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The Yellow Claw

Was It the End of It?

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Perkins entered his employer's private office and laid a square paper wrapped package at Murray's elbow. "By parcel post, marked 'Personal,'" he murmured apologetically and went away as silently as he had come.

John Murray stared at the package with incredulous eyes. Suddenly his jaw set firmly and he jumped up and, locking the door to the outer office, went to his safe and took from an inner compartment two other packages of the same size and shape as the one Perkins had just brought in.

With the three packages ranged before him on the desk, John Murray studied them with knitted brows. They were exactly alike. He opened one of the packages.

Within was a square box of Chinese red lacquer, with a powdering of gold on the lid. The box was perhaps ten inches square and three inches deep.

Murray lifted the lid and peered long at the strange contents of the box.

On a bed of red silk lay a hand—a hideous, claw-like hand—with long, transparent nails. The thing was made of yellow wax, but so perfect was the workmanship and so faithfully had the artisan carried out his idea that the yellow hand seemed like that of a living human hand, a veined and knotted hand, with misshapen fingers curling, as if in malignant desire so clutch, to strangle, to kill.

There was nothing else in the box save the yellow, claw-like hand.

With set lips Murray opened the second box and disclosed a facsimile of the waxen hand and the third box and saw still another hand. But this last hand contained in the box just arrived was closed, as though it hid something in a death grip.

Murray shuddered a little for he knew that the throat which the Yellow Claw louted to grasp was his own.

He knew that the death grip was intended for his own strong, brown throat.

Murray knew that he had received the three warnings and that if he did not obey the last one—well, he drew a sharp breath and walked to the window—well, if he didn't heed the third warning, why, he would disappear as mysteriously as Henderson had vanished three months before or as completely as Moore had dropped out of sight six months ago.

"I will speak to Swinnerton. He must advise me," muttered Murray as he thrust the boxes back into the safe and locked the door.

As he spoke there came a rap at the office door.

He turned the key and admitted Perkins, who darted little, snaky glances around the room as he delivered his message:

"Mr. Swinnerton to see you, sir."

"Send him in, please," said Murray shortly and he pushed forward a deep chair for his visitor, who entered almost immediately. Tom Swinnerton was a tall, thin, anxious looking young man with fair hair tousled over his fine forehead. He sank down in the chair and tossed his hat on the desk.

"Hope I don't bore you, Murray, but I've heard from them," he said with a nervous laugh.

John Murray uttered a faint echo of the laugh.

"I'm in the same box, you. I've heard three times."

"My God, Murray," gasped the other. "You don't mean—why, what are you going to do about it?"

Murray shrugged his shoulders. "The third call came only half an hour ago."

"I've heard twice. I came to ask your advice," shuddered the younger man, fixing his anxious eyes on Murray's strong face.

"There's only one thing to do, Tom, after all"—and Murray turned suddenly and sat down close to his visitor. He spoke in a whisper: "You know we four, Moore and Henderson, you and I, promised to obey the call of the Yellow Claw at any time in return for which they allowed Henderson to go free after that fiasco of his up the river. Those were rough days for foreigners in China, and, well, I don't believe any one of us expected to be called upon to do what the Yellow Claw demands. Henderson must have refused and Moore as well for you know they have both disappeared."

"Well, what is the one thing to do, John?" asked Tom after a while.

"Go down into Chinatown, find out what they want and then decide what is best to be done."

"When shall we go?"

"Tonight is best. I've had my last call. The third hand held a garroter's cord. Jove, they're an ungodly set, these Chinese!" Murray arose and paced the floor.

"Why Chinatown? We don't know where to go," objected Tom.

"They've come by parcel post. I've investigated and can tell you the very station from which they were mailed. And I'm pretty sure that when we get into Chinatown there will be some one looking out for us to take us to the Yellow Claw."

ics who had formed this foreign settle-
ment in California's largest city.

As they passed a dark alley a Chinese stepped forth and held out a lean hand toward them.

"Come," he said in a shrill whisper, and the two followed, knowing that they had received the dreaded summons.

Down the alley, lighted at long distances by small smoky oil lamps above grim doorways, through a broken arch, a turn to the left, through a swiftly opened door, down an ill lighted passage, at the end of which were brass steps leading down into a black void. Their guide produced a candle, lighted it and led the way down other steps into the bowels of the earth. At last he pushed before a black painted door and rapped softly three times, then three times again.

The door swung inward and disclosed a dimly lighted room.

Under a canopy of richly embroidered satin there sat on a cushioned teakwood chair a dignified figure clad in a Chinese robe of stiff brocade. On the breast of the tunic hung a heavy chain of amber beads and from the beads there swung a life size waxen hand—the replica of the three that John Murray had received, and of the two that had come to Swinnerton.

The face of the man in the chair was hidden under a queer mask of painted porcelain, but his bright dark eyes shone through narrow slits beneath the painted brows.

Murray looked around to find that the door was closed and their guide had disappeared. They were alone with the grim figure in the chair.

"Advance," mimicked the figure in English, and the two obeyed mechanically. Murray's hand rested on the revolver in his coat pocket.

"You have come in obedience to the beckoning of the Yellow Claw," went on the voice monotonously; "are you prepared to keep your promise made to the most high Fong Say?" His voice dropped to a whisper as he added a few words of secret import. A dead silence followed his speech.

"What is it you wish us to do?" asked Murray at last.

Again the personage bowed his covered head and whispered short abrupt sentences that caused his hearers to stiffen with horror.

