

THE ILLUSTRATED



WITH ART BY ERNŐ ZÓRÁD

The Illustrated MONKEY PLANET

Based upon the novel

La Planète des Singes

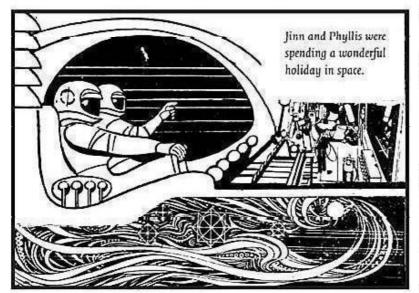
by

Pierre Boulle

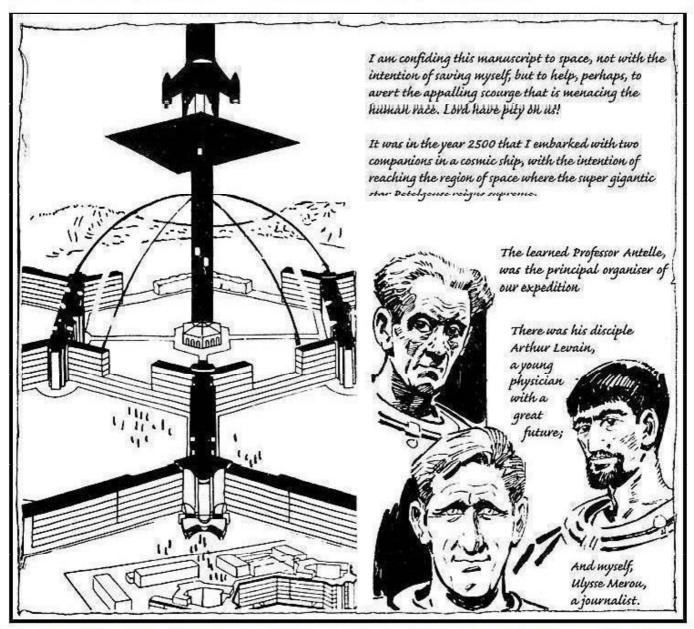
Translated into English by Xan Fielding

And the Hungarian comic book adaptation
A Majmok Bolygója
Illustrated by
Zórád Ernó









Jinn and Phyllis were spending a wonderful holiday in space, as far away as possible from the inhabited stars.

In those days, interplanetary voyages were an everyday occurrence but Jinn and Phyllis wandered over the universe for their pleasure in a ship that was like a sphere with an envelope - a sail - which moved through space propelled by the pressure of light-radiation.

One day, Jinn and Phyllis were lying side by side. Jinn was thinking only of his love for Phyllis. Phyllis lay stretched out on her side, gazing at the immensity of the universe and letting herself be hypnotised by the cosmic sensation of the void.

All of a sudden she sat up. An unusual flash of light had streaked across this void. Jinn, when it was pointed out to him, agreed with her, a body, sparkling in the light was floating through space. Jinn picked up a pair of binoculars and focused them on the mysterious object, while Phyllis leaned on his shoulder.

"It's not a very big object," he said. "It seems to be made of glass... It looks like..." A puzzled expression came into his eyes and he lowered the binoculars. "It's a bottle, darling, I can see it quite clearly. There's something white inside that looks like paper - a message, obviously".

"Jinn, we've got to get hold of it!"

Phyllis donned her diving suit and made her way out of the sail by the double trapdoor. There, holding onto a rope with one hand and brandishing a long-handled scoop in the other, she stood in readiness to retrieve the bottle.

"Slower, Jinn... No, a bit faster than that, it's going to pass us... Starboard... Now hard to port... Hold it... I've got it!"

She gave a triumphant cry and came back inside with her trophy. It was a largish bottle and its neck had been carefully sealed. A roll of paper could be seen inside.

"Jinn, break it open, hurry up!" Phyllis begged, stamping her foot.

Jinn yielded to his mate's entreaties and smashed the glass with a hammer. The paper unrolled of its' own accord. It consisted of a large number of very thin sheets, covered with tiny handwriting. The message was written in the language of the Earth, which Jinn knew perfectly, having been partly educated on that planet.

He reduced the volume of the sphere so that it floated idly in space, made sure that there was no obstacle in front of them, then lay down beside his companion and began to read the manuscript.

I am confiding this manuscript to space, not with the intention of saving myself, but to help, perhaps, to avert the appalling scourge that is menacing the human race. Lord have pity on us!

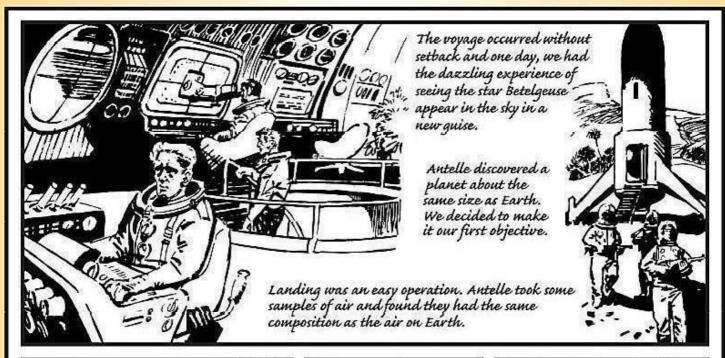
It was in the year, Two thousand, five hundred, that I embarked with two companions in a cosmic ship, with the intention of reaching the region of space where the super gigantic star, Betelgeuse, reigns supreme. Why was such a distant star chosen as the target for the first interstellar flight? It was the learned Professor Antelle, the principal organiser of the enterprise and the leader of our expedition who made this decision.

As he had foreseen, the voyage lasted about two years of our time, during which three and a half centuries must have elapsed on Earth. That was the only snag about aiming so far into the distance: if we came back one day we should find our planet older by seven or eight hundred years.

It is certain that the learned Antelle, without being a misanthrope, was not interested at all in human beings and this probably explains why he had collected in the craft, himself; his disciple Arthur Levain, a young physician with a great future; and myself, Ulysse Merou, a little-known journalist who had met the professor as a result of an interview.

The voyage thus occurred without a setback. The only physical inconvenience was a sensation of heaviness during the year of acceleration and the one of reducing speed. And one day, after this long crossing, we had the dazzling experience of seeing the star Betelgeuse appear in the sky in a new guise.

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The feeling of awe produced by such a sight cannot be described: a new sun was born for us, a reddish sun, like ours when it sets, the attraction and warmth of which we could already feel.

Antelle began his observations and it was not long before he discovered the existence of a planet about the same size as Earth. It possessed an atmosphere containing oxygen and nitrogen and it revolved around Betelgeuse receiving a radiation comparable to that received by Earth.

We decided to make it our first objective. We embarked in one of our launches and left our ship to revolve around the planet. It was safer there and we knew it would not drift an inch from its orbit.

Landing on a planet of this kind was an easy operation. As soon as we had penetrated the thick layers of the atmosphere, Professor Antelle took some samples of the outside air and analysed them. He found they had the same composition as the air on Earth at a similar altitude.

The planet bore a strange resemblance to Earth. This impression became clearer every second. The atmosphere was bright, slightly tinged with a pale green colour, rather like our sky in Provence at sunset. The ocean was light blue, also with green tinges. The form of the coastline was very different from anything I had seen at home, nothing in the planet's topography recalled either our Old or New worlds.

Our flight swept us over a thick, russet-coloured forest that called to mind our equatorial jungle. We were now at a very low altitude. We caught sight of a fairly large clearing occupying the top of a plateau, the ground all around it being rather broken. Our leader decided to attempt a landing there, and then, two years after leaving our Earth, we came down gently and landed without a jolt in the middle of the plateau, on green grass reminiscent of our meadows in Normandy.

We were silent and motionless for quite a time after making contact with the ground. Having donned our diving suits, we carefully opened one porthole of the launch. The forest surrounded the clearing like the walls of a fortress. Not a sound, not a movement, disturbed it.

Professor Antelle insisted on analysing the atmosphere and the result was encouraging: the air had the same composition as the Earth's. Shedding our space suits, we were able to talk easily but ventured only timidly to take a step or two without moving too far from our launch.

There was no doubt that we were on a twin planet of our Earth. Life existed. The vegetable realm was, in fact, particularly lush yet the forest all around us appeared to be uninhabited. Before taking a further step, we felt it was urgent to give the planet a name. We christened it Soror, because of its resemblance to our Earth.

We entered the forest, following a natural path. Levain and I were armed with carbines. We were marching in single file, when Levain, who was leading, stopped and motioned us to listen. A murmur, like running water, could be heard in the distance. We made our way in that direction and the sound became clearer.

It was a waterfall. On coming to it, all three of us were moved by the beauty of the site. A stream of water spread out into a sort of lake, a natural swimming pool fringed with rocks mingled with sand.

We took off our clothes and got ready to dive into the lake but Professor Antelle cautioned us. Perhaps this liquid was not water at all and might be extremely dangerous. Levain went up to the edge of it, bent down, scooped a little up in the palm of his hand, smelled it, and wetted the end of his tongue with it. "It can't be anything but water," he muttered.

He bent down again to plunge his hand into the lake, when we saw him suddenly stiffen. He gave an exclamation of surprise and pointed toward something he had just discerned in the sand.

It was the print of a human foot.

"It's a woman's foot," Arthur Levain declared. "She was here less than five minutes ago," the young man exclaimed. "She was swimming, heard us coming, and fled."

The Professor shrugged his shoulders. "If a human being swam here, we could no doubt do the same without any danger."

Without further ado we shed our clothes and plunged into the pool.



After our long voyage the pleasure of this swim in cool, delicious water made us almost forget our recent discovery. Levain alone seemed harassed and lost in thought. I was about to make a taunting remark about his melancholy expression when I saw the woman just above us, perched on the rocky ledge from which the cascade fell.

I shall never forget the impression her appearance made on me. I held my breath at the marvellous beauty of this creature from Soror, who revealed herself to us dripping with spray, illuminated by the blood-red beams of Betelgeuse. It was a woman - a young girl, rather, unless it was a goddess. She boldly asserted her femininity in the light of this monstrous sun, completely naked and without any ornament other than her hair, which hung down to her shoulders.

Standing upright, leaning forward, her breasts thrust out toward us, her arms raised slightly backward in the attitude of a diver taking off, she was watching us, and her surprise clearly equalled our own. When she saw that she herself was an object of curiosity - or, to be more accurate, when my eyes met hers - she seemed to receive a shock and abruptly looked away with an automatic gesture as swift as that of a frightened animal. It was not out of shame at being this scrutinised. I had a feeling that it would have been an exaggeration to suppose her capable of such an emotion. It was simply that her gaze would not, or could not, withstand mine. With her head turned to one side, she now watched us stealthily, out of the corner of her eye.

"As I told you, it's a woman," young Levain muttered.

We dared not move a muscle, tortured by the fear of seeing her rush away. Our attitude reassured her. After a moment she stepped out again onto the ledge. But young Levain was decidedly too excited to be able to hold his tongue.

"Never in my life..." he began. He stopped, realising his imprudence. She had recoiled in the same manner as before, as though the human voice terrified her.

Professor Antelle motioned us to keep quiet and started splashing about in the water without appearing to pay the slightest attention to her. We adopted the same tactics, which met with complete success. Not only did she step forward once more she then took to the water and swam toward us.

We realised she wanted to play and therefore continued with our frolics, which had given her such confidence, modifying our movements whenever she looked startled. Soon we were all involved in a game in which she had unconsciously laid down the rules: a strange game indeed, with a certain resemblance to the movements of seals in a pool, which consisted of alternately fleeing from us and approaching us, suddenly veering away when we were almost within reach, then drawing so close as to graze us but without ever actually coming into contact. It was childish; but what would we not have done in order to tame the beautiful stranger! I noticed that Professor Antelle took part in this play with unconcealed pleasure.

This had been going on for some time, and we were getting out of breath, when I was struck by the paradoxical nature of the girl's expression: her solemnity. There she was, taking evident pleasure in the games she was inspiring, yet not a smile had appeared on her face. For some time this had given me a vague feeling of uneasiness, without my knowing exactly why. I was now relieved to discover the reason: she neither laughed nor smiled; from time to time she only uttered one of those little throaty cries that evidently expressed her satisfaction.

