

The Problems of Professor Forrester

In The Fog

A Story of Bizarre Mystery

By SEABURY QUINN

All of us know the square-jawed dick, the gumshoe officer, the deductive sleuth, the infallible investigator, for those are the types we are accustomed to meet, in fiction and in life; but in these series of mystery stories Seabury Quinn acquaints us with a detective of a new and quite different sort—Professor Harvey Forrester, of the School of Anthropology of Benjamin Franklin University—whose methods of solving crime riddles place him apart in a single class. We think you will like the bookish Professor. We believe you will admire his cool self-possession when confronting desperate enterprise, his scholarly poise in the midst of stirring adventure. And we know you will find him unique. E. B.

CHAPTER ONE

The Girl in the Limousine

WASHINGTON lay cowed beneath a pall of gloom. The heavy fog, which had obscured the city's vistas all day, began dripping rain about nine o'clock, and the dense clouds of soft coal smoke, consequent of the annual strike in the anthracite fields, did their best to make the city on the Potomac as murky as the city on the Thames. Wisps of sticky sulphur-colored haze invaded the houses, felt their way haltingly, like blinded ghosts, between the bare-limbed trees, magnified and distorted commonplace objects into spectral monstrosities and drew curtains of impenetrable vapor from sky to earth. Here and there a motor's headlight glowed dully a moment, only to disappear like a firefly gobbled by a toad as the fog's draperies closed about it. Street lamps were mere points of cross-shaped luminance.

Professor Harvey Forrester, of the School of Anthropology of Benjamin Franklin University, nodded a curt good night to the doorman of the Far Corners Club, paused a moment in the feeble light shining through the plate glass doors of the club house, and scowled disconsolately at the

surrounding cloud bank.

"I might have known it," he muttered to himself. "Of course, there's no more chance of getting a taxicab than there is of meeting a gigantosaur in the Congressional Library. What a fool I was to come out tonight!"

He crossed the strip of puddle-dotted sidewalk and paused irresolute at the curb, tapping the ferrule of his walking stick against the stone and peering into the enshrouding vapor for some possible evidence of a cab.

"I'd give ten dollars for a taxi—" the Professor, who had an ingrown habit of conversing with himself, began, then paused, open-mouthed with surprise. Like a leviathan emerging from the deep, a long, dark-hued automobile slipped silently out of the fog, coming to a stop immediately before him.

"Well," the Professor congratulated himself, "this is luck. To think—"

For the second time in forty seconds the little scientist interrupted his self-addressed remarks. A curtain was suddenly flipped upward behind the glass of the motor's tonneau, and the Professor looked straight into a pair of wide, appealing eyes.

For eight seconds, perhaps, a woman's face, intensely pale, crowned with a mass of pale yellow

hair and muffled about the chin with the curling collar of a white fur wrap, was within six inches of Professor Forrester's. He saw her wide eyes grow wider still, as though dilated with horror, saw her red, well-formed lips part to frame an anguished appeal, caught the momentary flutter of a slender, pale hand raised in an imploring gesture, then, as abruptly as it had appeared, the face was blotted out. The curtain at the car's window was snatched downward with the quickness of a winking eyelid, and the big car slipped away into the fog, with scarcely more noise than an otter diving into a stream.

Too astonished to do more than gape, Professor Forrester turned his gaze after the disappearing motor, saw its red tail light blink mockingly at him from the obscurity of the thickening mist, then dissolve into nothingness.

"My word!" Forrester half turned in the direction the mysterious car had taken, even took a step or two into the street, then halted, shaking his head in bewilderment. "Did I really see it?" he asked himself, pausing in his stride and tapping his cane against the curbstone.

"Cab, sir?" the hail cut through his ruminations. "Taxi, sir?"

"Yes!" The Professor whirled about to the providentially-sent conveyance. "Yes, of course. See that car ahead?" he pointed vaguely down the street. "Follow it. Don't let it get out of sight! Catch it!" He leaped into the cab and banged the door behind him.

The taxi driver had seen no such car. He had seen nothing but the prospect of a fare. But he was at no loss what to do. He had been ordered to follow a car ahead, and one car was very like another in such a fog. Pressing his foot down on the accelerator, he urged his vehicle smartly forward, caught the red tail light of another motor's tail light and proceeded to maintain a discrete distance of four yards from it, slowing when the other slowed, putting on speed when the other did, through an endless succession of tunnel-like streets and avenues vaulted with billowing festoons of fog.

"What's next, boss?" The driver had brought his cab to a bumping halt. "The other bird's stopped. Want me to wait here?"

"No." Forrester extracted a bill from his pocket and flung it to the driver, without pausing for change. He lowered his head and launched himself

into the intervening haze like a channel swimmer entering the water for a record-breaking dash, cleared the distance in a dozen hurried steps, and seized the knob of the parked motor's door.

"I beg your pardon," he apologized, remembering his breeding in the midst of his haste. "You seemed to be in trouble. Is there anything I could—"

His voice trailed off into silence. There was no reply from the car's dark interior. The car was empty; not even a laprobe or cushion relieved the bareness of its luxurious mohair upholstery.

Professor Forrester gazed blankly into the deserted cabin of the motor, then at the rows of dark, ghostly houses standing behind their iron fences, then once more at the empty car. His own taximan had obeyed his order not to wait and was already three-quarters of a block away, though the Professor had no more idea where he was than he had concerning the winner of the current season's baseball pennant. Standing beside a dark, deserted automobile in a dark, deserted street, he was completely marooned.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed. "This is really very annoying!"

A moment he stood stock-still, striving to catch some hint of his locality by gazing at the blank-faced houses, then uttered a suppressed sigh of relief. Above the transom of the nearest house there struggled a faint, flickering ray of light, not more than a flicker, but sufficient to indicate the place was habited, and to give reasonable assurance that somebody able to inform him where he was might be found within.

Fumbling with the sagging gate in the cast-iron fence, Professor Forrester let himself into the shallow yard, felt his way carefully, step by step, along the uneven brick walk, mounted the three low steps of the porch and felt for the bell-pull. Nothing but hard, wet bricks met his questing fingers.

The Professor reached inside his overcoat, produced a pack of paper matches, and struck one to aid him in his search. As the little spurt of flame leaped up from the paper torch, a splash of water from the door's narrow pediment dropped with the accuracy of a well-directed shot, extinguishing the light and wetting the heads of all the matches in the book.

"Drat it!" flinging the ruined matches from him in disgust. He drew back his walking stick and

struck a reverberating blow on the panel before him.

Bang, bang, bang, the heavy cane pounded on the wood. No response.

Louder, more insistently, he played his tattoo. Still no answer.

"Confound them! Are they all dead?" he muttered testily, and pushed sharply against the panel with his fist, hammering loudly with his cane at the same time.

