

ZUDORA In the Twenty Million Dollar Mystery

HAROLD MAC GRATH

With Hassam Ali dead ZUDORA is released of her pledge to solve twenty (20) cases. She confronts, however, the greatest mystery of all which is the mystery of her own life, and the ambition to secure the vast fortune of \$20,000,000 left to her. Her remarkable adventures will be portrayed by Harold MacGrath in the succeeding chapters. This photo serial is being shown in the leading moving picture theaters by the Thanhouser Film Corporation. Among those participating are Marguerite Snow, Mary Elizabeth Forbes, James Cruise, in the new role of reporter hero, Sidney Bracey and Frank Farrington.

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CHAPTER X.

GENTLEMEN CROOKS AND THE LADY.

HASSAM ALI, or, to give him his real name, Frank Keene, died suddenly. Baird, his double, appreciating that the end was at hand, left the house by a secret exit, taking with him only such things as belonged to him. When the Hindu servant notified Zudora that her uncle was dead she could not believe it; and one look at the dead man was enough to convince her that there was something extremely mysterious in the change. The Hassam Ali she had seen a few days past had not looked ill; but this corpse was mute evidence of a long and desperate illness. But she never solved this puzzle; she was never given the time to. That night the house caught fire and very few things were saved.

One day shortly after the fire she dragged the battered old trunk out into the center of the room and proceeded to explore its contents. The first things she came across were her mother's old circus costumes, and she sat dreaming about them for some time. A knock upon the door aroused her.

"Come in!"

Storm entered with a bouquet.

"O, how pretty! Wait until I put them into a vase. There! Flowers always make a room look cozier."

"And what's going on here?" asked John, pointing to the trunk.

"Why, John, that trunk is about the only thing they rescued from the house. Do you know, I'm happier in this room than I have been in years. Uncle Frank was always cold and repellent; he just wouldn't let me love him."

"Good riddance of bad rubbish!"

"Why, John Storm?"

"I don't care. I'm positive of the fact that he attempted to make way with both of us half a dozen times. And I'm equally positive that he was hand in glove with some of the most dangerous criminals in the country. Well, as you say, he's dead; but as for me, I feel a deal easier in walking about these days. And yet that man was your uncle, flesh and blood. Have you gone through the trunk yet?"

"No."

"Well, then, let's take an inventory."

The two of them knelt down together and dug out the ancient circus trappings. Far down in a corner they came upon a little box, and Zudora opened it curiously.

"A diamond!" exclaimed Storm. "And a mighty good one, too, if I don't miss my guess. Look, there is a part of a letter under it. Let's see what it says."

The contents—or the half contents—of that burned sheet of paper affected them strangely. It had originally been a letter to Zudora's mother from her father, and brokenly it stated that he had struck it rich in Brazil. He, or his partner, had stumbled upon an exceedingly rich deposit of diamonds, and some day they would have plenty. To Zudora it was evident that this had been written a few days before the father's death, after he had made the strike in gold.

"And Hassam Ali kept this a secret from you?"

"Never mind now; it is no longer a secret," replied Zudora. She put the little box aside and once more gave her attention to the interior of the trunk. She next resurrected a locket. This contained the likeness of her parents. "My father and mother," she said, her eyes filling.

"You poor little chicken!" He put his arms around her. "We'd better see what can be done about this diamond mine. I'm sure there must be a lot of gems somewhere. But you don't need a diamond mine so far as I'm concerned, sweetheart; you're precious enough gem for any man."

"Thank you, John."

"Almost at this same moment a great liner plowed its way westward across the Atlantic. And on board this liner was a handful of diamonds which rightfully belonged to Zudora Keene.

There was a passenger who went by the name of Bruce. He was a smug, suave indi-

vidual, but was far deeper, far more cunning, than he appeared outwardly. He was in his stateroom. The door was locked. The bed was pulled from the wall. The man himself was between the bed and the ship's side, sawing a small hole in the wainscoting. From time to time he paused to listen for sounds in the adjacent staterooms, but he was quite satisfied that the occupants were all on deck in their chairs. When the job was completed he lifted out the square piece of board and laid it aside. Then he drew a bamboo cane toward him. He swiftly unscrewed the top and dumped something into the palm of his hand. Minute

rogue. He crossed the room swiftly, making no effort to conceal his sentiments. But she adroitly evaded him.

"Take care, captain; no sentiment, if you please. Some day, I do not say; but for the present we have business."