I decided to make an experiment. As she approached me, cleaving the water with a peculiar swimming action resembling a dog's and with her hair streaming out behind her like the tail of a comet, I looked her straight in the eye and, before she could turn her head aside, gave her a smile filled with all the friendliness and affection I could muster.

The result was surprising. She stopped swimming, stood up in the water, which reached to her waist, and raised her hands in front of her in a gesture of defence. Then she quickly turned her back on me and raced for the shore. Out of the water, she paused and half turned around, looking at me askance, as she had on the ledge, with the startled air of an animal that has just seen something alarming.









"A female savage," I said, "belonging to some backward race like those found in New Guinea or in our African forests?"

At the sound of my voice, this gorgeous creature, that in a romantic flight of fancy I had christened "Nova", turned to face us as though to defend herself, her arms again raised in front of her, her lips curled back, in a menacing attitude that brought us to a standstill. Then she uttered a last shrill cry, and fled into the forest. In a few seconds she had disappeared into the undergrowth that closed back around her golden body, leaving us standing aghast in the middle of the jungle, now completely silent once again.

We searched for the stranger around the region of the stream, but unable to find the slightest trace of her made our way back to our launch in the clearing. The professor thought of taking off again to attempt a landing at some more civilised spot, but Levain suggested stopping where we were for at least twenty four hours to try to establish another contact with this jungle's inhabitants. I supported him in this suggestion, which eventually prevailed. We dared not admit to one another that the hope of seeing the girl again held us to the area.

The afternoon went by without incident; but toward evening, the jungle gradually became alive with furtive rustlings and snappings, and we felt that invisible eyes were spying on us through the foliage. We spent an uneventful night, however, barricaded in our launch, keeping watch in turns.

At dawn we decided to return to the waterfall. The entire way, we were obsessed by the unnerving impression of being followed and watched by creatures that dared not show themselves. Yet Nova, the day before, had been willing to approach us.

"Perhaps it's our clothes that frighten them," Arthur Levain said suddenly.

This seemed a most likely explanation. I distinctly remembered that when Nova had fled she had found herself in front of our pile of clothes and had then sprung aside quickly to avoid them.

After a few minutes we noticed the girl on the rocky ledge, without having heard her approach. She was not alone. There was a man standing beside her, also completely naked, whose features were so similar to those of our goddess that I assumed he was her father. He was watching us, as was she, in an attitude of bewilderment and concern.

And there were many others. We noticed them little by little, while we forced ourselves to maintain our feigned indifference. They crept furtively out of the forest and gradually formed an unbroken circle around the lake. They were all sturdy, handsome specimens of humanity, men and women with golden skin, now looking restless, evidently prey to a great excitement and uttering an occasional sharp cry. We were hemmed in and felt somewhat anxious, but their attitude was not menacing; they simply appeared to be interested in our actions.

Whenever we had discussed, during the voyage, our eventual encounter with living beings, we saw in our mind's eye monstrous, misshapen creatures of a physical aspect very different from ours, but we always implicitly imagined the presence in them of a mind. On the planet Soror reality appeared to be quite the reverse: we had to do with inhabitants resembling us in every way from the physical point of view but who appeared to be completely devoid of the power of reason.

They collected together on the bank at the edge of the pool, in a trembling mob, uttering their furious little cries and stretching their arms out toward us in rage. Their gestures were so menacing that we took fright. Levain and I made for our weapons, but the wise Antelle whispered to us not to use them and even not to brandish them so long as they did not approach us.

But scarcely had he said so when their agitation grew into a frenzy. It appeared that the sight of men wearing clothes was unbearable to them. We made haste to regain the launch. On our way back I had the impression that they were still there, albeit invisible, and were following our withdrawal in silence.

The attack was launched as we came within sight of the clearing, with an abruptness that precluded all defence. Leaping out of the thickets like stags, the men of Soror were upon us before we could lift our weapons to our shoulders.

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The curious thing about this aggression was that it was not exactly directed against our persons. They were not after our lives, but after our clothes and all the accessories we were carrying. In a moment we were overwhelmed. A mass of probing hands stripped us of our weapons and ammunition pouches and threw these aside, while others struggled to peel off our clothes and tear them to shreds. Once I had understood what had provoked their fury, I passively gave in, and though I received a few scratches I was not seriously injured. Antelle and Levain did the same, and presently we found ourselves stark naked in the midst of a group of men and women who, visibly reassured to see us in this state, started dancing around us, encircling us too tightly for us to be able to escape.

There were now at least a hundred of them on the edge of the clearing. Those who were farther away then fell upon our launch with a fury comparable to that which had induced them to pull our clothes to pieces. In spite of the despair I felt at seeing them pillage our precious vehicle, I pondered on their behaviour and fancied I could discern an essential principle in it: these beings were roused to fury by objects. Things that were manufactured provoked their anger as well as their fear. When they seized an instrument, they held it in their hands only long enough to break it or tear it apart. Then they promptly hurled it as far away as possible, as though it were a live coal. I had already noted the fact that they had attacked us without a single weapon.

Powerless, we witnessed the sacking of our launch. The door had soon yielded to their blows. They rushed inside and destroyed everything that could be destroyed, in particular the precious navigating instruments, and scattered the bits and pieces. Then they came back to our group. We were jostled, pulled this way and that, and finally dragged off into the depths of the jungle.

Our situation was becoming more and more alarming. Disarmed, stripped, obliged to march barefoot at too fast a pace, we could neither exchange our impressions nor even complain. The slightest attempt at conversation provoked such menacing reactions that we had to resign ourselves to painful silence. And yet these creatures were men like us. Clad and shod, they would scarcely have drawn attention in our world.

This calvary lasted several hours. I was overwhelmed with fatigue, my feet bleeding, my body covered with scratches caused by the reeds through which these men of Soror made their way with impunity, like snakes. My companions were in no better shape than I was, and Antelle was stumbling at every step by the time we finally reached what appeared to be the end of the march. The forest was less thick at this spot and the undergrowth had given place to short grass. Here our guards released us and, without bothering about us, started playing once more, chasing one another through the trees, which seemed to be their main occupation. We sank to the ground, numb with fatigue, taking advantage of this respite to hold a consultation.

It needed all the philosophy of our leader to prevent us from being engulfed in dark despair. Night was falling. We could no doubt attempt an escape by taking advantage of the general inattention; but then what? Even if we managed to retrace our steps, there was no chance of our being able to use the launch. It seemed wiser to remain where we were and to try to win over these disconcerting beings. Moreover, we were famished.

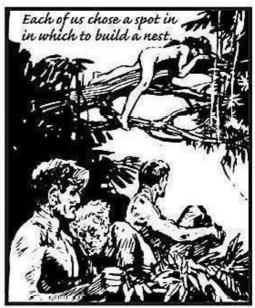
We rose to our feet and took a few timid steps. They went on with their senseless games without paying any attention. Nova alone seemed not to have forgotten us. She started following us at a distance, always turning her head away when we looked at her. After wandering at random, we discovered we were in a sort of encampment where the shelters were not even huts, but nest-like constructions like those built by the big apes in our African forests: a few interwoven branches, without any binding, placed on the ground or wedged into the forks of low trees. Some of these nests were occupied. Men and women lay stretched out inside them, often in couples, fast asleep and snuggling up together as dogs do in the cold. Other, larger shelters served entire families, and we noticed several children who looked extremely handsome and healthy.

This provided no solution to our feeding problem. At last we saw at the foot of a tree a family getting ready to eat, but their meal was hardly designed to tempt us. They were pulling to pieces, without the aid of any utensil, a fairly large animal resembling a deer. With their nails and their teeth they tore off bits of the raw meat, which they devoured after merely removing a few shreds of skin. This feast turned our stomachs, and in any case, after drawing a little closer, we realised we were by no means welcome to share it. Quite the contrary! Angry growls made us draw back quickly.

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It was Nova who came to our rescue. Did she do so because she had finally understood that we were hungry? Or was it because she was famished herself? In any case, she climbed up into the branches of a tree and a few moments later a shower of fruit resembling bananas fell to the ground. The fruit was quite good and we were able to eat our fill and, after drinking some water from a stream, we decided to spend the night there.

Each of us chose a corner in the grass in which to build a nest similar to the others in the colony. I took some time to finish my bed, still closely watched by Nova, who had drawn some distance, away. When I lay down, she stood motionless for a moment or two, as though unable to make up her mind; then she took a few hesitant steps away from me preferring instead to sleep in the branches of a tree.

I ended up by falling asleep, half dead from fatigue, after bestowing no more than a glance on the satellite of Soror, which, smaller than our Moon, east a yellowish light over the jungle.

The sky was turning pale through the trees when I awoke. Nova was still asleep. Suddenly she stirred and raised her head when a terrifying hullabaloo made us start up in alarm.

I found myself with my two companions, standing bolt upright in the gathering dawn. Nova had sprung to her feet and showed signs of the deepest terror. I understood immediately that this din was a nasty surprise not only for us but for all the inhabitants of the forest, for all of them, abandoning their lairs, had started running in panic. This was not a game, as on the previous day; their cries expressed sheer terror.

This din, suddenly breaking the silence of the forest, was enough to make one's blood run cold. It was a strange cacophony, a mixture of rattling sounds like a roll of drums and also shouts. It was the shouts that made the most impression on us, for they were incontestably human.

The elders of the tribe appeared to make a decision. They rushed off in the opposite direction from the noise. The rest of them followed, and we saw them galloping all around us like a driven herd of deer.

The din grew louder and I lost my composure. I ran as fast as I could for several hundred yards and then noticed that Levain alone had followed me, Professor Antelle's age precluding such rapid flight. I was about to suggest going back or at least waiting for our leader, when some other noises made us jump in alarm.

They were gunshots echoing through the jungle: one, two, three, then several more, at irregular intervals, sometimes one at a time, at other times two consecutive shots, strangely reminiscent of a double-barrelled gun. They were firing in front of us, on the path taken by the fugitives. Instinctively I resumed my headlong flight, taking care nevertheless to keep under cover of the undergrowth and to make as little noise as possible. My companion followed after me.

We thus reached the region in which the shots had been heard. I slowed down and crept forward, almost on all fours. Still followed by Levain, I clambered up a sort of hillock and came to a halt on the summit, panting for breath. There was nothing in front of me but a few trees and a curtain of scrub. I advanced cautiously, my head on a level with the ground. There I lay for a moment or two as though floored by a blow, overpowered by a spectacle completely beyond my poor human comprehension.

There were several incongruous features in the scene that unfolded before my eyes, some of them horrifying, but my attention was at first drawn exclusively to a figure standing motionless thirty paces away and peering in my direction.

I almost shouted aloud in amazement. Yes, in spite of my terror, in spite of the tragedy of my own position - I was caught between the beaters and the guns - stupefaction overrode all other emotion when I saw this creature on the lookout, lying in wait for the game. For it was an ape, a large-sized gorilla. It was in vain that I told myself I was losing my reason: I could entertain not the slightest doubt as to his species. But an encounter with a gorilla on the planet Soror was not the essential outlandishness of the situation. This for me lay in the fact that the ape was correctly dressed, like a man of our world, and above all that he wore his clothes in such an easy manner. This natural aspect was what struck me first of all. No sooner had I seen the animal than I realised that he was not in any way disguised. The state in which I saw him was normal, as normal to him as nakedness was to Nova and her companions.

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He was dressed as you and I are, I mean as you and I would be if we were taking part in one of those drives organised for ambassadors or other distinguished persons at official shooting parties. His dark-brown jacket seemed to be made by the best Paris tailor and revealed underneath a checked shirt of the kind our sportsmen wear. His breeches, flaring out slightly above his calves, terminated in a pair of leggings. There the resemblance ended: instead of boots he wore big black gloves.

It was a gorilla, I tell you! From his shirt collar emerged a hideous head, its top shaped like a sugar loaf and covered with black hair, with a flattened nose and jutting jaws. There he stood, leaning slightly forward, in the posture of a hunter on the lookout, grasping a rifle in his long hands. He was facing me, on the other side of a large gap cut out of the jungle at right angles to the direction of the drive.