Squeaking a little on rain-dampened hinges, the door gave way, and a flood of subdued red light rushed out to meet him, almost like the warmth from a suddenly opened furnace door. At the same moment another drop of chilled water disengaged itself from the little shelf above the doorway and dropped with mathematical precision down the back of his neck. With an involuntary movement, he leaped forward as the frigid water touched his skin. The door swung to behind him, and he heard a sharp *click* from a spring lock.

All unconsciously, Professor Forrester had entered a strange dwelling and locked himself in.

CHAPTER TWO The House of Mysteries

REALIZING his plight, he turned to seize the door-knob, as intent now on letting himself out as he had been on getting in a moment before; but his hand paused in midair, and his eyes blinked rapidly with surprise behind the lenses of his neat, rimless nose-glasses.

The door, apparently a single slab of dark, highly-polished wood, was wholly without knob or bolt of any sort. The lock he had heard snap was cunningly concealed inside the wood, and unless there was some secret and artfully hidden keyhole in the panel, the Professor was a helpless prisoner.

Groping feverishly for some hidden spring which might unlock the door, he ran his hands up and down the smooth wood, breathing in short, excited puffs, wondering how he might phrase a logical-sounding excuse to anyone who might find him.

"They'd be furious—" he began, then stopped abruptly, for an emphatic expression of the predicted fury came with startling suddenness.

A whizzing, whirring sound, like the whine of a ricocheting bullet, sounded over his left shoulder,

something which gleamed ominously slithered past his cheek and struck the door with a smashing impact a scant half-inch from his head.

It was a knife, about eight inches in length, double-edged and razor-sharp, the blade widening out from the hilt and ending in a wicked, parrot's-beak hook at the tip. The handle, of polished bone and cunningly wrought brass, was elaborately damascened, and the steel blade itself was decorated with a delicate tracery of inlaid bronze. Forrester, who had been in nearly every quarter of the globe on scientific quests, recognized the thing instantly for what it was—a cheray knife from Afghanistan, deadly alike as a weapon or missile, and a favorite implement in a land where murder is cultivated both as a fine art and an exceedingly desirable profession.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated softly, and wheeled about to face his assailant.

The sight of a scowling, swart-faced Afghan, a ferocious, bewhiskered Patan, poising a second knife for the throw—any of the host of menacing figures conjured up by the dagger—might have brought the blood rushing to the Professor's throat and sucked the breath from his lungs, but what he actually beheld left him speechless with horror, while tiny ripples of cold chased each other up his spine and across his cheeks. The big, dimly-lit hall was empty. Nowhere was there the slightest evidence of any person, though the knife, still quivering in the door behind him, bore mute testimony of the proximity of some murderously inclined foe.

Straight away from the Professor's feet ran the hall, fully thirty feet long by twelve wide. In its center a big, red-globed lamp, like the vigil light before a church altar, swung from the ceiling by three chains of hammered brass. Over the highly-polished floor were strewn oriental rugs of every hue, from the deep, midnight blue of Persia to the lighter reds and shell pink of Turkey and India. Other rugs, riotous in color and design as a hashish-eater's dream, were draped along the walls from ceiling to floor, with here and there the more intricate pattern of an Indian shawl. Beside the rugs, the hall contained only three articles of furniture, a small chair and taboret of dark wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and a large *tchibuk*, or water pipe, with a pot-bellied bowl of red glass. None of these was large enough to afford ambush for a six-weeks-

old child, much less a man capable of hurling the heavy knife which had all but split his head.

Professor Forrester looked long at the bizarre place into which he had come so unceremoniously, taking stock of it as he would have inspected a location for archaeological excavations. Then, still keeping his gaze on the room before him, he reached his right hand up and backward, found the hilt of the knife, and withdrew the weapon from the door. Who or where the assailant was the Professor did not know, but he was determined not to be caught unarmed if the unknown manifested himself a second time.

The knife was a beautifully balanced mechanism of death. As his long, white fingers closed about the hilt, Professor Forrester felt something of the savagery of the hillmen, for whom the dagger had been made, surging through him.

Dagger advanced like a sword, he took a careful step toward the end of the hall, watching warily for any sign of an enemy, then paused suddenly as one of the hanging rugs bellied out as though stirred by a breath of air.

"Who's there?" he demanded sharply, forgetting that it was he who trespassed. "Come out of there, or I'll come in after you!"

The drapery swayed again, swung back like the curtain of a tent, and a man slipped quickly into the hall, facing the Professor.

He was an ugly-looking customer, almost a dwarf, for his turbaned head came scarcely to a level with Forrester's shoulder, and his short, heavy legs were as bent as a split barrel-hoop. His forehead was low and narrow, sloping backward like a gorilla's, and the long, undershot jaw, tufted with a two-pronged wisp of beard, added to his apelike appearance. From head to ankles, he was clothed in dirty white linen, his head swathed in a twisted rag of fabric, loose-sleeved jacket and tight-fitting trousers of the same material completing the costume. His broad, splay feet with long, prehensile toes—another monkey like feature—were bare.

These things the Professor noticed with the first glance of a man who is trained to observe whatever comes before him with scientific precision. The last item of the fellow's equipment, however, excited more interest than his wardrobe. It was a Himalayan cutlass, three feet long and four inches wide, pointed as a needle, and so heavy that a well-directed thrust could detach a limb as easily as

a carving knife dismembers a roast fowl.

The heavy, bandy-legged man faced the Professor with a scowl of murderous hatred, swung his cutlass over his head, brought it downward with a rotary motion and advanced in a menacing manner.

The Professor was fairly proficient in Hindustani as he was in nearly every other tongue, ancient and modern, and in other circumstances he would have explained his presence in the house with all the flowery ornamentation demanded by the best oriental etiquette. As it was, his knowledge of the language enabled him to understand that his monkey-faced assailant was declaring him to be a "fetid hyena, a stinking he-goat and the offspring of a mangy she-camel and an unmentionable disease."

Whatever was to be done had to be done quickly. Professor Forrester reversed his knife, seizing it by the curved tip of its blade, and dashed the weapon, heavy brass hilt foremost, straight at his bellowing adversary's face.

Amazingly, the knife somersaulted in the air, almost as if it were a living thing, and flashed blade-foremost at the charging Oriental. Had Professor Forrester but known, his sportsmanship in trying to knock his opponent unconscious with the handle of the throwing knife had led him to adopt the technique followed by the most skillful knife throwers of the East. The curved blade, shaped specially for the purpose, whirled in midair, reversing the manner of the Professor's throw, and buried itself three-quarters in length in the chest of the charging Indian.

The expression on the fellow's face was almost comical. His eyes widened, his brows raised and contracted in a grimace of pained surprise, and his mouth drew downward at the corners as though he would utter some droll protest at the trick the Professor had played him. Next instant a spate of blood welled gurgling to his lips, he uttered a single choking sound, halfway between a hiccup and a gargle, the heavy cutlass fell from his hand with a thud, and he reared suddenly backward as if tripped, wavered unsteadily a moment, then measured his length supine on the floor, only the compulsive twitching of his hands and feet telling he had possessed life an instant before.