"I wonder if that some day will ever come?" The captain shrugged.

"I will be ready," she said, "in about twenty minutes."

"What?" taking a step forward.

"No, no, simpleton! I mean I'll be ready to go out with you. Now, let me add this: Please do not use that secret panel again just because you want to surprise me.

"Name?"

"Storm."

"John Storm?"

"Yes, sir."

"Show them in at once." He hailed Storm jovially, for he had known this young lawyer for several years. "Come in, come in! I'm glad to see you. What's on that legal mind of yours?"

"I want you to meet Miss Keene, Hunt; Miss Zudora Keene."

"O! I believe I've heard about you, Miss Keene. You're Hassam Ali's niece. He was a very shrewd man. I was sorry to hear of his death."

want to make good in this business. Hunt. The old shape may stick a knife in me one of these days, but I'll go out honest."

"That's the way to talk! Come on, then."

At the pier on cases like this Hunt generally donned the regulation uniform and the regular inspectors did not interfere with his work. So when Bruce came down the gangplank the detective greeted him.

"I'll take care of you, Mr. Bruce. You will not have to bother with the usual formalities."

"Anything is agreeable so long as I get out of this barn in reasonable time. Here's my luggage coming down. All suitcases and one steamer trunk."

"You have found the real one?" he cried.

"Yes. And we have just arrived at the conclusion of a conference. This girl Zudora must be put away until we've milked that mine of its last pebble. Her father's partner—old crook that he is—must be pushed off the board completely. There's a million in that pocket yet, believe me. I think by quick action we can get what we want within six months. We'll keep Zudora under cover for that period of time. As we understand it, she's engaged to a lawyer named Storm. We can fake up an accident to Storm and draw the girl into the net."

"Action's the word. And there's no better place to hide her until the coast is clear than in the old junk hut. That's where the boys will be taking Hunt's understudy by this time."

"But the diamonds?" interjected Mme. Du Val.

"My dear lady, I return to Liverpool on the same boat I arrived on. You will come and see me off. And when you bid me a tearful farewell the precious pebbles will be inside your muff. In fact, I return in the same cabin, and the gems are still in that same cabin. It's a new stunt, and ought to hold off the inspectors for at least a dozen voyages."

"You've got a head on you, Bruce," admitted Capt. Radcliffe admiringly.

Baird was able to find his way inside the deserted factory. A trap to the cellar caught his eye. He raised it and went down . . . and stepped plump into the arms of a hulk of a man who had been awaiting his arrival. Baird was no weakling, but it seemed to him that he had run into a bunch of live wire cables. Only a chance blow saved him. It saved him only temporarily. Another duck walloper came to his companion's aid. Baird was no superman, and a blow on the side of the head laid him out flat.

The two rogues bound and gagged their victim and blindfolded him, too. Baird was half-conscious of being carried out of the building and dumped into a wagon. A moment later a lot of evil smelling junk was thrown in upon him. Then they went rumbling over the rough cobble pavement. It seemed to Baird that the journey must have lasted fully an hour. Then the wagon stopped, the junk was hauled away, and he was dragged into a hut which to the world at large served the innocent purpose of housing junk; but to the crooks in charge it had ulterior purposes.

The hut possessed two rooms beyond that which was reserved for the better character of junk. The fore room was used as a habitation, the middle room as a prison when needs said must.

Into this middle room Baird was carried and bound to a post. They weren't gentle with him either. Presently they left him alone. Suspense is sometimes more cruel than actual physical punishment.

When Zudora learned that her lover was injured she set out post-haste. As, such luck would have it, Storm and Hunt arrived just after she had left in the taxi cab Storm was supposed to have sent her.

"Keep your hair on," said the detective. "We can keep track of that cab. Don't you worry. I'm glad I came along with you. I'll bet a dollar that this has something to do with those diamonds. There's nothing like adding two and two to get four. Now we're off."

They followed the other taxi for three quarters of an hour, lost it three times, but always managed to bring it back within range again. Meaner and meaner grew the streets.

"That's one fault of the crooked mind," was the detective's comment. "They always seek low places to hide their victims in. Not one detective in a thousand would think of hunting a missing person in a good neighborhood. He's slowing up. I think we'd better finish this on foot. Come along, Mr. Lawyer, and don't get in a sweat until you have to."