All of a sudden he stiffened. He had noticed, as I had, a faint sound in the bushes a little to my right. He turned and raised his weapon, ready to put it to his shoulder. From my position I could see the furrow left in the undergrowth by one of the fugitives who was running blindly straight ahead. I almost shouted out to warn him; so obvious was the ape's intention. But I had neither the time nor the strength; the man was already racing like a mountain goat across the open ground. The shot rang out while he was still halfway across the field of fire. He collapsed in a heap on the ground, and after a few convulsions lay motionless.

The realisation of my own position soon roused me from my stupor. I then noticed with terror that the cleared space in the forest was littered with human bodies. It was no longer possible to delude myself as to the meaning of this scene. I caught sight of another gorilla like the first one, a hundred paces off. I was witnessing a drive a alas, I was taking part in it! A fantastic drive in which the guns, posted at regular intervals, were apes and the game consisted of men, men like me, men and women whose naked, punctured bodies, twisted in ridiculous postures, lay bleeding on the ground.

I turned aside from this unbearable horror. I preferred the sight of the merely grotesque, and I gazed back at the gorilla barring my path. He had taken a step to one side, revealing another ape standing behind him. It was a young chimpanzee, dressed with less elegance than the gorilla, in a pair of trousers and a shirt, and easily playing his part in the meticulous organisation that I was beginning to discern. The hunter had just handed him his gun. The chimpanzee exchanged it for another he was holding in his hand. Then, with precise gestures, using the cartridges in the belt he was wearing around his waist and that sparkled in the rays of Betelgeuse, the little chimpanzee reloaded the weapon. Then each resumed his position.

Lying beside me, Arthur Levain, numb with terror, was incapable of giving me the slightest help. The danger was increasing at every second. The beaters were approaching from behind. The din they made was now deafening. We were at bay like wild beasts, like those wretched creatures that I could still see flitting all around us. The size of the colony must have been bigger than I had suspected, for many men were still rushing along the track, to meet there a ghastly death.

Not all, however. Forcing myself to recover a little composure, from the top of my hillock I studied the behaviour of the fugitives. Some of them, completely panic-stricken, rushed along snapping the undergrowth in their flight, thus alerting the apes, who easily shot them down. But others gave evidence of more cunning, like old boars that have been hunted several times and have learned a number of tricks. These crept forward on all fours, paused for a moment on the edge of the clearing, studied the nearest hunter through the leaves, and waited for the moment when his attention was drawn in another direction. Then, in one bound and at full speed, they crossed the deadly alley.

Therein perhaps lay a chance of safety. I motioned to Levain to follow me and slipped soundlessly forward as far as the last thicket in front of the path.

The hunt was ending in an infernal din. The beaters were at our heels. I saw one of them emerge from the foliage. It was an enormous gorilla, laying about him at random with a club and screeching fit to burst his lungs. He made an even more terrifying impression on me than the hunter with the gun. Levain started chattering with fear and trembling from head to foot, while I kept my eye on the newcomer in front of me and waited for an opportune moment.

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My wretched companion unconsciously saved my life by his imprudence. He had gone completely out of his mind. He got up without taking any precaution, started running off at random, and came out into the alley in full view of the hunter's field of fire. He went no farther. The shot seemed to snap him in two and he collapsed, adding his body to all those that already lay there. I wasted no time in mourning him - what could I do? But waited feverishly for the moment when the gorilla would hand his gun to his servant. As soon as he did so, I sprang out and raced across the alley. I saw the hunter, as though in a dream, hasten to seize his weapon, but I had got the best of him. I felt a strange joy, which was balm to my humiliation. I went on running at full speed, leaving the carnage behind me, until I could no longer hear the noise of the beaters. I was saved.

Saved! I was underestimating the maliciousness of the apes on the planet Soror. Hardly had I gone a hundred yards when I stumbled headfirst into an obstacle concealed in the foliage. It was a wide-meshed net stretched above the ground and equipped with large pockets, in one of which I was now entangled. I was not the only captive. The net ran across a large section of the forest, and a crowd of fugitives who had escaped being shot had let themselves be caught as I had. To my right and left frenzied jerks accompanied by furious whines bore witness to their efforts to break free.

A wild rage overcame me when I felt myself thus imprisoned, a rage stronger than terror, leaving me utterly incapable of thought. I did exactly what my reason advised me not to do - I struggled in an utterly insane manner, with the result that the net became even more tightly wound around me. I was eventually so closely bound that I could not move at all and was at the mercy of the apes I heard approaching. I was seized by a deadly terror when I saw their troop advancing. After witnessing their cruelty, I thought they were going to engage in wholesale massacre.

The hunters, all of them gorillas, led the advance. I noticed that they had abandoned their weapons, which gave me a little hope. Behind them came the loaders and beaters, among whom there were an equal number of gorillas and chimpanzees. The hunters seemed to be the masters and their manner was that of aristocrats. They did not appear to be ill-disposed, and chatted among themselves as cheerfully as one could wish.

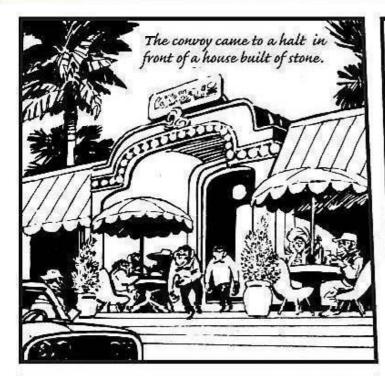
In fact, I am now so accustomed to the paradoxes of this planet that I wrote the preceding sentence without thinking of the absurdity it represents. And yet it's the truth! The gorillas had the manner of aristocrats. They chatted together happily in an articulate language, and each moment their faces expressed human sentiments, not a trace of which I had found in Nova. Alas! What had become of Nova? I shuddered as I recalled the bloodstained alley. There existed a fierce hatred between the two races. To realise this one only had to see the attitude of the captive men at the apes' approach. They struggled frenziedly, thrashing out with hands and feet, ground their teeth, foamed at the mouth, and gnawed furiously at the strings of the net.

Without paying attention to this hubbub, the hunter gorillas - I caught myself calling them the nobility - gave some orders to their servants. Some big carts, rather low-lying and completely caged in, were lined up on a track on the other side of the net. Into these we were bundled, ten or so to a vehicle: a fairly lengthy operation, for the prisoners struggled desperately. Two servant gorillas, their hands encased in leather gloves to protect them from bites, took hold of the prisoners one by one, freed them from the trap, and flung them into the cages, the doors of which were then shut fast, while the nobles directed the operation leaning negligently on their walking sticks.

When it came to my turn, I tried to draw attention to myself by talking. But no sooner had I opened my mouth than one of the apes, no doubt mistaking my action for a menace, brutally stuffed his enormous glove into my face. I was forcibly silenced and thrown like a bundle into a cage together with a dozen men and women who were still too agitated to pay any attention to me.

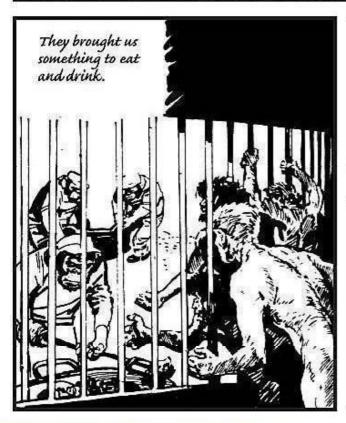
When we were all loaded inside, one of the servants checked the lock on each cage and went to report to his master. The latter gave a signal, and a roar of engines echoed through the forest. The carts started to move forward, each one towed by a sort of tractor driven by an ape. I could distinctly see the driver of the vehicle behind mine. He was a chimpanzee. From time to time he made sarcastic remarks at us, and when the engines slowed down I could hear him humming a rather melancholy little tune not altogether lacking in harmony.

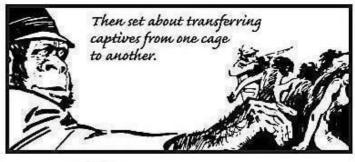
MONKEY PLANET %













After driving for a quarter of an hour along a rough track, the convoy came to a halt on a stretch of open ground in front of a house built of stone. The house, with its red tiled roof, green shutters, and an inscription on a panel at the entrance, looked like an inn. I realised at once it was a meeting place for the hunt. The she-apes had come here to wait for their lords and masters, who presently arrived in private cars along the same track we had taken. The lady gorillas sat around in armchairs chatting together in the shade of some big trees that looked like palms. One of them was sipping a drink through a straw.

I am afraid I am unable to convey the grotesque and diabolical quality this scene had for me. Have I adequately stressed the absolutely and totally simian appearance of these monkeys, apart from the expression in their eyes? Have I described how these she-gorillas, also dressed in sports clothes but with great elegance, jostled one another to view the best specimens and point them out while congratulating their lords and masters? Have I said that one of them, taking a little pair of scissors out of her bag, leaned over a body, cut off a lock of brown hair, curled it around her finger, and then, with the others soon following her example, pinned it onto her hat?

This scene was imbued with a horror incomprehensible to the normal mind. My blood boiled, but I succeeded for some time in restraining myself. However, when I recognised among the corpses, the boyish, almost childish features of my luckless companion, Arthur Levain, it was no longer possible to contain myself.

My emotion exploded in an outlandish manner in keeping with the grotesque aspect of this macabre scene. I gave way to a fit of wild hilarity, bursting out in hysterical laughter.

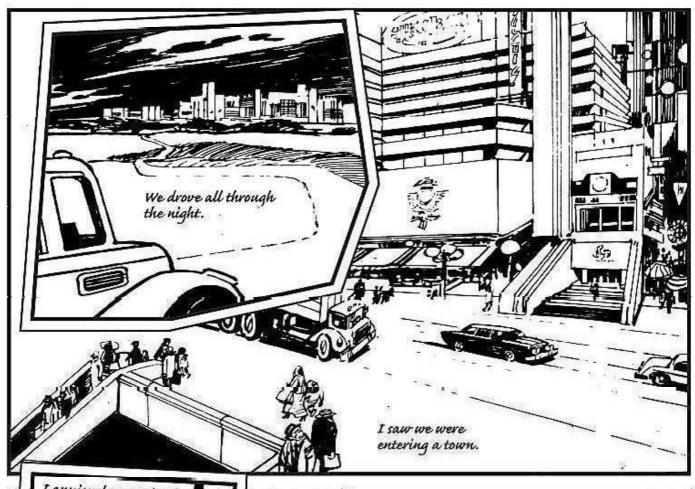
I had no idea of the fate the monkeys had in store for us, but it was clearly their policy to look after us. Before disappearing into the inn, one of the nobles gave some instructions to a gorilla who appeared to be a team leader. The latter came over to us, assembled his subordinates, and presently the servants brought us something to eat in basins and some buckets of water to drink. The food consisted of a sort of porridge. It was a thick mash with a cereal base that did not taste bad. I swallowed several handfuls without displeasure. Our menu was, moreover, enriched by the good will of our guards. Now that the hunt was over, these beaters, who had so frightened me, proved to be less unpleasant so long as we behaved ourselves.

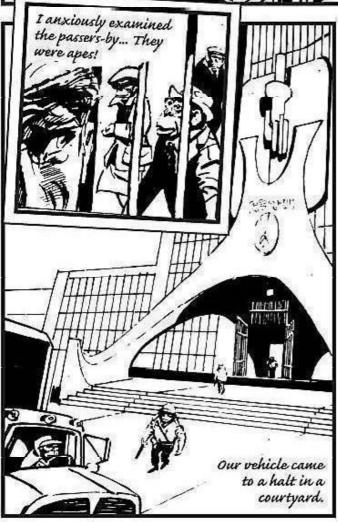
When the meal was over, the team leader and his assistants set about rearranging the convoy by transferring some of the captives from one cage to another. They seemed to be making some sort of selection, but on what basis I could not tell. Finding myself placed in a group of extremely handsome men and women, I tried to persuade myself that this was because we were the most remarkable subjects, deriving a bitter consolation from the thought that the apes, at first glance, had judged me worthy of being included in an elite.

