

PLANET OF THE APES

"THE DECEPTION"

By

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ACT ONE

Virдон, Kovak and Galen hear the laughter of children playing and, following the sound, they peer from the shadows of the trees to a spot where two ape children, IO and ERIS, play catch with a small round object which Virдон recognizes as a timepiece of the kind that could only have been built by advanced human technology. Only human hands could make use of it. While he and Kovak remain hidden from the children, Galen approaches them and asks them where they obtained the timepiece. One of the children indicates that he found it just beyond some hills near a grave; then they run off, leaving Galen with the timepiece.

Virдон and Kovak join Galen and the trio proceeds to move over the hills, finding themselves looking down at the recently dug grave and the simple stone marker inscribed only with a name, a fact that tells them little of whether the dead person was ape or human.

They are discussing the moral and practical conflict concerning the actual exhuming of the body to determine its species when they are caught unaware by someone who appears suddenly near them. A female ape, FAUNA, stands staring somewhat blankly at them, her head tipped slightly, curiously. The humans, Virдон and Kovak, are startled and alarmed at being seen, but their dismay slowly ebbs as they realize the female is totally blind and has no realization that they are of a different species from herself. She is friendly, unafraid, curious as to

who they are, going on to indicate somewhat sadly that the grave is that of her father. The trio are disturbed to learn, further, that her father had been recently killed by humans. The obvious pain Fauna reflects at the revelation of this fact keeps the trio from revealing that two of them are human, both Virdon and Kovak taking great precaution to avoid actual contact with the female so that she will not realize the truth. But it is apparent from the moment that Kovak speaks to Fauna that there is something in his voice that is both disturbing and attractive to her. She seems drawn more toward him than to the others, continues to address herself to him as she invites the trio to come with her to her farmhouse where she will give them food and drink.

At the farm, Fauna gives them nourishment while going on to explain that her blindness was the result of an illness several years ago. Despite the handicap, however, she indicates she manages to do quite well around the farm, being able to conduct herself around its perimeters almost as if she could see. The only thing she really misses terribly, she concludes, is the ability to read. Her father collected many books and, though she read them all quite early, she would love to read them again or others that she has heard about.

It is at this point that the trio becomes aware that someone is approaching the farm, the men realizing that they cannot stay and be seen. Kovak, in order to enlist Fauna's aid as well as getting them out of the house, invents a story concerning their

being wanted by the Ministry of Science for reading certain books they were not aware had been banned. Fauna responds as he predicts, sympathetic toward them because of her own love of books. She quickly goes along with their concern over being seen, pointing out that her uncle, SESTUS, would not be as sympathetic toward them as she is.

Despite her total blindness, Fauna leads the trio from the farm to a small cave not far into the nearby woods, a place where she says they can hide and rest. She explains, as she shows them the comfortable hiding place, that she came here with a childhood sweetheart and that no one but she knows of its existence. Sadly, she indicates that her sweetheart had been killed in an accident some time ago. Then, she is turning to Kovak and indicating softly that his voice reminds her so much of that lost love. She wonders if she might touch him so that she can better know what he looks like. Kovak is startled by this request, knowing that he cannot allow her to touch him without giving away the fact he is a human and has deceived her. He is at the point of guiltily revealing his deception when Galen shifts his position and allows Fauna to touch his hand and face, the female being given the impression she is actually touching Kovak. Fauna seems quite happy with the impression she gets, turns and moves out of the cave, leaving Kovak disturbed by Galen's continuation of the deception. Galen indicates he is no more happy about it than Kovak, but knows what her reaction would have been had she touched Kovak. Nor is he quite certain what his human companions

might have done to her had she attempted to threaten their safety in that knowledge. Irritated by his own action, Galen growls that he is going to take a chance and talk to Fauna's uncle to see if he can learn anything about the timepiece, and he storms out of the cave. Moving away from the cave, he is unaware that one of the ape children we saw earlier is watching him from concealment.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Galen assumes the role of a lone stranger for Fauna's uncle, Sestus. Fauna goes along with his story that he is a traveler seeking lodging for the night, but it is apparent that Sestus is a brooding ape with little of the warmth and openness of either Fauna or her mother. He is only willing to allow Galen a night's lodging at the imploring of both females.

Kovak is disturbed as he and Virdon wait in the cave. He doesn't like his deception, nor does he like the way Fauna seemed to compare him to her lost sweetheart. Virdon kids him, hinting at his male chauvinism. Kovak agrees with that, sees his instincts as even worse with a blind ape female, but there is still something about Fauna that makes it difficult for him not to feel some compassion.

