KING'S MATE

BY ROSITA FORBES

CHAPTER VII

Abd-el Krim rode into Telehdi amidst scenes of the wildest enthusiasm.

Menebbhe and his son traveled to the edge of their district to meet the great man and escorted him back to the village, riding one at each stirrup.

Westwyn met the sultan where the path widened above a hamlet. The riflemen padding ahead opened out to let the Englishman pass. The sultan, a small, sturdy Riff, dark skinned, with a slight mustache and an edging of wiry hairs on his chin, bent down, smiling.

"With pleasure—with blessing," he said. "Inshn Allah, you are in good health?" Their hands met and Westwyn touched his with his lips in Arab fashion. The sultan made a gesture of so doing. He signaled to a servant to bring the Englishman's horse and, after further greetings from Mohammabdi, a more muscular edition of his brother, the cavalcade continued its climb.

When they reached Menebbhe's house Westwyn took his leave, for few people and no foreigners see Abd-el Krim afoot. Lame from a wound occurred in escaping eight years ago from a Spanish prison in Melilla, and sensitive of the disfigurement, he receives his counselors seated and his warriors in the saddle.

When Westwyn returned for a formal audience he found the sultan established on a mattress covered with carpets, a rifle and cartridge pouch hanging on the wall above him, a black servant behind him. After the usual greetings and inquiries, as formal as if the two had not met for months, the Riffian leader signaled his guest to a chair, the only one in the room, but the Englishman seated himself cross-legged on the floor. A map was spread between them and Abd-el Krim, ignoring his attendant, drew his finger along the French front.

"I have news that an offensive is pending." Though he spoke Spanish fluently, the sultan generally insisted on using the Shilluh dialect, which had to be interpreted to strangers, but with this one friend who, alone among Europeans, he trusted, he spoke Arabic. "There is to be a simultaneous attack right along the line."

"A feint," said Westwyn. "They won't push it home."

"How can we tell?" asked the sultan, his eyes narrowed and anxious. Here was no legendary hero, no reckless preacher of Jehad, but a shrewd man, cunning and deliberate, unwilling to take great risks if lesser ones would serve.

"We can't," retorted Westwyn. "We've got to chance it." He tapped

"What Is Your Plan?" Asked the Riff, and There Was Sudden Keenness in His Eyes.

the northern edge of a map where the red dots marked the Spanish out posts.

"I want to wipe these out and to do so, I must have every available man. Leave a few snipers on the south. They can harass the French and put up a good enough show to give Petain an excuse for delay. Meanwhile we'll smash these fellows once for all."

"What is your plan?" asked the Riff, and there was sudden keenness in his eyes. The outlines of his face seemed less heavy. The biting concentrated intelligence of the man gleamed through the unwieldy flesh.

"The Spaniards have crossed the river. It's taken a fortnight of every inducement we could offer. Rain has been heavy in the hills and the dam is already swollen. In a few weeks, when the wet season sets in, we shall have a new ally! The wall can be blown up below the dam. It must be done at night and in an hour the Spanish force will be cut in half. Then we must attack—no half-measures, mind you! We've got to smash them."

"It means leaving the north defenseless."

"String the Arab tribes along there and back your luck, Sidi." Westwyn smiled. "We must make a bid for peace while there is still food in the Riff. Next year famine will be a worse enemy than France or Spain."

The sultan did not answer. He sat very still in his hand-woven woolen djellaba, no different from those of his followers. His very white linen and the skull cap he wore, instead of the usual twisted rope agall, accentuated the darkness of his face. "You mean to move the guns across?"

"A couple of batteries. I'll trust most to our rifles, but no one must guess. This must be between you and me, Sidi. The Spaniards will have to be tempted farther up from the river and there must be no obvious movement among the hills. The men can march by night, when the airplanes are safe at Adjir."

"They never venture far inland! Bismillah, what an amount of lead they have wasted among the rocks!" The sultan's gesture was contemptuous. "You think peace will follow a Spanish defeat?"

"I am sure of it," said Westwyn. Patiently he repeated his arguments. France did not want to rule the Riff. She was out to insure her own territory. Already tired of what she considered a fruitless waste of life, Paris had cut down the war vote by a milliard francs. "It is Spain who is our enemy," he ended.

Still Abd-el Krim hesitated. It was against his whole policy to risk so much. From the first his campaign had been one of pretense, sniping here, a raid there, an exaggerated suggestion of force, never an open attack. "Suppose you are mistaken and Petain pushes into the mountains?"

