

YU'AN HEE SEE LAUGHS

Copyright by Sax Rohmer.

WNU Service.

By SAX ROHMER

CHAPTER VI—Continued

—9—

When, bewilderingly, came the wish of a silken shawl—a patter of feet—a soft, terrified cry . . . and Eileen's sweet arms were about his neck!

"Billy—Billy dear! Oh, my G—d! you're covered with blood! What is it? What is it?"

"My dear!" he said—"It's nothing. I'm safe—and no one must know—"

She was staring into his face eagerly, her own raised in a sort of agony of apprehension. Haig began to tremble. Gone was every resolution he so recently had made—useless—hopeless.

He held her so close that she thought, "He will break me in half," and exulted. He kissed her until she was breathless, helpless.

"Oh, my darling," he whispered. He had so little to offer this wonder girl, locked, happy, in his arms—so much to tell her—so much to explain. Yet somehow all he could say over and over again, was:

"Oh, my darling. . . ."

A few moments after the Wallaroo dropped her anchor off Port Said, the British consul came aboard. There was a conference in the captain's cabin.

Haig had deliberately failed to reveal the fact that there was a man overboard. The first news was given by a steward entering the missing man's room in the morning. The conclusion was come to that the morose Chinese passenger had committed suicide during the night by jumping overboard. . . .

Now, in the closed cabin of the commander, Dawson Haig revealed the truth to Captain Peterson and the British consul.

"I take full responsibility," he said; "you can see for yourselves the sort of gang I have to deal with. First, the Limehouse outrage, and now this murderous attack on me. I got off lightly, with a cut scalp and a torn sleeve!"

The commander scratched his grizzled head.

"What do you wish me to do, Inspector?" the consul asked. "In my opinion, the persons whom you suspect of being associated with the missing assassin should be detained."

Dawson Haig stood up, grinning savagely, and shaking his head.

"Upon what evidence?" he demanded. "I assure you that except for a scrap of paper providentially discovered by Miss Kearney, there's nothing to associate Doctor Oestler, for instance, with any conspiracy directed against me. And even that is far from conclusive. I mean, he could explain it in all sorts of ways. He doesn't appear to be acquainted either with Miss Valerie Ednam or with Mr. Chow; and certainly not with the German, Hartog, on the lower deck. And what have I against these three people which would justify detention? I assure you"—he shook his head emphatically—"absolutely nothing."

"Then what are we to do?" said the consul. "Of course, I could detain them here, for a time—"

"No, no. Nothing official," was Haig's reply.

With the coming of daylight, the babel of the curious port rose to full blast. Sellers of all kinds of wares—carpets, lace, jewelry, Birmingham antiques, and the rest—set up their shops on deck, turning the ship into a miniature bazaar.

Dawson Haig, very reluctantly, had agreed to allow Eileen to pursue her inquiries in her own way; but he didn't realize that she had actually left the ship until she had been gone some time. He was watching Len Chow, who, having collected his baggage, was now following a porter toward the ladder.

Hartog had quietly gone ashore an hour before.

Just before Mr. Chow reached the gangway he passed a fortune teller, an evilly handsome fellow, wearing shabby European clothes and a tarbush—not an Egyptian, Haig determined, but possibly a Greek, or an Armenian.

Some words were exchanged rapidly, although Haig was too far away to overhear them. The Chinaman pointed shoreward. Haig looked and saw a native boat. . . . In this boat sat Eileen with two women passengers, the party being escorted by Doctor Oestler and the ship's surgeon!

Dawson Haig became acutely uncomfortable. The girl had played her part admirably, even to the extent of striking up a friendship with Miss Ednam. But neither from the woman nor from the Austrian physician had she gleaned anything in the nature of a clue. She was convinced, and had assured Haig of the fact, that they knew she was watching them.

Hurrying down the ladder, the dark-eyed fortune teller was pulled away in a boat which waited. Len Chow followed in another. There was nothing to show that the pair were associated. But why had the Chinaman pointed out Eileen's party?

Haig stood there watching, and trying to make up his mind which of several courses to adopt. Eileen! At all costs he must keep Eileen in sight. . . .

He was up against a closely and cleverly organized group, he alone holding all available threads in his hands.

Eileen had some shopping to do at Simon Arzt, and so to this store the party made their way. Doctor Oestler, it appeared, had purchases to make also. The ship's surgeon, Heatherley, went along. Dawson Haig, who had been in Port Said twice previously and, oddly enough, upon the same business which saw him there now, having satisfied himself that this was the destination of the party, became interested in the movements of Mr. Len Chow.

This gentleman, depositing his baggage at the Eastern exchange, had strolled out, like a man with nothing better to do than kill time.

