

# The Gorilla

By HORATIO VERNON  
ELLIS



**I**T WAS a night of storm. The streets were a mass of slime and slush. A beastly wind was blowing, and as I left the club it nearly took me off my feet. It was with considerable satisfaction, therefore, that I found a cheery log fire awaiting me in the library of my home.

"A bad night, sir," commented my servant as he helped me remove my soaking clothes and get into some dry ones.

"It certainly is, George—just listen to that wind howl—seems as though a thousand devils were abroad—doesn't it?"

"It does that, sir."

The wind shrieked around the cornice of the house. It died out with a long, low, wail, only to rise again with a greater fury than before.

A hot toddy at my elbow, I dismissed my man for the night and settled down before the fire to enjoy an hour or so of reading before retiring.

And now there came to my ears another sound. At first I thought it was only the wind. But as I heard it a second time I felt certain that it was a human voice calling. Laying aside the book I had been reading, I leaned forward in an effort to catch the sound again. Then suddenly, above the screech of the wind I heard my name called.

"Madden—Madden, for God's sake open the door!"

With a shriek of terror the voice trailed off in a high pitched wail that mingled with the howling wind.

Snatching my automatic from the mantel above the fire-place, I rushed to the hall door and flung it open. Invol-

untarily I drew back, as a mud-covered figure rushed past me into the hall.

"Close that door! For the love of God, Madden! Quick, before it is too late!"

Gasping for breath, eyes bulging with terror, the figure crouched against the wall like a hunted animal.

Closing and bolting the door, I turned and hastily scrutinized the man's face. Through the mud that covered his features I recognized Hapesworth Chadwick, collector of animals for the Wild Park Zoological Gardens.

"My God, Chadwick! What has happened?"

"Are you sure no one or—or—anything—can get in through that door?" he anxiously inquired, ignoring my question.

"Dynamite is about the only thing that will open that door from the outside," I assured him.

Seeming more at ease, he lifted a shaking hand and drew it across his face, wiping off some of the mud that stuck there. It was not until then that I noticed his attire. Clad in a suit of pa-

jambs that was soaked with rain and mud, his teeth chattering from the cold, he was a sorry looking object. Glancing down I noticed that his feet were bare.

I was almost tempted to laugh at his predicament, but a look of horror shone in his eyes and twisted his dirt-covered face into a horrible grimace.

Suppressing the numerous questions that I wanted to ask, I exclaimed:

"Lord! Chadwick, you must be almost frozen. Come into the library and sit by the fire until I can hunt you up something to wear that will be more comfortable than what you have on now."

A hot bath, warm clothes, a hot whisky and a good cigar helped dispel some of the fear that haunted him.

It seemed almost beyond reason that he, Hapeworth Chadwick, who had faced death times without number while hunting animals in the wildest parts of the African jungles, could be the same man sitting in front of me, who at every sound of the raging storm gave a nervous start and glances over his shoulder.

The slithering swish of the rain crept into the stillness of the room, rattling with ghostly fingers against the windows. A convulsive shudder shook my companion.

"Now, Chadwick, tell me—what is it all about!" I asked, trying to suppress the agitation in my voice.

As the sound of my voice broke the sudden stillness of the room, my friend gave a violent start, and almost rose up out of his chair.

"God! Madden, when I think of the horrible thing I saw back there in my room, my flesh crawls."

Lifting a trembling hand he drew it across his forehead, letting it rest a moment over his eyes as if to shut out some vision of horror.

There was a moment of silence. I could hear the wind as it went walling through the trees.

With a tremendous effort my friend pulled himself together and began to talk:

"You remember that last trip I made to Africa? It was about two years ago. I guess. Well, as you know, I went after gorillas. The lot I had brought back the year before contracted some kind of disease and died. It was therefore up to me to get another supply of the beasts."

"On the sixth day we plunged into a thick swamp. The odor of decay and mold was sickening. As our progress led us deeper into that hell-hole, the air grew heavier. It smelt dead."

"Suddenly one of the bush-beaters up ahead of me gave a yell. There was a crashing of brush, and an old she-gorilla carrying a young one at its breast bore

down upon us. Froth dripped from its mouth. On the instant I raised my rifle and fired. With a scream the beast slumped to the ground, the young one tightly clutched to its breast.

