The Adventures of Kathlyn

By HAROLD MAC GRATH

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Kathlyn Hare, believing her father, Col. Hare, in peril, has summoned her, leaves her home in California to go to him in Allaha, India. Umballa, pretender to the throne, has imprisoned the colonel, named by the late king as his heir.

CHAPTER II—Arriving in Allaha Kathlyn is informed by Umballa that her father being dead she is to be queen, and must marry him. She refuses and is informed by the priests that no woman can rule unmarried. She is given seven days to think it over.

CHAPTER III—She still refuses and is told that she must undergo two ordeals with wild beasts. If she survives she will be permitted to rule.

CHAPTER IV—John Bruce, an American, saves her life.

CHAPTER V—The elephant which carries her from the scene of her trials runs away, separating her from Bruce and the rest of the party.

CHAPTER VI—She takes refuge in a ruined temple, but this haven is the abode of a lion and she is forced to flee from it.

CHAPTER VII—She finds a retreat in the jungle, only to fall into the hands of slave traders.

CHAPTER VIII—Kathlyn is brought to the public mart in Allaha and sold to Umballa, who, finding her still insubmissive, throws her into the dungeon with her father.

CHAPTER IX—She is rescued by Bruce and his friends.

CHAPTER X—Colonel Hare also is rescued, Umballa, with soldiers, starts in pursuit. Kathlyn is struck by a bullet.

CHAPTER XI—The fugitives are given shelter in the palace of Rain Khan.

CHAPTER XII—Supplied by camels by the hospitable prince they start for the coast, but are captured by brigands. Umballa journeys to the lair of the bandits, makes the colonel a prisoner and orders Bruce and Kathlyn killed.

CHAPTER XIII—The bandits quarrel over the money paid them by Umballa and during the confusion Kathlyn and Bruce escape and return to Allaha. They nonesent a plan to rescue the colonel.

CHAPTER XIV—The colonel is nominally king, but really a prisoner. It is arranged to find a bride for him. Kathlyn gains access to the palace in disguise, and her rescue plans are succeeding when the treasury leopards escape throwing the court into confusion.

CHAPTER XV—During the panic Ramabai and Bruce rescue Kathlyn and her father, and the party steals away from Allaha.

CHAPTER XVI—The colonel learns that his younger daughter, Winnie, is about to arrive in Allaha. The party journeys back to Allaha. Winnie arrives before they do and walks into the trap prepared for her by Umballa. Winnie is crowned queen. Kathlyn and her father attend in disguise and make thier presence known to the terrified girl.

CHAPTER XVII—Kathlyn, in disguise, gains admission to Winnie's room, but is discovered by Umballa, who orders that she be offered as a sacrifice to the god Juggernaut. She is rescued by the colonel and his friends.

CHAPTER XVIII—Kathlyn, disguised as an animal trainer, takes part in a public exhibition, reveals her identity to the people and rescues her father.

CHAPTER XIX—Kathlyn, Winnie, their father and Bruce find a hiding place in the home of Ramabai. The latter's wife, Pundita, is the lawful queen of Allaha, and public sentiment in her favor is growing. The people at last, weary of Umballa's misrule, rise against him, with Ramabai at their head and Bruce and the colonel fighting under him. The rebels at first are defeated, but Kathlyn's timely appearance inspires them and the time turns in their favor.

CHAUTER XX—The arena. Bruce escapes and Kathlyn seeks safety in a deserted house. She is discovered by Umballa, who is fleeing with the rebels. Mad for revenge he sets fire to the house.

CHAPTER XXI.

Saved From the Flames.

When the lions sniffed the acrid smoke the two of them fell to roaring thunderously. They reared and attempted to climb the ladder, only to fall back jarringly. The ran up and down the hall, struck with that inborn terror of fire. They dared not descend in face of that lurid smoke which rose from that sparkling magic which they had feared since the beginning of time.

Alas, Kathlyn could have descended now without fear of the beasts molesting her; but it was too late. Finally she threw down the trap and the smoke cleared a little, but the inferno below went on crackling merrily.

The houses on each side were single storied. She would break every bone in her body if she jumped. There were four cartridges in the revolver. She held it in her hand and studied it in a curiously detached manner. She could face wild beasts, men, steel, and lead; but fire, the most horrible of all tortures. . . . Why hadn't she killed him as he leered up at her from the street?