The sharp, wide blade of the heavy throwing dagger had cleft his heart as a huckster's knife splits an apple.

CHAPTER THREE
**Mumtaz Banjjan—
Or Rosalie Osterhaut?**

PROFESSOR Forrester viewed his handiwork with an odd, sinking feeling at the pit of his stomach. Death by violence was not entirely strange to him—he had been in too many semi-civilized and savage places not to have seen it—but sudden death as the record of a kindly act (for he had intended only to stun his opponent) brought him up with a jolt.

“My goodness!” he murmured, bending above the man’s bleeding corpse. “This is really too bad. This is dreadful!”

Somewhere in the dim, unseen recesses of the house, behind that mysterious, rug-swathed wall, there sounded a quick, subdued *tinkle-tinkle* like the clatter of chimes from a Japanese wind-gong, only softer and more musical.

What the ringing portended Forrester had no idea, but within the space of three minutes he had been locked in this house of mystery, and had been murderously assaulted and compelled to kill a man in self defense. Taking chances was decidedly not in order.

Leaning forward, he possessed himself of his late adversary’s sword and assumed a truculent attitude.

“Come out,” he commanded. “Come out o’ that and fight like a man, or I’ll—”

The threat died half formed on his lips. A curtain of resplendent Bokhara tapestry swung back, and a girl stepped—*glided* would be a more accurate term—into the rug strewn hall.

She was a little under medium height, though she appeared taller because of her extreme slenderness. From breast to ankles she was enveloped in a close-fitting gown of clinging, shimmering terra-cotta colored silk, heavily fringed at the bottom with silver bullion. Over her head, like a nun’s veil, but falling to the metal-fringed hem of her robe, was a mantle of black lace, bordered with a wide strip of intricately worked golden wires as fine and soft as hair. About her arms were broad bands of hammered gold and silver wires, while every finger of each hand, including the thumbs, was decked with jeweled rings to the second

knuckle. On each great and little toe of her naked ivory-white feet was set a golden ring bearing a huge flashing green stone, so that with each mincing step her feet suggested the gliding of green-eyes serpents. Around her slender bare ankles were looped circles of exquisitely-colored glass discs, strung on golden wires, which clashed together musically with each movement of her feet. It was these, the Professor realized, which had made the chiming sound that warned him of her approach.

For a moment she regarded the Professor and his victim in wide-eyed surprise, then a smile, trustful and friendly as a child’s, parted her vividly rouged lips.

“Why,” she said, framing the words carefully, as though they were in an unfamiliar tongue, “you’re American, aren’t you?”

Professor Forrester returned her look with compound interest. “Young woman,” he replied acidly, “is there anything about me which leads you to suspect I’m a Fiji Islander?”

“Oh, no-o-o,” she assured him earnestly, his sarcasm as lost on her as it would have been on a child, “you look like an American. But—” she glanced from the dead man to him and back again wonderingly—“what are you doing here?”

“U’m,” Prof. Forrester’s free hand caressed his hard shaven chin in irritated puzzlement. “What are you doing here?”

“Oh, I belong here; I belong to—”

“Stuff! Nonsense!” Forrester cut in testily. “You’re no more Indian than I am.”

His denial was justified, for, despite the elaborate orientalism of her costume, the girl was a pronounced blonde, with white, creamy skin, hair the color of well-pulled taffy and eyes of pale topaz brown. Every thread of her clothing, every glittering item of her ornaments, cried “East” aloud; while her face, her complexion, her smoothly combed and parted fair hair and the rounded slenderness of her figure pronounced “West.”

“Of course not,” she agreed, nodding her small head till the golden ornaments in her little ears jingled musically. “I’m American too.”

“Then how in—” the Professor began, but she cut his question in two with her explanation.

“I am called Mumtaz Banjjan, the Lady Moonflower, because I am so fair,” she told him, “but when I was baptized they called me Rosalie—Rosalie Osterhaut.”

Forrester rested the point of his sword on the velvet rug at this feet and stared at her. "Mumtaz Banjjan—Rosalie Osterhaut?" he repeated incredulously. "What sort of circus hocus-pokus—"

The girl's lips parted in another smile, rather patiently, as she were attempting to explain to a backward child.

"I was born in Mindano, in the Philippines," she explained. "My father was Sergeant Jack Osterhaut of the American Army, my mother was half Spanish, half Filipino. Father and she were married while he was stationed on the island, and I was sent to the American School. Me, I am educated. I can read and write and do arithmetic, if it's not too hard."

"U'm," Forrester commented. "All right, you were born and educated. What else?"

"My father was killed in battle with the Moros, and my mother died of a broken heart—maybe of too much work and not enough to eat. She was a *lavendera*—how do you call it? a washerwoman?—after father was killed, and there were four children and very little money, you see. I was eleven years old when she died, and her uncle—her uncle on the native side—took me from the house with my little brother, Juan. Little Juan he apprenticed to a merchant who sold rum and gin, and took his wages in liquor. He used to get drunk and beat us.

"Me he sold to a Chinaman named Kim Tong Ho. He was very ugly man, this Kim. He had the smallpox, and only had one eye left. He paid my uncle fifteen dollars tin for me in trade gin, and took me to Manila, where he sold me for fifty dollars gold to Abani Kuma Das who worked for Chandra Roi. The American Guardian Society tried to get me back, but Abani put me on board of Chinese ship and took me to Singapore, and then I was taken to Chandra Roi's house. He brought me here."

"Here?" the Professor echoed. "Why in the name of heaven should he bring you here?"

She spread her exquisite, slender hands setting the bangles on her wrists chiming.

"I do not know," she confessed. "Perhaps it is the police. They want him very bad, and has traveled much recently. I only know he brought me here, and I was asleep most of the time because he gave me too much opium. Tonight he put a fur coat on me and took me somewhere in a motor car. I do not know where it was, but there were men there, and some women, too, and some of them smoked

opium. I did the gesture dance, while Hunsu played the zither, and after that they gave me more opium water and brought me back. I woke up in the motor, and saw a man in the street. He looked like an American, and I tried to call him to rescue me, but Hunsu dragged me away from the window and held me till we were out of sight."

"Then it was *you* who signaled me in the fog! I thought I recognized you."

"Perhaps; I am not sure," she replied. "I was almost asleep with poppy juice. But I am very glad you are an American and have come here. Before she died my mother always told me that American men were good to women. I do not know; I have never known any Americans, you see."

