

Here Was the End of the Puzzle.

SYNOPSIS.

George Percival Algernon Jones, vice-president of the Metropolitan Oriental Rug company of New York, thirsting for romance, is in Cairo on a business trip. Horace Ryenne arrives at the hotel in Cairo with Major Callahan, his friend, and Mrs. Chedsoye, the famous hussy. Ylondes rug which he admits having stolen from a pasha at Bagdad. Jones meets Major Callahan and later is introduced to Fortune Chedsoye, by woman to whom he had loaned 100 pounds some time ago some months previously, and who turns out to be Fortune's mother. Jones takes Mrs. Chedsoye and Fortune to a polo game. Fortune returns to the hotel and finds Mrs. Chedsoye engaged in some mysterious enterprise unknown to the daughter. Ryenne 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. Chedsoye, her brother, Major Callahan, Wallace and Ryenne, as the United Romance and Adventure company, plan a robbery involving Jones. Ryenne makes known to Major Callahan his intention to marry Fortune. Mrs. Chedsoye declares she will not permit it. Plans are laid to prevent Jones' sailing for Egypt. Ryenne steals the rug and suggests the destruction of the New York merchant as a means of securing his return. The rug disappears from Jones' room. Fortune quarrels with her mother when she later refuses to explain her mysterious actions. Fortune receives a message purporting to be from Ryenne asking her to meet him in a secluded place that evening. Jones receives a message asking him to meet Ryenne at the English Club. Jones arrives, even though he has carried off into the desert by Mahomed and his accomplices after a desperate fight. He discovers that Ryenne and Fortune also are captives, the former is badly battered and unconscious, and Ryenne conscious and the sight of Fortune in captivity reveals to him the fact that Mahomed intends to get vengeance on him through the girl. Fortune acknowledges that he stole the rug from Jones' room. She offers to return it to Mahomed if he will free all three of them. Mahomed agrees to liberate Fortune and one of the men in return for the rug. A courier is sent to Cairo for the rug, but returns with the information that Mrs. Chedsoye and her brother have sailed for New York. Fortune spurns offered freedom which does not include her two companions. Ryenne continues the journey toward Basra. Ryenne informs Jones that Mrs. Chedsoye is the most adroit smuggler of the age, and is overheard by Fortune. The three captives are rescued by Henry Wadsworth, who is in charge of a desert caravan. Mahomed and Mrs. Chedsoye discover the absence of Fortune and leaves for New York, taking the girl's belongings with her. Through forged letters of credit, the major and other companies take possession of Jones' New York home. Jones, Ryenne and Fortune arrive at Damascus. Ryenne fails in his resolution to lead a better life. Ryenne sends a letter to New York. At Jones' insistence, Mr. Mortimer, offers Fortune a home, but she declines. Jones then declares his love and finds that it is reciprocated.

CHAPTER XX.—(Continued.)

"I love you," he said; "I love you better than all the world."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure? Can you doubt it?"

"Sometimes."

"Why . . . ?"

But she interrupted him quickly. "In all this time you have never asked me if I love you. Why haven't you?"

"I have been afraid."

"Ask me!"

"Do you love me?" his heart missed a beat.

She leaned toward him swiftly.

"I am very happy," was all he could say.

"George, I am uneasy. I don't know why. It's my mother, my uncle, and Horace. I am going to meet them somewhere. I know it. And I worry about you."

"About me? That's foolish." He smiled down at her.

"Ah, why did my mother seek to renew the acquaintance with you? Why did Horace have you kidnapped into the desert? There can be no such a thing as the United Romance and Adventure company. It is a cloak for something more sinister."

"Pshaw! What's the use of worry—

The Pet from Carpet Bagdad

by HAROLD MAC GRATH

Author of HEARTS AND MASKS

THE MAN ON THE BOX etc.

Illustrations by M.G. KETTNER •••

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ing, little woman? Whatever schemes they had must be out of joint by now. Sometimes I think I must be dreaming, little girl."

"I am not little. I'm almost as tall as you are."

"You are vastly taller in many ways."

"Don't be too sure. I am human; I have my moods. I am sometimes crotchety; sometimes unjust and quick of temper."

"All right; I want you, temper and all, just the same."

