



"Make your report!"
Jimmie commanded the
dying Russian

The Mad Monks

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Novelette—Complete.

Spies of three nations wanted those railroad plans for Chinese Turkestan—and so did Jimmie Cordie

CHAPTER I.

VALUABLE PLANS.

"CHINESE," Jimmie Cordie announced as he looked through his glasses. "A survey party. Can you see the instruments, Zagatai?"

The young Uryankhes Tartar, son of Sahet Khan, who lay beside Jimmie Cordie on a rock ledge far up on the side of a mountain in the Thian Shan range, Sinkiang province, north-western China, smiled as he answered, "Yes, blood brother of my father, I can see them. Now they take them to

a tent—and now they begin to wrap them in cloth."

He did not need glasses to see distinctly what was going on at a camp pitched near one of the main passes. The eyes of the young chieftain were like those of an eagle.

"We're in the territory of the war lord Ning-Wu," Jimmie went on. "He must have authorized the survey. They may be his men."

"Shall we go down and ask, mighty one?" Zagatai replied, his thin, dark, proud face and fierce eyes lighting up with a smile.

That there were of the hunting



Some were Russian,
some Japanese

party that had left the encampment of the Uryankhes the week before, less than thirty men including five officers of the Big Swords, and at least three hundred Chinese in sight at the camp, made no difference to Zagatai, aged sixteen. The Uryankhes Tartars firmly believed that they could ride over and through any men, no matter what the odds against them.

"The Big Swords are at peace with the war lord Ning-Wu," Jimmie answered. He was also thin faced, dark and black-eyed. Second in command of all Big Swords, who were fighting the Japanese in Manchukuo, the slim, wiry American, one of the most famous soldiers of fortune in the Orient, was both liked and highly respected for his fighting ability by all men who fought in the far places.

"But just why he is making a survey here is— See that, Zagatai! A fight has started and—here comes a bunch from behind that pile of camp gear to get in it. Holy Moses! It's a regular Kilkenny cat fight."

Zagatai did not know what a regular Kilkenny fight was, but he knew a fight when he saw it. He watched, his delicate nostrils flaring out a little, dancing lights coming into his eyes. A fight, and Uryankhes Tartars watching it instead of— He turned a little so as to face Jimmie Cordie. "They fight, and we remain here?"

Jimmie laughed. He knew what Zagatai meant. Sahet Khan, who ruled twenty thousand Uryankhes with an iron hand, when he detailed his favorite son to go with the hunting party, had warned Zagatai to "obey all commands given by my blood brother as my commands are obeyed." Zagatai wanted to get into the fight and if Jimmie Cordie had not been there, by now the Uryankhes would have been riding down hell for leather to do it.

"Let's wait a minute and see. There go five or six men for the horse line. They are shooting their way, and—they are Japs."

"Yes, war captain of the Big Swords. See, other men run now back

of the pile—they mount. Eight, ten, twelve of them. See! The Chinese open fire!”

“The Japs jumped the Chinese for something and got it. Then the bunch that—”

“They turn to the right. We can cut them off at the river.”

“I guess we’d better do it. Those birds that came from the pile are Russians, unless my eyes and my glasses are both cock-eyed. We’ll ask them a few questions and then ask the Chinese a few more.”

A FATALLY wounded Russian sat on the ground, his back against a rock. On the ground near him were the bodies of twelve men, three of them Japanese, the others Russians.

Jimmie Cordie knelt beside him. Back a little ways there stood Zagatai, the Big Sword officers and the Uryankhes Tartars. The hunting party did not arrive in time to cut the fleeing men off, but did before the Russian died.

Blood trickled from his lips as he spoke. He told Jimmie Cordie of how his party arrived to seize the survey notes, only to find that some Japanese had beaten them to it. He had met Jimmie once, after the war, in Hongkong.

“...and so, they suddenly attacked the tent—of the leader—of—the survey party. I cannot—go on. My wife and children are—are—in Hongkong. I ask that you take—care of them, Captain Cordie.”

“I will take care of your wife and family, Colonel Radischev,” Jimmie said distinctly. “Hold fast and tell me what has happened. You are an officer and a gentleman—hold fast and tell me.”

“The Chinese have made a—survey of the passes for the—war lord here. I am—I am—”

“Attention!” Jimmie Cordie rasped. “Make your report, Colonel Radischev. The Chinese have made a survey—for what?”

“For—for a railroad, excellency.”

“The Japanese came to seize it and you did the same for the Soviet?”

“Yes. I am—a. Russian. Your country—is friend of mine now.—Don’t let—my enemies keep it—promise me, Captain Cordie—I gave my life for it—save it—” The head of the Russian, who had once commanded a regiment in the War, fell forward as his spirit left his body.

THREE Japanese Intelligence officers rode swiftly through the hills toward the south. One of them carried, under his tunic, a red leather case, about four inches wide by ten or eleven long.

Inside the case were the complete survey notes for a single track railroad from Jarkent on the Siberian side to Saram-por on the Chinese Turkestan side.

“We win through, major,” one of them said as their horses splashed through a little stream. “The Chinese did all the work—and now we have the survey.”

The officer addressed smiled. “And also we have the satisfaction of having sent quite a few of the Red mongrels to hell. That alone—”

They pulled up their horses as they reached the bank. In front of them, not a hundred feet away, there had risen Chinese infantry. On the left and right and to their rear—troops also showed.

The Japanese major cursed softly under his breath and as the young lieu-

tenant's hand went to revolver butt, said, "No. Take your hand away, Lieutenant Morioka. Resistance is useless. It may be a chance encounter."

From the troops in front a girl had ridden forward, accompanied by two Chinese officers. She was slender and beautiful, dressed in immaculate whipcord riding trousers, white flannel shirt, brown leather riding boots and little white felt hat perched jauntily on her sleek young head. Her eyes were hyacinth blue, her hair bronzed gold, her skin a rich creamy white. Elizabeth Montague, special agent for war lords and potentates, patrician Englishwoman from the top of her head to the tips of her little white toes.

The three Japanese officers sat their horses, their faces impassive as the girl and the Chinese officers trotted briskly up. The eyes of the major tightened a little as the girl and her escort came closer. He had heard of the English girl who had outplayed many intelligence men.

"Who are you?" she demanded curtly, after she reined her horse to a halt within a few feet of the Japanese.

She spoke in Chinese, but before Major Osaka could answer, laughed and went on, in English, "Oh, I see. Japanese."

"That is correct," Major Osaka answered in English. "We are Japanese— And you?"

"I am Elizabeth Montague, agent of the Lord of Sin-hsai-tung." She turned to the Chinese officers. "Search them."

Ten minutes later the Japanese were on their way once more, this time without the red leather case full of survey notes.

She watched them for a moment or

so, then said, "They will ride for the Japanese outpost at Hami. If they win to it they will try for us at the river. We will go south for fifty miles, then east once more on the far side of the Anu hills."

To herself she added, "And soon I will sell the survey to Nippon or Soviet."

It was the correct thing to do, but in doing it, she and her escort got too close to the border of the Kara-Kara sand. And the mad priests of Kara-Kara attack any and all who do that.

CHAPTER II.

"HOUSE OF LORDS."

THE Uryankhes and the Big Sword officers rode fast on the trail of the Japanese, but it was twelve hours later when they pulled up their horses at the stream where Elizabeth Montague had taken the red leather case away from Major Osaka. The Japs had been mounted on fresh, fast horses and kept well ahead of those who followed.

The hoofprints of other horses were seen and after the Uryankhes had circled and reported that a large body of men had lain in ambush, Jimmie Cordie said, "Some outfit gathered them in and then turned them loose. The great question before the House of Lords is, was the red leather case taken away from them, or not?"

The "House of Lords," at the moment, consisted of the other four Big Sword officers and Zagatai. The Big Swords were all, with the exception of the Fighting Yid, men who had served in the Foreign Legion with Jimmie Cordie. The Yid, born on Hester Street, New York, and named Abraham Cohen, received his nick-

name in the A. E. F., where he had been first sergeant of a machine gun company.

One of them, a tall, lean, lanky man, answered Jimmie.

"Well, Jeems, there is only one way I know of to find out. Keep on after the Japs until we catch them, and if they haven't got the said case, persuade them to tell us who has."

He was the Boston Bean, born in Boston, Massachusetts, named John Cabot Winthrop. Called anything that even remotely suggested Boston.

"Oi, vot a brilliant suggestion," the Yid said. "Und if dey haven't got it, by de time ve find it out, whoever has is all de vay to de Rock Candy Mountains. Tell you vot, Jimmie. Send it some of de Uryankhes after de Japs und ve vill follow de—"

Some twenty-odd Chinese soldiers came out of the timber near the stream. It could be plainly seen that they were two-thirds scared to death as well as wholly exhausted. They saw the dreaded Uryankhes, turned as if to go back into the timber, hesitated as if trying to choose between two evils, and then halted.

"Shall we bring them to you?" Zagatai asked eagerly.

"If they saw Uryankhes riding toward them their hearts would stop beating. You and I will go to them, son of my blood brother," Jimmie answered.

There was an old officer with the Chinese who could speak a little English. He did not care at all for the close proximity of a Uryankhes, but Jimmie Cordie's friendly, clean-cut, Anglo-Saxon face reassured him.

The story he told was disconnected and took a long time to tell. The gist of it was that Elizabeth Montague, the golden one, had taken from some Japa-

nese a red leather case and then allowed the Japanese to go. The regiment had then headed south. Close to a sand waste there had come a sudden attack made by swarms of madmen, armed with swords, bows and arrows and lances.

Thousands of them, according to the officer. He had been in command of the rear guard and, by chance, close to a pass that led up into the hills. Seeing that the regiment was going to be wiped out, he started up the pass with what men he had left. The madmen came up the narrow pass after them, until darkness came. What happened to the golden one he did not know. All he knew was that he finally won clear with what men the "lesplendent war captain sees."

"You are safe now, elder brother," Jimmie said. "Take your men to the stream and rest. The city of the war lord Shen is not far from here. He is a friend of your lord and will take care of you."

AS Jimmie and Zagatai rode back, Jimmie translated for Zagatai what the Chinese had told.

"I have heard of the mad jackals," Zagatai said, "but thought it mostly campfire tales. We will ride back to my father. Then we of the Uryankhes will see if they can wipe us out as they have done this Chinese regiment."

"First we ride to where the fight was. It may be that the golden one told of by the Chinese officer escaped in some way, as he did. Although, from what I've heard of her, she probably died right there, fighting."

Red Dolan, one of the Big Sword officers, riding beside Jimmie Cardie, asked, "Jimmie, what the hell is it all about?" From the day Red met Jimmie in the Legion, life had been

greatly simplified for the big Irishman. He would ask, "What now, Jimmie?" or "How about that?" and the answer always satisfied Red.

