

ZUDORA A Great Mystic Story HAROLD MAC GRATH

SYNOPSIS.

Zudora is left an orphan at an early age. Her father is killed in a gold mine he has discovered. Half an hour after learning of the death of her husband, Zudora's mother—a tight rope walker with a circus—is seized with vertigo, falls, and is killed.

Zudora and the fortune from the mine, which later grows to be worth \$20,000,000, are left to the guardianship of Frank Keene, a circus man and the brother of Zudora's mother. Zudora, giving promise of great beauty, reaches the age of 15. The uncle, who has set himself up as a Hindu mystic, and is known as Hassam Ali, decides in his greed that Zudora must die before she comes into possession of her great fortune, so that it may be left to him, the next of kin, and he prevails upon the girl to leave her money in his hands three years longer and to say nothing to any one about the fortune. Hassam Ali sees an obstacle to his scheme in the person of John Storm, a young lawyer for whom Zudora has taken a fancy, and he commands the girl to put the man out of her mind. Storm comes to ask Hassam Ali for the hand of his niece. At first the crystal gazer will not listen to the proposal, but Zudora insists that if she cannot marry Storm she will marry no one.

"Well, well," said Hassam Ali. "If you take such a stand I'll compromise. Solve my next twenty cases and you can marry him; fall in a single case and you must renounce him."

Zudora, using the knowledge gained from years of association with her uncle, unravels a series of baffling mysticisms.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE HYPNOTIC POWER OF MR. CHANG.

FOR a long time Zudora paced her room. She was troubled. That afternoon Storm had pleaded with her so strongly to leave her uncle, marry him, and go far away that she had been driven almost irresistibly toward her lover. From time to time she paused before some object, moved it abstractedly, and resumed her pacing. The youth in her wanted to fly away and be happy.

The thought of her vast fortune often terrified her. The moment the world found out that she was so rich an heiress she would be beset with all sorts of devices by fortune hunters. Every grade of beggar would be at her doorstep. More than that, she had made some strange enemies during her short career as a detective; and if these individuals knew of her wealth they would leave no stone unturned to trap her and hold her for some enormous ransom. A little money, enough to take care of her and supply her simple needs—that was all she craved.

But twenty millions! In dollars she could hardly count that sum during her allotted years!

Sometimes she found herself on the verge of asking her uncle, Hassam Ali, to take the bulk of it and let her be free to do as she thought fit. But always she stepped back from the threshold of this act. Great dreams of doing good in the world held her. She dreamed of helping humanity with these millions; to buy farms and convert them into communities for thrifty but unfortunate people; to build great hospitals, children's playgrounds. She determined that these dreams should become realities just as soon as she had accomplished the twenty tasks imposed upon her by her uncle.

She longed with all her heart to go to John Storm; but her word to her uncle was like a barrier of stone.

But tonight life had suddenly developed a new angle. She was in love; she was young; she had a right to be happy. And she was fighting a battle between loyalty to her word and the urgings of her heart. Besides, it was quite possible that the very next case might be the last. Several times so far she had escaped death by a hair. That in itself did not deter her, for she was as courageous as a lion. But she did not care to court death when the greatest happiness in the world was within arm's reach.

She stopped suddenly before a window and pressed her hot forehead against the cool pane. Over the great city hung that almost lurid haze—the million lamps thrown against the sky. Suddenly all hesitations left her; her resolution was formed. She walked quickly to her writing desk and sat down to write. She would accept John Storm's plea; she would go to him the very next day. Let her uncle become furious; was not her lover more to her than this strange man who was all that remained of both her parents, who followed strange rites, performed extraordinary feats at one time and the next blundered at another?

She would run away on the morrow and marry John Storm, and to provide against any weakness in this resolve she would write him at once to this effect:

Downstairs the bell rang. A maid shuffled to the door. A very beautiful woman entered. "I should like to see your master, Hassam Ali," she said quietly.

"Hate you an appointment?" asked the servant, frowning. "One sees him at night only by appointment."

"I believe he will see me," she replied with a singular smile. "Announce Madame Du Roy."

