

Oriental STORIES

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Broken Honor

By H. E. W. GAY

*Outcast from his world, living among the Malays whose respect he had gained, Tuan Jim was put to a heartbreakin*g test

THE yacht loomed through the faint light of dawn over the shallows, a startling intruder on the exile of the man who was called Tuan Jim. In the morning mist her tall spars and housed sails were ghost-like. She might have been a vision come to mock at the bearded man who gazed at her in dismay upon the companion ladder of his brig *Wanderer*.

"She has come in the night, O *Tuan*, a ship of white men!"

The Malay who had awaked him spoke in an awed whisper, as though the yacht boded some strange and incalculable evil.

"Has any one else seen her?" asked the other, his own voice instinctively sunk to a whisper.

"None, *Tuan*," answered the Malay. "I hastened to awaken you as soon as I beheld a strange ship. But soon all men's eyes will be upon her."

Tuan Jim's hand tightened on the com-

panion rail. He gazed for some moments in silence, the expression of surprize in his face slowly hardening to resentment. It was as though the vision had materialized beyond doubt to a palpable menace.

"Aground!" he muttered at last, all his resentment articulate in the word. "Aground!"

The mist that wreathed the shallows was fleeing like an uneasy ghost before the first rays of the sun. A golden streak shot the horizon beyond the yacht, touching her spars and white hull with its glamor. She looked like a ship in a dream. But the picture did not kindle a spark of admiration in his eyes.

"Of all places on God's earth for a packet like her!" he muttered.

"Shall I go ashore and bear the news to Abadir?" asked the Malay.

"No. He will learn soon enough," answered the other; and as he turned again to the yacht he thought: "If they



*"The remnant of the smile that lingered on
Tuan Jim's face vanished abruptly."*

have their way here you'll go up in smoke and every man aboard'll have his throat cut!"

His dominant feeling was one of anger against the intruder. She was a yacht, apparently on a pleasure cruise, which meant almost certainly there would be white people on board. And Telua, refuge of the last of those who had been pirates and trading adventurers of the Islands, was not a healthy place for such a packet. The remnant of Malays and Arabs who had refused to bow to the ever-widening dominion of white men over the seas of the Islands would see in the yacht a symbol of the authority they hated. Why was she there? Was she a spy, the forerunner of some accursed English or Dutch gunboat? But whatever she was, it was enough that she was

a ship of white men. A fierce exultation would possess them when they saw that the protective shallows which made Telua their refuge had delivered her into their hands. She had run aground on top of the spring tides, which meant she would not get away again at any rate within fourteen days, when the springs came round again. Ample time to leave nothing of her but a few charred ribs on a sandbank as a monument for every hated white man on board her!

"What blundering simpleton did her owner ship as master," wondered Tuan Jim, "to attempt a passage through these waters!"

He looked away from the stranded yacht to a cluster of houses ashore. Already there was a commotion in the courtyard of the biggest of them, the

dwelling of Abadir, a man who had been a leader of cutthroats, and whose sway over Telua had been supreme until the advent of Tuan Jim, outcast of white men.

"Men's eyes are *already* upon her!" he thought bitterly.

The yacht's appearance would provide just the opportunity that the Arab, Abadir, had been awaiting. Tuan Jim, who owed white men nothing, who had done with them for ever, would be put to the test. They would see, now, who were his people—the men of Telua to whom he had given his word, swearing that if he broke faith with them he would answer with his life, or those strangers in the yacht, whose skins were white like his own!

There was a drawn expression in his face, as though he were struggling not to cry out at some sharp spasm of pain. Certain officers at a naval court martial held about fifteen years ago had seen it, though they would not have recognized in the man with the iron-gray beard the young officer whose sword had been laid on the table, point toward him, as the presiding officer announced that he was dismissed the service. Two men only in that room had known that a scapegoat had been found for the theft of a secret code—the man who was responsible, and the scapegoat. Yet Tuan Jim had been that officer. About him had been drawn the deadly net of half-truths that are the outward appearance of things. There was no breaking free. Every violent denial was but a futile struggle that drew the meshes of the net more closely about him.

But the lawless sea-adventurers of Telua knew nothing of the naval officer. They knew a man who owned a brig called the *Wanderer*, who had forsaken the people of his country, who was just

and without fear, and whose word was his bond.

HE SAW the figure of Abadir emerge from the doorway of his house and focus a glass on the yacht. Then he gave an order to some men in the courtyard; for a moment later they made their way hurriedly to two large canoes that were hauled on the bank of the creek just astern of the brig.

"What's his idea?" Tuan Jim wondered suspiciously.

But it was plain that Abadir intended to come aboard the brig. Tuan Jim waited while a Malay ferried the Arab in a small dugout from the side of the creek.

"I have ordered a party of armed men to board her, *Tuan*," said the Arab with a glance toward the yacht.

The other looked at him and did not fail to notice the slightly malicious smile playing about his lips. In the arrogant tone of the voice and the hand resting on the pistol at his belt there was an unspoken: "That is good, is it not, hater of white men?"

