling youth, large built but clumsy, came forward. As with Sura, venom seemed to drive him where courage might have been insufficient. Almost with insolence he halted in front of the chief, and without greeting or preliminary he began.

“The words of my father are true. Garram does not hunt with the people of the tribe, nor in the tribal hunting grounds. Yet his foolish dog is always well fed, and I have watched him bring meat to your house.” The youth continued. “And if he does not hunt, whence comes this meat?” Menud hesitated. “Meat does not grow on trees, and his goats are few. So the meat was stolen!”

Here and there a gray beard nodded in agreement. But the old warrior who had first spoken in Garram’s defence had an objection.

“All this you say, but you say it in the boy’s absence, when he cannot deny. And how do we know your words are true? You have not seen the theft, nor can you produce the meat which, you say, has been eaten.” He paused. “Moreover, the stolen goats that Sura had counted are more than two men and dogs could eat!”

Menud waited, impatiently cropping the grass with prehensile toes, but with an evil grin of satisfaction. The game was being played into his hands. “I cannot watch each night to see a thief at work. But I have seen him returning with the price of our stolen goats, which he has sold in distant villages.”

Menud reached down to fumble for a moment with the knots of a bundle at his feet. Then spread the contents wide for the inspection of the Assembly. “Behold the price of the goats he could not eat, and the proof of his guilt!”

A horrified murmur rose from the Assembly. This seemed the last convincing proof of the crime of their chief’s son. A crime which had been on so large a scale that it must indeed involve the old warrior father as well.

Here and there elders rose stiffly from their stone seats. Supporting themselves on their staffs they came forward to inspect the bundle. Brass and copper rods, rolls of webbing-like cloth, and other articles which do duty for currency in a primitive country.

“This is all?” questioned one expert, scraping a rod with appraising thumbnail. For a moment Menud gulped and hesitated.

“Yes, all that I could find, though perhaps Garram has more hidden.”

One by one the old men, peering in the failing light, satisfied themselves that these articles were what they seemed, and one by one, silent, returned to their places. Of one race with Warok and Garram, their sympathies were with the aristocratic, haughty old chief and the independent young hunter, rather than with Sura and Menud, who seemed alternately to bully and grovel.

Among the Assembly Sura's purchased influence began to wane beneath a growing pity for the young hunter, and in the mind of one lame and wizened ancient grew, slowly, a plan to help the boy. If others took his meaning and followed his lead, then the boy might yet be saved. It was worth trying. He rose awkwardly and spoke.

"Sura has said that fifteen of my seventeen goats have been stolen. It is false. I have lost no goats!" The well-meaning lie took a little time to sink in, but, pleased with himself, the old one had sat down again. He leaned forward and with the end of his staff administered a broad hint, in the shape of a prod in the ribs to another ancient on his left. With a vicious malediction upon the first ancient the second rose to frame, if possible, a better lie. To claim an increase in his herds, perhaps! But Warok intervened.

"My thanks for your kindness," his level voice was heard through the gathering dusk. "But if he is guiltless my son will defend himself. If guilty he shall not escape the penalty!"

Then between the tree trunks in the dimming light the figure of a boy was seen approaching. Garram must, somehow, have learned what was in progress. Straight and unswerving he took his course to face his judges and accusers. Straight to face his trial for a crime whose punishment was death.

Through the onlookers beyond the circle of elders he came, and a path opened for him through the packed people.

He came within the ring of elders. Then the silence was broken.

"Seize him and bind him!" ordered Menud, and a group of those youths who followed him hastened to obey. Garram had not hesitated in his stride, but as they sprang forward an arrow appeared as if by magic on his bow. Swiftly Menud and his followers leaped for safety behind the seated elders.

The young hunter now stood before the elders, swaying slightly as he waited. At Garram's back, teeth bared and mane bristling, Kon stood on guard. A moment Garram waited, then his bow clattered to the ground from his relaxed left hand, and with his right he strove to hold together the gaping wounds in his side.

Warok, in answer to his son's question, detailed the charge. Something of pride was in the old man's voice as he spoke. Garram seemed struggling with his weakness, and the silence grew tense. His words must make certain his death for, surely, in the minds of the elders, there could be no defence for this well-proved charge, and both friends and enemies knew that he would speak the truth at any cost.

But the young hunter, weak as he was, seemed to have no intention of defending himself.

"When Menud robbed my cave, these, then," he pointed at the bundle Menud had opened—"these are all that he says he found?"

Voices out of the dusk confirmed. There was a movement of sympathy in the packed, straining crowd. Guilty as he was, he had made no attempt to deny his guilt.

"Then may his house and the house of Sura be searched for that which they have hidden and mean to steal. There is ten times that which has been brought before you!"

A murmured order from Warok dispatched a group of men to carry out the search.

It was now dark except for the vague light of a new moon. The voice of the boy, cool and even, like that of his father, seemed small and forlorn in the gloom.

"As to where I hunt and how, that is no matter for the Assembly, though none but a fool would hunt with Menud's chattering band. As for the rest, I have no skill in talk, being only a hunter."

Interest deepened. This seemed no confession of guilt. Nor yet a defence. A measure of reassurance came to Warok and to those who knew the boy best.

"I bring you things which may be touched and seen, not words which may lie. You may then touch, and see, and judge."

The quiet voice ceased. There was a rustle in the darkness, and heads were turned toward a small red glow which wove in and out among the trees. More spots of light came into sight, slowly tracing along the path from the village to the assembly ground, growing larger as they approached. Once more the crowd opened, this time to make way for a party of men with smoldering grass torches and carrying handfuls of bones and half-bleached skulls of goats. In the distance a group of men struggled with some heavy and awkward load, grunting and cursing with their effort.

The foremost cast down his burden, opened out his grass torch and swung it at arm's length till it burst into a blaze.

"By your son's orders we bring these, O Chief. The cave was full of the bones of goats—as if all the goats of the village had been slaughtered for one feast." The speaker held the blazing torch down so that the onlookers might see, while more and more bones were thrown upon the pile.

"And behind—— Ah, here he is." With something of the pride of a showman the speaker turned. "The stealer of these goats, the eater of this feast, whom your son Garram has killed single handed!"

And with a thud ten staggering men let fall the body of a magnificent leopard.

More and more torches were fanned into a blaze, till even the outermost spectators could make out the huge tawny shape with its black spots. Guttural murmurs of amazement were heard. Never in the memory of living man had such a great beast been seen, alive, trapped, or dead. Kon, growling, shrank back against Garram, who, for the moment forgetting his wounds, had sat down to enjoy the beginning of his triumph. Then he spoke.



"Menud sought the thief in the wrong cave. He should have sought higher on the path, nearer the village. Though perhaps had he done so he might have joined the goats!" With difficulty the young hunter kept the ring of exultation out of his voice.

Then, before people could recover from their amazement, there was another interruption. The men sent to search the house of Sura and Menud were returning. More torches flared as they cast down their burdens, load after load of jangling brass and copper rods, neat rolls of narrow cloth tightly wound to resist moisture. Words were unnecessary. Garram's defence and the proof of Menud's intent to steal lay in shining piles on the ground for all to see.

Garram, supported weakly on one elbow, suddenly crumpled up and lay still. Instantly Warok was at his side. Weak from the pain and loss of blood from the wounds left by the leopard's claws, Garram had fainted. After a swift but practised examination of the wounds the chief spread his own leopard-skin robe and placed the boy gently upon it, while Kon stood worriedly by.

Menud and his father had disappeared, but shouts of vengeance, upon the two plotters rose fiercely out of the torchlit darkness. The old chief turned angrily upon the crowd.

“When the sun sank you would have had me kill my son. Now that you have seen his deeds you would turn upon his accusers. Think you that he needs your help for vengeance upon such rats as those?”

Stooping down he gathered the still unconscious body in his powerful arms. Carrying it as though it were a child, and followed by Kon, the old chief passed proudly out of the Assembly.

But Menud and Sura were still free to plot again.

# THE RAINMAKER'S ADVICE



# CHAPTER IV
## THE RAINMAKER'S ADVICE

GARRAM heard the tapping of a stick. It was approaching along the rocky path which wound through the terraced fields of corn, toward the place where he lay basking in the sun. Bare feet give no sound on rock, so people of the Hills learn to recognize the tapping of the six-foot walking sticks as easily as boot-wearing people recognize the sound of a well-known footstep.

"Salutations and many salutations!" The boy sprang up in greeting as, rounding a boulder at the turn of the path, came the tall figure of his ancient friend, the Rainmaker and Priest of the Tribal Cults. Proudly Garram offered his new leopard skin as a seat for his visitor. Garram's wounds had healed with no trace of blood poisoning, but he was still too weak to hunt, and was forced to sit about, idly convalescing. He had been lying in the shade, watching Kon scratch for imaginary fleas, listening to the songs of the women as they ground corn in the huts, stretching out his brown arms and legs luxuriously in the morning breeze, but getting more and more bored.

"Increase in years and prosperity be thine!" he added as his welcome visitor sat down and disposed his soft skins about him.

The Rainmaker laid down his staff. "Peace and health!" the deep voice replied. "And your strength?... Returning to you?... It is good, for you will need it soon!"

The appearance of the old Rainmaker was impressive. His high-bridged nose was in contrast to the flatter noses of the rest of the tribe, and his shining but uncut beard and hair, his six foot six of bone

and muscle hung round with soft tanned leather robes and mysterious bags and charms, all added dignity to the seamed, impassive face on which alone the years had left their mark.

The young hunter and the old magician seemed to have something in common. Though grown-ups were silent at his approach and children ran howling to their mothers, Garram, when a small child, had stood gravely considering the old Rainmaker; then, to the horror of the other children, had crossed the market place to him, politely saluted him, and asked why people feared him! This was many years ago, but the Rainmaker and the young hunter, both aloof and uncommunicative, both fearless and rather disdainful of the chattering village, had formed a curious friendship which had lasted ever since.

The old man began to fill his pipe from a leather tobacco wallet which hung at his waist. At least two ounces of the coarse native tobacco went into the shining black clay bowl with its ornate carvings. The bowl was nearly four inches across and five deep, and it would have taken twice the amount to fill it. But it was seldom smoked out. Garram watched with interest as the old man busied himself with a collection of small tongs, skewers, and knives made of soft iron and kept especially for this purpose in the wallet.

Behind them as they sat was the group of red-walled, grass-thatched huts, built touching each other and inclosing a courtyard. This was Garram's home, and at a sign from the other he went in swiftly by the narrow window-like door set high in one of the walls. In a moment he returned with a small ember from the cooking fire, carefully shielding it from the inflammable thatch as he climbed out again through the circular doorway.

With the bowl at the end of the three-foot-long mouthpiece resting on the ground, the Rainmaker applied the glowing ember to a small stick.

"Though the sky be clear,"—he squatted on the leopard skin and drew carefully at the mouthpiece—"those who have wisdom can yet feel the coming storm." He made a motion for the young hunter to sit down and listen. "But the fool will wait till Achin the God of Thunder rends a tree before he says to himself, 'See there is a storm!'"

Reaching out his hand he broke the glowing end of the stick carefully into the exact center of the bowl. With a metal skewer he scraped the fluffy white wood ash all around it, carefully covering all but the center, where the charcoal glowed. A few tentative draws on the pipe, then, the result appearing to his satisfaction, he wiped and replaced the odd bunch of tools in the wallet.

"What, then, is the meaning of my saying?" he asked.

Garram remained silent. As a hunter he knew that talk scared the game. The silent man sees and hears most. The Rainmaker had not come for a chat but to say something of importance. Instead of replying, the boy stretched out a leg and with bare toe invited Kon to come and be scratched. The massive dog approached and with a bored sigh flopped down and rolled over, his lips drawing back in a contented grin as a skilful toe explored the sensitive part of the chest around the shoulder.

"Even though the sky be clear for you and for Warok your father," the deep voice resumed, "is there no sign of a coming storm?"

Garram looked up swiftly as his friend seemed to be reading his thoughts.

"Uncle of my father, Yes! The signs are clear, but there is much that I cannot understand."

The chief priest, in his turn, seemed to have lost all interest in the subject. With all elaboration and care seemingly due to so important an act he was tamping down his pipe where smoldering grains of tobacco had forced up the neat white ring of the wood ash.

The leopard skin beneath the two lay on a surface of thickly strewn white sand, sand which had been brought painstakingly from a stream bed two thousand feet below and spread like a soft carpet over the stones. Garram was marking parallel lines in it with outstretched forefinger as he brought to mind, one by one, the matters that had puzzled him.

With a sweep of his hand he obliterated the marks and spoke.

"Many things which are hidden to me are clear to you. And perhaps in these matters there is no mystery. But why is Menud again the leader of the young hunters of the tribe? Before my wounds made all things go black before my eyes he had been shown guilty of stealing

and perhaps of plotting to have me killed. He was not worthy of punishment, though many wished him punished. Why then is he thought worthy again to lead the youths of the tribe—he who is a thief and worse?"

The tall figure nodded. "Yes, that is without doubt one of the signs."

The boy made a long mark in the sand.

"And Sura who shared in the blame of Menud his son—he has not been cast out. He has even taken part in the Council of the Elders, sitting on the Sacred Stones and speaking as if with authority—though only in the absence of the chief, my father. Sura is not of the true descent, being a runaway slave from the Plains. Why does my father permit these acts?"

The priest nodded. Garram made another mark in the sand. There was a pause. The old man drew gently on his pipe. Then:

"Are there no other signs that you see? Things that affect you less, but the tribe perhaps more?"

Garram hesitated for a moment. "O uncle of my father, that is all that I see with clear sight. But beyond, matters which are no concern of mine, since I have no authority in the tribe—and yet...."

Garram had risen and was standing, hands clenched, more moved than when he had been on trial for his life. A look of understanding crossed the priest's seamed and rugged face.

"Why do we, the Hillmen, grow careless of our honor and safety?" The boy's dark eyes flashed as he spoke. "The elders follow Sura because of his wealth, though he is not of our race. The young men follow though he is clumsy as the wild boar and vain as the rock fowl. None care for the good of the tribe. There are no young hunters fit to become warriors. The cactus defence walls of the village are never repaired and are full of gaps for lazy women to take short cuts. There are no fire belts around the towns, so annual bush fires destroy many villages. An enemy could, by fire, drive us forth to meet his waiting spears."

Unused to making long speeches, the boy paused and scratched the calf of his left leg with bare right toe.

"And why, seeing this—and I have seen his face darken with anger as he sees—does my father the chief do nothing?" He stopped, his brown chest rising and falling under his excited breathing, and looked down into the expressionless face of the smoker.

Again the pipe called for attention. Again the tools were produced and the glowing charcoal was moved slightly toward one side. Garram, annoyed with himself for having said so much, fidgeted awkwardly from foot to foot.

"What would you have your father do?" The Rainmaker spoke quietly. "In peace we Hillmen are as free to act foolishly as wisely. Only in time of war do we place all power in the hands of the chief, punishing with death all who disobey. If the people, soft and secure for many years, fear no attack and neglect their defences, what then? The elders too," he continued, "are soft and forgetful of their duty. If Warok commands that defences be repaired, the elders will stand between him and the people, seeking to gain favor, saying, 'See, we will not permit this chief to oppress you, for you are free men!'"

The old man paused, then added as if in careless afterthought: "Moreover, the elders are well bribed by Sura with feasts and presents. And Sura seeks to discredit the chief, your father, and seize the chieftainship."

The early morning breeze was dropping, and the sun was getting uncomfortably hot. Kon rose and sauntered toward the cooler shadow of a doka tree near the path. But Garram waited. The old Rainmaker, the most feared man of the tribe, was not one to speak without cause and point. The boy felt the fierce eyes under the deep brows looking into him and testing him.

Whatever he sought, the priest seemed satisfied. Preliminaries were over, and he came straight to the point of his visit.

"There is a secret plot to murder Warok, your father. He will not save himself by flight, for the gods made him without fear and heedless of his enemies. He cannot defend himself except against the straightforward attack, and Sura and his followers are more likely to loose an arrow through the dusk or poison his food or water. But you his son have it in your power to save him. You only."

The eyes of the young hunter lighted up, and his hand slid to the knife at his belt. A half smile relaxed the grim face of the old man. “Nay, not by that means. By one way only—flight! If you are beyond the reach of the plotters they will not touch the chief your father. For they will fear the day when you may return to the tribe a grown man, living only to avenge him.”

His message delivered, the gaunt Rainmaker turned again to his pipe. With the greatest attention to detail he emptied out the charcoal, scraped out some burned tobacco, and plugged the unburned dottel with a stopper of grass. The young hunter stood motionless before him, looking into the distance. His hand was still on his knife, but he was swallowing the bitter medicine of his disappointment. To fight—ah, that would have been good! But to fly from one’s enemies—it seemed too hard a thing to ask! His chest rose and fell, and he had to gulp hard to conceal his sorrow. The old man, face averted, cleaned his tools twice over in the sand and polished them off on his bare sole with quite unnecessary care before replacing them in the leather bag.

At last the old Rainmaker rose to go. “Well? Your answer?” The deep voice betrayed unintended sympathy at variance with the curt inquiry.

The boy swallowed again. Then huskily, “I go!”

# A JOURNEY TO COME



# CHAPTER V
## A JOURNEY TO COME

GARRAM spent the rest of that day planning and preparing. If the safety of his father required him to leave the village of Kwallak it would debar him for the same reasons from those other villages of the Hills, where Sura might have influence. As Garram planned, he prepared also the famous poison of the Hill people, evaporating it in a piece of broken pot over a slow fire till it was the color and consistency of tar. There might be good reasons why he should leave the tribe but there was no reason for him to hide like a hunted animal.

One by one he examined his reed-shafted, unfeathered arrows, here and there renewing the fine lashing which held the soft iron heads in place. One by one he dipped them in the poison, laying them out to dry. Like all the other hunters of the Hills, he used a poison that was mainly strophanthus, and the faintest scratch with the arrow treated with it would kill man or beast painlessly and faster than a well-placed bullet.

He squatted, working, on a rock in the shade of a large tree and considered his possible plans. The people of the Plains to the east were of the Fulani race, and the little Garram had heard of them did not make either them or their country seem attractive. The tales he had heard were from Hillmen, who, captured young by raiding parties, had seen their parents wantonly butchered. Finally, when their captors had considered them no longer worth guarding as slaves, some homing instinct had made them drag their worn and broken bodies back to the Hills.

Arrows finished, the boy turned his attention to re-hafting his hunting ax. Meanwhile he considered the country of the Fulani of the West. Of these he knew little. They were, by their dress and appearance, of the same race as the Fulani of the East. But for some reason they had left the Hillmen alone, making no slave raids. Most thrilling about them was the half-fabled story of their mighty walled city, Yelwa. To the Hillmen, whose little round thatched huts clung like small clusters of mushrooms to the steep hillsides, had come vague tales of a widespread city, flat roofed, shadowed with ancient date palms, and encircled by an incredible wall.

With the completion of his preparations came decision. He gathered up his weapons and for safety's sake overturned the remnants of the poison into the fire. If then he was to be denied adventure in the Hills he would go to meet it in Yelwa itself—if the city really existed!

Garram called to Kon and entered his father's house. Just before dusk he made his final preparations in the shape of an incredibly large meal, a real traveler's meal, designed to last him through a night of hard going.

# THE CITY OF THE FULANI



# CHAPTER VI
## THE CITY OF THE FULANI

GARRAM peered out from the treetop. Far away to the right and left stretched the high red wall of the city, unbroken in its smooth surface save for the single doorway from which poured a seemingly endless stream of farmers, traders with their donkeys and headloads, and women with earthenware jars going forth to draw water.

The boy had arrived after midday of the previous day, having traveled rapidly all night and morning. He had found no difficulty in discovering the city, the fabulous city of Yelwa, for all tracks for at least twenty miles around led directly toward it, converging upon each other, widening when they met as streams meet to form rivers.

In the rugged, thinly populated Hills he had neither seen nor imagined anything like it, had heard of nothing to prepare him for the sight of so many paths, such unbelievable streams of people. It was all so terrifying in its strangeness. Not a rock nor a hill was in sight, only level fields of corn and other crops stretching as far as he could see from his treetop vantage point. And always his eyes and thoughts came back to that towering city wall. Yesterday he had circled it, Kon at his heels, until dark, seeking some less public way of entrance than this city gate. Four gates in all he had found, one at each point of the compass, but each choked with jostling crowds, and there was no other opening. There was no crack or growing plant, either, to afford him finger and toe hold up the high wall with its crenelated top.

Under cover of the darkness last night he had made a closer examination. Cautiously making his way to the edge of the dry moat, he had carefully felt along between the poisoned stakes planted in the

bottom of it and with the assistance of Kon's unwilling tail, hauled himself up the other side. Then, flattening himself against the base of the wall so that people on top might not easily see him in the dim starlight, he worked round to the gateway, only to find it closed. This he had expected, but all the same it was disappointing.

So he had made his way back again to the uncultivated bush, had hunted and killed, eaten and slept. And now he was again seeking an entrance into the city of Yelwa as it poured forth its inhabitants by its western gate.

Garram climbed down again to where Kon was waiting for him, hidden in the small brush at the foot of the tree. As it was early morning the stream of people was emerging from the gates, but catching sight of some travelers about to enter he fell in behind the crowd, dread of the unknown giving him a sick feeling inside him and weakening his knees.