Four cartridges, three for help and one for herself if help came not. She raised her arm and fired three shots with intervals between that might suggest a call for aid. Then she moved to the farthest end of the parapet, farthest from the smoke and the fire. Suddenly the roof shook and quivered as if an earthquake had disturbed the foundations. She understood. The lower staircase had toppled.

From the lions the denizens of this part of the bazaars had fled inside

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their houses; but the sight of the fire and its nearness drove them terrified into the street. They began taking out their valuables. The household goods litered, and children screamed and women shrieked.

But none of them could help the white goddess upon yonder doomed roof. And why should they make the attempt? Did she not bear a charmed life? Was she not the reincarnation of some ancient goddess? She had done something in heaven to offend the gods, and these things were her punishments. The gods would liberate her when the proper moment arrived.

But fire! The gods themselves could not control that; that was the right hand of Siva. Ai, ai, ai! The wailing rose to the girl on the roof. Ai, ai! The bazaars were doomed. There was neither water nor men who knew how to use it. Besides, who among them would offend the terrible Siva by meddling with his plaything?

The painted dancing girl in the house where Umballa had taken temporary refuge began to gather her trinkets, her amber and turquoise necklaces, bracelets, and anklets. These she placed in a brass enameled box and tucked it under her arm. Next she shook the sodden Umballa by the sleeve.

"Come!" she cried.

"I would sleep," he muttered.

"Durga Ram, I risk my life in offering you shelter; but I refuse to risk it in fire. Come! There is a way through the rear, to the house of a friend of mine. The fire will not reach there. And tonight you can seek shelter in the jungle, or where you will."

"Let be, I would sleep."

"Fool! Those who remain here will find it a burning shed in less than an hour. Look!" She pushed him toward the window. "Look! They are flying from the houses. Would you die?"

He flung her off. She returned, beating him with her fists. He swore and staggered to his feet and struck at her blindly. She laughed, clutched his sleeve, and began to drag him to the rear stairs. He struck at her again, this time with fairish aim. Her box of trinkets clattered to the floor and she whirled upon him with a dagger. The sight of the steel sobered him a little.

"Listen to me, Durga Ram; touch me again and you shall die! Can you not see I am trying to save you because my sister so wills it? The fire will spread, for the wind has risen. What! Am I one of your slaves that you lift your hand against me?" She seized a bowl containing some flow-

Kathlyn Rescued From the Fire.

ers and cast the contents into his face. "Fire, fire, and death!" she shrilled at him.

The douche brought the man out of his stupor.

"Fire?" he repeated.

"Come!"

This time he followed her docilely, wiping his face on his sleeve.

They heard the great shouting in the street, but did not tarry to learn what had caused it.

One of Umballa's bearers, upon realizing what his master had done, had run down the street for aid. He had had two objects in view—to save the white goddess and to buy his freedom.

A few hundred yards away, in another street, the colonel, Bruce, and Ahmed were dragging a net for the purpose of laying it for a lion at bay in a blind alley. Into their presence rushed the wild-eyed bearer.

Save the white goddess!" he cried. Bruce seized him by the shoulder. "What is that?"

"The white goddess, sahib! She is on the roof of a burning house. Durga Ram, my master, set fire to it. He is drunk and hiding in a house near by."

"The man is mad," declared the colonel. "Kit would not have lost her way this far. He is lying. He wants money."

Ahmed spoke. The bearer fell upon his knees.

Three shots, at intervals!

The colonel and Bruce stared into each other's eyes.

"God in heaven!" gasped the colonel; "those are revolver shots!"

"Bring the net!" shouted Ahmed. To the trembling bearer he said: "Lead us; we follow. And if you have spoken the truth you shall not only have your freedom but rupees for your old age."

A lion's net is a heavy affair, but with the aid of the keepers the men ran as quickly and lightly as if burdenless. Smoke. There was a fire. The hearts of the white men beat painfully. And the same thought occurred to both of them; they should have gone to Ramabai's home first, then turned their attention to the lions. And Umballa was hiding in a house near by!

Well for them that they entered the doomed quarters as they did. Kathlyn saw them, and the muzzle of the revolver which she was pressing to her heart was lowered, the weapon itself slipping from her hand to the roof. God was not going to let her die like this.

"Spread out the net!" commanded Bruce. "Kathlyn, can you hear me?" he shouted, cupping his hands before his mouth. Faintly he heard her reply. "When I give the word, jump. Do not be afraid."