"What is what all about?"

"The whole thing, Jimmie darlin'. What is this survey thing ye are after and the madmen and all? Who is this girl that took the damn thing from the little midgets?"

"She is an Englishwoman, Red. I don't know such a heck of a lot about her any more than she is supposed to be one of the most clever special agents in the Orient. And, just between you and me and the tall hills on your left, I have also heard that she doesn't allow very much to stop her when she goes after anything. There have been rumors, Mr. Dolan, that more than one man has been sent on high by the fair Montague.

"The way I got it from a man who knew her is that she can outplay most men and when she can't—why, it is just too bad for the man who blocks her off, if she can make it that way. Probably there is a lot of exaggeration, Red. She may be entirely different. All I really know is that she has worked for some pretty hard-boiled war lords, generals, and what not."

"Do ye think the madmen have killed her, Jimmie?"

"Chances are they have."

"Jimmie, who are they?"

"Well, Red, I don't know very much about them, either. And nothing first hand. South of us a few miles, the Kara-Kara sands begin. All route armies, caravans, raiding parties of hillmen and other outfits keep as far away from Kara-Kara as they can, for two or three reasons.

"The commander of the Chinese regiment and Elizabeth Montague

evidently were in the same position you are, Red. They never heard about the mad priests of Kara-Kara, either."

"Any wan would think that a full regiment armed wid guns could smack down a lot av madmen. Maybeso it was because they was Chinks."

"Your opinion of Chinese fighting ability is not very flattering, Mr. Dolan," Jimmie answered, with a grin.

"Maybeso, Jimmie. Go on wid it."

"Before I do I'll tell you that General Kai-Lun got tangled in the Kara-Kara with his route army—and only a few men came out. You will have to admit that old Kai-Lun and his route army could do some fighting."

"They could. Did the madmen get them?"

"From what I heard, the madmen did. Well, as I said, there are more things than the madmen to buck. No water, no forage, wind all the time blowing sand in your face."

"How do the madmen live there, then?"

"The mad priests of Kara-Kara live on top of a hill about in the center of the Kara-Kara. Once, many hundreds of years ago, one of the Tartar lords who had fought under Genghis Khan built a great stone city there. He—"

"What did he do for water?"

"For Pete's sake! You big red-headed ape, will you quit interrupting me?"

"Ye jump around so, ye black muzzled shrimp av the world. Tell me plain and—"

"I jump around? Go on back with the Yid and the Bean. The Yid knows about the Kara-Kara."

"That gibbon? He'd start in tellin' lies. I'm shut, Jimmie darlin'. Go ahead and tell me. Divil a time will I interrupt ye again."

"See that you don't. The Tartar lord found on top of the hill heap plenty springs. Alle same oasis, Mr. Dolan."

"How do ye know what he found?" Red asked, forgetting all about his promise.

JIMMIE CORDIE grinned. "I ought to know. I was there with him. In those dear, long-past days I commanded a squadron of cavalry for Genghis—"

"Will ye stop that and tell me?"

"I am telling you. Listen, Red, no foolin'. If you interrupt me once more I won't tell you a darn thing. Now—how long the mad priests have been there, how they got there, what they have to eat, or where they get it, I don't know."

"All I know is this. There are thousands of them and they are scrappers from who laid the chunk. They take on any and all and up to date no outfit that got tangled up with them has won clear."

Red studied that for a moment, then stated firmly, "I'll bet ye that the old First Regiment av the Legion could run them scuts so far off the hill that they'd never find the way back, them that was left to do it."

"No doubt about it, Mr. Dolan. But the First is far away and—"

"Jimmie, are they really madmen?"

"Depends on who is talking. They probably don't think they are at all. I guess there is no question, Red, but what they do things that class them as mad—as far as any so-called civilized people go."

"And them scuts have killed the fightin' English girl, have they? What are we goin' to do, Jimmie?"

"Find out whether they have or not, if we can. I hope she holed up

somewhere. If she did, we'll take her to Shen."

"How about the thing ye are after? Will ye take it away from her?"

"First catch the rabbit. Far be it from me to take anything away from a lady. I am deeply grieved, Mr. Dolan."

"Oh, are ye? Well, she took it away from the pink-toed banties, didn't she? 'Tis only right that some wan takes it from her."

"Well, if she is still alive, you can be the one to go up to her and say, 'Hand over the red leather case, or I'll smack you out of your shoes.' She will take one look at you and hand it right over."

"What? Me? Make a threat to a woman? Double shame on ye, Jimmie Cordie, for even—"

Zagatai rode up. "There are bod-ies ahead in a valley. The Chinese mongrel spoke truly, mighty one."

CHAPTER III.

CONDEMNED.

THE abbot of the mad priests sat in a high-backed, throne-like chair on a dais built against the south wall of what once had been a temple. He was a man of about sixty, grossly built, fat-bellied, fat-cheeked, and triple-chinned. His little, pig-like eyes slanted up at the corners, showing Chinese blood. His high cheekbones and bat-wing ears denoted some Tartar. The thick lips and splayed-out nostrils told of an African ancestor. He looked like something seen in a nightmare. And the cruel, mocking light in his eyes and the bestial smile on his lips did nothing to lessen the nightmare effect. Rather, they added to it.

Both he and his clothes, a filthy conglomeration of sheepskins and quilted cotton robes, looked as if they had never been washed.

On a table, placed about two feet in front of his chair, there rested a green jade carving. It was of three fish, each with tail in the mouth of the other, forming a circle. The bellies of the fish rested on a slab of green jade, about a foot wide and a foot and a half long. The fish were delicately and accurately carved; the eyes were emeralds.

Before the dais there crouched a Chinese boy. A little to the left and behind him stood Elizabeth Montague. Back of her stood one of the mad priests.

She stood there, her lovely blue eyes calm and impersonal.

The English girl was in a bad jam and she knew it. Yet she stood erect and faced the abbot with absolutely no show of fear, although she thought her death by torture, unless she could find some way to kill herself, was a question of minutes.

The abbot snarled something in a tongue unknown to her and the Chinese boy translated.

"The all-powerful one says that you are not Chinese. Who are you?"

"I am English," Elizabeth answered.

That did not mean anything to the abbot and after staring at her for a moment he spoke again.

"The mighty ruler of the world say that soon you will dance on the hot stones so that three sacred ones may be pleased."

In the few short hours she had been in the captive pen, Elizabeth had seen other captives dragged out of it—men, women and children—and then heard agonized screams and wails for mercy

that lasted a long time. But she answered, contemptuously:

"Tell him I am not afraid of him and that I will not dance anywhere on anything to please the three sacred ones or any one else. My friends will pay him much gold for me—and if anything happens to me they will slay him and all his priests."

The Chinese boy had no intention whatsoever of repeating what she said to the abbot. He was afraid that if he did, a whip might curl around his body which was still sore from the last whipping he had received. So he translated that the maiden bowed to the abbot in all things and would dance whenever the abbot desired her to do it.

The abbot listened, then grunted a few words.

The mad priest behind Elizabeth touched her on the arm. She turned and walked back to the captive pen, her head still high.

Inside the stone walls that enclosed about two acres of ground there were two hundred-odd huts, or hovels. They were made of wood, stone, hides and anything else that could be used on sides and roof. The mad priests evidently had trade relations with some tribe near the sands, for there were sides of boxes and burlap bags that bore Chinese and Persian markings. What the priests traded for foodstuffs there was no way of knowing. It may be that they had found the treasure of the old Tartar lord who had ridden with Genghis Khan.

ELIZABETH had been literally tossed into one of them and a little later had been searched by two old hags. The search was for anything she could kill herself with. Her clothes the Oriental women scorned, hence did not take. The red leather case

was opened and, after it was seen to contain only papers, tossed into a corner.

The hovels were filthy inside, so Elizabeth walked over toward the south wall and sat down on a boulder. There were a good many other women, as well as men and children, sitting or standing around, waiting for the mad priests to come for them.

As long as Elizabeth had been there she had seen no food brought in and most of the faces of the captives were gray with fear and starvation.

She had been in tight places before and gotten out. But this time there was no out she could figure—except one. That she should escape from the mad priests and make her way across the sand to the hills and once in them win through to a friendly war lord, weaponless and alone, was not within the bounds of possibility—and she knew it.

There was only one thing she could do, and that was to get close to one of the mad priests and try for his sword or dagger. Once she had it—she smiled a little as the thought came to her—she would do what dancing was required somewhere else than on earth.

As she smiled, the sun came out from behind a cloud and a ray slanted down on the roof of her hovel. By chance she was facing so that she saw a glint of what looked like steel. She looked closer and saw that the reflection came from a piece of iron band that had been left around a box top. It was half torn off, about six inches long, sharp and jagged at the torn end.

She looked at it for a moment, then smiled again. There was no need for her to try to get close to a mad priest.

She rose and sauntered carelessly over to her hovel.

THE valley in which the mad priests made their attack on the Chinese regiment escorting Elizabeth Montague was a bloody shambles of the dead. The Chinese had fought manfully to protect "the golden one," and for their lives, as the bodies of hundreds of the mad priests attested. The dead of the mad priests had been big, lean, hairy men, some of them naked to the waist, some entirely naked save for a loin cloth and some few with long black robes, black hats that looked a good deal like old fashioned women's bonnets. On the feet of those that were robed were sandals. The mad priests were not all of one race or tribe. They seemed to be a mixture of all Oriental peoples. Some looked as if they had Tartar or Manchu blood, others seemed more like Chinese, Persians or Mongols.

There were guns, swords, lances, bows and arrows scattered around everywhere. It was evident that the mad priests who survived the attack had made no attempt to pick up weapons or to bury their dead.

Near the body of the colonel of the regiment Jimmie Cordie found an empty Webley revolver, a natty little white felt hat and a riding glove. The Uryankhes had ranged the hills, and if Elizabeth Montague had escaped they would have found her.

The battlefield was searched, and at last Jimmie Cordie said, "Well, they've got her. For some unknown reason they took her alive."

"Und avay goes it de red leather case," the Yid added.

Jimmie Cordie's eyes, which usually held an amused smile, grew cold as he stared at the Yid. Finally he said,

"The red leather case, Mr. Cohen, has become of secondary importance."

"Vot? Oi, Jimmie! Excuse me, I ask you. I didn't mean to—"

"All right, Abie. It's a heck of a good plan to think once in a while before speaking."

"That Yid gibbon think?" scoffed Red. "What wid? He has no brains to—"

"That will be for a little while. Let's get down to it. They have probably taken her to G. H. Q. We'll go and get her."

"Come on," said Red. "What are ye waitin' for?"