It is at this point that Virdon hears a noise and, tracing it to the entrance of the cave, he discovers the young ape, Io, lurking there. The ape boy reacts to his discovery and charges out of the cave, making a mad dash to escape his human pursuer. Virdon knows the boy can give them away and chases him relentlessly through the woods, finally tackling him and attempting to assure him that he will not hurt him. Virdon is not aware that the ape boy's friend, Eris, has seen the chase and is running off down a road toward the nearby town.

Kovak is alone as Fauna returns to the cave and approaches him. The man reacts, disturbed at being alone with her, backing

away so that she might not come in contact with him and learn the truth about him. But she is happy to simply hear his voice, indicating that all seems well at the farm, her uncle and mother appearing to have accepted Galen's story of being alone. When she inquires about Virdon, Kovak indicates that his friend has gone down to the stream for some water. Fauna seems to be very concerned about the plight of these three whom she believes to be apes. She is worried about them moving unarmed through the countryside when dangerous humans are running wild and murdering apes. Kovak wants to know how Fauna is certain that it was humans who killed her father. She admits that she could not see what had happened, but her uncle had told her that he had fought to save his brother's life, but to no avail. Fauna's father had been slain down by the river, her uncle recovering his body and burying it. But the memory is painful and Fauna turns now to a childlike probing of Kovak concerning the books he has read, wanting him to tell her some of the stories. Kovak is hesitant at first, then slowly begins to tell her the story of Robinson Crusoe, changing the main character to an ape and "Friday" to a human. Fauna listens in total fascination.

Meanwhile, Virdon continues to make an attempt to convince the ape boy, Io, that he means him no harm and wants only to gain more information concerning the timepiece. The ape boy's fears are diminished when Virdon gives him back the timepiece he had taken earlier. Then, Io indicates he has something else that he had found in a cave, shows Virdon a small metal object which the

man recognizes as part of a highly complicated instrument. He wants to keep the part to study it, but Io doesn't want to give it up. Virдон tactfully begins to fashion a toy top out of a root so as to barter for the instrument part. Io watches him in fascination.

At the same time, Io's friend, Eris, has arrived in the town where he immediately seeks out the Constabulary, a fierce-looking gorilla by the name of PERDIX. Eris informs Perdix that he saw a human chasing his friend through the woods near the farm of Sestus. Perdix quickly gets his weapon and mounts up, taking the ape boy with him.

Kovak breaks off in his storytelling, nervously concerned that Virдон has not returned. But Fauna wants only to talk about books, quickly going on to indicate that she would like Kovak to read something for her, something that her father left her that she has never even shown her mother. From a hiding place in the cave, she recovers a dusty journal which she gives to Kovak. Scanning the book, Kovak reacts with startled interest to what he reads.

It is at this point that Perdix is riding through the woods toward Virдон.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

Viridon is showing how his rudely fashioned top works when he becomes aware of Perdix's approach and, holding Io so that the ape boy cannot cry out, the man hides until the danger has passed. Perdix moves away from the area toward the farm of Sestus.

Kovak leaves Fauna at the cave, indicating that he must find Viridon who has not returned. He promises that he will read the journal to her shortly, pretends to put it back where he found it. But he actually keeps it with him and moves out into the woods in search of Viridon. It is not long before he discovers the man holding the ape boy and returning to the cave. Viridon points out the fact that he saw a gorilla with a weapon looking for them, but Kovak is more interested in revealing what he has read in the journal belonging to Fauna's father. It is written much in the style of an ape-Thoreau, quite lyrical and devoted to the wonders of nature. But the sections that are of interest to the men are those that describe the ape's encounter with a human being, a man who Fauna's father appears to have liked and respected. Despite the prevailing antipathy towards humans in this area, Fauna's father had kept the man's stay at the farm a secret. At the end of the account, the ape-writer has further described how the human, on preparing to leave, had given him an article that he said could provide contact between them again, if ever Fauna's father wanted to reach his human friend. The article sounds very much like some sort of homing device or radio directional finder, part of which might be what Viridon has managed to extract from

the ape boy, Io, trading the top for it.

Perdix, the Gorilla-Constabulary, arrives at the farm and indicates to Sestus that the ape boy has reported seeing humans in the area. Sestus indicates that he has no knowledge of any humans, the ape obviously quite nervous under Perdix's suspicious scrutiny. Sestus remembers that his brother had hidden a human here not long ago and he thinks that perhaps Perdix is aware of what occurred here at that time. Perdix wants to know where Fauna is, indicating that he wants to question her.

