

## YU'AN HEE SEE LAUGHS

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By SAX ROHMER

## CHAPTER I

"GOOD-BY, then, Eileen. And take great care of yourself. I've probably missed the train and everything—but I don't give a hoot. Be sure to write from Marseilles and cable when you get in. And don't forget I'm coming out in March."

The girl clung desperately to her brother, her soft arms locked about him. Matt Kearney could feel that she was trembling, and:

"What's the matter with Kid Sister?" he asked, squeezing her.

"Kid Sister's miserable!"

"Because you don't want to go back?"

"No. But because somehow, Matt dear," she whispered very close to his ear, "I feel frightened about this journey. Don't be mad with me. I know it's silly, and I ought to be used to traveling by now. But I've got a wobbly, funny feeling."

Kearney looked down at the tangled curls nestling upon his shoulder; and in the light shining out from the cozy stateroom they gleamed and shimmered like burnished bronze. He hugged her affectionately and told himself that a chill suddenly experienced and resembling cold water trickling down his spine was due physically to the clammy quality of the night, and mentally to the girl's overwrought condition.

"Kid, dear," he said, and stroked her hair, "play fair. Seeing little girls off is bad enough anyway, without giving a fellow the breeze up."

"I'm sorry, Matt. It was utterly Big Pig of me."

"No—only Little Pig," he said playfully. "I only wish I were coming with you."

"It wasn't fair, and I shouldn't have said it. It's just this beastly fog and having to let you go ashore in it. Give me a kiss, Matt, and we'll go and hunt Jack Rattray—although I really don't know how you're going to get home."

Wisps of mist floated under the lights. Not another soul was in sight on that deck, but there was activity on the deck below, and a tremendous clamor on the dockside. The R. M. S. Wallaroo was going out in the morning—sixteen hours late, thanks to one of those fogs, London Special, which sometimes hold up Thames traffic for whole days.

One last lingering glance Kearney cast into the cozy stateroom which Eileen was to occupy to Colombo. He would cheerfully have resigned six months' pay to be going, too. The wardrobe trunk, which he had labelled himself, a green hat on the rack above the bed, a camera hung on the back of a chair, a dressing case open on the table. The box of a hundred cigarettes which Dawson Haig had brought down to the steamer that morning lay on the turned-back coverlet, and a pile of magazines on top of an unopened cabin trunk; three novels which Matt had brought for Eileen in the rack beside the green hat.

"Ah, well!" he sighed, "you'll be a comfortable Little Pig. Winter, the purser, is a star turn. You're at his table, and he'll see that everything's right. Jack Rattray is an old pal, so that you won't lack company."

"I sha'n't lack company," said Eileen archly.

Her mood changed, and she smiled mischievously. But Kearney welcomed the change, and:

"You little devil!" he said, and squeezed her hard. "Don't forget there's a spy aboard."

"I might buy him over!" said "Oh, don't please do that!" Eileen.

"I'll tell Billy Haig!"

exclaimed in mock horror. "He might never run out to Colombo to have a cup of tea with me as he promised!"

But really her heart was very sad. Because she didn't expect ever to see Dawson Haig again.

She made a charming figure in the light streaming from the cabin door, simply dressed though she was in a jumper and tweed skirt. And Matt Kearney felt affectionately proud of his dainty sister.

"Come on," said he. "Let's go and dig old Rattray out. I must positively beat it. I've got at least a quarter of an hour's walk through dockland, and falling divine luck, a long voyage by motor bus."

Jack Rattray, chief officer of the Wallaroo, was exchanging a few pleasantries with the boss stevedore by the hatch of Number



Had Some One Passed Him—Or Had He Imagined It?

Three hold, but he broke off this not too parliamentary debate when the charming passenger appeared beside him with Kearney.

"What about a final?" asked Rattray.

"No final for me," Kearney replied. He grasped Rattray's hand. "Good-night, and all the best. I know you'll look after her."

Rattray, tall, leisurely, taciturn, smiled his slim smile.

"Sure thing, Bo!" said he.

"You're mocking me!" Eileen cried, and punched the speaker forcibly in the ribs. "I don't have an accent like that. I speak better English than you do, anyway!"

"You speak more English," Rattray drawled provokingly.

"Very Big Pig," said Eileen.

But Kearney left the ship in a happier mood and experienced no return of that unpleasant chill. Eileen was in good company, and the voyage would pass like three days.

He picked his way through litter on the dockside. Just under an arc he paused, turned, and looked back. Jack Rattray and Eileen were standing on the deck by the gangway. He waved his hat and shouted:

"Good-by until March, and good luck!"

"Good-by, Matt," came the girl's voice; and:

"Cheer!-ho, old boy."

That was Rattray.

The fascinating activity of those docks claimed Kearney. Here East meets West: produce of the Spice islands, tea of Ceylon, the timbers of Burma, jostle ironmongery from Birmingham, lie cheek and jowl with chemical products of Silver-

town. At night, especially, under dockland floodlights, amid river noises and the hoarse voices of workers, the mystery of the port of London, type of a vast and ever-turning wheel of empire, touched the poetry which was part of him.

He stood there for a moment looking about him and failing to notice a man who, ten paces away, seemed to be watching the dock gates—a tallish man wearing a white raincoat, collar turned up, and a soft brown hat with the brim pulled down. But the other man had seen Kearney—and the sight of Kearney had set him dreaming. Colombo a year before. A year! It seemed only like a week! The mist dispersed before the eyes of the dreamer by the gates. He saw Mount Lavinia hotel, and a petite, slender girl in a blue frock crossing the deserted mahogany dance floor. She had been a sort of revelation, opening his eyes to all that had been lacking.