Kathlyn stepped upon the parapet. A great volume of smoke obscured her for a moment. Out of the windows the vivid tongues of flames darted, flashing upward. She summoned all her courage and waited for the call of the man she loved. Inside a floor gave way with a crash and the collateral walls of the building swayed ominously. A despairing roar accompanied the thunder of falling beams. The lions had gone to their death.

"Jump!"

Without hesitation Kathlyn flung herself into space. A murmur ran through the crowd, which had for the moment forgotten its own danger in the wonder of this spectacle. The men holding the net threw themselves backward as Kathlyn struck the mesh. Even then her body touched the street cobbles and she was bruised and shaken severely, but, O, alive, alive!

There rose the great shouting which Umballa and the dancing girl had heard.

Shortly after the house collapsed. The fire spread to the houses on each side.

Bruce seized the bearer by the arm. "Now, the house which Umballa entered!"

Eagerly enough the slave directed him. For all the abuse and beatings the slave was to have his hour. But they found the house empty except for a chattering monkey and a screaming parrakeet, both attached to pedestal perches. Bruce liberated them and returned to the colonel.

"Gone! Well, let him hide in the jungle, a prey to fear and hunger. At least we are rid of him. But I shall die unhappy if in this life we two fail to meet again. Kit!"

"John!" She withdrew from her father's arms and sought those of the man who loved her and whom she loved, as youth will and must. "Let him go. Why should we care? Take me to my sister."

Ahmed smiled as he and his men rolled the net. This was as it should be. For what man was a better mate for his golden-haired memsahib? And then he thought of Lal Singh, and he choked a little. For Lal Singh and he had spent many pleasant hours together. They had worked together in play and in war, shared danger and bread and glory, all of which was written in the books of the British raj in Calcutta.

It was the will of Allah; there was but one God, and Mahomet was his prophet. Then Ahmed dismissed Lal Singh and the past from his thoughts, after the philosophical manner of the Asiatic, and turned to the more vital affairs under hand.

At Ramabai's house there was a happy reunion; and on her knees Pundita confessed to her lord how near she had been to Christian damnation. She had fallen from grace; she had reverted to the old customs of her race, to whom suicide was not sin. Ramabai took her in his arms and touched her forehead with his lips.

"And now," said the colonel, "the king!"

Ramabai's head sank.

"What is the matter? Is he dead?"

"If I knew that," answered Ramabai, "I would rest content."

"But you searched the royal prison?"

"And found nothing, nothing!"

"What do you believe?"

"I believe that either the Council or Umballa has forestalled us. We shall visit the Council at once. They are prisoners. If they have had no hand in the disappearance of the king, then we are facing a stone wall over which we cannot leap. For Umballa has fled, wither no one knows, and with him has gone the secret. Come, we shall go at once to the palace prison."

The Council which had ruled so long in Allaha was very humble indeed. They had imprisoned the king because he had given many evidences of mental unbalance. Perhaps unwisely they had proclaimed his death. Durga Ram had discovered what they had done and had held it over their heads like a sword blade. That the king was not in his dungeon, why and wherefor, was beyond their knowledge. They were in the power of Ramabai; let him work his will upon them. They had told the truth. And Ramabai, much as he detested them, believed them. But for the present it was required that they remain incarcerated till the king was found, dead or alive.

In the palace soldiers and servants alike had already forgotten Umballa. To them it was as if he had not existed. All in a few hours. There was, however, one man who did not forget. Upon a certain day Umballa had carelessly saved his life, and to his benefactor he was now determined to devote that life. This man was the majordomo, the chief servant in the king's household. It was not that he loved Umballa; rather than he owed Umballa a debt and resolved to pay it.

Two days later, when the fires were extinguished and the populace had settled back into its former habits, this majordomo betook himself to Umballa's house. It was well guarded, and by men who had never been close to Umballa, but had always belonged to the dissatisfied section, the frankly and openly mutinous section. No bribery was possible here; at least, nothing short of a fabulous sum of money would dislodge their loyalty to Ramabai, now the constitutional regent. No one could leave the house or enter it without scrutiny and question.

The servants and the women of the zenanas remained undisturbed. Ramabai would have it so. Things had been put in order. There had not been much damage done by the looters on the day of the revolt. They had looked for treasure merely, and only an occasional bit of vandalism had marked their pathway.

On the pain of death no soldier might enter the house.