Their faces were white like drifted snow when they lifted them to the impassive porcelain mask. Swinnerton's eyes were fixed on the bright dark eyes of the personage with a strange intensity; it was as if he was trying to wring some secret from the keeper of the Yellow Claw—as if he was racking his memory for some clue. Murray broke the silence.

"And if we refuse?" he asked.

"If you refuse," answered the voice, "Henderson and Moore will no longer be alone."

Tom was laughing and in either clutch hand was a revolver; his long neck was thrust forward and his head nodded waggishly at the personage.

For the first time the figure in the teakwood chair moved, the hands sought folds of the voluminous robes and flashed out again.

Four revolver shots deafened the air, and when the smoke had cleared away Swinnerton was sitting on the floor with a bullet through his arm, while the teakwood chair was empty.

On the silken carpet before the dais was a bundled form under folds of stiff brocade.

Murray leaned over his friend and assisted him to rise.

"Tom, are you badly hurt?"

"A scratch on my arm. I believe Perkins is dead. Better look and see," returned the other with a dry laugh.

"Perkins! What are you talking about?"

"Why, I guess you'll find that the Yellow Claw is nothing less than your confidential clerk, Perkins. I thought his face was familiar, but couldn't place it. Remember Blake, the renege white man who got Henderson into that trouble up the Yanatte?"

"Yes, of course; but Perkins?"

"Perkins is Blake, and the rascal has been working us four to the limit. Must have robbed and murdered Moore and Henderson. Both wore handsome jewelry and carried large sums of money when they disappeared. Let us get out of this."

"But the Yellow Claw?" protested Murray, unconvinced that all these years of uneasiness and the last few weeks of terror had been inspired by the machinations of his sinky eyed clerk.

"Perkins is the Yellow Claw. It doesn't exist outside of China. That's my best bet. He's used his knowledge to blackmail us, and he may be the tool for treasonable powers higher up. Remember the sums of money he demanded? Whew!"

Murray stepped to the prostrate form and turned it over. The porcelain mask fell away and disclosed the dead face of Perkins. The waxen hand at his neck was red with blood.

Without another word the two Americans left the room. Together they fled silently by strange passages and through crooked corridors, darting blindly here and there, up drowsome stairways, until, guided by a watchful Providence, they found themselves in a dim courtyard that was peopled only in the shadows. No one stayed their flight, for no one dared. Each had his own affairs, and murder was a common thing.

Finally they came to the Signal building, and Murray helped his companion up to the office and telephoned for a physician to attend to Swinnerton's wounded arm.

"Now to live," muttered Swinnerton with a grim smile. "The Yellow Claw is dead."

But Murray shivered as if he felt the cold breath of some evil premonition.

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SANCTUARY IN ENGLAND.

The Principle Still Survives to a Limited Degree.

Much water has flowed under London bridge since the British criminal could defy the strong arm of the law by the single expedient of escaping to the nearest church or hospital and claiming the protection of the "sanctuary," for down to the early Stuart days Great Britain had thousands of just such refuges for the criminal, from cathedrals and royal palaces to scores of towns and cities, where the man guilty of felony could laugh with impunity at the officers of law and justice for a period ranging up to forty days. If within that time he chose to go before the court, clothed in penitence and sackcloth, and confess his guilt, he was free to quit the realm without any hand daring to lay him.

Although no such asylum exists today for the criminal, the principle of the "sanctuary" still manages to survive. This privilege refers only to civil offenses and not to crimes as in the olden days, and yet the privileges are of considerable value.

No clergyman can be arrested within the walls of his church or while he is going to or returning from his duty. Bishops and archbishops are still more protected, for not one of them can be held before a magistrate even though the cause is a crime, unless the king especially commands it. Nor even up to the present time has any warrant an effect within the precincts of any of the king's palaces.—Chicago Trib-une.

CHICAGO—At a meeting of the Associated Country Newspaper Publishers of Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin in the rose room of the Hotel Sherman the advisability of eliminating mail-order advertising from their columns was discussed. R. H. Loper of Chicago, publisher of the Home Town magazine, issued monthly by the small-town newspaper men in conjunction with their regular publication, was chosen chairman.

CENTRALIA—Mrs. O. W. Coleman, who lives in Wamac, a new village located in three counties—Washington, Marion, and Clinton—is the first woman to cash a ballot in Illinois under the new suffrage law. The election was held to select a president and six trustees for the village, which is a suburb of Centralia. The new Illinois Central yards and shops, erected last fall at an expense of \$1,000,000, are located in the suburb.

The Only Explanation.
"Remember," said the fair visitor to convict 2323, "that stone walls do not a prison make nor iron bars a cage."
"Well, den, lady," replied 2323, "de warden's wolly'n't no' no' hypnotized."
—New York Times.

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State of Illinois, County of Lake, ss. Circuit Court of Lake County, October Term, A. D. 1913.

Frances C. Colby vs. Lynn M. Colby. In Chancery. No. 6341.

The requisite affidavit having been filed in the office of the Clerk of said Court, notice is therefore hereby given to the said Lynn M. Colby, defendant aforesaid, that the above named Complainant heretofore filed her Bill of Complaint in said Court, on the Chancery side thereof, and that a summons thereupon issued out of said Court against the above named defendant, returnable on the first day of the term of the Circuit Court of Lake County, to be held at the Court House in Waukegan in said Lake County, on the first Monday of October, A. D. 1913, as is by law required, and which suit is still pending.

LEWIS O. BROCKWAY, Clerk.

Waukegan, Illinois, August 5th, A. D. 1913.

WILLIAM E. CLOYES, Complainant's Solicitor.

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