He was among the stars again, could see the winking lighthouse callously stabbing the tropical night, hear the plaintive tremolo of a Tamil love chant floating up from the village. . . .

From these haunting memories he was abruptly jerked back to reality. He withdrew into shadow.

A man was coming out of the gates—so muffled up in a heavy fur-collared coat that his features were indistinguishable. This man turned sharply left, passed Kearney, and was swallowed up in the fog.

And as he vanished, something—an instinct perhaps; or was it a faint odor suggestive of musk?—suddenly brought Kearney an unaccountable return of that sensation as though cold water trickled down his spine. He stared into the fog. Had some one passed him—or had he imagined it?

He hated this sensation—as of an indefinable dread—which twice, now, had oppressed him.

A hand rested on his shoulder.

Kearney twisted about with a cry. The man in the white raincoat stood just behind him. And, stock still, peering into the other's face: "Good Lord!" Kearney exclaimed joyfully, "it's Dawson Haig!"

. . . . .

Eileen watched from the rail until fog hanging over the dockside swallowed up Matt's figure. She turned and looked at Jack Rattray. Seeing her expression:

"Whatever's the matter, Eileen?" said he.

"Oh, I don't know, Jack!" she replied. She was angry with herself.

"I'm behaving like a perfect little idiot tonight. And if you ask me why, I can't tell you. It's just Jim-Jams. Except that I think it began with a horrible looking man wearing a fur-collared overcoat!"

"Oh!" said Rattray, conscious that duty called him but held against his will by the girl's unaccountable mood. "When did you see this furry bird? And was it his collar or his overcoat you didn't like?"

"His face! He looked into the open door of my stateroom while Matt was up in your cabin. I saw his reflection in my hand mirror. When I turned, he wasn't there."

"Do you mean he was actually in the room—fur collar and all?"

"No—foolish idiot! He was standing just in the doorway, and he was smiling . . . the most horrible smile imaginable."

"An Englishman?"

"Oh, no, he wasn't! A Chinaman."

"A Chinaman! In a fur coat! No wonder you were shaken up!"

"There was a queer musky smell, too—"

"Have you seen him since?"

"Yes. I saw him afterwards on

the dockside, looking up at me." "I think that settles it," said Jack Rattray reassuringly. "There was a bunch of stuff shipped by a Chinese agency down Limehouse way for a firm in Sydney. Some d—n silly mistake. They're hauling it out now—a h—l of a job—from Number Three hold. This oriental bird was probably the half-wit responsible. It's given me more trouble than the specie."

"The specie?"

"Yes. We're a Spanish galleon this trip, Eileen!" Rattray smiled his slow smile. "Minted gold from the Bank of England, consigned to the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. Look! It's just coming aboard. Two millions! Well, I must slip off now. They've rushed this little lot aboard us at the last moment, and I've got to find a safe home for it. Take my tip. Turn in with a book and, if you like, I'll have a nightcap sent along in about half an hour. Leave it to me."

"You're a Kind Pig," said Eileen, and squeezed his arm affectionately.

She had known Jack Rattray for three years. He had introduced her to Dawson Haig in Colombo—only a year ago. . . .

As he went off with his slow long strides, she turned and entered her cabin.

The memory of that strange lemon-yellow face, glimpsed between upraised flaps of an astrakhan collar and the pulled down brim of a soft black hat, haunted her ridiculously. Of course, the man was some Chinese shipping agent. The apparent evil of his smile might have been no more than a distorted reflection in the mirror.

She wondered if Dawson Haig would write. . . .

Queer, that odor, like musk. It seemed to hang about. . . .

Yes, she would turn in and read.

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"You see, Kearney," said Detective Inspector Dawson Haig, staring up at an old print which decorated the bar, "officially, my hands are tied. It's because I've always made a point of finding the loopholes in official regulations that I've got as far as I have."

The bar was sparsely populated. Two firemen, amiably drunk, lolled in a corner. A solitary, seedy-looking drinker sat against the wall,

smoking his pipe and taking sips from a tankard. A shirt-sleeved barman made up the company.

Kearney smiled at the speaker. He regarded William Dawson Haig as one of the most remarkable men in London—a man destined to win an international reputation. Haig had been at Stonyhurst with Kearney—Michael Kearney, now United States consul at Colombo, at that time having been stationed in Liverpool. Catastrophe came just as Haig went up to Oxford Endowed by his father with a load of debts and a posthumous V. C., he had enlisted in the Metropolitan police force. He was today the youngest detective-inspector in the criminal investigation department, with a great future assured.

"Regulations weren't made for you," said Kearney, laughing. "But I'm still in the dark. You leave the Wallaroo after lunch, with dramatic farewells, and then bang me on the back at the dock gates at ten o'clock at night!"

Haig raised his tankard, contemplating it with interest, and:

"I gave you a lift as far as Limehouse," he reminded Kearney. "You ought to be thankful for that. And the beer is good. . . ."

Kearney banged the counter. The barman replenished the tankards. And, when he had retired:

"What's afoot?" Kearney asked in a low voice.

"I don't know!" was Haig's surprising answer. "I can only think there's been a bad leakage of news. Some time ago," he went on, "a consignment of pottery was sent from China to a firm in Birmingham. This consignment, unopened, was re-consigned to a Chinese firm in Sydney, per Messrs. King, shipping agents, of Limehouse. It was put on the Wallaroo. I checked it myself, this morning."

"Was that how you managed to get down to see Eileen?"

"It was," Haig acknowledged, "and I blessed the chance! Now, here's what I meant when I said my hands were tied: neither K. division nor Scotland Yard have had power to open those cases of pottery. Oh, it's too d—n silly to talk about—because I know for a fact that they are stuffed with 'gum'!"

"Opium! But why send drugs from China to Australia via Birmingham!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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