He had never imagined how strange and trying the quarter of a mile to the city gates could be. He had never heard any spoken language but his own, and here people were chattering and exchanging salutations in a tongue which seemed to him as meaningless as the calls of birds. But, all the same, they seemed to understand it, though it was hard to believe it wasn't pretence. People looked curiously at him, for the men all wore long robes and baggy trousers, and the women a long straight cloth wrapped around beneath their arms and reaching nearly to the feet. Half-admiringly a girl nudged another girl, and they both smiled at him and pointed. But the boy grew hot under his dark skin and passed his hand over his shaven head. All the other men and boys wore turbans or round red hats, all crown, he noticed, and nowhere did he see such a leather loincloth as he wore.

Kon, however, seemed to be enjoying himself. Many yellow-colored dogs passed him, but on seeing him snarled and made a wide detour. Here and there he stepped aside to get a closer sniff at some strange scent of donkey, horse, or human.

By the time the slowly moving donkey train in front of him had reached the gate Garram was glad to lift his glance from the roadway with its deep-trodden sand. The gatehouse with a guard-room on each side made a tunnel of shadow through which could be seen a long

street of flat-roofed houses, so unlike the round huts of the Hills that he scarcely took them for dwelling places. It was dreadfully like a trap, and it took all his will power to overcome his instinct to turn and escape before it was too late.

A man at arms on guard at the gateway took one swift glance at the strange young hunter, then called back to someone in the gatehouse. At the signal several others came out at a run, fixing on their red-tasseled sword slings as they came.

"A Hillman and his dog, though never before has one left the Hills!" the sentry cried.

"A terrible warrior indeed!" jeered one of those who had been called from his morning meal. "But now that he has passed, permit that we return, since you no longer require protection." They turned back, unslinging their cross-handled swords, unbuckling the fastenings on their quilted armor.

"By Shehu, they took it coolly." The sentry stabbed idle patterns in the sand with his spear point. "The unbeliever is young and comes openly, as in peace. But my father has told me of how, in the old days, when their hills were attacked they fought as lions, having no fear of death, but killing as they sank wounded to their knees, killing still as they dropped to one elbow, still stabbing as their eyes closed in death." Admiringly the young soldier followed Garram with his eyes "Allah permit that I, a true believer and follower of the Prophet Mohammed may some day fight as well as these unbelievers!"

The young hunter, unconscious of these happenings behind him, had plenty to bewilder him. The sandy road, hollowed out by many feet and hoofs, narrowed between the houses, then opened wide into the market square, set with shady trees. From the trading booths of mud and thatch, from the groups of people who crouched over wares spread on mats in the open, came a bewildering hubbub of many voices, crying their goods, disputing prices, greeting each other, telling the news.

To his nose came also the strong scents of the market, of spices and strange foods, of the perfumes used by both men and women of these gowned people, of the smoke of the small fires round the butchers'

stalls where morsels of meat were grilled on slivers of stick. The boy turned, half seeking a way out of this, when Kon created a diversion which made retreat impossible.

The mangy market curs, underfed, timorous, and cruel, had come up one by one to inspect this unknown dog, who looked more like a young calf than a canine. One by one they had ranged themselves beside Kon as he followed a pace behind his young master. The hound, with majestic dignity, was ignoring them when with a flash of yellow teeth a cur made a slash at his hind quarters. But the teeth never met in Kon's flesh, and the yellow torrent of dogs, which as if by signal closed on Kon, hurled themselves at empty air. For an instant Kon stood grinning where his sideways leap had landed him—then ——

Garram turned swiftly at first sound of the flurry, but only in time to see the yellow pack in yelping flight across the market place. The dogs managed to dodge the more solid things such as mud walls and tree trunks, but that was all they dodged. Grave leather workers, gesticulating butter sellers, and such, had no warning before yellow bodies began sailing past their heads, emitting terrified yelps and scrabbling confusedly with their paws at turbans, faces of those who had knelt on the mats, bowls of milk, and anything else which might give foothold and increase their speed of flight.

What the curs could not go under they went through. Powdered tobacco became mixed with sweetmeats, fluffy mounds of ginned cotton spread like snow through the square, butter and milk shot high in the air and descended like blessings on ungrateful heads. The first yellow wave of curs crashed over and among people before there was time to shake a stick at them. As traders sprang up from mat seats, adjusting disheveled turbans, righting overturned calabashes, retrieving scattered market produce, a second apparition sent them groveling afresh, calling upon Allah and the Prophet.

One terrified glimpse they got of something huge and black. It was Kon, grinning but immensely determined, hurtling in pursuit. Behind him Garram, who appeared a small fiend armed with all sorts of

outlandish weapons, and uttering strange calls, seemed to their astonished gaze scarcely to touch the ground as he dodged, swerved, and leaped in pursuit.

All those men whom Islam deemed holy and whose names could be remembered in a hurry were invoked as protectors in case Allah and Mohammed should again prove insufficient.

At the end of the market was a large flat-roofed building with an outside stairway, the Mohammedan mosque, the Place of Prayer for the Faithful of Islam. As the yelping, scurrying pack swept round the corner of the building out of sight, Kon withdrew from the pursuit. Garram, seeing this, turned in the act of leaping over some children and a pile of corded firewood and alighted in a space between some bowls of sweetmeats. He glanced around, seeking a way out of the awkward situation. Kon, still grinning, and dancing almost on tiptoe, came up, trying unsuccessfully to look apologetic.

But hurrying after them came a stout and wrathful trader, turban askew, his brown face almost black with anger. “In the name of Shehu, this exceeds all!” he shouted and with raised spear rushed upon Kon.

Garram could not understand the strange speech, but it was clear that his dog was in danger. The trader’s spear flashed forward and down. But with his left hand Garram had swung his keen hunting ax, cutting the spearhead from the shaft. Like a spinning leaf the broad blade flew, flashing from the shaft out into the air, and the lunge of the angry merchant carried the headless spear shaft harmlessly past Kon’s broad back.



The man was still recovering his balance, gazing with wonder at the wand he held, that had so short a moment before been a spear, then his eyes fell upon the knife in the young hunter's right hand. The blade slid smoothly to the broad stomacher, was lost in the folds of the loose gown and withdrawn with the swift dexterous twist that only comes from much practice. Then Garram and Kon vanished round the corner of the Mosque.

Horror of death was on the broad face of the trader. His useless spear fell to the ground. A large hand felt at where the gaping wound should be, then astonishment and finally a broad grin spread across his face.

"Shaitan and Iblus!" Amazement was in his voice. "To cut my trouser string and make me think it was death!" Hastily he grabbed up the trousers which had settled round his ankles and, though much

impeded, started in pursuit.

# LAUGHTER MAKES FRIENDS AND FOES



# CHAPTER VII
## LAUGHTER MAKES FRIENDS AND FOES

THE Emir, the chief of all the Fulani of the Western Plain, was not pleased with the way things were going in Yelwa, his capital city. But on a Friday he seldom was pleased. For, on his way to the mosque on the Mohammedan day of prayer it was the custom for people to stop him and to present petitions. Also, and it was this that annoyed him most, it was tradition that he should grant many of these requests for pardon of criminals, and that he should give alms on a large scale. Both went against the grain, but especially the pardoning of criminals. To sentence a man earlier in the week only to release him on a Friday, seemed waste of time. Lately he had taken to giving sentences of flogging, which could be all done and finished by the time the day of pardons came around. Another solution had been to give sentence of double the punishment he intended and then remit half.

As he thought, a grim smile twisted one corner of his mouth. Amid the plaudits of the richly robed court he paused for the purification before entering the mosque.

During the ceremony a gathering cloud grew and blackened on the hard face of the aristocratic old Fulani. Not only the Ladan, in his call to prayer, but the Liman—the Leader in Prayer—had deviated intentionally from the traditional ritual. With his anger was mixed anxiety. These religious men must feel they had strong backing so daringly to flout the orthodoxy of which he and his great ancestors had been such staunch upholders!

The rows of white-robed worshipers made their final prayer, their final prostration, and began to file out by the narrow doorway, out of the dim coolness into the blinding heat of the sunlight. For a few moments they stood, gathering up their staves and ablution bottles while they gossiped. The Emir leaned heavily upon the shoulders of two followers while a third placed the richly ornamented sandals on his soft, almost ladylike feet. The Leader in Prayer, the Liman, was making his salutations, and the Court Praiser had struck up "Great is the Son of...."

Garram at full speed rounded the corner. He tried to dodge the group at the mosque door, but his speed was too great. He slipped, recovered, throwing up a cloud of dust from the dry ground, slipped again, and with bony elbows, hard head, harder ax, throwing stick and bow, crashed full into the Leader of Prayer!

That gentleman had stooped to put on his sandals. The impact sent him spinning backward. To preserve his balance he grasped the Ladan and for a brief moment they tottered forward and back as if indulging in an undignified comic dance. An agony of suspense was on their faces. Then, force of gravity having its way, stiff legged, feet stretched out in front, gently they sat down side by side.

Garram would have resumed his flight, but guards seized him, and people looked toward the Emir, expecting a brief, angry order. In vain they waited.

The Emir was bent almost double—at first they thought in pain. Then they saw that the hook-nosed, hawk-like face was twisted in honest mirth. Twice he pointed a finger at the two astonished elders who were sitting on the ground, arms round each other like loving twins. Twice he tried to speak. Cruel the African native may be, but he loves a joke. From one after another of the crowd snorts of laughter were heard, then the whole group, old and young, were chuckling and hooting with glee.

It was perhaps unfortunate for the trader that it was at this juncture he rounded the corner in pursuit: sometimes hopping, sometimes running, as his trousers permitted, and snorting his indignation, his baggy garments slipping, being caught, and slipping again as he stumbled along. To complete the situation the trousers slipped once

too often and too far. The big man rocked once in his stride, then, thudding at the feet of the Emir he came down in a cloud of dust. Hands at his side, still grasping at the refractory pantaloons, feet behind him and mouth wide open and gasping, he looked for all the world like a large fish, just landed.

Surprise at this second apparition had momentarily checked the laughter. At this climax it started again like one choking sob. The Emir, all dignity swept away, leaned crumpled up against the wall of the mosque, making strange hooting noises.

The guard needed no order to make them release their hold on Garram. The feeling of the Emir and the people was too obvious to need putting into words. Garram, too wise to draw attention to himself by bolting again, sat down to await developments. Kon, tail wagging in applause, was quite willing to wait, apparently hoping that someone would do some more funny tricks.

The Leader in Prayer and the Ladan gathered themselves together, shaking the sand and dust from their robes. Bitterly the Liman reproached his innocent subordinate, whom he seemed to blame for his humiliation. Muttering curses beneath his breath which he dared not say aloud he turned a baleful glance upon the unconscious Emir.

"Allah will requite!" he stalked off muttering. "Allah will avenge the wrong done to his servant!"

Goshi, the stout trader, rose from before the Emir and made more proper obeisance. "Pardon, O Great One! Pardon thy servant!"

The usual frown had returned to the face of the Emir, and the trader trembled.

"Be not so impetuous the next time you hasten to pay your respects."

Goshi strove to stammer forth explanations, but the chief cut him short with a wave of the hand. "But if your quarry is not in fact a thief, caught in the act, you shall forgive him. Then will I forgive you."

Then turning to the guard the Emir raised his voice so that the courtiers and assembled multitude might also hear. "This boy is sent of Allah to reprove presumptuous Holy Men. And well has he done it! See that he, aye, and even his dog, if so large a thing can be a dog, are well lodged and fed in the palace."

The ever growing crowd let loose a burst of applause far different from the usual acclamation. In the train of the Emir, Garram strove to talk to a genial giant of a guard in sign language. Kon followed, his tail broadcasting unmistakable opinion that this was a cheery city to live in.

# THE EMIR'S COURT



# CHAPTER VIII
## THE EMIR'S COURT

THE Emir, splendid in jeweled robes of state, held court. The room was filled with petty officers of the court, townspeople of Yelwa, and smaller chiefs, and below the dais groveled the prisoner, loaded with leg irons and manacles. The accused, now pale and trembling, bore little resemblance to the cruel tyrant who, called forth by the Emir to answer for his crimes, had replied by raising an army and attempting war upon the Emir himself.

Here in the court witness after witness was called, drawn from the actual scene of the crime, and guilt of the accused was established beyond dispute. Their tales of terrorism, exaction, and torture ended, the prisoner, eyes fixed in dread anticipation upon the judge, his Emir, awaited sentence.

The stir of movement, of whispered comment, ceased throughout the bare, cave-like hall. Judgment and sentence were about to be pronounced. Raising one hand with its antique signet rings, the Emir enjoined silence. "Since you, Governor of one of our provinces, saw fit to rise in armed rebellion against us...." He was addressing the object in chains, upon whom all eyes were fixed.

All eyes except those of Garram. In the deserted side of the hall, behind the Emir, a man, previously hidden behind a massive pillar, moved swiftly forward to the cover of another pillar. A quick movement of Kon's huge head had drawn Garram's attention to this.

The voice of the Emir continued. "Since in this rebellion you tortured free men, burned villages, stole...." The level voice was proceeding with the summing up.

Next to the Emir sat the Waziri, the Vizier, and the Emir's first officer of state. He was close enough to be visible from a corner of the Emir's eye, and in full view of the people, but Garram, watching, saw that although neither head nor body of the Waziri moved, his left hand slid behind him and made signs behind the cover of his robes. Such signs could only be intended for that stealthily approaching figure.

"All these are clearly shown by many men whose own eyes have beheld them," the voice continued. "Therefore the sentence is Death! Your head shall be struck off in the market place at sunset time!"

Garram's keen and watchful eye saw the Waziri's hand fall as if in secret signal. There was a swift flash of steel as the hidden man sprang into the open and flung himself upon the unsuspecting Emir, and the point of the assassin's knife tore into the back of the jeweled robe. Then Kon's great weight struck with full force, and knife and man went thudding to the ground.

There was a gasp of horror from the crowded room, another gasp as the dog's huge jaws closed menacingly around the attacker's throat.

The Emir gave no sign of fear, did not even pause in his judgment. Coolly he continued with his directions to the executioner, and the condemned rebel was removed, then, careless of the spreading stain of blood upon his garments, the chief turned to the scene at his feet. The time for the attack had been well chosen, when all attention was upon the fate of the rebel, and but for Kon's intervention the Emir's fate would have been certain. Now, with threatening clamor, guards and courtiers rushed forward and surrounded the prostrate man. Kon, at a word from Garram, released the figure and stalked back to his master's side.

The prisoner, would-be assassin, was dragged by the mob to the front of the dais, and in a moment his scarlet and gold uniform of the guard hung in tatters from his shoulders, his face was twisted in pain. But he faced the wrathful Emir unafraid, waiting his sentence of death or torture.

"So it is you, Ibrahim!" cried the Emir. "You, the son of my cousin, of my own blood!"

Ibrahim, lips set with pain, inclined his head in assent. The Emir's even tones deepened in anger. "Was then my gift of captaincy of the guard such an insult that it must be wiped out in blood?" The proud and angry face of the chief took on a look of sorrowful disdain. "If I have ever wronged you, or yours, speak—and I will set you free!"

The young man had returned haughty look for look, in spite of his pain. Now something like shame came to the handsome face, and he bent his head to hide it.

"Speak, if you have words in excuse for your deed! If you have none the penalty is——"

"*Death!*" With a ring of pride Ibrahim completed the Emir's sentence.

"Nay," mocked the Emir. "Death is scarcely the word. But in the end you may greet death as a mercy, and not as a punishment. But, guard, remove the prisoner lest I pass sentence blinded by anger. Seven days from to-day, at the door of the mosque of my ancestors, I will pass sentence."

"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Assembly is dismissed," rang the voice of the court crier.

As the crowd filed through the wide doorways in ever increasing hubbub of talk the Emir turned to the Waziri. "See that an interpreter be sent me. One that speaks the speech of this young hunter whose dog has saved my life." Then, contemptuous of the broadening red stain upon his robe he passed through the small doorway leading to his private apartments.

# THE EMIR'S SECRET



# CHAPTER IX
## THE EMIR'S SECRET

THE hunting camp was to be made about two days' journey from the city of Yelwa. Garram and Kon, unused to the leisurely travel of city men, covered the distance in one day and found themselves on the camp site with many hours to wait before the Emir arrived.

It was just before nightfall when they reached the prearranged spot and sat for a while watching a gang of laborers clearing grasses, bushes, and tree stumps from a wide flat space on the bank of a small lake. At nightfall the two went hunting, killed, ate, and slept, and at dawn started for a fresh hunt, driving the game as close in to camp as possible before killing it. When they arrived back at the camp site the clearing that had been made the day before was being filled with flat-roofed sun shelters made with boughs of trees. Grass-walled huts had been run up and picketing places established for the horses which were expected.



In the center the laborers were erecting the Emir's own hut. It was larger than the others, more pretentious, with walls of three thicknesses of grass matting and a thatched roof, beautifully thick and even. The workers were busy trimming more boughs with heavy knives, digging holes for timber uprights, tying and plaiting grasses. They looked up from their work as Garram passed, glancing curiously at the boy dressed in hides, and at his dog, so much larger than any they had ever seen before. Enviously they stared after his load of freshly killed meat which showed beneath the leaf coverings. They had come from distant villages and had lived for more than two days on a little half-cooked flour mixed with water, which they had brought with them.

Garram had noted their scanty diet and guessed their hunger. Now, dropping the heavy load from his head, he knelt down and undid the twisted slivers of bark with which it was tied. Almost before he had unrolled the meat, the workers, divining his intention, dropped their work and commenced to blow up cooking fires from such wood as came to hand.

Garram made signs to the old village chief, and the old man detailed off a band of boys to follow the hunter and Kon back into the bush for the remainder of the kill. The young hunter returned to find himself suddenly popular, and the popularity increased, along with astonishment, when they discovered that he would take no money for the food. Never before had they seen any one of Garram's race, but they had heard of the mysterious race of the Hillmen since they were children. They were almost incredulous at his ability to go into the bush and return with game as easily as a man picks a sheep from a sheep pen. Why, it would have taken a hunter of the Plains a fortnight, at least a week, to kill as much as Garram had brought to them in a single day!

They offered him their small tobacco pipes, pressed upon him small gifts of tobacco, and later in the day, when the women and children arrived with fresh provisions, they urged upon him thick but harmless beer and other delicacies. Twice more that morning Garram went hunting, and under the stimulus of so much good meat the camp builders worked at an amazing pace. By midday everything was

finished, and all the long, blazing afternoon the hunter and his new friends lay, half asleep, in a shady shelter topping a grassy slope. A faint breeze, just enough to eddy the tobacco smoke, came from the stretch of blue water below.

Kon, glad to be released from the grilling heat of the city, had followed the children down to the lake and delightedly joined in their play. He had figured as a riding horse, been taken down to drink and to stand belly-deep among the water lilies. Then came a less peaceful rôle, that of a hunted elephant. But as the heat grew he changed from an elephant to a hippopotamus. But a hippo must submerge and dive down to graze along the lake bottom, and the children, finding Kon unsinkable, finally turned him into a good-natured canoe.

Toward sunset Garram woke. The drums and horns of the Emir's party could be heard approaching. The villagers, collecting their tools, went out to meet their chief and pay their respects, Garram and Kon followed them. A wide track had been cleared through the bush, and passing over a gentle rise the two stopped to watch the advancing column which wound its way down a hill, crossed a small plain and came on.

A band of mounted men rode first, wearing the many-colored plumed helmet and the quilted armor of the guards. In spite of two days traveling, their wiry, thin little horses were prancing and sidling along the wide cleared track, their low-hanging embroidered saddle-cloths swinging to the movements. Following them came men on foot, their ten-foot trumpets gleaming red in the setting sun. The deep boom of the great instruments formed an undercurrent to the rattle of accouterments and the patter of hoofs. Mounted guards and trumpeters passed in a cloud of dust which turned golden on the evening air. Then the wail of oboe-like reed instruments became audible. Lesser chiefs and courtiers, each with running footmen and a few mounted attendants preceded the mounted oboe players.

Behind the musicians, closely surrounded by people chanting his praises, covered by a brilliant crimson and gold umbrella ten feet across, and fanned by other attendants, rode the Emir. Then more guards followed, grooms, slaves, and the innumerable hangers-on, small children, pouring along in a steady stream with the dust over all.

Garram waited to see the last of the procession pass and turned back toward camp. He heard the distant plaudits as the Emir reached his hut and alighted, and moving swiftly along through the last of the setting sun ran into a breathless messenger who gave Garram to understand, by signs, that the Emir had sent for him. As they neared camp the change was already apparent. Cooking fires were crackling gently outside grass huts, men smoked and lounged and gossiped as they passed in and out, and a bustle of busy preparations for the evening meal surrounded him. The use of the sand-strewn square framed with logs, which had puzzled him, now became clear. White-robed worshipers were already kneeling there, pressing their foreheads to the sand, engaged in their evening prayers.

And then, as Garram and the messenger entered the Emir's hut, all the heat and bustle and confusion of the newly pitched camp died out behind them. The hut which Garram had seen bare but a short time before was now lined from roof to floor with embroidered hangings, heavy draperies which shut out the dust, heat, and noise. The boy had no chance for detailed inspection, for the guide immediately withdrew, and the Emir turned to another man, only dimly seen in the darkness, and who seemed to be an interpreter.

"Oh, Garram, it is easier for a beggar to free himself of fleas than for an emir to free himself of courtiers!"

The voice from the darkness translated the Emir's remark into the speech of the Hills, and Garram inclined his head in reply.

The Emir's voice went on, and again the other voice interpreted: "Praisers, beggars, singers, women, statesmen with their much talking, cover a man with words, separating him from all manly acts, deafening him with their clamor."