The fortune teller had entered a shop nearly opposite.

Dawson Haig, wearing the tinted glasses of "Mr. Smith," sat down at some distance from the door and ordered a cool drink. He was doing some hard thinking.

At about this time, Eileen had completed her purchases. Her companions—excluding Doctor Heatherley—had allowed themselves to be lured by wonderful shawls, scarfs, and other pitfalls which await unwary travelers in Eastern shops.

Doctor Oestler was inspecting a handsome casket of inlaid wood. Eileen, covertly, was watching him. That this man was an associate of criminals, murderers, she could not doubt; yet he was a most entertaining companion, and in spite of his marked ugliness, possessed the rare quality of soothing without boring.

Eileen was enjoying that sense of martyrdom so dear to woman's nature. Her spirit was seeking Dawson Haig all the time. Where was he? Was he safe? Did he appreciate what she was doing? With it all, she was so happy that she was frightened.

Doctor Oestler had stepped to the open doorway to examine the casket by daylight; and:

"My gentleman," said a soft voice. The doctor stared through his glasses at the speaker. It was the Armenian fortune teller.

"I do not wish to buy anything,

ha?" said the doctor good humoredly. "I do not wish my palm to be read—no? And I do not wish to know my future. Is it so?"

"It is not so, my gentleman," the soft voice continued. "It is that I know where there are boxes such as this, but ever so much better—and cheaper."

"You know this—ha?" said Doctor Oestler, smiling at Eileen.

"You think perhaps I don't know this?"

"I think—ha?—you may. I say I do not wish to buy even such a box."

"I make with you a bargain," the man went on earnestly. "I charge you nothing—nothing—unless you buy from the shop I take you to. This is my bargain."

Eileen began to laugh. "My lady laughs," said the Armenian earnestly. "But I will show her." He took her hand, as Doctor Oestler returned and placed the casket on the counter from which he had taken it. The doctor rejoined them.

"If I tell this lady true," said the man, still holding Eileen's hand, "something I cannot know except from the palm, will you come with me to the shop I show you?"

Eileen agreed. "But he'll fall down on it and expect half-a-crown all the same."

"We shall see—ha? Proceed, my good fellow."

"You come not to Egypt, but to somewhere farther—to India, I think. And in India some one is waiting for you—some one you love and who loves you. No!" He stared closer. "It is not so. Yet there is some one who waits. There is some one I have spoken of—who is now on his way to India, or to some place very near to India. And there he will meet you. . . . Ah, but still I am not right! He is here, this one—here, in Port Said!"

Eileen betrayed herself by a sudden start.

"For him there are many dangers . . . and for you, too, lady. I read it in your palm. But you will be married, and be very happy. There will be—"

"That's enough," said Eileen, startled by the man's reading.

"Then we must stick to our bargain—yes?" said Doctor Oestler. The man smiled triumphantly. "Please follow, my lady, my gentleman," he said. "It is not far. Please follow."

Eileen was conscious of a sudden vague uneasiness.

"Perhaps the others would like to come?" she suggested.

Doctor Oestler nodded, returned to the shop, and presently came back. "The ladies are still absorbed with silk wear," he said, smiling, "silk undies—ha? So I have left Doctor Heatherley to take care of them, and I arrange that we shall meet at the Eastern exchange in half an hour."

The Armenian led them into the native quarter. Eileen's brain began working rapidly. The question repeated itself over and over again: "Should I go? Should I go?"

Perhaps even at the last moment she would have conjured up some

excuse. But suddenly she saw a sight which reassured her . . . made her heart sing. Dawson Haig had followed Len Chow, when the Chinaman, apparently aimlessly, had set out, and had temporarily lost sight of him at a corner. Almost at the same moment he had seen Eileen—alone with Doctor Oestler—accompanied by the fortune teller.

And so Eileen, glancing back apprehensively along the narrow street, recognized the glitter of "Mr. Smith's" smoked glasses. Dawson Haig followed, twenty paces behind! Doctor Oestler was talking to the palmist-guide and could not possibly have noticed her backward glance. . . .

On they went into several streets. Dawson Haig was still only twenty paces behind!

The shop was purely Arab in appearance. They went down two steps into the interior, and from a dim corner the proprietor, whom the guide addressed as Mohammed, appeared.

Mohammed bowed low, opened a door hidden in the dark recess from which he had emerged, and stood aside. Eileen glanced back in the direction of the street. . . . Dawson Haig was outside.

Confidently, now, she stepped through into a big room—to pause breathless with astonishment. The fortune teller had not exaggerated. This was, indeed, a wonder house, a treasury of beautiful things! And there were other rooms beyond.

"You see, my lady," said the palmist softly, "what I tell you true."