A man fully as big as Red laughed. "Let's wait a minute, Red. Jimmie, you say we are going to get her. What with? A few Uryankhes Tartars and our thirty-thirty rifles? We won't get to first base, let alone to—"

"Have I lived to see the day that ye back away from anything, George Grigsby?" demanded Red. "What do ye care how far we get?"

Grigsby, ex-Foreign Legion and major of infantry, A. E. F., known in the Orient as "a damn good man to have along," smiled at Red.

"I don't—but Miss Montague might, old-timer. I was going to suggest that we try to plan something that at least has a chance of succeeding."

"Right ye are, George. Think up something, Jimmie."

"It may take me all of three minutes, Red. George is right about our not getting to first base. To take anything away from the mad priests of Kara-Kara by force would require a—"

"Jeems," the Boston Bean interrupted, "I have just had a brilliant thought."

The Bean always looked mournful and sleepy. It was a very misleading

look. The Bean was reckless, happy-go-lucky, and always wide awake.

"YEAH? We've had experience with your brilliant thoughts, Codfish, and most of the time soon afterward we wake up in the hospital to hear the nurse say, 'Take this nice medicine.' What is this one?"

"You wrong me, Jeems. Well—"

"Wrong ye, ye Bosting bean-eater? Can wan spoil a bad egg? I'll answer me own question. They cannot. Av all the—"

"Put a jaw tackle on, you big red-headed ape. Is this the time for broadcasting? There is a girl in the hands of the mad priests and every minute counts. You know what they do to captives? They have torture down to a science. If you can't help us frame something, at least keep that big mouth of yours shut. And that goes for you, too, Yid."

"Oi, vos I sayink anythink, Jimmie?"

"No, but you looked as if you were going to. Let's have it, Bean."

"Well, the brilliant thought is—we become mad priests."

"What? Listen, Codfish. What I told Red and the Yid goes for you, also. This isn't a case of our lives being in danger. There is a girl in—"

"So you just said," the Bean answered gravely. "I'm not kidding, Jeems, me good man. We become mad priests, walk calmly across the sand, arrive at the hill in the darkness, find out where Miss Montague is held, get her and serenely walk back to the hills whistling 'God Save the King.'"

"'Tis goofy ye are, yerself," Red said with deep conviction.

"He is, like heck. Bean, in my next

army you may be a proud and haughty corporal. It was a brilliant thought that has made up for all your darn unbrilliant ones. Let's see what we can do toward becoming mad priests. We'll strap our forty-fives next to our skins and—"

"Wait," commanded Red. "Do ye mean to say that we are goin' to put on them damn robes and them bonnets and—the skins av us is white under our clothes, Jimmie. Look at them bare legs and them little what-you-may-call-'ems. Am I to walk across the hot sands wid them things on the feet av me?"

"They are called sandals, Mr. Dolan. Yes, you are to walk across the hot sands with them on your feet, and furthermore, you are going to like it."

"I am like hell. Why can't we—"

"We could, but we don't intend to. We'll send Zagatai and the Tartars home, cache our rifles and clothes and trust that the Nine Red Gods will play on our side."

Zagatai did not see that going home thing at all. He wanted to stick right along, but finally Jimmie convinced him that the Uryankhes would only add to the danger of being discovered.

A small party could go where a larger one could not. Five mad priests straggling along would not attract the attention that a body of twenty-odd would. Privately Jimmie was afraid that the hot tempered Uryankhes, who held all other tribes in contempt, would at once start a fight, irrespective of odds, once they were close to the mad priests.

He told Zagatai that the thing for him, Zagatai, to do was to ride as fast as he could to the main encampment of the Uryankhes and return with a strong column.

"Then, when we are followed from the hill, after having rescued the golden one, the Uryankhes can drive the mad priests back."

That pleased Zagatai, who answered, "You will see us ride over the mad dogs, grinding their faces into the sand with the hoofs of our horses."

CHAPTER IV.

OVER THE SAND.

RED looked at the Boston Bean. "Ye know what ye look like to me? Ye look like something the cat brought in."

"Oh, do I? Have you any idea what you look like, me good man? Any self-respecting cat would take one look at you and then step around you."

"Und dot is smacking de big Irisher vare he lives," the Yid announced, as he wiped the sweat from his eyes. "Vy can't it you always look like a gentleman, Mistaire Dolan, like I do?"

Words failed Red. He opened his mouth to say something, could not think of anything bad enough, so contented himself with glaring at the smirking Yid.

They were then ten miles across the sands and, up to the time Red spoke, had seen nothing of the mad priests. At the battlefield the Boston Bean had acted as director and chief costumer. He ordered them back to where there was some dirt and mold, each man carrying a desert water bag of which there were plenty where the mad priests had discarded them to charge. Each man also carried a long black robe, a bonnet and a pair of sandals.

Red protested bitterly at being "all smeared up wid di-ert-ty dirt," and the possibilities of there being cooties

in the robes. He was a cleanly, fastidious soul, but all his protests got him from the Bean was more dirt. All of their faces and hands were deeply bronzed and none of them carried any excess fat. Their feet were white, but not after the Bean passed them as O. K.

At last he said, "Well, I guess you'll do. Red, a little more dirt under your left eye wouldn't hurt. You look very mad, but not quite mad enough to suit me."

Red's answer to that reached new heights, even for him, and ended with, "Tend to yerself, ye long-legged cross between a Bosting jacksnipe and a black and white kitty."

"Outside of that, the red-headed ape likes me," the Bean answered. "If we don't sweat it off before we've gone a mile, we'll pass anything but a close inspection. Take the deck once more, Jeems."

They cached their clothes and rifles and horse equipment and hid the horses in a little blind cañon. Their .45 Colts with belts heavy with ammunition they wore next to their skins as suggested by Jimmie Cordie. And each of them, also at his suggestion, cut a slit in the robe so he could get at the Colt in a hurry. At the battlefield they each picked up what weapons they fancied. Red, Grigsby, the Yid and the Bean took sword and lance. Jimmie Cordie took a sword and then picked up a long bow and a quiver full of arrows.

"What are ye takin' that damn thing for?" Red demanded.

"Because, Red, I am one of the kind of archers you read about. I've always wanted to go into battle with a long bow. I can send an arrow four hundred yards with—"

"You mean by, Jeems. By express.

Now, we will all take the water bags and trip gayly on our way," the Bean announced, forgetting he had just "given the deck" to Jimmie Cordie.

AS the Yid asked Red why he could not always look like a gentleman, Jimmie Cordie, who had been a little ahead with Grigsby, dropped back.

"We'll have to hit it up, gents. I've heard that the hill is about thirty miles from the border of the sands. We've gone about ten, and it's four o'clock. If we don't arrive and do our searching and what not in the dark, we're sunk."

"Oi," the Yid mourned, "hit it up? How can ve did it, I esk you? I sink it up to de knees now mit every step." The Yid was very nearly as broad as he was long, with powerful shoulders and arms long enough for him to touch his knees with clenched fists without stooping.

Red claimed that the Yid was first cousin to—and looked like—a gorilla. And there were men in the Orient who stated they had just as soon tackle the gorilla as the Yid when he was really angry.

However, Red's statement was highly exaggerated. The Yid's face, in repose, was like the face of some Hebrew patriarch of olden days.

"THE benighted Hester Street scut can't take it, Jimmie,"

Red said. "Let's carry the—"

"Vot? I can't take it? Start runnink, Jimmie. I vill show it dis—"

"You two kidders better save what energy you've got. You better dirty up your face, Yid. You've wiped off most of the camouflage. Red, you and I will set the pace."

"How far is it, Jimmie?"

"Well, if the hill is thirty miles in, and if we have gone ten, if I haven't forgotten how to subtract, it is twenty miles, Mr. Dolan. Come on, we'll send George back to keep these two synthetic mad priests company."

"Good-by, Yid. I know ye can't keep up. Dig a hole in the sand and cover yerself all but the nose av ye. I hope wan of the real quill comes along and steps on it for ye. We'll be seein' you on the way back."

"Take it me up dere mit, Jimmie. I vill run dis Irish bummer down to a visper."

"I bet you. Try it on the way home. I have a feeling we are going to get plenty of that running thing. Come on, Mr. Dolan. Never mind answering Mr. Cohen."

It was hard going, very hard. The wind blew continually, driving sand in their faces and eyes. It was hot and the humidity was frightful.

But they were a hard-bitten crowd, and all of them "in the pink." They needed to be to cross the Kara-Kara sands. Red walked silently beside Jimmie Cordie for a few minutes and then said, "Jimmie, tell me about the survey thing."

"What?" Jimmie had been thinking of a girl in the hands of the mad priests and had been offering up little prayers, although he was not what is known as a religious man, that they had not harmed her.

"Tell me about what the Russian had and why the little pink-toed mid-gets wanted it. How come if he was a Russian did he want to sell it to the Soviet?"

"Well—while we are taking a pleasant walk before supper, I'll tell you all I know, Red. It isn't much."

The Yid came up and fell in behind Jimmie.

"Vot is de idea of draggink de line dis vay? My, such slow valkers. I vill set it de pace from now on. Take it hold of my hand, Irisher."

"What? 'Twas slow we was goin' because av ye, ye monkey-faced, flat-footed cross between a—"

"Do you want to hear the how-come?" demanded Jimmie.

"Sure I do. Wait till I put this Hester Street Yid in the proper place av him."

"That's just what I don't want to hear, Mr. Dolan. The chatter of you two chimpanzees gets on my nerves."

"Ye? Wid nerves? I never thought ye had any, Jimmie darlin'. Keep the mouth av ye shut, Abie. Jimmie is nervous."

JIMMIE laughed. "Not quite as bad as that, old kid. But right now I can do without a lot of wah-wah."

"I'm shut, Jimmie."

"All right. I'll start off. But listen: one more interruption and back to the rear you'll both go. Red, this is short and sweet, principally short. In the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, the Russians started to build a lot of railroads. The most important at the moment is the Siberian. The first section was started from Chelyabinski to Omsk.

"A little later the Russians started to build the Pacific end from Vladivostok to Khabarovsk, which is some four hundred and seventy miles north of Vladivostok. Get that place in your head, Red. It is where the Soviet is massing troops—big and little guns—planes and what not. The Japs will try for Vladivostok and then Khabarovsk. Then they will try for Chita and Irkutsk. If they can take the last two, they have the Soviet blocked off from

Manchuria and also from Vladivostok and the North. The Chinese and the Russians built the Chinese Eastern to—"

"Jimmie, what the hell has all this to do wid the case we was after till we found out about the girl?"