As for Zudora, her evil star shone cold and brilliant as any of the gems she was seeking as her own. When she discerned the character of the neighborhood her suspicions became aroused. She called to the chauffeur, but his answer was a fresh burst of speed. He whirled up in front of the junk hut, gave three blasts of the horn, and jumped down from the car.

The two men who were guarding Baird rushed out at this signal.

"The captain!" one of them cried.

"Silence, you fool!" warned the pseudo-chauffeur. "Here, help a hand with this bundle of petticoats, and if she gets away from you I'll cut your throats. Live!"

Zudora, while she could not understand the reason of this abduction, perfectly comprehended that it would be useless to struggle against three men. She allowed them to take her inside the hut. The chauffeur jumped back to his seat and whirled away at top speed.

Hunt and Storm were quite willing that he should go. It meant one less to handle. It was hard for Storm to wait for Hunt's signal. When it did come he was first at the door of the hut. But the door was a stout one and it took sundry smashing blows of both men's shoulders to make the lock give. There was a rattling good fight for a moment; then Hunt succeeded in drawing his automatics.

"Hands up!"

The two thugs saw business in his cold blue eyes, and raised their hands.

"You poor girl!" cried Storm.

"Never mind me," she said. "There's some one in the next room calling for help."

And there they found Baird.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



AFTER A RATTLING GOOD FIGHT HUNT SUCCEEDED IN DRAWING HIS AUTOMATICS

fashes of red and blue flame darted up into his eyes. These flashes came from diamonds of the purest white. He chuckled loudly. Next he poured the gems into a little chamois bag and thrust the bag into the hole in the wall. With extraordinary deftness he replaced the square of wainscoting, and only the closest scrutiny would have told any one what had taken place.

After that Mr. Bruce went up to the smoke room and indulged in a stiff whisky and soda. Then he played bridge until the second bugle call for dinner, and in that period of time more than made his expenses for the trip. Mr. Bruce enjoyed his dinner, enjoyed his wine, the coffee, and pariga. The secret agents could hear what they pleased and they could search him and all his belongings, and he would submit with the utmost complacency. Only fools were caught these days by the agents of the United States customs. He had made some twenty voyages, and what had they ever found upon him that was contraband? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Tomorrow they would dock, the old formulas would be gone through, and that night he would be able to confide another success to his confederates. It all depended upon nerve and foresight. But there was one man with whom he had yet to reckon.

His name was Thomas Hunt, and one of his specialties was putting his stout hand upon the shoulders of malefactors and asking them politely which they preferred, steel cuffs or docility? The day before Bruce landed Hunt received a cable in which he was informed that their old enemy was going to attempt to run the blockade again, with diamonds as usual. And one of the remarkable phases of these exploits of Bruce's was the fact that he invariably sold gems in Holland as a starter, but brought the bulk of them into the United States.

The officials knew that he had confederates, some above him in power and some below. Chief among those of the first order were Mme. Du Val and Capt. Radcliffe, a man without a country. Radcliffe was patently in love with Mme. Du Val, but she could not put from her thoughts the man Baird. The fact that he had gone over to the other side in an attempt to rehabilitate himself did not lessen the woman's admiration. As the pseudo Hassam she had had some power over him, but as a reporter on one of the big newspapers he had passed beyond the reach of her arm.

Somewhere she had seen a painting by the late Alma Tadema, and she had, under the inspiration, fixed up what she called a Greek salon. She really possessed excellent taste. In the center there was a fountain surrounded by plants. The water trickled merrily at all times. But sometimes the stream suddenly fell silent, which indicated that some one was behind the secret panel.

On the night before the arrival of Bruce with his ill gotten gems, madam was in the salon, playing idly with an Angora kitten. It is a fact that these tiger women always have kittens about. Suddenly she noted the slant of the jet of water. She summoned an attendant and nodded meaningly toward the wall. The footman went over swiftly, touched a knob, and the secret panel went up, revealing a small elevator. Out of this stepped Capt. Radcliffe, something of a dandy in appearance, but at heart a shady



SHE SAT DREAMING ABOUT HER MOTHER'S OLD CIRCUS COSTUMES

After midnight, if you have anything really important on hand, enter by the panel; but in ordinary times, the front door, my dear captain."

"Your word is law," he replied, bowing.

She left the salon and he filled away the twenty minutes playing with the kitten. When she returned she was ready for the street. She carried a kind of velvet purse.

"Do you know what's in this?" she asked.

"Powder puffs?"

"Ah! Ah, they to be disposed of, each-and-travel?"

