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THE ADVENTURES OF KATHLYN

By HAROLD MacGRATH

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Kathlyn Hare believes her father, Col. Hare, to be in dire distress in Allah, a principality of India. The King of Allah has recently died, and because the Colonel had once saved his life he names him as his successor. Umballah, pretender to the throne of Allah, loves Kathlyn and has forged a message summoning her to her father, whom he has thrown into prison. She leaves her home in California to go to him.

On her arrival in Allah she is informed by Umballah that her father is dead and that she is the queen. An elaborate durbar is arranged, the central figure of which is Kathlyn, protesting and grief-stricken. When the crown is placed upon her head Umballah announces that she is to be married to him forthwith. Her refusal infuriates him, but as Kathlyn's beauty and spirit have made a strong appeal to the people he yields the joint for the time being. A priest announces that no woman may rule unmarried with the laws of the state she will be given seven days to decide.

When Kathlyn reiterates at the expiration of the week of grace, her refusal to marry Umballah she receives sentence from the supreme tribunal that she is to undergo two ordeals with wild beasts. If she survives, she is to be permitted to rule without hindrance. Through the pluck and resourcefulness of John Bruce, an American and fellow passenger on the boat which brought Kathlyn to Allah, and who has come to her assistance, she escapes unharmed from two ordeals. With Bruce she flees from Allah. The elephant which carries her becomes frightened and runs away, separating her from Bruce and the rest of the party.

CHAPTER X THE ESCAPE

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Kathlyn flung herself into her father's arms. "Dad, dad! To leave you alone!" "Kit you are wasting time. Be off. Trust me; I wasn't meant to die in this dog's kennel, curse or no curse. Kiss me and go."

"Curse? What do you mean, father?" "Ahmed will tell you. In God's name go child!" "Come, Miss Kathlyn," Bruce called anxiously. Kathlyn then climbed up to the window, and Bruce lifted her into his howdah, bidding her to lie low. How strong he was, she thought. Ah, something has whispered to her day by day that he would come when she needed him. Suddenly she felt her cheeks grow hot with shame. She snuggled her bare legs under her grass dress. Till this moment she had never given her appearance a single thought. There had been things so much more vital. But youth, and there is ever the way of a man with a maid.

Now, Kathlyn did not love this quiet resourceful young man; at least if she did she was not yet aware of it; but the touch of his hand and the sound of his voice sent a shiver over her that was not due to the chill of the night. She heard him give his orders, low voiced. "Do not lift your head above the howdah rim, Miss Kathlyn, till we are in the jungle. And don't worry about your father. He's all right, and that's enough for Ahmed and me. What a strange world it is, how fate shuffles us about! Forward!" "The curse, what did her father mean by that? It seemed to Kathlyn that hours passed before Bruce spoke again.

"Now you may sit up. What in the world have you got on? Good heavens, grass you poor girl!" He took of his coat and threw it across her shoulders, and was startled by the contact of her warm flesh. "I cannot thank you in words," she said faintly. "Don't thank me, it was nothing. I would have gone—" He stopped unbarbarously. "Well? Perhaps it was coquetry which impelled the query; perhaps it was something deeper. "I was going to say

that I would have gone into the depths of hell to serve you. We'll be at your father's bungalow in a minute or so, and then the final stroke. Umballah is not dependable. He may or may not pay a visit to the cell tonight. I can only pray that he will come down the moment I arrive." But he was not to meet Umballah that night. Umballah had won his point in regard to having his prisoners flogged; but, oriental that he was, he went about the matter leisurely. He ate his supper, changed his clothes, and dallied in the zenana for an hour. The rasool had made a thorough study of the word "suspense"; he knew the exquisite fortune of making one's victim wait. For the time being his passion for Kathlyn had subsided. He desired above all things just then revenge for the humiliating experience in the cell; he wanted to put pain and terror into her heart. Ah, she would be on her knees, begging, begging, and her father would struggle in vain at his shackles. Spurred; so be it. She should have a taste of his hate, the black man's hate. Two should hold her by the arms while the professional flogger seared the white, soft back of her. She would soon come to him begging. He had been too kind. The lash of the zenana, it should bite into her soft flesh. He would break her spirit and her body together and fling her into his own zenana to let her gnaw her heart out in suspense. She should be the least of his women, the drudge.

