VALIANT DUST

by Percival Christopher Wren, author of "BEAU GESTE"

SYNOPSIS: When Margaret Malign tells her mother-in-law El Isa Beth el Ain that Raisul, son of the Raid of Mekazzen has entered her room at night the older woman attempts to call the occurrence a joke. But Raisul had first gotten Jules Margaret's husband, drunk; now Jules is ill and El Isa Beth el Ain will not allow Margaret to see him. Behind it all is a series of intrigues against France involving Raisul, the Raid, the Malignis, and Major Napoleon Riccoli of the Foreign Legion, whose post is not far away.

Chapter 22

THE SECRET SPRING

"AND what would you have done?" asked Margaret in angry bewilderment.

"Well, what do you suppose I've done a thousand times in this Castle," returned El Isa Beth el Ain, "with my husband hundreds of miles away, and Zainub devoting the whole of her time plotting my ruin?"

"I don't know."

"You don't seem to know anything. And Jules was a fool to bring you here."

"I was a fool to come, but I'm going back at the very earliest possible moment, and I'll take good care I don't return."

"You won't take my Jules away 'at the earliest possible moment,'" replied El Isa Beth el Ain quickly, "and if you are going to live in England—if you ever get there—you will live as a widow, for this is Jules' country and his home. His work is here, and henceforth he will live here."

"I'll discuss that with Jules, thank you," replied Margaret coldly. "And while we are here, he must stay with me. After last night, I will not be left alone again.

"And I intend to see him now," added Margaret.

"He is ill—he is sleeping."

"Then I'll wait until he wakes."

"Yes? Where will you wait? Shall Hassan take you back to your room?"

"I'll wait here," replied Margaret. "I'm sorry to intrude, but I won't leave this room until I see Jules."

"I used to talk like that when I was a girl," smiled El Isa Beth el Ain.

"I tell you I insist," cried Margaret angrily, and encouraging hot anger that it might fight chill fear. "I insist on . . ."

"I used to insist, at first," said El Isa Beth el Ain, conversationally, as she rose from her cushions and crossed to the door that had first foiled Margaret. "You were going to say you insist on remaining in this room? Well, I'll leave it."

And, almost without pausing, she opened the door and went out. With a heavy clang and a click, the door closed behind her.

Rushing across the room and throwing herself against it, Margaret again found it immovable.

Obviously there was some secret device by which it could be opened or—disturbing thought — someone waited, watched and listened on the other side. Someone not as deaf as Hassan el Miskeen who kept the outer door.

Traversing a tunnel-like corridor, the Lady El Isa Beth el Ain entered a lofty whitewashed room, bare and unfurnished save for rugs, cushions, and a broad bed, or divan, upon which the place of mattress was taken by a mass of colored pillows, partly covered, uncomfortably and untidily, by a stained sheet of purple silk.

Upon this unattractive bed reclined Jules Malign, and beside it, on a cushion, sat the girl Sara, wielding in one hand an incongruous painted fan edged with dirty swansdown, and holding in the other a brass vessel containing a dubious-looking mixture of fruit-juice, sherbet and water, with which she ministered to her patient's thirst.

Smiling fondly upon her son, and approvingly upon the ministering angel whose attentions presumably alleviated the pain and anguish that wrung his brow, El Isa Beth el Ain advanced to the bedside, bestowed a warm lingering loving kiss upon the patient and bade his nurse clear out.

"And how do you feel now, Light o. my Eyes?" she asked, solicitously.

"Well, Ornament of Court and Desire of Emperors, and all that, I'll tell you. I feel—exactly as though I was very drunk last night. Gloriously drunk. And so I was. That Algerian wine is a bit sweet and heavy and sticky, but believe me, it's great stuff. D'you know, Light of the Harem, there were three 'dead men' under my chair before I was vanquished?"

"Dead men?" interrupted the Lady El Isa Beth el Ain.

"Yes, and a half-dead one, of cognac, on the table, and three or four badly wounded ones, of assorted liqueurs."

And here the speaker paused to emit a deep heartrending groan . . .

"An iced lager!" he whispered. "I bottle off the ice, instead of this appalling bilge — sherbet-and-warm-water. Oh, Allah, I ask You! Sherbet and warm water, with a squeeze of rotten orange in it!"

"Peace, my son," interrupted Lady El Isa Beth el Ain, laying a hand upon her son's hot forehead. "Peace; and listen. I know you are a great grown man now, and that men must be men, and enjoy themselves, with wine and women and music and banquetings. All that is well enough in its way, and right and proper in due season but it is the mark of the wise man to know the season. And I say that it is not now."

"You don't see any chance of changing this foul drink for some cold black beer, darling, I suppose?"

"Listen to your old mother, Heart of my Heart, and heed her advice. I foresee great changes here, and at an early day. This young Raisul who . . ."

"Good boy, young Raisul," yawned Jules. "Drank me under the table."

"Sat by—and led you on. Filled your glass as fast as you emptied it, and saw you drink yourself into a sleep like the sleep of Death, while he drank nothing. And when he had made you drunk as a sodden servant, he went off as sober as a judge and got into mischief.

Jules only laughed.

"Raisul has come back to rule Mekazzen through his father, the Kaid, that he may the more strongly rule it with his own hand after the Kaid's death. And when will that be?"

"Don't know, Mother," murmured Jules.

"No, you don't know. No one knows. But I could tell them. He'll die just as soon as Raisul has done with him."

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El Isa Beth el Ain tells her son more of the terrible Raisul, tomorrow.

"I won't leave until I see Jules."

Willamette Frosh Win Glee Contest

SALEM, Mar. 6.—(AP)—The freshman class was winner of the silver anniversary freshman glee at Willamette university Saturday night.

In the traditional contest each class writes a school song and presents it in a group, the winning class receiving a blanket and the losing class taking a plunge in the mill stream.

Oregon Weather.

Rain west and rain and snow east portions tonight and Tuesday; warmer extreme east portion tonight; fresh and strong southerly wind offshore.

Fender and body repairing. Prices right. Brill Sheet Metal Works.

WEDNESDAY'S FORUM OF LOCAL CHAMBER CREATING INTEREST

The Chamber of Commerce forum luncheon scheduled for Wednesday noon at the Hotel Medford, is creating much interest among business men and women of Medford and promises to be a very well attended affair, according to A. P. Johnsen, chairman of the forum committee.

Charles C. Thompson, the speaker for the occasion, president of the National Association of Life Underwriters, has had a wealth of experience in the business world and his talk has been designated as "Dependence and Independence."

He has been long identified with business and civic affairs in many communities throughout the United States and his activities in recent years, as an ardent member of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, have made him a leader in that community.

Outdoor sports provide his only recreation and beside being an ardent golfer, he is enthusiastic over hunting and fishing, so an endeavor will be made to have him stay here a few days in order to convince him of the recreational advantages of southern Oregon.

Quite a number of tickets have been sold for the luncheon and those desiring to attend are requested to notify the Chamber of Commerce immediately so that necessary preparations can be made with the hotel.

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OREGON FELICITATES INCOMING PRESIDENT

SALEM, March 6.—(AP)—Congratulations of the state of Oregon, pursuant to house concurrent resolution No. 8, and pledging the wholehearted support of the people of this state, Senator Fred Kiddle, president of the senate, and Representative Earl Snell, speaker of the house Saturday sent a telegram to President Franklin D. Roosevelt upon the occasion of his inauguration.

Viola Corbin announces new Beauty Shop at Fountain Lodge 326 W. Main. Phone 917-J. New low prices.

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