She smiled engagingly at him as she continued: "Now, you will please kill Chandra Roi as you did Hunsu, and Sookee and Chitu, too, and take me to live with you? Chandra Roi has spent much money on my education, and I can sing the songs of Ten Thousand Devotions, and do the gesture dance, which is very difficult, and do as the frog children of India do—I can bend backward and thrust my head into a pool of water and keep it there while you smoke almost the whole of a cigarette, and I can do all sorts of contortionist's tricks. I can slip my head and feet through a hoop only six inches wide at the same time. Very few girls can do that. Yes, I am worth much money, and you can become rich exhibiting me, but I will give me to you if you kill Chandra Roi and the others.

"I do not love Chandra Roi, even though he gives me many beautiful things"—she swept an appreciative glance over her jewelry—"but I should not mind staying in your house. I will be a very good girl, American. I will serve you as a faithful slave should serve her master; but first you must kill the others as you did Hunsu."

"H'm, charming little program you've mapped out for me," the Professor commented.

"Yes," the girl agreed, casting him a languishing glance from her black-fringed amber eyes. "I shall make you very happy, but first you must kill Chandra Roi and Sookee and Chitu."

"You insist on homicide as a condition?" Forrester asked in mock seriousness.

"But of course," she replied, as one who states a self-evident fact. "How are we to escape if you do not kill them?"

"U'm; we'll see how this works," the Professor

returned, striding to the door and raising his sword, ax-like, for a blow at the panels.

"My dear chap! I wouldn't; I really wouldn't, you know," a smooth, unctuous voice behind him admonished. "You might mar the woodwork, don't you know?"

CHAPTER FOUR

Chandra Roi

PROFESSOR Forrester whirled as though struck by a pin, his heavy blade still poised above his head.

At the far end of the hall, smiling sardonically, stood a rather heavy-set young man in elaborately correct dinner clothes, shirt studs and cuff links of garnet, matched by waistcoat buttons of a similar ruddy hue, giving his costume something of an *opera bouffe* note, which was heightened by a large turban of pale green silk, set at a jaunty angle on his large head.

But if the ostentatious jewelry and the green turban struck a note of unreality, there was nothing but severe practicality denoted by the small, efficient-looking automatic pistol which he held unwaveringly in line with the astonished Professor's breast.

"Don't you think you'd do well to put that ridiculous pig-sticker down, old thing?" he asked, with a negligent gesture of his free hand toward the Professor's upraised sword. "Just toss it on the carpet here, there's a good fellow."

"*Chitu! Sookee!*" he raised his voice in sharp command.

The girl suddenly galvanized into action. Rushing across the velvet carpet, her tight-fitting, sheer garments outlining every movement of her sinuously lovely figure, she fell to her knees beside the young man, her hands crossed palms outward before her forehead. "Chandra Roi—Master—be merciful!" she besought. "He—" she gestured wildly toward the Professor—"he broke into my lord's house like a common thief and killed the good Hunsu. Me he would have stolen, too, but I held him with talk till you could come and take him. Mercy, my lord, mercy!" She bent forward till her crossed hands rested on the carpet and bowed her forehead upon them. "Be pitiful, be pitiful!"

"Quite so, my dear," the man replied. "I heard

your captivating conversation. A little touch of the whip may teach you to be more tactful in your talk with strangers hereafter.

"*Chitu! Sookee!*" he called again, more loudly this time.

A rug swung back from the wall, and two men in white linen slipped through the opening. One of them, short, squat, dark-skinned and heavily bearded, held a four-thonged whip in his hand, and at the sight of the instrument of torture the girl cowered still lower on the floor, drawing her bent knees up to her chin, beating her head softly upon her crossed hands and shuddering in a frenzy of abject supplication.

"Mercy, mercy!" she begged, writhing on the carpet till her flowing veil brushed the body of the dead Hunsu. For a moment she started back from the contact, then dropped her head and hands, enveloped as they were in her trailing mantle, over the dead man's breast and shook with sobs.

"*Ai, ai,*" she cried shrilly, the universal mourning of the East. "Hunsu, good Hunsu, he did kill you! *Ai, ai, wah!*"

"Take her out," the young man ordered, motioning to the prostrate girl, "and be sure you do not strike hard enough to bruise her badly. I want her to dance again tomorrow night."

Lamenting her fate at the top of her shrill voice, the girl was dragged from through the rug-covered doorway, and Professor Forrester and the turbaned man faced each other across Hunsu's corpse.

"Well, sir," the Oriental demanded crisply, his exaggerated English manner falling from him like a cloak, "what have you to say for yourself?"

Forrester stared at him curiously a moment then responded, "I got into this crazy madhouse by mistake, and when I tried to get out I found your door fastened with a spring lock. All I want to do now is—"

"Get out and send for the police?" the other supplied sarcastically. "You got in by mistake, eh? I daresay it was a mistake that you followed my car through the fog, too? You murdered my servant here—" he touched the body with his foot—"by mistake, too?"

"I certainly did," the Professor assured him earnestly, "I only intended to stun him with the knife hilt, but—"

"You lie," the other cut in. "I know you.

You're an agent of that damned American Guardian Society, and you've followed Mumtaz Banjjan here to take her away from me. Either that, or you're from the British police. I'll show you what it means to meddle in the affairs of Chandra Roi!"

"Careful!" he ordered sharply, raising his pistol threateningly as Forrester took an angry step forward. "Stand where you are. Chitu, Sookee! Never mind Banjjan. Come here. Quickly!"

The two servants popped back into the hall, like twin jacks-in-the-box, almost before the echo of his hail died away.

"Take him," the master ordered. "Put him in the cellar."

Forrester squared his shoulders and doubled his fists, prepared to trade a few black eyes for his liberty, but he was given no more chance to fight than a fly in the lair of a hungry spider.

Seizing a rug from the floor, one of the men held it before him protectingly, rushed straight at the Professor and tossed the fabric forward, smothering the little scientist in its heavy folds. Before he could claw the clinging carpet from his head and shoulders, the Professor found himself tripped up, flat on the floor, and bound round and round with lengths of twisted linen, his arms firmly knotted to his sides, his knees and ankles pinioned tightly. Lifted bodily from the floor, he was slung between his captors like a sack of meal, hustled unceremoniously through one of the rug-draped doorways, bumped down a flight of rickety stairs and left flat on his back upon the earth floor of an unlighted cellar.

CHAPTER FIVE

"The Death of the Rat"

TIME passed slowly in the dungeon. Cramped by his position on the damp floor, the Professor essayed to count the minutes as a mariner does: "One, one, one, one, one, two, two, two, two," but soon lost all the tally and gave the attempt up. Straining at his bonds was productive of no better result, for the knots had been tied by experts, and, though the linen bands were soft enough to enable him to strain against them without cutting himself, they yielded not the fraction of an inch to his desperate efforts.

It might have been an hour later that Chandra

Roi, accompanied by his two myrmidons, descended the creaking stairs. Chitu, the bearded man, carried an oil lantern, without a lid, a short ax, and two wooden stakes under one arm, while from his other hand hung a wire trap imprisoning a huge, drab rat which crouched ferociously against the bars of its cage, its bright eyes shining evilly in the lantern's rays.

