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THE ADVENTURES OF KATHLYN

By HAROLD MacGRATH

"Kathlyn Is Forced to Enter the King's Palace By Umballa"

"Kathlyn in the Royal Crypt"

Kathlyn in despair turned toward the station. It was then she saw the boxed lion on the platform. She returned to the conductor of the freight.

"Why isn't that lion shipped?"

"We can't carry a lion without an attendant, Miss. You ought to know that."

"Very well," replied Kathlyn. She smiled at the conductor confidently. "I'll travel as the lion's attendant. You certainly cannot object to that. that."

"I guess you've got me," admitted the conductor. "But where the dickens will you put the cat? Every car is closed and locked, and there is not an empty."

"You can easily get the lion in the caboose. I'll see that he doesn't bother any one."

"Lions in the caboose is a new one on me. Well, you know your dad's business better than I do. Look alive, boys, and get that angora aboard. This is Miss Hare herself, and she'll take charge.

"Kit, Kit!"

"Winnie!"

"O, I'll be brave, I've just got to be. But I've never been left alone before."

The two girls embraced, and Winnie went sobbing back to the maid who waited on the platform.

What happened in that particular caboose has long since been newspaper history. The crew will go on telling it till it becomes as fabulous as one of Sindbad's yarns. How the lion escaped, how the fearless young woman captured it alone, unaided, may be found in the files of all metropolitan newspapers. Of the brown man who was found hiding in the coat closet of the caboose nothing was said, but the sight of him dismayed Kathlyn as no lion could have done. Any dark skinned person was now a subtle menace, and when later, she saw him peering into the portehole of her stateroom, dismay became terror.

Who was this man?

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTER 1.

Kathlyn to India, the Hindu is a forged message, believes her father, Col. Hare, who is hunting in India, has summoned her to him. She starts immediately for Allaha, leaving her younger sister, Winnie, at home on their wild animal farm in California.

Umballa, a protege of the King of Allaha, hopes to succeed to the throne. Allaha being an independent principality, the childless ruler has the right to appoint his heir. On a previous visit to Allaha Col. Hare had saved the life of the king, and as a reward a decoration carrying with it royal honors and the right of succession had been conferred upon him.

Umballa goes to America and, spying on the household of Col. Hare, sees the lovely, fair-haired Kathlyn and falls in love with her. He determines that she shall come to Allaha and be an innocent aid in the plot against her father. The ruse is successful, and on the boat which carries Kathlyn Hare, deceived by a passenger.

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CHAPTER II.

THE UNWELCOME THRONE

Kathlyn sensed great loneliness when, about a month later, she arrived at the basin in Calcutta. A thousand or more natives were bathing ceremoniously in the what—men, women, and children. It was early morn, and they were making solemn genuflections toward the bright sun. The water front swarmed with brown bodies, and great wheeled carts drawn by sad eyed bullocks threaded slowly through the maze. The many white turbans, stirring hither and thither, reminded her of a field of white poppies in a breeze, India! There it lay ready for her eager feet. Always she had dreamed about it, and romanced over it, and sought it on swings of her spirit. Yonder it lay, ancient as China, enchanting as storied Persia. If only she were on pleasure bent! If only she knew some one in this great teeming city! She knew no one; she carried no letters of introduction, no letters of credit, nothing but the gold notes the paymaster at the farm had hastily turned over to her. Only by constant application to maps and guide books had she managed to arrange the short cut to the far kingdom. She had been warned that it was a wild turbulent place, out of the beaten path, beyond the reach of iron rails. Three long sea voyages; across the Pacific (which wasn't), down the bitter Yellow sea, up the blue Bay of Bengal with many a sea change and many a strange picture. What though her heart ached, it was impossible that her eyes should not absorb all she saw and marvel over it. India!

The strange, elusive Hindu had disappeared after Hongkong. That was a weight off her soul. She was now assured that her imagination had beguiled her. How should he know anything about her? What was more natural than that he should wish to hurry back to his native state? She was not the only one in a hurry. And there were Hindus of all castes on all three ships. By now she had almost forgotten him.

