



The Pet from Carp Bagdad

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SYNOPSIS.

George Percival Algernon Jones, vice-president of the Metropolitan Oriental Rug company of New York, starting for romance, is in Cairo on a business trip. Horace Ryanne arrives at the hotel in Cairo with a carefully guarded bundle. Ryanne sells Jones the famous holy Yhi-orde rug which he admits having stolen from a pasha at Bagdad. Jones meets Major Callahan and later is introduced to Fortune Chedoye by a woman to whom he had loaned \$50,000 at Monte Carlo some months previously, and who turns out to be Fortune's mother. Jones takes Mrs. Chedoye and Fortune to a polo game. Fortune returns to Jones the money borrowed by her mother. Mrs. Chedoye appears to be engaged in some mysterious enterprise unknown to the daughter. Ryanne interests Jones in the United Romance and Adventure company, a concern which for a price will arrange any kind of an adventure to order. Mrs. Chedoye, her brother, Major Callahan, Wallace and Ryanne, as the United Romance and Adventure company, plan a risky enterprise involving Jones. Ryanne makes known to Mrs. Chedoye his intention to marry Fortune. Mrs. Chedoye declares she will not permit it. Plans are laid to prevent Jones sailing for home. Ryanne steals Jones' letters and cable dispatches. He wires agent in New York, in Jones' name, that he is renting house in New York to some friends. Mahomed, keeper of the holy carpet, in on Ryanne's trail. Ryanne promises Fortune that he will see that Jones comes to no harm as a result of his purchase of the rug. Mahomed accuses Ryanne and demands the Thibodeau rug. Ryanne tells him Jones has the rug and suggests the abduction of the New York merchant as a means of securing its return. The rug disappears from Jones' room. Fortune quarrels with her mother when the latter refuses to explain her mysterious actions. Fortune gets a message saying to meet Ryanne at the English-Bar the same evening. Jones is carried off into the desert by Mahomed and his accomplices after a desperate fight. He discovers that Ryanne and Fortune also are captives, the former is badly battered and unconscious.

"You've got lots of pluck."
"Have I?"
"Yes. You haven't asked a question yet."
"Would it help any?"
"No, I don't suppose it would. I've an idea that we're all on the way to the home of Haroun-al-Rashid."
"Bagdad," musingly.
"It's the rug. But I do not understand you in the picture."
"No more do I."

With a consideration that spoke well of his understanding, he did not speak to her again till food was passed. Later, when the full terror of the affair took hold of her, she would be dreadfully lonely and would need to see him near, to hear his voice. He forced some of the hot soup down Ryanne's throat, and was glad to note that he responded a little. After that he limped about the strange camp, but was careful to get in no one's way. Slyly he took note of this face and that, and his satisfaction grew as he counted the aftermath of the war. And it had taken five of them, and even then the result had been in doubt up to the moment when his head had gone bang against the atucco. He took a melancholy pride in his swollen ear and half-shut eye. He had always been doubtful regarding his courage; and now he knew that George Percival Algernon Jones was as good a name as Bayard.

The camel-boys (they are called boys all the way from ten years up to forty), having hobbled the beasts, were portioning each a small bundle of libbin or chopped straw in addition to what they might find by grazing. Funny brutes, thought George, as he walked among the kneeling animals: to go five days without food or water,

name? And how might her presence torture Ryanne? George felt weak in that bitter moment. Ay, how might not her presence torture him also? He had never, for the briefest space, thought of Ryanne and Fortune at the same time. She spoke, apathetically it was true, as if she had known him all her life. The wisest thing he could do was to bring Ryanne to a condition where he could explain some parts of the enigma and be of some use. Horace!

"I'm going to have another try at him," he said.

She nodded, but without any particular enthusiasm.

George worked over Ryanne for the better part of an hour, and finally the battered man moved. He made an effort to speak, but this time no sound issued from his lips. At the end of the hour he opened his eyes and smiled. It was more like the grin George had once seen upon the face of a boxer who had returned to the contest after having been floored half a dozen times.

"Can you hear me?" asked George. Ryanne stared into his face. "Yes," thickly. "Where are we?"

"In the desert."

"Which one?"

Ryanne tried to sit up alone.

"Better not try to move. They banged you up at a great rate. Best thing you can do is to go to sleep. You'll be all right in the morning."

back upon the hard clay and slept. Romance is the greatest thing in the world; but for all that, a man must eat and a man must sleep.