"But will they like me? Won't they think I'm an adventuress, or something like that?"

"Bless your heart, not in a thousand years! I'm a pretty wise man in some ways, and they know it."

And so it proved to be. Both Mr and Mrs. Mortimer greeted them at the pier in Hoboken. One glance at the face of the girl was sufficient. Mrs. Mortimer held out her arms. It was a very fine thing to do.

"I was in doubt at first," she said frankly, "George is so guileless. But to look at you, my child, would scatter the doubts of a Thomas. Will you let me be your mother, if only for a little while?" with a wise and tender smile.

Shyly Fortune accepted the embrace. Never had she been so happy. Never had she felt arms like these about her.

"What did he cable you?" she asked in a whisper.

"That he loved you and wanted me to mother you against that time when he might have the right to take you as his own. Has he that right?"

"Yes. And oh! he is the bravest and tenderest man I know; and below it all he is only a boy."

Mrs. Mortimer patted her hand. A little while later all four went over to the city and drove uptown to the Mortimer home. On the way Fortune told her story, simply, without avoiding any essential detail. And all her new mother did was to put an arm about her and draw her closer.

"As quietly as he possibly could, he stepped down from his uncertain perch. In the fine fury that followed his amazement, his one thought was to summon the police at once, to confront the wretches in their villainy; but once outside in the street, he cooled. Instantly he saw the trial in court. Fortune as witness against her own mother. That was horrible and not to be thought of. But what could he do? He was shaken to his soul. The stupendous audacity of such a plan! To have worked out every detail, down to the altering of the keyhole to prevent surprise! He saw the automobiles. They were leaving that night. If he acted at all, it must be within an hour; in less than that time they would be loading the cars. His mind began to rid itself of its confusion. Without the aid of the police; and presently he saw the way to do it.

He was off at a dog-trot, upon the balls of his feet, silently. Within five minutes he was mounting the steps to the Mortimer home, and in another minute was inside. The others saw directly that something serious had happened.

"What's the trouble, George? House vanished?" asked Mortimer.

"Have you got a brace of revolvers?" said George quietly.

"Two automatics. But"

"Give them to me," less evenly in tone. "Will you call up Arthur Wadsworth, president of the Merchant-Mechanic Bank of New York."

Arthur was small, thin, blond like his brother, but the hair was so light upon the top of his head that he gave one the impression that he was bald. His eyes looked out from behind half-shut lids; his cheeks were cadaverous; his pale lips met in a straight, unpleasant line. There was not the slightest resemblance between the two brothers, either in their bodies or in their souls. George recognized this fact immediately. He disliked the man instinctively, just as he could not help admiring his roguish nature.

"The bank?"

"Yes, the bank. You know, it is just in the rear of my house."

Here Fortune came forward. All the bright color was gone from her cheeks; the old mask of despair had re-formed. She needed no further enlightenment.

"Are you going back there?" she asked.

"Yes, dear; I must. Mr. Mortimer will go with me."

"And I?"

"No, heart o' mine; you've got to stay here."

"If you do not take me with you, you will not find me here when you return."

"My child," began Mortimer soothingly, "you must not talk like that. There will be danger."

"Then notify the police, and let the danger rest upon their shoulders," she said, her jaws set squarely.

"I can't call in the police," replied George, miserably.

"Shall I tell you why?"

"Dearest, can't you understand that it is I am thinking of?"

"I am determined. If I do not go with you, you shall never see me again. My mother is there!"

Tragedy. Mrs. Mortimer stretched out a hand, but the girl did not see it. Her mother; her own flesh and blood! Oh, the poor child!