Again the hunter inclined his head, and the voice went on: "So now I seek to escape. The guard will be told that I rest, being wearied with travel, and this man"—the Emir waved to the voice—"will dress in my clothes, lie on my couch, and feign sleep. But I, dressed in his garments will meet you and the dog at the north side of the lake as soon as dusk shall be fallen. Then will I gain freedom from talk and shall hunt as I hunted long ago."

Garram had barely reached the meeting place before the Emir arrived. The borrowed robes had served their purpose in taking him, unrecognized, through the camp. Now, silently, he stripped to dark blue loincloth and thrust the rolled up robe and trousers into a thick bush. Garram found time to notice with admiration his tall form, soft no doubt with city dwelling, but with none of the bulging muscles of the professional strong man. His chest, as he breathed, showed almost the elasticity of youth, his long lean flatness spoke of speed and tirelessness, and his shoulders, but for his height, would have been unduly broad.

Then the young hunter's attention turned to Kon. The dog, nose to ground, had discovered something of interest. Garram, knowing they wished bigger game, signaled to Kon by a faint whistle not to follow bird tracks, and the dog's ears swung back for an instant in answer to the call. Now, as they moved forward following Kon, the light faded quickly, and faint sounds became more and more distinct in the still air. Only the *swish-swish* of the Emir's sandals seemed out of place. He took them off and hung them on his quiver.

"One must not stamp along like a buffalo!" he muttered.

They swung along for what seemed hours, and as the faint moonlight grew, the woods seemed almost more silent than in full darkness. Now and then Garram bent to examine the tracks more closely. One was that of a male *barawa*, apparently alone. The Emir whispered its name in the Fulani tongue, and the boy, intent on the slot, nodded assent without noticing the gleam of interest in the older man's face at his understanding. At last, after a mile or two of tracking, Kon paused and looked up for instructions. The problem was a simple one. A fresher track of a bigger animal had crossed the one they were following. Which did the master want Kon to follow? A sign swung him off the old track on to that of a hartebeeste. Soon the dog paused again. The Emir would have run up, but Garram checked him. Kon was not asking advice this time. Slowly, carefully, harking back so as to make certain, the finely trained nose disentangled the interwoven tracks, and breaking into a confident trot again Kon traced his beast clear of the tangle.

Following the dog's example the two humans moved with greater and greater caution. Soon they were close behind their leader and slowed to a silent, gliding walk. The scent was now strong and easy to follow, Kon could afford to raise his head and moved forward at a slow walk, scanning the bush ahead, again dropping his nose to the trail to make sure. They had come to more open country, the thick scrubby trees were fewer here, and bare ground, studded with tussocks of grass, stretched between.

Suddenly Kon halted. Shapes rising silvery gray from the moonlight stood out in front of them. Heartebeestes! On both sides of them the Emir and Garram could hear the herd moving and grazing.

Swiftly the long war bow of the Emir rose and twanged. Garram slipped an arrow from his muted hunting bow into a shape at his right, and the animal fell as he stood. As it struggled to rise again Garram gave it the final blow with his knife and turned quickly back to help his fellow hunter. But the Emir and Kon had already disappeared.

Garram took up the trail at a swift run. Now that the game had been disturbed there was no virtue in extreme silence. Without pause he sped along the faint tracks in the dim moonlight and had not gone far before the crash of a wounded animal at bay came clearly through the night. He arrived too late to assist. As he came upon the scene Kon swung the animal by one hind leg. It made a half turn, then fell with a thud, and the Emir threw his weight upon the noble head to cut the throat. Cutting, he spoke the prescribed words, which make the meat *halal*—or lawful food for followers of the Prophet.

The Emir, excited and happy as a youth, produced flint and steel and started a fire, while Garram and Kon did the skinning. With growing amazement the Fulani watched the dog keep a steady pull on the hide as the boy eased it away from the underlying tissue with his knife, Kon following directions and pulling now to the right, now to the left. Later, when Garram came to a joint and put down his knife, Kon walked around to his side and passed him the hunting ax, which was used for disjointing.

“Allah! Do my eyes tell me truth?” cried the Emir, stirred from his silent admiration. “Perhaps this great dog also mends your leather and sweeps your hut! Give him the knife and let him finish the skinning, you and I are only in the way!”

Garram looked up from his work and grinned but did not reply. The skinning over, he made long skewers of wood and, running them through slices of the meat, planted them in the ashes of the now clear and smokeless fire.

The young hunter from the Hills, the Emir of proud and ancient lineage, the huge mongrel dog were all equally hungry.

“No sweetmeats of the palace ever tasted so good!” sighed the Emir as he finished the meal. He lay back on his elbow, threw the last greasy skewer into the fire, and sniffed the warm night air. Kon gnawed at a huge bone for dessert. Garram watched the Fulani chief with silent interest.

“Garram, whom men call the Hunter, it is now three moons since you came to the city and to my court. At first when people spake our speech you did not understand. But now, even though you do not speak in return, anger, amusement, satisfaction at the words of others show in your face when you think no one is watching you. Garram the Stranger is no longer a stranger, but understands our speech!”

The boy did not reply, and the elder man went on. “Game that comes too often to strange feeding grounds dies soon, eh? But you, who with this monstrous hound saved my life, should have no fear of *me*.”

The boy had been working with his knife at some morsels of fat still clinging to the hide. He turned now on one elbow toward the Emir. Thinking out his words in the strange Fulani tongue he answered slowly and stiffly: “Most I understand, but little I speak. Talking is not so useful as listening. If I spoke, people would know I also understand. Then they would hide from me things that now they let me hear.”

“And what things do you now hear?” The Emir sat up, his interest increasing.

“Of food, of trade, of crops of the fields, of children, and very often of women—but sometimes, in dark places——”

"Yes, yes, of what? Speak!"

"Of how they will kill you, killing also your heir, the child who cannot yet walk." The hunter waved an explanatory hand in the red firelight. "Therefore I listened, being angry at the thought of the killing of a child. To kill a man is no great harm—though I do not like the killing by a friend and from behind, as they would have done to you had Kon not seen. But to kill the young, whether of animals or of men, is to bring down the wrath of the God Nen—Fertility—and would bring misfortune and blight to the crops. It is unlawful in our Hills and should be so in your Plains!"

Anger and amusement struggled for place in the Emir's mind. He had long suspected that Garram, unknown to those around him, had been picking up the language and much valuable information. Trusting him as perhaps the one really honest man in an intriguing court, the Emir had planned this move to the hunting camp, and the secret midnight hunt, simply for the purpose of getting word with him free from risk of being heard by spies. Now Garram's honest, unflattering views were a trifle embarrassing. To the Emir it was no slight matter if an enemy assassinated him!

Prompted by questions, Garram explained his point.

"Ibrahim was only a misguided fool," he said. "A tool of the plotters. The proof of the real plotters must, however, be established. They are very cunning, but we shall track them down if you will leave it to me and do as I say."

Several times the Emir had to swallow his wrath at the blunt simple speech. The boy seemed more concerned with making the true situation clear and with catching the criminals than with flattering the Emir and concern for his safety. They sat long over the fire, and it was Garram's suggestions, moreover, that won his point. With a twinkle of humor showing in his dark eyes the Emir summed up. "So—if I follow your advice you will catch my enemies. But in payment you ask the pardon of Ibrahim?"

Garram, who had hated all these words, nodded in reply.

"You are a bold youth to make terms with me thus. But so be it! Search out the trails of the conspirators, and good hunting! But now we must return, for dawn is nearly breaking. I will help you with the

meat as far as the place where my clothes are hidden. Thence you must carry it yourself, for my hunting and my talk with you must remain unknown."

# THE ROYAL HUNT



# CHAPTER X
## THE ROYAL HUNT

NEXT day occurred the royal hunt. Garram and Kon found the camp already astir on their return with the meat. Without stopping for sleep they joined the followers and the villagers who had built the camp and were now going to act as beaters. For four hours they walked due south, and then turning spread into a thin line to the west. Keeping their position as well as they could by the sound of their neighbors' shouts and rattling of sticks against tree trunks, they began to beat up the game to the northeast.

For some time there was little to be seen. Here and there small hares, which are always perquisites of beaters, were chased and yelled at, and occasionally killed or caught by mongrel dogs. Then the bigger game, content to be driven a short distance but now getting anxious, tried to break back to their feeding grounds. A band of baboons, barking furiously, used the thick branches of tall trees lining a stream as cover and got safely away. A wild boar charged and overturned a beater without doing him much damage, and a sow and four half-grown pigs followed his lead to safety. Oribi and duiker, small buck not three feet high, took cover in the grass till nearly trodden on, then dashed forward and hid again, and kept repeating the process. Guinea fowl and other game birds sounded warning calls and ran and flew in front of the line of beaters.



Gradually the heat of the day increased; gradually the concentration of game in front of the beaters grew more dense. From time to time mounted followers of the court would ride along the line of beaters, urging forward part of the line, restraining those who were getting too far to the front, so that the cordon should leave no gaps for escaping game.

Garram, to whom the horse was an unknown animal, was thrilled by the ease with which the courtiers swung their mounts as they followed at an easy canter along the tortuous game tracks. The boy's mouth opened wide in admiration as he watched a feeble-looking courtier, whom previously he had rather despised, sit his plunging pony unaware of the movement. Orders delivered, the rider touched his horse's flanks with the shovel-like stirrups which served as spurs,

shot stooping beneath a low branch, and collecting the animal, flipped neatly across the narrow stream. Garram let out a wild war-whoop in applause.

The beaters had now come out into the open plain where the royal party waited. Garram, followed by Kon, wriggled forward for a better view. Worming their way up the water course, they searched for a spot where they could hide from the keepers and be safe from the riders. A giant kuka tree, ten feet across and hollow as a drum, seemed just made for the purpose. By climbing up where the branches separated, it was possible, after making sure the place was free of snakes, to drop down inside. Numerous knot holes made excellent windows for watching the fun, and it was like being in a loopholed tower.

They had scarcely got into position, Kon licking Garram's ear as he was lowered to the ground, when part of the hunt came directly towards them. It was the Emir on a glossy black stallion, but how different he looked from last night!

Now he was dressed as if for full court ceremonial, from his voluminous turban to his high, decorated boots, brilliantly colored robes, and trousers incrusted with embroidery. All these, it seemed to Garram, must make free use of bow and spear impossible. Slowly the chief of the Fulani walked his horse toward some cover on Garram's left. From time to time he rose in his stirrups for a better view. Then, almost at the foot of the kuka tree, a magnificent boar broke cover, swinging to the right, and the horse and rider broke into full gallop in pursuit. From a glimpse of the long tushes as the animal broke, Garram was able to mark it down as an old boar, liable to put up a stiff fight. Then all he could see was its swift wallowing run as it streaked off into the distance. He and Kon almost howled with disappointment.

When at last the horse and rider caught up, the boar, with a swift turn almost directly beneath the horse's hoofs, jinked and swung back on his tracks. This gave the quarry a fresh start, and there was hard riding before the lost ground was made up. Whenever they all but closed on the bristling beast, another swift turn put the hunters again at a disadvantage.

First one stirrup, then the other scraped ground as the well-schooled pony flung himself to right and left, following with sharp turns the wild hog. Gradually the zigzag course brought the chase nearer to the watchers in the tree trunk, and Garram viewed with startled eyes the turns and swings which seemed to leave the rider steady as a rock but little by little decreased the boar's lead. The flash of the Emir's black eyes above his beaky nose was now clearly seen, and the thunder of the hoofs, the grunting of the hunted beast seemed scarcely a yard from the tree.

Then, in the middle of a swift turn, the rider rose in his stirrups to loose an arrow from the longbow. It pierced the galloping quarters of the quarry.

Brought to bay, without pausing, the boar swung around and charged. A quick slash at the forefeet of the pony, not three yards away—with those gleaming tushes. Then the same tushes, red by then, would be able to tear and tear against the soft, defenceless body pinned by the fallen horse.

But the vengeful teeth never drove home.

Slender spear in hand the Emir leaned far out of the saddle to take the shock when the spear should meet the charging boar. In that fraction of a second he stiffened his arm, gripping with knees as if to crush the ribs of his mount. Saddle and girths burst with the shock. The black stallion was forced back on his haunches and, with dilated nostrils and staring eyes, over on his flank.

But the slender spear head, backed by its steel shaft had met the shoulder of the boar, passed through, and down to the heart.

As the dust cleared, man, horse, and boar were seen stretched on the hoof-torn ground, motionless, almost touching. Horse and man rose and shook themselves, but the boar lay dead. Courtiers galloped up, full of solicitude and praise. The Emir glanced carefully over the black stallion to assure himself that he was uninjured, then mounted bareback and cantered off.

Much more Garram saw that day. Including such bad shooting from horseback as made him grateful for the protection of his tree. Nothing after that equaled the impression made upon him by the Emir and his

glossy black stallion. Between those two was an understanding, a combination such as the hunter and Kon had worked out together.

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The next evening, on their journey back to Yelwa, the courtiers and councilors received from the Emir gifts of robes of honor, musk scented, in celebration of the hunting party. But on that robe given to the Waziri was a special musk. Garram had searched long for the certain bush cat from which it came. To the human nose it smelled much as the others did; it would take a dog to tell the difference.

# KON AS DETECTIVE



# CHAPTER XI
## KON AS DETECTIVE

THE courtiers, clad in the robes of honor, were filling the audience chamber with a buzz of conjecture. It was the morning after their return to Yelwa, and the day appointed for the trial of the would-be assassin. A change of plan had moved the place of trial from the door of the mosque to the audience chamber where the attack had first taken place. In chains the prisoner stood, pale and silent, clad still in the garments of the red-robed guard.

The Waziri, sitting on the right of the Emir's vacant throne, signed to the officer in charge of the prisoner to approach. "The man has not been tortured?" Some hidden fear was reflected in the cautious whisper. The soldier looked hard at the Waziri as he replied:

"No."

"He has said nothing more?" The questioner's hands were clasping and unclasping under his robe.

"Have no fear. Ibrahim is a soldier and no courtier." Contempt was in the voice.

"Why should I fear—I? Have a care thou! It is not meet to insult the Grand Vizier of the land." The Waziri's voice held hidden menace, but the soldier had turned on his heel and left.

Trumpets sounded from the inner chambers, announcing that the Emir was on his way. Entering he received the acclamations of the Assembly and made his formal acknowledgments. He took his seat upon the lion skin on the dais and signed to the Waziri. A court crier

announced the descent of the Emir and the virtues of his ancestors, recited the boundaries of the dominion to which he laid claim, then declared the court open.

The prisoner, moving as if in a daze, was brought to the front of the dais. Another crier announced the name of the prisoner, his descent, and the crime with which he stood charged.

"Son of my cousin," the Emir's voice came quietly to Ibrahim, "your crime was seen by all men. But never have I knowingly wronged you or your house. Why, then, did you attempt to kill me?"

No word came from the man awaiting death. The Waziri could be seen leaning forward, whispering urgently in the Emir's ear.

"O Ibrahim, torture would make you speak. But the Waziri counsels that instead your tongue be torn out as punishment. In any event you must die."

One look the condemned man threw toward the Waziri and made as if to speak, then clenched his jaws and was silent. But that look the watchful Emir had intercepted. Blank astonishment, succeeded by pitiful reproach of a false friend was there, as clear as if the prisoner had spoken.

"But if you will tell all—your fellow plotters, your motive for the crime"—oh, very persuasive was the Emir's smooth voice—"then will your death be swift and suited to your noble blood!"

"Lord of our race, and head of our noble house," neither fear nor hesitation were in the clear young voice, "I did not fear to attempt your life. Why should I now fear how you take mine?"

Emir and prisoner confronted each other, each seemingly as hard and fearless as the other, and power lay with the Emir. Dread tenseness grew upon the Assembly. Just, but justly dreaded, had been all his line. All expected some fiendish judgment of torture to be pronounced.

"Since you will not betray your friends, even though your friends betray you...." Slow, catlike, the words stalked, seemingly ready to pounce: "Guard! Strike off the fetters!" Tools rang on the heavy rivets, and manacles and leg irons clanged to the floor.

Freed of his bonds, the prisoner straightened himself proudly before the people. He turned a look almost of gratitude on the man he had tried to kill. Whatever terrible form his death might take, he was to be permitted to face it nobly, and not as a thief loaded with chains lest he run or flinch from the executioner's blade.

A murmur of approval of the Emir's gesture rose from the Assembly, then ceased in puzzled apprehension. Guards with gleaming spears were moving to cover each exit from the hall.

"Fetters! Bring more fetters, for the prisoners will be many," the Emir's command rang out, and guards hastened in search of manacles, leg irons, chains, rope—anything that would serve the instant need.

"Permit, Lord, that I aid the search for fetters, many." Trembling, the Waziri sought pretext to leave the court.

"Nay, do not go!" The Emir laid a gentle restraining hand on his sleeve. "We may need your loyal counsel.... Ha! Then since you will not stay at my request, stay by my command! Guards, seize this false Waziri!"

Heavily, his brown face ashen gray with fright, the Waziri resisted, but was overpowered. Surprise upon surprise had been unfolded, and people gaped their wonderment. Swiftly another surprise followed. The Emir's voice rang again in command: "Ho! Hunter of the Hills, here is the source of the conspiracy. Bring thou thy dog and trace me its course!"

Kon and Garram, who had been awaiting the signal, came to the foot of the divan. The dog's mouth almost dripped with eagerness as he caught the scent of the Waziri's robe of honor. Then, at a whispered instruction from his master he quested among the Assembly. The first man to be pointed out was a soldier of the guard. Before the blank astonishment had faded from his face his comrades had pinioned him.

"Bind him—and him—and him!" ordered the Emir, as Kon, searching among courtiers, guards, and onlookers alike, marked down man after man. So certainly and so surely, missing none, Kon identified the conspirators. Fear and guilt showed upon some even

before the dog approached them. One man was caught too late. The slight delay had sufficed for him to swallow poison. Kon pointed to him even as he writhed in death upon the ground.

Guilty terror was upon the conspirators. And upon all the Assembly was a horror at the uncanny certainty of the procedure. The once proud Waziri, now herded into line like a common prisoner, voiced the feeling: “This thing is of Iblis, of Shaitan the Evil One himself!” the terror-broken voice babbled. “The Devil alone can know all this!”

Kon, his work finished, had made one last tour of the people to make sure he had missed no one. Now with Garram he returned to the side of the divan.

Turning to the row of prisoners, the Emir glanced them over. The Waziri twisted from the restraining hands of the guard and flung himself at the Emir’s feet in supplication. “Have mercy, O Lord!” he cried. “It is true, this crime with which you charge us. Even last night we met together and sought afresh some means to kill you, since our first attempt by the hand of Ibrahim had failed.” Flat upon the ground he groveled, gray beard in the dust. “Death we do not fear. We will tell you all. But, of your mercy, spare us only torture!”

And from the other prisoners came the broken murmur: “Death, for we are guilty, Lord. But spare us only torture!”

At a sign the guard began to lead away the prisoners, readjusting fetters and bonds as they went. Ibrahim, with a look of contempt at the groveling Waziri, who had first persuaded him to attack the Emir and had then left him to his fate, who had even suggested to the Emir the tearing out of the prisoner’s tongue so that he should not reveal his accomplices, turned to go. Death would be easy now! He looked with gratitude on his royal kinsman.

“Guard, leave that prisoner.” The Emir pointed at Ibrahim. “O would-be assassin, you were only the arrow shot from the bow of this evil Waziri who coveted my kingdom. Though he abandoned you and then would have betrayed you, counseling the loss of your tongue for fear you might confess his evil schemes when under torture, still you kept silence.” From the folds of his robe the Emir produced the same jeweled dagger with which Ibrahim had attacked him. With his own hand he returned it to Ibrahim.

Dazedly the prisoner took it. “Well would you have served the Waziri! See that you serve me but half as well. You are free! Go in peace.”

Since the removal of the prisoners the gates had been left unguarded. More and yet more people were crowding into the Council Hall, excitedly whispering inquiries.

The Emir rose as if to depart, then turned back to address the dazed and excited people.

“My people, the sons of my father’s people, here is the end of an intrigue which has been a hidden wound, draining the strength of our country. When the knife struck between my shoulders I knew that the Waziri had been looking, watching that direction from which the attacker came. He neither warned me nor sought to stop the knife, but I could not therefore say, ‘You sent the man to kill!’ Again the Waziri, thinking he spoke to me in secret, advised that the tongue of Ibrahim should be torn out, this to avert the risk that Ibrahim might speak as death approached and so incriminate the Waziri himself. And so”—the Emir drew Garram in honor to the seat vacated by the Waziri—“plotted against by those near me I sought the aid of a true man, though a stranger. It was this hunter who thought of the plan. I gave to the Waziri a robe of honor specially scented, with a scent whereby the dog might recognize all those with whom the Waziri came in contact.

“It was late last evening when we returned from the hunt. In the fresh air the scent of the robe would cling to no chance companions of the robe. This morning the Waziri would be seated on the divan, apart from the people. So those that the dog found with the taint of contact would be those with whom the Waziri plotted overnight—as I knew he would, making last minute plans before this day’s trial. Plans for alibis, even for escape, should the confession of the prisoner Ibrahim make this necessary.

“The conspirators have all confessed, as you have heard. But this I have told you, lest in your folly you should believe the last foolish words of the Waziri, that this strange hunter and his still stranger dog are in league with Shaitan the Evil One. Whereas the only miracle is an honest man who is wise, and a wise dog who has a nose.

"And Allah alone knows which is the scarcer, the more miraculous of these two!"