"As two of the native boys were trying to get the young one out of the grip of the mother's powerful arms, I made the discovery that my bullet had only grazed the side of the brute's head, and instead of being dead it was only senseless. At last we managed to get the little one free and by rare good fortune we also succeeded in getting the mother back to camp before she regained consciousness."

"In the days that followed we obtained quite a collection of the smaller animals. The old one by this time had recovered from the wound on the side of her head where my bullet had creased her. As the wound healed it left a long scar that ran from the side of the mouth straight back above the left ear."

"I had kept the little one away from its mother, and we became quite chummy. One day I took it into my hut and let it out of the cage to see what it would do. As I stood watching its foolish antics, I heard excited shouts coming from the native guides outside. Forgetting about the little one, I rushed out, leaving the door open. When I came back the young gorilla was gone. Glancing through the door, I saw it running toward the cage that held its mother."

"With a bound I was after it, I caught it just as it came up to the cage. As I clutched the little fellow, the mother let out a roar of rage and began tearing at the bars of her cage in a wild frenzy to reach me. As the howls of its mother increased in volume it started to scorch and bite like a little devil, in an effort to get away. Intending to choke it into insensibility I grasped it by the throat. I must have held it in my grip too long, for when I dropped it to the ground it was dead."

"The mother seemed to sense what I had done. She stopped her attempt to break loose. Settling back on her haunches she uttered a screech that made my blood run cold. As I looked at her there in her cage her eyes seemed to burn into mine. I could almost feel the hatred that smoldered in them. Low guttural sounds of agony issued from the thick hairy throat. Froth, thick and stringy, dripped from the mouth onto the broad breast."

Turning on my heel I strode back to my hut. All that night I had terrible dreams that always had the same end—I was struggling in the arms of a bestial gorilla that was ever trying to tear my throat open with its yellow tusks.

"The next morning her cage was open and she was gone. How the cage had been opened I do not know, nor was I ever able to find out. But the old gorilla had vanished and had taken her dead with her."

The man sat there, gazing into the flames. I listened to the rain tap-tap-tapping, like skeleton fingers on the window pane.

My friend looked up.

"I then dismissed the whole thing from my mind. I would never have given it another thought but for what happened yesterday, when I chanced to drop into the menagerie tent of a circus. You can believe me or not, Madden, but when I came out of the tent I was trembling with fear. A wild impulse to run gripped me as a long drawn, eerie cry floated to me on the wind."

"In one of the cages in that tent was the same animal that had escaped from me in the jungles of Africa!"

A high-pitched scream, that seemed a part, yet independent, of the wind caused my friend's face to turn an ashen gray.

"What was that, Madden? Did you hear! Good God!"

Trembling, he sank deeper into his chair, as though to hide from the invisible terror that haunted him.

"It was only the wind," I told him in an assuring tone, although in my own heart I was not sure whether it was or not. "You were saying?"

"Oh! yes—let's see—Where was I?"

Like a man in a trance he seemed searching his mind to gather together the loose ends of a shattered thought.

"Oh! yes—now I remember. After leaving the circus tent I went direct to my room. I had a feeling of impending doom. Try as I would I could not shake it off. That cry I had heard was still ringing in my ears when I climbed into my bath. I felt considerably better after the plunge, so, picking up a book I threw myself on the bed and began to read. It was still daylight when I lay down, therefore I had no need of lights."

"I must have fallen asleep, for with a start I found myself sitting up in bed. The darkness seemed so thick that you could cut it with a knife. Once more that feeling of doom possessed me. Cold beads of perspiration covered my forehead. I brushed a hand across my face. It was wet and clammy. Death seemed reaching out its bony hands to clutch me by the throat. The next instant my blood froze with terror, for out of the night there came to me, lying there in the inky blackness of my room, a long drawn animal-like cry. Springing from bed I switched on the lights. As I stood

there listening I could hear my heart beating a tattoo against my ribs.

"I slept no more that night. At the slightest sound a cold sweat would break out over my entire body. How I passed the night without losing my mind, God only knows."