First, however, the lash should bite the father till he dropped in his chains; thus she would be able to anticipate the pain and degradation. And always there would remain the little dark haired sister. She would marry him; she would do it to save her father and sister. Then the filigree basket heaped with rubies and pearls and emeralds and sapphires! As for the other, what cared he if he rotted? It gave him the whip hand over the doddering council. Master he would be; he would blot out all things which stood in his path. A king, till he gathered what fortune he needed. Then let the jackals howl.

Accompanied by torch bearers, servants, and the professional flogger, he led the way to the cell and flung open the door triumphantly. For a moment he could not believe his eyes. She was gone, and through yonder window! Hell of hells of Hind! She was gone, and he was robbed!

"Out of your reach this time, you black devil!" cried the colonel. "Go on. Do what you please to me. I'm ready." Umballah ran to the tabaret and jumped upon it. He saw the trampled grass. Elephants. And these doubtless had come from the Colonel's camp. He jumped off the tabaret and dashed to the door. "Follow me!" he cried. "Later, Col. Hare, later!" he threatened. The colonel remained silent.

Up above, in the palace, Umballah summoned a dozen troopers and gave them explicit orders. He was quite confident that Kathlyn would be carried at once to her father's bungalow, if only for a change of clothes. It was a shrewd guess. As the iron door clanged upon the sill, Col. Hare leaned against the pillar and closed his eyes, praying silently.

At the bungalow Pundita fell at Kathlyn's feet and kissed them. "Memsahib!" Kathlyn stooped and gathered her up in her arms. After that Ramabai would have died for her under any torture. "Now, Ahmed, what did my father mean when he said 'curse or no curse'?" "It's a long story, Memsahib," said Ahmed evasively. "Tell it."

It was in a temple in the south. The Colonel Sahib took a sapphire from an idol's eye. The Guru, a very wise and ancient priest, demanded the return of it. The Colonel Sahib, being a young man, refused. The Guru cursed him. That is all. "No, Ahmed; there must be more. Did not the Guru curse my father's children and their children's children?" "Quick!" cried Ahmed. "Get the howdahs off the elephants." It was done. "Hobble them." It was immediately accomplished. "Into the bungalow; all of you, Memsahib, follow me!" "What are you going to do?" asked Bruce. "Hide her where none will dare to look," answered Ahmed.

He seized Kathlyn by the hand and urged her to run. She had implicit faith in this old friend, who had once dangled her on his knees. They disappeared behind the bungalow and ran toward the animal cages. He stopped abruptly before one of the cages.

"A leopard, but harmless. You'll know how to soothe him if he becomes nervous. Enter."

Kathlyn obeyed. This cage was not a movable one, and had a cavity underneath. The heavy plank flooring was not nailed. The soldiers arrived at the bungalow, boisterously threatening the arm of the entire camp if Durga Ram's slave was not produced forthwith.

"You are mistaken," said Bruce. "There is no slave here. Search." "You stand in extreme danger, Sahib. You have meddled with what does not concern you," replied the captain, who had thrown his fortunes with Umballah, sensing that here was a man bound to win and would be liberal to those who stood by him during the struggle.

"Search," repeated Bruce. The captain and his men ran about not without a certain system of thoroughness. They examined the elephants, but were baffled there, owing to Ahmed's foresight. They entered the native quarters, looked under the canvases into the empty cages, from cellar to roof in the

Pundita?" "Secure files and return for my master."

"I would die for the Memsahib." "And I, too," added Ramabai. "Ahmed and Bruce gazed at each other.