There was one bright recollection to break the unending loneliness. Coming down from Hongkong to Singapore she had met at the captain's table a young man by the name of Bruce. He was a quiet, rather entertaining man, lean and sinegun and wine bitten. Kathlyn has as yet had no sentiment affairs. Absorbed in her work, her father, and the care of Winnie, such men as she had met had scarcely interested her. She had only tolerant contempt for idlers, and these young men had belonged to that category. Bruce caught her interest in the very fact that he had but little to say and said that crisply and well. There was something authoritative in the shape of his mouth and the steadiness of his eye, though before her he never exercised this power. A dozen times she had been on the point of taking him into her confidence, but the irony of fate had always firmly closed her lips.

And now, waiting for the ship to warp into its pier she realized what a fatal mistake her reticence had been. A friend of her father!

Bruce had left the Lloyder before dinner (at Singapore), and as Kathlyn's British-India coaster did not not leave till morning she had elected to remain over night on the German boat.

As Bruce disappeared among the disembarking passengers and climbed into rickshaw she turned to the captain, who stood beside her.

"Do you know Mr. Bruce?"

"Very well," said the German. "Didn't he tell you who he is?" No? Ach! Why, Mr. Bruce is a great hunter. He has shot everything, written books, climbed the Himalayas. Only last year he brought me the sack of a musk deer, and that is the most dangerous of all sports. He collects animals."

Then Kathlyn knew. The name had been vaguely familiar, but the young man's reticence had given her no opportunity to dig into her recollection. Bruce! How many times her father had spoken of him! What a fool she had been! Bruce knew the country she was going to, perhaps as well as her father; and he could have simplified her journey to the last word. Well, what was done could not be recalled and done over.

"My father is a great hunter, too," she said simply, eying wistfully a road taken by Bruce into town.

"What? Herr Gott! Are you Col. Hare's daughter?" exclaimed the captain.

"Yes."

Tears filled Kathlyn's eyes. In an Indian prison, out of the jurisdiction of the British Raj, and with her two small hands and woman's mind she must free him! Always the mysterious packet lay close to her heart, never for a moment was it beyon the reach of her hand. Her father's freedom!

The rusty metal sides of the ship scraped against the pier and the gangplank was lowered and presently the tourists flocked down, with constant emotions, to be besieged by fruit sellers, water carriers, cabmen blind beggars, and maimed, naked little children with curious insolent black eyes, women with infants straddling their hips, stolid Chinamen; a riot of color and a bewildering babel of tongues.

Her white sola-topee (sun helmet) had scarcely disappeared in the crowd when the Hindu of the freight caboose emerged from the steerage, no longer in the bedraggled linen trousers and ragged turban, but dressed like a native fop. He was in no hurry. Leisurely he followed Kathlyn to the hotel, then proceeded to the railway station. He had need no longe to watch and worry. There was nothing left now but to greet her upon her arrival, this golden houri from the verses of Sa'adi. The two weeks of durance vile among the low castes in the steerage should be amply repaid. In six days he would be beyond the hand of the meddling British rule, in his own country.

Kathlyn began her journey at once. Now that she was on land, moving toward her father, all her vigor returned. She felt strangely alive, exhilarated. She knew that she was not going to be afraid of anything hereafter. To enter the strange country without having her purpose know would be the main difficulty. Wher was Ahmed all this time? Doubtles in a cell like his master.

Three days later she stood at the frontier, and her servant set about arguing and bargaining with the mahouts to engage elephants for the three days' march through jungle and mountainous divides to the capital. Three elephants were necessary. There were two howdah elephants and one pack elephant, who was always lagging behind. Through long aisles of magnificent trees they passed, across hot, blistering deserts dotted here and there by shrubs and stunted trees, in and out of gloomy defiles of flinty rock, over sluggish and swiftly flowing streams. The days were hot, but the nights were bitter cold. Sometimes a blue miasmic haze settled down, and the dry raspy hides of the elephants grew damp and they fretted at their chains.

Rao, the khitmatger Kathlyn had hired in Calcutta proved invaluable. Without him she would never have succeeded in entering the strange country; for these wild eyed Mohamedan mahouts (and it is pertinent to note that only Mohamedans are ever made mahouts, it being against the tenets of Hinduism to kill or ride anything that kills, scrovded at her evilly. They would have made away with her for an anna-piece. Rao was a Mohamedan himself, so they listened and obeyed.

All this the first day and night out. On the following morning a leopard crossed the trail. Kathlyn seized her rifle and broke its spine. The jabbering of the mahouts would have roused her at any other time.