"Everything. Here — the Soviet knows that if the Japs can knock 'em off the Christmas tree anywhere along the Chinese Eastern the other side of Manchuria, especially at Omsk, Irkutsk or at Chita, they will be in a bad way, as far as holding anything south and east of the Siberian border. That is the reason the Soviet is double tracking the line as fast as they can and also massing troops from Khabarovsk to Chita. It is a case of—"

"I'll take the word av ye for it. All ye are doin' is gettin' me all mixed up. Tell me plain."

"I'm trying to, Red. Listen. The Soviet has known for a long time that the Japs would try to cut them off and — holy cats! Wait until I tighten my belt. It's taking the skin off my left side."

"Mine has taken the skin av me off both sides. Tuck the robe av ye up and use it as a pad like I have done."

"I'll tighten it up a hole. No likee the feel of this felt or whatever it is. Where was I?"

"Ye said that the Soviet knew that the little bamalams would try to cut them off."

"That's right. So the Soviet, as quietly as they could do 'er, have been putting down track from Omsk to Jarkent on the Siberian side. Now, to get into Manchuria—"

"De track is all down," the Yid stated.

"And how the hell and gone do ye know?" demanded Red scornfully.

"Vy shouldn't it I know, Irisher?"

I vos dere ven dey did it as chief engineer of de whole cheese. Dot reminds me of another song. 'Oh, I'm de chief engineer of a von shirt laundry, down on de river ba-ha—ank.' You vish to hear it de rest of de song, red-headt?"

"While you are deciding, Red, I will drop back with George and the Bean. You two double morons would make a preacher put his Bible down and—"

"Don't do it, Jimmie darlin'. I will ignore the Yid scut as a gentleman and a Dolan should. Get on wid the story."

JIMMIE CORDIE laughed. "You have got me so mixed up myself that I don't know where to get on from. Maybe this will make it clear to you, Red. The Soviet wants to come through the Thian Shan with a railroad so they can come up through the Khanates if the Japs take the Chinese Eastern. By doing that, the Soviet can still unload troops in Manchuria."

"But, Jimmie, 'tis all av a thousand miles from Omsk to the Thian Shan where we are."

"I know it is—and another thousand or so through the Khanates. But two or three hundred thousand men, when they are Reds, can lay a whole lot of track in a day, Mr. Dolan. Ask Chief Engineer Cohen about it if you don't think so."

"I'll ask the Yid monkey nawthin'. Go on wid it."

"All right. The Chinese were making the survey, or rather had made it. The Japs knew about it and tried for the notes after it was finished. Some Russians did also. The Japs—"

"The Russians tried for it for the Soviet? But if they did, what did that fellow mean by tellin' ye to sell it to

them? If he was van av them, is the scout sellin' out his own side?"

"There are a lot of Russians, Red, who are for Russia but not for the Soviet. That bird was one of them. How he got the dope about the survey I don't know. Evidently he got some of his sidekickers and came up to get it, hoping to make a sale of it to the Soviet for enough to put himself and his family on Easy Street. Maybe he was going to sell it to the Japs, for all I know.

"But at the last, he wanted Russia to have it."

"Why should the little dish-faced polecats want it? They ain't buildin' a railroad too, are they?"

"No. But as long as they have it the Soviet hasn't, sabe? It takes time to make a survey through a mountain range."

"Well, why can't the Soviet or the Chinks make another?"

"They can, but in the meantime, heap plenty things can happen. The war lord Ming-kai was probably fooled into thinking the survey was for China. If I get back I'll see that he is disillusioned, by gosh. And also see that the Uryankhes and the Altai Tartars are— Heads up! Let George and the Bean catch up with us. Here comes seven or eight of the real thing. We will let them make any play. Our game is to plod along, ignoring them."

"Sure," the Yid said with a grin, "just as if ve had known it dem for years und never did like dem anyvay. Keep it de bonnet on, Irisher. If dey see it de red-head, maybeso dere ain't no mad priest red-heads."

"And ye keep that hook nose av ye outta sight. Maybeso there ain't any mad priest Yids, either."

The Yid and Jimmie both laughed, and Jimmie said:

"That is good advice for both of you to take."

CHAPTER V.

HAND TO HAND.

THERE were seven of the mad priests in the party that came up. Three of them with robes, sandals and bonnets. The other four were naked from the waist up. They all carried desert water bags and swords for weapons. That the mad priests had no suspicion of the little party of five that was walking doggedly along over the sand was evident by the way they came up.

"Our priestly brothers are heading for G. H. Q.," the Bean said, "the same as we are."

"Get all wah-wah out of your systems before they get here," Jimmie ordered. "No talkee at all. We're the kind of mad priests that don't speak. And, if it comes to a show-down—no gun-play. Shots might bring eight hundred and sixty more of them. We'll take them with swords."

"Don't forget the bow and arrows av ye," Red said. "Try it out on the scuts. 'Tis well widin' four hundred yards, me bucko archer."

"Steady," Grigsby warned. "They are getting close enough to see lips move."

The mad priests were all big men, and if they were maniacs or crazy men they did not show it very much. Two or three of them had a vacant, staring look in their eyes and three of the others had wild, cunning looking eyes. But there was no yelling or dancing.

One, a black robed and bonneted man, had cold blue eyes that appeared to be absolutely sane. He seemed to be the leader.

They came up on an angle and did not attempt to mix in with the party of five they had joined. The soldiers of fortune were walking now in wedge formation, not as if premeditatedly but as if by chance. Jimmie Cordie was the point, then came the Bean and Grigsby, then, just a little way out, the Yid and Red. The mad priests came up on the Yid's right, Red being to his left.

They were bunched, more or less, the leader a little ahead. When he got up to Jimmie Cordie they slacked down their pace and began plodding along also. Nothing was said and none of the mad priests looked closely at individuals of the party they had come up with.

It wasn't a place conducive to conversation anyway. The wind was blowing sand as it does a sleeting rain. All of the priests, mad and synthetic, had their heads bowed and their bodies bent forward, bucking it. Half an hour went past, an hour. And there happened what Jimmie Cordie had hoped would not happen. Red had said, "Maybeso there ain't any mad priest Yids, either." He need not have used the word "maybeso."

The bonnets they wore had attached, on either side, long streamers of the same cloth they were made of. They were patently used to tie the bonnet on by knotting under the chin. The soldiers of fortune had all done that, after they had all chased their bonnets over the sand when they first encountered the wind.

The Fighting Yid, when he began to perspire freely, loosened his. A particularly fierce gust of wind completed the job. At the identical second that it did, the mad priest nearest him turned a little to adjust a water bag. His eyes were on a direct line with the

Yid. The wind lifted the bonnet from Mr. Cohen's head and it sailed away. The mad priest looked at the unmistakably Semitic face and, as he looked, let out a wild yell.

Every man, in both parties, that was ahead of him halted and turned. Two or three of the mad priests were behind him, and Red was about on a line.

The mad priest was drawing his sword as he yelled. He yelled again as he charged the Yid, who was only six feet from him.

This time he yelled, "Yehuda!"

AS the man drew his sword, the Yid's right hand flashed in under the robe to the butt of his .45 Colt, then he remembered what Jimmie had said about no shots, which spoke well for the Yid's chilled steel nerves.

He did not have time to draw his sword and he knew it, so he did the next best thing. He was carrying one of the heavy water bags, made of skin with the rope over his left shoulder. His hand left the gun butt and went to the rope, his thumb going under it. His left shoulder went down and his left arm slipped out of the rope. The Yid swung the bag with all the power of his massive shoulders, straight into the face of the mad priest, who went down as if hit on the point of the jaw with a sledge hammer. Almost before he hit the sand the Yid, who was as fast as a black leopard, was on him. One hand closed around the mad priest's sword wrist, the other around his throat.

The mad priest heaved up and almost threw the Yid off. The Yid let go the sword wrist and his left hand and forearm went under the mad priest's body. There was a flurry in

the sand, and then the Yid got to his feet. The mad priest was dead. What the Yid did to him, only the Yid knew, but whatever it was, it ended all things on earth for one of the mad priests of Kara-Kara.

The leader of the mad priests, thinking only of a Jew being there, turned, drew his sword and started back toward the Yid.

Jimmie Cordie was about three feet ahead of the leader, to the left. Grigsby was closer to another mad priest than he was to the leader when the leader started. The Bean, Red and Grigsby had their swords out. The other mad priests drew at once. But they were surprised, and the soldiers of fortune were not, which gave a distinct edge to the five against the seven, six now, as the Yid rose.

The leader raised the sword to cut Grigsby down as he saw Grigsby engage the mad priest close to him.

The four other mad priests were closer to Red and the Bean than to any one else. The Bean, as the Yid hurled himself at the mad priest, had turned and taken three or four running steps toward the Yid, hoping to arrive in time to block the charge. This, while the Yid was slipping his arm out of the water bag. It put him, with Red, fairly in front of the four mad priests who by now had gotten over their surprise.

Jimmie Cordie, at the point, was in the clear as far as having a foe to face. The longbow was strung and he was carrying it in his left hand. The quiver of arrows was slung over his right shoulder. He ran forward and to the right a little, about two yards. As he ran he plucked an arrow from the quiver and fitted it to the string. Jimmie Cordie was fast on his feet and his brain and muscle coördinated per-

fectly. He turned, raised the bow, and sent an arrow between the shoulder blades of the leader, to the feathers. He had drawn it to the head. Jimmie did not know it, but he had a Manchu bow of ten strengths, about one hundred and thirty pounds pull. That he could pull an arrow to the head told of the strength the slim, wiry Jimmie Cordie possessed.

The leader dropped his sword and fell forward. Grigsby was outmatched by the other mad priest, who threw Grigsby's blade far out to one side. The mad priest yelled in triumph and lowered his sword for an upward and inward slash. He did not live long enough to complete it. An arrow sank deep into his throat.

NOW the odds had changed. It was four mad priests to five soldiers of fortune. But the four mad priests were all attacking Red and the Bean.

The Yid had put forth every ounce of strength doing what he did to the mad priest, and was staggering toward the Bean and Red to get into the fight. But he was, right then, as he told Jimmie after the fight, "as veak as a sick kitten, ain't it."

Red, running true to form, had taken a couple of steps forward to meet the two mad priests who were charging him. The Boston Bean, more cool-headed, promptly retreated a little way and began circling around. One mad priest was faster than the other of the two that came after the Bean and reached him first.

The Bean was no swordsman and never claimed to be. But he had what the mad priest had not, a clever brain. He sank on one knee as if he had tripped. The mad priest ran in, sword up. The Bean lunged forward and the

mad priest spitted himself on the Bean's sword. The Bean's long arms also had plenty of strength. The sword point was entering the priest's body before he was close enough to cut down.

Red Dolan, who was all of two hundred and thirty pounds of bone and muscle, was having the time of his life. He dearly loved a fight of any kind and a fight with swords especially appealed to him. He did not care how many swords faced him. He had "wan" for himself and the rest of it was quite all right.