"Then we lose," said the Englishman, but his carelessness did not deceive his chief.

"You are very certain."

"Yes." Westwyn leaned forward. "It's our chance, Sidi—a desperate one if you like, but the only one. We've got to force the issue." His determination began to have its effect on the sultan. The steadiness of the queer, light eyes was hypnotic. "Risk it, man. Call the French bluff!" Westwyn smashed his fist on the ground. The two men looked at each other, while the slave held his breath, aware of the clash of the wills.

"Allah has given you wisdom," said Abd-el Krim at last. "It shall be as you wish."

Westwyn strode up to his house with a smile on set lips. He had forgotten his horse, still tethered by the sultan's gate. God! What a game! They were bound to win, if only the news didn't leak out. He'd have to keep El Krim up to the point. No, the man wouldn't let him down. He'd be on edge all the time, but once he'd given his word he'd stick to it. With his mind full of such thoughts, Westwyn entered his house by the nearest way, which happened to be the little-used harem door. Consequently, he almost fell over Rosemary, who was sitting on a pile of stones inside. "Lord, what a day!" thought the man, and dragged his brain back from the water power in the southern hills.

"I say, I'm most awfully sorry. I forgot you were here."

"Women and war! They don't mix well," retorted Rosemary, smiling and annoyed.

Westwyn explained. "I've just come from Abd-el Krim. He was full of news."

"You look bursting with it."

The man laughed. "I say, let's have a truce, or do you want to prosecute me for trespassing?" He studied the slender figure in a short red and blue striped skirt, adapted from a barracan. The indigo jumper bared arms which were faintly sunburned and the ankles, too, were bare, above primrose-yellow native slippers.

Rosemary blushed. "My solitary pair of stockings has deserted me—piecemeal have I buried them! I am doing the sun cure. I hope you approve."

The gallantry of her appealed to Westwyn. "With all my worldly goods I have thee endowed—temporarily, of course—but I don't know if you'll find anything of much use among them."

"You give me leave to investigate?" The strain was over. Rosemary, defeated, felt there was no need to fight any more. However unwilling she was to accept it, she knew she could rely on this man's protection—horrible word!

CHAPTER VIII

Rosemary stayed in the yard, though the stones of her seat were sharp. She must forget what she stigmatized as the "ridiculousness" of the last week. If she treated the situation as perfectly normal, it would become so of course. She resolved to interest herself in the Riffian war, to study the customs and politics of the people. In time she might get as excited about them as the Kaid. For an instant she saw herself an African Joan of Arc. Then her bare legs attracted her attention. "Economical," she thought. "Healthy, but not at all engaging!" Her thoughts flew on.

"Zarifa!" she called. "Isn't there a mirror in the whole village?"

"Yes, yes," shrilled the handmaiden. "I will get one." And, when the light was almost gone, she bustled into the room with a fly blown glass, ornately framed in gilt. "It belongs to Sidi Mohamed's wife and she was proud and grateful to lend it to a bride."

Rosemary's mood was proof against her giggles. She studied her face with considerable attention. "It's like meeting an old acquaintance," she reflected, and smiled with firm lips, so thin skinned that the blood underneath was like red, smooth petals.

Zarifa watched her draw a damp finger across her eyebrows, which were long and slim, and comb her hair, pushing it into waves with impatient purpose.

"Wallahi, Allah has given you beauty. The Kaid may well be pleased." The words rolled off Rosemary's new security. She was glad she was beautiful for it made things more exciting. Some day, perhaps, Westwyn would realize it. Her cheeks began to burn. She must not look back. There were things she couldn't bear to remember, worst of all the moment when the Kaid had picked her bodily off the couch and told her to play the game. D—n him, she thought, and then pushed away her resentment, packing it down amidst layers of common sense. It was no use regretting anything. She must begin all over again.

They sat on the couch, talking long after Ahmed had cleared away the dishes, delighted at the destruction which proved his skill. Westwyn was preoccupied, though he took in every detail of the girl's grace, as she twisted into the most comfortable position against the brilliant bolsters.

"He can't get away from his soldiery," thought Rosemary, but the man's mind was fixed on pajamas! What the dence did she sleep in, he wondered. Why on earth hadn't he thought of it before. His teeth bit into the pipe stem. Planning a southern offensive, decided his companion, half amused, half annoyed. She moved restlessly against the cushions, pushing them into a better angle.