# GARRAM ACCUSED



# CHAPTER XII
## GARRAM ACCUSED

GARRAM'S face darkened with anger, but he made no reply to his accusers. The scene was in the Emir's audience hall, where he had been called to answer the charge. A long, low room of the universal red mud, supported on squat pillars, each of which had, at building, enclosed a living slave, as was the custom of the country. Its mud floor had been beaten and polished to the texture of black marble by the passing of countless feet. The Emir himself reclined on a dais, the front of which was ornamented with white cowrie shells in an intricate pattern.

In front of the Emir and on his right stood the Liman and Ladan, leaning on their black staves. On the left stood the young hunter, striving to keep back his rising anger.

The Liman had detailed his charge. That Garram was a *kafiri*—an unbeliever, who said no prayers, made no protestation of his belief in the One God whose Prophet is Mohammed, and never attended the mosque on Fridays. That he spent his time with a dog, a thing unclean as declared by the Law of Allah and the Prophet Mohammed.

He had got as far as this when the Emir interrupted. "But being all these things, he and his dog have saved me, the head of the State, from death when others whom you would call true men, since they are true believers, plotted my death!"

"Saved you, but by witchcraft," heatedly the Liman responded.

The Emir smiled wearily. He had explained the method of detection to the Assembly to avoid just such accusations, but in vain. People will always believe what thrills them most, and probably he and Garram

alone of the whole State believed the story.

"And Shaitan the Evil One, who showed the dog and boy, undoubtedly put the crime into the minds of the poor plotters, in order that this boy and dog, the servants of the Evil One, might by the detection of the plot, be exalted among the true believers." In spite of the presence of the Emir, the speaker spat upon the ground to show his hatred of the Evil One and his helpers.

This was indeed distorted and fanatical reasoning, but the Emir looked grave for a moment. The holy man was more learned in such matters than he. The supposition, if true, put another interpretation upon the facts. He looked doubtfully at Garram and Kon. But he was first of all a man, and only second a Mohammedan. Gratitude prevailed over fear, and he again took up the defence.

"Have I priestly water in my veins instead of red blood! What you ask is too hard—that I should abandon those who have helped me even to saving my life and kingdom!"

A vengeful glint appeared in the eyes of the Liman. Garram could see his hands, clawlike as the talons of a bird of prey, clasping and clutching upon his staff. "Why, then, when all true believers sleep, does he depart, this son of the Evil One, to be absent all night? Where does he go, engaged upon his wicked practices, returning only long after the morning sun has risen?" He paused, and the look of surprise on the Emir's face told him this was news. With quick cunning he added, "But Garram, an innocent man, will no doubt have told you all this."

Garram too looked surprised. He had kept in touch with the happenings in his tribe by meeting the messenger from the Rainmaker once a month at the foot of the Hills. But he had done so with caution, traveling by night. This was the first news that his movements had been watched.

The Emir spoke again in defence. "This no doubt is untrue, like all the rest."

"It is the truth," interrupted Garram. "I leave the city and return in the morning. But what I do is not wrong and is no business but my own."

The Emir's look was ominous. Coldly he dismissed the Liman and his follower and turned to Garram, expecting an explanation. But none was forthcoming. Garram, silent and always inclined to keep his own counsel, was angered by the ease with which his friend the Emir had been persuaded to suspect him. Further, it might incriminate Ibrahim the Captain of the Guard, who since his restoration had, out of gratitude, permitted the boy to pass the gates at night.

The Emir, puzzled and so recently reminded how even so trusted a man as the Waziri could turn against him, suspected some sort of treachery in the unaccountable silence. For a while he waited. Then angrily but sadly motioned Garram to withdraw. Flushed in the face and with a feeling of guilt which he knew he did not deserve, the boy went.

At a loss for a plan, he wandered aimlessly about the palace. Then decided to go and consult his new friend, the Captain of the Guard. Particularly on the matter of a pig, a small black pig, a most amusing small black pig. But if these people thought so badly of a man not being of their own religion, and of a dog for being ceremonially impure, what would they think of his pig? For he knew that pigs were still more impure than dogs, according to the Sharia, the Holy Law of Islam. When Garram had first planned the catching of the plotters the Emir had given him some money and with this he had purchased a gift of flint and steel for the old Rainmaker. In return the magician had sent him a present of a small pig, for he knew the boy's taste for meat.

But, unwilling to kill the cheery and playful little beast, Garram had smuggled it into a disused stable which his exploring instinct had discovered in a ramshackle corner of the far-flung palace. Now, as he went his round of the city guard inquiring for Ibrahim, he began to get more and more anxious. These fanatics would consider it a sufficiently grave crime that he had brought the pig within the city. Supposing they discovered it within the Emir's own house?




**Garram smuggled it into a stable**

"If just wandering at night is so grave a crime," thought Garram, "what would they make this look like?"

Finding Ibrahim at length, Garram explained his needs. He was in disgrace, he said, and wanted to get away where he could think out what to do.

“I would have your aid.” The tall black Captain of the Guard smiled at the boy. “Cannot you accompany me?” continued Garram.

Ibrahim both could and would. Garram’s talk of the bush had whetted the young soldier’s appetite for hunting, and Garram’s fame promised something special in that line.

He had some small matter to attend to that night, Garram explained, so they should wait until dawn. This too suited Ibrahim well. He would have to ask permission to be absent from his duties, though this was a mere matter of form.

# MENUD “TROUBLES TROUBLE”



# CHAPTER XIII

## MENUD "TROUBLES TROUBLE"

LATE that night a small figure with a bundle on its back slung itself with swift dexterity up the almost smooth ten-foot wall which encircled the numerous buildings of the Liman's house. A slight pause to reconnoiter, and it dropped noiselessly down on the inside. Clinging like a lizard, Garram, for it was he, worked his way up the wall which formed an angle of the flat-roofed building in front of him. There, hearing the soft thud of footsteps on the sandy road outside, he flattened himself so that his outline should not show against the stars.

Then from building to building he made his way, jumping the dizzy gaps between them and landing with no more noise than the thump of a leaping cat. Lost in the darkness for a time, presently he returned, moving more easily without his burden. Outlined against the stars, he danced exultingly along the ten-foot wall, then flung wide his arms and dropped to the sandy road beneath.

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Ibrahim had had no trouble in getting permission to be absent and at dawn he and Garram met inside the eastern gate of the city. Early as it was, quite a number of citizens, hoe on shoulder and drinking calabash in hand, were waiting for the opening of the gates. It was still cold, and the huddled shapes were standing silently, waiting with African patience for such time as the guard would deign to open the

doors. At Ibrahim's coming, however, beams were lifted out of sockets, chains unhooked, and the great ports, wooden and hinged with leather, creaked and groaned as they were folded back.

Ibrahim and Garram had a long distance to go, so kept to the main road for some time, where traveling was easiest and quickest. The farmers, old and young, began to come out of their torpor as the sun gradually warmed the chill air of morning. Exchanging salutations and wishes for the day, little groups swung off the road into the fields, to clean and burn the rubbish and do such light preliminary hoeing as can be done before the rains soften the iron soil and allow proper tilling.

Like a river being traced to its source, the wide shady road gradually narrowed and became more choked with elephant grass. Presently it became only a single-file track.

This was the first time that the two had gone on an expedition together, and they eyed each other's arms with interest. Like hunters all the world over, there was some disapproval in the glance. The beautiful long war bow carried by the Fulani would drive an arrow through all but the largest game and would give twice the range that Garram's stiff short bow would. But Garram noted how cumbersome its length would be in the thick bush and marveled that its string should be unprovided with that little tuft of cotton which silences the twang of the release.

Ibrahim also had the heavy war quiver which holds from fifty to a hundred poisoned arrows. Excellent no doubt for battle, as were the broad-bladed arrows called *pasa* which he carried. These were mixed with the more usual plain points called *isiko*. But Garram carried less than a dozen arrows, and even those were divided between two separate quivers so that, if some were lost or shot or broken, the others would not have room to rattle or to warp out of shape. And in hunting, game does not stand while one shoots arrow after arrow at it. Large quiverfuls savored to Garram of military pose and conceit.

As the road petered out into a bush track the two broke into a trot, the light hunting axes and throwing sticks thumping on their shoulders, their knives slapping against the leather loin cloth that

each wore. Kon, the serious occupation of the day not yet commenced, bounded alongside them like a frolicsome calf.

Near the city the ground had been of hard, sun-baked red clay with deep sand in the hollows. Gradually the sand became less. The trees, too, changed. Near the city generations of farmers had kept the ground clear of grass and smaller trees, leaving only here and there one big shade tree. Gradually the growth became smaller, stunted and gnarled by the annual bush fires, and with impenetrable thickets of thorns and tall elephant grass. Slowing down to a fast walk, mostly for Ibrahim, who, though strong, had not the endurance of the boy from the Hills, they continued to cover the ground until the sun was nearly overhead.

After a pause for a drink from the stream which flowed at the base of an isolated rocky hill, Garram signed that they should swing off up the rock. As they scrambled up the steep way, Garram leaping and balancing, Ibrahim using hands and knees, little black rock partridges retreated with much bobbing of tails, and at the top a family of baboons seemed inclined to resent their invasion, but finally, with much barking, dropped over a ledge and went swinging heavily through the trees to the plain below.

Seated in the shade of a twisted tree which grew out of a cleft in the bare rock, Garram outlined his story. Ibrahim sat silent, his bare toes playing with a loop of the bowstring which hung from the end of his bow. Garram's eyes were fixed on a range of hills showing blue in the eastern distance.

"And so—if I go back to my Hills," nodding in the direction of his eyes, "perhaps Warok, my father, will die, and I also. But if I stay there," nodding his head backward in the direction of the now invisible Fulani city, "I think I shall die too, for such seems to be the meaning of that old man, the Liman, with his talk and his hate."

"You seek my counsel? Whether to go or to stay?"

"Yes, I can weigh and judge the one matter, for I know the minds of my people of the Hills. But the people of the Plains and of the city are strange game in a strange country, whose customs I do not know and whose track I cannot read."

Garram, his story told, lay at ease, running his finger up and down a crack in the rock. A frown of perplexity appeared on Ibrahim's face, and his toes ceased playing with the bowstring. Presently he spoke: "What you have done is of small account. Perhaps they might thrust you out of the city, but no more. For many of the state, country dwellers, are unbelievers, even as yourself, and it is no crime. It is not your acts but the poison that the Liman may spread over them that is to be feared."

There was a pause. A rock rabbit came round a ledge of rock, stopped to consider them, and then fled, squawking alarm.

"Had you told me of this before we left the city I could have sought the opinion of others. Those skilled in words led me to attempt the life of a friend of my father, the Emir. Words are a weapon in which I have no skill. But let us hunt. And while we hunt I will think, and in the end give you such counsel as I can."

Kon, very bored, had disappeared downhill. As if thought-reading, he now reappeared, his coat dripping from a bath in the stream. His vigorous shake filled the air with spray which, in the bright hot sunlight, made a rainbow of mist. The dousing also brought Ibrahim and Garram to their feet. As the latter, grinning, made a dive to pull Kon's tail, the dog went bounding down the eastern slope of the hill, and the hunting party set off again.

They killed an oribi which broke from its thick midday sun cover only as they almost stepped on it, was transfixed by an arrow from the Fulani's powerful bow, cooked in slivers before a fire, and with Kon's noteworthy assistance, was almost completely consumed.

Resuming their rapid travel toward the ever distant hills, they watched them recede into the shimmering haze as if outdistancing them. This was the worst part of the day, when everything more than a few yards away from them danced in the heat, and in spite of the dryness, streams of perspiration rolled down their shiny brown backs.

No animals except humans face the blaze of the tropical afternoon. Everything was silent except for the creak or rustle of an occasional twig or leaf, twisted and tortured by the heat. Even Kon moved without spring or bound, as if economizing his energy to the utmost.

Ibrahim, accustomed to the coolness of dwellings with six-foot thickness of walls, suffered most, but Garram suffered too, for he was more used to the freshness of the Hills than to this sweltering air.

Then gradually the shimmering heat seemed to become less. What more natural when the afternoon was drawing on, but what more difficult to believe at the end of a hard afternoon? To the two hunters it seemed almost too good to be true.

In another half mile of travel the Hills were coming out of the blur and seemed actually to be advancing to meet them. The pass, down which Garram had come on his first visit to the city and at the foot of which he had met the Rainmaker's messenger each moon, now became clearly visible. Kon's level trot became more lively and occasionally he snapped at a fly or stopped in his stride to investigate a scent.

A gentle breeze, like a cooling drink, arose, and soon they were traveling through the cool of the evening, chatting comfortably as they went. Arriving at the foot of the Hills as dusk began to fall, they discovered good water, made a meal on the remainder of the oribi, and before night fell were all asleep.

They started again before midnight, and the bare granite mountains looked more impressive than ever by moonlight. But it was long after dawn, and the sun had commenced to get hot, before they had their first sight of the klipspringer, the quarry for which they had come so far. In habits it is the West African equivalent to the chamois or the Barbary sheep; consequently, it was not surprising that their first sight of it was only of a head looking down at them from a ledge of rock on the other side of a precipitous gorge and well out of bowshot. Ibrahim, when it was pointed out to him, had to look hard before he could see it. In this strange rocky country which was all ups and downs, nothing seemed recognizable to him and all distances and sizes were deceptive.




**Boulder after boulder crashed down**

Ibrahim poked his tender feet with an exploring finger and swore gently to himself as Garram dilated on the special importance of the animal. Smaller than a native goat, and with a papery sort of hair that comes out in tufts at the slightest touch, it was able, perhaps because of the very stiff upright hoofs, to leap down from incredible heights and to keep its footing on the steepest, smoothest rock.

Garram badly wanted new bowstrings, and the hide of no other animal, nor even catgut, can approach carefully twisted lengths of this skin for smoothness and strength. Unfortunately the klipspringer only frequents broken hillsides where the eddying breeze brings to it the scent of possible pursuers from almost any direction. Hillsides too are almost bare of cover to assist the stalker.

Ibrahim swore again, but more audibly this time. He would willingly leave the precious bowstrings to someone else and not hunt in land that had been lifted up and left standing on edge. But the end of his remarks was lost. Garram had been studying the hillside carefully and had marked out what seemed a possible line of approach. Grumbling, but more in amusement than ill humor, Ibrahim followed, feet and hands fully occupied in keeping him from sliding down the jumble of broken rocks into the valley beneath.

Suddenly Ibrahim was swept off his feet by a sliding rock. Garram, with a warning shout, leaped to a ledge under an overhanging cliff. Boulder after boulder was crashing down from above them, leaping, bounding, and shivering into fragments that disappeared over the cliff to explode on the massive rocks below. Ibrahim, with two fractured ankles, lost consciousness and lay limply across a heap of stones, his bow fallen somewhere in the valley beneath.

So swiftly had the attack come that Garram had been taken completely by surprise. As if satisfied now, the stones seemed to stop rolling down toward where the young Fulani lay moaning, but still poured in a torrent over where Garram lay crouched.

# A NOVEL PUNISHMENT



# CHAPTER XIV
## A NOVEL PUNISHMENT

A VOICE, that of Menud, came mockingly from above! As the roar of falling rocks lessened, the words became audible:

"Oho, Garram the independent, Garram the skilled hunter, now is your end! If you move or try even to rise high enough to put an arrow to bow, a rock will split you, or pulp you as a lizard's egg is smashed when a house falls. Can you hear me, or are you too frightened to find speech?"

Garram chanced a swift glance over the top of his cover, but had barely time to duck back again, to dodge a swiftly sliding rock. It would have sliced off the top of his head as if it had been an egg.

Then the voice began again. "While my friends keep you penned with sliding rocks, while you tremble with fear, I will work round to this spur which looks into your little home from the side. Then I will fill you with arrows as one fills a target! Is not the plan good?"

Garram trembled, but with powerless rage, not fear. Above and to the side boulders started to slide and bang their way in increasing numbers, making it impossible for him to get out. Below him there was nothing but an almost straight drop into the steep valley. The little cleft in the hillside, rather like an eye socket, had him penned in. Only by bending down almost double did the brow of the socket save him from hurtling rocks, and even so his back was bleeding from splinters of the granite.

There was a sound as of the snapping of fingers and the first arrow struck the rock by the crouching boy. Even as it struck, Garram noticed a possible means of escape. Risky to the limit of risk, but

better than certain death by poisoned arrows. It was a slight flaw in the rock-face below him, just enough to allow finger and toe to wedge themselves in and give him a chance to reach the bottom.

Then, with almost a groan, he abandoned the one way back to life. In his peril he had forgotten Ibrahim, lying there, unable to move. If the Fulani got into the hands of Menud, he would probably pray for death long before death took him!

More arrows struck, shivering on the face of the rock. Then Garram sprang suddenly to full height, one hand pulling at the end of an arrow which stuck out of his side, the other vainly scrabbling at the rock. With a scream he fell, wriggled and twisted till one arm lay over the edge of the ledge and the body seemed ready to plunge down. A kick and a twist seemed almost to push it off, then another brought it back again, the hand still desperately grasping the protruding arrow shaft; then, with a final squirm, it lay still.



No more arrows fell, and presently the hail of rocks stopped roaring down the face of the cliff. Menud sprang forth into the open and clambered down the ledge. For a moment he stood, eyes fixed on the motionless body. Picking up a small stone, he threw it with all his force. It struck the twisted shape with a thud, but the body did not twitch.

"Good, so the rat is at last dead!" he cried, and signing to his followers to approach, the overgrown loutish leader let himself down over the socket of the ledge, cautiously moving forward. Digging the motionless figure in the ribs with his toe, hand on knife as a precaution, he then bent down to examine more closely the staring open eyes of the flung-back head.

Then of a sudden he felt a hand at his throat, and a poisoned arrow head was within an inch of his eye. Menud flung up his arms in an instinctive movement to release the hand at his neck, then froze at the menace that faced him. A quiet voice remarked, "Not so hurriedly, Menud! You should have waited longer, perhaps another forty years, to have found me dead." And Garram, with one hand disarming him, threw knife and weapons clattering over the edge, keeping Menud's bow only long enough to cut loose the bowstring. And all the while the stump of poisoned arrow was within an inch of his enemy's eye.

"And now you can order back your pack of imitation murderers while I make *my* arrangements!"

Menud shivered. Terrible death was his alternative. With teeth and one hand Garram tied the arms of his enemy behind him, the dread arrow holding him in agonized fear. As they emerged from the shelter of the ledge into the view of Menud's followers, the latter looked for an order from their leader. Then, realizing that something was amiss, they charged down the slippery face of the rock only to pull up with a moan of horror as they realized their position.

Garram beckoned them to approach, and the party moved toward Ibrahim. The grotesque angles of his twisted legs made the poor Fulani look very terrible, but Garram had had the usual experiences with hunting accidents, his own and others', and knew that this was not serious.

"A litter of boughs, and if it is not brought immediately you die!" Menud's followers did not need the confirmation of the order from their leader, but scattered quickly; and before Garram had made a preliminary examination of Ibrahim's injuries, they were back, breathless and scratched and still trimming the boughs with their knives as they ran.

The youths had obeyed Menud's orders, since he had made himself by sheer physical strength their leader, but his intolerable conceit and folly made him no popular figure. As much out of friendship to Garram as to save Menud, they now set about making what preparations they could for the wounded Captain of the Guard, resetting the legs with splints and a skilful padding of leaves tight bound with bowstrings.

Then an awful thought struck Garram. Where was Kon? None knew. Since the first fall of rock no one had seen him. He would not have run away, so the hideous truth became clear. A rock must have swept him over the precipice! Dragging the terrified Menud, Garram sought along the brink, calling as he went. But there was no answer.

The bulging face of the rock prevented the boy's seeing into the valley beneath, but there was no sign of the dog clinging to any of the sparse tufts of bush and grass which clung here and there to crevices. And there would have been no way of getting him up or down the almost sheer face, even if he had thus been saved by a miracle.

Garram's grip on Menud's throat tightened till he whined for mercy. Gone was the almost mocking manner with which the young hunter had faced his own and Ibrahim's predicament.

"One dog of mine you caused to die. If Kon too is dead—no, you will not die—only your eyes—and nose—and ears will be taken from you—with a clean knife, so that you will live many years to remember!"

One party moved off, carrying Ibrahim slowly and carefully on the improvised litter, a man on each side fanning the still unconscious patient with boughs to keep off the plague of flies. Garram and Menud and a search party sought a way down to the valley where Kon must lie. Twice, with difficulty, they were forced to retrace their steps, faced

with the sheer drop in front of them. Then, as they tried again, Garram's face settled into grim and yet grimmer lines, a cold nose was thrust into his hand from behind.

It was the dog, who had found another way up. Kon, gashed by the treetops into which he must have fallen, feet almost raw from his scrabbling efforts to save himself as he slipped down and down the precipice, but thrilled at his adventure and grinning his happiness at being back again.

The gentle hands of the young hunter searched anxiously for broken bones or other hidden harm. But none could be found, and it was a relieved and almost joyous party that hurried to overtake Ibrahim.

All through that day and the next day they traveled almost without halt or food, Kon seemingly recovered after a bath in the stream at the foot of the hill. At noon the next day the surprising procession passed through the gates and into the city of Yelwa, leaving Ibrahim in the care of his relatives.

The next evening the Captain of the Guard had recovered sufficiently to be carried on a door to see a sight which Garram said might amuse him. Garram had hired a dye pit for the day. The dye pit is a cylinder-shaped hole in the ground, lined with native cement. Into this hole clothes to be dyed are put to soak in a noxious smelling mixture of rotting indigo.

Round the mouth of this particular dye pit Kon was circling, barking with glee at something within. Ibrahim, on being carried to the brink, raised himself slightly to see what was going on, then lay back, the better to give vent to the laughter which was choking him. For in the pit, unarmed and unbound, stood Menud, gradually absorbing a richer and ever more lasting stain of indigo.