He engaged both priests, roaring out insults in English, the French of the Legion, and whatever other languages he had a few words of.

The robe handicapped him a little, but he held it up in his left hand and went to work.

The mad priest that had been beaten to the Bean arrived. But a second later he joined the other on the sand. Jimmie Cordie put an arrow through the mad priest's stomach and a second later another entered his opened mouth.

The Bean looked around at Jimmie. "The next time, Jeems, me good man, keep those arrows farther out. The feathers of the last one tickled my ear."

"I intended to nick it. Look at Red waving George off! Step to the left, Codfish, you're in my line of— The Yid got one!"

The Yid had received some new strength from a reserve and in spite of Red's orders to "keep away from us, ye Yid gibbon," had, without waiting for the mad priest to turn and defend himself, started a cut from as far back as his right hand would reach. There is no question but what the Yid had, as Jimmie said, got one.

As he did, Red got the other. The priest was a better swordsman than Red; but he didn't have Red's strength and he did not have sense enough to keep away from Red until he could feint Red's sword out of position. He smashed right in and got smashed.

"And that," the Bean said, "is that. I move that from now on, Mr. Cordie's son Jeems packs a bow and arrows. One—two—three men have fallen to his trusty bow. His grandpa drew a good bow at Hastings and—"

"Get to Red! He's going down! Get him, Yid!"

Red had been reached twice by the swords of the mad priests. Once in the left shoulder and once, as he struck down the blade, in the right leg above the knee. He had been standing there, sword in hand, swaying back and forth, putting his whole heart and soul into cursing the Yid with the black curse of Cru'mel for interfering in his business.

The Yid was trying to get a word in edgeways, but not succeeding when Jimmie shouted.

THE BEAN and the Yid both got to Red and eased him to the ground. The mad priest who had gone down coughing blood raised himself on an elbow, pointed a finger at the Yid and began to laugh. As he laughed, the blood poured out of his mouth.

It was a ghastly thing to see, but it did not last long. He stopped laughing, tried to get to his feet, failed to do it, and sank back, dead.

"Oi," the Yid said, "vot a pump dot guy's heart vos."

"Never mind about pumps. Help me get this robe off Red," Jimmie ordered.

Red's wounds were cuts, not very

deep or long but deep enough to cause him to lose a lot of blood. Jimmie washed the cuts out and then bandaged them with cloth torn from a robe.

That was all he had to do it with. Whether infection would set in or not he did not know, but he had to take the chance.

"Well, we take seven priests for a buggy ride and lose one man doing it. If that proportion holds good, mad priest number thirty-six or seven is going to stand around looking for some one to fight. We'll have to pack Red. He's all right. He's only lost a little blood."

"Maybeso ve can make it a litter mit swords und vater bag skins," the Yid offered.

Two hundred and thirty-odd pounds to carry and four of them to do it. It was hard enough work packing themselves across the sands, yet they laughed as Jimmie answered, "What is the matter, Mr. Cohen? Are you getting feeble? I thought a Cohen could carry a Dolan for a few miles without any trouble. Why the 'we'?"

They made the litter by emptying all but four water bags, then cutting them. The ropes they used to bind them to sword hilts. When it was finished, it wasn't much of a litter, but it bore Red's weight after he was placed on it and it was lifted to the shoulders of Jimmie and the Yid in front, Grigsby and the Bean in the rear.

"All set?" Jimmie asked. "Let's go! *Allons, enfants perdus! Boutez en avant!* In other words, get going."

IT was about two o'clock in the morning when they saw campfires on top of a big hill, about a half a mile dead ahead of them. No more mad priests had been met. Red had

regained consciousness after they had packed him three miles. He sat up, nearly wrecking the litter, and demanded, "What the hell is it all about?"

Jimmie Cordie turned his head and issued a few orders to Mr. Dolan. "Get down, you red-headed ape. All the way down on your back. Put that bonnet over your head again. Stay that way until I tell you to get up. You were cut twice and have lost a lot of blood. We'll dispense with any wah-wah from you. If you want to be among those present at the hill, stay down until we reach it."

Red promptly got down, muttering, "Aw, hell, I'm all right."

Jimmie heard him and answered, "Sure you are, old-timer. You'll be a darn sigh righter if you obey orders."

Red did obey the order about getting down and keeping the bonnet over his head, but he kept up a continual grumbling, to which no one paid the slightest attention. Before the hill was sighted there was plenty to occupy their attention besides Red Dolan's broadcasting. Among other things, whether they could stick it or not. The loose sand, the heat, the humidity, the wind blowing sand into their faces, the black robes, the sandals, the belts heavy with ammunition against their naked skins, for a few of the other things.

"Well, we've made it within sight of G. H. Q., anyway," Jimmie said. "Put Mr. Dolan down for a moment or so. Easy does it. Hold your end up, Yid, until we get down to you. Fine. Now—"

Red sat up, tossing the bonnet away from him. "Jimmie, I been thinkin' of it. Where did ye learn to shoot a bow?"

"Well, for Pete's sake! What a time

to begin asking questions. I was taught how to shoot a bow, Mr. Dolan, by the Uryankhes Tartars. Now you know all about it. How do you feel?"

"I'm all right, Jimmie. The cuts av me are all healed and I feel O. K. Wait, now, I'll get up and show ye."

"No. Sit there until we start up the hill. Those cuts are not healed, you idjut. George, I think we better leave Red here with one of us and—"

"What? Leave me here? Ye will not, Jimmie Cordie! As weak as I am, I'm a damn sight better man than any av ye. Start up the hill and see."

"Not so good, Jimmie," Grigsby said. "That would entail our coming back this way—and the chances are that we are not coming back any way. If we left a man with Red it would weaken us just that much and—"

"My idea, George, is that three men can do just as much as five can. If we are uncovered, it will only take the mad priests just a little less time to mop up on three than it would on five. If we pull it off, we can come down the hill in this direction as well as any other."

"That is right, Jeems," the Bean answered. "Very much so. But I think, if Red can make it up the hill—wait a minute—why not continue to pack him up?"

"Because, if the mad priests do not take care of their wounded and sick, it would draw attention to us that would be fatal."

Red got to his feet. "Listen to me, Jimmie Cordie. When I met ye in the Legion 'twas durin' a fight wid the black-hearted scuts av the Bat d'Af we was havin' in the café, wasn't it? It was. Ye fought by the side av me then. That's many long years ago and still we do be fightin' side by side. I ask ye to remember the while I ask

ye this, all foolin' to wan side. Are ye goin' up that hill widout Red Dolan by the side av ye, weak though he is? I can still pull the trigger av me forty-five, and—"

Jimmie Cordie laughed. "Come right along, Mr. Dolan. I hope that trigger pulling will not be necessary. But get this—I want you to take it as easy as you can, at least until your strength comes back."

"I will, Jimmie darlin'. Come on."

"All right, we will. I'll say this, before we start. About that side by side thing. I've always been glad you were beside me, you big Irish, brick-topped wild man from Cork."

"The same to ye," Red answered happily as he fell in beside Jimmie.

CHAPTER VI.

INVASION.

THE ruins of the stone city covered a large space. There were piles of stone that once had been proud temples. Palaces half in ruins, street after street of what had once been stone houses, two stories high. Barracks, audience halls, warehouses, stone fountains from which there still gushed clear, cold water, squares and courtyards and artificial lakes and little ponds, all mixed together and, in a good many places, partly covered with vegetation. The whole place literally swarmed with mad priests. The captive pen was back of the palace used by the abbot, but the rescue party had no way of knowing that.

The priests were going here and there, sitting around campfires, stretched on the ground asleep, dancing in front of some old temple, on their knees shouting prayers; some

were marching around and around in circles, others walking blindly, not caring who or what they bumped into, their eyes on the moon which was just beginning to come out from behind a cloud.

The mad priests they came close to paid no attention to them. The five soldiers of fortune walked with heads down, and, after the Yid said something, in the old prison lockstep, each man with his hand on the shoulder of the man ahead. His left hand. His right was ready to draw the deadly .45 Colt. Deadly in the hands of men who were all crack shots and unafraid. No more bow and arrow and sword work. From now on it would be shoot until they could shoot no more if they were discovered.

Jimmie Cordie led the parade and, as they got into the formation, said to George Grigsby, the man behind him, "Pass the word that we are going to circulate. If the showdown comes, back to back until we teach them to keep their distance."

Grigsby laughed. "That's the boy, Jimmie."

The lockstep idea of the Yid's was a grand success. It was a new kind of dance to the mad priests who happened to be looking that way when it started. After watching it for a moment or so, several of them at once formed parades of their own. Very soon there were long lines of the mad priests marching around in the lockstep. They started howling and yelling and after a moment or so Jimmie Cordie howled lustily and started a sort of a barbaric chant.

One by one the soldiers of fortune howled also and began to sing. They kept right on howling, only after the first, long drawn out howl they howled gibberish. Grigsby used the only tune

he was familiar with, "My Old Kentucky Home." Red, behind Grigsby, used "The Wearing of the Green" for music and always claimed that the words were pure Celtic. The Boston Bean howled "John Brown's Body," as he claimed, in French. The Fighting Yid, not daring to sing in Hebrew, after the experience with the seven mad priests, gave vent very soulfully to "Dere is a happy land, far, far away. Vere dey eat pork und beans three times a day. Oh! How de boarders yell, ven dey hear it de dinner bell—three times a day," and so on, in a special kind of pig-Latin. Whatever it all was, all together it made a volume of noise that sounded as if it must issue from very mad priests indeed.

JIMMIE CORDIE led the way through several of the buildings, winding in and out of the ruins, down streets and around ponds. His thought was to locate some place that looked as if it were being used as a prison or a place where a captive might be guarded. There were priests in all the buildings, some cooking, others eating and sleeping. But in no place was there any sign of a prisoner.

Grigsby, as they filed through a dark place near a wall, stopped howling long enough to say, "It may be, Jimmie, that they do not keep prisoners any longer than—it takes."

"I'm afraid of that, George. It must be getting darn near daylight. Comes the dawn—also comes us getting sunk. We haven't been in a third of the— There's a guard stationed by that door. See, over to the left. In front of that palace. We'll go over. If he tries to halt us, step behind him while I occupy his attention. I guess we can put him out before he squawks."

"You take his attention, Jimmie. I'll see to it that he does not squawk."

The mad priest on guard watched the parade come up, indifferently.