"Good, Memsahib," whispered Rao. "You have out fear into their devils' hearts. Good! Chup!" he called. "Stop your noise."

After that they gave Kathlyn's dog tent plenty of room.

"You Black Scoundral"

the evening round their dung fire while Kathlyn busied with the tea over a wood fire, a tiger roared near by. The elephants trumpted and the mahouts rose in terror. Kathlyn ran for her rifle, but the trumpething of the elephants, was sufficient to send the striped cat to other hunting grounds. Wild ape and pig abounded, and occasionally a caba wriggled out of the sun into the brittle grasses. Very few beasts or reptiles are aggressive; it is only when they feel cornered that they turn. Even the cats, will rarely offer battle except when attacked.

Meanwhile the man who had followed Kathlyn arrived at the city.

Five hours later Kathlyn stepped out of her howdah, gave Rao the money for the mahouts, and looked about. This was the gate to the capital. How many times had her father passed through it? Her jaw set and her eyes flashed. Whatever danger beset her she was determined to meet them with courage and patience.

"Rao, you had better return to Calcutta. What I have to do must be done alone."

"Very good. But I shall remain here till the Memsahib returns." Rao salaamed

"And if I should not return?" affected by this strange loyalty.

"Then I shall seek Bruce Sahib, who has a camp twenty miles east."

"Bruce? But he is in Singapore!"—a quickening of her pulses.

"Who can say where Bruce Sahib is? He is like a shadow, there today, here tomorrow. I have been his servant, Memsahib, and that is how I today am yours. I received a telegram to call at your hotel and apply to you for service. Very good. I shall wait. The mahout here will take you directly to Hara Sahib's bungalow. You will find your father's servants there, and all will be well. A week, then. If you do not send for me I will seek Bruce Sahib, and we shall return with many. Some will speak English at the bungalow."

"Thank you, Rao. I shall not forget."

"Neither will Bruce Sahib," mysteriously. Rao salaamed.

Kathlyn got into the howdah and passed through the gates. Bruce Sahib, the quiet man whose hand had reached out over seas thus strangly to reassure her! A hardness came into her throat, and she swallowed desperately. She was only twenty-four. Except for herself there might not be a white person in all this sprawling ragged principality. From time to time the new mahout turned and smiled at her curiously, but she was too absorbed to note his attentions.

Durga Ram, called lightly Umballah, went directly to the palace, where he knew the Court of Three solemnly awaited his arrival. He dashed up the imposing flight of marble steps, exultant. He had fulfilled his promise; the golden daughter of Hara Sahib was but a few miles away.

Umballah hurried along through the deep corridor, supported by exquisitely carved marble columns.

He stopped at the door guarded by a single soldier, who saluted but spat as soon as Umballah had passed into the throneroom. The throne itself was vacant. The Council of Three rose at the approach of Umballah.

The council salaamed.

Umballah stroked his chin as he gazed at the huge candles flickering at each side of the throne. He sniffed the Tibetan incense and shrugged. It was written. "Go," he said, "to Hara Sahib's bungalow and await me. I shall be there presently. There is plenty of time. And remember our four heads depend upon the next few hours. The soldiers are on the verge of mutiny, and only success can pacify them."

He turned without ceremony and left them. With oriental philosophy they accepted the situation. They had sought to overturn him, and he held them in the hollow of his hand. During the weeks of this absence in America his spies had hung about them like bees about honey. They were the fowlers snared.

Umballah proceeded along the corridor to a flight of stairs leading beneath the palace floor. Here the soldiers were agreeable enough; they had reason to be. Umballah gave them new minted rupees for their work, many rupees. For they knew secrets. Before the door of a dungeon Umqallah paused and listened. There was no sound. He returned upstairs and sought a chamber near the harem. This he entered, and stood with folded arms near the door.

"Ah, Colonel Sahib!"

"Umballah!" Col. Hare, hearded, unkempt, tried to stand erect and face his enemy. "You black scoundrel!"

"Durga Ram, Sahib. Words, words; the patter of rain on stone roofs. Our king lives no more, alas!"

"You lie!"

"He is dead. Dying, he left you this throne—you a white man, knowing it was a legacy of terror and confusion. You know. Why did you return? Ah, pearls and sapphires and emeralds! What? I offer you this throne upon conditions."

