

THE WHISPER—BY ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

Illustrated on Opposite Page by a Pose From Life by Pauline Frederick, Star of "Joseph and His Brethren" and Called Most Beautiful Woman in America by Artist Harrison Fisher.

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As I entered the alley the bells of the dim city tolled for the passing night. Far in the maze of filthy lanes and mist-choked streets a policeman whistled; I heard the distant din of an elevated, rushing through the fog, which rolled from river to river, heavy, stifling.

In the gloom of the alley a shadowy form passed. All around me the vapor became tainted with opium and a flare of yellow light streamed out from an opening door. There was a momentary murmur of voices, the soft shuffle of felt-shod feet, the rustle of silken sleeves. A painted paper lantern swung from the doorway, dipped, and disappeared. I heard the deadened slam of the door and the black night veiled my eyes again.

I raised my eyes to the dark house before me where from a rusting balcony a sign hung low above the doorway.

"This was her house," I said aloud to myself; but I passed on to the next house. Before I could find the handle, the door flew open and I heard McManus' angry bellow: "Git t' hell outer here, yes dope suckin' yap!" and a Chinaman was hustled into the area, feeling like an infuriated ape.

I stepped into the low-ceilinged room and took a chair at a table beside the wall. Two young men sitting there said, "Hello, Jim!"

"Good evenin'," said McManus, leaning over the bar, "did you see me givin' de bounce to Wah-Wo?"

"Yes," I said, "when did he come back?"

"He jest came in. I told him to git an' he give me de ha-ha, so Charley trun him down."

One of the young men at the table beside me looked up from the Welsh-rabbit he was eating and called for ale. McManus brought it himself, a brimming pewter mug. Then he hawled for Charley to take my order.

Lynde, of the "Herald," advised me to try a rabbit, and Penlow, of the "Tribune," spoke well of the chops, so I left it to Charley and he retired, whistling, "Oh, I don't know!"

"It's a wonder to me," I said, hanging my wet mackintosh on a peg and kicking off my overshoes, "it's a wonder to me that Wah-Wo was discharged by the court."

"There was no evidence to hold him," observed Lynde.

Penlow lighted his pipe and rattled his mug on the table.

"No evidence," I repeated; "do you fellows doubt that Wah-Wo did it?"

"I suppose he did," said Penlow, "it was my scoop, too."

"We may scoop yet," said Lynde, "the mah's bound to be caught."

"Gents," began McManus, "youse is dead off—, Wah-Wo ain't in it," he said contemptuously: "I give him de t'row-down—fur why? —fur because I don't give de glad hand to no dope suckin' chink. But he didn't do no dirt to the gal whut youse gents was stuck on—he ain't that kind! He give me the laugh an' I t'rowed him down, see? An' I won't do a t'ing but push his face in. See?"

"Well, Mac," said Lynde, "what's your theory? You know as much about it as anybody. The girl came