When Jimmie got to within two feet of him, the mad priest stepped squarely in front of Jimmie, his sword drawn back for a thrust. He snarled something in a language Jimmie did not understand. Jimmie howled as if in a rage, then raised both arms high above his head. The mad priest snarled again and advanced his point an inch or so. Jimmie brought his left arm down and clenched his fist. Then he moved the fist slowly to the left, opening one finger at a time. It was an old trick, a very old one used in the West by gunmen to attract the eyes of a man facing them. It worked on the hill of the mad priests of the Kara-Kara sands. The mad priest's eyes followed the hand for a second. Long enough for Grigsby to step out of the line and get almost behind him. The mad priest sensed, rather than saw it, and turned. But it was too late. Grigsby's left arm was around the priest's throat and his right knee in the small of the priest's back.

"Close up, Red," Jimmie commanded calmly. "Cover George."

Red closed up, as did the Bean and the Yid, and then faced out. Between that living wall and the wall of the building a mad priest met his death.

"Push him over in the shadows," Jimmie said as Grigsby lowered the body to the ground. "That's far enough. We'll go in and see what he was guarding."

It was the place where Elizabeth Montague had faced the abbot. The chair he sat on was still on the dais and on the stand were the three jade fish. Near the dais were several of the mad priests—sound asleep.

Jimmie, the first one in, saw them

and raised his hand for the howling to cease. The mad priests lay sprawled out in whatever position they were when sleep overcame them. It may have been drugs that put them to sleep or they may have been gorging themselves on food. Several pots half full of something were near them. Whatever the cause, the mad priests were asleep and most of them were snoring.

"Oi, Bean," the Yid said softly, "look at de jade fish. Dey is worth somethink, I bet you."

"Well," the Bean answered, "put 'em in your pocket, Mr. Cohen."

"I vill do it dot little thing if de pocket of dis robe is big enough und Jimmie marches around de place."

"It doesn't look much like a place where prisoners are kept," Jimmie said. "Those fish are probably some sacred—"

"Jimmie, see that door beyant?" Red interrupted. "Maybeso she is in there, wid this guard and all out here."

"Yeah? Maybeso. I think the guard is for the fish—and some guarding they are doing at the moment. Well, we'll go and take a look. All doors look alike in this man's town."

THEY kept close to the wall, avoiding the sleeping mad priests, and got to the dais. The Yid said, "Vait a minute. I think I take it de jade fish along as a souvenir."

He climbed up on the dais and then started around the chair to get to the table.

"The ruling passion strong in death," Jimmie said with a grin.

The Yid had stooped and pulled something from under the chair. It was the Chinese boy who had translated for the abbot.

The Yid had him by the ankle. The boy opened his mouth to shriek, but before he could draw breath and expel it, the Yid's other hand was over his mouth.

"Quiet," the Yid said sternly but softly.

A whisper carries farther than a low voice, and the Yid remembered it, but he did not remember to speak in anything else but English. He knew several Chinese words and commands, but in remembering one thing he forgot another.

"Hand him down here," Jimmie ordered. "He may know something."

The Yid handed him down to Grigsby and then went on about his business, which at the moment was to get himself a souvenir. The boy was too frightened to even try to yell now. He thought that some of the mad priests had him and were going to torture him. And yet—the mad priests who had pulled him out from under the chair had spoken an English word!

Jimmie Cordie motioned for Grigsby to carry the boy back of the dais, which was fairly long and wide. Once there, Jimmie put a finger to his lips as the boy looked at him, then ordered, "Take your hand away, George. He's all right."

The Yid had not taken his hand from the boy's mouth until Grigsby's hand was ready to substitute.

As Grigsby's hand fell away, Jimmie said, in Pushtu, "Do not be afraid, little brother. We are not going to hurt you."

The boy answered from Grigsby's arms, "I undelstand English. You—you ale not—"

"We are men who have come for one the mad priests hold captive, little brother. Do you—"

"I am also held captive. My father

was a mighty, all-poweful war lold, and—and the mad pliests slew him and all his men and captuled me. I am the abbot's slave boy. Lescue me, please."

"All right, we will rescue you, also. But first we must rescue a maiden of the English. She was taken when the mad—"

"I know who you mean, mighty one. She is in the captive pen. To-morrow she is to dance on the led hot stones. Dance until she dies in honor of the thlee saced fish."

"Where is the captive pen?"

"Back of this place. Behind that door the abbot lives, and if he heals us it will be vely bad for us. I sleep most of time under the chair, so that—"

"Tell us all about it later. Can you lead us to the captive pen or are you afraid to do it?"

The boy was intelligent and once his first fright was over and he found out the men who had him were not mad priests, he did not seem to be afraid.

"I am not afraid. Mad pliests know I go evelywhele. The abbot send me all over. But—five men cannot enter the captive pen. Thele ale many gualds, and they ale not like those monglels who ale supposed to guald the saced fish. They ale wide awake and—"

"You show us where it is; we'll attend to the guards. Are there guards all around the captive pen?"

"No, only at the gates. Walls all aloud. Maybe some gualds on walls; I don't know."

"We'll find out. What is your name?"

"Li Tang."

"Put Li Tang down, George. Now, you walk beside me, Li Tang. Not to the gate of the captive pen, but to the part of the wall that is farthest away from— You understand me?"

"Sule, luler of the wolld. Plenty

understand. I lived in American family in Canchow for eight years."

"I see. Lead us, then. We will rescue you, also."

CHAPTER VII.

THE YID'S SACRIFICE.

ELIZABETH MONTAGUE lay asleep just outside her shack, her head pillowed on an arm. Her hand was under her, close to her breast. In it there was clutched the piece of iron band she had seen reflect the rays of the sun. She had worked it loose from the board that held it. The torn, sharp, jagged edge was ready to be drawn across her throat when the mad priests came for her.

She had not intended to go to sleep, but nature intended otherwise.

The moon had come out and it was fairly light, light enough to distinguish figures and faces. She stirred in her sleep as a light tap-tap-tap on her shoulder kept up. At last she opened her eyes and sat up. She saw the Chinese boy kneeling beside her, and as her arm tensed to flash the iron band to her throat she heard a calm voice say in English, "Steady, Montague. The guns have come."

"What? The guns have—" She turned and saw Jimmie Cordie, who had taken off his bonnet. "Who are you?" she asked, just as calmly.

"I am Jimmie Cordie, of the Big Swords, Miss Montague. May I suggest that we defer introductions until after we—"

"Mad priests coming," warned Li Tang. "I can see them coming from the gate."

"How many men have you here, Captain Cordie?"

"Four—five counting Li Tang, who is a very good man indeed."

"These priests may be coming for me. If they are, you are not to try to save me. Get back in—"

Jimmie Cordie laughed. "I'll bring up the guns, Miss Montague. Get back here in the shadows. They have turned to the right."

Elizabeth arose and smiled. "I am at your orders, Captain Cordie of the Big Swords."

"Well, those clothes you have on would give us away before we got fifty feet from the wall. Take this robe and bonnet. I'm dark, and—"

"I will take this Chinese boy's robe, cap and slippers. Is he to go with us?"

"Yes, Miss Montague, he is to go with us. But—what will he—"

"My shirt," interrupted Li Tang. "Many times I go around in it or with nothing on. Mad priests used to seeing me naked."

"Get behind Captain Cordie where it is dark and take them off. Drop them on the ground and then keep in the darkness until I have put them on. Hurry, boy."

As Li Tang slipped behind Jimmie Cordie, Elizabeth said, "Do you think there is any chance of our making it, Captain Cordie?"

"Well, it is on the knees of the Nine Red Gods. They allowed us to get to you. Maybeso they plan on allowing us to get out. Who knows?"

"You are a fatalist, captain? So am I—to a certain extent. I am—there is something I want to take with me. If the Red Gods plan to allow us to get out, it is of value. I will be back in a moment."

She had remembered the red leather case. It spoke a lot for her nerve, remembering a thing like that in the position she was in. Most women, and

men also, would have thought only of escaping from the mad priests.

SHE went into the hovel and came out in a moment with the case tucked under her left arm. "Have you an extra gun?" she asked.

"No," answered Jimmie, amused at her courage. "Li Tang's outfit is ready, Miss Montague."

Two minutes or less went by, and then Elizabeth stepped from the darkness. She and the Chinese boy were about of the same size and, in the moonlight, if not too close, she did not look unlike him.

"Where is the case you went to get?" Jimmie asked. "Have you forgotten it?"

"No. I put it in the pocket of this robe. If you are ready, Captain Cordie."

"Quite ready," Jimmie answered with a grin. Now that they had found her, unhurt, his spirits had risen once more to their usual gay outlook. "Li Tang, there can't be two of you. If the mad priests see you walking with us and also see you prancing along with a shirt on, what then?"

"I do not know, lesplendent one. Vely selious matter. Vely. No can be two of me."

"Well, we'll make it to the wall and join the rest of the army. It may be we can make a black bonnet out of you as soon as we meet a mad priest who wears the regalia. You understand what regalia means?"

"No, war lold of all captains."

"I'll tell you some time. Right now, keep between the golden one and me and make yourself as small as possible."

Elizabeth Montague laughed, a gay, amused little laugh. "I have heard a great deal about you, Captain Cordie.

Now I know it was not exaggerated. Is Major Grigsby and Red Dolan and—what is it he is called, the—"

"You mean the Boston Bean or the Fighting Yid?"

"Yes. Are they with you, as usual?"

"All of them. They are the army I referred to."

Again Elizabeth laughed. "Well, if Jimmie Cordie, the Fighting Yid, the Boston Bean, Red Dolan and George Grigsby cannot rescue me, who can?"

"You forget Li Tang, here. He is the one who told us where you were, then led us to the wall and had the nerve to climb over with me. He is now an honored member of the outfit, Miss Montague."

"If those Nine Red Gods of yours allow us to escape, I will see to it that he is— But what better reward could he have than to be one of Jimmie Cordie's outfit?"

"Very prettily put, Miss Montague. To the left a little. Isn't it here we came over, Li Tang?"

"Yes, light hele, luler of millions of swolds. But—we wele boosted up. How can we climb up by ouselves?"

"I'll show you. You climb up on my shoulders. You can reach the top with your hands. Can you pull yourself up?"

"Yes, vely easily. I am mole than stlong."

"I'll bet you are. After you get up, roll to the other side and jump down. Tell Major Grigsby to climb up on the wall with the Fighting Yid."

JIMMIE lifted Elizabeth up to where the Fighting Yid's hands could close on her slender wrists. The Yid's legs were held in a grip like steel by Grigsby.

Once the Yid had her, Elizabeth was

on top of the wall in another second. Grigsby lowered the Yid a little and Jimmie Cordie landed beside her.

All four rolled to the other side and jumped down. "What have ye here?" Red demanded. "Where is—"

"Heads up!" shouted the Bean. "Here they come!" And as he shouted his .45 Colt began detonating.

