



# THE SILK ENIGMA

BY  
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"ZORA, THE INVISIBLE,"  
"DEATH IN THE STALLS," &c.

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## CHAPTER XXIV PRISONERS THREE

Philip Slater struggled desperately to roll himself off the electrified mattress, but it seemed as though every wire that touched him had claws dragging him down with a fascinating affection. "Switch off!"

The voice of Sen Yat Soh sped through the room like the crack of a rifle and Ling Foo, still standing beside the switch, released the handle and the torture went "dead."

Sen Yat Soh moved closer to the exhausted man and the unconscious woman, but he seemed utterly oblivious of the woman. She might have been dead. He did not care. His narrow slits of eyes fastened themselves on the young man.

"Get up" he commanded, peremptorily.

From the tone of the Chinaman's voice Philip realized that this was no moment for heroics, and though his body felt as though it had been kicked all over, he struggled to his feet.

"Who are you and how did you get in here?" he demanded, rubbing his chin affectionately.

"Does that matter?" inquired Philip, glancing down towards the still form of the woman.

"He is the man who came this morning, Excellency," piped up Ling Foo. "I fancy he is from Oxtons."

"Is this true?" screamed Sen Yat Soh.

"Perfectly." "Take him away while I cool my fever," announced the man, beckoning to Ling Foo. "I will see him later."

"But this—this woman," Philip began to protest. "Surely you are not..."

Sen Yat Soh paused over his shoulder.

"She is a woman who would search for youth that is lost," he replied enigmatically.

When he had gone, Ling Foo touched the young man on the arm.

"I will show you to your room," he said, in a tone that might have been used by a hotel hall-porter.

Philip had roused himself out of his surprise. "You will, will you. Take that," and Philip's arm shot out to the man's face, but his doubled fist struck nothing but the air. The next moment a grip of iron descended on the nape of his neck. Ling Foo had side-stepped with the expert agility of a boxer, but it was not Ling Foo who gripped the young man's neck. It was another—smaller—more hideous yellow man. And Philip was as helpless as he had been last night when he had attacked the man in the store.

In this summary and utterly ignominious fashion he was frog-marched from the room, along the landing and bundled into another room totally dark. A key snapped in the lock and he found himself alone.

Ling Foo now busied himself with restoring Brenda Lennard to consciousness. He did it instinctively by dashing cold water into the woman's face. Miss Lennard blinked, and when her eyes rested on Ling Foo's face she gave a little scream and covered back again against that horrible torture-impregnated mattress.

"It is well, Miss Lennard," Ling Foo told her, politely. "When you are well enough I shall carry you to your room."

Brenda Lennard shuddered again. "No thank you," she said, grimly. "I'll walk."

Phyllis Varley, meanwhile, had been summoned before Sen Yat Soh. The girl felt anything but cheerful. She had heard Brenda Lennard's screams and knew that her turn came next. It was horrible; revolting.

"Sit down, Miss Varley," said Sen Yat Soh, indicating a chair. "I am in a difficulty. We have a visitor and I want you to tell me something about him... the truth, you understand."

For a moment the girl's heart leapt with hope. "But who is it?" she asked, excitedly.

"I have yet to learn his name. He is a young man from Oxtons. Why he is here, I know not, but as you know I have ways of making tongues loosen."

"You mean Mr. Slater. But that's wonderful," cried Phyllis. "You say he's here?"

Sen Yat Soh watched the girl, an evil leer on his lips. He nodded. "Yes, if that's the young gentleman, he's here, and I want you to tell me everything you know about him and particularly whether he knows anything about Chinese silk."

Phyllis was on her guard immediately. She had no idea how Philip had found the house. But her next thought was not so hopeful. Perhaps Philip had been brought here as she and Miss Lennard had been.

"I really don't know very much about him," she began; "that is, if it really is Mr. Slater. He's on the office staff, but he comes into the shop occasionally otherwise I would know nothing about him at all."

"You lie!" exclaimed Sen Yat Soh. "You and he are lovers. Your eyes speak more truly than your tongue. And being lovers you will have secrets. They are secrets I must know, and I must know them before to-morrow sun-

down. You will speak?"

Phyllis felt herself trembling. What could she tell him but the truth. She knew nothing about all this silk mystery that he had prated about ever since he had dragged her to the house. She couldn't understand a word of it, and she doubted very much whether Philip knew either.