It was indeed true, since this, and not the establishment in Stamboul, was the principal warehouse of that great and mysterious industry controlled by Yu'an Hee See. Here, to Port Said, came the choicest pieces, to be distributed for sale.

Eileen experienced a sense of bewilderment. It was amazing, in fact, terrifying . . . opening as it did out of that tawdry little shop—what did it mean? What could it mean? She looked around that Aladdin's cave, and slowly the realization came to her that only a Rockefeller could have bid for the contents.

CHAPTER VII

DAWSON HAIG pulled up before the shop of Mohammed.

Further consideration and convinced him that his earlier fears for Eileen were groundless. His own life hung upon a thread. This he recognized. And he scrupulously avoided overhanging windows and watched warily anyone who walked too closely behind him. But he had no intention of leaving Eileen alone in the company of Doctor Oestler.

He entered the shop, and looked about him. The place was empty. Haig clapped his hands—and a moment later the aged proprietor appeared, bowing low.

"What can I do for you, my gentleman?" he croaked.

"I came to join my friends, who arrived here just ahead of me," Haig replied.

"Ah!" Mohammed nodded. "Yes, yes. Wait but one moment."

The door of the treasure house was opened, and he had a glimpse of a long, low room lined with shelves and cases.

A blank wall faced the shop, and there were no passers-by. It was a

queer backwater, and Haig wondered what had induced Eileen to visit it. He stared again through the open door. Then he moved forward and looked along the room.

Like a flash of summer lightning revelation came. . . . This was a branch—or perhaps the parent establishment—of Jo Lung's Limehouse emporium.

Came the sound of shuffling footsteps returning. The aged Arab reappeared.

"My gentleman," he said, "I am sorry to keep you waiting, but your friends have gone."

"Gone!"

"By the other door."

Haig stared through dimness, seeking for the expression in those sunken eyes. "They didn't stay long!" he snapped.

The old Arab spread his palms eloquently. "They buy nothing, sir."

"Show me the way to this other door," Dawson Haig directed. "I shall overtake them more quickly by going out that way."

Mohammed bowed. "Please follow," he said.

Haig entered, his hand upon the butt of an automatic. Yes, the very arrangement of the place told him now that this was the receiving house. Jo Lung's was merely a



Some Words Were Exchanged Rapidly.

salesroom. But—Eileen. "This way, my gentleman." The Arab, mounting three steps, indicated a further room beyond.

Dawson Haig followed. A second treasure cave stretched before him. There was a sort of narrow passage connecting this room with another beyond. Through this corridor the aged Arab was hurrying. Haig increased his stride, entered the passage almost on the heels of Mohammed—and . . .

The floor collapsed beneath his feet . . . a stifling drug-like smell swept up to meet, to envelop him, as he fell.

"My G—d!"

Too late he knew . . . to what "other door" this old fiend had led him . . . the "Bath of Feathers!"

Doctor Heatherley, and the two women passengers from the Wallaroo sat at a table outside the Eastern exchange, long drinks with straws before them. Presently Doctor Heatherley glanced at his watch.

"Our friends are late," said he. "They must have found the Mystery shop. There's supposed to be a store here compared with which Simon Arzt's is merely Woolworth's. I've never found anybody to lead me to the Mystery shop, but I believe there is such a shop. Doctor Oestler may know where it is."

Even as he spoke, Doctor Oestler smiling broadly, bore down upon them.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

THE STORY FROM THE BEGINNING

Matt Kearney, young American living in London, says good-by to his sister Eileen, on board the Wallaroo. The ship is conveying £2,000,000 in gold to Australia. On his way home Kearney meets Inspector Dawson Haig, of Scotland Yard, very much in love with Eileen. Haig is on the trail of opium, which he is convinced is concealed in Jo Lung's warehouse. Called to other duty, Haig delegates Kearney, with Detective Norwich to visit the place and find out what he can. While in the warehouse Kearney picks up and carries away a notebook, which he turns over to Haig. Yu'an Hee See, leader of a band of international thieves, is at Jo Lung's. He sends two of his followers after Norwich and Kearney, one of whom he realizes must have picked up the notebook. Haig is puzzled over cryptic notes in the book, referring to the Wallaroo. Soon after leaving Kearney Norwich is murdered, but Kearney is not overtaken. While Haig is poring over the book, a monstrous creature enters, seizes it, and escapes. At Cairo Yu'an confers with his lieutenant, Aswami Pasha, over a mysterious coup they are planning. Haig boards the Wallaroo at Marseilles, disguised. From radio messages he decodes, he realizes that members of Yu'an's gang are on board, and that they have recognized him. A Chinaman tries to throw Haig overboard but goes over himself in a desperate struggle.