"Yes, madame." The servant returned directly. "Follow me, madame; the master will receive you."

"I thought so." Hassam Ali stood by his crystal as she entered. At a sign the servant took himself off. "I was not expecting you, madame," said Hassam Ali, but he smiled as he spoke.

"Mr. Chang could not come. Of course you know that you can trust our organization."

"Yes. But did Chang confide in you?" An almost imperceptible frown filled across Hassam Ali's face. He knew the Caucasian

was; he was wary in trusting them with vital secrets. A Chinaman, on the other hand, was like sand; he absorbed but never gave back a secret. Still, in the present case he was bound to trust this woman.

A quarter of an hour passed, when she took her leave, leaving Hassam Ali quite satisfied. He was reasonably sure that Zudora would be taken off his hands this time, and in a manner which would totally baffle all the detectives in Manhattan. But there was a hurt in it; it was going to cost money; his beautiful gold would be some hundreds lower; for Wu Chang never accepted anything but gold for his services. You cannot mark gold as you can paper money. Wu Chang was the wisest oriental in New York.

Among the various races which inhabit this earth's nose is less known than the Chinese. One hears a tale now and then that comes down to the coast, and those who know China believe all that comes down to the coast. It

Not for a moment did she feel any regret. She had for her uncle a certain fondness, but due to his general coldness, it had never developed into real love. The only thing she really did regret leaving behind was the carrier pigeon. It was too late now.

Why, she thought, how strangely the room began to appear! Was it fog outside? What was this strange and unaccountable desire to laugh, to fling her things about? Seized with a sudden and terrible knowledge, she tried to turn. It was impossible to stir!

"Sleep!" she heard vaguely. "Sleep!"

Zudora's eyes closed irresistibly. Wu Chang stepped in front of her and touched her forehead. The man's own forehead was covered with sweat, for this had been a tremendous exertion of will power. Had the girl been able to turn he would have falled signally.

"Be a child," he whispered. "Be a child. Now you are young and happy, without a care in the world. You are young?"

A good deal!

By dint of inquiry they learned that a Chinaman and a woman had been seen entering Wu Chang's teahop. Storm waited for over an hour, and as no one came out he concluded that this was a case for professional detectives, and he straightway sought their aid. Together they went over the records of Chinatown, but Wu Chang was not a tough man; there had never been any opium smuggling; he was one of the few Chinamen down in that crime infested hole who stood clean upon the police records. Still, they were willing to make a thorough investigation.

Hassam Ali, still disguised as Chang, entered the supposed tea merchant's house and found Mrs. Du Roy awaiting him. The woman at first thought him to be Chang himself until he explained.

"Can you bring her out of the trance?" she asked.

"That's the easiest part of it. But there's

nothing to be high and dry on shore. He would send the boy on a long tour. People would forget.

Chang entered Mills' automobile, and a plain clothes man recognized his face and immediately warned Storm and the other officers to watch Chang's house. Chang ordinarily would have kept away from his home, but he was weak and tired and wanted—nay, needed—the solace of his poppy pipe.

Arriving home, he at once conferred with Hassam Ali and was glad to learn that Zudora had been confined to the walled room. At dawn Mrs. Du Roy would convey her to the ship that was to sail for Cherbourg. From there they would drop down to Marselles and sail for Hongkong. Zudora Trainer would never be heard of again.

"I think that before I smoke I will see the young lady," said Chang, smiling.

Hassam Ali smiled, too. In his mind's eye he was counting up the enormous pyramids

shoulder peered his assistant, his heavy eyes blinking at the beauty of the prisoner.

Slowly Zudora returned to the world. The faces looking down at her were attentive. She gave a cry. And this cry Storm heard. Instantly Chang and his assistant seized her and bound and gagged her. Then the official tried to throw her back into the trance; but he failed, for Zudora was not taken unaware this time. She was bewildered and could not dream what had happened since that moment she had started for the rope which hung from her bonnet window. The two wills fought for a minute, and then Wu Chang stepped back, sighing. He had wasted too much power that night. The girl's mind was now free, however well her body was bound.