Fauna, meanwhile, has returned to the farm and is intercepted by Galen, the ape obviously concerned over her growing interest in Kovak. His concern is heightened considerably when Fauna, still considering Kovak one of her own kind, reveals to Galen that she is in love with the man. She is aware that it is a sudden thing and somehow related to the other ape that she loved, but she feels it is real somehow and wants to know from Galen, whether he thinks Kovak could love her. Galen is sorely tempted at this point to tell her the truth about Kovak, but can't quite bring himself to it. Taking a different tack, Galen tries to undermine the relationship, but the female becomes angry with him, interpreting it as an attempt on Galen's part to win her for himself.

At the cave, Virdon has improvised a checkerboard and "checkers" from available materials, and has fascinated the ape boy Io by teaching him the game. Io has become so involved in this activity that he is completely unaware that the "game" is a device

to keep him from leaving the cave.

Galen now seeks out Virdon and Kovak, his anger and frustration over the situation with Fauna spilling out in the form of his desire to leave the area immediately. It is then that the men reveal to him the contents of the journal, pointing out their theory that Fauna may know the whereabouts of the directional finder which could lead them to the other humans who were here. The situation now erupts into a heated conflict between the trio. Latent prejudices emerge as Galen reflects his feelings regarding Kovak and Fauna. He had no idea that Kovak would become involved with her when he contributed to the deception. But Kovak angrily denies he is "involved" with Fauna, his denial striking Galen as evidence of Kovak looking down on apes as inferior. Virdon tries to act as intermediary between the ape and the man, his own determination to find the directional finder leading into a further conflict as Galen wants to leave, and Kovak wants to stay. This resolve only seems to Galen to be an excuse for Kovak's avoidance of the fact Fauna is in love with him and can only be badly hurt. Nor does the ape like Virdon's holding the ape boy Io as a hostage despite Virdon's insistence that he has not injured the boy and can't allow him to go because of the potential danger.

At this point, Kovak stubbornly indicates that he is going to see if he can't learn something about the directional finder from Fauna. After he leaves, Galen persists in his determination that Virdon allow Io to go free, the ape eliciting a promise from

the boy that he will give them a chance to leave the area before he tells anyone about them.

Kovak seeks out Fauna, revealing to her that he had kept the journal because of something he had read in it which he wanted to discuss with his friends before he told her. He begins to probe her, regarding the directional finder left to her father by the human who was here before. But before he can get into it, Fauna leads him off in another direction regarding their relationship. Kovak is disturbed, guilty over the deception, knowing the he somehow can't continue any longer in leading her on simply to gain information. Dropping his quest regarding the directional finder, he gently recalls for her another story from the book, a book known as "The Bible." It is the story of the blind Isaac and his two sons, Jacob and Esau. One of the sons, Esau, was strong and hairy, a hunter idolized by his father and blessed on his deathbed. Jacob, soft and smooth of skin, wanting the same blessing from his father, posed as his brother by covering his hand with a piece of goatskin. Isaac, fooled into thinking he was touching Esau, gave Jacob the same blessing. It was a deception born of desperate need, concludes Kovak to Fauna, not one meant to harm anyone. And with this, he reaches out with his hand in an attempt to make contact with her so that she might feel his smooth skin and know the truth, that he is not an ape, but a human.. However, just before he touches her, she says something that makes him realize not only how much knowing the truth would hurt her...but also how hostile she is

against humans and how dangerous it would truly be to himself and Virдон if she were to know the truth. And in that last instant, he finds he cannot bring himself to reveal to her how she has been tricked.

Instead, he takes another way out of the dilemma...suddenly and angrily indicating to the shaken Fauna that he has no interest in her, that he and the others are leaving here for good and that she will never see him again. Moving off, Kovak knows underneath that he couldn't reveal himself to her simply because he couldn't take her reaction to his deceit. As for Fauna, she is crushed by the rejection and wanders off into the woods by herself, a lonely poignant figure.

It is at this point that Virдон and Galen, seeking Kovak and Fauna, find their way blocked by a gorilla holding a rifle leveled at them. It is Perdix. Beside him is the boy ape, Io, who apparently has broken his promise not to reveal the presence of the humans.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

Perdix holds Virdon and Galen at gunpoint, indicating his awareness of just who they are and that they are wanted by the Ministry of Science. He also knows there is one other human and demands that the pair reveal his whereabouts.

Meanwhile, Sestus, alarmed over Perdix's warning that unknown humans might be in the area, is concerned for the welfare of Fauna, whom he dearly loves. After all, the only humans known to be anywhere in this vicinity have been murdering renegades, and if humans are indeed in this area, as suggested by Perdix, it would be far safer if Fauna were to stay close to home until they are located.

Sestus goes to search for Fauna.

