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The handsome native who had been lying at the side of the princess now opened his eyes, saw the strange white man talking or trying to talk to his princess. The stupor left him almost instantly. He sprang to his feet, a vicious looking knife in his hand.

"Feringhi!" he shouted. Which means a foreigner.

Others came to life at the same moment, and John Storm found himself in a predicament little to his liking. He was strong and sturdy, but he was no match for the dozen or so little East Indians. He was overcome and taken away from the octagonal room. He was cast into a steel dungeon in the basement of the house.

The sleeping mystery of this house had its ebb and flow evidently. Zadora awoke without any abnormal effect for her short sleep, and the men who had gone to Hassan Ali's house also awoke. Nalok Shin demanded of them who this white girl was. Were they betraying him? They should die like dogs in that case. They groveled and hastily explained that she was the niece of the celebrated Hassan Ali and that she might be able to break the power of the sudden sleep by discovering how it was accomplished.

"Where is this man Hassan Ali then?" demanded Nalok Shin, who had grown very suspicious.

"Honor, we know not. Mayhap overcome as we were by the sleep but this mousahib is clever and may help us."

"Who was this man I just sent to the dungeon?"

"We know not."

"Well, you speak the accursed English tongue. Question her and learn what she has to say. And on your heads be it if there is any sign of treachery."

"It is just," said the leader of the men who had brought Zadora.

They then proceeded to squat down upon the rug, and Zadora plied her questions and called a story which ran somewhat as follows:

It began in southern India. A certain native prince had in his extreme youth, as is customary in India, become betrothed to the little princess of a neighboring state. There were great festivities, not to say extravagant ones, in honor of the event. When the girl became a young woman and the boy a young man the marriage ceremony was brought about, but not consummated, for the simple fact that a prince of still another principality had seen the princess and had determined to make her his own regardless of the possibility of throwing the three states into a tribal war. The British raj might interfere, but not until a good deal of damage was wrought. The rival prince was Nalok Shin, a brave, hardy and none too scrupulous chieftain. He succeeded in carrying off the princess, but he was beset by so many trials that he fled from India to America with the bulk of his treasure and the betrothed princess. The house with its oriental trappings had been the property of an uncle, who had chosen America because his neck had been in danger.

"But the mystery is this, mousahib: It is written that the marriage ceremony shall take place before our god, the elephant headed, and always when we begin the ceremony we are thus strangely overcome by sleep. Solve this riddle for us and my master will pay you well." The spokesman addressed a few words to Nalok Shin.

The prince smiled and dangled a rope of superb pearls before the girl, intimating that in the event of her success they would become hers.

Now, Zadora did not seek monetary reward, but she was wise beyond her years in understanding the oriental mind, due to the several years that her uncle had employed Hindus as servants. If she signified that she asked for no reward these dark eyed men would instantly begin to suspect her, and once they suspected her her life would not be worth a snap of the fingers. Besides, it would not be such a very hard ordeal to accept such a magnificent gift. So she told the leader to say to Nalok Shin that she hoped to solve the mystery for the sake of the pearls, being a normal woman. But she must have free run of the house. This was agreed, but under no circumstance must she leave without being blindfolded, and, moreover, she must remain that night.

Zadora accepted the conditions philosophically. She never wore Nalok Shin's rope of pearls, however.

She would have liked very much, though, to acquaint her lover with her whereabouts. Her uncle's disappearance puzzled her. But perhaps he had already begun his investigations. The night passed uneventfully. Those who slept did so naturally. Zadora, however, wandered in and out among the curious alcoves and quaint balconies. She peered behind the grotesque statues into the fountain. Whenever the ceremony began sleep came. This fact kept ringing through her mind. She just must solve it. It would be another step toward her lover and happiness. One thing she ascertained for future use and this was the chief: more or less carefully guarded, she might have to take to her heels.

And all the while, in the steel dungeon below, Storm saw the walls slowly and relentlessly contract. He had bent upon the unfeeling steel until his knuckles bled. He had shouted until his lungs hurt, and smaller and smaller grew his prison. He recalled a certain tale by Poe and touched the metal from time to time to see if it were growing hot. But it was evident that he was to be crushed only, not incinerated.

Morning came. The feast of the night before was resumed. Nalok and his girls danced; musicians played the mad and wailing music of the east. Zadora had quietly wet her handkerchief in the basin of the fountain and at the

moment the ceremony began he wet her handkerchief to her nose. She showed her foresight in this, for shortly after the music began the people in the octagonal room fell in nodding and from nodding into peaceful sleep. Even with the aid of the dampened handkerchief Zadora could not wholly escape the subtle and amazing narcotic. She struggled blindly toward the exit. How she managed to reach the street was something she could never remember.

She was mighty glad to get back to New York again, for she had been 12,000 miles away in spirit if not in fact. Still, she determined to return and solve the riddle. She had already formed a campaign. What simple fools those orientals were in some respects! Hassan Ali concealed his astonishment. Yet something deep down in



Storm Saw the Walls Slowly and Relentlessly Contract.

his soul told him that she would return unharmed.

"But how did you escape, uncle?"