"Does a man threaten a stranger with arms without first making sure he is an enemy?" asked Tuan Jim, ignoring the challenge of the swarthy leader of cut-throats. "Is it wise to approach a vessel—maybe an armed vessel, Abadir!—in open canoes packed with spearmen?"

"You fear, *Tuan*, this ship of white men—your enemies?" pursued the Arab.

"There is nothing to fear, Abadir, if I remain behind—with you," answered the other quietly. "But I shall not. It is better that I—who am wiser in the ways of white men than you—board the yacht alone and unarmed to learn her business here."

"What business brings her to Telua, O *Tuan*?" asked the Arab with subtle simplicity.

"I shall ask them," answered the bearded man, matching the other's manner of speaking.

Over Abadir's shoulder he could see the excited launching of the canoes. About a dozen men armed with spears were scrambling aboard each of them, talking loudly and gesticulating toward the stranded yacht.

"A nice freight of mischief to get alongside a ship's ladder!" he thought.

At heart these refugees of Telua were the lawless adventurers they had always been. The gunboats patrolling the more navigable waters of the Islands' seas may have driven them out of the business of piracy. But give them half a chance of looting a vessel, and they'd turn swiftly enough from their fishing and intermittent trading!

Ignoring Abadir, Tuan Jim went aft to the brig's rail.

"Haul those canoes ashore!" he shouted. "I am going alone to the ship of white men to learn their business."

"But the Rajah Abadir——" shouted the voice.

"Haul them ashore!" thundered the man at the brig's rail. "If the strange vessel be armed, will not your canoes be sunk before a single spear can be thrown? Your way is the way of fools. Haul them ashore!"

Reluctantly the canoes were grounded again. Abadir did not attempt to interfere. He was too shrewd to match his influence against that of the bearded man —yet. That time would come. Let the yacht remain for some days, at once an object of suspicion and a temptation. Let her become a thorn in the side of that man who had sworn he had done with white men for ever. They would see, the men of Telua, to whom the word of Tuan Jim was his bond. The black eyes of the Arab gleamed as they rested on the

broad shoulders of the man at the brig's after rail.

"Haul the dinghy alongside," he commanded, turning back from the rail. And as he approached the Arab he said:

"My word still stands, Abadir, even if the ships of white men were scattered thickly as the gulls over the shallows. If I break faith, the voice of the pistol at your belt shall be your last word to me."

"I hear—O enemy of white men," answered the other.

TUAN JIM handed his revolver to the Malay who stood by with the dinghy's painter, then descended the rope ladder from the brig's side. Slowly, as though he were paying a complimentary visit to a stranger in a safe harbor, he pulled toward the yacht. Astern of him the men who had left the canoes stood near the mouth of the creek, watching. Intermittent flashes revealed the broad heads of spears in the sunlight.

The quartermaster at the yacht's gangway was fingering an automatic pistol and looking down suspiciously at the man in the dinghy. Tuan Jim's courteous request that he be allowed to come aboard to speak to the owner seemed, however, to reassure him slightly. He stared in a puzzled manner at the big bearded man who looked like a pirate but spoke in a manner fitting to the yacht's own saloon.

As he followed the quartermaster aft he saw a girl of about fifteen standing by the rail. She was looking at him with the same puzzled air as the quartermaster, but there was a childish defiance in her attitude. She was not going to be scared by any whiskered pirate! Then just for an instant their eyes met, and the bearded man inclined his head with a smile. There was something about the way he did it that seemed to change the

child's attitude toward him. He caught a glimpse of it as his eyes left her.

"I am the owner. You wish to speak to me?"

He heard the voice at the same moment that he saw the man walking toward him. "And you are——?" the voice continued.

The remnant of the smile that lingered on Tuan Jim's face vanished abruptly. He managed to stifle the exclamation that came to his lips. Before him stood the man who had watched a young officer's sword laid on the table, point toward him—and knew that the theft of a naval code had been successfully fastened on a scapegoat.

For a moment the impulse came to him to answer the other's question: "I am the man in whose charge you left the keys of a certain safe in the office of the Governor of Port Koloa—for a purpose quite clear to you at the time, and subsequently as clear to me. I am the man who signed a chit, when I took the keys, that the contents of the safe were in order—after the customary superficial glance that is the rule between officers and gentlemen."

But Tuan Jim maintained silence. There was a certain irony in the present situation that caused an acid humor to stir deep down in him. He would let the other remain in ignorance of his identity, concealed by the graying beard, the seaman-adventurer's clothes, and the vagaries of time and place. What would the unscrupulous careerist before him say if he knew that every life on the yacht hung on a word from the lips of the stranger on her decks?

"And you are——?" the yacht's owner repeated, a little impatient of the other's stare and his silence.

"I?" He smiled slightly. "I am called Tuan Jim."