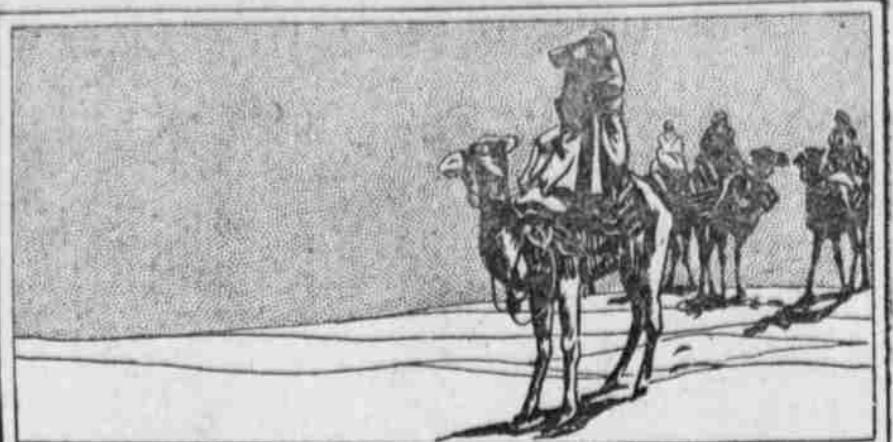
"Come, then," said George, in despair. "But you are hurting me, Fortune."

"Forgive me, but I must go with you. I must!"

"Get me the revolvers, Mr. Mortimer. We'll wait for Wadsworth. Will you please telephone him? I'm afraid I couldn't talk steadily enough. Explain nothing save that it concerns his bank."

George sat down. Not during those early days of the journey across the desert had he felt so pitifully weak and inefficient.

Fortune paced the room, her arms folded tightly across her breast. Strange, there was neither fear nor pain in her heart, only a wild wrath.



Ryanne tipped the third bottle daintily.

When Mortimer returned from the telephone, saying that Wadsworth would be right over, he asked George to explain fully what was going on. It was rather a long story. George managed to get through it with a coherence understandable, but no more.

George inspected the revolvers carefully to see if they were loaded.

The bell rang, and Arthur Wadsworth came in. Mortimer knew him; George did not. He drew his interest as it fell due and deposited it in another bank. That was the extent of his relations with Arthur Wadsworth, president of the Merchant-Mechanic Bank of New York.

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"I want you to go with me to my house at once," began George.

"Please explain."

George disliked the voice even more than the man himself. "Everything will be explained there," he replied.

"This is very unusual," the banker complained.

"You will find it so. Come." George moved toward the hall, the revolvers in his coat-pocket.

"But I insist"

"Mr. Wadsworth, everything will be fully explained to you the moment you enter my house. More I shall not tell you. You are at liberty to return home."

"It concerns the bank?" The voice had something human in it now; a note of affection.

Arthur Wadsworth loved the bank as a man loves his sweetheart, but more explicitly, as a miser loves the hoard hidden in the stocking.

"It concerns the bank?" he repeated, torn by doubt.

George shrugged. "Let us be going."

"Will it be necessary to call in the police?"

"No."

"I suppose, then," said Wadsworth bitterly, wondering, too, over the strange animosity of this young man he did not know—"I suppose I must do just as you say?"

"Absolutely." George's teeth came together with a click.

The four of them passed out of the house, each singularly wrought with agitation. Fortune walked ahead with George. Neither spoke. They could hear the occasional protest from the banker into Mortimer's ear; but Mortimer did not open his lips. They came to the house, and then George whispered his final instructions to Wadsworth. The latter, when he un-

derstood what was taking place, became wild with rage and terror; and it was only because George threatened to warn the conspirators that he subsided.

"And," went on George, "if you do not obey, you can get out of it the best you know how. Now, silence, absolute silence."

He pressed back the grille gate, and the others tiptoed after him.

Ryanne tipped the third bottle daintily. Not a drop was wasted. How the golden beads swarmed up to the brim, to break into the essences of perfume! And this was good wine; twelve years in the bottle.

"It's like some dream; eh?"

Wallace smacked his lips loudly. "Wallace," chided Ryanne, "you always drink like a sailor. You don't swallow champagne; you sip it, like this."

Major Callahan swayed his glass back and forth under his nose. "Smells like vineyard after a rain."

"There's poetry for you!" laughed the butler.

Mrs. Chedsoye seemed absorbed in other things. She was trying to discover what it was that gave this supreme moment so flat a taste. It was always so; it was the chase, the goal was nothing. It was the excitement of going toward, not arriving at, the destination. Was she, who considered herself so perfect, a freak after all, shallow like a hill-stream and as aimless in her endeavors? Had she possessed a real enthusiasm for anything?

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His Mistake.

"A scientist said not long ago that music would make a cow give more milk, but it won't work. I bought a phonograph and tried it."

"The scientist did not say a phonograph, he said music."