"They wanted you," he said glibly. "They blindfolded me again and sent me about my business. What did you learn?"

"I thought to determine me to see what I can do. Of course it is a colossal trick of some sort, but it would not be wise to suggest that. It must be proved."

"My child, this is altogether a strange business. These orientals are quick to distrust. If they find you gone when they wake up it is quite likely they will try to kill you."

"I've made up my mind."

Then she ran upstairs. She was anxious to send a message to Storm by the carrier pigeon. She wrote a short note explaining the situation and liberated the bird. Storm's housekeeper received the bird and naturally read the message. She scribbled on the back of the message and informed her master's sweetheart that he had left the house in haste the night before and had not yet returned. The return of the pigeon left Zadora in a fair state of excitement. She immediately set out for Storm's apartments, but the housekeeper could add nothing further than that Mr. Storm had sent a pigeon to her and it had come back with the note.

Zadora returned home and quizzed her uncle; but, of course, he piously denied having seen Storm. Surprisingly she piled the Hindu servant. This man secretly worshipped the young mousahib, and by and by she got the facts from him. Not she had not only to solve the mystery of the sleeping house, but to save her lover also. It would be without a mission in that fantastic house, and it was quite likely that he would be made to suffer for his audacity.

Bravely she set out for the house of Nalok Shin and boldly she demanded admittance. The servant at the door recognized her, but it took a bribe to open the door wide enough for her to slip through.

The persistent ceremony was being started again. To Zadora it would have been laughable but for the new tragedy underneath. The man who had brought her to the house originally finally disclosed to her what had been done to Storm. His death had been decided on.

As Zadora gazed wildly about the room she saw a man in a garb quite different from that worn by those in the octagonal room. She stole up to where he stood and covertly watched him and became suddenly conscious of the desire to sleep. She breathed through her handkerchief, never letting her glance waver from the hidden man. He turned, smiling ironically, and she saw him raise a stone in the ceiling. He disappeared into a pit, letting the stone fall carefully into place.

Sleep had again attacked these determined upon the ceremony. She would think that they would have at least given her some chance to invent a device before proceeding again in an endeavor which had so many times proved a failure. This very sleep, however, gave her freedom of action. She stole from the octagonal room, found the stone, raised it and discovered a tunnel. It was not the safest tunnel in the world, but with John's life hanging in the balance she accepted her chances. The tunnel led to a room under the cellar. This room bewildered her far more than the octagonal one. There was a large vat, which had the appearance of a distillation vat, with many little pipes leading up from it. The men gathered about this strange contrivance were evidently of a different caste from those in the upper room. A tall, graceful young man seemed to be directing the others. One of them, however, saw the shadow by the door, drew his knife and stole quietly up to the girl. She was caught!

Ready wifed, she asked. "Do you speak English?"

The man passed. He nodded grimly. "I am a friend. I would save your prisoners. I would defeat Nalok Shin. My lover is hidden somewhere in this house. Save him, and I will save the princess."

The man turned to see if his comrades had observed him. They were all busy with the vat.

"I will go with the mousahib. If she has fled she shall die."

"I agree to that."

Once home she ran upstairs for her automatic. When she came down again the stranger had vanished. Amed refused to speak and Hassan Ali did not know what she was talking about.

"He came in behind me," she declared.

"Then he took to his heels the moment your back was turned. Over her shoulder to Amed Hassan Ali sent a terrible glance, and Amed knew that death awaited him if he opened his lips. He was still breathing heavily from the struggle."

Zadora left the house more deeply puzzled than ever.

Two hours later she had cleared up the mystery of the sleeping house and rescued Storm from his dreadful prison.

The fact that the ceremony could take place only before the elephant headed god made it a simple game to the enemies of Nalok Shin. Zadora did not go to the octagonal room, but proceeded directly to the secret chamber. For one brief moment death stared her in the eyes, but she spoke bravely. In return for the liberation of her lover she declared that with the aid of one man she would bring the princess down to them. The young prince struck his forehead in rage. He had never thought of such a thing. His one aim had been to force Nalok Shin from the house and then to seize his betrothed.

When the princess awoke the next time she found her true lover gazing down into her eyes. They started out in search of Storm, and they were just in time. The steel chamber had become a box, coffin shaped, three feet square and eight feet high. Storm was in bad shape, but food and water and an hour or so in the outer air revived him.

"Will you be good hereafter?" he said to Zadora.

"Yes."

"You promise never to go anywhere without first sending the pigeon?"

"Yes."

"And now what the dickens made those chaps go to sleep?"

She explained. The vat was a brew of an oriental narcotic, the vapor of



She Found the Stone, Raised it and Discovered a Tunnel.

which superinduced sleep. It was quite innocuous and harmless. The pipes led to all the elephant trunks, and each time the ceremony began the vapor was liberated at a signal from the watcher above.

"That's the oriental mind, John. They cannot go at anything in a straightforward way. It must be all mystery and trickery."

"Do you know, Zadora?" he said ruminatively.

"Know what?"

"That I've an idea we'll be married before the year is out!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

The Ag... man.

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