"And those conditions I have refused."

"You have, yes, but now ——" Umballah smiled. Then he suddenly blazed forth: Think you a white man shall sit upon this throne while I live? It is mine. I was his heir."

"And what if I admit it?" truculently.

"Umballah, or Darga Ram, if you wish, listed. Take the throne. What's to hinder you? You want it. Take it and let me begone."

"Yes, I want it; and by all the gods of Hind I'll have it—but safely. Ah! It will be fine to proclaim myself when mutiny and rebellion stalk about. Am I pig to play a game like that? Tch!" He clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth in derision. "No; I need a buckler till all this roily water subsides and clears."

"And then, some fine night, Hara Sahib's throne? I am not afraid of death, Umballah, I have faced it too many times. Make an end of me at once or leave me to rot here, my answer will always be the same. I will not become a dishonorable tool. You have offered me freedom and jewels. No; I repeat, I will free all slaves, abolish the harems, the buying and selling of flesh; I will make a man of every poor devil of a coolie who carries stones from your quarries."

Umballah laughed. "Then remain here like a dog while I put your golden daughter on the throne and become what the British Raj calls prince consort. She-ll rebel, I know; but I have a way." He scepped outside and closed the door.

"Umballah?"

"Well!"

"Kit, my daughter? Good God what is she doing here when I warned her?" Hare tugged furiously at his chains. "Durga Ram, you have beaten me. State your terms and I will accept them to the letter. . . . . Kit, my beautiful Kit, in this hell hole!"

"Ah, but I don't want you to accept now. I was merely amusing myself." The door shut and the bolt shot home.

Hare fell upon his knees. "My head, my head! Dear God, save me my reason!"

The moment Kathlyn arrived at the animal cages of her father she called for Ahmed.

"My father?" L

"Ah, Memsahib, they say he is dead. I know not. One might— the second after we arrived— he was summoned to the palace. He never came back."

"They have killed him!"

"Perhaps. They watch me, too; but I act simple. We wait and see."

Kathlyn rushed across the ground intervening between the animals cages and the bungalow. There was no one in sight. She ran up the steps . . . to be greeted inside by the sauve Umballah.

"I Miss Hare." He salaamed, with a sweeping gesture of his hands.

Sadly the wretch told her the tale; the will of the king, his death, and the subsequent death of her father in his, Durga Ram's, arms. Younder urn contained his ashes. For the first time in her young life Kathlyn fainted. She had been living on her nerves for weeks, and at the sight of that urn something snapped. Daintly Umballah plucked forth the packet and waited. At length she opened her eyes.

"You are a queen, Miss Hare."

"You are mad!"

"Nay; it was the madness of the king. But mad things often make laws which must be obeyed. You will accuse me of perfidy when I tell you all. The note which brought you here was written by me and substituted for this."

Dully Kathlyn read: "Kathlyn— If not heard from, I'm held captive in Allaha. The royal title given to me by the king made me and my descendants direct heirs to the throne Do not come to Allaha yourself. Destroy sealed documents herewith.

FATHER."

The Council of Three entered noiselessly from the adjoining room. At the four dark, inscruable faces the bewildered girl stared, her limbs with terror. Gravely the council told her she must come with them to the palace.

"It is impossible!" she murmured "You are all mad. I am a white woman. I cannot rule over an alien race whose tongues I cannot speak, whose habits I know nothing of. It is impossible. Since my father is dead, I must return to my home."

"No," said Umballah.

"I refuse to stir!" She was all afire of a sudden; the base trickery which had brought her here! She was very lovely to the picturesque savage who stood at her elbow.

As he looked down at her, in his troubled soul Umballah knew that it was not the throne so much as it was this beautiful bird of Paradise which he wished to cage.

"Be brave," he said, "like your father. I do not wish to use force but you must go. It is useless to struggle. Come."

She hung back for a moment; then, realizing her utter helplessness, she signified that she was ready to go. She needed time to collect her stunned and disordered thoughts.

Before going to the palace they conducted her to the royal crypt. The urn containing her father's ashes was deposited in a niche. Many other niches concaining urns, and Umballah explained to her that these held the ashes of many rulers. Tears welled into Kathlyn's eyes, but they were of a hysterical character.