I was surprised and overjoyed to see Nova among my new companions. She had escaped the massacre and I gave thanks to the heaven of Betelgeuse. It was with her, above all, in mind that I had scrutinised the victims at great length, fearful of seeing at any moment her lovely body among the pile of corpses. I felt as though I had recovered a being that was dear to me and, losing my head once more, I rushed over to her, opening my arms wide. It was utter madness; my gesture terrified her. Was such a marvellous physique not animated by any sort of mind? I felt downcast to see her shrink away at my approach, her hands extended like claws as though to throttle me, which she probably would have done had I persisted.

Yet when I checked myself she calmed down fairly quickly. She lay down in a corner of the cage and I followed her example with a sigh. All the other captives had done likewise. They now looked listless, prostrate, and resigned to their fate.

Outside, the apes were getting ready for the convoy to move off. A tarpaulin was stretched over our cage and fastened halfway down the sides, letting in some light. Orders were issued; the engines started. I found myself travelling at high speed toward an unknown destination, terrified by the thought of the fresh horrors that awaited me on the planet Soror.









We drove all through the night and I racked my brains to discover some sense in the events I had witnessed. A general overall impression prevailed: these apes, male and female, gorillas and chimpanzees, were not in any way ridiculous and there was nothing at all unnatural about any of their gestures.

I succeeded in sleeping till daybreak when my rest was interrupted as our vehicle slowed down and I saw we were entering a town. I pressed my face against the bars and for the first time viewed a civilised city on the planet Soror.

We were driving down a fairly broad street flanked with pavements. I anxiously examined the passers-by.

They were apes.

My hope of discovering a civilised human race became chimerical, and I spent the last part of the drive in gloomy despair. After passing through an entrance gate our vehicle came to a halt in a courtyard. Some apes immediately surrounded us and tried to calm down the captives' mounting agitation with a few blows of their pikes.

They helped our guards unload the carts. We were taken out of the cages one by one, stuffed into big sacks, and carried inside the building. I put up no resistance and let myself be hauled off by two gorillas dressed in white. Eventually I was dumped down on the ground; then, after the sack had been opened, I was thrown into another cage, this time a stationary one, its floor covered with straw. I was alone. One of the gorillas carefully locked the door from the outside.

The room in which I found myself contained a large number of cages like mine, lined up in two rows and facing a long passage. Most of them were already occupied, some of them by my companions of the roundup who had just been brought here, others by men and women who must have been captured some time earlier.

I was distracted by the return of the two gorillas in white jackets, they pushed in front of them a handcart laden with food and buckets of water that they dished out to the captives. They placed in front of me a bowl containing some mash, a little fruit, and a bucket. I had decided to do all I could to establish contact with these apes, who seemed to be the only rational and civilised beings on the planet. The one who brought my food did not look unpleasant. Observing my tranquillity, he even gave me a friendly tap on the shoulder. I looked him straight in the eye, then, putting my hand on my chest, gave a ceremonious bow. I saw intense surprise on his face as I raised my head again. I then smiled at him, putting all my heart into this gesture. He stopped short and uttered an exclamation. At last I had succeeded in attracting attention to myself. Wishing to reinforce this success I uttered rather stupidly the first phrase that came into my head:

"How do you do? I am a man from Earth. I've had a long journey."

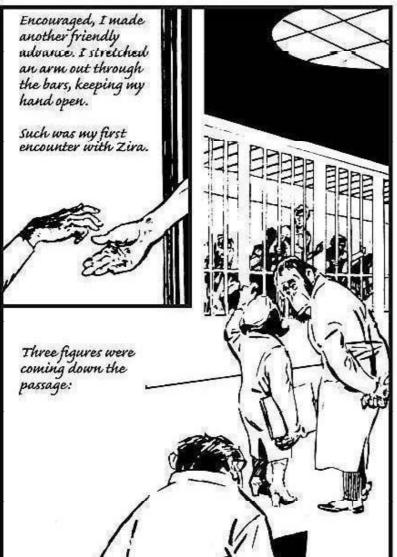
The meaning was unimportant. I only needed to speak in order to reveal my true nature to him. I had certainly achieved my aim. Never before had such stupefaction been seen on an ape's face. He stood breathless and gaping, and so did his companion. They both started talking together in an undertone, but the result was not what I had hoped for.

The two apes looked at each other for a moment and began roaring with laughter. I must have represented a truly unique phenomenon, for tears were streaming down their faces and they could not stop making merry at my expense.

Nevertheless I had succeeded in drawing their attention to me. As they went off, they turned around several times to look back at me. I saw one of them take a notebook from his pocket and scribble something in it after carefully recording a sign inscribed on a panel at the top of my cage, which I assumed to be a number.

They disappeared. The other captives, at first agitated by my demonstration, had resumed eating. There was nothing else I could do but eat and rest while waiting for a more favourable opportunity to reveal my noble nature. I gulped down another mash of cereals and some delicious fruit. Opposite me, Nova stopped munching every now and then to dart a furtive glance in my direction.









On the following morning the door of the corridor was pushed open and I saw a new figure enter the room accompanied by the two warders. It was a female chimpanzee, and I realised from the way the gorillas kept in the background that she held an important post in the establishment.

The warders must have given her a report about me, for no sooner had she come in than she questioned one of them, who promptly pointed his finger in my direction. Thereupon she came straight over to my cage.

I watched her carefully as she approached. She, too, was dressed in a white smock, cut more elegantly than those worn by the gorillas. What struck me most about her was her expression, which was remarkably alert and intelligent. She seemed to be quite young in spite of the simian wrinkles that framed her white muzzle. In her hand she carried a leather briefcase.

She came to a halt in front of my cage and began to scrutinise me, at the same time taking a notebook out of her briefcase.

"Good day to you, Madame," I said with a bow.

I had spoken in my gentlest voice. A look of intense surprise came over the she-ape's face, but she maintained her composure and with a gesture of authority silenced the gorillas, who had started sniggering again.

The she-ape took a fountain pen from her pocket and inscribed several lines in her notebook. Then, raising her head and again meeting my anxious gaze, she smiled once more. This encouraged me to make another friendly advance. I stretched an arm out through the bars, keeping my hand open. The gorillas gave a start and made as though to come between us. But the she-ape, whose first reaction had been to draw back, recovered herself, stopped them with one word, and, without taking her eyes off me, likewise stretched out her hairy arm, which trembled a little, toward mine. I did not move. She drew nearer still and placed her hand with its excessively long fingers on my wrist. I felt her tremble at this contact. I did my best not to make any movement that might startle her. She felt my hand, stroked my arm, then turned around to her assistants with an air of triumph.

Such was my first encounter with Zira. Zira was the she-ape's name, as I presently learned. She was the head of the department to which I had been brought. Her manner gave me some hope and I had a feeling that I would manage to enter into communication with her. She had a long conversation with the warders and I fancied she was giving them instructions about me. Then she continued on her rounds, inspecting the other occupants of the cages.

My second day of captivity went by much like the first. The apes did not bother about us except to bring us food when their attention was diverted by the arrival of some new visitors.

Three figures were coming down the passage: Zira, the female chimpanzee, and two other apes, one of whom was plainly in a high position.

He was an orangutan, the first I had seen on the planet Soror. He was shorter than the gorillas and slightly round-shouldered. His arms were relatively longer so that he often touched the ground with his hands as he walked, which the other apes did only rarely. He thus gave me the odd impression of using a couple of walking sticks. His head adorned with long coarse hair and sunk between his shoulders, his face frozen in an expression of pedantic meditation, he looked like a venerable and solemn old pontiff. He was also dressed quite differently from the others, in a long black frock coat with a red star in the buttonhole and black-and-white-striped trousers, both somewhat dusty.

Zira showed every sign of respect for this superior of hers. The two gorillas went forward to meet him and bowed low before him. The orangutan gave a condescending little wave of his hand.

They made straight for my cage. Was I not the most interesting subject of the lot? I welcomed the great authority with my most affable smile and addressed him in ringing tones:

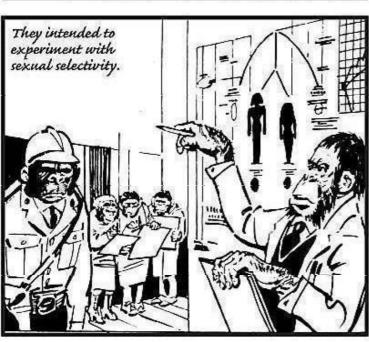
"My dear orangutan, how happy I am to find myself at last in the presence of a creature who exhales wisdom and intelligence! I am sure we are going to understand each other, you and I."

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The old dear had given a start at the sound of my voice. He scratched his ear for some time and peered suspiciously into my cage as though scenting some trickery. Zira then addressed him, notebook in hand, reading out the particulars she had jotted down about me. She did her best, but it was plain to see that the orangutan refused to be convinced.

He put his hands behind his back and started pacing up and down the corridor, passing and re-passing my cage and darting glances in my direction that were far from kindly. He stopped in front of me and started dictating his notes to his secretary.

He went on dictating for a long time, punctuating his phrases with pompous gestures. I was beginning to have enough of his blindness and resolved to give him fresh proof of my capacities. Stretching my arms out toward him, I spoke up to the best of my ability: "Mi Zaius." I had noticed that all the underlings who addressed him began with these two words.

The monkeys were flabbergasted. As for Zaius, he was completely flustered and started pacing up and down the corridor again, shaking his head with an air of incredulity.

Having finally recovered his composure, he gave orders for me to be subjected in his presence to a series of tests. I acquitted myself well and Zira's attitude showed me that she, at least, was extremely impressed. I continued to distinguish myself but above all, by listening carefully, I managed to retain a few simple words of the simian language and to understand their meaning.

Zaius, now accompanied by another orangutan who I assumed was a colleague, started a long discussion in front of my cage with Zira, who had meanwhile joined them. The she-ape spoke at great length and with fervour. I knew she was trying to plead my cause, pointing out the exceptional keenness of my intelligence, which no longer could be contested. But the only result of her intervention was to provoke an incredulous smile from the two scientists.

This time I felt it was impossible that they could entertain further doubt as to my true condition. Alas, I did not yet know the blindness of orangutans! They again gave that sceptical smile that enraged me so much, paid no attention to Zira, and went on with their discussion. No doubt I should have yielded to some angry outburst had I not intercepted a glance from Zira. It was plain to see that she did not agree with them and felt ashamed to hear them talking like this in front of me.

His colleague having eventually gone off, doubtless after pronouncing a categorical opinion on my case, Zaius embarked on some other exercises. He did the rounds of the hall, examining each of the captives in turn and giving fresh instructions to Zira, who noted them down. His movements seemed to indicate numerous changes in the occupancy of the cages.

I was not mistaken. The gorillas were now carrying out the boss's orders, which Zira had passed on to them. We were redistributed in couples. What fiendish tests were indicated by this pairing off? My acquaintance with biological laboratories had suggested the answer to me: to a scientist who has chosen instinct and reflexes as his field of study, the sexual instinct has an exceptional interest.

That was it! These demons wanted to use us - to study in captivity the amorous practices of men. Doubtless they also intended to experiment with sexual selectivity?

As soon as I understood their plan, I felt more humiliated than I had ever been in my life and swore to die rather than lend myself to these degrading schemes. Yet my shame was substantially reduced, I must admit, when I saw the woman whom science had assigned as my mate. It was Nova.

I felt almost inclined to forgive the old pedant his stupidity and blindness, and I made no protest when Zoram and Zanam seized me around the waist and flung me at the feet of the nymph of the torrent.

I shall not give a detailed account of the scenes that took place in the cages during the weeks that followed. As I had guessed, the apes had taken it into their heads to study the amorous behaviour of humans, and they tackled this task in their usual methodical manner, noting the slightest developments, struggling to provoke relationships, making use of their pikes now and then to correct a recalcitrant subject's conduct.

MONKEY PLANET *











One day, after several weeks, I snatched away Zira's notebook and fountain pen. I braved her gentle remonstrances, sat down on the straw, and started a geometrical figure. The effect it had on Zira was extraordinary. Her muzzle went purple and she gave a sharp exclamation.