"I don't know any more than what I've already told you," she insisted.

"Yet you lied to me about that silk," he sneered. "You said it had been bought by Miss Lennard. I now know that she did not purchase any silk. What have you to say to that?"

"I have nothing to say except that you drove me to it," she said, hoarsely. "I gave you the first name and address that came to my head. I didn't know that it would prove to be the name of an actual person."

"Very well. You will go back to your room and see if Miss Lennard is well. I shall not need her again for a little while and I imagine she will be feeling a little distressed after her electric tonic."

Ling Foo arrived in that mysterious way he always did arrive and conducted her from the room.

### "YOU LIE!"

Philip heard the grating of a key in the lock. A yellow light glowed through the tiny room. Ling Foo stood in the doorway.

"You will come with me, and you will make no attempt to be violent. If you are you will be placed in irons, uncomfortable irons, Mr. Slater. Irons that are connected with the power unit. You see we are thoroughly up-to-date in this establishment. We use modern inventions."

Philip decided that, after his previous experience, the fellow probably meant everything he said and he realized that if he was able to get free of the house again he must not be impeded with irons, so he preceded Ling Foo along the passage and down the staircase.

Sen Yat Soh was waiting to receive them. There was a note of impatience in his almost eyes.

"So, Mr. Slater, you are from Oxtons. Employed in the office. Doubtless you know something about the consignments of Suchow silk that have arrived in London in the past four weeks. Is that not so?"

Philip felt that the Chinaman had become possessed of accurate information in the shortest possible time, since he had appeared not to know who he was less than an hour ago.

"Up to a point you're right. I have seen the invoices and the delivery notes

for the silk you mention."

Sen Yat Soh rubbed his hands. His ancestors had been pleased to be kind to him to-night. Without any plotting this young man, who might easily prove to hold the key to the secret, had actually walked in on him. But Sen Yat Soh was much too hardened a campaigner to take too much for granted. He was secretly intrigued to know how the fellow came to discover his hiding-place.

"Tell me," the Chinaman went off obliquely, "how came you here... to this house?"

"Just strolling around," said Philip lamely.

"Not good enough, Mr. Slater. Can't you think of something more in keeping with your undoubted intelligence? Or maybe you require a stimulant to your memory?"

Philip understood that he was dealing with no ordinary Chinaman. This fellow was as clever as a bagful of monkeys.

"As a matter of fact, I was given the address."

"How interesting! Yet you lie, Slater. Your tongue is an adept at it. Think again."

Philip decided that verbal fencing was getting him nowhere, so he told just as much as he wanted the man to know. "I see. It was careless of my man to lose that scrap of paper. I must make quite sure that he is not careless a second time. And yet, I don't know that I would have had it different. Providence—or call it what you will—works strangely. Now about the silk in which I am interested."

Philip Slater's brain worked swiftly. "Of course," he explained, "you mustn't imagine that the entire consignment to Oxtons actually went into the store. Only about half the quantity did that. The remainder is still in stock in the stock-room in the basement."

"Ah!" Sen Yat Soh exclamation was one of infinite satisfaction, but suddenly the pleased expression on his face changed. "How do I know you speak the truth—you of a thousand lies? How do I know?"

"Why not go and see?" suggested Philip, secretly hoping that the man would agree to the suggestion.

"Perhaps there is another way," said Sen Yat Soh, slowly, touching the concealed bell beside his chair.

Ling Foo came in answer to it, and stood just inside the room. "Bring Miss Varley to me," he said, slowly and without looking at Philip. At the mention of the girl's name, Philip took an involuntary step forward. "Did you say Miss Varley?"

Sen Yat Soh nodded. "Charming girl," he commented, tonelessly. "But not very helpful—as yet."

Philip stood there clenching his fists and breathing quickly.

"If you've tried any of your swine tricks on her—"

He broke off as the door opened and saw Phyllis standing there with Ling Foo behind her.

"Philip!" The girl almost leaped across the room and clung to him.

Sen Yat Soh smiled.

"Pretty scene!" he said. "I like romance and sentimentality in an attractive setting, but I'm afraid this is no moment for love-making. We have work to be done."

"What's this swine been doing to you?" Philip demanded of her.