The majordomo was permitted to enter without question. He passed the guards humbly. But once inside, beyond observation, he became a different man. For in Umballa's house, as in Ramabai's, there were secret chambers, and today the majordomo entered one of them—through a panel concealed behind a hanging Ispahan rug.

On the night after the revolt, Umballa, sober and desperate, had slunk back disguised as a candy seller. The house was not guarded then, so he had no difficulty in gaining admittance. But he had to gain entrance through a window in the zenana. He would not trust either his servants, his slaves, or his chief eunuch. To the women of his own zenana he had always been carelessly kind, and women are least bribable of the two sexes.

Umballa entered at once his secret chamber, and food and water were brought, one of the women acting as bearer, on the morning after the guards arrived, and Umballa knew not how long he might have to wait. Through one of the women he sent a verbal message to the majordomo, with the result that each day he learned what was taking place in the palace. So they hunted for the king?

He was very well satisfied. He had had his revenge; and more than this, he was confident when the time came he would also gain his liberty. He had a ransom to pay: the king himself!

Now, then, Ramabai felt it incumbent on him to hold a banquet in the palace, there to state to his friends, native and white, just what he intended to do. And on the night of this sober occasion he sat in the throne room before a desk littered with documents. As he finished writing a note he summoned the majordomo.

"Have this delivered at once to Hare Sahib, whom you will find at his bungalow outside the city. Tell him also that he must be present tonight, he, his friend, and his daughters. It is of vital importance."

Pundita, who was staring out of the window, turned and asked her lord what he was sending the Colonel Sahib but he could not give him at the banquet.

"A surprise, an agreeable surprise."

The majordomo cocked his ears; but Ramabai said nothing more.

"I Will Tell All. I Am Dying!"

At the colonel's bungalow there was rejoicing. Ramabai had written that since the king could not be found he would head the provisional government as regent, search for and arrest Umballa, and at any time the Colonel Sahib signified would furnish him with a trusty escort to the railway, three days' journey away. He added, however, that he hoped the Colonel Sahib would be good enough to remain till order was established.

The majordomo contrived to tarry long enough to overhear as much of the conversation as needed—for he understood English—and then returned to the city to carry the news to Umballa. To him Umballa gave a white powder.

"Tonight, you say, Ramabai gives a banquet?"

"Yes, huzoor."

"Well, put this in his cup and your obligation to me is paid."

The majordomo stared a long time at that little packet of powder. A cold sweat formed upon his brow under his turban.

"Well?" said Umballa, ironically.

"Huzoor, it is murder!"

Umballa shrugged and held out his hand for the packet.

The majordomo swallowed a few times and bowed his head. "It shall be done, huzoor. My life is yours to do with as you please. I have said it."

"Begone, then, and bring me the news on the morrow that Ramabai is dead. You alone know where the king is. Should they near the hut in which I have hidden him, see that he is killed. He is also useless."

The major domo departed with heavy heart. Ramabai was an honest man; but Durga Ram had spoken.

At the banquet, with its quail and pheasant, its fruits and flowers, its rare plates and its rarer goblets for the light wines high castes permitted themselves occasionally to drink, Ramabai toyed idly with his goblet and thoughtlessly pushed it toward Kathlyn, who sat at his right.

Imbued with a sense of gratitude for Ramabai's patience and kindness and assistance through all her dreadful ordeals, Kathlyn sprang up suddenly and without looking reached for what she supposed to be her own goblet, but inadvertently her hand came in contact with Ramabai's. What she had in mind to say was never spoken.

The majordomo stood appalled. This wonderful white woman over whom the gods watched as they watched the winds and the rains, of whom he had not dared speak to Umballa. She? No! He saw that he himself must die. He seized the goblet ere it reached her lips, drank, and flung it aside empty. He was as good as dead, for there were no antidotes for poisons Umballa gave. Those seated about the table were too astonished to stir. The majordomo put his hand to his eyes, reeled, [illegible] himself; and then Ramabai [illegible]

"Poison!" he [illegible] the majordomo by the [illegible] "Poison, and it was meant [illegible] me. Speak!"

"Lord, I will tell all. I am dying!"

It was a strange tale of misplaced loyalty and gratitude, but it was peculiarly oriental. And when they learned that Umballa was hidden in his own house and the king in a hut outside the city they knew that God was just, whatever his prophet's name might be. Before he died the majordomo explained the method of entering the secret chamber.