"Do they always stuff their pillows with young potatoes?"

"Yes, I think so—pretty neck racking, isn't it?" returned Westwyn, regarding her as if she were a strategic puzzle, and wondering whether he could offer her some pajamas! Oppressed by the problem, his leave taking was somewhat disconnected. "I suppose Zarifa can make this into a decent bed," he remarked, prodding the hard, hempen couch. His gaze wandered round the room, with its bare mud walls decorated with texts from the Koran, and its islands of camp furniture upon a sea of matting. "I'm afraid it's awfully uncomfortable," he said. "I do hope you'll be all right. If you'll wait a minute I'll get you—" and he disappeared through the door into the yard.

Rosemary sat on the window ledge contemplating a corner of starlit sky—it looked as if it were a flower bed. She felt she could pick out the biggest stars and set them like candles on the table. Westwyn's footsteps came slowly across the yard. He hesitated in the doorway, a bundle of pale-colored garments in his arms. His smile was guilty, but there was a twinkle in his eyes.

"Look here, Rosemary—you'll have to let me call you that; I can't say Mrs. Westwyn, can I?—it would be indiscreet, I suppose, to ask what you do sleep in, but I thought perhaps you'd let me lend you these." He dumped the pajamas on the couch and retreated, with the air of getting as far away from them as possible.

Rosemary struggled not to laugh. His embarrassment made her mistress of the situation. "Thank you, awfully. It'll be a great improvement on a barracan. So scratchy, you know, and my toes always get entangled in the fringe." From sheer mischief she crossed to the couch and picked up a striped coat. "I shall disappear in it altogether and never be found again," she said, measuring the arms.

Westwyn was amused. Two could play that game! "Turn up the sleeves," he suggested, and came over to help. It was while they were both holding the coat, laughing at each other as they weighed and summed up the new feeling between them, that a burst of music came from outside. Wild and stormy, it was sound woven into the passion of a marriage night, the song of women drifting like leaves on a tide. It caught at Rosemary's heart, and her face reflected something of its tumult.

"What is it?" she asked, and noticed the man's hands clenched on the stuff they held.

"It's the village women. They have come here to celebrate the wedding. Listen, now." For the life of him he couldn't help touching her arm. Through the music came a ringing ululation, the primitive rejoicing of woman in her mate, her glad promise of fertility. The mask of civilization was torn from Rosemary as the music wrenched her nerves. For a minute she was as much potential wife as any of the shrouded figures who rejoiced in her fulfillment. Wide-eyed and fearless, the tide of life full in her veins, she looked at Westwyn and saw his face sterner than she had ever known it.

"You must go out to them. Give them money," he said, and pushed silver into her hand.

"Come, too," she pleaded, puzzled and a little hurt, but still hypnotized by the tremendous forces echoed from audh and drum.

Westwyn shook his head. "I can't. They are not all peasants. Some of them may be veiled." He urged her

(Continued next week.)

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The work of Mrs. Lulu Crandall of The Dalles in recounting the early history of this section of Oregon is to be commended. That lady is possessed of a vast store of early happening in Oregon and her column of questions and answers in the Portland Oregonian is quite educational.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION
Department of The Interior

U. S. Land Office at The Dalles, Oregon, Dec. 12, 1927.

Notice is hereby given that

Anson T. Lindley,

of Maupin, Oregon, who, on Nov. 13, 1920, made Homestead Entry under Act. Dec. 29, 1916, No. 020,920, for NE¼ SE¼, Sec. 22, T. 3 S., R. 14 E., Lot, 4, S½ NW¼, Sec. 1, SE¼ SE½, Sec. 2, NW¼ NW¼, Sec. 12, E½ SW¼, Sec. 14, W½ NW¼, Sec. 24, T. 5 S., R. 14 E., NE¼ NE¼, Sec. 7, and NW¼ NW¼, Sec. 8, T. 5, S., R. 15 E., Willamette Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make final three year proof, to establish claim to the land above described, before F. D. Stuart, United States Commissioner, at Maupin, Oregon, on the 1st day of February, 1928.

Claimant names as witnesses: John Donaldson, Floyd McLeod, Elmer Hornquist, Al. Kennedy, all of Maupin Oregon.

D15-J12 J. W. Donnelly, Reg.