Now it was she who appeared eager to establish contact. I gave thanks to Pythagoras and embarked once more on my geometry. In one corner of the sheet I sketched the system of Betelgeuse, with its four planets and marked Soror down in its exact position. I indicated it to Zira, and then pointed my forefinger at her repeatedly. She signaled to me that she had understood completely. Then in another corner of the sheet I drew our dear old solar system with its principal planets. I indicated the Earth and pointed my finger at my own chest.

This time Zira was slower to understand. She, too, indicated the Earth, then pointed her finger upward. I gave an affirmative nod. She was flabbergasted and her mental turmoil was plain to see. I did my best to help her by drawing another dotted line between Earth and Soror and marking in our vessel, on a different scale, on the trajectory. This made her see the light. I was now cert ain that my true nature and origin were known to her.

From then on, thanks to Zira, my knowledge of the simian world and language increased rapidly. She contrived to see me alone almost every day on the pretext of some test and undertook my education, instructing me in the language and soon we were able to converse together.

Then came a red-letter day for me. Yielding to my entreaties, Zira had obtained permission to take me out of the Institute for Advanced Biological Study - that was the name of the establishment - and show me around the town.

I felt my heart thumping at the thought of being in the open air again. My enthusiasm was slightly curbed when I saw she was going to keep me on a lead. The gorillas took me out of the cage, banged the door shut in Nova's face, and put around my neck a leather collar to which a strong chain was fixed. Zira took the other end and led me off, while a heart-rending whine from Nova stirred my compassion. But when I showed her a little pity and gave her a friendly wave, Zira looked angry and tugged me forward by the neck. Since she was now convinced I had an ape's mind, my intimacy with the young girl vexed and shocked her.

Her bad temper evaporated when we were alone together in the dark, deserted corridor.

"I don't suppose," she laughed, "that men on Earth are used to being held on a lead like this by apes?"

I assured her they were not at all used to it. She apologised, explaining that even though there were a few tame men who could be taken out like this without causing a scene, it was more normal if I was tied up. Subsequently, if I proved harmless, she might possibly be able to relieve me of my fetters.

And partly forgetting my true condition, as she still often did, she began advising me about my behaviour, which humiliated me deeply.

"Above all, do be careful not to turn on passers-by or bare your teeth or scratch a trustful child who might come up and pet you. I didn't want to muzzle you, but . . ."

She stopped short and burst out laughing.

"Forgive me, forgive me!" she cried. "I keep forgetting you have a mind like an ape."

I allowed myself to be led along quietly. We left the building. On the sidewalk I staggered slightly, giddy from the exercise and dazzled by the glare of Betelgeuse after more than three months' captivity. I inhaled the warm air deeply; at the same time, I felt embarrassed to be walking around naked. I had grown used to this in my cage, but here I felt grotesque and indecent under the eyes of the apes passing by, who kept staring at me. But it was not because I was naked but simply because I was a man, a species that in the streets roused the same sort of curiosity as would a chimpanzee in a French city. The adults merely grinned and continued on their way, but some young apes began to gather around me in great glee. Zira quickly led me off toward her car, motioned me into the back seat, sat down herself behind the steering wheel, and drove me slowly along the streets.

※ Monkey Planet ※









Zira stopped her car in front of a tall gate through which I could see banks of flowers. "The park," she said. "We can go for a little stroll. I need to make you aware of the danger you are in. Your launch has been discovered. It has aroused the curiosity of our researchers. Some of our scientists have put forward the theory that the machine comes from another planet and that it was inhabited. They are unable to go a step further and imagine intelligent beings in human form."

"But you must tell them, Zira!" I cried. "I've had enough of living like a prisoner. Why not reveal the truth to everyone?"

Zira stopped short, glanced all about her, and put her hand on my arm. "Why? It's purely in your own interests that I'm doing this. You know Zaius?" Did you notice the effect your first attempts at rationality produced on him? He's as stubborn as a mule and as stupid as a man!" She burst out. "I'm almost certain he would accuse me of scientific heresy if I tried to reveal the truth in your case, as you suggest. I should be dismissed. That's unimportant, but do you realise what might then happen to you?"

"What fate could be worse than living in a cage?"

"The encephalic section. That's where we perform certain extremely tricky operations on the brain: grafting; observation and alteration of the nervous centres; partial and even total ablation."

"Am I then condemned to spend the rest of my life in a cage?"

"Not if the plan I have in mind succeeds. I have brought you here to meet Cornelius, my fiancé. He's the only one to whom I have spoken about you. He has promised to do all he can for you. Naturally, he wants to see you beforehand so as to check the incredible account I have given him."

Cornelius was waiting for us near a bank of giant ferns. He was a fine-looking chimpanzee, older than Zira certainly, but extremely young for a learned academician. As soon as I saw him I was struck by his exceptionally keen and intense expression.

"Dr. Cornelius of the Academy," Zira said. "Ulysse Merou, an inhabitant of the solar system or, to be more precise, the Earth."

Cornelius had evidently given little credit till now to Zira's confidences, preferring to believe in some hoax. He started firing questions at me. We were strolling along, the two of them a few paces ahead and arm in arm, I following on the end of my chain so as not to attract the attention of the passers-by we chanced to meet. But my replies roused his scientific curiosity to such a pitch that he would often stop short, let go of his fiancée, and we would embark on a discussion face to face with sweeping gestures, tracing diagrams in the sand on the path. Zira did not mind. She appeared, on the contrary, delighted with the impression I had made.

We made our way to the zoo adjoining the park. At first I felt no surprise. The animals bore many similarities to those on Earth. There were felines, pachyderms, ruminants, reptiles, and birds. If I noticed a sort of camel with three humps and a wild boar with horns like a stag, they could in no way astonish me after what I had already seen on the planet Soror.

My amazement began with the section devoted to man. Zira tried to dissuade me from going there, regretting having brought me, I believe, but my curiosity was too strong and I tugged on my lead until she yielded.

The first cage at which we stopped contained at least fifty individuals, men, women, and children, exhibited there to the great glee of the ape spectators. They displayed a feverish and immoderate activity, leaping about, jostling one another, making an exhibition of themselves, indulging in all sorts of frolics.

The other cages provided the same degrading spectacle. I was about to let myself be led off by Zira, with a heavy heart, when suddenly, and with a great effort, I stifled a cry of surprise. There in front of me, among the herd, I saw none other than my travelling companion, the leader and mastermind of our expedition, the famous Professor Antelle. Like me, he had been captured and, no doubt less fortunate, had then been sold to the zoo.



My joy at knowing he was alive and seeing him again was such that tears came into my eyes; then I shuddered at the condition to which this learned man had been reduced. My emotion gradually changed to a painful numbness when I noticed that his behaviour was identical to the other men's. I could not doubt the evidence of my own eyes, in spite of the improbability of this behaviour. A little ape gave him some fruit. The scientist took it, sat down, crossed his legs, and began to devour it greedily, looking at his benefactor with an eager eye, as though he hoped for another gesture of generosity. I wept anew at this sight. In a low voice I told Zira the reason for my tears. I should have liked to go up and speak to him, but she dissuaded me vigorously. I could do nothing for him at the moment, and, in the emotion of meeting again, we risked causing a scene that would prejudice our common interests and might well ruin my own plans.

"When you have been recognised and accepted as a rational being," Zira told me, "we will see about him."

"And when might that be," I cried, in dismay.

"In a month from now we're holding our annual biological conference. It's an important event. Now, for us public opinion is a more powerful element than Zaius, more powerful than all the orangutans combined. This will be a chance for you to speak up yourself to explain your case. This would cause such a sensation that Zaius wouldn't be able to stop you."

She was right and I regretfully let myself be dragged away. On the way back to the car I told them all about the professor and his reputation on Earth in the scientific world. She pondered over this for some time and promised to do her best to get him out of the zoo.

During the weeks preceding the congress Zaius paid me several visits, multiplying the ridiculous tests, while his secretary filled several notebooks with observations and conclusions concerning me. I hypocritically did my best not to appear more intelligent than he wished.

The long-awaited date finally arrived. Zira whispered in my ear as she took me out of the cage, "There'll be a vast crowd and the whole of the press. They're all on tenterhooks and know there's something unusual afoot. It's excellent for you. Take courage!"

A gorilla appeared and I rose to my feet quickly, then, flanked by two bodyguards, I entered the assembly hall with a firm tread. As soon as I had crossed the threshold I halted, dazzled and abashed.

I was in a gigantic amphitheatre of which every row of seats both around and above me was swarming with apes. There were several thousands of them. Never before had I seen so many apes gathered together, their numbers overwhelmed me.

The guards pushed me toward the centre of a circle, resembling a circus arena, where a platform had been erected. I slowly glanced all around me. The tiers of apes rose as high as the ceiling, to a height that seemed to me incredible. From the loud murmurs that greeted my appearance, they were evidently in a state of great excitement.

The president gorilla rang his bell, obtained silence, and announced he was giving the illustrious Zaius leave to speak. The orangutan then rose to his feet and began on his discourse. During this time I was doing my best to assume as intelligent an attitude as possible. When he spoke about me I bowed, putting my hand to my breast, which at first gave rise to some laughter that was promptly stifled by the bell. I quickly realised I was not advancing my cause by indulging in these tricks, which might be interpreted as the mere result of good training. I stood still, waiting for the end of his speech.

He summarised the conclusions of his report and described the tricks he was going to make me perform, the equipment for his damnable tests having been set up on the platform. He ended by declaring that, like certain birds, I was also capable of repeating a few words, and he hoped to be able to make me do this in front of the assembly. Then he turned around to me, picked up the box with its multiple fastenings, and handed it to me. But instead of manipulating the locks, I embarked on another sort of exercise.

My hour had come. I raised my hand, then, tugging gently on the lead held by a guard, I approached the microphone and addressed the President.

※ Monkey Planet ※



"Illustrious President," I said in my best simian language," I beg permission to make an announcement that, I swear, will astonish this learned assembly."

I had articulated very clearly and the result was what I had anticipated. All the apes remained glued to their seats, dumfounded, holding their breath. The president gaped at me. As for Zaius, he seemed to be in a towering rage. "Mr. President," he yelled, "I protest..." But he stopped short, overwhelmed by the ridiculousness of a discussion with a man. I took advantage of this to go on with my speech.

"Illustrious President, Noble Gorillas, Learned Orangutans, Wise Chimpanzees, O Apes! I, a man, beg leave to address you. I know my appearance is grotesque. I know the sight of this ridiculous body of mine offends you, but I also know I am addressing the wisest and most learned apes of all, those whose minds are capable of rising above mere sensory impressions and of perceiving the essential substance of a being apart from his wretched material exterior..."

The pompous humility of this opening had been suggested by Zira and Cornelius, who knew it was liable to touch the orangutans. I went on in a silence that was complete:

"Listen to me, O Apes! For I can talk, and not, I assure you, like a mechanical toy or a parrot. I can understand what you say just as well. Presently, if Your Lordships deign to question me, I shall deem it an honour to reply to your questions to the best of my ability.

But first I should like to reveal that I come from a distant planet on which, by a whim of nature, it is men who are the repositories of wisdom and reason. I beg permission to point out the place of my origin for those of my audience who are not so well acquainted with the various stellar systems."

I went up to a blackboard and by means of a few diagrams described the solar system to the best of my ability and indicated its position in the galaxy. My lecture was listened to in profound silence. Having finished my sketches, I clapped my hands together to get rid of the chalk dust on them, this simple gesture provoked an enthusiastic murmur among the crowd in the upper rows.

"Thus on Earth the intellect is embodied in the human race. It is in man's cranium that the brain has developed and flourished. It is man who invented language and made use of tools."

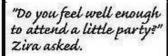
At this point I quoted several examples of our finest achievements. My voice became firmer the longer I spoke. I then embarked on the account of my own adventures, I described the means by which I had reached the world of Soror, how I had been captured and locked up in a cage, how I tried to enter into contact with Zaius, and how, doubtless as a result of my lack of ingenuity, all my efforts had been in vain. Lastly I mentioned Zira's valuable assistance and that of Dr. Cornelius. I concluded with the following words:

"This is what I wanted to tell you, O Apes! It is up to you now to decide whether I should end my days in a cage. It remains for me to say that I voyaged here without any hostile intent, inspired solely by the spirit of discovery. Since I have come to know you I find you extraordinarily congenial and I admire you with all my heart. Let us unite our efforts! Let us establish contacts with the Earth! Let us march forward hand in hand, apes and men together, and no power, no secret of the cosmos will be able to resist us!"