When he would have raised himself at one side of the pit, Kon circled after him and met the upturned face and gripping fingers with pawings and playful snaps of the powerful jaws, which caused Menud to drop back each time with a juicy plop into the rich mixture below. This had been going on all day, and with Kon on duty to see that the sentence was carried out, continued till nightfall, much to the amusement of the whole market, who came to jeer and to point.

After a day's soaking in the warm mush and a night's drying to make the dye more lasting, Menud was judged fit to proceed. The next day he, a villain of the deepest dye, and his followers left the city for the Hills again, Menud vowing vengeance as he went.

# A PIGLET ACTS FOR GARRAM



# CHAPTER XV
## A PIGLET ACTS FOR GARRAM

THE Liman wagged a skinny forefinger under the nose of Goshi, the stout trader. "Since he brought us both to shame, it is we who should bring this heretic Garram to account."

Goshi, made tolerant, perhaps, by his girth and his wealth, looked round the dimly lighted room as if in search of an excuse and did not seem to notice the wagging forefinger. The little earthenware saucer with cotton wick and vegetable oil, which served as a flickering lamp, occupied his attention for lack of anything more thrilling in the small bare hut with its rough mud walls and its flat ceiling which barely cleared his head as he stood.

"It is for this purpose that I summoned you," the harsh, weak voice of the Liman continued; "for, though it is the duty of all good Mohammedans of the city to punish such *kafurchi* [heathenness]"—he almost spat the word—"with death, yet the softness of this generation is such that no longer can we stone infidels to death publicly or convert them at the point of the sword."




**It was like a snake, swaying**

Goshi's attention had been caught by the black shadows of the Liman's arm sawing up and down the wall. It was like a venomous snake swaying, about to strike. The trader's round face showed its disgust. If he could have caught Garram in that headlong pursuit in the market place, he would have given him, weapons or no weapons, a detailed and most effective spanking. For the trader was as brave as

he was fat. But that was more than three months ago. His only feeling now was a poignant regret that he had arrived a moment or so too late to witness the Liman's own discomfiture. He grunted vaguely in reply.

The Liman's cracked and excited voice went on. "We wait now only for the Ladan and two friends who can be trusted. Then I will unfold my plan. We must act quickly, for each moon sees Garram, this child of the Devil, more firmly established with the people and in deeper favor with the Emir himself."

Goshi looked at the matting covered door as if considering a way out. The exhibition of hate made by the skinny old religious enthusiast was not to his taste. But his dislike of underhand deals made him wait. If he knew the plan, he might later be of assistance to the mischievous young hunter, whom he had grown rather to admire. To free himself from the obsession of that shadowy snake he took the lamp from the niche in the wall and set it on the black polished floor.

Then, with whispered greeting and sidelong glances the three remaining conspirators entered. In this half-ruined hut, in the corner of the Liman's compound, they still appeared fearful of being overheard.

As the Liman's voice again sawed away in exhortation Goshi's attention wandered. He could have sworn he heard the flat roof of mud and timber creak as if under a footstep. Then there was a small sound like the leap of a heavy cat onto a neighboring roof. In a pause in the harangue a faint scuffle outside came to his ears, and a muffled squeal which puzzled him. Could there be a small pig, such as he had sometimes seen in his travels, in this town?

"Three days ago I spoke with the Emir himself concerning this same Garram and his evil ways, his levity, and his lack of true belief in Allah. The Emir was nearly persuaded by me. But when later this child of the Devil went away, the Father of our People sent for me and called me many evil names, saying I had driven away this boy who had become to him as a son. Alas that the Father of our country should call a heretic and unbeliever 'Son'!" The vengeful bigot paused for effect.

"And now that he has returned safe, and bringing with him Ibrahim, whom he saved from death, not only people of the market place and common people, but even courtiers and nobles of the land call a blessing on him when he passes."

Goshi was still but vaguely attending, waiting for the time when the real plot should be unfolded. The gentle thud as of a leaping cat was approaching again. He could hear the roof give a faint creak.

"Shaitan the Evil One," the Liman was haranguing away, "Shaitan aids Garram, the son of Shaitan, for does not the Devil always help his own? Shaitan——" With a crash the roof opened and a small black shape fell with a gentle bump among the conspirators, overturning and extinguishing the lamp. Overhead a boy's leg scrambled wildly for a foothold in the hole in the roof, pulled itself up. A gentle thud told that the owner of the leg had alighted safely on the ground outside the hut. In the darkness Goshi grinned. He had recognized Garram's foot just as the light went out. But he alone had seen.

The room was in plain panic. Something small but terrible was circling the hut at an increasing pace, ever and anon encountering a pair of thin religious shanks. Then the owners of the shanks, without time even to commend themselves to Allah and his Prophet, sat down with a vigor that persuaded the small piglet that this was their way of trying to catch him.

Terror of this unknown thing circling in the dark upon the ground forced the Liman and his friends to their feet as rapidly as possible after each fall. Goshi, who alone realized the situation, lay still where he had fallen—as still as his rocking laughter would permit.

Determined not to be caught by these people who seemed trying to sit on him, the small pig increased his speed and the plotters had barely time to scramble to their feet before being felled again. Breathless invocations ceased, as no breath remained to the plotters. The only sounds were Goshi's demoniacal laughter out of the darkness and the continual thud-thud of falling bodies.

Goshi, after a short time, could not have risen. Weak with laughter he groveled. First the feet of the piglet, passing over him, tickled him in the ribs. Then, as the small beast put more into it to increase his speed, the hoofs seemed to nudge him in the side, as if asking him to

share in the joke. There was a yell of terror as the conspirators found what they took to be another and unexpected devil added to the first one. But it was only the same small pig seeking variety by turning to go round in the opposite direction.

One of the men made a temporary escape by seeking to hang from a roof beam. This had much to commend it. Unfortunately he let go again just as another had been bowled over beneath him. The Liman, by the voice, was the lower one, and feeling the weight of something still heavier dropping from the sky and the darkness robbed him of what little of his wits remained. Partly running, partly on all fours, he began to circle the hut, terror lending him marvelous speed.

His gasping yells sounded scarcely human to the other conspirators, and this final addition to the pig's solo procession turned an excellent imitation madhouse into a realistic pandemonium. No longer were the evil spirits content with cleanly felling them and permitting them to rise again. Now when they fell, a second mass, even more terrifying, would fall upon them, strike them evilly with thin, flail-like limbs, and seem about to devour them as it gobbled wildly. It was only the Liman striving to surmount obstructions in his path, whooping and mewing as he sought breath and words for his feelings.



Then, to the fat trader's keen regret, the small black pig found the doorway with its light matting cover and disappeared as suddenly as he had come. To the trader's ears came the sound of a scuffle, as Garram, waiting outside the door for his pet, caught him and went his way. Gradually the disturbance in the hut died down, till only Goshi's shaking sobs of laughter broke the silence. But even the best conspirators need breath to conspire properly. The weakness of the plotters, and their fear of the devil which they believed they had invoked, made further mischief that night improbable. Goshi found his way through the door which only darkness and blind terror had

hidden before. The four conspirators tried to get through it together, jammed, but one by one followed him to the edge of the Liman's compound, where they parted.

Goshi weakly zigzagged his way through the deserted market place, pausing, from time to time, to the scandal of the lean scavenging dogs, as hooting, snorting laughter caught him anew. "Wallahi! What an event!" he leaned up against a stall and informed a cat and two dogs. "How can I tell the story properly on the morrow when I heard only sounds and could not see the faces of the pious as they played on the ground with a piglet and to amuse it hung like bats from the roofing?"

His voice, worn to a whisper with much laughing, had a determined ring to it. "But justice shall be done to the story, though I perjure myself and swear to blue flames of hell or bright moonlight through the roof. Better the latter, since the Liman will have put the hell flames into his own story."

He wove homeward through the night.

# A STORY OF STORIES



# CHAPTER XVI
## A STORY OF STORIES

THE Liman timed his arrival carefully and entered the court as the Emir dismissed the last of his public duties and was turning to such lesser matters as might, according to custom, be laid before him. A few requests, of no great importance, were dealt with, and then the Liman limped forward and demanded attention. “Lord, is it permitted that again I speak of this infidel, this Son of Shaitan, Garram the hunter?”

Without waiting, he plunged into the detail of Garram’s crimes, that he was an unbeliever, a consorter with dogs, and who knew what other things unclean and held accursed in Islam. That he was sent by Shaitan himself to harm the true faith and the true believers.

Patiently the Emir listened, though he had heard all this before. Then his attention deepened. The Liman was recounting his adventures of the night before. Five true believers had, it appeared, merely been speaking of Garram and Shaitan—whose name be accursed—when a devil had been conjured up, or down, he did not seem certain which. With a wealth of detail, including the flames which Goshi had foreseen, he pictured the scene. The number of devils had increased in the telling, though they still remained black. Black indeed, and very big and terrifying. How they could all get into the room together was the greatest mystery of all. But the three other plotters, present, by arrangement, among the audience, were appealed to for corroboration on one point and another and were unanimous in confirming the truth of the Liman’s account. On some points they enlarged.

A surprised and puzzled Emir tried by means of questions to find solid ground in this fantastic story. The witnesses were men of considerable religious standing, who would not, whatever their motives, conspire to invent this adventure. Yet it was all very incredible. His bewilderment was reflected in the faces of some of his courtiers. Though many seemed laboring under some other emotion, breathing heavily, nudging each other, even hiding their faces in their wide sleeves, while their shoulders shook and heaved.

With swirling phrases and much learned quotation from the Koran and the Traditions, the Liman demanded the death of the heretic Garram, he who was so clearly in league with the Powers of Evil. Death, without alternative, was the punishment enjoined by the Sharia—the Holy Law of Islam—and this not even the Emir himself had power to vary.

Garram alone stood unmoved by the speech. His right hand, which had swung to his knife hilt, was now gently scratching Kon's ear. The Liman's harsh voice rose almost to a scream of hatred as he pressed the charge. Then an interruption occurred in court.

It was Goshi, who with puffed out cheeks was trying to make his way to the doorway before laughter should overcome him. But with a gurgle and a pop it burst forth.

As one loose stone may start a hillside sliding, so his shout of laughter let loose the pent-up mirth of those who had heard his version of the Liman's story and had been hugging the joke with ever increasing strain. To be able to make devils and flames out of piglets and bumped noses! Allah! What a salesman was lost in the Liman when he took to the religious life!

Angered by the disrespectful hubbub, the Emir enjoined silence. "A madman comes to me with stories of devils, yea, devils, in this our city of Yelwa. Then greater madmen laugh in my face in full court! Fools!" he stormed. "What is the meaning of this? Say, before I have you beaten by the guard!"

Pushed forward by many hands, Goshi began to speak, his voice quavering, his eyes damp with laughter. "Lord, what is my knowledge compared with the wisdom of these holy men? But I was with them last night when they planned the downfall of this young hunter. And

indeed I saw no devils and no flames. Their devil, perhaps, was the small piglet with which they played. Their play was to me a surprise, but who was I to know the customs of holy men?" The look of childlike innocence on the stout trader's face was the cause of some weakly silenced guffaws among the crowd, and several figures made a bolt for the door. He paused, as his voice was getting tremulous again, and Garram stepped forward.

"That piglet was mine, which unfortunately fell through the roof as I was bringing it home. It did no harm, and without doubt thought they wished to play." Garram, his ingenuous explanation ended, stood, scratching one leg with the other foot.

"A piglet that wanted to play with the Liman, or a Liman that wanted to play with a piglet?" The Emir's look of anger gave way to one of curiosity. He leaned forward as he spoke. "What talk is this? Do thou, Goshi, tell me your story first; then perhaps will come some measure of enlightenment!"

Willingly Goshi took up his story. No market was dull where Goshi was, and this was a story of stories. Certainly it lost nothing in the telling. Again and yet again the guard had to quiet the court so that the Emir might not miss a point. By the time the trader had described how the feet of the scurrying pig had tickled his ribs each time it passed him, twisting in laughter on the floor, the Liman and his witnesses had slunk from the court.

When he reached the description—purely imaginative, for it had been too dark to see—of the expression on the holy faces, the thin shanks waving in the air, as their owners were bowled over, picked themselves up, and were bowled over again and again, noisy and uncontrolled merriment drowned the rest of the story for anyone but the Emir. Which was a pity, for probably his best bit was his picture of the man hanging—according to Goshi—by his feet from the roofing, invoking, "Shehu! Shehu!" in a thin batlike squeak before he let go his hold and plunged headforemost into the Liman's meager center section.

The story at last ended (and with what wealth of embroidery!), the Emir turned weakly to Garram. "Though the humiliation of those men was well deserved, take heed! Only two men do as you have done

safely, a Waziri or a Wawa. Because of your wisdom I might make you my Waziri—my Vizier—or for your jokes I might make you the Wawa —the Court Jester. The one has power and the other license, so both are safe."

At the sound of the Emir's voice silence fell again upon the Assembly. "But,"—the Emir emphasized the word—"because of your jokes you cannot be Vizier, and because of your wisdom you cannot be Jester. Now for your services choose some requital, ask some gift that I may bestow, some favor that I may grant!"

Garram transferred his weight to the other leg and with the toe of the disengaged foot scratched himself and sought for words. Then: "Freely I came to your city of Yelwa, O Father of the Plainlands, and freely I would return to my Hills with my dog, my weapons, and my new piglet." He had not the gift of words, and more scratching of his leg seemed needed before he went on. Something in his manner made a hush fall upon the people, who had begun to whisper comment. "Though no message has come to me, all to-day I have known that I must go back to my Hills. This I cannot explain, but I think it is my father who is in danger and whose spirit is calling to mine."

"Boy in years and man in ways, I think I understand you." The Emir's voice had in it sadness, disappointment, and Goshi and others nodded in sympathy. Many would be sorry at his departure. "If your father is in danger I would offer you armed men to assist, but I fear they would only hinder." Garram nodded in reply. "I would offer you rule over a province if it would make you stay—but I know that it would not." The Emir rose to his full height to signify that the audience was ended.

"If some day you need riches, armed force, or power, remember that I, the Emir of the Plains, am your friend. Remember further that I am a just man who would pay his debts to you for your many services. In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful, the audience is ended. Go in peace!"

# A GHOST LEOPARD



# CHAPTER XVII
## A GHOST LEOPARD

AN HOUR after the audience had ended Garram was already on his way out of the city of Yelwa by its eastern gate. Three months ago, or very little more, he had entered by the same gate, warily, almost furtively, into a strange and probably hostile town. Now people—more people than he thought could have known him—pressed forward with farewells, with food for him, and other small provision for the road. Some, and among these was Goshi, wanted to present him with swords, slaves, and even horses. If he had accepted, he would have had a small fortune, as fortunes went in those parts. Reluctantly he thanked the people, but returned their gifts, for hard travel, and he knew not what else, lay in front of him, where such luxuries would be only encumbrances.

Two things, however, he could not resist, and he now carried them over his shoulder, his arms fully occupied with the struggling piglet. One was a coat of finest chain mail, such as used to find their way across the Sahara and may even have seen the fighting of the Crusades. It was light, as armor goes, and the small interlaced steel rings rippled almost like silk when the coat was worn. It had been handed down by the Emir's ancestors and was indeed a royal gift. The other present, which Goshi had given, was a leaf-headed spear with long and slender damascened iron shaft all made in one piece. Though designed for mounted use, it was of such fine workmanship that it was little heavier than a stout hill spear, and its balance in the hand was a delight.

Kon careered wildly ahead as soon as they were outside the city walls. Thrilled at the release from the tame life at court, he snuffled at everything with a wriggling and inquiring nose, bounced back, and made a playful snap at the corkscrew tail of the pig, then galloped off ahead once more. But the boy traveled intent upon making good time, and for once taking no notice of the things around him. Something from the Hills, almost an audible voice, seemed to be calling. “Come!” it said. “Come! Hasten!”

Though starting late in the day and cumbered with the pig, Garram reached the foot of the Hills before dark. There, as he had somehow expected, a boy with a message from the Rainmaker was waiting for him.

“The Rainmaker told me to meet you here and said you would be expecting me.” Garram would have made inquiries, but hastily, so as not to forget it, the small boy went on with his message: “The Rainmaker says, ‘Come! For Warok your father is lying in a hut bound and under guard. The elders who listen to the evil counsel of Sura and Menud wish him deposed from his chieftainship and, for their own safety, killed!’”

Now Garram understood the feeling that he had had all the day, urging him as if with a voice to leave the city and go to the Hills. For the old Rainmaker had practised sending him messages in this mysterious way, sometimes when they were sitting together, sometimes from a different hut or even different village. Sometimes he even got messages from the Rainmaker when hunting. It had been only an amusing game in those days, with a thrill of mystery about it. Now the advantage of it became obvious.

“Where is Warok lying?” Garram asked. No great talker, his questions were to the point and swift.

“In his own hut, but guarded by Menud’s own followers. The friends of your father dare not help him, for each is afraid to act without the others, and they have no leader.” The messenger would have gone off into a dramatic recital of events, but Garram had no time to waste.

“With what crime have they charged my father, what injustice to the tribe? For they dare not say they do this out of hatred.” Holding the piglet under one arm, Garram was impatiently pricking the ground

with his spear point.

The young messenger hesitated before replying. “O Garram the Hunter, do not be angry at this which I tell you. But they say that you showed the secret passes of the Hills to the Fulani whom we fear. And more—that this you did by orders of Warok himself! Also they say that Menud and his followers surprised you in the act and would have brought you back for trial, but a large body of the enemy released you and captured them, taking them even as far as the great city of the plains. And they speak of the city, describing it in such manner that all may know their story is true.”

Garram writhed at the ease with which Menud the Talker with a few easy lies had turned the tables on him. But that story did not account for their being back in the Hills, nor for Menud being stained a deep and indelible blue. Swift question elicited the simple explanation from the messenger.

“Menud the Wily, they say, escaped first and, staining himself blue, came back as a returned spirit of the dead, so scaring the guard that the escape of the rest of the band was easy.”

Garram acknowledged the ingenuity of the lie with a grim smile. The Rainmaker’s envoy went on: “And this we know must be true, for the color is not yet off his skin, and all men seeing him must believe his story.”

Angrily Garram turned with the younger boy toward the Hills. As they went, in as few words as possible he outlined the true story. Darkness had been falling as they spoke, and as the night was moonless, there should be little fear of their being seen by spies of Menud. For still greater precaution they took a difficult path known only to Garram, and avoided the main pass into the Hills.

After an hour’s traveling their short but difficult route cut across the main track. Garram showed the messenger his way. He himself would take another short cut. “Take then this true account that I have told you to the Rainmaker, that hearing he may know. Also, this small and very light piglet you will take to him. For he will recognize it and so know that the story like the piglet comes from me.” And with a grin of relief, unseen in the darkness, the young hunter passed over his awkward, kicking burden.

The messenger would have protested. Carrying struggling pigs, even small ones, along a dark and broken rocky path was not a habit of his. But Garram sent him firmly upon his way.

"Child! Idiot!" His voice sounded very stern to the younger boy. "The Rainmaker will expect some sign from me to show that you have done his bidding. Otherwise and without doubt he will beat you and say your tale is a lie. This is the only token I will give you, so be content with the pig that saves you a beating."

Grumbling, the messenger took his way. For a moment Garram stood considering the short cut, then changed his mind. Probably he would save time by the main route, which, though longer, was far easier. Time was so important that the extra risk must be taken. Within a few moments he was back on the main track, after a swift detour which cut in, in front of the Rainmaker's envoy. Garram thought of the awkward burden he had so easily transferred and chuckled. Then he arranged his weapons so that they would not rattle and gave himself up to swift and silent travel.

This extreme silence and Kon's keen ears and nose lessened any risk of capture. Several times they stepped swiftly from the path and crouched while something, perhaps beast, perhaps man, passed within a few yards of them on their windward side. These halts served also as a well-earned rest. The two were moving at a swift lope, no easy task over a dark rocky path and in that high mountain air which starves the lungs.

To Kon darkness mattered little. His nose kept him as fully informed of his surroundings as his eyes could have done in daylight, and even Garram picked out many scents on the still night air. The inhabitants of the villages which he passed had long since gone to bed, so it was too late for the sweet savor of the evening cooking, but the smoke of wood fires from the huts drifted across the track here and there. The aromatic taste in the smoke made from the brush wood of the Hills was pleasantly distinct from the heavy acrid smoke of the city fires. Garram wriggled his nose and snorted to get a stronger whiff of it.

The feel of the rocks under foot, the bracing touch of the crisp mountain air, the stillness of the barren Hills all gave him the thrill of homecoming. Where the chill mist, which he could feel but could not see, hung in the little fertile cups of valleys he could catch the scent of dwarf cattle. Away in the distance, in front of him, he heard the sawing note of a leopard busy on his night's hunt.

It was going to be no easy homecoming. With his enemies in power and his father awaiting death at their hands, he was more likely to be killed on sight than welcomed! The young hunter repressed his desire to sing and turned his attention to producing some plan of action.

Half the art of hunting is in laying plans. Plans not so detailed that unexpected behavior of the game throws them out, but elastic plans with alternatives to fit any possible move of the quarry. Garram, the invisible ground slipping away behind him as he ran, tried over plan after plan in his mind, rejecting one because it would take outside assistance, and he preferred to play a lone-hand game; rejecting another because it would take too long. For he felt that whatever he did must be done before dawn if it were to be in time to rescue his father, Warok.