At the same time, Kovak has returned to the cave, discovered his friends gone, and has gone in search of them. It is near the area of a fast moving river that Sestus finds tracks leading to the cave, and begins to move in that direction, eventually finding himself confronting Kovak. Sestus is both surprised and frightened. A strange and unknown human can only mean danger. Sestus is carrying his gun, points it at Kovak...and in that instant they both hear a piercing scream for help! It is Fauna, crying out in terror. Both Sestus and Kovak forget their own confrontation, turn, and race towards the direction of the cry.

They find that Fauna had stumbled along a cliff, near the brink, had lost her footing at a spot where the cliff bordered the fast-moving stream, had fallen, and was now gripping some

roots in an attempt to keep from falling in. Almost as the Astronaut and the ape reach the scene, Fauna, loses her grip, tumbles down, and lies unconscious on a rock from which she will be swept off into the raging waters and sure death. (The danger of this area and the waters will be established in an earlier scene, earlier in the play.)

Without hesitation, Kovak rushes down, plunges into the waters as Fauna's body is swept away, and manages to pull the unconscious blind ape girl back onto shore. Carrying her in his arms, he brings her back to her farmhouse with Sestus leading the way. By now the differences between Kovak and Sestus have been totally forgotten. All that Sestus can think of is how Kovak risked his life to save Sestus' beloved niece.

Kovak carries Fauna into the back bedroom, puts her down on the bed. She recovers consciousness, hears Kovak's voice, is thrilled that the ape she loves is here, but now he touches her and she realizes he is a human. The combined shock of the near-fatal accident and the revelation of Kovak's true identity is almost more than Fauna can take, and she almost goes into hysteria at the thought of having been so close to a hated human. Shocked, revulsed, she recoils from him in abject terror, and nothing either Kovak nor Sestus can say can mitigate the hatred and horror she feels. She is, of course, unaware that Kovak is the one who saved her life. She feels it was Sestus.

It is at that moment that Perdix appears at the locked front door, his two prisoners...Galen and Virton...in tow. They have

had their hands tied behind their backs and ropes around their necks by which Perdix has led them behind his horse.

Sestus goes to the front door, sees it is Perdix, is dismayed, for he no longer has any desire to turn Kovak over to the gorilla. But now Fauna feels differently. Kovak is a human, of the breed that had murdered her father, and has so deceived her that she wants to think of nothing but vengeance. For Kovak it is a desperate moment. There is no way out of this crude farmhouse but the front door, and Perdix will not wait much longer. In her anger and hostility, Fauna gets up from the bed, and moves toward the front door. Desperate to prevent her from turning the human who had saved her over to the police, Sestus intercepts her, tells her that it was Kovak...not he...who had saved her life. She wavers briefly, but not for long. And now the guilt that has eaten at Sestus can be contained no longer...now, when she says that humans had killed her father and must be eradicated like the animals they are. So it is now that Sestus reveals that it had not been a human who had caused her father's death. It had been Sestus. Almost in tears, he tells her how he had argued with her father over her father's friendship with the human...that the argument had led to blows, and how Sestus had accidentally hit Fauna's father, knocked him down, and had been terrified to discover that his head had hit a sharp rock and that he was dead! Panic struck, Sestus had blamed the death on the humans...but he can no longer live this lie. He now knows that all humans can not be considered bad...that there are good and bad among all kinds...

apes and humans...and he wants Fauna to realize that as well.

It is with a sense of relief that Kovak watches Fauna go to the door, apologize for keeping Perdix waiting, and then tell him that they have not seen any humans in the area.

It is with a sense of determination that Kovak "borrows" Sestus' gun, watches Perdix go off with his prisoners. He then races out of the house, cuts through the woods, comes out on the path in front of Perdix, with his gun leveled at the Gorilla. Virдон and Galen are freed, and the Gorilla tied up.

Feeling a deep sense of gratitude, Kovak returns to the farmhouse to give Sestus back his gun. Virдон and Galen are with him now. Virдон's thoughts are with the direction finder. Does Sestus know anything about it? Sestus nods that he doesn't know about a "direction finder," but he knows about an instrument that Fauna's father had kept...one that Sestus put away into hiding. He digs it out of its hiding place as Virдон awaits breathlessly. Virдон's eagerness turns to dismay as Sestus displays the shattered bits and pieces of what had once been some kind of advanced instrument. Totally useless...yet still an indication that hope does exist somewhere.

And now they must go. It is at this last moment that Kovak manages to overcome his own innate feelings about Fauna's "ugliness," kissing her lightly, gently, on the cheek. Then the men and Galen are gone, Fauna and Sestus remaining near the doorway of the farmhouse, Fauna gently waving good-bye to a man she cannot see.

THE END