

YU'AN HEE SEE LAUGHS

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WNU Service.

By SAX ROHMER

CHAPTER VIII—Continued
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Cursing, opening and closing his talon-like hands, old Hassan es-Suk poured forth a torrent of what Haig divined to be brilliant invective. The seated man shrugged resignedly. Hassan es-Suk pushed Haig forward.

"A spy—" he whispered in his ear—"a dirty police pig! Begone—quickly!"

Elleen sat on the edge of the disordered lacquered bed, her teeth tightly clenched. She had completed an exploration of her prison. There was a large wardrobe in which, carefully hung, were the clothes she had worn in Port Said. There was an extravagantly appointed bathroom. She had succeeded in recalling everything of that dim past out of which she had awakened in this preposterous place, up to the very moment of entering the shop of Mohammed.

She recalled seeing Dawson Haig outside. It was then she accepted the invitation of the aged Arab to explore the treasure house beyond. Here her memory terminated with the recollection of a sharp pain in her shoulder, a sickly smell, and a sense of sudden weakness. . . . How long had elapsed since then? Where was she? And where was Dawson Haig? Had they . . . ?

The door opened and a stout and kindly looking French maid came in, locked the door behind her. Elleen was breathing very rapidly.

"Mam'selle is frightened," said the woman. "No no—" meeting that fixed, angry stare—"it is no good, cherie. I am Celeste," she went on, opening the wardrobe and taking out Elleen's suit in the most natural manner in the world. "You have been sick—I know that sickness—I have had it."

Celeste swiftly glanced up, high in one wall to a little wooden trap. It was closed. "Cherie," she said, "trust me, I am your friend. You understand. Perhaps I can help. Don't answer."

She bustled busily into the bathroom. "Come, mam'selle," she called. "You will be yourself again after your bath."

Elleen walked across to the bathroom. The Frenchwoman closed the door as she entered. "I know how it has happened to you, cherie," came her voluble whisper. "Where were you when you last remembered?"

"In Port Said," said Elleen miserably.

"Ah!" The Frenchwoman nodded comprehendingly. "I was at Cairo when he saw me. But that was many years ago!"

"But tell me, please, where am I now?"

"In Yemen, cherie." A large strong arm was slipped maternally about the girl's shoulders. She was pressed to an ample breast. "You have courage, great courage—I see it in your face. And now 's the time for courage—courage not to fight."

Elleen began to feel that she had known this singular woman all her life. "What do you mean Celeste?" she asked. "What is this place—where am I?"

"You are in Arabia, poor baby. Down in there—" she pointed vaguely—"is a little town that no one ever heard of, Beyond is the Red sea. Here behind us is desert—desert—desert—and then . . . Mecca."

"But this house? Who does it belong to?"

"It is the house of Aswami Pasha."

"But I don't know Aswami Pasha!"

"Once, it is nearly ten years ago, I did not know him, cherie. He is rich—very rich! But come, cherie. Slip your robe off. This is the time

for cunning. But be thankful that I am with you."

Elleen threw one white arm around the Frenchwoman's neck. This strange character, with her bright, kindly eyes, was a rock of refuge.

Celeste hugged the frightened captive tightly, and went out closing the bathroom door.

Shuddering, Elleen dropped the strange robe which had enveloped her when she had awakened, and stepped into the bath.

Behind what looked like the grating of a ventilator, high in the bath room wall, two points of light glittered and disappeared. Yu'an Hee See walked slowly out of the cupboard-room above onto the mahogany floor of the salon which adjoined it. He nodded slowly, as one who has clinched a satisfactory bargain. And, crossing to the door, he hissed softly. . . .

CHAPTER IX

DAWSON HAIG spent part of that night in the large caravanserai of Bir Ambar, on the old pilgrim route to Mecca. He had traveled from Keneh in a big French car with an Egyptian driver, over roads which were originally intended for camels. The tiny oasis was nearly deserted and he dozed a few uneasy hours upon a hard bed. At daybreak they took the road again, reaching Koseir about noon.

He was taken straight to the house of Doctor Hess, a small villa looking out upon a sailless sea. The doctor rose from behind a table at which he was seated, smiled significantly, and held out his hand. Dawson Haig caught his breath. The stout and prosperous looking Hess was a Turk! Nodding, Haig handed him the letter received from Hassan es-Suk. The doctor glanced at it, then from a drawer took out a third envelope identical in appearance, and passed it to Haig. He now spoke for the first time.

"You are the last to arrive, Joseph." He spoke in French! A wave of relief swept over the listener. "So I understand, Doctor. But" (a sudden idea entered his brain) "I think Len Chow and Franz cannot be far ahead."

