

Zudora

A Great Mystic Story by Harold McGrath

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SYNOPSIS.

Zudora is left an orphan at an early age. Her father is killed in a gold mine, and the fortune from the mine, which grows to be worth \$20,000,000, are left in the guardianship of Frank Keene, Zudora's mother's brother, who has set himself up as a Hindu mystic and is known as Hassam Ali. He decides that Zudora must die before she can have a chance to come into possession of her money, so that it may be left to him, the next of kin. Hassam Ali sees an obstacle to his scheme in the person of John Storm, a young lawyer, for whom Zudora has taken a fancy, and he commands the girl to put the man out of her mind. Zudora insists that if she cannot marry Storm she will marry no one.

"Well, well," says Hassam Ali, "solve my next twenty cases and you can marry him; fall in a single case and you must renounce him."

Zudora unravels a mystery and wins her first case—a case in which John Storm is saved from being convicted of a murder instigated by Hassam Ali himself.

Zudora and Hassam Ali visit Nabok Shan's house, where sleep overcomes every one whenever Nabok attempts to marry a princess. Storm, seeking Zudora, is made a prisoner. Zudora foils Nabok Shan, restores the princess to her original lover and saves Storm from death.

A maker of diamonds tells Hassam Ali his secret. Storm informs Zudora that his life is being attempted frequently. Storm suspects Hassam Ali. Storm is arrested for stealing the diamond maker's gems, but Zudora discovers the real thieves—a pair of mice.

The negro help employed on Storm's father's farm are fleeing because a great skeleton hand appears at night upon a hill near by. Storm is baffled in his investigation, but Zudora learns that her uncle has employed Jimmy Bolton, a half-witted man, thus to annoy Storm's parents. Zudora finds Bolton operating a magic lantern and is attacked by him. Storm appears and saves her.

Hassam Ali asks Zudora to find a gem lost by two mysterious old men. Zudora gets a photograph of the gem and it burns in her hand. An old house is mined by Hassam Ali and the old men. Storm and Zudora are lured there and narrowly escape destruction when the house blows up.

John McWinter, endeavoring to trap and kill George Smith, is killed himself, and Smith is charged with murder. Hassam Ali conspires to have John Storm meet the same fate as McWinter, and he and Storm are overcome by powerful fumes. Zudora saves them, proves that McWinter's own dog trapped and killed him and saves Smith from a band of ruffians.

An inventor blows up a submarine with a powerful heat ray which he sends through water. Hassam Ali sends Zudora to a photographer directly beneath the inventor's laboratory and orders the inventor to kill her. Zudora gets a warning and her life is saved. The heat ray machine is destroyed, and the photographer, after a quarrel with Hassam Ali, is found dead in the river.

Wa Chang prevents Zudora's elopement with John Storm by hypnotizing her, and he and Hassam Ali attempt to smuggle her out of the country. This plot is frustrated by Storm.

Baird, Hassam Ali's double, falls in love with Zudora. Baird and Mme. Du Val kidnap Zudora and the Van Wick child. Storm rescues them, and Hassam Ali dies.

With Hassam Ali dead Zudora is released of her pledge to solve twenty cases. She confronts, however, the greatest mystery of all, which is the mystery of her own life, and the ambition to secure the vast fortune of \$20,000,000 left to her. This great photo serial is being shown in the leading moving picture theaters by the Thinkhouse Film Corporation. Among those participating are Marguerite Snow, Mary Elizabeth Forbes, James Cruze, in the new role of reporter-hero, Sidney Bracey and Frank Farrington.

On looking through her uncle's papers Zudora finds that her father left her an interest in a diamond mine, and Storm and Baird both lend assistance in trying to regain for her possession of this estate which is being appropriated by rogues under the leadership of Mme. Du Val. They plan to frighten Zudora so that she will run away. Failing, they kidnap Zudora and Howard, the mine superintendent, and put them in a private insane asylum. Howard dies, but Zudora, nearly famished, is rescued by Storm and his friends.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Missing Millions.

It took a fortnight for Zudora to become herself again. The treatment she had received in the sanitarium would have driven insane any woman with less mental balance and physical stamina. She had been ill fed, ill clothed, roughly handled, threatened. She had shut her teeth together and endured.

The death of the mine superintendent did not clear away any clouds. The diamond mine was as far away from Zudora as ever. Storm and Hunt agreed that some one had got into Hassam Ali's papers, and these papers made the ownership of the diamond mines unassailable.

