

1 - Belgian and Arab

Lieutenant Albert Werper, disgraced and exiled to the Congo by his own hand, finds his mental state deteriorating after months of isolation. His brooding turns to a silent hatred towards his superior, culminating in a rash homicidal impulse. Werper shoots his captain dead in a misguided attempt at asserting his honor. Realizing the gravity of his action too late, Werper flees into the jungle, pursued by his own men. The chase pushes him to his limits until he collapses, to be discovered by Achmet Zek, an infamous Arab raider.

A tense introduction sets Werper's fate on a dangerous path. Rescued by Zek, he is forced to appeal to the raider's notorious disdain for Belgians, claiming a shared enmity and offering his military skills in exchange for protection. Skeptical but intrigued by the potential of a trained European officer, Zek integrates Werper into his band of raiders. Over time, Werper earns Zek's trust through his ruthlessness and is taken into confidence over a scheme targeting Tarzan, the protector of the region's tribes and a long-standing thorn in Zek's side.

The proposed scheme is a sinister one - to either ransom or sell Tarzan's wife, leveraging her against the riches Tarzan has kept from Zek's grasp. Despite his initial revulsion, Werper's survival instinct and the promise of wealth persuade him to entertain the idea. The plan's morality weighs heavily on him, but the fear of Achmet Zek's wrath, coupled with a sense of alienation from his own kind, sways his decision. Rationalizing her as an enemy by virtue of her societal affiliations, Werper agrees to participate in the scheme.

As the two conspirators lay their plans beneath the faded opulence of Zek's tent, the narrative hints at the moral decay and desperation that drive men to betray all that once defined them. This chapter not only sets the stage for Werper's further descent into villainy but also foreshadows the inevitable collision of motives between him, Zek, and Tarzan.