Doctor Hess smiled even more broadly. "Nearly eight hours," he replied. "Convey to the Chief my best wishes and assurances. If you will follow my servant, he will direct you to the quay."

The "letter of travel," addressed as before "To Joseph," read "You will proceed by motorboat and report, Chief."

Haig followed the servant down rough stone steps to a little quay against which a battered but seaworthy motorboat was tied up; a thirty-eight-foot cruiser which he guessed concealed powerful engines under that dilapidated hull. . . .

An aged mendicant was seated at the foot of these steps. He grasped Haig's hand. "Bakshish! bakshish!" he whined.

Haig paused—looked down. In stantaneously the nut-cracker features were relaxed. He saw a young face under the old mask. "Destination unknown!" he whispered.

"Don't sail yet, inspector. . . . It's impossible to cover you!" came a swift reply. Then, loudly, "Bakshish! bakshish!"

Haig dropped a coin, and the clutching fingers were relaxed. "Impossible to cover me," he thought. Routine did not demand that he should sail for this unknown place and "report!" Common sense was against it.

Further co-operation with his Egyptian colleagues became impossible. But beckoning out of the haze over the sea was a dream-image of

Elleen. Some stupendous plot was working slowly to its culmination. Even now he had not grasped it. But his suspicions were horrible. His usefulness might be ended if he should be cut off from his allies. But . . . Elleen!

He must find her at all costs—be near to her. Some means of communication he would surely find. . . .

In a long, rectangular room on the first floor of the house on the hill Yu'an Hee See's rogues were gathered. There were a dozen faces which must have been recognizable by anyone who had been privileged to enter that room in the Restaurant Suleiman Bey in Paris on a certain night when Dawson Haig had sat waiting below. Wine flowed freely.

Remarks were being shouted in many tongues when, suddenly, Doctor Oestler stood up. "Orders!" he cried. The clamor subsided—died away—a curtain was drawn aside, and Aswami Pasha entered. He was greeted with a roar of welcome. He smiled, and nodded his handsome head to right and left. Then he raised both hands—silence fell again.

"My friends," he said, "you speak many tongues, but all of you, I think, a little English, so I will address you in English. Tonight you have been entertained and I trust are very happy. But after one more drink all round, you will go to your quarters, and you will sleep; because tomorrow is the day for which we have been called together again from all over the world . . . by Mr. King."

He paused. The silence was so complete that men could be heard breathing.

"Every man knows his job and what is expected of him," Aswami went on. "Every man knows also what is coming to him if he fails. You have enjoyed success in the past. You have all been made rich by the man you serve. If you are all poor again tonight, this is your own concern. Another chance is being given to you. And this time the share-out will be enormous."

As he paused again, an excited murmur rose.

"Enormous," he repeated. "I need not tell you what the folly of one man may mean to all of us. Failure is always paid for here in one way, and in one way only. But failure tomorrow would certainly mean death for every man concerned. We shall sail at four o'clock in the afternoon; every man jack of us with a noose around his neck—and so every man will watch his neighbor. And a short shrift, say I, to any backsliders."

A great roar, like that of a pack of wolves suddenly aroused, greeted his last words. Aswami waved his hand, and went out, sped by a hoarse cheer. Doctor Oestler followed.

Kid Brown stumbled across the room to the drunken Macles' side. "Is it an English ship, mate?" he whispered.

The Scotchman's bleary eyes fixed

themselves upon him. There was an interval, and then "I ken it is I've worked out a' the poseetion—an' this will be the old Wallaroo, thirteen thousand tons, out fro' London to Brisbane."

Aswami Pasha sat behind a large writing table. Kid Brown, battle scarred, stood before him.

"Am I to regard this interview, Brown," said the Egyptian, "as a piece of private blackmail?"

"Listen," said Brown. "I've been your bodyguard for three years, and I've done well out of it. There's been some bloody dirty work, though I say so, but I've done it! But this 'ere English liner—I don't want to go tomorrow. . . ."

"Your share?"

"Keep it! Leave me out."

Aswami Pasha was thinking. "This man has been talking to Macles. He must come tomorrow. Otherwise he will be dangerous. Macles must come also—but for the last time."

"It is in orders that you join us, Brown," he said coldly. "Therefore I have no choice but to refer your protest to—"

Kid Brown sprang forward and grasped the outstretched hand.

"I'll go!" he whispered hoarsely. Aswami drew his hand away. "It is the cargo we want, not the ship," he said. "And now that you have come to your senses, a word of warning: Mac is being watched by Mr. King!"

The Kid drew back, biting his thick underlip.