I stopped speaking; exhausted. I turned to the president's table, picked up the glass of water standing there, and drained it in a gulp. This simple gesture produced an amazing effect and was the signal for an absolute uproar. The whole hall spontaneously gave vent to an enthusiastic outburst that no pen could ever describe. I knew I had won over my audience, but I would never have thought it possible for any assembly in the world to break into such commotion. I was deafened by it, retaining just enough composure to observe one of the reasons for this fantastic din: apes clap with all four hands when they are pleased. I was thus surrounded by a seething mass of frantic creatures balancing on their rumps and waving their four limbs in a frenzy of applause punctuated by wild yells in which the gorillas' deep voices predominated. I felt unsteady on my feet. I looked anxiously around me. Zaius had just risen from his seat in fury and was striding up and down the platform with his hands behind his back. I saw a vacant chair and collapsed into it. A fresh burst of applause, which I barely heard before fainting dead away, greeted this gesture.

MONKEY PLANET *















It was some time before I recovered consciousness, so intense had been the strain of this session. I found myself lying on a bed in a room. Zira and Cornelius were attending me, while some gorillas in uniform held back a crowd of journalists and curious onlookers who were trying to approach me.

"Magnificent!" Zira whispered in my ear. "You've won."

"Ulysse," said Cornelius, "together we're going to do great things." He told me that the Grand Council of Soror had just held a special meeting and had decided on my immediate release.

"There were some who opposed it," he added, "but public opinion demanded it and they had to yield." Having himself requested and obtained permission to take me on as his collaborator, he was rubbing his hands at the thought of the assistance I would provide in his research.

"This is where you'll be living. I hope this apartment will suit you. It is quite close to mine, in a wing of the institute reserved for the senior personnel."

I looked around in bewilderment, thinking I was dreaming. The room was provided with every comfort; it was the beginning of a new epoch. After hoping so long for this moment, I was suddenly overwhelmed by an odd feeling of nostalgia. My eyes met Zira's and I saw that the clever she-ape had read my thoughts. A rather ambiguous smile came over her face.

"Here, of course," she said, "you won't have Nova with you."

I blushed, shrugged my shoulders, and sat up. I had recovered my strength and was eager to embark on my new life.

"Do you feel well enough to attend a little party?" Zira asked. "We've invited a few friends, all of them chimpanzees, to celebrate this great day."

I replied that nothing would give me greater pleasure, but I was no longer willing to appear stark naked. I then noticed I was wearing some pyjamas, Cornelius having lent me his. But though I was able, in a pinch, to wear a chimpanzee's pajamas, I should have looked grotesque in one of his suits.

"We'll fit you out completely tomorrow and you'll have a decent suit for this evening. Here's the tailor,"

A little chimpanzee came in and greeted me with great courtesy. I discovered that while I was still lying unconscious, the best tailors had competed for the honour of dressing me. This one, the most famous of all, had the most noted gorillas in the capital as clients.

I admired his speed and dexterity. In less than two hours he had succeeded in making me an acceptable suit. It felt quite strange to be wearing clothes again, and Zira looked at me as though she had never seen me before. While the artist was making the final adjustments Cornelius admitted the journalists who were hammering at the door. I was put through a catechism for over an hour, riddled with questions, under fire from the photographers, and required to furnish the most intriguing details about the Earth and the life men led on that planet. I lent myself willingly to this ceremony. A journalist myself, I realised the scoop I represented to these colleagues and knew what a powerful support the press could be.

It was late by the time they left. We were just on our way to join Cornelius' friends when we were detained by the arrival of Zanam from the Institute. He was obviously acquainted with the latest developments, for he gave me an obsequious bow. He had come to tell Zira that things were not going too well in her department. Furious at my long absence, Nova was making a great racket. Her mood had infected all the other captives, and no amount of pike blows would calm them down.

"I'll go and see," said Zira. "Wait for me here."

I looked at her with a pleading expression. She hesitated, then shrugged her shoulders. "Come along if you like," she said. "After all, you're free and perhaps you'll be able to calm them down better than I can."



Together we entered the room with the cages. The captives calmed down as soon as they saw me, and the uproar was followed by a strange silence. They recognised me in spite of my clothes and seemed to understand that they were in the presence of something miraculous.

"Don't worry," said Zira. "She is being well treated and there's nothing she needs. I'm doing everything I can for her. No female human has ever been so carefully watched over."

Under her gaze I lowered my eyes like a schoolboy guilty of some misdemeanor. She made an effort to assume an ironical tone, but I could see she was perturbed. True, I realised my physical intimacy with Nova had vexed her ever since she recognised my true nature, but there was more than vexation in her expression. It was her affection for me that made her anxious.

Trembling with emotion, I walked over to Nova's cage, my own cage. I went right up to her, I smiled at her, I spoke to her. For a moment I had the impression that she was following my train of thought and was about to answer me. This was impossible, but my mere presence had calmed her down like the others. She accepted a lump of sugar that I handed to her and ate it while I made my way out of the room with a heavy heart.



Of that party, which took place in a smart night club - Cornelius had decided to launch me forthwith into simian society, since in any case I was now destined to live in it - I have only a confused and rather disturbing memory.

The confusion was caused by the alcohol that I started swilling as soon as I arrived, and to which my system was no longer accustomed. The disturbing effect was an odd sensation that was to come over me later on many other occasions.

I can only describe it by saying that the nature of the figures around me became progressively less simian, whereas then, function - or the position they held in society - became dominant. The head waiter, for instance, who came up obsequiously to show us our table, I saw only as the head waiter, and the fact that he was a gorilla tended to be obscured. The figure of an elderly she-ape with an outrageously painted face was replaced by that of an old coquette, and when I danced with Zira I forgot her condition completely, and my arm merely encircled the waist of a dancer. The chimpanzee orchestra was nothing more than an orchestra, and the elegant apes exchanging witticisms all around me were simply men about town.

I shall not dwell on the sensation caused by my presence among them. I was the focus of all eyes. I had to give my autograph to a number of fans, and the two gorillas whom Cornelius had had the prudence to bring along were hard-pressed to protect me from the swarm of she-apes of every age who competed for the honour of having a drink or dancing with me.

It was getting late and I was already fairly tipsy when the thought of Professor Antelle crossed my mind. I felt steeped in black remorse. I was not far from shedding a tear or two over my own infamy as I reflected that here I was making merry and drinking with a lot of apes while my companion was shivering on some straw in a cage.

Zira asked me why I was looking so sad. I told her. Cornelius then informed me that he had made inquiries about the professor and that he was in good health. There would be no opposition now to his being released. I insisted that I could not wait a minute longer before bringing him this good news.

"After all," Cornelius agreed, after thinking it over, "one can't refuse you anything on a day like this. Let's go. I know the director of the zoo."



The three of us left the nightclub and drove to the garden. On being woken up, the director bestirred himself. He knew all about me. Cornelius told him the true identity of one of the men he held locked up in a cage. He could hardly believe his ears, but he, too, was eager to do all he could for me. We should have to wait, of course, until the next day and go through various formalities before he could release the Professor, but meanwhile there was nothing against our having a talk with him at once. He offered to accompany us.

Day was breaking when we reached the cage in which the luckless scientist lived like an animal in the midst of fifty men and women. These were still asleep, huddled together in couples or in groups of four or five. They opened their eyes as soon as the director switched on the lights.

It did not take me long to find my companion. He was stretched out on the ground like the others, huddled against the body of a girl who looked quite young. I shuddered to see him like this, and at the same time was moved by the debasement to which I, too, had been reduced for four months.

I was so upset that I could not speak. The men, who were now awake, showed no sign of surprise. They were tame and well trained; they began performing their usual tricks in the hope of some reward. The director threw them some pieces of cake. Immediately scuffles and disputes broke out, as they did during the day, while the quietest of them assumed their favourite position, squatting by the bars and stretching out an imploring hand.

Professor Antelle followed their example. He came up as close as possible to the director and begged for a tidbit. This humiliating behaviour gave me a sickening feeling that soon became an unbearable anguish. He was three paces away; he was looking at me and appeared not to recognise me. In fact, his eyes, which had once been so keen, had lost all their gleam and suggested the same spiritual void as those of the other captives. I was horrified to see in them no more emotion than that aroused among the other captives by the presence of a man in clothes.

I made a great effort and managed at last to speak in order to put an end to this nightmare. "Professor," I said, "Master, it is I, Ulysse Merou. We are saved. I came here to tell you..."

I stopped in sheer amazement. At the sound of my voice he had reacted in the same way as the men of the planet Soror. He had suddenly lowered his head and shrunk away.

"Professor, Professor Antelle," I beseeched him, "it's I, Ulysse Merou, your travelling companion. I am free, and in a few hours you will be too. These apes you see here are our friends. They know who we are and welcome us like brothers."

There was no response. He showed not the slightest sign of comprehension but, with another frightened gesture like that of a startled beast, recoiled still further.

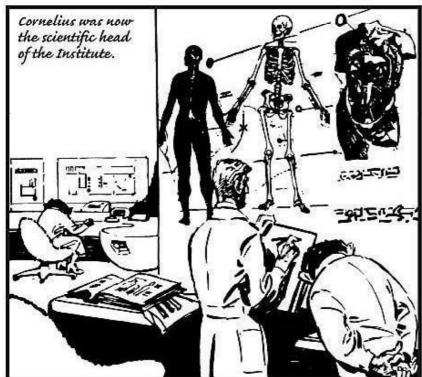
I was in despair, and the apes seemed extremely puzzled. Cornelius wrinkled his brow, as he did when he was trying to find the solution to a problem. It crossed my mind that the Professor, frightened by their presence, might well be pretending to be witless. I asked them to move away and leave me alone with him, to which they readily agreed. When they had disappeared, I walked around the cage to reach the corner in which the scientist had taken refuge and again I spoke to him:

"Master," I implored him, "I understand your caution. I know the danger to which men from Earth are exposed on this planet. But we are alone, I give you my word of honour, and our ordeals are over. You must believe me, your companion, your disciple, your friend, Ulysse Merou."

He shrank back still further, darting furtive glances in my direction. Then, while I stood there trembling, not knowing what else to say, he half opened his mouth.

Had I succeeded at last in convincing him? I watched him, hoping against hope. But I remained speechless with horror at the manner in which he expressed his emotion. I said that he had half opened his mouth, but this was not the spontaneous gesture of a creature preparing to speak. He emitted from it a gurgling sound similar to those uttered by the strange men on this planet to express satisfaction or fear. There in front of me, without moving his lips, while my heart went numb with horror, Professor Antelle gave vent to a long, drawn-out howl.

MONKEY PLANET *











I woke early after a restless night. I eventually came to my senses to learn that Cornelius was now the scientific head of the institute and as for me, I was to take part in the scientist's research work, no longer as a guinea pig but as a collaborator.

Here I am in the room with the cages. The captives are well acquainted with me now and recognise my authority. For the last month, despite my patience and efforts, I, too, had been unsuccessful in making them achieve any higher level of performance than that of well-trained animals.

I should like to teach them to talk. This is my great ambition. I have not succeeded, I admit. It is only with the utmost difficulty that some of them manage to repeat a monosyllabic sound or two. I finally come to the cage in which Nova was at present vegetating in solitary sadness.

I often think of Nova. I cannot forget the hours I spent in her company. With her I obtain better results than with the others. She presses up against the bars as soon as she sees me, and her mouth twists into a grimace that could almost pass as a smile. Even before I have opened my mouth she tries to pronounce the three or four syllables she has learned.

I say her name, then my own, pointing my finger alternately at her and myself. She imitates the gesture. But I see her expression change suddenly and she bares her teeth as I hear a gentle chuckle behind me. It is Zira, accompanied by Cornelius, who is interested in my efforts and often comes to see the results for himself. Today he has come to see me for another reason. He looks rather excited. "Would you like to go on a little trip with me, Ulysse?"

"A trip?"

"Some archaeologists have discovered some extremely curious ruins. There's something strange about them that fascinates me and that may afford decisive material for my research. The Academy is sending me out there on an official mission and I think your presence would be most useful."