The cold dew of dawn was the tonic that recalled him from the land of grotesque dreams. He sat up and rubbed his face briskly with his hands, drying it upon the sleeve of his coat, as hasty and as satisfying a toilet as he had ever made. There was no activity in camp; evidently they were not going to start early. The cook alone was busy. The fire was crackling, the kettle was steaming, and a pot of pleasant-smelling coffee leaned rakishly against the hot ashes. The flap to Fortune's tent was still closed. And there was Ryanne, sitting with his knees drawn up under his chin, his hands clasped about his shins, and glowering at no visible thing.

"Hello!" cried George. "Found yourself, eh?"

Ryanne eyed him without emotion.

"When and how did they get you?" George inquired.

"About three hours before they got you. Something in a glass of wine. Dope. I'd have cleaned them up but for that."

"How do you feel?"

"Damned bad, Percival."

"Any bones broken?"

"No; I'm just knocked about; sore spot in my side; kicked, maybe. But it isn't that."

George didn't ask what "that" was.

"Where do you think he's taking us?"

"Bagdad, if we don't die upon the way."

"I don't think he'll kill us. It wouldn't be worth his while."

"You did not give him the rug."

"Not I!"

"It comes hard, Jones. I know, but your giving it up will save us both many bad days. He asked you for it?"

"He did."

"Then why the devil didn't you give it to him? What's a thousand pounds against this muddle?"

"For the simple reason I didn't have it to give up."

"What's that?"

"When I went up to my room, night before last, some one had been there ahead of me. And at first I had given you the credit," said George, with admirable frankness.

"And Mahomed will notify him of our arrival!" bitterly.
"Isn't there some way we two might get at Mahomed?"
"Perhaps; but it will take time. Don't bank upon money. Mahomed wants his head. If the rug . . ."
But Ryanne stopped. He looked beyond George, his face full of terror. George turned to see what had produced this effect. Fortune was coming out of her tent. "Fortune? My God!" Ryanne's legs gave under and he sank, his face in his hands. "I see it all now! Fool, fool! He's going to get me, Jones; he's going to get me through her!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Mahomed Offers Freedom.

Fortune had slept, but only after hours of watchful terror. The slightest sound outside the tent sent a scream into her throat, but she succeeded each time in stifling it. Once the evil laughter of a hyena came over her ears, shivering. Alone! She laid her head upon the wadded saddle-bags and wept silently, and every sob tore at her heart. She must keep up the face of being brave when she knew that she wasn't. The men must not be discouraged. Her department would characterize theirs; any sign of weakness upon her side would correspondingly depress them the more. She prayed to God to give her the strength to hold out. She was afraid of Mahomed; she was afraid of his grim smile, afraid of his mocking eyes; she could not sponge out the scene wherein he had so gratuitously kicked Horace in the side. Horace! No, she did not believe that she would ever forgive him for this web which he had spun and fallen into himself. Two things she must hide for the sake of them all: her fear of Mahomed and her knowledge of Ryanne's trickery.

What part in this tragedy had the Arab assigned her? Her fingers twined and untwined, and she rocked and rocked, bit her lips, lay down, sat up and rocked again. But for the exhaustion, but for the insistent call of nature, she would never have closed her eyes that night.

And her mother! What would her mother believe, after the scene that had taken place between them? What could she believe, save that her daughter had fulfilled her threat, and run away? And upon this not unreasonable supposition her mother would make no attempt to find out what had

eyes and turned aside his head. He was sick in soul and body. To have walked blindly into a trap like this, of his own making, too! Fool! What had possessed him, usually so keen, to trust the copper-hided devil? All for the sake of one glass of wine! With an effort entailing no madder pain in his side, he stilled the strangling hiccoughs, swung round and tried to smile reassuringly at the girl.
"You are better?" she asked.
There was in the tone of that question an answer to all his dreams. One night's work had given him his ticket to the land of those weighed and found wanting. She knew; how much he did not care; enough to read his guilt.

It appeared to George that she was accepting the situation with a philosophy deeper than either his or Ryanne's. Not a whimper, not a plaint, not a protest so far had she made. She was a Roland in petticoats.

"Oh, I'm bashed up a bit," said Ryanne. "I'll get my legs in a day or so. Fortune, will you answer one question?"