"What is your plan, Memsahib?" asked Ahmed, replacing the board and helping Kathlyn out of the cage, the door of which he closed quickly, as the leopard was evincing a temper at all this nocturnal disturbance. "It is a trap for Umballah."

"He is as wise as the cobra and as suspicious as the jackal," said Ahmed doubtfully. "Reason forbids that we return tonight. Umballah will wait, knowing me. Listen, Pundita, you shall return to the city. Two men will accompany you to the gate. You will enter alone in the early morning. Pundita drew close to her husband.

"You will seek Umballah and play traitor. You will pretend to betray me." "No, no, Memsahib!" "Listen. You will demand to see him alone. You will tell him that you are ready to lead him to my hiding place."

"No, Miss Kathlyn; that will do at all," declared Bruce emphatically. To this Ahmed agreed with a shake of the head. "Let me finish," said Kathlyn. "You will tell him, Pundita, that he

Feely the colonel shook his head. "Tomorrow, then! Up till now you have known only neglect. Now you shall feel the active hatred of the man you robbed and cheated! Ah, rubies and pearls and emeralds; you shall never see them."

"Nor shall you!" first time in weeks. She felt strangely uncomfortable. For so long a time her body had been free that the old familiar garments of civilization (are they civilized?) almost suffocated her.

"You are not afraid, Pundita?" "No, Memsahib. Ahmed will have me carried to within a few yards of the gate and after that I will be easy to find Durga Ram. Ah, Memsahib, if you but knew how I hate him!"

After Pundita had departed Ahmed brought in the leopard. Kathlyn petted it and crooned, and the magic timbre of her tones won over the spotted cat. He purred.

And now they must wait. An hour flew past, Kathlyn showed signs of restlessness, and this restlessness conveyed itself to the leopard, who began to switch his tail about.

"Memsahib, you are losing your influence over the cat," warned Ahmed. "Go walk; go talk elephant; and you, Bruce Sahib, go with her. I'll take care of the cat."

So Bruce and Kathlyn went the rounds of the cages. She was a veritable engima to Bruce. Tigers lost

as much as anything. Not a sign of that natural hysteria of woman, though she had been through enough to drive insane a dozen ordinary women. He loved the fearless eye of her, the flat back, the deep chest, the spring with which she measured her strides. Here at last was the true normal woman. She was of the breed which produced heroes.

He loved her, and yet was afraid of her. A wall seemed to surround her, and nowhere could he discover any breach. Vaguely he wondered how the Viking made love to the Niking's daughter. By storm or by guile? Yes, he was afraid of her, afraid of her because she could walk alone. He looked up his thoughts in his heart, for instinct advised him to say nothing now; this was no time for the declaration of love.

"It is best," said Ahmed, "that we all remain inside the bungalow. Ramabai, have you any plan in case Pundita does not return?" Ramabai's breast swelled. "Yes, Ahmed. I have a thousand friends in yonder city, ready at my call. Only this is not the time. Still I can call to them, and by tomorrow there will not be a stone of the palace upon another. Be not alarmed. Pundita will return, but maybe alone."

So they waited. Now, Pundita, being a woman, was wise in the matter of lure. She entered the city unquestioned. She came to the palace steps just as Umballah was issuing forth. She shivered a little—she could not help it; the man looked so gloomy and forboding. The scowl warned her to walk with extreme care.

He stopped when he saw her and was surprised into according her the salute one gave to a woman of quality. "Ah!"

"Durga Ram," she began. "I am seeking you." Her voice trembled so little. "Indeed! And why do you seek me, who am your enemy, and who always will be?"

"A woman loves where she must, not where she wills." Umballah seemed to ponder over this truth.

"And why have you sought me?" "A woman's reasons. My husband and the Memsahib—"

"You know, then, where she is?" "Aye, Durga Ram; I know where she is hiding."