"Certainly; and the sooner the better. Bruce will be in port shortly, and we do not want too many on our hands."

"I'll take care of them." This done he added rather impatiently: "It's high time we made off for that luncheon."

To return to Thomas Hunt, detective and secret service man. Hunt divided his time between personal cases and the more difficult problems which frequently confronted the government agents. They generally came to him when they were in trouble. He was sitting at his desk. Before him, spread out fan-wise, were numerous newspaper clippings, and in all of them there was some reference to a man named Bruce. Unlike his kind, the man was always getting into the papers. For a long time this fooled the secret service. They had looked upon him as a harmless crank.

Hunt looked up suddenly. He swept the clippings into a drawer.

"Come in," he said.

The clerk struck his head into his chief's office. "Lady and gentleman wish to see you."

"Name?"

"Storm."

"John Storm?"

"Yes, sir."

"Show them in at once." He hailed Storm jovially, for he had known this young lawyer for several years. "Come in, come in! I'm glad to see you. What's on that legal mind of yours?"

"I want you to meet Miss Keene, Hunt; Miss Zudora Keene."

"O! I believe I've heard about you, Miss Keene. You're Hassam Ali's niece. He was a very shrewd man. I was sorry to hear of his death."

Mme. Du Val and Capt. Radcliffe returned to the former's house immediately after lunch and they both appeared rather excited over something. It seems that the two had met Storm and Zudora at the restaurant and had asked them to sit at their table, with no purpose in mind save that of friendliness. During the luncheon madam noticed the quaint locket around Zudora's throat and inspected it. The two faces she saw inside the locket made her heart jump, but the mildly curious expression on her face did not change.

She and the captain came into the salon hurriedly. They went directly to a table upon which the cut was sleeping. The felon dreams were rudely shattered, however, for the mistress pushed the animal to the floor. Madam pressed certain bits of inlay and a secret drawer was revealed. From this drawer she took two old daguerreotypes.

"The same?" whispered the captain.

"The very same! O, we are in luck, captain, to find this out in time. That mine is this girl Zudora's; and we'll have to watch our cards."

"Put her out of the way?"

"There's been a little too much of that. We'll try all other methods first. But what luck?"

"Telephone!" he said. "Shall I answer it?"

"Better let me." She returned to him after a moment. "Bruce; he's slipped through as usual."

"Clever chap!"

"And the gems are still on board the boat?"

In the meantime Baird had no great difficulty in hanging to the heels of Bruce's cab. He had an idea that the cab would seek a deserted spot, possibly near the water front, where there is a good deal of abandoned property. While his eye followed the cab in front his mind was elsewhere. A year ago he had been a crook, not a dangerous one, to be sure, but infernally clever. And here he was, striving honestly to live decently, all because he had fallen in love with the girl that should have been his victim. Lots of kinks in this old world; lots of startling twists and windings. But of what use to love her? She loved another, and a clean, decent man, too. He wondered if the day would come when he could tell her the truth, that for months he had played at being her uncle and had boldly attempted to do away with her.

"Hunt, you make a study of diamonds, don't you?" asked Storm.

"Legally, legally."

"I want you to find a diamond mine in Brazil, belonging to the father of Miss Keene here. He's been dead for a good many years."

Hunt whistled. "That's a big order. Any papers?"

"Nothing that would give a hint to the location of the mine."

"Well, I can make a stab at it, anyhow. But it looks on the face of it like that old needle in the haystack stuff. We have some agents down there; they might be able to help us out."

"It will be very good of you," said Zudora.

She and Storm rose, and as they did so a young man entered unannounced. Zudora recognized him instantly as the young man she had met at Madam Du Val's. As for Storm, he bowed slightly. Careless greetings passed between them, and Baird and Hunt were left alone.

"Well," said the detective grimly, "how are you behaving yourself?"

"Straight," said Baird soberly. "It was mighty fine of you to help me when I needed help. The life of a reporter is fascinating. But just now I need a story. Got one?"

"Maybe. Did you ever hear of a man named Bruce?"

"Yes," Baird stared at the rug. Yes, he had known Bruce in the days when he was Hassam Ali.

"Well," began Hunt, "I think the rogue is going to beat the customs again. I'll wager that up to date he has smuggled in something over a million in gems. They'll land at the pier in about two hours. Suppose we hike right away?"

"Nothing would suit me any better. I

See "Zudora" Every Thursday at the Bligh Theatre