So he left her for the night. At dawn she would be on the high seas. The sooner the better, so far as he was concerned. When that liner drew out of her slip Hassam Ali would place in his hands one thousand shining disks of gold. But the answer to a telephone call at dawn dismayed Wu Chang. The liner would not sail until 4 in the afternoon. Ships do not always sail on scheduled time.

As for Storm, he did not take his clothes off at all, and he was something of a wreck when he ate a meager breakfast. He had heard Zudora call for help as plainly as if he had seen her. He thought and thought, and finally, recalling certain curious features in Wu Chang's house, fell upon what he believed to be the true solution. A secret room, behind that alcove, from whence the voice had come! He seized the telephone and routed out half a dozen grumbling detectives. Storm was a coming power; a turn of the wheel might lift him to the position of district attorney, and the detectives wanted to be on the right side of him in that event.

There was a bit of bluff in his declaration that he had been mysteriously apprised of the fact that there was a hidden room in Wu Chang's house and that Zudora was there. The detectives were still skeptical.

To return to Zudora. She was still as Chang had left her, bound, gagged, helpless. There was only one bit of consolation: her mind was her own. Through a small, high window—outwardly giving the appearance of belonging to the next house—the sun poured in brightly and warmly. She gazed about eagerly, endeavoring vainly to find something sharp upon which she could saw her bonds. The room had been (and evidently still was) a kind of seclusion for Wu Chang when he desired to pursue his modes of culture. There was a table upon which stood a reader's magnifying glass attached to a frame. Quickly Zudora calculated the rays of the sun as the inspiration came to her. She was quite oblivious to the sudden sounds coming faintly through the wall. If she could but reach that table! Fortunately she was not bound to the chair. She rose slowly and took short little jumps, balancing herself liberally. If she stumbled and fell, good-by liberty or the chance of it.

It took three minutes to reach the table. With her elbow she hitched the glass so that the sun fell full upon it. Instantly the book beneath emitted a bit of smoke. Zudora turned about so that this burning ray be came focused upon the hempen cords. She felt the smart and sting of flame upon her wrists. But that was nothing. The ray was shriveling the rope; she could smell it! She strained suddenly at her wrists—and was free! It took but a moment to untwist the rope and tear away the bands.

Pistol shots! She listened. A pounding began to take place against the wall outside. Her lover had found her!

Storm and the detectives had entered unceremoniously this time, and a fine bit of warfare ensued. Chang lost his temper and in doing so lost his liberty. He drew a knife and sprang at Storm with all that deadly fury of an angry Chinaman. A lucky bullet from one of the detectives saved Storm's life. Seizing a handy object, Storm began to beat in the wall of the alcove, even while the desperate battle between the detectives and the Chinaman raged fiercely about him.

When the battle was over and Chang was in irons they got into Zudora's prison. And they found a trap under a mat, and below they found the source of Mr. Wu Chang's fortune—thousands of cans of opium. And still further below a big room half filled with the devotees of the drug.

Later Hassam Ali sat in his mystic room and heard from her own lips Zudora's remarkable adventure.

"My child, you had better give up the struggle. In some manner Chang has heard of your fortune and kidnapped you for ransom. Wait until you are 21. You will still be young enough to marry Storm."

"I have concluded to go to the end. I am determined to solve these twenty riddles, because—well, because I begin to find these adventures the most fascinating things in the world."

"Very well, my child; but remember that I have warned you."

No sooner was she gone from the room than he set to plan some new devilry. But for two weeks he trembled. Chang might speak. But Chang never spoke. His bit of work for Hassam Ali was of small consequence to other crimes that were unthought within that fortnight. Wu Chang was not born to die in a cell. A little black pellet in his moustache's ring opened the way out.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



"IT IS DONE," HE SAID TO HASSAM ALI.