"My inquisitive friend," Chandra Roi remarked in a voice as soft as the swishing of silk, "you are about to assist in a most interesting experiment. Very simple it is; yet I believe you will admit, before we finish, that it is—ah—eminently effective. Observe our preparations carefully, if you please."

At a nod from him, Sookee, and Chitu proceeded to drive the two stakes into the cellar's earthen floor and bind the helpless Professor's hands and feet to them in such a way that he was stretched to his extreme length, like a prisoner of the Inquisition about to undergo the torture of the rack.

"Merely a matter of precaution, old chap," Chandra Roi explained, as he bent over the supine Professor and bandaged his mouth with a wide linen rag. "We really can't afford to have you disturb the neighbors' beauty sleep with your howls, you know."

"What?" He paused, his eyebrows raised quizzically, as though the Professor had addressed him. "You won't scream? Of course, you won't, dear boy, because you'll have no chance; but you'll jolly well wish you could before we're through; odds of a thousand to one you will."

A curt order from the master, and Sookee unsheathed a short, razor sharp knife from his sash and leaned over the Professor's body, resting the weapon's edge upon the second button of Forrester's waistcoat. A queer, sick sensation, like that experienced in a rapidly descending elevator, swept through the Professor's stomach as the keen steel flashed dimly in the lantern light. Already he could feel the merciless metal shearing through his abdomen, cutting through skin and muscles and tender shrieking nerves—

Chandra Roi laughed lightly. "Nervous, old thing?" he asked. "Don't be; the show's not half over yet."

He nodded again, and Sookee drew his knife transversely across the Professor's stomach, cleaving through waistcoat, shirt and underclothes, but not so much as scratching the quivering skin

beneath. Turning his blade, he made a longitudinal slash and laid back the corners of the severed cloth, exposing a patch of the Professor's bared body some six inches square.

"You begin to comprehend?" asked Chandra Roi. "How terribly dense you Westerners are! Why, the most ignorant coolie in the slums of Singapore could have told you exactly what was coming long before this. Well, my meddlesome friend, live and learn is the rule. In your case, however, I think it will be learn and die."

Chitu picked up the empty biscuit tin and rested it with its uncovered side downward on the Professor's stomach. Grinning fiendishly, Sookee took the rat trap, advanced it to the edge of the box, and snapped open its door. Next instant Forrester went sick with repulsion as he felt the tiny, claw-armed feet of the rodent in contact with his naked skin. The rat was imprisoned in the tin box, his unprotected body forming the floor of its prison.

"Quite a quaint conceit, eh, what?" Chandra Roi remarked pleasantly as he noted the Professor's wincing face. "However, this is merely the prologue to the play, so to speak, old dear."

"Sookee—" he nodded significantly to the servant.

The fellow ran nimbly up the stairs, returning in a moment with a tin pan filled with glowing charcoal.

"You see?" Chandra Roi asked solicitously. "We shall place the coals on the box. Very soon the rat will begin to feel uncomfortable. Rats exceedingly dislike being cooked alive. He will attempt to gnaw his way through the tin, but he'll find it a bit too hard for his teeth. There remains another exit, however. I doubt if he will find your flesh as resistant as the tin. *Voilà*—he will create a tunnel of escape through you. Clever little trick, what?"

Sookee watched his master expectantly. Grinning, he waited Chandra Roi's signal to pile coals on the box.

"I think," Chandra Roi remarked, "we might as well get on with it. Proceed, Sookee. Not too fast; let the box heat slowly."

The pan of glowing coals hovered above the box on Forrester's abdomen. One glowing lump fell upon the tin with a faint ringing sound, another dropped, half a dozen of them. Carefully, with devilish precision, Sookee fed the lumps of living

fire on the box top, prolonging the process with fiendish skill.

He tilted the pan's edge higher to add fuel to the incandescent mass already on the tin, turned half questioningly to his master for the signal to pour out the remaining coals, and—

Whis-s-s-sh! Something that flashed twinklingly, like the dart of heat-lightning, swept downward through the cellar's dim light with swishing sound, there was a crash of splintering glass and rending metal, and the oil lantern went tumbling and bouncing across the cellar floor like an empty tin can scuttering before a puff of wind, its chimney shivered, its oil-cap smashed and its feeble flame snuffed out like a candle-light in a hurricane.

The pan fell from the astounded Sookee's hands, and the glowing coals rippled and danced like a cascade of flashing jewels across the black earthen floor.

Above, from the stairhead, came the slam of a suddenly closed door. The room was as dark as the lowest level of a caved-in mine.

"Damnation!" Chandra Roi screamed in a voice that was thin with fury, as Sookee and Chitu, blundering toward the stairs through the dark, cannoned into him. "Back, you swine, out of my way!"

Two quick spurts of flame, two more, and still another stabbed the cellar's stygian darkness, and a deafening roar reverberated through the confined of the low-ceiled room as he emptied the contents of his automatic up the stairway.

From beyond the cellar door came the tinkle of a high-pitched, mocking laugh.

"Here, Sookee, Chitu!" he snarled at the Professor as he turned to ascend the steps. "I'll make you beg for the rat before I'm done with you, sneaking spy, but first I'll rip the life out of that—"

The rest of his threat was lost as he tore the cellar door open savagely and smashed it shut behind him.

CHAPTER SIX "Black Smoke Fuel"

WITH a convulsive heave of his body, Professor Forrester overturned the tin box on his stomach, and the frenzied rat scampered into a corner of the room.

Sharply, silently, like the gnawing of a rodent, a scraping scratching sound became audible in the dead hush penetrating the cellar, following the crashing of Chandra Roi's shots. Forrester, straining against his bonds, picturing the cellar swarming with rats flocking to eat him alive as he lay bound and helpless. He wrenched at the cloths binding his feet and hands, knotting his muscles until they shrieked in agony at the unwonted exertion, biting his lips to keep back a scream of mad, unreasoning terror. Already he could hear the patter of the little claw-tipped feet, see the greenish flash of their wicked, hungry little eyes in the dark. To die like this, the prey of rats, in a loathsome cellar? He wrenched his tortured muscles in another vain effort at liberty—

Something soft and fluttering, like the wing of a bat or the feet of a giant spider, crept exploringly over his face. Another horror of the dark come to mock him?

"*American!*" the whisper breathed, softly in his ear. "It is I, Mumtaz Banjjan; do not be afraid!"

Another instant, and Forrester felt the cloth bindings of his wrists go slack as the girl cut them with a single deft stroke of her knife, and in an instant more she had freed his feet.

"Quick!" she breathed, so low he could scarcely hear. "This way. Hurry!" Her little hand sought his in the dark, and guided him across the cellar, warning him to stoop by a downward pressure. Falling to hands and knees, he followed her through a low opening in the wall, crawled painfully on stiffened limbs through a narrow, winding tunnel, and finally stood erect in a stuffy, cobweb-laden room crammed to overflowing with boxes and rope bound bundles of burlap.

