17 - The Gold of Opar

He halted a moment, sniffing the air, then with the swiftness of a jungle cat, changed his direction and moved stealthily toward the spot where the ape and the woman were. As he approached, he heard the savage mutterings of the great ape and the soft whimpering of the woman.

The sight which met his eyes as he stepped into the clearing sent him into a fury. The great anthropoid had managed to sever Jane's bonds, and now, as Tarzan appeared, the ape seemed to consider the unbound woman as its prize, standing defensively between Jane and the approaching Tarzan. With a roar that was part bestial and part the rage of man, Tarzan charged. The great ape, realizing perhaps its mistake in defying this new and mighty jungle creature, turned to flee, but not before Tarzan had crashed into it, tumbling it to the earth where the two grappled amidst leaves and dirt.

The struggle was violent but brief, as Tarzan's superior agility and strength overcame the ape. With a final, mighty punch, the ape lay still. Tarzan then turned to Jane, his fiercest expressions softening into concern. Jane, recovering her senses after the terrifying experience with the ape, found herself staring into the eyes of her rescuer, not recognizing him in his enraged state. He reached out to her, speaking softly, reassuring her with gentle words. He checked her for injuries, his touches tender, a stark contrast to the savage ferocity with which he had fought off her attacker. Assured she was unharmed, Tarzan then turned his attention back to the matter of their

immediate security.

Aware that the jungle at night held many dangers, and that their presence had likely been detected by the sounds of the conflict, Tarzan decided they must move. With effortless strength, he lifted Jane into his arms and

sprinted into the dense foliage, away from the scene of their encounter. The night was filled with the sounds of the jungle, but under Tarzan's guidance, they moved silently, almost as part of the night itself. Jane, held securely in his arms, watched the play of moonlight through the leaves, wondering at the strange turn of events that had brought her into the care of this wild, fierce protector. Despite the danger, she felt a strange sense of safety within the circle of his arms.

As they moved further away from the danger zone, Jane's thoughts drifted to the future. With Tarzan by her side, she felt an unspoken promise of protection and, perhaps, a way out of her dire situation. Yet, as the jungle enveloped them, she knew there were still many challenges ahead. But for now, in the quiet embrace of the jungle night, those worries seemed a lifetime away.