

The Mandarin House Murders

By VAN WYCK MASON

CHAPTER IV

Marya Gallian's rickshaw sped smoothly past the North China Building and then the Palace Hotel, and North began to wonder whether her destination was the Yangtzeop quarters. He hoped not; half an hour was the most he could at present devote to her problems.

The Cathay's glowing tower loomed briefly overhead and the clairnets of a jazz band blaring away within it for a while penetrated the traffic roar. Just as lights of the Mandarin House shone ahead the leading rickshaw swerved and, to North's sharp surprise, swung into the curb before it. Promptly his interest in Marya Gallian achieved a new high, for he distinctly heard her call out, "Chanchol! Makee stop!"

"—And she's never been to China!" A thin smile fitted over the Intelligence Captain's lean visage. "Well, well."

Deeply intrigued, he watched her grip her rickshaw's handles against the coolie's sudden dropping of the shafts—which nasty little habit will pitch an unwary traveler neatly onto the pavement.

"Your fiance is staying here?" North inquired while interposing an arm between her and an M. P., lousy hauling an hilarious gob away to some hoosegow.

Under the hotel's great steel and glass awning, Marya Gallian cast one darting look about her before she nodded and gathered her evening cape so high as to effectively mask her features.

"Yes, Room 1311—I think Phil said. Oh, dear, I'm so worried." And this was one statement of hers which the man from G-2 saw no reason to doubt.

It was, North perceived, a neat dilemma in which he now found himself. Waiting for him inside would be Sir Guy Huntingden, Major Kilgour of the British Intelligence and probably that fat little lump of Oriental wisdom, Inspector Chao Ku. Especially he hoped Chao Ku would be on hand. Very little went on in Shanghai which escaped the S. M. P. detective's ears.

When they gained the lobby, North paused.

"Please wait for me in the women's lounge, Miss Gallian; better take a magazine or a paper. I may be gone some minutes."

"I'd much rather go with you. Don't you see? I must find out what's happened as quickly as I can." Her skilfully tinted lips became crushed between small white teeth. "Please let me go with you."

"You will do as I say," North insisted politely but definitely—he really needed to get oriented. "I'll be back shortly."

Bowing to occasional acquaintance, North was nearing the elevators when an assistant manager came up and in a stagey undertone said:

"You're Captain North, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"The police are waiting for you in room 1311. Please come with me."

1311! A small buzzing sensation made itself manifested in Hugh North's finger tips.

"1311? A bad luck number and a good one. Quite the happy medium in room numbers."

"It wasn't very happy for Mr. King, sir."

A sudden realization struck North like the warning buzz of a rattlesnake and his long stride slowed a little. "What name did you say?"

"The man who—er, who hanged himself registered as Mr. King—Phillip King. Gave his address as Baltimore, Maryland."

"Mr. King took the room alone?"

"Yes, sir. Why do you ask?"

"I had an impression that someone of a different name had taken 1311."

"I could check up, sir. It'd take only a minute."

"No. Never mind—it's my mistake."

Odd, he mused as the elevator shot upwards, if he had been disposed to accept Miss Gallian's ten thousand pounds—and he never had been—it seemed as if he had already earned it. So Luther Adams and Miss Gallian's Phillip King were not strangers? How interesting. How very interesting.

The assistant manager, impeccable in his neat dinner coat, rapped gently on the panels of a door marked 1311 and called, "Captain North is here, gentlemen."

A broad beam of light sprang out into the hall when the door opened. Simultaneously the assistant manager emitted a sharp—

"Oh, lord! Look at that!"

Cast ever so high upon a wall within, the silhouette of a human head and shoulders was etched in sharp relief. From the base of the bent head a thin dark line arose to eventually lose itself in a long tangent across the ceiling.

"How horrible! How perfectly ghastly!" North's companion fumbled at his own throat as if it, too, were constricted.

(To be Continued)

Letters To The Editor

Editor The Mountaineer:

The news of the death of my old friend James McLean brings sadness to one who has known him long and well. In all the 50 years that he has lived in Waynesville, I never knew him to do other than the honest and square and right thing. He was a man of straight-up-and-down character and integrity, and this he put into his life and work. Years ago, David Gudgeer and I built our home on the old home place adjacent to Mrs. Annie G. Quinlan. Jim McLean did much of the outside and most of the inside work, and today the fine quality of his work speaks for itself.

Here is an incident which shows just what manner of man he was. We were paying our union carpenters 10-hours pay for 9-hour day, but they struck because we would not pay them for an extra four hours which they did not work. Jim, who was president of the union, refused to quit work saying—"I have never taken wages for work that I have not done. I have always given a man a day's work for a day's pay."

It may not be generally known that Jim McLean is partly responsible for our present fine system of waterwork. Some of us remember when our water came from a mudhole on the road to Eagles Nest. While Mr. George W. Maslin lived in Waynesville and had a bank in the library building (which he built), he and Jim McLean were on the board of aldermen. During their term of office new waterworks were planned with an intake on Rocky Branch above Massie's on Allen's Creek.

To put in the water line a company was formed of local men who knew no more about the job than Jim did. Mr. Maslin had had experience with able contractors, putting in waterworks in other towns where he had lived. Against strong opposition and the cry "Keep the money at home," George W. Maslin and Jim McLean voted the job to the "foreign" contractors, who did the town a splendid job even if they made no money on it. Explaining his action Jim said to me, "I knew that Mr. Maslin had had experience with building waterworks and I had great confidence

Ratcliff Cove News

Mrs. James Swayngim has as her guest this week Mrs. Thurman Woods, of Highlands.

Glenn Francis returned to Fort Bragg Sunday after visiting his family here.

Miss Oberia and Miss Ruth Ratcliff, of Asheville, spent the weekend here with their parents.

Rev. and Mrs. Brouton and daughter, Karis, of Weddington, were the guests during the week of Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Jones.

Rev. Brouton is a former pastor of Elizabeth Chapel.

U. S. Plane To Carry Sixty Men Being Built

NEW YORK—Construction of a new-type, thirty-seven-ton transport plane, capable of carrying sixty fully-equipped soldiers, with a cruising speed of 280 miles an hour, by the Lockheed Corporation of Burbank, Cal., has been reported in aviation circles.

No one ever saved enough at the store on tooth brushes and tooth paste to buy store teeth.

Last year North Carolina layers were credited with a total egg production of 670,000 or 188 per person, reports the State Department of Agriculture.

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SATURDAY, JULY 5

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