It was still early in the night when he arrived outside Kwallak, the village where he had been born. He was still testing the plan he had in mind by confronting it with all possible variations, when Kon, who had been bounding ahead, slunk back as if for protection, tail down and every bristle raised. As the hunter's hand felt the dog's raised mane in the darkness, he stopped in his stride and listened.

Only two things could make the dog behave like this: a lion in the Plains or a leopard in the Hills. Garram almost shouted with joy as he saw how this might fit into his plan. If he could kill it! And what a glorious mad adventure to fight a leopard single handed in the dark!

The faint breeze was from in front of them, and if this leopard followed the path, as they usually do, it must almost bump into him. Swiftly he made his preparations, slipping the chain mail over his head, putting one arrow on his bow, and silently placing the quiver on the ground. Kon backed farther and farther into the darkness as the scent of the approaching beast strengthened.

Then came the soft swish-swish of padded paws in front. Breathlessly the boy waited until the sound was within five paces, swinging his head to get the exact direction by sound; then loosed the arrow.

In one swift movement he dropped the bow, set the butt of his new spear against the ground, and clamped it there with his foot. With a coughing roar, which told that the arrow had not missed, the leopard charged. Square and low in the chest the inclined head of the spear met the leaping body, raking upward into the heart as the weight of the animal forced the butt more firmly into the rocky soil.

Garram's foot and left hand stayed only just long enough to present the spear point at the leopard. Then he leaped aside and with his right hand swung his hunting ax with a crash into the beast's skull.

The huge leopard kicked and lay dead, the ax torn from the hunter's hand still embedded in its brain.

The young hunter extracted the spear, and after several jerks freed the ax, which had bitten deeply into the skull. Either ax or spear wound would have been immediately fatal without the other. The arrow wound too was mortal, but poison often takes a minute or two to kill outright. Carefully he made his examination, sliding quick fingers over the warm silky body. Then, ever businesslike, set to work on the skinning. For it was the skin he needed for his plan.

The skinning finished, Kon, to his disgust, was ordered to remain in the cover afforded by some thick bushes while Garram cautiously reconnoitered the village. Careful inspection showed that, though everywhere else the people seemed to have gone to sleep, a murmur of talk still rose from the chiefs compound. The huts of Warok's house were built touching each other, and forming four sides of a rough square. In the center of this square was the courtyard from which the voices seemed to come. The only entrance was through a hut which faced inward toward the maze of village streets. If the small messenger's story were true Warok must be a prisoner somewhere inside. In which case the entrance hut would be well guarded.

In daylight there would be no chance of getting in undetected. But by night.... How about the wide-spreading doka tree which reached out its branches well outside the compound? It was just the sort of

weak point in his defences which Menud might leave open.

Silently the young hunter felt his way along the outer wall until he reached the place where he remembered the boughs to hang lowest. Then he leaped, once, twice, and even a third time, but still his upstretched hands closed on nothing. For a moment dread seized him that his plan might fail. Then, jumping farther to one side, his fingers touched some leaves, and little by little he bent down first twigs, then boughs, until he gripped something strong enough to support him as he climbed.

The leaves, green though they were, seemed to his anxious ears to rustle and crackle like dried hide, and in spite of the most painstaking caution twigs snapped in a way which he was certain must arouse even a sleeping guard. But at last he reached the center of the tree where the bare limbs could neither rustle nor snap, and hung silently watching and listening.

Below him lay the courtyard, with an isolated hut, usually used as a granary, in the center. Before the door of the hut a large fire glowed, and beyond this again were the guard, some lying wrapped in rough cloth, others sitting and talking. From time to time one would rise and pace up and down in front of the hut door, replenish the fire with huge logs, or kick it into a warm blaze before sitting down again.

Carefully Garram weighed the situation. A few well-directed arrows might kill several of the guard, but this would only bring in others whom he could hear in the entrance hut. Warok would be unable to help, as he would undoubtedly be lying bound behind the closed and fastened door. If the surprise attack failed, everyone would be on the alert till dawn, and any further attempt at rescue would be hopeless. Fantastic as it was, his first plan seemed the best, and without further delay he started to put it into execution.

First he carefully sought among the tangle of boughs, for the limb which stretched out above the well-guarded hut. There was no bright moonlit sky to reveal him but from time to time the watch fire threw a dangerous glow upon the underside of the tree. Inch by inch Garram made his way out along the bough, skilfully parting the leaves and twigs in front of him, and slowly releasing them again behind him so that they should not rustle. The guard had stopped talking, which,

unless they went to sleep, made silence more imperative than ever. Each time the youth parted the leaves for a fresh examination of his position there were still some sitting upright, or rising from time to time to tend the fire.

It seemed hours of strained caution before Garram found himself directly above the hut with the guards beneath still unsuspecting. Then came disappointment, for the thatched roof was too far below him! It would be impossible to jump to the cracking straw without arousing the men. To attempt any method of letting himself down gently by his bow and bowstring would be useless, for between the cover of the leaves and the shelter of the roof he would be hanging in the glow of the fire in full view of the watchers.




**Garram was directly above the hut**

For a moment all seemed useless, and the boy even considered his other plan of a surprise attack on the guard. Then in a flash he had the solution. With as much care as he had used before, he retraced his way along the bough to where the thinner one joined it. Cutting and laying aside twigs which barred his way, he wormed his way out again toward the hut, still managing to keep a screen of leaves between

himself and the watchers in the courtyard. As he went the bough, as he had hoped, began to bend ever so little under his weight, to lean down toward the hut roof.

It would not be sufficient to pass along the bough silently till it bent so that he could step off, though this seemed difficult enough: he must move so slowly that to any one who glanced that way the bough must still appear stationary. This slow motion set up a strain that brought the perspiration bursting from his skin, in spite of the coolness of the night. Once, too, it nearly led to his being discovered. For a wrist that had been bearing the weight of his body in the slow forward movement for nearly a minute began to tremble and started a rustling among the leaves.

One of the guard rose to his feet, picked up a stone, and came and stood under the young hunter, peering up into the dark mass of leaf. No doubt he had hoped that it was a stray hen roosting there, as they sometimes did, and that he might pass some of the long hours of the night making and eating a chicken stew. Garram chuckled inwardly at the mistake. Then nearly yelled. For the stone thrown experimentally to see if it might bring anything down had glanced off a twig and spent its remaining force on his elbow.

There was no chance to rub it, he must make no move nor sound while the man stood below. It was with extraordinary satisfaction that he heard the man move slowly back to the fire.

There was no further incident to hinder his scheme, and within a quarter of an hour he was pressed flat along the roof, on the side farthest from the guard and the watch fire. But the helpful bough now became a nuisance. It must not be allowed to flip up into position again, or it would bring the guard to see what had happened. Swiftly he loosened his bowstring, joined it to the spare one that he always carried, and attached it to the bough that he was gripping with his elbow. Inch by inch he began to pay out the string, but the tremendous pull exerted by the branch began to make the plan impossible. It was almost certain to make a noise, cause him to slip on the roof and let go, or some other catastrophe. Also time was getting

very precious. He thought a moment. The branch must not be allowed to flip back into place. True. But why let it go back at all? In fact, why not tie it to the peak of the conical roof?

That was easy. Then came more trouble. The idea of cutting his way in through the thatch of the roof had sounded simple. But to do it silently he found he needed to sort out each straw-like grass stem separately—working by touch only, since it was dark on the side away from the fire—and then cut it and dispose of it by sticking it back into the thatch somewhere else.

At last even this labor was ended, and he was standing safely within the hut, the unsuspecting guard separated from him by only a thin wall and a few yards of space.

For a moment he stood, uncertain what to do. How could he manage to find his father in the darkness, and waken him without disturbing the warriors outside? Then hope seemed to drain out by his feet, and despondency which was almost a physical sickness swept over him. His plan was near final success, so very near—— He checked a gasp of dismay, for surely the hut was empty, surely no man could be here in this silence?

"Son!" came the faintest of mocking whispers. "Do not breathe so loudly, or the guard who are outside will make base talk of me as an old man who snores and grunts in his sleep!"

Quickly Garram bent down with his knife and cut the cords that bound the chief. Then, while he helped to restore the circulation in the cramped arms and legs, whispered his plan of escape. Whispered with his mouth to Warok's ear, for the clear crackle of the fire and loud grunts of the watch warned him how near they were.

In a short while Warok was able to stand upright. With whispered instructions the young hunter handed into his keeping the new spear, his bow, arrow quiver, and even his trusted hunting ax. Then, keeping only his long-bladed knife, he busied himself with the awkward bundle of chain mail and newly flayed leopard skin.

A noise inside the hut caught the attention of the guard. It sounded like the faint note of a leopard. It could not be a leopard, of course, but it might be the old man making the call of his totem animal in his dreams. People do dream of their totem animals, and it seemed quite likely that the chief would have a disturbed night since he would be killed on the morrow. So one of the watchers at the fire thought, and got up to undo the door of the hut and make sure that everything was all right with the prisoner and that he had not worked loose his bonds. Fumblingly, standing in his own light, he undid the leather fastening of the door and walked in.

Then with a howl he leaped back. For the whole hut stank of leopard, and there, following him out of the doorway, moved the leopard himself.

Even in the dim firelight the animal looked huge and tremendously broad in the shoulders. The rest of the guard awoke, as, with a howl of dismay the first man loosed an arrow.

At that range the arrow could not have missed. But there stood the leopard with dropped head, insolently regarding him. Then, obviously unharmed, stalked slowly and majestically toward the group of men around the fire.

There had been no time to stir the embers into a blaze, but even as they retreated the guard fired again and again at such close ranges that they could not miss.

And in the firelight they saw the arrows strike the spotted flank only to fall broken to the ground!

Huddled for protection in the entrance hut of the compound they watched the huge beast skirt the fire and move slowly toward them, arrows bouncing off him as they struck.

“God pity us! Warok is changed into his totem animal, the leopard,” a scared and shaking voice gabbled. “O Warok, spare us! It is not we who would have done you harm. Spare us! Spare us!”

For a moment they stood, then turned to fly. Wild terror jammed them struggling in the outer door of the entrance hut. Then with a crash the walls each side gave way and released them. Far down the

winding maze of village streets went the stumbling hurrying fugitives, eager only to get away. Over their shoulders they gasped, “Spare us! Only spare us!” and each saw a leopard ready to spring.

Garram, from under his chain mail and leopard skin, beckoned to the hut door, and Warok came stiffly forth. Preceded by Garram, still on all fours and covered with the yellow hide, he walked slowly out into the village street. No one would touch them, no one would even willingly set eyes on them. For it was well known that the mere sight of an angry totem animal would kill. Outside the village the impatient Kon awaited them.

# THE ALARM DRUM



# CHAPTER XVIII
## THE ALARM DRUM

As SOON as they felt safe from pursuit, the tribesmen who had been guarding Warok hastened to Sura and Menud with their story. An incredible tale of a ghost leopard, or of Warok transforming himself into a leopard, they poured out, panting and shaken, before the incredulous Menud and his father. Interested but puzzled, neither Sura nor Menud was quite convinced. But as one after the other of the shaken guard arrived and told the same story, the obvious belief of the eyewitnesses and the constant repetition of it gave proof.

A hurried visit to the hut where Warok had been imprisoned showed only a dying watch fire and no traces of the prisoner. Something of the tale, Menud felt, must be true. Moreover, the unwillingness of the guard to revisit the scene and their obvious terror showed better than words that this was not a tale concocted to account for a release obtained by bribery.

Boaster, liar, and traitor as he was, Menud was supported in his ambition by considerable ability as a plotter. Swiftly he weighed up the situation. With Warok free the game was no longer entirely in his hands. He knew only too well that the old chief had a considerable following in the tribe whom he would now get together and organize.

Menud felt that his next move must be to gather all his sympathizers from as many villages as he could in the time at his disposal, and have himself declared chief. Then, with this usurped authority in his support he would have the tribal organization at his disposal.

But, swiftly as his dispositions were made, they should have been swifter.

At dawn the old Rainmaker had already assembled a nucleus of Warok's followers. He had sent for these before Garram's message had reached him. They were a last desperate hope to free Warok by force of arms. Fully armed and experienced warriors had come at the old man's bidding from every village of the tribe. In twos and threes, so as not to attract too much attention, they had been converging on the village since dawn. Outside the village they had been met and directed to the Sacred Grove.

Even after dawn more and still more men were climbing to the flat-topped hill which was the meeting place of the great Council of the People. The Sacred Grove seemed to swallow them up, singly and in groups, and none outside could tell how many there were.

Garram, no longer in his leopard skin and armor, had had a series of thrilling escapes from Menud's followers while searching the village for the Rainmaker. At dawn he ran the old man to earth in the Sacred Grove. Swiftly he told his tale, while the Rainmaker nodded approval. "It is well done! But this I already knew. For even as you sought me in the village, Warok, your father, has himself come and is here waiting."

"Then as soon as enough are assembled we shall attack the followers of Sura and Menud and kill those two traitors?" Garram's eagerness, in spite of his twenty-four hours of strain and effort, made the old man smile.

"Not so. For that would be to give all honor to youth who have already earned enough," the Rainmaker soothed his impatience. "Now is the time when old heads may make a plan instead of young arms striking."

Garram hopped on one foot in eagerness, and Kon strolled up in hope of excitement. "The plan, then, O Great One, the plan, what is the plan?"

"Is it not easier to snare the hare than to run after it with sticks? Have patience a moment, and you will see the snare catch the hare. Come, see!"

Speaking together the two had moved farther into the grove. And Garram saw. For two of Warok's warriors with threatening spears were forcing one of Menud's followers to yield up his weapons. Silently and without outcry, so that others might not be warned. In the broken country round the village there was only one clear space where a force could easily be assembled—the flat-topped hill on which grew the Sacred Grove. The Rainmaker's plan was indeed skilful.

Warok's followers had gathered first. Sura's men came unprepared, in little groups and singly in too small numbers to offer resistance. And those who had come first had already been disarmed and could render no help to later comers.

The ring of trees, which was the Sacred Grove, crowned the hill and masked it from people below. The barren slopes of the hill gave no chance to anyone to escape unseen and carry the news back to the village. As neat a little trap as could have been devised, and grim smiles played upon the faces of the old warriors who followed the chief as they noted the chagrined expressions of Menud's followers, disarmed and helpless.

On the farther side of the stone circle Warok sat in his accustomed place. Dressed in Garram's shirt of mail, the new leopard skin thrown loosely over the stone seat, and Garram's steel-shafted spear planted by his side, he was the center of an interested throng. At once the hunter recognized the skill with which his father put even such details as these to their most effective use. For such armor, rarest of heirlooms even among the Fulani was unknown among the primitive Hillmen. The rays of the rising sun rose over the encircling Sacred Grove and struck down into the clearing, ruddy and glowing, upon the motionless figure of the chief. All eyes turned to the flashing golden figure, and a deep-toned murmur of awe boomed from the people.

Then Menud and his father, with a handful of his followers, were seen approaching.

No attempt had been made to disarm them. Instead way was made for them, so that even as they passed through the wood chatting and boasting, they were unaware of the changed situation. With self-conscious dignity they paced out from the cover of the trees into the clearing. Then something of the truth flashed upon them. Jaws

dropped upon unfinished remarks, and there was a movement among the party as if to turn and run. But already the guards had closed in behind them. In paralyzed surprise they rendered up their arms.

Then Warok spoke. “You have called a council. Behold, your men are here! What will you say to them?”

Silence fell.

One by one the party that had come with Menud and Sura drifted away and were lost in the crowd which stood behind the seats of the stone circle. Elders one by one sought their appointed seats. Scowling their useless anger, Menud and his father stood helpless, isolated in the center of the ring.

An elder rose in his place and spoke. “O Warok, and people of the Hills, it is time that the voice of truth was heard. For many years men have grumbled saying that you oppress them when you make them do the things needed for the safety of the land. Sura has followed the trail of discontent with gifts, preaching more discontent. Speaking against you. Promising no work and many gifts if the discontented will make him chief.” The father of Menud made as if to speak. “Do not protest, O Sura, for there are surely a thousand men here who would know your denial a lie.”

“This I have known for many years,” answered Warok. “We all know that after many years of peace people will say, ‘There will be no more war in our days, why should we keep the defence hedges of cactus in repair? Why should we train ourselves to defend our families? Why should we do aught save gather wealth or eat and drink?’ Yet we, who bear scars of many ancient battles against the slave-raiders from the east, know that when they think to find us unprepared they will come again.”

Menud spat disdainfully upon the ground. “If the chief fears the Fulani raiders let him not think we are all cowards! Have I not myself killed many and escaped from the very city of their Emir? Pah!” Again he spat his feigned disgust.

“Your story of your adventure at Yelwa is a lie, as all men will know in due course. Moreover, it is not those Fulani who are our enemies, but those of the east. As to your courage, have you ever shown it

except in words? And the raiders require more than words to drive them off!"

The situation was a difficult one. To Garram it seemed simple. With the men who had tried to kill him here at his mercy, why did not Warok dispatch them out of hand? All this talk seemed dangerous delay. But the old man knew his trade. Summary execution of Menud and Sura might be justice and would draw the sting of the conspirators for a time, but in the end it might turn them into first-class martyrs for liberty and lead to civil war in the tribe.

"Bring in the followers of Menud," directed the chief, "but bring them one by one and let the others wait beyond earshot." The chief's bidding was done.

Now, with Menud helpless, his followers no longer feared to tell the truth. The story soon came out: his attempt to murder Garram, even the punishment of the dye pit, which till now had appeared in various forms but never as punishment for treachery. Menud's cowardly attack was not to the liking of the brave and simple Hillmen. A roar of anger broke from the throats of the crowd, from followers of Warok and Menud alike, and they shook threatening arms at their recent leader. Twice the old chief had to still the tumult as he sat watching the effect produced. Little by little, doubtingly at first the followers of Sura and Menud turned upon their leader and would follow Warok. His enemies were at his mercy.

Skilfully the old chief guided affairs. The last witness withdrew beyond the circle of the elders and from the outermost ring, reaching far beyond the Sacred Grove to Sura and Menud, standing scowling and uneasy in the center, came silence and no movement. The sun was nearly at midday; no breath of wind stirred the heavy leaves of the tall enfolding trees.

Strained and more strained grew the hush—the hush of waiting.

Garram, like a true hunter, having played his part, was resting, almost sleeping with eyes open in preparation for the next move. Kon, stretched out, basked in the sun. Nothing of the old chief's thoughts or feeling could be guessed from his face. It seemed set, carved in stone, but his keen old eyes lost nothing of what passed before them.

Then a group of elders rose from their stone seats and spoke together in whispers. The eldest, leaning on his staff, his shriveled skin lying in folds upon his body, led the group before the chief.

"Father of our tribe, ourselves, our families, and our villages are at your service, to follow you in war and to hear your words in peace. Ours is the blame that, forgetting that these two were runaway slaves from the Plains, we believed their word as though they had been of the tribe."

The old man paused and sought the eyes of his comrades as if in support of what he was about to say. Grimly they nodded their assent.

"We are not able to make conditions with you whose father was chief of our fathers, but one thing we would beg."

Again the old man paused. Something of his intention seemed to be divined by Menud and Sura, whose eyes searched vainly among the assembly for sign of support. But anger was on the faces of the followers they had once duped, and on the faces of Warok's men, triumph.

As the old one spoke a buzz of whispering carried his words out to the farthest fringe of people beyond the grove. Now the hush of expectancy caught and gripped anew the tight-packed throng. The ancient felt the weight of the words that he was about to speak. Proudly his old frame straightened, and his shriveled skin seemed for the moment to hang less loosely on him. He turned from Warok and stretched out his arms to the people. "Let our shame be healed by the death of these two, Sura and Menud! Let their death be such that men, aye, even hardened warriors, shall speak of it with terror and shuddering!"

No whispers now. His old voice rose to a clear ringing summons which carried to every man there. In answer the Hillman's killing call rose from a thousand warrior throats. Then, more dreadful still, for by tribal custom the women only may torture, grew the eerie death wail of the women. It was the answer. Gray and trembling, Sura and Menud awaited their fate.

Then, like a sea, the mob surged in to snatch its prey. With a shout Warok, Garram, and a handful of old warriors sprang forward. Exile, possibly death the chief had planned for the two, but not this. This

almost forgotten death by lingering public torture. Swiftly a ring of armed men was flung between the mob and the groveling figures on the ground.

Then a small boy, dusty, gasping, almost falling with weariness, burst somehow through the throng. At a stumbling run he came to Warok, then spoke a hurried message.

Garram, at a sign, ran up to receive a short order, and even as he turned at a run toward the village, Warok, a glittering figure in his chain mail, swung toward the people.

The din was so great that at first his words could not penetrate. The guard, though heavily reinforced was being pressed back and forth by the unarmed mob, who, once Menud's followers, now wanted his life. Then, as those near the chief heard his news, the shouts began to cease. Packed and jumbled the mob stood still, froze almost to hear and catch the words.

"O People of the Hills, we have been attacked from within the tribe by these two traitors who writhe in fear before you, groveling on the ground imploring mercy. Do not waste your time upon them! Even now word has come that more worthy foes await us. The Fulani of the East, whom we have not seen for a generation, have sacked, burned and ravished our southern villages on the foothills, and seek a way into our Hills themselves."

The old warrior chief waited for the news to be whispered out to the edges of the crowd. But time was not being wasted. Already Garram had been sent hurrying to sound the alarm drum in the village below.

"Until we have met and hurled back the Fulani raiders we need not trouble ourselves with this scum. Only by lies can they do harm, not by their own strength! Now that you know the truth, what harm can they do? Now let the women prepare the food to follow, while all true Hillmen take only their weapons and cast these vermin of the Plains back from the Hills of our ancestors. Now is not the time for talk. Let us travel swiftly and strike hard! Brothers, we have had a generation of talk! Let us now fight. Come!"

