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BY ST. GEORGE RATHBONE

Author of "Doctor Jack," "Doctor Jack's Wife," "Captain Tom," "Miss Pauline of New York," Etc.

CHAPTER V—Continued.

Perhaps a trifle of the scorn he feels shows upon his face. Pauline can no longer call him her slave, and it may be this that arouses the new feeling in her heart, for a woman will never bear the sneers of one whom she has madly loved.

"This is worse than foolish, Pauline. You seem to know at least a portion of my mission abroad, and hence must be aware that I am in no humor for love-making—that my whole soul is bound up in my search."

"Well, I can help you, John," she says quietly, holding her feelings in check until she has ventured upon this last resort.

"You can? Then I beg of you, Pauline, to give me assistance. To find my mother is the one thought of my existence, and any one who can shorten my quest must have my deepest gratitude."

Pauline frowns again. "I hate that word; it has no place with me, John Craig. Friendship I despise—it is either love or hate with me. Let me tell you what I am in a position to do—find your mother for you, bring you face to face, or, on the other hand, render it impossible for you to ever set eyes upon her."

Her manner proves it to be no idle boast, but the young man will not descend to deceit, even when he might accomplish so much.

"Will you bring about this meeting?" he asks.

"On one condition, John."

"Well—hesitatingly—name it."

"That you marry me," is the prompt reply, and, even Pauline, actress by nature and vocation as she is, turns a trifle rosy under his gaze, though not abashed.

"That is a sudden ultimatum. Kindly tell me when you would like this little affair to come off?" he asks lightly.

"Now—before I take you to the one you have long sought."

"Pardon me; I can hardly collect my wits. You see I had not dreamed of marrying for years. It is very, very sudden."

"Oh! I'll give you time to reflect upon it, John. I wouldn't hurry up such grave business."

"I don't believe I need much time. Don't you think it is a rather strange thing to demand payment before you deliver the goods?"

"If you gave me your word, John, I would wait until I had carried out my word."

"You think you could trust me?"

"I am willing to accept the chances."

"Indeed!"

"Will you make the promise?"

"Not I."

"Then you were simply gaining time," with a clenching of the small hands and a gathering of the black brows.

"I wanted to uncover your batteries; to learn what you knew; to understand your designs. Now that you give me no alternative, I am compelled to hurt your feelings by declaring myself able to find the one I seek without the aid of Pauline Potter."

As he speaks the last word he rises to his feet, once more feeling like himself.

"What would you do now, John Craig?"

"Leave this building, since I was lured here under false pretences. What have you done with my companion?"

"The funny little man? Oh, he left here long ago, when he learned you had fallen among old friends," she replies, carelessly.

John remembers something now; it is the sight of Philander Sharpe lying back in his chair drugged, and therefore he does not credit what the actress says.

"Will you show me the way out?" he asks.

"I will do more."

She clasps her hands together in the Oriental way of summoning a servant. Instantly the curtains move; three men enter the apartment, and John realizes that Pauline Potter is about to show her teeth.

He draws his figure up, for while not a pugnacious man, he knows how to defend himself. As to his bravery, who can question it, after his action of the afternoon?

"Does it take three to show me to the door? With your permission I will depart."

"Not yet, Doctor Chicago—not yet."

"Ha! you would attempt violence. Well, I'm ready to meet these fellows, thanks to the forethought that caused me to arm myself before starting on this grotesque errand to-night."

The young Chicagoan throws a hand back to draw the little pocket revolver which has more than once served him well, but, to his dismay, it is gone.

He sees a derisive smile upon the features of Pauline, and knows she has taken it while he lay there unconscious on the couch.

"I was afraid you might do yourself damage, John. If you are wise, you will submit tamely," she says, and clapping her hands again sets the three men upon him.

Craig is no Hercules in build, and, besides, his left arm is in rather poor condition for warfare, being exceedingly sore.

Still he is not the one to submit tamely, so long as a single chance remains, and for the space of a minute there is a lively scene in the Oriental apartment, in which divans are overturned, men swinging desperately around, and even Pauline Potter, accustomed to stage battles only, is constrained to utter a few shrieks of alarm.

Then it is over.

Doctor Chicago, breathing hard and looking his dogged defiance, stands there in the hands of his captors.

"Do you change your mind, John Craig?" asks the woman, fastening her burning gaze upon his face.

"I have too much Scotch blood in me for that. On the contrary, I am more than ever determined to pursue my mission without any outside assistance," he answers.

"Take that cross!" she cries, and the look that crosses her face can only be likened to the black clouds preceding the hurricane.

John struggles no longer, for he realizes that he is safer out of her sight than in it.

They take him through a door-way, and the last he hears from the beautiful tigress is her taunting cry of:

"We will break this proud spirit of yours, John Craig—what you scorn now you will beg for after awhile, when it is too late."

He wonders whether this is a prophecy.

The men hurry him along a narrow hall, for many of these Maltese houses are built in a queer way, nor do they treat him with consideration, but rather the contrary.

When he ventures to protest, the man who opened the door orders silence and enforces it with a cowardly blow from his fist.

John looks him straight in the eye and says:

"You coward! I will remember that," at which the man turns his head away and sweats under his breath.

Presently they halt in front of a door, which the leader unlocks. At a word from him the young American is pushed inside.

John, receiving such an impetus, staggers and throws out his hands for support, but failing to find anything of this kind, pitches over, just as the door slams shut.

He recovers himself and sits up, a trifle bruised, but not otherwise injured through his rough treatment.

This is a nice predicament to be

shut up in a house in Valetta, while, perhaps, Philander Sharpe returns to the hotel with a story of his succumbing to the wiles of a beautiful enchantress.

The steamer will sail without him, and the duse must be to pay generally. John begins, like a man, to wonder if he can do anything for himself; that spirit so distinctive will not allow him to sit down and repine.

Surrounded by gloom, how will he find out the nature of his prison?

He endeavors to penetrate the darkness—a trace of light finds an entrance under the door and relieves the sombre blank. It does more, for all at once John's eyes discover something that rivets his attention.

There are two of them—eyes that gleam in the darkness like those of a great cat.

A thrill sweeps over the doctor; can it be possible they have shut him up here with some great fierce animal that will tear him limb from limb? Is this Pauline Potter's dramatic revenge?

Who can blame him for a sudden quaking in the region of his heart—such a fate is too terrible to calmly contemplate; but this quail is only momentary, and then Doctor Chicago is himself again, brave and self-reliant.

(To be Continued.)



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