The quail and pheasant, the fruits and wine remained untouched. The hall become deserted almost immediately. To the king first; to the king! The Umballa should pay his debt.

They found the poor king in the hut, in a pitiable condition. He laughed and babbled and smiled and wept as they led him away. But in the secret chamber which was to have held Umballa there was no living thing.

For Umballa had, at the departure of the majordomo, conceived a plan for rehabilitation so wide in its ramifications, so powerful and whelming, that nothing could stay it once it was set in motion. The priests, the real rulers of Asia; the wise and patient gurus, who held the most compelling of all scepters, superstition! Double fool that he had been not to have thought of this before! He knew that they hated Ramabai, who in religion was an outcast and a pariah, who worshiped but a single God whom none had ever seen, of whom no idol had been carved and set up in a temple.

Superstition!

Umballa threw off his robes and donned his candy seller's tatters, left the house without being questioned by the careless guard, and sought the chief temple.

Superstition!

To cow the populace, to bring the troops to the mark, with threats of curses, famine, plague, eternal damnation! Superstition! And this is why Ramabai and his followers found the empty chamber.

CHAPTER XXII.

Allaha's Real King Killed.

In the rear of the temple Umballa sought was a small chamber which was used by the priests when they desired to rest or converse privately, which was often. The burning temple lamps of brass emphasized the darkness of the room rather than dispelled it. A shadow occasionally flickered through the amber haze—an exploring bat. A dozen or more priests stood in one of the dim corners, from which their own especial idol winked at them with eyes like coals blown upon. The Krishna of the Ruby eyes, an idol known far and wide but seen by few.

In the temple itself there was a handful of tardy worshipers. The heat of the candles, the smell of the eternal lotus flower and smoking incense sticks made even the huge vault stifling. Many of the idols were bejewled or patched with beaten gold leaf, and many had been coveted by wandering white men, who, when their endeavor became known, disappeared mysteriously and were never more known in the haunts of men.

A man in tatters appeared suddenly in the great arched doorway. His turban came down almost to his eyes and a neckcloth covered his mouth. All that could be seen of him in the matter of countenance was a pair of brilliant eyes and predatory nose. He threw a quick, piercing glance about, assured himself that such devotees as he saw were harmless, then strode boldly if hurriedly toward the rear chamber, which he entered without ado. Instantly the indignant priests rushed toward him to expel him and give him a tongue-lashing for his impudence, when a hand was thrust out, and they beheld upon a finger a great green stone. They stopped as suddenly as though they had met an invisible electric current.

The curtain fell behind the man in tatters, and he remained motionless for a space. A low murmuring among the priests ensued, and presently one of their number — the youngest — passed out and stationed himself before the curtain. Not even a privileged dancing girl might enter now.

The man in tatters stepped forward. He became the center of the group; his gestures were quick, tense, authoritative. At length priest turned to priest, and the wrinkled faces became more wrinkled still: smiles.

"Highness," said the eldest, "we had thought of this, but you did not make us your confidant."

"Till an hour gone it had not occurred to me. Shall Ramabai, then, become your master, to set forth the propaganda of the infidel?"

"No!" The word was not spoken loudly, but sibilantly, with something resembling a hiss. "No!"

"And shall a king who has no mind, no will, no strength, resume his authority? Perhaps to bring more white people into Allaha, perhaps to give Allaha eventually to the British raj?"

Again the negative.

"But the method?"

Umballa smiled. "What brings the worshiper here with candles and flowers and incense? Is it love or reverence or superstition?"

The bald yellow heads nodded like porcelain mandarins.

"Superstition," went on Umballa, "the sword which bends the knees of the layman, has and always will through the ages!"

In the vault outside a bell tinkled, a gong boomed melodiously.

"When I give the sign," continued the schemer, "declare the curse upon all those who do not bend. A word from your lips, and Ramabai's troops vanish, reform, and become yours and mine!"

"While the king lives?" asked the chief priest curiously.

"Ah!" And Umballa smiled again. "But you, Durga Ram?"

"There is Ramabai, a senile king, and I. Which for your purposes will you choose?"

There was a conference. The priests drifted away from Umballa. He did not stir. His mien was proud and haughty, but for all that his knees shook and his heart thundered. He understood that it was to be all or nothing, no middle course, no half methods. He waited, wetting his cracked lips and swollen lips. When the priests returned to him, their heads bent before him a little. It

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