"*S-s-sh!*" the girl warned when he would have spoken.

Slinking to her knees again, she wormed her way through the passage they had traversed and disappeared, emerging in a moment and drawing one of the burlap-covered crates across the entrance of the tunnel.

"I did go back to replace the boards at the entrance," she explained, brushing the festoons of dust from her silken mantle. "No one else knows that passage is there—I found it one day when they sent me to the store room, and I told no one of it—and I do not want them to find us." She readjusted the silken veil over her smooth golden hair, and

added matter-of-factly: "They will kill us if they do."

"But—but," the Professor stammered incredulously, "how did you come here?"

"*Hou!*" she laughed softly, laying a slender finger against his lips to warn him to silence. "Before Chitu and Sookee took me away to beat me I did steal the dagger from Hunsu's wound and hid it under my *sari*, and when they went into the cellar to torture you I crept away and stole another knife; then I hid beside the door of the cellar and listened. When I heard Chandra Roi give orders to pile the coals on the box in which they had the rat, I slipped the door open and threw a knife. *Wah*, but it was better fun than watching a rope dancer to see Sookee's face as my blade knocked over the lantern. I am very clever, American, and seldom do I miss my throw. The other knife I intended for Chandra Roi's heart, but I had forgotten his pistol, so I had to shut the door quickly before he could shoot straight, and I mocked him with my laughter when his bullets went harmlessly over my head. *Wallah*, he is vain! Well I knew he could not stand my laughter, but would come to get me, even though he must leave you alone to do it. So I threw a chair in the way and ran for the store room. When he had opened the door, and while he mixed his legs with those of the chair like a silly fly in the spider's web, I crept through the tunnel, and—"

"Yes," Forrester replied in a whisper, "and here we are. What next?"

"I do not know," she answered. "Perhaps they will not find us. If they do not we may escape. If they do—" she put back her veil and displayed the brazen hilt of a throwing knife—"you must take this and kill me, then stab yourself. They would put us both to 'the death of the rat.' I do not want to die that way. Once, in Singapore, I saw Chandra Roi kill a Burmese girl, who had tried to run away, by the rat—he made us all watch it—and she cried terribly before she died. I do not want to die that way; I would rather have my American master put me to a clean death, and go to heaven with him."

"U'm?" Forrester grunted. "How many of them are there?"

She ticked the count off on her long fingers. "Hunsu you did kill; Sookee and Chitu and Chandra Roi still live. There are only three of them, and we are two, but we have only one knife between us, and they will have swords—pistols, too, perhaps. We

cannot withstand them if they find us. We must surely die, American."

"Hum," the Professor commented non-committally. "What do you keep here?"

"Fuel for the black smoke."

"Eh?"

"See for yourself, American *sahib*," the girl responded, and, reaching upward, turned the key of an electric bulb which hung by a single wire from the grimy ceiling.

The room was a litter of cases and boxes, cloth-covered bales and tin cans about the size of condensed milk containers. With a slash of her knife, she slit the burlap wrappings of the nearest bale and thrust her hand through the opening. Withdrawing it, she showed a canvas sack, similar to those used by banks for holding silver, though somewhat smaller. Cutting the bag, she revealed a number of roughly fashioned balls, each about the size of an English walnut, and covered with dull, reddish-gray flakes resembling bran. While Forrester took one of these in his hand, she pried the lid from a tin with the point of her knife and exposed a whitish, stringy filling, something like shredded cocoanut.

The Professor raised first the little ball, then the opened can, to his nostrils, and looked at the girl in amusement.

"Opium! Crude and gum opium; thousands of dollars worth—why there's enough here to set the whole town crazy!"

"Yes," the girl nodded, "Chandra Roi is the opium king. He has many places where Americans come to drink the black smoke—it was one of those I went to dance—and he is very rich. Also, he is very wicked, and I wish you could have killed him as I asked you when we first met."

"I wish to heaven I had!" Professor Forrester agreed fervently.

Mumtaz Banjjan laughed softly, mirthlessly. "Who can catch the flying cloud or put a bridle on the wind?" she asked. "The police of many lands, from Singapore to this city, have tried to take him, yet always he throws dust in their eyes. It is useless to fight against him. Perhaps it were better that you kill me now, Master, and so make sure I shall not die by the rat."

Cold Steel, Bare Fists

"U'M, PERHAPS," Forrester assented gently, "but I don't think so. See here, you're sure that there are only three of them left?"

"Yes."

"Very well; we'll see if we can't catch the flying cloud and put a bridle on the wind, my dear. Now keep quiet, and let me think."

Reaching into the pocket of his dinner jacket, he produced a short-stemmed briar pipe and a tobacco pouch, stuffed the bowl to overflowing with the black long-cut tobacco and applied a match to it.

"U'm," he muttered, sucking down great draughts of the strong, acrid smoke and expelling twin columns of it through his nostrils. "Let—me—see."

Carefully he took stock of the room. There was no window, and the door, which opened inward was narrower than usual. Evidently the original owners of the house had intended the place as a sort of linen closet. "Good enough," he nodded approvingly. "Very good, indeed. I think I can manage it. Give me the knife, Mum—ah—Rosalie."

"Yes, my lord." The girl sank to her knees, took the blade in both hands and raised it to her lips, then, with bowed head, presented it to him. "I am ready, Master, strike swiftly!" She threw her head back, exposing her slender white throat, and closed both eyes as she crossed her jeweled hands over her breast.

"Don't be absurd!" the Professor commanded sharply. "Here, pull these cords away as I cut them."

Working quickly, he snipped binding after binding from the burlap parcels, and when a dozen or so had been laid on the floor, fell to plaiting them into three stout ropes about nine feet in length. This task completed, he fashioned a running noose at the end of each cord and laid the lassos with their hoops well open on the floor before the door, each within a single long step of the sill, but none on top of the others.

"Do you perceive the idea?" he asked with a boyish grin. He snapped out the electric light and tiptoed toward the door, then bent his head, listening intently.

Footsteps were pounding on the polished board outside as Chandra Roi and his servants combed the house for the fugitives, but none of them had passed the entrance to the store room as yet. "Mustn't make

it *too* obvious," the Professor muttered, as he softly unlatched the door's fastening and stared speculatively through the surrounding darkness. "Ah—I have it!"

Reaching at random through the gloom, he seized two of the opium tins and knocked them to the floor. They fell with a resounding crash, and the girl gave a startled little scream.

The pursuers rose to the bait. "*Kudda, bara hai!*" Chandra Roi shouted exultantly, and dashed down the hall toward the store room, swinging a long-bladed scimitar furiously above his head.

Forrester propped his foot against the door's lower edge and held it against the Hindu's frantic assault a moment, but allowed it to give sufficiently to encourage the besieger.

