… And Tarzan Runs Into The Jungle

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Tarzan looks up and sees smoke way off in the distance. "Something wrong, Cheetah." The script has this simple direction: [Tarzan runs into the jungle]. He does, and the director hollers, "Cut."

Tarzan does not go up into the treehouse to tell Jane and boy where he's going. He doesn't grab a bottle of water, an energy bar, a pastrami and mayo on white bread, not even a compass. Tarzan runs into the jungle.

Naked and barefoot, with a knife strapped around his waist, and his family jewels rattling around in his loincloth. He dashes headlong into the bush, across a field of pythons (all named Monty) and venomous touch-me-not frogs. Life is stark, brutal, and direct where he lives. Smoke. Something wrong. Therefore, someone must need saving. …And Tarzan runs into the jungle.

I understand this is being shot in an indoor studio with fake trees all around, borrowed from the old Lassie set and from Bonanza being shot next door. Dirt is scattered on the floor, the area is painstakingly lit for effect. There is no rainy season in a TV rainforest. The director needs to get Tarzan out of there and into the next shot. So Tarzan runs into the jungle.

In the high canopy jungle, long vines dangle from the treetops and somehow find their way over to an adjacent tree 100 feet away, where it drapes itself across a branch within arm's length of where Tarzan will land. There is no tree that doesn't have a vine waiting. Thus, he goes zero to 60 in three seconds, reaching the faraway smoke in no time. You don't see Cheetah swinging on vines, but he still gets to the smoke at the same time.

By the way, Cheetah is not simply comic relief. He does heavy lifting in the plot, sometimes stealing keys and taking them to Tarzan and whoever is handcuffed with him. Cheetah can also be counted on to do a silly dance in the final scene, causing Tarzan, Jane, and Boy to laugh.

Tarzan arrives on scene and lurks in the bush, spying on the evildoers, when Jane calls to ask, "Tarz, what

the hell?!" His cell phone ringtone alerts the bad guys and they grab him and handcuff him to a pretty American girl with no sweat glands, wearing a safari helmet.

Just kidding. No cell phone towers. No cell phones. No computer chips either. The only computer in the mid-60s was a Video Pong game in the 7-Eleven. But even if that were not the case, loincloths don't have pockets.

This is incredibly instructive if you're able to take it. You can't even manage to clean out your kitchen junk drawer, but Tarzan, the original minimalist has zero emotional clutter. He speaks in short, clipped sentences. No moralizing speeches. No pronouns. No gender (that he's aware of). No personal space. Just a sense that someone off in the distance needs saving. … And Tarzan runs into the jungle.



all photos submitted by Larry Moffitt