Hunt questioned Baird in private, but the latter swore on his oath that he had never been able to put his hand on Hassam Ali's money or on his private papers. The Hindu servant had known where these things were, and there was no doubt in Baird's mind that the brown man had taken both gold and papers, the latter being turned over to those who now possessed them.

"There's one thing I'm curious about," said Baird.

"And what's that?"

"That gold mine. Zudora had quite a few thousands at the start. I know she received them. I know she was legally entitled to them. Gold mines do not vanish off the earth in the fashion this one is said to have vanished. Has it occurred to you that the report might have been faked by those most interested in cheating Zudora?"

"We can soon find out. Your idea is a good one, and, more than that, it's my opinion that those who are milk the diamond mine are digging into

the gold. They've got all the documents in the case. All right. For awhile we'll chuck the diamond end of it and see what can be done with the gold. Zudora can turn over her interests to Storm, and he can start the bombardment. Suppose I telephone him to meet us up there at her home at once? We can't lose anything by going to it at the drop of the hat."

Baird called at once on Storm and explained his idea.

"So you think these crooks are trying to put that deal over us also? The information came to Zudora unsolicited. Some clerk sent the information."

"A frame-up, no doubt. Mr. Storm, we've all got to move mighty smoothly to beat the crowd we're up against. Up to date we have no legal hold. If we go to court with half rights it's quite likely the litigation will run on for years. I don't think you could enjoin an African diamond mine from producing. We might be able to hold up the gold mine for a time, but these people have money, barrels of it, and they'll use it to fight. Now, we want to get the upper hand in this game without having to go to the courts. Suppose you write a letter to the Zudora mine to see where we stand. Ask for information about Trainor, Zudora's father; ask if there are any papers relating to the will, and so forth and so on. Feel them out. If they are crooks out there it's better to know it as soon as possible. Here's Miss Trainor now," wound up Baird as Zudora entered.

She approved of the letter, but it was always money, money, money. She was beginning to hate the sound of it. Why not let the scoundrels have it?

"That isn't the idea, my girl," said Storm. "It isn't the money so much;

But for an old man's folly they would have me still. I was pretty. Du Val had influence, and here I am, mistress of his fortune. It's the game with me."

"And it's the cold lure, if you want my side of it. I like good things to wear, to eat. I like to spend money for the mere sake of spending it. I'd like to sit in a game of poker without feeling the necessity of slipping an ace from my sleeve." Radcliffe laughed.

"And because I fumbled an ace once upon a time—oh, well, the past is the past, and a hand once played can't be put Villiers out of the way. Storm has written him, but Brown intercepted the letter. On my side, as Storm, I've requested him to bring east all his documents. And there's the real game—to get our hands upon those. But I would like to know where our pretty Zudora hid those diamonds. The loot was worth at least fifty thousand."

"Who is this man Baird?"

"Why, I thought you knew all about him."

"I thought I did. Either he has turned over for keeps or he is playing a deeper game than we are." Madame nudged for a moment. "I never could tell when it was Baird or the real Hassam. He was the cleverest make-up man I ever saw."

"And you were just a little bit smitten with him, eh?"

"Well, maybe I was. But I've got over it."

"There's one thing we may be sure—he didn't get into Hassam Ali's trunks. That Hindu was a godsend to us. I suppose by this time he is back in India, with trained elephants to fight for him and slave girls to wait upon him. He got Hassam's hoarded gold, all right. The old boy was the shrewdest

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It's the principle. I know you've just gone through a terrible ordeal, and it has put fear into you, but we can't let these people go scot free. Do you think I'll ever let up hunting them when I think what they did to you? No, thanks! This bunch of rogues is going to pay the piper for their fox trot."

They all laughed, and then Storm made out his letter to Marcus Villiers, chairman of the board of trustees.

And Mme. Du Val made up her mind to have a little masquerade for the benefit of this same Marcus Villiers. The chairman was coming east to see the real Zudora, supposing, of course, that the fortune was still under her control. There had been an unusually fine vein struck, and he was going east to suggest that she sell outright her holdings.

Baird's idea that there might be an unfaithful clerk at the mines was a keen one. The superintendent of the mine was of a different caliber from the man who had taken charge of the diamond mine. Brown of the Zudora gold mine was not above doubling his income, and he was not particular how that doubling was brought about. The moment the new find was made he promptly wired Captain Radcliffe that Villiers was arranging to come east and that Detective Hunt, whom Radcliffe had warned him about, would be lured west and put out of business.