A mad priest had been sleeping partly behind a bale of rotting hemp, close to the wall. The soldiers of fortune had not seen him, and he had neither seen nor heard them when they came up. But a short time later he woke up. He heard Red telling the Yid all about it—in English. Jimmie had warned both of them to keep still, and they had, for a little while.

Grigsby and the Bean were a little farther along the wall. The Yid said something to Red in a low tone. Something about it being duck soup for them, resting while Jimmie Cordie climbed walls. It was kidding, pure and simple; the Yid would have given his eye teeth to be with Jimmie in the captive pen. Red, his cuts hurting him and having a vivid recollection of the Yid's butting in on him when he was playing around with two mad priests, answered in English and just about three tones too loud.

The mad priest listened, puzzled at the language. Grigsby came up and warned Red, who calmed down. The mad priest lay where he was, watching now as well as listening. He saw Li Tang come over the wall and then saw two of the men climb up. How mad he was cannot be known. Anyway, he was sane enough to realize there was a rescue of some kind going on. Some of the mad priests would have yelled, drawn their sword and charged. This one didn't.

He eased back along the wall and

made it to the nearest group of priests, some fifty or sixty. Then he pointed, snarled out something and began dancing up and down in a rage, looking for all the world like an angry chimpanzee. The other priests looked, howled, drew their swords or picked up lances and charged. As they had looked, Jimmie Cordie, Grigsby, the Yid and Elizabeth Montague jumped down from the wall.

Jimmie Cordie looked at them and laughed.

"The rest of the tale will be woe, pure and simple. Let 'em have it! Get in the middle, Montague. You too, Li Tang. Start off, Bean! You next, Yid! Get beside George, Red. I'll rear guard. Spread out a little. Right through and down the hill."

Grigsby smiled as he fired. It was plain to be seen that Jimmie Cordie was back at the old stand. He had found Elizabeth Montague alive and unharmed—and here was a fight to get into.

The heavy bullets sent the mad priests down as a ball send ninepins. They shot a path through the priests—for a little way. Not far. If they had machine guns they could not have shot their way off the hill. The mad priests of Kara-Kara were not afraid of guns or anything else. And there were a thousand times too many of them for any five men to go through.

Jimmie Cordie saw it and ran forward to the Bean. "No can do, Codfish. Head for that building on the left."

THE building was of stone, two stories high, with no windows and with a narrow doorway that would barely admit two slim men at a time. The roof had fallen in at one front corner.

The soldiers of fortune won to it and in. There was no lull in the attack of the mad priests. No sooner had Jimmie Cordie gotten in than two mad priests appeared in the doorway. There was no door. Jimmie turned and shot them both down.

Two more appeared, to fall also. There was a lull while priests were dragging the dead out of the way. A lull, and then two more mad priests charged in, to die in the doorway. The bullets hit them in the face, not the body.

Jimmie Cordie and the Boston Bean held the doorway. The mad priests did not have the chance of a paper cat in the hot place. They came into sight—and bullets from two of the most deadly guns in the Orient met them.

Elizabeth Montague, Red Dolan, the Yid, Grigsby and Li Tang stood by the wall to the right of the doorway. The Yid, Red and Grigsby had their Colt .45s in hand. Elizabeth Montague looked at them and smiled. Dawn had come and, owing to the hole in the roof, it was fairly light in the stone building.

She smiled as she said, "It looks as if we are holed up, gentlemen."

"We are, alanna," answered Red Dolan. "But don't ye worry. The scuts will never take ye from us."

"You are Red Dolan, aren't you?"

"I am. And ye are the English girl that Jimmie was tellin' me about. What was the matter wid the Chinks that was along to guard ye? Could not they—Where are ye going, ye Yid beneath notice? Stay up wid the rest av us."

The Yid had looked up at the hole and then started along the wall. He halted as Red spoke, and grinned. "I am goink up dere und take a look, Mistaire Dolan."

"Up where? Are ye a monkey to climb up the wall? Stay here where ye belong."

"Vatch me und learn somethink, Irish loafer." The Yid jumped, caught the end of a protruding timber, swung himself up, caught another timber farther up and then got his fingers on the flat of a stone that was out of line. He drew his body up, let go one hand, reached up and got hold of the wall where it had once joined the roof. In another second he was head and shoulders out of the hole.

"Bravo, Yid!" called Elizabeth Montague, as if she were at a circus, applauding some clever acrobat.

"Come down from there," Red commanded. "Now I know ye are a monkey, ye—"

The Yid's head appeared. "Tell it to Jimmie dot de main squeeze is coming up. My, is he mad? He is foaming at de mouth und dancink around. Vait till I take it a look." The Yid's head disappeared for a minute, then showed once more. "He is telling de gang somethink. Now dey are all mad as anythink. Dey ain't payink any attention to us. Vait till I take it another look."

"What the hell—I beg the pardon av ye, darlin'—what do we care what the black hearted divils are doin'?" Red called up. "Come down off there, ye Hester Street polecat. Some one will put an arrow in the gullet av ye."

The Yid looked out, then his head appeared.

"Dey is all runnink to von of de buildings. Mit de main squeeze. Somethink is didink."

JIMMIE CORDIE could not hear the Yid very well and paid no attention. He was concentrating on the doorway as was the Boston Bean.

As the Yid's head came into sight once more the attack ceased.

"Dey are in de building and all around outside it. If dey wasn't mad before, dey are now. Vait till I take it another— I bet you I know what dey is mad about!" He swung down to the dirt floor. "Jimmie, I have thought it of somethink."

"Yeah? Well, some one better think of something before our ammunition gives out. Take my place for a minute, George."

As Grigsby stepped up beside the Bean, Jimmie walked over to the Yid. "All right, Abie. Let's have it."

"You remember ven I took it the jade fish for a souvenir?"

"Yes."

"Vell—know vat dey are, I bet you?"

"I know they are jade fish. What else?"

"Dey are the most precious thing dey have got. Maybeso de fish is vot dey vorship, ain't it?"

"The Fighting Yid is right, Captain Cordie. The jade fish is their god," Elizabeth Montague said. "There is no question about that."

"Maybeso. Go ahead, Yid."

"Vell, I got it dem in my pocket. Here, vai." The Yid took the jade fish from the deep pocket of the black robe. "See dis, kidt?" to Li Tang. "Vot is dey?"

"Oh, my glacious goodness! The thlee saced fish! The abbot will be mole than clazy now and so will the lest of them. The fish is what they wolship. It is the most saced thing that—"

"All right, Li Tang. Tell it to us later. What is the idea, Yid?"

"Dis, Jimmie. From de vall I see it another vall I can jump to. From dere I can reach it a big palace und

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from dere to a pond und from dere to another vall und—"

"From Evers to Tinker to Chance. What of it?"

"Vell, I can go all around in de ruins, I bet you, from roof to roof und so on. Dis of it. I vill get back up dere, yell, und den ven dey look at me, hold up the fish und make it a face at dem. Den I vill jump from de vall on de next von. Vot vill dey do, I esk you?"

"You ask what they will do, Abie? They will let go all holds and chase you over the said walls and roofs and what nots."

"Sure dey vill, all of dem. I vill lead it dem away across de ruins und vile I am didink it, you can all sneak it down de hill. Vat could be sveeter?"

"Nothing—for us. But a whole heck of a lot of things for you, Mr. Cohen. Did it ever occur to you that they might catch you?"

"Not for a long time dey von't. Den if dey do, vat do I care—you are down de hill mit Miss Montague, ain't it?"

"It is a chance, Abie," Jimmie answered slowly. "A bare, fighting chance. But—"

"Wait a minute, Jimmie," the Yid interrupted, and to the surprise of Elizabeth Montague he spoke perfect English. The soldiers of fortune knew he could, if he wanted to—and if, in his mind, the situation warranted. "There are no buts. I have seen you lead a forlorn hope. I have seen the Bean lead one. I have seen both George and Red. And once I saw a man we all loved hold a pass until he died so that we might win to safety. We left him because we had a woman to protect—as we have now. Am I unworthy, Jimmie?"

"No, Abie, you are not unworthy.

We hold you now as we have held you always, our equal in every respect. You are our partner—I can't say more than that."

"And I," Elizabeth Montague said clearly, "think that you are a gallant gentleman."

"Vell, den," the Yid went back to his usual speech, "dot's plenty. Dere is no time to vaste, ain't it. Ve make it believe dot all de veepink on shoulders is did. Good-by und good luck."

"Abie," Red said. "Ye are not goin' to the death av ye like that, widout—widout—ye know I always loved ye, ye hook-nosed scut av the world."

"Und so did I you, Irish bummer. fell—here goes it nothink. Good-by, George und Beany. I vill be seeink you. Good-by, Jimmie. Und you—"

"Wait," commanded Elizabeth, as the Yid turned to the wall. She walked up to him, took his face between her two hands and kissed him squarely on the mouth. "There are few men, very few, that I have kissed, Yid. I am honored to number you among them in my memory."

"Oi, it is me dot is honored und happy." For once, the soldiers of fortune saw the Fighting Yid embarrassed and showing extreme pleasure at the same time. "Now I fly it over de valls. Von more like dot und I do de chasink, not de mad priests."

Elizabeth kissed the Yid again. "As you said to us—good-by and good luck."

The Yid smiled, jumped for the timber and made it to the top of the wall.

They could not see what he was doing, but they heard him yell. Right afterward they heard many yells that grew in volume. Then they saw the Yid's legs drawn up to the wall.

"He's gone," Red said. "The Yid

—is gone from us. Many is the time I fussed at him and now—"

"Start that later. We may not last ten minutes ourself. Take a look out the door, Bean."

"It is clear to the left," the Bean reported, "for as far as I can see. The mad priests are all running toward— I see the Yid! He is on a roof making faces at them and jumping up and down. They are climbing after him and—he's disappeared."

"Get going," Jimmie commanded curtly. "You and the Bean, George. You next, Miss Montague. Beside her, Li Tang. Beside me, Red. Once more we will try that right through and down the hill thing."

THEY made it—off the hill first and then across the sand to the border. The Yid had done what he thought he could do. He put every mad priest on the hill that could walk or run to chasing him to rescue the three jade fish. Nothing else was of the slightest importance to them. If they had seen the party leave the stone house they would not have paid any attention. To them, the fish were all in all—and now in the hands of an enemy!

The journey across the sand was a nightmare. Red's wounds made him give out early, and the Bean and Grigsby carried him on a seat made by their hands on wrists, Red's arms around their necks.

Then Elizabeth Montague's feet gave out. She had taken off her riding boots to put on Li Tang's slippers at the captive pen and walked in them without a whimper until her feet were raw and bleeding. At last she sat down, saying with a laugh:

"Another casualty, gentlemen. I am afraid I can walk no farther."