"A good sign," mused Umballah, who thought he knew something of women, like all men beset wieh vanity. Oddly enough, he had forgotten all about the incident of the lion in the freight caboose. All women are felines to a certain extent. This golden haired woman had claws, and the day was coming when he would feel them drag over his heart.

From the crypt they proceeded to the place zenana (harem), which surrounded in court of exceeding beauty. Three ladies of the harem were sitting in the portico, attended by slaves. All were curiously interested at the sight of a woman with white skin, tinted like the lotus. Umballah came to a halt before the lattice door.

"Here your majesty must remain till the day of your coronation."

"How did my father die?"

"He was assassinated on the palace steps by a Mohammedan lunatic. As I told you, he died in my arms."

"His note signifies that he feared imprisonment. How came he on the palace steps?"

"He was not a prisoner. He came and went as he pleased in the city." He bowed and left her.

Alone in her chamber, the dullness of her mind diminished and finally cleared away like a fog in a wind. Her dear, kind, blue eyed father was dead, and she was virtually a prisoner, and Winnie was all alone. A queen! They were mad, or she was in the midst of some hideous nightmare. Mad, mad, She began to laugh, and it was not a pleasant sound. A queen, she, Kathlyn Hare! Her father was dead, she was a queen, and Winnie was all alone. A gale of laughter brought to the marble lattice many wondering eyes. The white cockatoo shrilled his displeasure. Those outside the lattice saw this marvelous white skinned woman with hair like the gold threads in Chinese brocades, suddenly throw herself upon a pile of cushions, and they saw her shoulders rock and heave, but heard no sound of wailing.

After a while she fell asleep, a kind of dreamless stuper. When she awoke it was twilight in the court.

She sat perfectly still, slowly gathering her strength, mental and physical. She was not her father's daughter for nothing. She was to fight in some strange warfare, instinctively she felt this; but from what direction, in what shape, only God knew. Yet she must prepare for it; that was the vital thing; she must marshal her forces, feminine and only defensive, and watch.

Rao! Her hands clutched the pillows. In five days' time he would be off to seek John Bruce and there would be white men there, and they would come to her though a thousand legions of these brown men stood between. She must play for time; she must pretend docility and humility, meet guile with guile. She could get no word to her faithful khitmatgar; none here, even if open to bribery, could be made to understand. Only Umballah and the council spoke English or understood it. She had ten days' grace; within that time she hoped to find some loophole.

Slave girls entered noiselessly. The hanging lamps were lit. A tabaret was set before her. There were small and roast kid, fruits and fragrant tea. She was not hungry, but she ate.

Within a dozen yards of her sat her father, stolidly munching his chupattis, because he knew that now he must live.

One of the chief characteristics of the East Indian is extravagance. To outvie each other in celebration of births, weddings, deaths, and coronations they beggar themselves. In this the oriental and the occidental have one thing in common. This principality was small, but there was a deal of wealth in it because of its emerald mines and turquoise pits. The Durbar brought out princes and princelings from east, south and west, and even three or four wild eyed amirs from the north. The British government at Calcutta heard vaguely about this fete, but gave it scant attention for the simple fact that it had not been invited to attend. Still, it watched the performance covertly. Usually Durbars took months of preparation; this one had been called into existence within ten days.

As Kathlyn advanced to the canopied dais upon which she was to be crowned, a hand filled with flowers reached out. She turned to see Ahmed.

"Bruce Sahib," she whispered.

Ahmed salaamed deeply as she passed on. The impression that she was dreaming again seized her. This could not possibly be real. Her feet did not seem to touch the carpets; she did not seem to breathe; she floated. It was only when the crown was placed upon her head that she realized the reality and the finality of the proceedings.

"Be wise," whispered Umballah, coldly. "If you take off that crown now, neither your gods nor mine could save you from that mob down yonder. Be advised. Rise!"

She obeyed. She wanted to cry out to that sea of bronze faces. "People, I do not want to be your queen. Let me go!" They would not understand. Where was Rao? Where was Bruce? What of the hope that now flickered and died in her heart, like a guttering candle light? There was a small dagger hidden in the folds of her white robe; she could always use that. She heard Umballah speaking in the native tongue. A great shouting followed. The populace surged.

"What have you said to them?" she demanded.

(Continued on page three)