"As many as you like."

"How did you get here?"

"Don't you know?"

George wasn't certain, but the girl's voice was cold and accusing.

"I?"

"Yes. Wasn't it the note that you wrote to me?"

Ryanne took his head in his hands, wearily. "I wrote you no note, Fortune; I have never written you a note of any kind. You do not know my handwriting from Adam's. In God's name, why didn't you ask your mother or your uncle? They would have recognized the forgery at once. Who gave it to you?"

"Mahomed himself."

"Damn him!" Ryanne grew strong under the passing fit of rage. "No, don't tell me to be silent. I don't care about myself. I'm the kind of a man who pulls through, generally. But this takes the spine out of me. I'm to blame; it's all my fault."

"Say no more about it." She believed him. She really hadn't thought him capable of such baseness, though at the time of her abduction she had been inclined to accuse him. That he was here, a prisoner like herself, was conclusive evidence, so far as she was concerned, of his innocence. But she knew him to be responsible for the presence of Jones; knew him to be culpable of treachery of the meanest order; knew him to be lacking in generosity and magnanimity toward a man who was practically his benefactor. "What does Mahomed want?"

"The bally rug, Fortune. And Jones here, who had it, says that it is gone."

"Vanished, magic-carpet-wise," supplemented George.

"And Jones would have given it up."

"And a thousand like it, if we could have bought you out of this."

"Jones and I could have managed to get along."

"We shouldn't have mattered."

"And would you have returned to Mr. Jones his thousand pounds?"

"Yes, and everything else I have," quite honestly.

"Don't worry any more about the rug, then. I know where it is."

"You?" cried the two men.

"Yes. I stole it. I did so, thinking to avert this very hour; to save you from harm," to George, "and you from doing a contemptible thing," to Ryanne.

"It is in my room, done up in the big steamer-roll. And now I am glad that I stole it."

Ryanne laughed weakly.

Said George soberly: "What contemptible thing?" He remembered Mahomed's words in regard to Ryanne as the latter lay insensible in the sand.

Ryanne, quick to seize the opportunity of solving, to his own advantage, the puzzle for George, and at the same time guiding Fortune away from a topic, the danger of which she knew nothing, raised a hand. "I bribed Mahomed to kidnap you, Jones. Don't be impatient. You laughed at me when I laid before you the prospectus of the United Romance and Adventure Company. I wished to prove to you that the concern existed. And so here is your adventure upon approval. I thought, of course, you still had the rug. Mahomed was to carry you into the desert for a week, and by that time you would have surrendered the rug, returned to Cairo, the hero of a full-fledged adventure. Lord! what a mess of it I've made. I forgot, next to this bally rug, Mahomed loved me."

The hitherto credulous George had of late begun to look into facts instead of dreams. He did not believe a word of this amazing confession, despite the additional testimony of Fortune, relative to Ryanne's statements made to her in the bazaars.

"The bitter bitten," was George's sole comment.

Ryanne breathed easier.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

When Philosophy Comes Easy.

A philosopher who died recently left a fortune of \$1,000,000, which, we might say, accounts for the philosophicalness of his philosophy.—Detroit Free Press

CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

A good fire was started, and the funeral aspect of the oasis became quick and cheerful. A little distance from the blaze, George saw Fortune bending over the insensible Ryanne. She was bathing his face with a wet handkerchief. After a time Ryanne turned over and flung his arms limply across his face. It was the first sign of life he had exhibited since the start. Fortune gently pulled aside his arms and continued her tender mercies.

"Can I help?" asked George.

"You might rub his wrists," she answered.

It seemed odd to him that they should begin in such a matter-of-fact way. It would be only when they had fully adjusted themselves to the situation that questions would put forth for answers. He knelt down at the other side of Ryanne and massaged his wrists and arms. Once he paused, catching his breath.

"What is it?" she asked.

"A rib seems to bother me. It'll be all right tomorrow." He went on with his manipulations.

"Is he badly hurt?"

"I can't say."

His knowledge of anatomy was not wide; still, Ryanne's arms and legs worked satisfactorily. The trouble was either in his head or back of his ribs. He put his arm under Ryanne's shoulder and raised him. Ryanne mumbled some words. George bent down to catch them. "Hit 'em up in this half, boys; we've got them going. Hell! Get off my head, you farmer!"