"Get on my back," Jimmie commanded, kneeling in front of her, his back to her.

"But, Captain Cordie, I am very heavy."

"No talkee—lideoe pigaback, allee same, little girl."

Elizabeth was not very heavy, weighing around one hundred and twenty, but she was no little girl either. Jimmie Cordie stuck it, as did the Bean and Grigsby, but they were all more than glad to take frequent rests before the hills were reached. The soles of Li Tang's feet must have been like shoe leather, because he walked over the sand as if on a bedroom rug.

They cleared the sand just about twenty-four hours after they left the hill. Several times, parties of two and three mad priests were met, heading for the hill. The Bean and Grigsby put Red down and shot the mad priests as they would that many snakes. No mad priest that came close lived to tell about it.

As they stopped near the battlefield in the valley, five thousand Uryankhes Tartars led by Sahet Khan and Zagatai came out of the passes and over the mountain ridges.

Jimmie, thinking of the long chance of rescuing the Yid, signaled with a violence that brought the Tartars galloping toward him.

"In a few minutes," Jimmie Cordie said as he knelt so that Elizabeth Montague could get off his back, "you will have something much better to ride than old man Cordie's son Jimmie."

"I thank you, Jimmie. You also are a very gallant gentleman. I think I will tell you that I—I like you very much."

Jimmie Cordie honestly did not know whether the look in her lovely blue eyes and the tone of her voice rang true—or not. They told that she

had fallen in love with him. And yet, Jimmie knew she was—Elizabeth Montague and...

He liked her for her courage and, not being blind, granted the fact that she was very easy on the eyes. But that was as far as it went with him. He realized that she might know that he had the red leather case and was trying to do what Red called "smooch" him.

"I think," he said with a grin, "that if you will honor me as you did the Yid, that will be more than sufficient, Miss Montague."

She looked at him steadily for a moment, then laughed. "It may be that I will—some day, Captain Cordie of the Big Swords. And now, I will take my red leather case, please."

"I am afraid I do not understand. You put it in the pocket of the robe you are wearing, did you not?"

"I did. And when I was rolling over and over on the wall of the captive pen it fell out. You, rolling over and over behind me, picked it up and put it in your pocket."

"Why, so I did. I had forgotten all about it."

"I will take it now."

"If it were yours, I would give it to you, Miss Montague. At that, you may have the case—but not what is in it."

"It is my turn to misunderstand," she said coldly.

"Well, let's see. A Chinese surveyor made some notes. Some Japs and Russians tried for them. The Japs won and rode away with the notes—which then became stolen notes. You held the Japs up and in turn—I will say confiscated the notes. Whether the mad priests took them away from you and tossed them aside as valueless, I don't know. You dropped them, and I found them.

Question, to whom do the notes belong? If the old saying, 'finders keepers,' still is in force, they belong to me."

"You see fit to joke, Captain Cordie. I will take them, please."

SAHET KHAN rode up. The fierce, dour old Tartar Khan, who could, and did when necessity arose, lead twenty thousand Uryankhes into battle, greeted Jimmie Cordie, who had gone through the ceremony of "blood brother" with him. As soon as he could conclude the greetings, Jimmie asked that a small fire be hastily built. Sahet Khan did not know what Jimmie wanted the fire for, but ordered it built.

Elizabeth Montague stood as if carved out of stone while Jimmie Cordie fed the fire with the survey notes. After it was finished she asked, "Why did you do that, Captain Cordie? They would have been worth a million to either the Soviet or Japan."

"There will be no fighting in the Thian Shan or on either side between the Japanese and the Soviet as long as I can prevent it, Miss Montague. There are too many Manchu and Chinese cities that would be caught between the upper and the nether millstones. And in those cities there are many gentle little women and children."

"I see. As well as being a fatalist, you are also a sentimentalist. I see also that I—made a mistake, Captain Cordie."

"We all do, once in a while, Miss Montague. Now we will send you on your way with an escort of Uryankhes while we and Sahet Khan go to save the Yid or"—Jimmie's voice grew taut—"avenge him."

A howl that reminded the soldiers of fortune and Elizabeth Montague of

the mad priests came from Red Dolan, who was very nearly all right again.

"E-e-e-e yah! Look, Jimmie! Look! 'Tis the Yid! Well, the beneath notice, monkey-faced suet av the world and Hester Street!"

It was the Fighting Yid, nonchalantly strolling up to them. Li Tang squeaked, "My glacious goodness! He has on the abbot's celemonial hat!"

It took some time, after the Yid arrived, to get Red calmed down enough so that the Yid could tell his story. Red patted him on the back, hugged him and did everything but what Elizabeth Montague had done.

The Yid fairly bubbled: "Sure dey chased it me. Over buildings, down vells, across de bottom of de lakes, up in de towers und all over. Ven I got it tired, I hid und rested. My, it vos duck soup keepink away from dem. Vonce in a vile I put it de fish in my pocket und pulled it de bonnet low und come out und helped dem hunt for me. I vos de chief climber und acrobat for a big—"

"Keep on the main line, Abie," Jimmie interrupted with a grin.

"I vill. Vell, ven night come I met it de abbot comink out of his room. He gave it me de hat for another souvenir."

"He gave it to ye, ye thief av all creation? Ye took it from him and well ye know it," Red stated.

"I did not, Irish bummer. Treat it me mit great respect. I am now de abbot of de mad priests. Git it me madder und I vill order dot you be skinned alive, red-headt. My, vot a lovely ceremony it vos ven dey made me de—"

"Made ye what? Ye are only a—"

"Save it until later, Red. Come clean, Mr. Cohen."

"Vell, if you put it dot vay, Jimmie. Maybeso de abbot und I had it a

little wrestlink match. After it vos over he didn't need it de hat any more, so I put it in my pocket. Den, ven I got good und ready I snuck down de hill und here I am—at de end of a perfect day."

"Day and night, you mean," the Bean corrected. "Well, all's well that ends well. What now, Jeems, me good man? I suggest adjourning to our clothes and then to a spring where we can wash around the ears."

"Vait," the Yid ordered. "I vish to—" He took the three jade fish from his pocket and went up to Elizabeth Montague. As he held them out to her he said, "For a very beautiful lady to remember the Fighting Yid by. He has

something of infinitely more value to remember her by."

Elizabeth Montague took the jade fish in her hands. She knew that the three sacred fish of the mad priests of Kara-Kara were worth more to any museum or collector than the survey notes were to the Soviet or Japan, as far as selling for money was concerned.


"Why—why, thank you, Yid. I—it may be that some day I can—"

"Give it me another kiss," the Yid finished for her with a smirk. At that, they all laughed, Elizabeth Montague included.

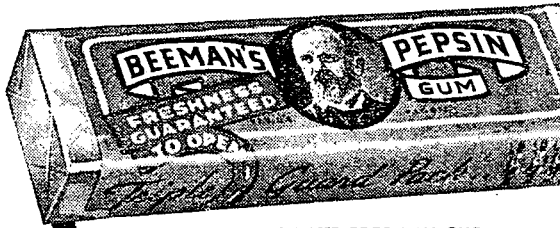
"Now that everything is settled," Jimmie said, "let's be on our way."

THE END.



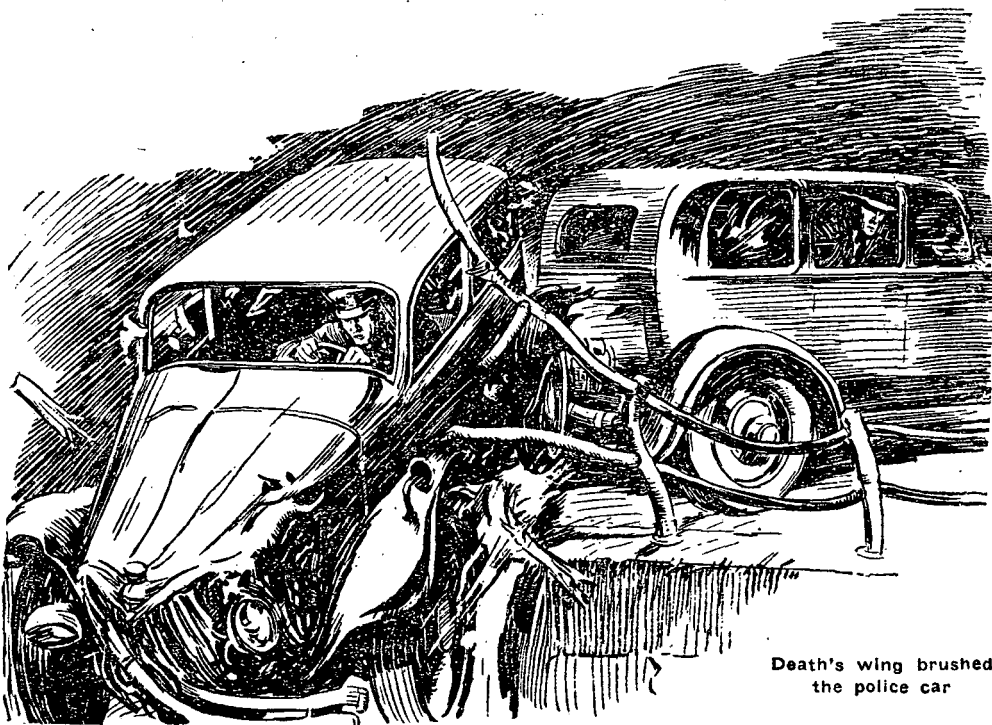


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The Ledger of Life

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Authors of "The Green Goddess," "The Woolly Dog," etc.

Could the gifted sight of Semi-Dual, Persian mystic, penetrate the dark secrets of a blackmail and murder ring?

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

DETECTIVES Jim Bryce and Gordon Glace, and their assistant, Danny Quinn, first had their attention called to the case when two blackmail victims came to them for help. One of these victims was a broker named Jeff Hendricks; the other was a schoolgirl named Allison Martin, who belonged to a wealthy family. Both had been the marks of a blackmailer who was, seemingly, a woman—the broker because he had been deceiving his wife, and the Martin girl because she had been indiscreet enough to accept the attentions of Joe Palloni, a notorious gangster.

The case came out into the open when

a woman was murdered, under mysterious circumstances, at the night club known as the Silver Moon, owned by Palloni. This woman was Margaret Kenton, one of a small party of people at the night club. At first glance, the death appeared to be suicide; but later that seemed extremely doubtful, even though the weapon used was a 38-caliber, silencer-equipped revolver which had belonged to her. Suspicion pointed, of course, to those nearest the dead woman at the time: Dick Torrance, a friend; a lawyer named Richfield who had once employed the dead woman; Gladys Ingham, a business associate; and Bob

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