He sent a shrewd glance into her eyes. Had she wavered, ill would have befallen her. "Tell me."

"Follow." He laughed. Nearby stood two of the palace guards. "All women are liars. Why should I trust you?"

"That is true. Why indeed should you trust me?" She turned a little with bowed head started to walk away.

"Wait!" he called to her, at the same time motioning to the guards to follow at a distance. "If I lead you to the Memsahib it must be alone."

"You say that you alone know where she is?" "I meant that I alone will lead you to her. And you must decide quickly Durga Ram, for even now they are preparing for flight, and this time they will go far."

"Lead on." "Send the guards back to the palace." Umballah made a sign with his hand, but another with his eyes. The guard fell back to the palace steps, understanding perfectly that this was a trap. He would apparently walk into it unsuspectingly; but those who sprung the trap would find no rat, but a tiger. And after the manner of hungry tigers he licked his chops. A trap; a child could have discerned it. But having faith in his star he followed Pundita. Only once during the journey did he speak.

"Pundita, remember, if you have lied you will be punished." "Durga Ram, I have not lied, I have promised to lead you to her, and lead to her I shall."

"Durga Ram," he mused. She did not give him his title of prince; indeed, she never had, she was really the rightful heir to this crown; but her forbears had legally foresworn. Ah! the Colonel Sahib's camp. God. He knew now that in Kathlyn's escape he had the man Ahmed to reckon with. Presently.

"She is there, Durga Ram." "And what more?" ironically. His coolness caused her some uneasiness. Had he, by means unknown to her, signalled to the guards to follow?

Umballah entered the living room of the bungalow. It was apparently deserted. He cast a quick glance about. The curtains trembled suspiciously, and even as he noted it, Bruce, Ramabai, and Ahmed sprang forth, carrying ropes. Umballah made a dash for the door, but they

bound; but all the while he was bound to quick for him.

Struggling, he was seized and laughing inwardly. Did they dream of trapping him in this childish fashion? By now twenty or thirty of his men were drawing a cordon about the camp. All of them should pay the full penalty of this act. What mattered a few ropes? He was rather puzzled as to the reason of their leaving his right arm free.

Next, the curtains were thrown back, and Kathlyn stood revealed. Near here a leopard strained impatiently on the leash. Umballah eyed her wonderingly. She was like the woman who had arrived a week ago. And yet to him she seemed less beautiful than when he paid five thousand rupees for her in the slave mart. He waited.

"Umballah, write an order for my father's release." "And if I refuse?" Umballah wanted to gain time.

"You shall be liberated at the same time as this leopard. You have had experience with leopards. Do you not recall the one my father killed, saving the life of your benefactor?" "I will free him in exchange for yourself."

"Write." She offered the pen to him. He shrugged and made no effort to take it.

"Very well," said Kathlyn. "Leave us." Once alone she said: "Can you run as fast as this cat?" She approached and began at the knot of the ropes.

He saw by the thin determined line of her lips that she meant to do exactly as she threatened. He concluded then to sign the paper. His men would arrive before a messenger could reach the city.

"I will sign," he said. "For the present you have the best of me. But what of the afterwards?"

"We are going to hold you as host-age, Umballah. When my father arrives we intend to escort you to the frontier and there leave you."

"Give me the pen." His men were drawing nearer and nearer. He signed the order of release. He knew that even if he reached the council it would not serve, lacking an essential.

Kathlyn joyfully caught up the order and called to her friends. Ramabai smiled and shook his head. It was not enough he said. He took the jeweled triangle from Umballah's turban.

"Go, Ramabai," said Kathlyn, strangely tender all at once; "go bring my father back to me. Rest assured that if aught happens to you, Umballah shall pay."

"With this head," supplemented Bruce. "Look not so eagerly toward the west, Umballah. Your troops will remain at the edge of the clearing. They have been informed that a single misstep on their part and their masters die."

Umballah sat up stiffly in the chair. They had beaten him by a point. The heat of his rage swept over him like fire, and he closed his eyes.