"Tonight," Aswami continued, "the Armenian, Joseph, from Port Said, joins us, taking the place—at the same pay—of the Portuguese sent to us by Polodos. I knew, when I interviewed him in Paris, that this man from Stamboul would fall us, as he had failed us before. Very well. You have taken a gross liberty tonight. You shall have a chance to make good. I have to go with Mr. King to the sheds. See this fellow Joseph, and instruct him in his duties. Remember—with the Jackal, he will be in sole charge, outside, during our absence. You will be responsible. . . ."

Kid Brown turned and made for the door. "I may collect women, Brown," came the smooth voice, "but I study men."

And in a small room situated in a wing of the rambling mansion, Macles was kneeling beside a neat bed trying to pray. There is no more desperate character than that of a religious man gone wrong. And James Malcolm Macles, ex-chief engineer of a famous liner, was a deeply religious man whom an irreligious woman had driven down to hell.

In drink he was a devil incarnate. And he wanted to pray for strength to remain sober long enough to save his poor soul from this last black sin. But never a word would come. . . .

As the motorboat swung into the reef-sheltered harbor, the truth leaped at last to Dawson Haig's brain. . . .

A suspicion, which for weeks past—longer; perhaps since that day when the existence of the former Marquis Yu'an Hee See had thrust itself upon his attention—had clamored for recognition, at last drove home. . . .

Drug smuggler—slave dealer—re-

ceiver of stolen property—yes! but at last the whole scope of this devil's activities presented itself like a revelation. . . .

Yu'an Hee See was a pirate—a modern pirate!—holding strictly to the motto of that ghastly trade, "Dead men tell no tales."

This was the man, with his damnable organization in whose power Elleen lay! What should he do? What could he do? Where did his duty lie?

He had deliberately snapped the link between himself and official support. He was alone—alone against an organized group of absolutely evil, scoundrels—operating under the orders of the most evil man that ever came out of Asia. The whole ghastly conspiracy be-



Kid Brown, Battle-Scarred, Stood Before Him

came an open book; all his past knowledge of the group, clues which had led nowhere—suspicions at which the chief had laughed. . . .

This last astounding recognition had brought everything into order. His futile journey to Singapore with its nearly fatal termination—how near he had been then to the truth! And what bloodshed and sorrow he might have averted had he not failed. Now—was he to fail again?—with all the facts at last in his hands? Elleen!

Elleen he could not think about and remain sane. Turning to the taciturn negro who accompanied him, he asked, "Do we go far?"

He fully appreciated the position of Joseph in the scheme of things. Joseph was a nominee of the old villain, Mohammed, at Port Said. He had been given a chance to prove himself. Therefore, he was about to be received by—whom?

A horrible idea flashed through his mind—Polodos! The Greek unmistakably was a man with an excellent brain; a man of culture. And it was Polodos who had taken charge in Limehouse during the critical hours which preceded the sailing of the Wallaroo.

He remembered how he had nudged his brains for an explanation of where the leakage had occurred between Scotland Yard and Sydney. It was painfully clear now. The consignment of drugs—a minor matter—had been removed, because at the last moment this greater scheme had suggested itself to the master mind!

"There," the negro replied, and pointed. Ahead on the right, a long high wall began. Beyond it, where the negro pointed, he saw twinkling lights.

He was ushered into a carpeted and well-furnished room. The guide disappeared. But the man in uniform stood before him. "Chief engaged," he said in his thick negro voice. "Some one see you present! Have a drink?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

THE STORY FROM THE OPENING CHAPTER

Matt Kearney, young American living in London, says good-by to his sister Elleen, on board the Wallaroo which is conveying £2,000,000 in gold to Australia. Inspector Dawson Haig, of Scotland Yard, very much in love with Elleen, is on the trail of opium he is convinced is concealed in Jo Lung's warehouse. He delegates Kearney, with Detective Norwich, to visit the place and find out what he can. While there Kearney picks up and carries away a notebook, which he turns over to Haig. Yu'an Hee See, leader of international thieves, is at Jo Lung's. He sends men after Norwich and Kearney, one of whom he realizes must have picked up the notebook. Haig is puzzled over cryptic notes in the book. Norwich is found murdered. While Haig is poring over the book, a monstrous creature enters, seizes it, and escapes. Haig boards the Wallaroo at Marseilles, disguised. From radio messages he decodes, he realizes members of Yu'an's gang are on board, and have recognized him. A Chinaman tries to throw Haig overboard but goes over himself. At Port Said Haig, trailing Elleen, is lured into a "bath of feathers." Elleen disappears. Haig escapes from the trap and shoots Joseph, one of the plotters. Elleen, drugged, regains consciousness in Yu'an's headquarters. Haig takes Joseph's papers, and reports Elleen's kidnapping to the British consul. Yu'an and Aswami Pasha intend to capture or sink the Wallaroo. Using Joseph's credentials, Haig makes his way to Keneh.