STORM AND THE POLICE HAD ENTERED UNCEMERONIOUSLY. IT RESULTED IN THE CAPTURE OF WU CHANG AND THE RELEASE OF ZUDORA.

is only the casual tourist who is skeptical. There was a certain monk who thought he had discovered gunpowder; there was a man who thought he had discovered glazing for pottery; there was a German physician who honestly believed that he had discovered hypnotism. All fallacies of opinion; the Chinese had invented these things, or discovered them, long before the Christian era.

Wu Chang had taught Hassam Ali all he knew about hypnotism; and hypnotism vitally concerns Zudora in this episode of her adventures. A bit of greediness—which is inherent in all orientals—on the part of Wu Chang proved his ultimate undoing.

Wu Chang spoke English with remarkable fluency. Only in his den did he relapse into the gutturals of his native tongue. Men applied to his arts as men applied to Hassam Ali. There lived in New York at this day a wealthy old bachelor who had adopted a son. The old man was absolutely alone in the world; and this kind of man has a horror of dying and having strangers divide his money. As this son grew up he evinced a stupidity that annoyed his father greatly. Tutors by the score gave up the boy as a hopeless job; and if Mills had not possessed a certain amount of vanity Zudora would have vanished from the face of the earth. Curious, isn't it, how these things dovetail? The loss of an envelope in Singapore may be the cause of the ultimate death of a man in Chicago.

Mills had had dreams of this boy becoming a great orator, eventually a statesman, just as an ordinary father would have dreamed of the career of a real son. Mills had one day bragged about the boy's prowess in this direction, and foolishly entered the boy in an oratorical contest. Then he started out to hunt for some one to coach the boy, and finally came to the door of a Chinaman! Yes, for a price Wu Chang would make an orator of the boy for one night. This was all Mills desired to ease his vanity. The price was rather stiff, but he agreed.

Wu Chang brought the boy under the spell of hypnotism and put a brilliant speech on the boy's tongue. All that was necessary now was the presence of Wu Chang at the contest. Unfortunately for Chang, this night was close to a far more lucrative and dangerous mission. You cannot throw two stones with two hands.

Zudora had written Storm, and everything was prepared for her flight. From a crack in the door Hassam Ali's man watched her curiously as she packed her belongings, just enough of clothes to see her at her journey's end. Storm was to meet her with an auto. She was to leave her room by way of a stout rope.

The Hindu servant returned to his master to report that the memorabilia was getting ready to run away. And Hassam Ali set his pieces immediately. Wu Chang was ushered in half an hour later; and he very quietly changed costumes with the Hindu.

"Remember," warned Hassam Ali, "if she sees you, or notices anything wrong, she will escape."

"Trust me," smiled the Chinaman.

It was growing dark by now. A street light sparkled several times and then blazed brilliantly. Zudora heard the rumble of her lover's automobile and pulled up the window without making a sound. She gave the whistle agreed upon, and Storm and his chauffeur managed to get the rope up to her. She fastened it securely to the foot of the bed.

"O, yes; I am a child," Zudora began to laugh.

Wu Chang picked up the photograph of her lover and held it before her. There was no recognition in her eyes. He had won. Zudora sat down.

Below Storm whistled frantically and wondered what had thus delayed his sweetheart. Chang heard these shrill calls.

"Go to the window, child," he said.

Zudora got up and walked to the window. She looked down calmly upon her lover and never made any sign that she saw him. If it had been lighter he might have noted the stoniness of her look, the unnatural pallor.

"What in heaven's name has happened?" murmured the distracted lover. At any moment Hassam Ali might appear upon the scene. Still he waited.

Chang left the room.

"It is done," he said to Hassam Ali.

"It is something I've never been able to accomplish. She is very strong mentally."

"But at that moment she was thinking of love," said the oriental. "Now we have no time to waste upon discussing the science of the thing. That young man may at any time become suspicious and break in. Let us act at once. You shall for the present become Wu Chang and I shall remain the servant of Hassam Ali. You have makeup. Come; hurry!"

In a very short time the two returned to Zudora. They put her hat and coat on and led her from the room.

"Storm Sahib has gone around to the rear!" cried the real servant.