The speaker paused. His face was ehaly. He buried his face in his hands, shuddering, while I rose and threw another log on the fire.

Outside, the wind still howled, monotonously, eerily. Then came my friend's voice again, dead, cold.

"With the first faint streak of dawn I was dressed. As I walked out of the house I felt like a craven coward, afraid of the shadows that still lurked in the fence corners. By walking I thought I could throw off the feeling that still had hold of me. All day I walked, never stopping one to get a bite to eat, for my one impulse was to get away from the haunting fear that possessed me. When at last, towards evening, I stopped to get my bearings, I found by some trick of fate I was standing within a stone's throw of the tent that held the thing I feared. What made me go to take another look at the hideous brute, I do not know, but I bought a ticket and went in.

"As I came within sight of its cage, I could feel the blood drain in my face. I shook from head to foot. The cage was empty! With a voice that shook I asked one of the attendants what had become of the beast that had occupied the cage the day before. He informed me that it had escaped that night. Glancing back at the cage I noticed the iron bars had been twisted and bent like so much lead wire. Then it dawned on me that it had made its escape the same night that I had been awakened by the cry that had almost driven me mad.

"Numb with terror I left the tent. It was just getting dark when I let myself into my rooms. Switching on the lights I pulled down the blinds, and after locking the door I felt in a small way secure. Tired, weary and foot-sore from my day of aimless wandering I dozed off and lay on the bed, too fatigued to pull down the covers and crawl beneath them. I did not switch off the lights, for I was afraid I would go mad if I could not see everything in the room.

"I soon fell into a fitful sleep. How long I slept I do not know. A crash as of breaking glass awoke me. On the instant I was out of bed and on my feet in the middle of the room. My eyes were blinded for an instant by the sudden flare of the lights that I had left burning. As I stood there blinking I was

conscious of a peculiar scraping sound. As my eyes grew accustomed to the light, my gaze wandered to the window. Framed in the broken window was the huge hairy head of a gorilla! One hand was stretched out toward me as if to grasp me by the throat. The lips curled back over the yellow teeth with a throaty snarl. Thick foam dripped from the mouth covering the beast's breast! With a sudden lunge the thing lurched forward, dragging its shoulders through the opening. The light shining on the side of the brute's head, revealed a long scar running from the corner of its mouth straight back over the left ear. My blood surged through my veins like fire. Something in my brain snapped. With a scream I turned and tore open the door, fled down the stairs, and out into the night!

"The rest, Madden, you know as well as I do. What possessed me to come here, God only knows! I only know I ran. God, how I ran! My only thought was to get away from the horrible thing back in my room, and—and—Madden, I'm afraid—afraid!"

My companion shuddered. The fire-light shone on his face, which seemed grown suddenly old and haggard. I reached for the bottle of brandy that stood on the table. A peculiar prickling sensation ran along the roots of my hair. Forning out a stiff brazer I handed it to him, saying:

"Here, drink this and brace up. It may not be as bad as it looks."

My attempt at cheerfulness fell short, for the story my friend had just told, combined with the swish of the rain, was getting on my nerves.

He drank the brandy with a gulp. Taking a stiff nip myself, I turned to him and said:

"Now look here, Chadwick! What you need is a good night's rest. I'll put you up in the spare room for it must be pretty late. Come on, and I'll show you where the room is."

As I finished speaking, the clock in the hall struck two. With a lurch Chadwick rose to his feet.

"All right, Madden. I hope you're right, but somehow I feel like the oriental who said, 'Who can escape his fate!'"

"Forget it. Nothing can harm you here. It would take a half dozen gorillas to get into the room I am going to put you into," I replied.

Staggering like a man intoxicated, he followed me to his room, which was situated back of the library, my own being on the floor above, directly over his. I had brought the automatic with me from the library. Switching on the lights, I

laid it on the chiffonier, remarking as I did so:

"There, Chadwick; that's more than a match for a dozen animals, no matter what they are."

Giving him the key to the door, so that he could lock himself in if he wished I bade him good-night. As I mounted the stairs to my own room I heard his key grate in the lock.