Somewhere in the dense mass of people were Sura and Menud, but already forgotten as the crowd ebbed and flowed through the encircling trees crowding toward the southward leading track.

And as they jostled came the steady rhythmical boom from the village below.

Deep, continuous, and ever louder, strange and unheard for a generation, still none could mistake it, it was the wooden war drum of their ancestors. Beaten only in case of tribal extremity, and then only by order of the chief himself, it could be heard for ten miles in any direction. In each village was a similar drum made of a hollowed hardwood tree. Each village, as soon as it heard the deep note, would transmit the message.

And the deep tone varied as the tone of the Hill language varied, so that words and sentences could be sent in the tone language itself.

Every marching man could hear the call to arms. Then came the names of the villages that the enemy had attacked. And like a stop between each sentence came the two-toned word of their language meaning war. War—young men gripped their spears with determination. War—grizzled, hardened warriors dreamed awhile of their youth. War—again the drum thundered out, and women hastened to soothe the children and prepare food to send after their husbands and fathers.

# THE CHIEF RETURNS



# CHAPTER XIX
## THE CHIEF RETURNS

IT WAS midnight when the dusty band of travel-worn Hillmen led by Warok arrived at the southern escarpment of the Hills. In front of them the rock dropped away like a cliff overhanging a black sea. Nothing could be seen of the plainland spread out into the distance far below them. Nearer in, tucked under the precipice, but still far away, three spots of light glowed red through the darkness.

A wounded man, his arm bandaged with tree fiber and a padding of leaves, came out from the surrounding night and in the strange-sounding southern dialect told Warok his story. The glowing points were the embers of the three villages which in a false sense of security the men of the southern clans had built on the lower foothills. Forgetful of old traditions, they had begun to farm in the Plains, and instead of building defence works had improved and made easier the track from the plain to the villages.

The slave-raiding Fulani of the East must somehow have come to know of this group of defenceless villages. Anger came into the speaker's voice as he reached this point of his narrative. "In the blackness before dawn I woke, smelling fire. I lived on the side of the village from which the breeze was coming, and, moreover, near the gate. But even as I looked round, rising from sleep on one elbow, flames ate the grass roof and lighted the hut. All my house, all my village was ablaze, as I saw, leaping through the door. Somewhere out of the flames my family called, and their moans came to me above the roar of the fire. Three times I tried to reach them but could not, for blazing roofs had fallen and blocked the way." The voice sank to a dull

note of despair. Warok nodded assent. To an old warrior the surprise attack of an enemy at dawn, setting fire to the village to bolt the inhabitants panic-stricken and defenceless was no new story.

"Then, with only the knife which I, like all men, keep in my belt when sleeping, I stumbled from the flames which would have eaten me. The gate was too far. But as I ran a house fell which had formed part of the outer wall of the village. Also for a moment the wind, started by the burning village, sucked the flames from the gap. So I escaped."

The old chief had let the survivor tell his own story so far. But he wanted useful facts, not a story of personal adventure. "How many of your village, and how many from the other two villages escaped?" he asked. "And where are the attackers?"

"Two men, and one girl child only have I met! The threshing ground and flat space round the village were full of horsemen as I fled. Each side of the gates they waited, spearing the men and old women, taking captive the girls and young children." He pointed to his bandaged arm down which a trail of dried blood showed black in the starlight. "Even as I ran, one thrust his spear through my arm, and other horsemen were closing in on me as I reached the broken rocks. My knife...."

But Warok was no longer listening. He called three names. Three warriors came out of the darkness. Grasping one by the arm he spoke: "Loka, friend of my youth and companion in many battles, take with you Garram, my son, as tracker. Go softly past the force encamped round the villages and bring me word of the Fulani force lying in reserve in the Plains. Their camp should not be far away. Speedy news, not fighting, is your first task. Go."

Led by Kon and Garram the warrior moved off into the darkness, calling to him a handful of trusted men as he went.

"You"—Warok gave the next man his direction—"will take more men, for you will need to fight. I have seen small lights round the three burning villages. These will be the camp fires of the Fulani who reached the foothills, and you must find their strength. Drive in the sentry posts and kill a little. But do not fight in the open against them, for we have few men and the enemy are many and mounted. Keep near the rocks where their horses cannot follow, and see that they do

not sleep!" A chuckle showed that the plan was to the taste of the gathered Hillmen. There was a sound of movement in the darkness, a rattle of quivers and weapons, and the small body of men moved off.

Next, order was given that each chief should call the name of his village. In spite of the darkness, the uneven ground, and the lack of training due to long years of peace, the mob of armed men began to form orderly groups. Simple though this organization was, it would make it possible to handle the men in battle, working by plan, and not as a blind and clumsy horde.

Orderly groups, each under its village leader, marched swiftly into the darkness to prepare the defence of the pass which led up from the towns below. Soon Warok and a handful of elders were the only ones left on the dark crag overlooking the burning villages. It was necessary for him to remain in the one place so that messengers from any of the three parties should know where to find him in the dim, starlit night. Down in the foothills, around the burning villages, the Hillmen were already reconnoitring the Fulani position. The Fulani could not be given open battle, since their numbers far exceeded the whole of Warok's force, and the little group of fighting scouts would have been wiped out before they could have made any impression. A sentry here and there had been killed as he replenished the outer ring of fires. But immediately he had been replaced, and the Fulani, secure in their numbers, had gone on sleeping. A sentry more or less did not matter!

Then, suddenly, as a Fulani guard strained his eyes to pierce the night beyond his watch fire, with a hiss of steam the blaze and glowing embers blackened. Earthenware water pots, thrown with unerring aim by the Hillmen, landed in the fire and burst, scattering their contents, and putting all in darkness.

Rapidly, on all sides, the fires hissed and went dead. Even as the sentry shouted the alarm and grasped his spear, the dark figures of the Hillmen sprang upon him. One more murderer of old men and women had died. And not he alone, but the whole ring of sentries were stretched as dead as the wet ashes of their watch fires.

The sleeping army woke to the sound of the war howl of the Hillmen. Half quenched cooking fires in the center of the camp were kicked into a blaze, as men grasped their arms and hastily rallied to

defend themselves. Under cover of the night the long vengeful knives of the Hillmen were pressed home to the hilt, withdrawn, and again and again sought heart, lung, or stomach of those who had butchered their unarmed kinsmen.

Swiftly the small band of raiders came. Swiftly they withdrew to the rocks and cover of darkness. The huge Fulani army, rallying in the name of the Prophet, found only empty darkness filled with the taste of fresh blood.

Thrown in relief by the rekindled cooking fires, no longer protected by the line of sentries and watch fires, the massed forces of the Fulani formed a perfect target. Without warning an unseen cloud of arrows poured in from nowhere, finding the massed ranks a target impossible to miss.

Here and there courageous groups of the Fulani charged on foot among the rocks, trying to come to grips with the subtle stinging enemy. Enraged by their losses and inability to make contact, they tried again and again, until their commander, becoming anxious at their continuing casualties, ordered them back. The raid had been beautifully executed, and the massing of the panic-stricken Fulani in full glare of their cook fires had been a gift from the gods to the skilled bowmen of the Hills. The raiders had lost men, and here and there among the rocks a wounded Hillman groaned as his friends carried him to safety. But for every raider killed at least a score of Fulani lives had been taken in exchange.

Meanwhile news of the success of this raid that he had planned spread up to Warok. The main body of warriors stationed at the head of the pass clamored to leave their work and charge down upon the Fulani camp. The elders, grouped with Warok on the peak, counseled him to immediate action. Even Sura, so lately discomfited and in danger of death, joined his voice to the others, counseling attack in full force.

With only the support of the Rainmaker, Warok refused to pit inexperienced warriors against five times their strength of trained Fulani. “A dog may bring to bay and tire out a bull,” the old chief explained, “but if he closes with the bull and tries to slay....”

The elders nodded assent. The bull would win, of course. The strength of the Fulani was like that of the bull compared with the force the Hillmen could throw into the attack. But Sura had a scheme worthy of his mean cunning. None but Sura, nicknamed the Snake, could have devised a scheme so diabolically selfish, so murderous for others, so safe for himself. He asked permission to put forward a plan.

"In full daylight our men will see the numbers of the enemy and fear to attack. But in this darkness they will not know the certain death to which they go. And even now they are clamoring to attack. So —" with a pointed pause—"none will blame you afterward!"

Neither Warok nor the Rainmaker spoke his disgust. From the assembled elders came a murmur of interest. Encouraged, Sura continued: "Once they have closed with the enemy, all will be hand-to-hand fighting and confusion from which neither our men nor the enemy will be able to escape. Few of our men will be alive by morning, but the enemy will fear us. So that when at dawn they see our women, dressed as warriors, and carrying sticks to look like spears, crowning the heights above them, they will be deceived by their fears and will retreat."

Little red spots began to gleam in the darkness, as the elders, stirred by the skilful plan, drew harder on their huge tobacco pipes. Cynically the Snake played his last card: "So we should be safe without risk to ourselves. And the wives, the betrothed, the household goods, and the farms of the young men of the tribe will become ours, since the dead will no longer have need of them!"

With silky voice of anger Warok broke in upon the applause. "Do you, the elders of our people, counsel this plan?" Their answer left no doubt. "O Warok, there is no other plan whereby we may live and the Fulani be driven back!"

"On one condition and one only I consent," the soft voice insinuated: "You and I, O Sura, will lead the attack, my wrist tied to yours. Our only weapons will be short stabbing spears which have no edge to cut the bond should one of us be slain before the other. Is not the plan now perfect? Since we shall both be slain, there will be no dishonor!"

The awed intake of breath sounded like the rustle of the dawn breeze among the leaves. The elders did not doubt Warok's reckless willingness to put the amendment into practice. Nor did the Snake doubt, scrambling to his feet as if for flight. "This is mad folly," he blurted out. "Why should a wise man die when fools can die for him?"

"How shall a man who fears to fight give good counsel as to fighting?" was the swift retort. "Go join the women and give them counsel as to the cooking of food!"

But the Snake had courage after his own fashion. There was the scrape of a rough-surfaced native knife being drawn from the dry leather sheath. There was the sound of a body leaping through the dark as Sura would have flung himself upon the chief. But Warok's light throwing spear, impelled by his powerful shoulder muscles, met the assailant as he leaped, pinning him through the chest as if he were a butterfly. The old chief had not risen to throw, his back had not even left the rock on which he leaned, and he must have judged his throw only by sound. Yet the force of the blow had driven the spear head out through the would-be murderer's back, and the thrum of the vibrating spear shaft sang out among the rocks. With a clatter the body of Sura spun round and fell.

None moved. All knew what had happened. The sounds had told all as well as sight would have done. Then the voice of the Rainmaker rose out of the darkness. "Sura would not fight for the tribe. But in the dark, as you have heard, he would have murdered." Deep toned, impersonal as of a judge, his voice rolled on. "Death of such a one as this will not anger the gods. No curse will fall. I bear witness!" The deep tones ended. The Priest of the Tribe had spoken!

Silence, dreaded silence grew in the darkness. In the belief of the elders, the spirit of the freshly slain man was angrily walking around them, seeking revenge. For this is what spirits are believed to do when just made homeless by death. None dared speak or move, for fear of being noticed. For the spirit would take a dreadful vengeance—would kill perhaps the soul of the first man it caught, leaving the body alive and unconscious of the terrible mutilation.

Warok's pipe gleamed cheerfully in the darkness, all the same. He had not wanted to take life. Had indeed only taken it at the last moment, in self-defence. Now he was quite willing that the silent vigil should impress the object lesson on the elders. Spirits did not trouble him.

The old chief had regained full control of the tribe again. Comfortably he sat puffing his long pipe. As to the enemy, his plan had been decided as soon as he had seen the situation.

# GARRAM EARNS SLEEP



# CHAPTER XX
## GARRAM EARNS SLEEP

"CHIEF of our People, hear our report!" Loka, the leader of the scouts sent to reconnoiter the war camp of the Fulani in the Plains strode proudly into the silent group of elders. The gray light which heralds the true dawn gave faint outline to objects seen in silhouette against the sky, below, darkness seemed the more intense.

With slapping of slung weapons on their bare backs and the rustle of soft leather loincloths his scouts followed him. In the rear came Kon, tail up, and Garram, still unwearied. In Garram's arms a vague bundle.

"Speak, then," the chief commanded, "but tread not on the Snake at your feet."

"Guh!" With a startled grunt the old warrior bent to investigate the body of Sura still lying where it fell. Then, unimpressed, went on with his report.

"This is no ordinary raid such as we knew in our youth, O Warok. The war camp is pitched barely at the foot of the Hills, and not the full day's journey away, as is usual. Many times we circled it, seeking to see or hear some sign of the numbers."

The elders, stiff with their motionless vigil, drew nearer, reassured a little, and interested in the account.

"Never have I seen so large a camp nor so many sentries. An army of sentries, not the sentries of an army merely!"

"Their numbers must give them courage," Warok pointed out—more to himself than as an item of information. "Always they used to keep the camp with its many unarmed straying camp followers a full

day's journey from our hills. But have you no further knowledge? Nothing except of the outside of the camp?"

"I am no stalker by night, but a fighter by day." The old warrior Loka was nettled. "Moreover, so dark was the night that even Garram, your son, who is noted as a stalker, was lost from our party when we arrived at the camp and did not find us till we were about to return."

Garram was curled up on the ground against Kon's huge form. Even in the tropics a hilltop at dawn can be piercingly cold, and Kon was pleasantly warm. Garram was snatching some of his previous night's arrears of rest and kept only as much awake as he felt conditions required. The sound of his name brought him back to realities.

"Yes, the words are true words," Garram murmured sleepily. "Very big camp but half empty. Half the men and horses must have gone to the sack of the three villages." He was nearly asleep before he had ended his sentence and at once snuggled down again with the queer-shaped bundle between himself and the dog.

Prodded further, the young hunter woke long enough to tell some of his story. He had been into the camp. Was it not the only way to find out? Yes, he had found many empty picket lines. Someone seemed skeptical. "Does a man stub his toe on a hardwood picketing peg and think it is a cat?" Appreciative chuckles greeted his naïve but telling retort.

Questions met him from all sides, and he tried to answer them. The women and children captured from the Hill villages? People wanted to inquire after the lost ones by name, but Warok intervened.

"Dawn is nearly breaking, and time is short. Have you any further news of fighting matters?"

Garram roused himself and tried to think clearly. "The camp is big, and half empty of both men and horses. There are several large tents of cloth and leather. Three sentries had to die quietly before I could obtain entrance. But there was nothing in the tents except useless pale women of their own—Fulani—tribe. They slept among fine woven cloths, but I did not wish to steal. Only this I took," holding up a huddled gray shape of fur, "for he is a monkey of the Hills and should not be a slave to Plainsmen!"

The leader of the scouts laughed. “A likely story! You were lost, and no doubt your dog caught you the monkey among the rocks!” But those near by, examining the monkey, fingered a golden chain and jewel-encrusted collar on his neck.

“Does a dog catch golden chains?” remarked an astonished onlooker. But Garram was asleep again.

# MENUD, THE TRAITOR



# CHAPTER XXI
## MENUD, THE TRAITOR

OVERNIGHT the remainder of the army of the Hills had been ordered to descend the pass and hide in the broken rocky country round the Fulani camp in the foothills.

Now, at first glint of dawn, Warok and the elders followed. Garram had just time to hand the monkey over to a friend and slip in front of the party with Kon.

On the western side of the peak lay the path, if it might so be called, which led down into the Plains. No more unlikely place could be found for a track, for the peak seemed to drop in sheer precipice. But along the face of the cliff stretched a diagonal fault in the rock, forming a narrow ledge which sloped southward and downward to the level ground around the burned villages. The sun had already begun to tint the opposite side of the gorge, but the face of the precipice down which the party marched in single file was still in the shadow of the crag they had left. One by one the party seemed to drop out of sight into a black, fathomless chasm.

Unseen and unheard above them, Menud had stumbled across the body of his father Sura. A casual glance showed that life was extinct. Then, quickly but cautiously, he made his way to the edge of the precipice and, leaning over, swore vengeance on the party moving through the darkness below. Revenge would be easy. Just a matter of pushing a few rocks crashing down upon the path beneath. The death of the unsuspecting Warok and Garram, of Kon and all the elders was a certainty. No skill, no courage could save them, for there was no way

off the path, which was bounded by a precipice that rose on one side, and on the other dropped sheer several hundred feet into a boulder-strewn chasm.

Then Menud changed his mind!

Mean cunning replaced anger upon his face. His father was dead and no longer of use to him. Why should he waste time avenging his death? A more paying plan occurred to him. The ambitious plotter drew back from the edge and followed Warok's party down the path. As he went he planned, his mouth twisted into a yellow-toothed, triumphant grin. For if he could find his way into the Fulani camp, show them this secret way up into the Hills—and it was the only pass into the Hills from the south—their numbers should give them easy victory over the Hillmen. Then, since no Fulani would wish to be left as chief over the conquered Hillmen in these strange and barren Hills, who would suit them better than himself, Menud? For he would have shown his loyalty to his new friends by betraying to them his own tribe!

Even as he walked and ran, the traitor saw himself the trusted agent of the Fulani, exacting tribute from the Hillmen, collecting their sons, and especially daughters, as slaves to be sent to the Fulani. What a full revenge! What tortures, what ignominy could he inflict on those whom he hated, with the support of the Fulani horsemen!

Stirred by his plan, Menud had been making better time down the path than he had expected. At a bend he almost bumped into the party of Garram and Warok, for the elders, more for dignity than because of weakness, were traveling slowly. Menud did not want to meet them. He planned to wait unseen behind them on the path, and then slip around them unseen as soon as the narrow way opened out near the Fulani camp.

As the rocky track swung round the face of a buttress-like projection of the cliff face, Garram began to realize the wisdom of Warok in moving the force down overnight. From where they were now hiding in the rocky foothills they could be thrown into attack like water from a bursting dam. But men moving to attack down this narrow path would have been like water dripping from a leaky pot—an easy matter for the enemy to deal with. Here, round the buttress-

like projection, the ledge of rock along which the track led ceased in a vertical drop into the black shadowy depths beneath. At this point the path was carried on by a rickety, fantastic-looking bridge. Timbers, weathered silver gray with time, and long since bare of bark, had been wedged into crannies in the cliff face. On these twisted and uneven supports, which looked barely able to carry their own weight, had been laid smaller boughs, rounded and gnarled as all hilltop timber is. With its worn and frail-looking supports, its loose decking rolling underfoot and showing the black depths beneath, it was a writhing nightmare scaffolding rather than a bridge.

Unconcernedly the Hillmen balanced their way across it, talking as they went. They were well used to these weirdly skilled pieces of primitive engineering done with a chisel-shaped ax as the only tool. There were several more of these same bridges, on this same path, built like birds' nests to the face of the precipice. Following the ledge in the vertical western side of the crag, the path led downward and southward to the foothills where lay the burned villages and the Fulani force. The foot of the crag hid the actual camp till Warok and his party had drawn clear of the pass.

Expecting to meet the main force of Hillmen guarding the mouth of the pass, the young hunter was surprised to find no one there. Accustomed to using his brain when hunting, Garram now tried to apply it to this new game of warfare. Why was the place left undefended?

At a sign from Warok the party swung off wide to the right. Then left, left, in a wide circle with the Fulani camp for a centre. To Garram it was very like skirting game at a distance so as to approach it from down wind. That gave him the clue. With a hop of excitement he made a grab at Kon's waving tail, as if to bring the news to his attention. It wasn't the wind, but the sun; not scent, but sight, which the cunning Warok was planning to use as ally. The warriors had been swung round to the west of the camp so as to attack the Fulani with the low blinding morning sun directly behind them! With the sun behind him, a skilled fighter could catch as many as four out of five enemy arrows

harmlessly on his shield. And with the dazzling tropical light low in front, the enemy would be able to ward off practically nothing, neither arrows nor spears, nor even slow-moving battle axes.

The hunter almost danced with excitement at his father's tactics. And what nerve it must take to leave the pass unguarded rather than weaken his striking force and by overmuch caution court defeat. Then, below him, in the shallow green cup where lay the black spots of the charred villages, sounded the tinkle of the Fulani war cymbal. Men, more men than he had ever seen before, were moving hurriedly about, like uncountable water beetles on a mossy green pool. Gradually they formed into groups, like patterns on the green background. They were moving into battle order, in regular ranks—a method unknown to the wild Hill fighter.

Meanwhile the leaders of the Hill villages had been called up to receive orders. Quickly they returned, each man to his command. Morning light had shown Warok the absence of horses in the Fulani camp. They must have sent them back to the plains under cover of darkness. A detail, but it had made necessary a last minute change of plans, of which the village leaders had to be informed.

Now all was ready. Warok gave a signal; a series of soft sweet notes on the little Hill whistle made of horn. Immediately it was repeated by the whistles of the leaders of villages. Then the bare gray rock of the unchanging Hills appeared transformed into a black torrent. The hidden warriors had sprung from their hidings and, leaping from rock to rock, poured swiftly from the encircling heights.

Hastily Garram charged after them.

It was the rush of an undrilled horde in all its furious force. Without reducing this force, the organization by villages had made it controllable. As the rush carried the line forward, converging upon the enemy, the whistles blew again, ordering back the rear ranks who would have crowded among the men in front and jammed them too tight for full use of bow and spear. In silence the Hillmen reached the level ground and swept forward. And still the attention of the Fulani was directed toward the west, away from the attack, toward the pass

into the Hills. Shouting of orders rose clearly from the camp, but still the packed and motionless ranks of the Fulani faced away from the charging Hillmen.