"Good," said his double. To Hassam Ali he said: "You and the girl leave now, by the front door. I'll handle your man."

"Do nothing violent," said Hassam Ali, who, though he greatly detested the death of Storm, did not care to have the affair take place on the premises. There was, as had been stated before, no love lost between him and the police.

He followed Chang's advice without more ado, and was snugly inside a taxi with Zudora when Chang opened the door to Storm. He made as though to close the door again, but Storm was too quick. He rushed in fearlessly, and, as Chang closed in, flung him aside before the Chinaman could put the trick in his leg to throw Storm. The lover dashed headlong up the stairs to Zudora's room, saw the rope attached to the bed, the suitcase, but no Zudora. Hassam Ali had tricked him! Down the stairs he rushed, wild with anger.

Chang awaited him, but for a second time he was not quick enough. The lover dashed from the house, to be informed by his excited chauffeur that a Chinaman and Zudora had entered a taxi which had stood opposite and had been driven away.

"Which way?"

"Straight ahead!"

"Come on, then! And drive like the devil! Did you get the license number?"

"Too dark to see; but there was a crack in the tail lamp."

It was a wild goose chase, for they never came within sight of a red lamp with a crack in it. But there was one thing that John Storm knew: if sight in the way of harm befell his sweetheart he would kill Hassam Ali with his bare hands.

"Suppose we go down to Chinatown and make a try?" suggested the chauffeur.

no need. She must remain in this condition until long after you are out to sea. I don't care if she never comes out of it."

"You're a strange kind of uncle," mused the woman, wondering what was behind this unnatural attitude of the man.

"That's my business," said Hassam Ali gruffly. "Now, find me a room for the girl. I am not going to trust to luck."

"There is a walled room; the method of getting in and out of it is secret."

"I rather believe you can trust me with the secret," said Hassam Ali grimly.

"Follow me, then."

Zudora had to be led. She was physically capable as ever, but her mind was temporarily blank. Once in the walled room, she sat down placidly, after the manner of persons hypnotized, and stared at her hands. It was all Hassam Ali could do to resist the desire to bring her out of the trance and tell her what was going to happen, but his bump of caution was abnormal. She might escape somewhere along the route, and that would wind up the affairs of a certain mystic who, for a commission, advised old ladies when and how to invest their fortunes—a commission which, by the way, usually consisted of at least half of the sums invested.

The real Wu Chang, in the meanwhile, left the house of Hassam Ali at what might be called the psychological moment. Ten minutes later the house was under the espionage of a plain clothes man. Mr. Chang, affable tea merchant, was driven to one of the uptown hotels he sometimes frequented. He wanted an alibi. Besides this hotel was quite near the hall where the adopted son of Mills was to make his brilliant speech that same night. It was a delightful thing to make money with right and left hand. But, as has already been said, you cannot throw two stones with two hands and hit any given target.

Chang went to the hall, took a seat where he could focus the eye of the boy, and waited patiently for his debut. It must have been exceedingly dull business for a mind so keen as Wu Chang's to be forced to listen to the oratorical spoutings of green young intellects, but Storm a Chinaman will tarry until the resper comes if so be there is gold at the end.

When the boy finally came forward, blinking and frightened, old Mills for a moment thought Wu Chang had betrayed him. But all at once the boy seemed to straighten up, and presently he began to speak. The voice was unpleasant and monotonous; no hypnotism in the world could change that. There were some surprised people in that hall, you may be sure, especially among the judges. From the audience there came occasionally a ripple of applause. The sweat began to form upon Wu Chang's forehead. Two such exploits in one day were terribly sweating. When the affair was over the stiffened figure of the Chinaman relaxed. He found some difficulty, too, in opening his thin, tapering hands, which had been tightly clenched under the concentration of his will.

"Are you satisfied?" he whispered rather weakly to Mills, who sat next to him.

"I am; and I will keep to the letter of my bargain."

"And never bring again about your son's oratorical powers. I doubt if I could hold him again."

Mills flushed, but for all that he was

See "Zudora" Every Thursday at the Bligh Theatre