

12 - La Seeks Vengeance

Upon his return through the jungle, Tarzan, unaware of impending peril, revels in his primal existence, oblivious to the orchestrated pursuit by La, the High Priestess of the Flaming God from Opar, and her fifty grotesque priests. Motivated by the theft of the sacred sacrificial knife, an artifact of immense significance and power inherited from her ancient Atlantean ancestors, La ventures beyond Opar's ruins for the first time. The knife's loss compels her to act, its absence equating to profound desecration of her religious and royal stature.

La's fury is a complex tapestry woven from the desecration of her temple and the rejection of her love by Tarzan, the object of her unprecedented affection. Unlike the deformed priests or the anthropoid bulls of Opar, Tarzan embodies the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy and awakens in La a fierce love and desire, marking him as distinct and desirable. This unreciprocated love exacerbates La's wrath, transforming her quest into one of revenge, aiming for Tarzan's suffering as retribution for both personal and sacred affronts.

La leads her macabre entourage—adorned with knives and bludgeons, and an air of vengeance—through the jungle, displaying intrinsic leadership and strategic prowess despite her inexperience outside the city's confines. She imposes harrowing demands on her followers, who, despite their deformity and servitude, idolize her as a divine figure. Their journey, marked by reverence and fear towards La, is uneventful until an ape scouts Tarzan's presence, prompting a stealthy advance towards him.

As Tarzan slumbers, unsuspecting of the imminent attack, La instructs her cohort to seize him alive, dictating that his fate is hers to decide. The ambush is swift, as Tarzan finds himself overwhelmed by the attackers, an unexpected turn that marks the beginning of his entrapment and an uncertain fate dictated by La's vengeance. This conflict reinforces the eternal struggle between civilization and the primal laws of the jungle, highlighting the interplay of power, desire, and revenge in Tarzan's world.