

13 - Condemned to Torture and Death

Following her men's capture of Tarzan, La, the High Priestess of Opar, decides against immediate execution, instead opting to torture and then sacrifice him to their deity, the Flaming God. Despite their previous confrontations, La's complex feelings towards Tarzan – a combination of resentment, admiration, and unrequited love – lead her to struggle with the decision to condemn him. La's priests prepare a sacrificial altar, echoing ancient rituals whose meanings have long been forgotten, underscoring the lost city's deep history and disconnect from the present world.

Throughout his captivity, Tarzan displays remarkable stoicism and defiance in the face of death, relying on his innate strength and understanding of the jungle for a glimmer of hope. His calmness contrasts sharply with La's turmoil, torn between her duties as High Priestess and her personal desires. Even as she orders the construction of the altar and prepares for the sacrifice, her resolve falters, revealing the depth of her feelings for Tarzan.

The chapter builds tension with the imminent threat of Tarzan's execution and the priests' blind adherence to their savage customs, highlighting the barbarity of Opar's religion compared to Tarzan's more nuanced understanding of life and death. La's internal conflict reaches its peak as she decides against torturing Tarzan, opting instead for a swift execution, only to falter at the last moment, unable to carry through with her plan due to her love for him.

In a dramatic twist, the arrival of Tantor, the elephant, summoned by Tarzan's call for help, shifts the narrative's direction. La's realization of Tarzan's plan to rescue them and her subsequent decision to free him emphasizes the theme of redemption and the power of love over duty. However, Tantor's rampage, driven by a frenzy, forces Tarzan and La into a precarious situation, highlighting the unpredictability of the jungle and the fine line between friend and foe.

The chapter concludes with Tarzan and La in a temporary haven from Tantor's rage, underlining the enduring bond between Tarzan and the jungle's creatures, even in the face of madness. La's complex character is further developed as she grapples with her duty, her people's customs, and her feelings for Tarzan, setting the stage for the continuing conflict between her responsibilities as High Priestess and her personal desires.