It was not long from the time I entered my room until I was in bed and asleep. How long I had slept I cannot say. I was brought to my waking senses by what I thought was the report of a gun. Thinking that I had probably been dreaming, I sat up in bed and listened.

Outside, the wind still howled and shrieked, driving the rain against the window in torrents. The inky blackness was punctured now and then by the flashing of lightning. Silence so deep greeted me that my ear-drums hummed. Deciding that I had been dreaming I was about to lie down, when a scream echoed and re-echoed through the house, and brought me out of bed with a bound. Following the scream there rang out two gun shots.

Rushing out into the hall, I dashed down the stairs. The sound of violent struggling reached my ears as I missed the last two steps at the bottom of the stairs and went sprawling to the floor in the dark. Quickly regaining my feet, I rushed toward my friend's room, whence the sound of the struggling came. As I reached the door, a shriek of mortal agony rang out, that seemed to freeze the blood in my veins. With a rush I sprang against the door in an effort to force it open. Failing in the first attempt I drew back for another rush just as another shot rang out. Terror-stricken, I flew at the door, beating upon the stout oak panels with my bare fists, shouting:

"Chadwick—Chad—for God's sake open the door!—Chad—!"

For a moment I listened. The streak of yellow that filtered through the crack beneath the door told me that his light was still burning. A peculiar scraping sound greeted my straining ears, followed by the impact of a falling body. On the instant the hall where I stood was flooded with light. Whirling, I confronted my servant standing back of me in his night clothes. His teeth were chattering, and his face was chalky white.

"What—what is the matter, sir?" he asked.

"I don't know yet. Help me open this door," I quickly answered.

Using our combined weights, we succeeded, after what seemed an eternity, in

(Continued on page 94)

## THE GORILLA

*(Continued from page 61)*

breaking open the door. Involuntarily I drew back from the horrible sight that met my gaze.

Sprawled on the floor lay the body of my friend. Tightly clutched in his right hand was the automatic I had laid on the chiffonier. His head lay in a dark pool of blood, that still trickled from a jagged torn hole in the throat!

"My God, sir! Look!" my servant gasped, pointing with shaking finger toward the window.

Jerking my eyes from the gruesome sight at my feet I looked toward the window.

A repulsive horror gripped at my vitals as I gazed at the thing that lay on the floor beneath the window. With blood trickling from its mouth lay the body of a huge gorilla! As the light shone on the misshapen head it revealed a long scar that ran from the corner of the mouth straight back over the left ear.

## Table of Contents

The contents of *Weird Tales* is fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers. All communications should be addressed to the publishers main office at 854 North Clark St., Chicago, Ill.

THE PEOPLE OF THE COMET.....	3
THE BLACK PATCH.....	17
AUSTIN HALL JULIAN KILMAN	
THE SOUL OF PETER ANDRUS.....	19
THE CASE OF DR. JOHNSTONE.....	23
RUBERT LA DUE BURTON PETER THOM	
THE DEAD-NAMING OF LUKAPEHU.....	26
F. D. GOD	
THE CUP OF BLOOD.....	27
OTIS ADELBERT KLINE	
BLACK MAGIC.....	33
C. F. OLIVER	
THE DEVIL'S CABIN.....	35
VANCE HOTT	
THE OLD BURYING GROUND.....	39
EDGAR LLOYD HAMPTON	
SUNFIRE.....	48
FRANCIS STEVENS	
THE GORILLA.....	59
HORATIO VERNON ELLIS	
THE TALISMAN.....	62
NADIA LAVROVA	
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BLUE GHOST.....	64
DON MARK LEMON	
THE DAMNED THING.....	70
AMBROSE BIERCE	
THE TEAK-WOOD SHRINE.....	73
FARNSWORTH WRIGHT	
THE MONEY LENDER.....	75
VINCENT STARRETT	
THE BLOODSTAINED PARASOL.....	77
JAMES HAVENSCROFT	
THE EYRIE.....	79
THE EDITOR	
THE CAULDRON.....	86
PRESTON LANGLEY HICKEY	

For Advertising Rates in *WEIRD TALES* apply to YOUNG & WARD, Advertising Managers,  
163 North Michigan Blvd., Chicago, Ill.