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Upon receipt of the wire from Brown Captain Radcliffe at once sought Mme. Du Val.

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"So long as we pay him well. My dear woman, with a little close sailing we'll have riches beyond our wildest dreams. Millions, and not a soul to step between! Howard is out of the way, and that diamond mine is practically ours, to do with as we please. With this man Villiers sent along aff-

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"It's not the money with me, Radcliffe; it's the sport of the game. I like to beat the law, to confuse it, to make it impotent. It twisted me once.

"What is it?"

"Munn committed suicide in the Tombs this morning, and the Howard case goes off the calendar with him. Sooner or later he'd have blown the game, and we'd have had to like."

"Munn dead! What a weight off my shoulders! I've been waiting for the police every day since he went to the Tombs. He overdid the Howard business. Of course he had only verbal evidence against us. But if he had broken down under the third degree it would have put us into hot water. More, it would have started the hawks looking me up. And then by-by. We must play a finer hand. No rough stuff from our side except in the case of Hunt. We'll ship Villiers to a spot he can't get back from. If we give him no chance to see the real Zudora it will be plain sailing. Once we have his papers in our possession we can laugh at him."

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"Marry you? Not the best man that ever lived! We'd tire of each other in a week. You know it, and I know it. Let us keep to the platonic scheme if you please, captain."

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"Do you put any faith in it?"

Hunt shrugged. "I want to find where that mine is. I don't care a hang whether this wire is a plant or not."

"Would you like company?" suggested Baird.

"I should say yes! Will you go?"

"What kind of a yarn will I tell the office?"

"Tell them you've got the mate to the South African story. Add, your expenses will be taken care of by the Trainor estate."

Baird sat down to the telephone. Two minutes later he jumped up with a whoop.

"All O. K. I'll meet you at the Grand Central in one hour. I'm aching for a shindy."

"You'll get it, I'm thinking, if you come with me," said Hunt grimly.

Marcus Villiers was the son of John

would. Instantly he stopped the car and whirled in his seat. When Hunt and Baird looked at him again they found themselves also looking into the barrels of two ugly, serviceable automatics. At the same time Radcliffe and Brown, both made up for the occasion, dashed around the break in the road.

Quick as light Hunt's cane flashed through the air, striking the chauffeur on the wrist and sending one of the guns whirling down the ravine. Before the chauffeur recovered Hunt was upon him for the possession of the remaining weapon. But things did not go very well with Baird. Radcliffe and Brown got him foul, and he had his hands full.

Hunt fought furiously and succeeded in getting the chauffeur at a disadvantage. He snapped the gun from his grasp and crucked him over the head with the butt, and like the miner in Bret Harte's poem, "the subsequent proceedings interested him no more!"

The detective threw on the power and sent the car whizzing ahead without realizing what had happened to Baird. They had succeeded in pulling him out of the car and knocking him senseless. The moment the car started Radcliffe jumped and caught hold of the side, managing with no small difficulty to crawl into the tonneau. And then Hunt's brave dash came to an abrupt end.

Baird saved half the day by keeping still until he had recovered his breath. Then he reached for Brown's leg and threw him neatly. And that was the end of Brown's part for the present.

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Villiers, the banker to whom Trainor had entrusted his mine originally. He was a lively individual, a shrewd business man, but something of a fop. He possessed the only valet in that part of the country, and he kept that valet, not because he needed help, but because it took courage to do so in face of the old timers who held all men-servants in contempt.

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The day previous to Hunt and Baird's departure it was agreed that Captain Radcliffe himself should go west to see that Hunt was properly taken care of. He was three days later met at the little mining town station by two trusted men of Brown's. The trio went directly to the mine, and in the office, together with Brown, they mapped out the campaign against Detective Hunt, who was due to arrive on the morrow.

When Hunt and Baird arrived it was natural that they should select the one automobile in sight. The chauffeur, who was the same man who had driven Radcliffe to the mine office the day before, asked the new arrivals where they wanted to go.

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But the chauffeur knew that he would have to stand sharp scrutiny. So his bland countenance partly reassured the detective.

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"Cards?"

"Surely! I've got to have a little recreation for the risks I'm taking and about to take. But I'm going to give you some fine news for the money. It is worth ten thousand instead of two hundred."

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"What do you think?" whispered Baird.

"In a game like this you've got to wait for the other man to move," returned Hunt, with his eye on the chauffeur's neck.

The chauffeur turned "See that ledge around the bend there? That's the mine."

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