"Two cards, please." His face puckered into what was intended for a smile. George laid him back gently. Foot-ball and poker; what had this man not known or seen in life? Some one came between the two men and the fire, casting a long shadow athwart them. George looked up and saw Mahomed standing close by. His arms were folded and his face grimly inscrutable.

"Have you any blankets?" asked George coolly.

Mahomed gave an order. A blanket and two saddle-bags were thrown down beside the unconscious man. George made a pillow of the bags and laid the blanket over Ryanne.

"Why do you waste your time over him?" asked Mahomed curiously.

"I would not let a dog die this way," he retorted.

"He would have let you die," replied Mahomed, turning upon his heel.

George stared thoughtfully at his whilom accomplice. What did the old villain insinuate?

"Can I do anything to make you more comfortable?" speaking to Fortune.

"I'm all right. I was chilled a little while ago, but the fire has done away with that. Thank you."

"You must eat when they bring you food."

"I'll try to," smiling bravely.

To take her in his arms, then and there, to appease their hunger and his heart!

Self-consciously, her hand stole to her hair. A color came into her cheeks. How frightful she must look! Neither hair-pin nor comb was left. She threw the strands across her shoulder and plucked the snarls and tangles apart, then braided the whole. He watched her, fascinated. He had never seen a woman do this before. It was almost a sacrifice for him to be so near her at such a moment. Afterward she drew her blanket over her shoulders.



"For the Simple Reason I Didn't Have It to Give Up."

to travel continuously from twenty-five to eighty miles the day! Others were busy with the pack-baskets. A tent, presumably Mahomed's, was being erected upon a clayey piece of ground in between the palms. No one entered the huts, even out of curiosity; so George was certain that the desertion had been brought about by one plague or another. A smaller tent was put up later, and he was grateful at the sight of it. It meant a little privacy for the poor girl. Great God, how helpless he was, how helpless they all were!

An incessant clatter, occasionally interspersed with a laugh, went on. The Arab, unlike the East Indian, is not ordinarily surly; and these seemed to be good-natured enough. They eyed George without malice. The war of the night before had been all in a day's work, for which they had been liberally paid. While he had spent much time in the Orient and had ridden camels, a real caravan, prepared for weeks of travel, was a distinct novelty, and so he viewed all with interest, knowing perfectly well that within a few days he would look upon these activities with a dull, hopeless anger. He went back to the girl and sat down beside her.

"Have you any idea why you are here?"

"No; unless he saw me in the bazaars with Horace, and thought to torture him by bringing me along."

Horace! A chill that was not of the night ran over his shoulders. So she called the adventurer by his given

Ryanne sank back, and George bundled him up snugly. Poor devil!

"He'll pull himself together in the morning," he said to Fortune. "I did not know that you knew him well."

"I have known him for eight or nine years. He used to visit my uncle at our villa at Mentone." She smiled.

"You look very odd."

"No odder than I feel," with ineffectual attempt to bring together the ends of his collar-band. "I must be a sight. I was in too much of a hurry to get there. Did you eat the soup and fish?"

"The soup, yes; but I'm afraid that it will be some time before I can find the dried fish palatable. I hope my courage will not fail me," she added, the first sign of anxiety she had shown. She was very lonely, very tired, very sad.

It is quite possible that Mahomed, coming over, spoiled a pretty scene; for George had some very brave words upon the tip of his tongue.

"Come," said Mahomed to Fortune. "You will sleep in the little tent. No one will disturb you."

"Good night, Mr. Jones. Don't worry; I am not afraid."

George was alone. He produced one of his precious cigars and lighted it. Then he drew over his feet one of the empty saddle-bags, wrapped his blanket round him, and sat smoking and thinking till the heat of the fire replenished from time to time, filled him with a comfortable drowsiness; and the cigar, still smoking, dropped from his nerveless fingers, as he lay



"Don't Worry Any More About the Rug, Then. I Know Where It Is."

become of her. Perhaps she would be glad, glad to be rid of her and her questions. Alone! Well, she had always been alone.

The only ray of sunshine in all was the presence of Jones. She felt, subtly, that he would not only stand between her and Mahomed, but also between her and Ryanne.

"Hush!" whispered George. "Don't let her see you like this. She musn't know."

"You don't understand," replied Ryanne miserably.

"I believe I do." George's heart was heavy. This man was in love with her, too.

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