"Chitu! Sookee!" Chandra Roi yelled. "Quick—here they are!" He drew back his shoulder for another attack on the panels.

Professor Forrester removed his foot from the door and stepped back hastily, seizing the loose end of the first noose in both hands.

Chandra Roi catapulted into the room like a football player smashing through a weak interference, stumbled once as he half ran, half fell across the sill, and—

With a mighty yank, the Professor snatched the lasso's end backward and upward, snaring both Chandra Roi's feet in the closing noose, and bringing the man to the floor with a crash like a felled tree.

"Shut the door—lock it!" he shouted over his shoulder to the girl, as he grabbed a tin of opium and brought it down with a devastating blow on the writhing Hindu's turbaned head.

The turban probably saved Chandra Roi's brains from being dashed out, but nothing short of a steel helmet could have protected his consciousness under the force of Forrester's blow. The fellow grunted once, twitched convulsively, and lay still.

With the skill of long practice in packing scientific equipment for muleback transportation in the far corners of the earth, Professor Forrester trussed the unconscious man's feet, wrists, knees and elbows in the coils of the lasso and calmly dragged him into a corner of the store room.

Blows were raining on the door as Sookee and Chitu sought furiously to come to their master's assistance.

"Hold it, my lads!" the Professor chuckled

gleefully, "your turn's coming." He unfastened the latch and crouched beside the entrance, the ends of the remaining two nooses in his hands.

Sookee, a tall, rawboned fellow from the foothills of the Himalayas, was the first into the room, swinging his sword and cursing in every dialect known from Bombay to the boundaries of Tibet. Ankles snared, he fell to the floor with a roar of mingled surprise and rage, his sword slipping from his hand and clattering across the dusty boards.

Chitu, close behind him was more fortunate. Though the Professor jerked the noose as his foot crossed the threshold, the trap failed to work, for Chitu's heavy boot sole was planted squarely on the loop of cord instead of inside it. In a moment he and the Professor were locked in a death-grapple, and Sookee was rising to his feet, still dizzy with the force of his fall, but wild-eyed for revenge.

The Hindu shortened his sword to drive it through Forrester's body, employing his free hand to hold his victim in place for the death blow, and grinned savagely as his wiry muscles rose like cords in his forearms with the force of his grip on the weapon's hilt.

But Chitu came from a land where steel is the resident weapon and bare fists of no account. Professor Forrester, though several times a Ph. D. And many years removed from undergraduate days, had been one of his school's best boxer's in the days when 'Sweet Ad-o-line' was the reigning favorite among the season's songs. Before Chitu's shining point could complete its arc of destruction, a small and very hard fist suddenly connected with his solar plexus, and Chitu crumpled downward, bending at the knees, his head sagging drunkenly. He fell just in time to act as trip-hurdle for Sookee, as the latter charged full tilt at the Professor. Once again Sookee crashed to the floor, his flying feet entangled in the flaccid arms of his unconscious fellow, and before he could rise again Forrester drove a smashing right hook to the point of his brown jaw and followed it with a downward 'haymaker' blow of his left hand.

"Very nice," Professor Forrester commented as he completed the job of tying his unconscious captives firmly with the bindings from the burlap bales. "Very nice, indeed."

"Be a good girl and watch these fellows, my dear." He turned to Mumtaz Banjjan with a thin-lipped smile. "I'm going to fetch a policeman."

Stuffing his pipe with a fresh charge of long-cut, he chuckled.

"I believe I heard you say something about catching the flying clouds and bridling the wind. Well, we may not have quite done that—but we've certainly caught three uncommonly fine specimens of the *genus* scoundrel."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Men From Headquarters

A FRESHENING breeze had dispersed the last traces of the fog when Professor Forrester reached the street, after battering down the front door with one of the heavy swords taken from his vanquished captives. Here and there a little know of clouds flitted across the sky, and through their open ranks the moon played peek-a-boo coquettishly.

At the corner of the intersecting street there glowed the dimly-lighted window of a drug store. The place was closed for the night, but that fact deterred Professor Forrester not at all. With the sword he still carried, he calmly proceeded to smash the glass of the front door, and march in unconcernedly to the nearest telephone booth. What was a detail such as housebreaking after a night of battle, murder and sudden death?

He inserted a nickel into the slot. "Give me Main 6000, please . . . I want Police Headquarters," he demanded, when a sleepy voice announced, "District Building," from the other end of the line.

"This is Professor Harvey Forrester of Benjamin Franklin University," he introduced himself, in answer to the curt "H'lo?" from headquarters. "I'm telephoning from the corner of Carstairs and Osceola Streets, Northwest, and I want you to send a policeman up here right away. I've captured a man I think you want—Chandra Roi—"

"The hell you have!" the voice at headquarters yelled back. "Chandra Roi? You've got him? . . . Send a patrolman? Like hell! I'm comin' myself as fast as gasoline'll bring me! Hold him there, if you have to kill him to do it!"

"No need for that," the Professor answered; "he'll be safe where he is for quite a while."

A big sedan driven at furious speed, drew up to the curb before the drug store a scant ten minutes later, and two men in plain clothes, one stout to the

point of obesity, a derby hat pulled well forward on his bullet head, the other lean and wiry as a terrier, leaped from the tonneau, followed by four uniformed patrolmen.

"My name's McClellan, Inspector James McClellan, of the Metropolitan Police," the stout man introduced, "and this is Detective Inspector William Piggot, of the British Singapore Service. Where's this Chandra Roi you was tellin' us about, Professor?"

"I've got him tied up in the twelfth house from the corner," the Professor replied, as he fell in step with the two officers. "I thought you'd want him, but I didn't know you were waiting for him."

"We've been doin' nothin' else for the last couple o' months." Inspector McClellan answered as they mounted the steps to the house . . .

"You do the honors, Bill," McClellan waved an invitation to his British colleague when the patrolmen had carried Chandra Roi and his two servants from the store room to the hall.

The Britisher stepped forward impressively and laid his hand on the Hindu's shoulder. "Chandra Roi, alias Singapore Charley," he intoned, "I arrest you in the King's name for the murder of Ah Wong Ark and Hashimoto Otsuka, and I have to warn you that anything you may say may be used against you."

"Atta, boy, Bill!" McClellan commended. "You limies sure know how to do the things up in style."

"This is not British territory. You cannot arrest me," Chandra Roi snarled, his face convulsed with fury.

"Well, I'm an American police officer," the heavy man answered, clapping his hand on the Hindu's other shoulder, "and *I* say you're under arrest too. See if you can laugh *that* off."

Mumtaz Banjjan crossed the room to the officers and their prisoner, her glass anklet clinking musically at each graceful step. "Please, sir," she besought as she turned soft, pleading eyes up to McClellan's face, "will you grant me a little—a very little-small—favor?"

"What is it?" he replied with an answering smile.