We set off a week later. Cornelius was pensive. For some time he had seemed rather nervous. He still kept the subject of his research a secret, I only knew it concerned the origin of ape and that the learned chimpanzee tended more and more to reject the classical theories.

"You did say, didn't you, Ulysse, that on your Earth the apes are utter animals? That man has risen to a degree of civilisation equal to our own and which, in certain respects, even surpasses it?"

"Yes, that's undeniable. One of the best proofs is that I am here. It seems to me you have only reached the stage...."

"I know, I know," he broke in wearily. "We are now penetrating the secrets you discovered centuries ago...

He went on. "For some time I've been harassed by a feeling that the key to these secrets, even here on our planet, has been held by other brains in the distant past. Other brains," he repeated pensively, "that maybe were not..." He broke off abruptly. "The archeologists have laid bare a whole city of which nothing remains but ruins. But these ruins, I am convinced, hold an extraordinary secret that I have vowed to solve."

Digging among stones that crumble at every move and in sand that sinks under every step is no easy job. It is now a month since we have been at it. Cornelius insists on prolonging his stay. He is as enthusiastic as I am and convinced that only here, among these relics of the past, is to be found the solution to the great problems tormenting him.

The city is very, very old indeed. It is much more than ten thousand years old, and therefore constitutes a unique record, tending to show that simian civilisation did not burst forth miraculously out of the void.

Something existed before this present era. But what? After a month of feverish investigation we are disappointed, for it seems that this prehistoric city was not very different from those of the present day. We have discovered remnants of houses, traces of factories, vestiges showing that these forebears had motor cars and airplanes, just as apes of today do. These remains indicate that the origins of mind can be traced far back into the past. This is less than Cornelius was expecting, I feel; it is less than I was hoping for.





He leads me to a spot where workmen had laid bare a house with thick walls made of a sort of reinforced concrete, which seems better preserved than the rest. The inside was filled with sand and debris that they had undertaken to sift. Until yesterday they had found nothing more than in the other sections: fragments of piping, household appliances, kitchen equipment, but today it does not take me long to realise they have made an exceptional discovery.

Cornelius is holding in his hand a small object that I cannot not make out. Never have I seen him in such a state. He can barely talk. The workmen gather around the find and point it out to one another but they seem merely amused. Some of them laugh out loud.

"A doll, Ulysse, a doll!" Cornelius cries.

It is a doll, an ordinary china doll. By a miracle it has been preserved almost intact, with vestiges of hair and eyes that still reveal a few chips of colour. It is such a familiar sight to me that at first I cannot understand Cornelius' emotion. It takes me several seconds to realise...

Then I've got it!

Its strangeness dawns on me and immediately I am overwhelmed.

It is a human doll representing a little girl, a little girl like one on Earth. I realise more and more clearly, the reason for my clever chimpanzee's emotion.

And this is not all. The toy presents another anomaly, another oddity that makes all the workmen laugh and even provokes a smile from the solemn orangutan directing the excavations. The doll talks. It talks like a doll at home. In putting it down, Cornelius happens to press the mechanism, which has been preserved intact, and it talks. Oh, it was not much of a speech! It uttered one word, one simple word of two syllables:

"Papa,"

Cornelius picks it up again and turns it round and round in his nimble hands.

Suppose that men once reigned as masters on this planet. Suppose that a human civilisation similar to ours flourished on Soror more than ten thousand years ago!

This is no longer a senseless hypothesis - quite the contrary. No sooner do I formulate it than I feel the excitement produced by picking up the right scent among so many false ones. It is on this track, I know, that the solution to the irritating simian mystery is to be found, I realise my subconscious has always been dreaming of some explanation of this sort.

Cornelius remains wrapped in thought and silent for the rest of the day. I have the impression he is now frightened of pursuing his research and is regretting his semi-revelations. Now that his excitement has subsided, he is sorry I have witnessed his discovery.

On the very next day I am given proof that he regrets having brought me here with him. After a night's reflection, he informs me, avoiding my eyes, that he has decided to send me back to the Institute, where I should be able to continue with more important work than in these ruins.

I shall be leaving in twenty-four hours.

MONKEY PLANET %

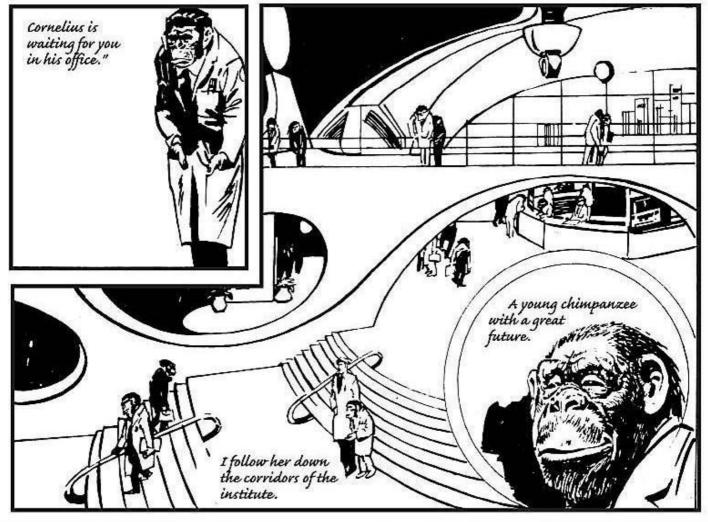












It was now two months since I visited my former companions in captivity, my fellow humans. It is time for me to pay my visit.

As before, I go slowly around the cages. I force myself not to rush over to Nova's cage at once. I speak to each of my subjects. The moment had not yet come for them to talk. I do not mind. I have my entire lifetime in which to accomplish my mission. I now approach my former cage with studied negligence. I look out of the corner of my eye, but I do not see Nova's arms stretched through the bars, I do not hear the cries of joy with which she always used to greet me. A strange misgiving assails me. I cannot restrain myself. I dash forward. The cage is empty.

I summon one of the warders in an authoritative voice that makes the captives shiver. "Where is Nova?"

He replies in a surly manner that he does not know. She was taken away one day without any reason being given. At this moment, luckily, Zira turns up to carry out her tour of inspection. She sees me in front of the empty cage and realises why I am so upset. She looks flustered and at once starts talking about something else. "Cornelius has just come back. He wants to see you."

At the moment I don't give a damn about Cornelius or the chimpanzees or the gorillas or any other creature in heaven or in hell. I point at the cell with my finger. "Where's Nova?"

She beckons to me and leads me aside, out of earshot of the warder. "The administrator made me promise to keep it secret. But I feel you ought to know. Nova is pregnant," the she-ape announces, observing me with a curious expression.

"Zira, I want to see her!"

She gives a little pout of annoyance. "I knew you would ask me that. I've already discussed it with Cornelius and I think he will agree to it. He's waiting for you in his office."

My anguish increases as I follow her down the corridors of the institute. Cornelius greets me in a friendly manner, but a permanent awkwardness has been created between us. I make an effort not to broach the subject on my mind at once. I ask him about the voyage and the end of his stay among the ruins.

His clever little eyes are sparkling. He cannot prevent himself from exulting over his success. "Skeletons," he says. "Not one, but a whole collection and they are the skeletons of men."

"I am now certain," he admits, "that there once existed on our planet a race of human beings endowed with a mind comparable to that of the men who populate your Earth, a race that has degenerated and reverted to an animal state. Furthermore, since my return here I have been given additional evidence to support this hypothesis."

"Additional evidence?"

"Yes. It was discovered by the director of the encephalic section, a young chimpanzee with a great future. He may even be a genius."

"You would be wrong to think," he continues with heavy sarcasm, "that apes have always been imitators. We have made some remarkable innovations in certain branches of science, especially in connection with these experiments on the brain."

I do not feel inclined to pursue the point for I have other more pressing subjects. I bring the conversation around to Nova and her condition. He makes no comment and tries to console me.

"Don't worry. It will be all right, I hope. It will probably be a child like any other human child on Soror."

"I certainly hope not. I'm convinced it will talk!" I cannot help protesting indignantly. Zira gives a frown to make me keep quiet

"Don't be too hopeful," Cornelius solemnly says, "for her sake and for your own."



Cornelius took me to the encephalic section, the wonders of which he had endeavoured to describe. He introduced me to the head of the department, the young chimpanzee called Helius.

Helius showed us into a room. "Here," Cornelius told me in a solemn tone, "you're going to see a marvellous achievement, which is absolutely new. Only three of us ever go into this room - Helius, who is personally in charge of this research and who has made such a success of it, myself, and a carefully selected assistant."

I entered the room and at first could see nothing to justify this air of mystery. The equipment was the same as in any previous room: generators, transformers, and electrodes. There were only two subjects, a man and a woman, lying strapped down on two parallel divans.

"All is well. They are quite calm. We can begin a test right away."

"What sort of test?" I implored.

"I'd rather keep it as a surprise for you," Cornelius grinned. A gorilla anaesthetised the two patients and started up various machines. Helius went up to the woman, carefully unrolled the bandage that covered her skull, and, aiming at a certain spot, applied the electrodes. I was questioning Cornelius with my eyes when the miracle happened.

The woman began to talk. Every sentence she uttered has remained engraved on my memory.

"For some time," said the voice in a slightly anxious tone, "these apes, all these apes, have been ceaselessly multiplying, although it looked as though their species was bound to die out at a certain period. If this goes on, they will almost outnumber us... and that's not all. They are becoming arrogant. They look us straight in the eye. We have been wrong to tame them and to grant those whom we use as servants a certain amount of liberty. They are the most insolent of all. One day I was jostled in the street by a chimpanzee. As I raised my hand, he looked at me in such a menacing manner that I did not dare strike him."

The woman paused, heaved several anguished sighs, then went on:

"It's happened! One of them has succeeded in talking. It's certain; I read about it in Woman's Journal. There's a photograph of him, too. He's a chimpanzee."

"There are several others. The papers report fresh cases every day. Certain biologists regard this as a great scientific success. Don't they realise where it may lead? It appears that one of these chimpanzees has uttered some ugly threats. The first use they make of speech is to protest when they are given an order."

The woman fell silent again and resumed in a different voice, a somewhat pedantic man's voice:

"What is happening could have been foreseen. A cerebral laziness has taken hold of us. Meanwhile the apes are meditating in silence. Their brain is developing in solitary reflection . . . and they are talking."

After a long silence a woman's voice continued, in anguish:

"I was a lady animal tamer. I used to do an act with a dozen orangutans, magnificent beasts. Today I'm inside the cage instead of them, together with some other circus performers. I'm not unhappy. I have no more worries or responsibilities. Most of us are adapting ourselves to this regime."

The woman continued in a more and more anguished tone:

"There are only a few hundred of us left and our situation is precarious. We form the last human nucleus in the vicinity of the city, but the apes will not tolerate us at liberty so close to them. I can hear a barbaric din, something like a parody of a military band...Help! It's them, it's the apes! They are surrounding us. They are led by enormous gorillas. They have taken our bugles, our drums and uniforms, our weapons, too, of course... No, they haven't any weapons. Oh, what bitter humiliation, the final insult!

Their army is upon us and all they are carrying are whips!"

MONKEY PLANET %



have a son on the planet Soror.



MONKEY PLANET

In the weeks that followed some of the results obtained by Helius leaked out to the public. Probably it was the chimpanzee himself who could not keep his mouth shut in the enthusiasm of success.

In the town they are saying that a scientist has succeeded in making men talk. Furthermore, the discoveries of the buried city are being discussed in the press, and although their significance is usually distorted, one or two journalists are close to suspecting the truth. As a result there is an uneasy atmosphere abroad, which has manifested by the increased wariness of the authorities about me, an attitude that is increasingly more disturbing.

Zira! Admirable she-ape! Thanks to her, I was able to see Nova fairly often during this period, without the authorities knowing. I spent hours on the lookout for the intermittent gleam in her eye, and the weeks went by in impatient expectancy of the birth.

Then, the long-awaited event has taken place! First I was overwhelmed with joy but, on second thoughts, trembled at the new danger it represents. Nova has given birth to a boy.