Ramabai passed the guards, giving them additional warning to remain exactly where they were. The captain shrugged; it was all in a day's work, and women were always leading or driving men into hell.

When Ramabai appeared before the council he did so proudly. He saluted as etiquette required, however, and extended this written order for Col. Hare's release. At first they refused to regard it as authentic. Ramabai produced the jeweled triangle.

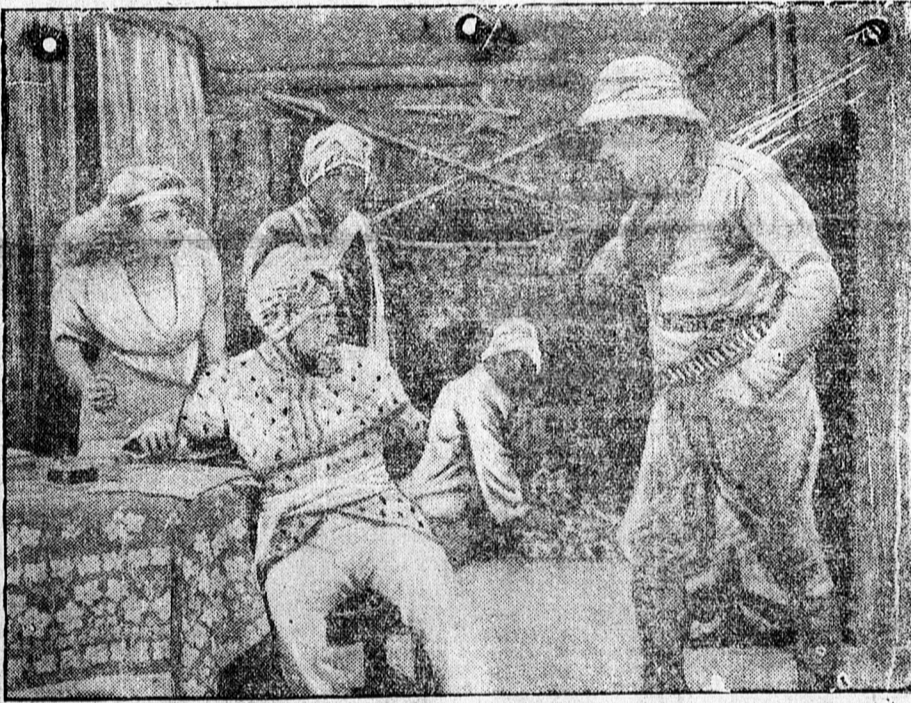
"The prince has made the order imperative," he said. "Col. Hare will proceed in my custody."

"Where is Durga Ram?" "At the bungalow of Col. Hare, where he found the daughter."

Ah, that cleared up everything. Umballah had some definite plan in releasing Col. Hare. It would confuse the public, who had been given to understand that the hunter was dead; but they would claim that it was an affair of state, in no wise concerning the populace. So Col. Hare was brought up. Ramabai instantly signalled for the colonel to pretend dejection. He was so pitifully weak that he could scarcely stand and only vaguely understood that he was to follow this man Ramabai, whom he had not recognize.

Ramabai, comprehending his plight, gave him the support of his arm, and together they left the palace. So far all had gone smoothly. The council had no suspicions. Twenty men had followed Durga Ram and without doubt they were at this moment with him.

"Zee!" breathed the colonel, as Ramabai beckoned to a public litter. "Hush! You are supposed to be my prisoner. Make no sign of jubilation." Ramabai helped the broken man into the litter and bade the coolies to hurry. "Elephants will be ready to stand the moment we reach your camp. This time I believe we can get away in safety."



"I will sign," he said. "For the present you have the best of me."

bungalow, when suddenly the captain missed Ahmed. "Where is the Colonel Sahib's man?" he asked brusquely. "Possibly he is going the rounds of the animal cages," said Bruce, outwardly calm but shaking within. "And thou, Ramabai, beware!" "Of what, captain?" coolly. "Thou, too, hast meddled; and meddlers burn their fingers."