Now they were noticed, and the enemy turned hastily to meet the threatened danger. Now they were within bowshot. Men stood and fired, then ran forward a few paces, fitting another arrow to the bow, halted, and loosed another shaft.

Garram, who had brought along four quiverfuls of arrows, was loosing two swift shots for every one fired by the less skilled bowmen on each side of him. The clack of bowstring on hard leather wrist guard and the twang of the strings rose in continuous rattle and hum. It seemed only a moment since the young hunter was firing vaguely in the direction of the massed enemy at full bowshot range. But already he had thrown away one empty quiver and was now near enough to choose and hit his individual enemy.

Then, with a yell, the Fulani charged to meet them, their ranks thinning with falling men as they came.

A hunter is always unwilling to abandon the bow, and Garram might have used an ax instead of his last arrow, so close was the range. That man fell, but another enemy was already in the gap. The boy threw up his bow to parry a cleaving sword cut. It was only just in time, and even so the keen edge sliced a patch of skin from his bare shoulder.

With a yell of pain and fury he swung his ax in return, and then felt it nearly pulled out of his hand as his adversary fell, the edge firmly embedded in his skull. He jerked the ax free just in time to strike at another enemy. A misplaced blow this, the handle striking harmlessly on the Fulani's shoulder and nearly jerking itself free from Garram's grip. The long knife of a Hillman on his left saved him that time.

The front rank, with Garram in it, was now deep in the enemy's lines. All formation had gone. Now was the time when men, wounded, thrown down, and rising again, lost all sense of direction and fought friend as well as foe. But this Warok, with hard-won experience of hand-to-hand fighting, had foreseen and provided for. From the throat of every village leader came the battle cry, "The sun on your backs—and on!" Quickly the slogan spread, and gave the steady aim of

veterans to the dashing ardor of these young warriors. The deep yell panted from laboring lungs as the Hillmen again turned a solid front against the hated enemy.

Dry grass became slippery beneath his struggling feet. A body writhing in death agony on the ground tripped him. But Garram struggled upright again in the sweating, hacking, cursing struggle.

Troops pressed backwards offer less resistance than those pressing forward. Balance on the feet, morale, everything enters into it. Each army, pushed forward by the chest and shoulders of their slipping, tripping rear ranks, pressed harder and harder against the opposing ranks. Ribs could be heard to snap where the struggling, thrusting pressure was greatest. Few who fell could rise again; there was no room to strike a blow. Where a hand could be freed for an instant, a knife would be pressed home, and a dying man would be carried upright in the packed and swaying crush, until he could be turned under those cruel struggling feet. Over the heads of the front ranks where friend and foe were mixed, poisoned arrows were being exchanged by the rear-rank men. Since each side was engaged along the whole of its front, flanking movements were impossible.

Garram had no idea of what was happening except just around him. The pressure and heat became a cruel, impossible nightmare. The rank smell of human blood made him sick and giddy. The quilted cotton armor of his enemies began to provoke him to absurd anger. It was so difficult to force a knife through the thick padding. Then he found a method of reaching round and placing the point of the knife under the ribs at the side. Once placed and pointing inward, the pressure of the swaying crowd would force the blade through anything.

With unspeakable relief Garram felt the pressure slackening, felt himself being carried forward as the enemy began to give ground. Then suddenly the fighting changed. He found himself charging past small groups of four or five mixed friends and enemies hotly engaged in a kind of human dog fight. Suddenly he was the center of a similar dog fight, knife back on his hip again, swinging the hunting ax. As he

fought, more assistance would pour up, some of the enemy fall, the remainder melt away. Then on to the next isolated struggle. “Backs to the sun—and on!”

Stung by wounds he fought like a seasoned warrior and no boy. The advance reached the black ruins of the villages. Fighting opened out more and more. The enemy seemed to have disappeared, though here and there skirmishing was going on. Arrows and quiver were broken and his bow gone, or he could have done great execution in this open fighting.

A group of corpses lay at the gate of the village. He was passing them as no matter for comment at a time like this when something about them caught his attention. Disgust and anger shook him. For they were the unarmed villagers—women as well as men—killed by the Fulani in their surprise raid upon the peaceful sleeping hamlet. Killed, and—he was nearly sick at the sight—mutilated—horribly. Something like madness seized him. With a yell he sprang at a group of tall Fulani soldiers. Three spears were thrust out to meet him. He ducked, swerved, and was in with the knife.... A sword flashed out, and would have transfixed him when, still in the gleaming chain mail, Warok charged in with a roar.

The old chief had done his best to stay behind and direct the battle, but his instinct for the fight was too strong. Dropping all weapons save his favorite ax, he had sprung into the battle. Never noted for playing for safety, with a chuckle at the thought of the chain mail, he had made no attempt to guard himself or parry. With both hands he swung his ax, swung again and again, and four men had dropped. The handle, wet and slippery, twisted from his grasp. A spear point slid past his face as he sidestepped. He was in and under the spear and had his last adversary in his arms. But the man he grasped was already slipping to the ground. Garram’s knife had been just a shade faster. The old chief stood back with a grin of appreciation. A neat stroke that for a boy! Garram would have grinned back, but a look of surprise came to the father’s face, for the boy swayed unsteadily on his feet. Swayed, recovered himself, then sank, wounded and unconscious, to the ground.

Rapidly but carefully the warrior carried the sagging body into the cover of the burned-out village. The sound of stealthy footsteps brought him round with a snarl to defend himself. A huge black form nearly bowled him over. It was Kon, who had been squeezed away from his master in the first stages of the fight and had now found him again. With the fussy assistance of the anxious animal Warok checked the boy's heart and breathing, each seeming to find reassurance in his own way. The boy lived.

Then, as Kon snuffled inquiringly at ear, mouth, and eyes, the old chief grasped the situation. The boy had had no sleep, almost no rest or food or water for more than two days and nights. Two days and nights of strain and effort such as few grown men could have borne. Then on top of this the boy—for he was only a boy in years—had been put to the terrible ordeal of a long, sternly fought battle. The sight of the murdered villagers must have drawn from him his last remaining strength in that fierce final effort. And body and mind had at last rebelled, and he had fallen asleep as he stood!

For there was no doubt about it, he was peacefully sleeping! Here among the shouts and smells of battle!

The father reassured himself by a further examination of skull, ribs, and limbs. Nothing was broken, nothing amiss except for a few easily healed wounds. Leaving some weapons by his side for use when Garram awoke, the old chief posted Kon as huge calf-like nurse and all-sufficient guard. Then Warok ran toward the sounds of the receding battle.

# THE HILLMEN TRIUMPH

# CHAPTER XXII
## THE HILLMEN TRIUMPH



THE plain was strewn with the terrible harvest of battle, over which, in the clear morning sky, wheeled and wheeled countless vultures, waiting, waiting.... Some, with flapping of wings and clumsy hopping, had alighted. Some, with bald repulsive necks and heads stretched forward, were already tugging with cruel beaks at something hidden by their clumsily flapping wings.

Warok saw nothing of this, only the absence of fighting, which had moved around to the west while he was attending to Garram. The foot of the spur must now be hiding the battle. He ran, and as he ran, thought. Why had the enemy retreated in that direction, which led only to the pass up into the Hills? Why had they not fallen back toward their reënforcements in the Plains? There could be only one explanation: a traitor must have shown them the pass!

Then, of a sudden, he understood much that had puzzled him. The Fulani leader must have started to take his troops up the pass to the west while on the east the Hillmen were waiting for the rising sun to help their attack. Once the Fulani force were spread in a thin line along the narrow path up the pass, the leader in front of them would be quite unable to keep touch with what was happening in the rear.

Which also accounted for the ease of the Hillmen's victory over their much more numerous and better armed opponents. The enemy rear guard alone had been engaged! The main body of the Fulani must by now be nearly at the top of the pass, protected by the unscalable cliff face from the Hillmen in the foothills below. A warrior chief, his honest mind had not counted on treachery. That had been the weak

point in his plan. As he rounded the foot on the spur he saw that his conjecture was right. At the mouth of the pass confused fighting still went on. The remains of the Fulani rear guard were covering the entrance of the last of their main body into the rocky path, and once safely in the pass they should be able to hold it against any number of Hillmen, for there were many points in the path that only one man at a time could pass.

Warok saw that the head of the twisting black line of the enemy had climbed almost to the top of the pass. There was no other way up into the hills for many miles on either side. The Hill forces were caught in the foothills, helpless to stem the tide of the Fulani advance. The old chief groaned aloud, for nothing now lay between the cruel enemy and the peaceful Hill villages where women and children would be working and playing in the morning sun.

Others had grasped the situation. Old warriors, frantic at their helplessness to defend their villages, blamed Warok to his face for leaving the pass undefended. Still others, less privileged by their age and honors, gathered in futile, scowling groups, muttering to each other the things they dared not say to the old chief's face. And all, mixing threats with entreaties, demanded of him a miracle, that he should find some means of stopping the enemy's advance upon the Hill villages. Cold and hard, Warok stood before his judges. He was scarcely aware of them, of their many words. With all his will he was trying to tear from his mind some plan to retrieve the disaster.

"Gather all warriors! Cease this talk!" his stern command stilled the babble. "Re-arm swiftly from the dead and wounded." His glance sought a man among the mob. "You, Loka, will re-form the force under its village leaders and lead it with all swiftness to attack the camp of the Fulani in the plains below." Murmurs began to arise, questions.

"O Warok, I have never feared battle, but what is the use of attacking the Fulani in the plains when by then the other force of Fulani will be killing and capturing our wives and children in the Hills?"

“None doubts your courage, O Loka. If you cannot capture the camp, at least set fire to it. If even this is too much for you, then make smoke fires in the bush near the camp and defend these fires with your lives. For on the smoke will hang the safety of your homes, your wives, your children!”

“But how will revenge benefit us?” Loka was puzzled. “And why this child’s play with fires and smoke?”

“O fool,” Warok thundered, “are not the women and horses of the Fulani to them as your women and cattle are to you?” The old chief grew angry at the delay in what must be done at once if at all. “If the Fulani on the hill see the smoke as of their camp being attacked and burned, will they not turn again to defend it, leaving our villages till later?”

Warok knew how utterly his people could be relied upon to carry out the idea once it was planted in their thick skulls. To attempt to lay down the details of their task would only arouse the resentment of this federation of independent—very independent—Hill villages. Without further words he drove them on their way.

Meanwhile, till smoke rose from the Fulani camp in the plain, time was on the old warrior’s hands. Turning toward the pass again, he grinned and spun his ax sparkling in the air. With a rallying shout he led a wedge into the small rear guard, cutting them off from the mouth of the pass. Then, leaving his followers to deal with the little isolated group, he plunged up the pass, ax in hand, his chain mail twinkling in the sun. At the first bend he came across the tail of the enemy’s force. Two men he sent crashing down the precipice and had sprung like a human leopard on the third before he could turn to defend himself. Uneventfully but steadily Warok ate into the tail of the column, man by man falling to his ax or being sent hurtling down to the depths below.

At a bend in the path he halted with a shout of surprise. The Fulani had not reached the head of the pass yet. Something seemed to be holding up the head of the column, far away in the distance. Even as he looked, the cause of the obstruction became clear. One of the scaffold-like bridges had been set on fire in front of the advancing Fulani! As he watched, it fell smoking and blazing out of sight into the

chasm below. Whether accident or design had set fire to the bridge, the result was the same. There was now no way for the Fulani, or anyone else, to reach the hilltop by this path. They must retreat by the way they had come!

But why let them retreat? Where the old chief was standing was just such another bridge as the one which had been destroyed in front of the Fulani. If he could destroy this behind them, the huge force would be caught helpless on the path, unable to advance or retire. And even now the force was turning back. For some brief moments—the best in his warrior life—the old chief held the narrow pass against the enemy while behind him his followers loosened the timbers of the bridge. On his right the unclimbable cliff face, on his left a precipice, beneath his feet the bridge which his followers were even now destroying.

At a warning shout from behind, he sprang back across the loosened timbers. Before the stupefied enemy could cross, beams, timbers and decking were lifted shoulder high by willing Hillmen, then hurled crashing to the depths. The enemy was in the trap, and the trap was closed!

A giant scraping noise was heard. Then a crash. A boulder had dropped down the bare rock from above and burst on the rocky path. Warok and his followers moved swiftly back from their penned-in enemy. Rock dropped from a height explodes almost like a shell as it lands. As the Hillmen made their way back to the foot of the path opening upon the foothills they threw glance after glance back over their shoulders and shuddered. The path behind them and the chasm beneath were filled with the booming and crashing of giant boulders hurled from above. In this inferno, spread thinly along the rocky path which was cut off at both ends, the Fulani army cowered against the cliff face and awaited death.

Above them the old Rainmaker had not been idle. Debarred from battle because of his age and his priesthood, it was he who had thought of destroying the bridge in front of the Fulani advance. Now he had summoned all the women of the tribe. The bounding crashing boulders which thudded down the hillside upon the helpless enemy beneath had more mercy in them than had the hearts of the women who launched them. Frantically they labored. With poles, ropes, and

bare bleeding hands they urged more and more massive missiles over the edge of the crag. The simple Hillmen had no mercy for these murdering and torturing slave-raiders, and even small children toddled to the edge of the crag and let loose handfuls of ineffective pebbles upon the enemy beneath.

# HOME AGAIN



# CHAPTER XXIII
## HOME AGAIN

IT WAS evening time. The red glow of the setting sun still tinted the tops of the Sacred Grove round the Place of Assembly where the Hill people were gathered.

One by one the leaders of each part of the operations told the story of the happenings of that day. A simple tale, giving the names of the men who had died in defence of the Hills. For such had been the custom long ago. The greatest numbers had died in the assault on the camp in the Plains. Outnumbered by the better armed Fulani, the attackers had had no thought but to capture the camp by the quickest way—direct assault—before the Fulani still in the pass could march upon the peaceful Hill villages.

To those that had carried out the assault and to the relatives of all those who had died was alotted the plunder of the camp: horses, tents, rich clothing. The women found in the camp, pale soft beauties of the harem, were now huddled together, frightened but unharmed, in the midst of the Assembly.

The Rainmaker would accept nothing of the plunder. “For me I risked nothing, and wish no profit. If it is for sacrifice to the gods that you press these things upon me, are there not within the tribes sufficient riches lacking owner? For Sura and his son Menud are no more!”

There were murmurs of surprise. The death of the father was known, but that of Menud?

"While the bridge was burning and I was loosening further timbers to make its fall certain, the Chief of the Fulani came to the other side. Dressed in gorgeous robes, his banner carried behind him, he approached and made as if he would attempt to cross." The Priest and Rainmaker paused. Telling his story he tasted again the dramatic moment. "A man with him, dressed in skins, like one of our own people, and not in robes and quilted armor like the enemy, spoke with him. The chief did not understand, and he whom I now saw was Menud made signs, as one acting as guide, that they should turn back."

The old priest turned sadly to the people. "And this I think is true, that Menud was the traitor guide who betrayed the pass to the enemy. But the chief thought him another kind of traitor, who had led them into a trap. At a sign from him, a huge slave, bow-legged, like a baboon, with arms and chest strong as four men's, lifted Menud." He paused awhile.

"I think in that embrace his back was broken. The huge slave took him easily by one leg, as one would lift a chicken, and he did not struggle. For a time he held him thus, hanging by one leg, at arm's length, over the precipice. Then the chief spoke, and the slave dropped him thudding into the depths. There was no cry."

With the slow understanding of utter weariness the Hillmen were digesting this news when an interruption occurred. All heads turned as a Fulani, surrounded by a small guard, made his way through the crowd and halted before Warok. Unarmed, surrounded by a guard of villagers from the western part of the Hills, the man bowed in smiling good-humor and uttered words of greeting in his unknown tongue.

At a sign the guard told their strange tale: "Before the sun struck over our hills into the valley beneath our village, we saw an army, greater than we have ever seen before, mustered in the Plains below. What could we do?" The wizened ancient dropped his arms to his side in a gesture of helplessness. "All our fighting men had already gone to give battle with the rest of the tribe against the Fulani of the East. And these were Fulani of the West, who have never been our enemies. But at least this we could do: We sought for bows and such other weapons as were left, I and the other elders, then went out among the rocks to

watch. There we came upon this man, alone and unarmed, following the path to our village. We would have killed him, but he pointed onward, as one having business. Moreover, he showed no fear! Instead we brought him here. But also we bring the news of the army from the west waiting in the Plains below our village!"

The stranger waited. He looked around him. Then his glance fell upon the huddled group of Fulani women captured from the raiders. Again he spoke a few words, looking hopefully at Warok. None understood him. He looked around as if in search of someone whom he could not see. Then the stranger had an idea. Shifting his weight to one foot, he slid the sandal off the other and with big toe scratched the calf of the other leg. Then, with make-believe bow, he gently scratched the middle of his back, looking tensely into the distance the while. The dumb show met with instant response. Calls for "Garram! Ho, Garram!" rose from dozens of throats. For he had depicted Garram to the life. Garram puzzled and thoughtfully scratching a leg. Garram watching distant game and planning his approach, gently massaging his shoulder blades with the end of his bow as he thinks, since flies settle on a hunter's back as soon as he stands stationary.

The young hunter had long gone to sleep again, and it was no easy matter waking him as he lay, curled against Kon. The dog in fact came across to greet his old friend some time before Garram was properly awake. It was Ibrahim, Captain of the Guard, whom Garram had once saved from death and possibly torture. Whom he had later saved from Menud's treacherous attack. Gladly the two greeted each other, while the dog's tail wagged as hearty a welcome.

Then all was easy going. Ibrahim came as an envoy sent by the Emir of the West to seek alliance. "News has come of an army of the Fulani of the East, who wish to cross your hills and attack us in the Plains of the West. My master the Emir offers you the aid of his army to assist in repelling them. Not this alone he offers, but lifelong alliance between his people and your people of the Hills!"




**Garram**

Puzzled at the silent reception of his message and the expression of his audience Ibrahim paused. Then resumed: “If you think that you have no need of aid, know then, that the army from the East is bigger than any before known. As big as all your tribe, and as big as all the army sent by my master. This much is known with certainty. And if you fear the army sent by my master, know then that for your greater assurance the Emir offers to place his men under the sole command of one of your young men known as Garram the Hunter. For he is well known to my master the Emir. Well known and well trusted!”

Again the envoy paused, and, while his message was being interpreted, gazed curiously around him. Then: “What, then, is your answer, for even now the enemy may be approaching?”

“The enemy was, but is no more,” Warok’s quiet voice replied. “Tell him all.”

Garram explained to Ibrahim. Swiftly, however, for he still ached for sleep. The wonder of the Captain of the Guard grew. Grew beyond all expression. It could be no jest and was obviously no lie. Silently he listened and marveled, and marveling he forced himself to believe the incredible story.

Then he bowed to the Assembly. "Only, then, remains the offer of friendship and alliance which my master the Emir makes you. Also the offer of many and noble gifts which he will doubtless send you in thanks for the service you have rendered us and in honor of your noble deeds. Permit that I give you greetings and return to my army!"

"You have promised the assistance of the army you have brought. Will you still lend this aid?" Warok's eyes twinkled as he spoke.

Wonderingly Ibrahim assented.

"Good! Then let your army remove these women of the Fulani. They cannot cook—this much is already known. And none wants them for wife, since they are of the pale brownness of the Plains which we deem ugly. If your master the Emir will send them back to their own tribe we shall hold his debt fully discharged. For the Hills are for the Hillmen, and we do not want this weak stock."

Kon and Garram escorted Ibrahim as far as Kwallak and would have had him stay. But the Captain of the Guard was not his own master till his duties were performed. With reluctance they made their farewells, the dark shadows of homegoing villagers passing them as they stood. "O Ibrahim, now that you have come once, come yet again and again. For there are klipspringer in the Hills which you have yet to shoot, and rock rabbits that lurk in fortresses stronger than even the walls of Yelwa. Come back again. Come to the Hills!" "Surely I will come, O Garram!" Only three days since they had parted at Yelwa, but even so the Captain of the Guard found the parting hard. "But see that you come back to Yelwa, or life at the Court will become insupportable. For three days has the Emir sat with the dread frown on his face, declaring there is no honest man left in his kingdom now that you have gone. I alone am in favor because jestingly I suggested that Kon would make him a good Waziri, being grave and silent and something of a glutton!" Kon, hearing his name, looked up as if in protest at the charge of gluttony, and the two laughed.

“Some day I will surely come, Ibrahim. But first I want my Hills. My Hills—and—euyyah!” Garram’s white teeth snapped together after a luxurious double yawn—“sleep! Go in peace!”

“In peace, then,” Ibrahim responded.

An hour later Warok and the Rainmaker returned that way to the village. Pacing in grave silence they nearly fell upon Kon. Stooping they lifted something between them. “Have a care, old warrior, do not wake him,” the priest’s booming voice tried to whisper. “He has earned his sleep. Let us carry him to your fireside, where we may talk and smoke!”

“None has schemed more skilfully in this affair than Garram, my son, unless it be you, O caller of rains and sunshine.”

The Rainmaker shook his head.

The old chief resumed: “Even so, none has worked harder or fought harder than this boy. And surely none will sleep harder to-night! There is no fear of waking him.”

Carefully the chief and the Priest of the Tribe carried the light body between them. Kon padded round on anxious, silent paws. Up the rocky path to where cooking fires gleamed in welcoming doorways. Where food, sleep, and comfort were waiting.

THE END

# Colophon

Garram the Hunter
Herbert Best

Pipcub Editions

Text set for this Pipcub edition.