"I should greatly like to cut Chandra Roi's black heart from out his breast, if you do not mind," she stated. "See, I have here a knife," and she displayed the murderous, hook-bladed weapon she

had secreted beneath the folds of her mantle.

"Sorry, but the bet's coppered," the Inspector replied. "My friend Bill here wants to take this bird back to Singapore to hang him, and he can't do that if you cut his heat out, you know."

CHAPTER NINE

Chandra Roi's Pedigree

"You're bloomin' well right he's a rum one, sir." Inspector Piggot agreed with Professor Forrester, as the latter concluded the story of his night's adventures in McClellan's office. "Singapore Charley's one of the rottenest characters on the whole China coast, and that's the cesspool of the universe.

"We've got his pedigree. He's a half-caste, not half-white, but half-Hindu, half-Malay—couldn't be a stinkier breed in the world. When he was about three years old a Methodist missionary took him in and educated him at mission school. Bright 'un, he was, too; learned everything the mission folks could teach him and a lot of stuff they didn't suspect. Got some nice old ladies back in England to finance his studies at a public school, and came out East declaring he was going to be a minister. While he was in divinity school he acted as assistant treasurer and ducked out one night with one of the native girl pupils and all the ready cash in sight.

"Since then, he's been thriving on every sort o' crime from larceny to murder. Ran an opium joint for a while, then branched out with two or three girl houses, finally got into the slave trade."

"But I didn't know the slave trade was allowed today," Professor Forrester protested.

"It isn't. But it keeps on going, just the same. There are hundreds of places along the China coast where you can buy any sort of woman—white, brown, yellow or mixed—if you've got the price. If the dealers haven't the goods you want they'll go out and get 'em, even if they have to stage a kidnapping to do it.

"This Singapore Charley was one of the worst offenders. He had a system that reached from the Philippines to India, owned his own ships, and maintained his own agents—sort of brokerage system, you know—in every port. This little girl—" he glanced at Mumtaz Banjjan—"is an example of his work. He bought her from a native relative after

her white father skipped out, probably. Took her to his headquarters in Singapore and kept her to ripen, I dare say. White girls don't fetch much in the way of prices before they're seventeen or so, and you can wager Chandra Roi would hold out for the last trade dollar to be had in a deal of that kind—he'd not let a little beauty like this get away without a good, fat price.

"About a year and a half ago he and some of his confederates had a grand little row, and two of his slave runners, a Chinaman named Ah Wong Ark, and a Japanese named Hashimoto Otsuka, were shot. Chandra Roi always was careless with firearms. A Lascar house boy saw the killings and got cold feet, and ran into Singapore and blew the whole ruddy show to us. We got on Charley's tail as fast as we could, but he was one jump ahead of us, and he's kept there ever since. Oh, he's a slippery one, all right."

"But what on earth was he doing in Washington?" the Professor asked. "I should think this would be the last place in the world—"

"So did he," Inspector McClellan interrupted with a grin. "He didn't dare stay anywhere in the British East, for there was a general lookout posted for him, and the American Guardian Society would have taken his scalp if he'd set foot in the Philippines, and he didn't dare settle in 'Frisco or New York or any place that has much Chinese population, for Ah Wong Ark's tong was making it almost as hot for him as the police were, so when he came to America he just naturally gravitated to Washington. He intended to lay low till the storm had blown over back East, and in the meantime he was doing a brisk business in hop. We've been on his tracks—got wise to him through a nigger stool pigeon—and believe me, he was putting on *some* show here, too. Had a regular organization, with hop houses dotted all around, and used to go out on tours of inspection every once in a while. We've raided three of 'em, but he slipped through our fingers every time; the sucker seemed able to smell a policeman as far as buzzard can see a dead horse!

"Night before last my friend Bill here blew into town on some other business, and told me his tale of woe about Singapore Charley, and his description of the bird he wanted fitted this bonzo to a T, so when you 'phoned in you'd nabbed this boy, I says, 'Bill, come on out and make your pinch, some college professor's done what the combined police forces of

Asia and America couldn't—tied Chandra Roi up in a bag.'

"Now." Inspector McClellan looked dubiously at Mumtaz Banjjan, "what are we goin' to do about this little girl?"

"Oh, sir, you need not bother about me," the girl informed him with a confident smile, linking her long, white fingers through the Professor's arm, "my American will take care of me. I used to belong to Chandra Roi, but now the nice Englishman is going to hang him, I am the slave of my American. I have made him a present of me. See—" she dropped to her knees before the scandalized Professor, lowered her forehead to the floor and, seizing one of his unsuspecting feet in both hands, planted it firmly on her neck. "Master!" she exclaimed, and would have put a kiss upon his other foot had he not leaped back as though from a rattlesnake.

"For heaven's sake, get up from there!" he implored, while McClellan and Piggot grinned broadly.

"Will you be responsible for her?" McClellan asked, restoring his face to something akin to seriousness.

"Er—I don't see how—why—er—yes," replied Professor Forrester, blushing like a schoolboy beneath the fat detective's stare. "Yes. I shall make it my duty to provide for the young woman. After all, you see, she saved my life."

"Will you send her to school?" the Inspector demanded.

"Of course."

"Well, I don't envy the school ma'am that has the job of civilizing her," the detective commented. "Can we give you a lift?"

Before the Professor could restrain her, Banjjan had seized his hand and covered it with kisses. "My American accepts my gift of me!" she exclaimed in a voice which was almost a song.

CHAPTER TEN "Uncle Harvey"

THE big police car, piloted by an official chauffeur, slipped swiftly through the early morning streets toward the house of Professor Forrester's maiden aunt, where he had decided the girl should remain till a suitable educational institution could be selected for her.

"Beloved," Mumtaz Banjjan, otherwise Rosalie Osterhaut, cooed in the Professor's ear, as she knelt beside him on the car's cushioned seat, her little bare feet tucked under her, her long, white fingers laced across his shoulders, "beloved, I will make you very, very happy." She smiled at him with the frankness of a child, and began crooning softly:

The Nightingale sings in the branches,
The moon swims in the surf of the sky,
And the music of love holds me bound in
A thrall,
For the slave of thy passion am I.

A chaplet to bind thy fair brow,
Or a sash at thy waist I would be,
Or I'd turn to the shoe which is happily
placed
On thy foot to be trod by thee.

"Stop that!" Professor Forrester commanded sharply.

"O-o-oh, but I do make love to you, adored!" the girl protested. "Do not you like it?"

"No, I don't" the Professor declared emphatically, "and don't call me 'adored' either."

"Then how shall your slave address you, Master?"

"Uh—um—you may call me Uncle Harvey, if you wish."

"On-kle Har-vay!" she whispered, and her tone was like the echo of a love song. "On-kle Har-vay, Mumtaz Banjjan is your slave, she will do whatever you command, so long as you do not deny her the light of your countenance. If you drive her away, she will kill herself!"

"U'm?" remarked Professor Forrester, and began stuffing the bowl of his pipe methodically.