"I am innocent of any crime," said Ramabai. "I am watched, I know; but there is still some justice in Allah."

"Bully for you!" said Bruce in English. The captain eyed him malevolently. "Search the animal cages," he ordered.

Bruce, Ramabai, and Pundita followed the captain. He peered into the cages, one by one, and at length came to the leopard's cage. And there was the crafty Ahmed, calmly stroking the leopard, which snarled suddenly. Ahmed stood up with a fine imitation of surprise. The captain, greatly mystified turned about; he was partially convinced that he had his work for nothing. Still, he had his tongue.

"Thou Ramabai, hast broken thy parole. Thou wert not to leave thy house. It shall be reported." Then he took a shot at Bruce: "And thou wilt enter the city on the pain of death."

With this he ordered the soldiers right about and proceeded the way he had come. "Ahmed, where is she?" cried Bruce, who was as mystified as the captain. "Smiling, Ahmed raised one of the broad plank boards, and the golden head of Kathlyn appeared.

"He will promise, but by some sign or other he will signify to his men to follow. Well, the guard may follow. Once Umballah steps inside the bungalow we will seize and bind him. His life will depend upon his writing a note to the council to liberate my father. If he refuses, the leopard."

"The leopard?" "Yes, why not? A leopard was the basic cause of all this misery and treachery. Let us give Umballah a taste of it. Am I cruel? Well, yes; all that was gentle and tender in me seems either to have vanished or hardened. He has put terror into my heart; let me put it into his."

"Search the animal cages," he ordered. "It is all impractical," demurred Bruce. "He will never follow Pundita," said Ahmed.

"Then shall we sit down and wait?" Kathlyn asked bitterly. "At least let me try. He will not harm Pundita since it is I he wants."

"She is right," averred Pundita. "A woman can do more at this moment than a hundred men. I will bring Memsahib; and, more, I will bring h m back."

"But if he should hold you as a hostage?" suggested the harried Ahmed. "What then?"

"What will be will be," answered Pundita with ornamental philosophy. "You shall go, Pundita," said Ramabai; "and Durga Ram shall choke between these two hands if he harms a hair of your head."

"And now to bed," said Ahmed. Well for Kathlyn that she had not the gift of clairvoyance. At the precise moment she put her head upon the pillow her father was writing under the lash; but never a sound came from his lips. Kit was free! Kit was free!

"Wait and see. That's another way of twisting the secret from you. Wait; have patience." Umballah laughed. And this laughter rang in the colonel's ears long after the door had closed. What new devilry had he in mind?

The next morning Kathlyn came into the living room dressed, for their teneness and looked straight into her eyes. A cheat with with cunning, whereas the keeper of this cage dared not go within a foot of it. By the time she reached the elephants a dozen keepers were following her, their eyes wide with awe.

They had heard often of the Memsahib who calmed the wild ones, but they had not believed. With the elephants she did about as she pleased.

"Miss Kathlyn, I am growing a bit afraid of you," said Bruce. "And why?"

"I've never seen animals act like that before. What is it you do to them?" "Let them know that I am not afraid of them and that I am fond of them."

"I am not afraid of them and am also fond of them. Yet they spit at me whenever I approach."

"Perhaps it is black art." The shadow of a smile crossed her lips. Then the smile stiffened and she wrashed deeply. For the moment she had forgotten her father; who stood chained to a pillar in a vile cell. She put her hand over her eyes and swayed.

"What is it?" he cried in alarm. "Nothing, I had almost forgotten where I am."

"I, too, I am beginning to let Ahmed think for me. Let us get back to the bungalow."

He loved her. And he feared her, too. She was so unlike any young woman he had ever met that she confounded his established ideas of the sex. The cool blood of her disturbed him