Zira leads me to an isolated little building to which she alone holds the key. The room into which she shows me is not very big. It contains only three cages, two of which are empty. Nova occupies the third.

I have a child, I have a son on the planet Soror. I have seen him, but only with the greatest difficulty. The security measures have become increasingly strict and I was unable to visit Nova until weeks after the birth.

He's a splendid baby. He was lying on the straw like a new Christ, nuzzling against his mother's breast. He looks like me, but he also has Nova's beauty. I kiss my son with passion, without allowing myself to think of the clouds gathering over our heads.

He will be a man, a proper man, I'm sure. Intelligence sparkles in his features and in his eyes. I have revived the sacred flame. Thanks to me, a new human race is rising and will bloom on this planet. When he grows up he will be the first of the branch and then...

When he grows up! I shudder at the thought of the conditions of his childhood and of all the obstacles that will stand in his path. No matter! Between the three of us, we shall triumph, of that I am sure.

I put him down again on the straw. I am reassured as to his nature. He does not talk yet, but - I am out of my mind, he is only three weeks old! He will one day. Now he has started crying, crying like a human child and not whining. Nova hears the difference and observes him with awe and ecstasy.

It does not escape Zira's attention either. She draws closer, her furry ears prick up, and she watches the baby for a long time, in silence, with a solemn expression. Then she signals me that it is time to go. It would be dangerous for all of us if I were to be found here. She promises to look after my son and I know she will keep her word. But I am also aware that she is suspected of being attached to me, and the possibility of her dismissal makes me tremble. I must not allow her to run this risk.

I embrace my family warmly and leave. Looking around, I see the she-ape likewise bend over this human body and gently put her muzzle to his brow before closing the cage. And Nova does not protest! She permits this caress which must have become a daily occurrence. Remembering the antipathy she used to show toward Zira, I cannot help regarding this as a miracle.

Cornelius has been looking for me. There is something serious he wants to discuss.

"My son?" I ask as we entered his office.

"He's very well," Zira says abruptly.

"Too well," Cornelius mutters with a frown. "Much too well, he smiles. He cries like a baby ape...

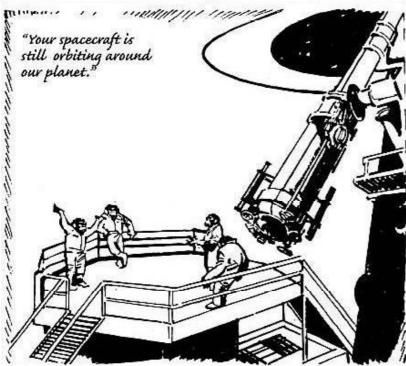
...and he has begun to talk!"

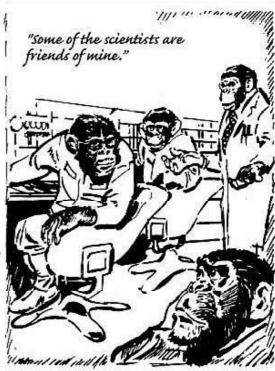
MONKEY PLANET













"At three months of age!"

"Baby words, but there's everything to indicate that he will talk properly later. But don't you realise this is a disaster? The others will never leave him in liberty. There's no question of doing away with him... not for the moment, at least; but he'll be taken away from his mother."

"And I, wouldn't I be allowed to see him?"

"You least of all," the chimpanzee continues emphatically. "We didn't come here to feel sorry for ourselves but to work out a plan of action. Zaius has been plotting for some time and he is going to get the better of us."

At this point Cornelius clenches his fists in rage and mutters some ugly oaths. Then he continues: "It's not only the child that is menaced. The orangutans and the gorillas consider you too dangerous. They are frightened you might found a new race on this planet."

"To tell the truth," Cornelius abruptly concludes, "I'm very much afraid that within the next two weeks the Council might decide to eliminate you... As for Nova, I believe it will be decided to put her out of the way as well, because she has been in such close contact with you."

But how to escape from this planet? Cornelius has a plan.

"You must get away. You must leave this planet, to which you should never have come. You must go back where you belong. You once said, that your spacecraft was still intact and could take you home?"

"Without the slightest doubt. It contains enough fuel, oxygen, and supplies to take us to the edge of the universe. But how am I to reach it?"

"It's still orbiting around our planet. An astronomer friend of mine has tracked it down. As to the means of reaching it? In exactly ten days' time we are going to launch an artificial satellite, manned by humans, of course, on whom we want to test the effect of certain rays..."

I grasp his scheme in a flash and appreciate his ingenuity - but what obstacles!

"Some of the scientists responsible for this launching are friends of mine, and I have won them over to your cause. The satellite will be placed on the same trajectory as your craft and will be navigable within certain limits."

It ought to be possible. But I cannot shake off the melancholy that assailed me at the thought of leaving my fellow humans. Toward them I feel I am something of a deserter. Yet above all I must save my son and Nova. I But I shall come back. Yes, later, I shall come back with trump cards in my hand.

We leave one another after making arrangements to meet on the following day. Zira goes out first. Remaining behind with Cornelius for a moment, I take the opportunity of thanking him with all my heart. Inwardly I'm wondering why he is doing all this for me. He reads my thoughts.

"Zira's the one you ought to thank," he says. "It's to her you will owe your life."

He closes the door after me as I leave the room. I am alone with Zira and we take a few steps along the corridor.

"Zira!"

I stop and take her in my arms. She is as upset as I. Ah, what matter this horrid exterior! It is her soul that communes with mine. I feel her shapeless body tremble against mine. I force myself to rub my cheek against hers. We are about to kiss like lovers when she thrusts me away violently.

While I stand there speechless, not knowing what attitude to adopt, she hides her head in her long hairy paws and this hideous she-ape bursts into tears and announces in despair:

"Oh, darling,, it's impossible. It's a shame, but I can't, I can't. You are really too unattractive!"







We have brought it off. I am once again travelling through space aboard the cosmic craft, rushing like a comet in the direction of the solar system at an ever-increasing speed.

I am not alone. With me are Nova and Sirius, the fruit of our interplanetary passion, who can say "papa," "mama" and many other words. Also on board are a couple of chickens and rabbits, and various seeds that the scientists put in the satellite to study the effects of radiation on organisms of very diverse kinds. All this will not be wasted.

Cornelius' plan was carried out to the letter. He will have a few worries perhaps, but all this will soon be forgotten... What do I mean! It is forgotten already, for eons have elapsed out there during the few months I have been shooting through space. As for me, my memories are rapidly receding, like the material body of the super-giant Betelgeuse, as the space-time increases between us: the monster has changed in size to a small balloon, then an orange. It is now no more than a minute bright spot in the galaxy. So is it with my Sororian thoughts.

It would be unreasonable of me to fret. I have succeeded in saving the beings who are dear to me. Whom do I miss over there? Zira? Yes, Zira. But the emotions that came to life between us had no name on Earth or in any other region of the cosmos. The separation was essential. She must have recovered her peace of mind, bringing up her baby chimpanzees after marrying Cornelius. Professor Antelle? To hell with the professor! I could no longer do anything for him. Only I shudder occasionally when I think that had I been placed in the same environment as he was, and without Zira's presence, I, too, might have fallen equally low.

The boarding of our craft took place without a hitch. I was able to draw closer and closer to it by guiding the satellite, and to enter the compartment, which had been left wide open for the eventual return of our launch. Then the robots went into action and closed all the exits.

We were on board. The equipment was intact and the electronic brain started carrying out all the operations for our departure. On the planet Soror our accomplices pretended that the satellite had been destroyed in flight after failing to be placed in orbit.

We have been travelling for more than a year and a half of our own time. We have reached almost the speed of light, crossed an immense space in a very short time, and have already embarked on the deceleration period that is to last another year. In our little universe I never get tired of admiring my new family.

Nova is bearing the voyage extremely well. She is becoming more and more rational. Her motherhood has transformed her. She spends hours doting on her son, who is proving to be a better teacher for her than I was. She articulates almost correctly the words he utters. She does not yet talk to me, but we have drawn up a code of gestures enabling us to understand each other. I feel as though I had lived with her always. As for Sirius, he is truly the pearl of the cosmos. He is a year and a half old. He walks, despite the heavy gravity, and babbles without stopping. I cannot wait to show him to the men on Earth.

What intense emotion I felt this morning when I noticed the sun beginning to assume perceptible dimension! It appears to us now like a billiard ball and is tinged with yellow. I point it out to Nova and Sirius. I explain the nature of this heavenly body, which is new to them, and they understand. Today Sirius talks fluently and Nova almost as well. She has been learning at the same time as he. Miracle of motherhood, miracle that I ovulated! I was unable to raise all the men on Soror from their animal state, but my success in Nova's case is complete.

The sun is growing bigger every moment. I try to distinguish the planets through the telescope. I can find my bearings easily. I can see Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, and... the Earth, yes, here is the Earth!

Tears come into my eyes. Only someone who has lived more than a year on the planet of the apes could appreciate my emotion..

I know that after seven hundred years I shall find neither parents nor friends, but I can hardly wait to see proper men again.

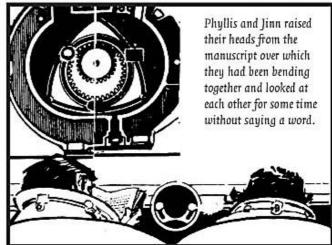
Glued to the portholes, we watch Earth approaching.

MONKEY PLANET











I no longer need the telescope to distinguish the continents. We are in orbit. We are revolving around my old planet. I can see Australia, America, and then... yes, here is France. We all three embrace, sobbing.

We embark in the vessel's second launch. All the calculations have been made with a view to landing in my native country: not far from Paris, I hope.

We have entered the atmosphere. The retro-rocket come into action. Nova looks at me and smiles. She has learned how to smile and also how to weep. My son stretches his arms out and opens his eyes in wonder. Below us is Paris. The Eiffel Tower is still there.

I have taken over the controls and after seven hundred years' absence I manage to land at Orly, at the end of the airfield far from the airport buildings. They must have noticed me, so all I need do is wait.

A vehicle moves off from the buildings, heading in our direction. I switch off my rockets. What a story I shall have to tell my fellow humans! Perhaps they won't believe me at first, but I have proof. I have Nova, I have my son.

The vehicle approaches. It is a truck and a fairly old-fashioned model: four wheels and a combustion engine. I automatically register these details. I should have thought such vehicles had been relegated to museums long ago.

There are very few people here to greet me. Only two men, as far as I can see. But how stupid I am - of course they cannot know. But when they do know!

Yes, there are two of them. I cannot see them distinctly because of the setting sun reflected on the extremely dirty windshield. Just the driver and one passenger. The latter wears a uniform. He is an officer; I can see the glitter of his badges of rank. The commander of the airport, probably.

The truck stops fifty yards from us. I pick my son up in my arms and leave the launch. Nova follows us after a moment's hesitation. She looks frightened but she will soon get over it.

The driver gets out of the vehicle. He has his back turned to me. He is half concealed by the long grass growing in the space between us. He opens the door for the passenger to alight. I was not mistaken, he is an officer; a senior officer, as I now see from his badges of rank. He jumps down. He takes a few steps toward us, emerges from the grass, and at last appears in full view. Nova utters a scream, snatches my son from me, and rushes back with him to the launch, while I remain rooted to the spot, unable to move a muscle or utter a sound.

He is a gorilla.

Phyllis and Jinn raised their heads from the manuscript over which they had been bending together and looked at each other for some time without saying a word.

"A likely story," said Jinn at last, forcing a smile to his lips. "It just shows there are poets everywhere, in every corner of the cosmos, and practical jokers, too."

Phyllis pondered over this, but was not so easily convinced as he was. However, she reluctantly agreed.

"You're right, Jinn. That's what I think... Rational men? Men endowed with a mind? Men inspired by intelligence? No, that's not possible; there the author has gone too far. But it's a pity!"

"I quite agree," said Jinn. "Now it's time we started back."

He let out the sail, exposing it to the combined rays of the three suns. Then he began to manipulate the driving levers, using his four agile hands, while Phyllis, after dismissing a last shred of doubt with an energetic shake of her velvety ears, took out her compact and, in view of their return to port, touched up her dear little chimpanzee muzzle.

THE END