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## Hunchback of the Jungle

The flames of the camp fire threw huge shadows on the walls of the jungle hospital.

From the dispensary door I could see young Goha. He stood in the background, but his deformed face and the unsightly lumps on his back were clearly visible.

Daudi whispered, 'How long before we can do his operations, Bwana?'

'Everything depends on how he responds to the new medicines. Mosquitoes have done much harm to his blood.'

Lying at Goha's feet was Seko, his small dog, who seemed to have the ability to smile.

Daudi gripped my elbow. 'Look at that dog, doctor.'

Seko's ears were flat. He trembled all over.

'Seko, come here!' ordered Goha, but instead of obeying the dog tried to creep under a three-legged stool.

## Jungle Doctor's Crooked Dealings

Goha put one hand over the twisted side of his face and moved forward to pick up the little animal.

It all happened in a second. A brown, hunched-up shadow came rocketing out of the darkness. Snarling, it grabbed the small dog by the scruff of the neck and shot off again into the gloom of the night.

Daudi jumped to his feet. 'Mbisi - the hyaena! Quickly, after the brute!'

I snatched up my torch. Its beam followed the sound of the little dog's howling as I swept the corn garden systematically with light.

'Save him, Bwana!' gasped Goha as we dashed through the gate.



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A muffled howl came from the path ahead as the beam of light picked out the hyaena trying to swerve round a tall man carrying a knobbed stick.

*Thump!* The club whacked into the jungle scavenger's ribs. A second wallop caught the hyaena where his tail joined his hunched back. With a yelp he disappeared in the direction of the jungle.

Goha picked up the small dog, who lay huddled beside the path. He ran back and gently put him into my arms. Tears ran down Goha's face.

I examined the dog. One leg was broken, and the teeth of the hyaena had torn him savagely.

In an undertone I said to my medical assistant, 'Daudi, he is so badly hurt that the kindest thing to do would be to help him join his ancestors.'

'*Eheh,*' he agreed.

Goha stood up and came towards me. There was a tragic look on his small face. The sweat on his forehead stood out in beads. 'Bwana, you won't let Seko die?'

'It might be kinder if we saved him from suffering.'

'Seko's brave, Bwana. Please save his life.'

'I'll do what I can. Mboga, take Goha and see that he rests quietly in bed.'

The male nurse smiled. 'Yes, Bwana.'

I put my hand on the boy's shoulder. 'I'll operate, and when we're finished I'll tell you all about it.'

The sick boy looked longingly at his dog, who made a feeble effort to lick his hand.

'We will need penicillin to save Seko,' said Daudi anxiously, 'but in a hospital like this where we are always short of drugs, what can we do?'

'Bwana,' urged Mboga, 'the dog means much to the boy. If Seko dies, Goha will fret. We're not just fighting for the dog's life. Let's do all we can.'

'We will, but I've only operated on a dog once before.'

'Kah!' muttered Daudi as he started the primus stove. 'It is a new work, boiling up instruments for an operation on a dog.'

I injected anaesthetic into the little creature, scrubbed up my hands, and set to work.

It was complicated surgery. After an hour Seko, heavily bandaged and with one leg in plaster, lay in a padded box. Mboga carried the small dog to the ward where the glimmer of a lantern showed that Goha was still awake.

Daudi went in. 'The Bwana worked with skill. His hand was as gentle for the dog as it will be for you.'

'Eheh,' nodded Goha, 'of course.'

'He also gave injections of penicillin, for the teeth of hyaena are covered with *vidudu* - germs.'

The boy asked hoarsely, 'Bwana, what is news of my dog?'

'He's sick, very sick. Do you want me to tell you exactly what I think?' He nodded. 'The chance for him to recover is small.'

Tears rolled down his face. 'Bwana, you did everything you could?'

'Yes, everything.'

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He lay there quietly for a while and then, 'Does God listen when we pray for dogs?'

'Yes, Goha, he does. But we can't tell God what to do. He knows best. Often he is answering before we ask. You see, there would have been no hope for Seko unless that tall man with the knobbed stick had been on the path. Also, he would certainly have died if we hadn't operated at once. It isn't only a matter of his neck and leg, but the teeth of hyaena have torn him deeply inside.'

'What have you done, Bwana?'

'I have fixed everything up, but it was not easy. I have also set and splinted his left leg. It was not only broken but it was crushed. Seko will have much pain.'

'Bwana, for a year Seko has been my only friend.'

'We know these things, Goha, so we have done the best we could.'

The boy climbed out of bed and quietly knelt down.