"Nothing—yet," Phyllis faltered. "Only—Miss Lennard."

"Look here," stormed Philip. "we've got to put an end to this farce. If we don't it's going to be unfortunate for you. Before this time to-morrow the police will be here. You hear what I say—the police—Scotland Yard—and that will be the end-of you!"

Sen Yat Soh was still smiling from his chair.

"So, the police will be here—that is interesting, Mr. Slater. I should hate your police to have this journey for nothing. But again you lie," he changed. "Why should the police wait until to-morrow? If they know you are here, why are they not here, too? You are very clever, Mr. Slater—but you are not quite clever enough. There is something lacking—just a little something. But we are forgetting the business in hand." He turned to the girl who was still clinging to Philip's arm. "Mr. Slater has been telling me about your supply of Suchow silk. Would you be good enough, Miss Varley, to tell me where your supplies are kept?—apart from those on the store-shelves, I mean."

Phyllis felt the pressure of Philip's hand on her own and heard him whisper one word—"Cellar."

"Why, in the store-room, of course," she told him.

"And where is the store-room?"

"In the cellar," she replied, simply.

"So! The silk is in the cellar. Yet it wasn't there last night, or my agent would have found it. You lie, both of you! To-morrow—or perhaps to-night," he reflected, "I shall learn the truth. As for your police, who am I that I should be afraid of them? They do not know I am in England, you poor helpless fools!"

(To be Concluded)



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### City Traffic Tied up to Save Life of a Sparrow

(Canadian Forest and Outdoors)

The life of a sparrow was saved at Elmira, N.Y., because the firemen were unwilling to see him die of starvation and exhaustion. The bird had carried a piece of string to the top of a high tree, as part of its nest making material. Bird and string became entangled in the tree-top. Acting Fire Chief Collins ordered out the aerial truck.

Fireman Miller climbed to the top of the ladder but could not reach. He returned, and the ladder was set at a higher angle. This time he succeeded. Clarence E. Hoagland, a salesman, took charge of the exhausted sparrow and nursed it back to health.

Elmira's traffic was tied up, a company of men and equipment were used, people were inconvenienced—all to save a sparrow.

Not only this, but the effect of the spinach lasted much longer. After administration of the fish oil the full influence lasted from three to six days, after which vision deteriorated again. The effect of the spinach was maintained for 10 to 14 days.

The use of the vitamin by children who had not been receiving a sufficient amount produced a striking and almost instantaneous improvement. The existing indolent and passive manner was replaced by smiles and a lively reaction to the flashes of the light of a lamp.

The condition of night blindness is not confined to children alone. Many adults suffer from the same thing and it is certain that some automobile accidents are due to this defect in vision. The remedy is plain. Eat more spinach.

North Bay Nugget.—Surely Mr. Stalin and his cohorts didn't stage the "over-the-pole" flight to demonstrate the feasibility of raining bombs on Canada and the United States should it be necessary in the sweet future.

The test applied to the solution of the problem by these Danish doctors

ally he got them, although I still can't understand why he wanted olive oil!

### Popeye Supported by Health Authority

(By Dr. J. W. S. McCullough)

Two Danish doctors, Frederichsen and Edmond, have demonstrated the marked superiority of spinach over halibut and cod-liver oils as a source of vitamin A.

Vitamin A is the one that prevents the night blindness of children and adults. It has been amply proved that lack of this vitamin will bring on the affection of children known as hemeralopia or night blindness, a disease in which the vision is abnormally poor in a dim light although there is nothing in the condition of the eye to explain this.

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### The Children's Corner

(By "Your Friend Kip")

Don't tell me that none of you have clever dogs or other pets, like the one Iris Naish told about in her "Dog Chatter" which I quoted for your entertainment. I am sure that there are plenty of smart pets in town. Wouldn't you like to tell other people about them? Send your stories to me and soon others will know of how clever a pet you have.

Perhaps your pet has done nothing exceptional like the Major's dog who sang, but it may do quaint things that are not usually done. For example, I once had a pure white cat who, besides being a beauty, had a wonderful memory (or so I thought). This cat was very fond of olive oil and sardines (imagine! Olive oil and sardines!) and he always remembered where they were kept, and when he wanted them he would insistently scratch at the right-hand cupboard door (so that I would know that that day's menu should contain olive oil and sardines). And usu-

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