He saw the other's eyes run him up

and down before glancing away at the shore. There was a moment of hesitation as he seemed to consider those two aspects of things in conjunction. Then the acid humor stirred again in Tuan Jim, as he saw how the other had made up his mind. Time had not altered him!

"I think it might be well for you to realize to whom you are speaking," he said. "I am the Governor of Port Koloa, and this is my private yacht."

There was a pause—an impressive pause. But Tuan Jim did not appear overwhelmed. His manner was politely attentive.

"Does that convey nothing to you?" There was a rasp of arrogance in the voice.

"It is a statement I can understand," answered Tuan Jim. Then with a sudden sharpness of tone: "Does the stranding of your yacht here convey nothing to you?"

"What do you mean? I am unaware of your relations with the riffraff I have noticed ashore, but if you appear before me——"

"That is not the happiest of phrases in your present position," interrupted Tuan Jim. "I am here to discuss ways and means of avoiding the very real danger into which you have run by stranding off this coast. It will be well if you forget your official position—which will avail you less than nothing here—and place yourself in my hands until you can get away again. Have you arms on board?"

For a moment or two the Governor glanced at the other arrogantly, then seemed to decide it would be well to listen to him. There might be some foundation for the alarm which the yacht's captain had betrayed when he had been ordered to take the vessel through these waters. According to him there

were yet men along this coast "who would as soon cut your throat as look at you."

"There are no arms on board," he answered. "This is—or was intended to be—a pleasure cruise. My daughter is accompanying me. Why do you ask?"

"Merely to know if you have means of defense. As you haven't, I advise you to be as unobtrusive as possible and certainly to make no attempt to come ashore."

"And what would be the consequences of failing to attend to your advice?" There was a thinly veiled sneer in the question.

"I might not be able to answer for it," replied the other. "Any move on your part the least suspicious or provocative would be seized on by the people ashore as ample justification for killing every one on board and setting fire to the yacht."

"And may I ask what you are doing in such estimable company?" asked the Governor with a sneer that was no longer veiled.

"It may be well for you that I am in their company," answered Tuan Jim. "The writ of Port Koloa does not run to these waters, and if it did they are too shoal for a gunboat to endorse it."

He left the Governor and had taken a few paces toward the gangway when he turned back suddenly.

"Keep a bright light burning at night," he said, "in case it is necessary for me to come aboard secretly. It may not be discreet to hail you in the dark."

The girl, who was still standing by the rails, smiled at him as he passed. There was something very likable about that child, he decided.

"I'm not the least bit afraid of you, you know!" her expression suggested.

"Is that little girl the owner's daugh-

ter?" he whispered to the quartermaster at the gangway.

"Yes. Though no one would think—" The man stopped short, with thoughts of kidnapping and ransoms flashing to his mind.

But Tuan Jim betrayed no further interest. He swung down the ladder into the dinghy and began to pull toward the brig. Above the yacht's rail a white handkerchief fluttered in the girl's hand. He shipped an oar for a second and waved back.

As the quartermaster had let slip: "No one would think—" And she was the daughter of the man who had made his name an offense in the ears of decent men. . . .

Tuan Jim smiled, but the source of his smile was not a bitter humor. He was wondering how life would have turned out for that child by the yacht's rail if he had not been made a scapegoat.

"Whar a devilish queer crisscross of a job life is!" he muttered.

Ashore the seamen adventurers of Telua watched the return of the man they called Tuan Jim, who had come in his brig *Wanderer*, an outcast of white men, finished with them for ever.

EVERY night a lantern slung from low on the yacht's forestay burned brightly. There had been no need for Tuan Jim to board her again. It became more and more plain from the way men looked at him that the less interest he displayed in her the safer it would be for the people on board. He was glad that they were following his advice to keep a light burning. It was evidence that the ship of white men remained a prisoner of the shallows, and within the power of those ashore. But how it would be possible to get her away when the spring tides came round again was a problem

that became more grave to Tuan Jim with each day that passed.

Abadir was playing his game with deadly skill. In spite of Tuan Jim's assurances that no danger threatened from the yacht, that she would depart again on the first tide that served, leaving Telua the refuge it had always been, men's suspicions were not lulled. They gazed at her with hostile eyes, and little groups of men gathered by the canoes on the bank of the creek, talking among themselves. But their talk was not for the ears of Tuan Jim. Whenever they saw him approaching, an ominous silence would fall, and their faces would grow sullen. The Malay who was the *serang* of his brig asked him one day if men spoke truly when they said much loot was to be had from the stranded ship.

"Whose speech is of loot?" asked Tuan Jim sharply.

"All men's, O Tuan," answered the Malay simply.

He left the *serang's* question unanswered. What would it avail to deny there was loot, even if the loot were no more than the yacht's stores and fittings? You could not convince men who had lived by piracy and adventuring that a trim three-hundred-ton yacht was not worth boarding! It would be a palpable lie. And men's faith in him was diminishing swiftly enough without his lying to no purpose!

"Abadir is leaving no stone unturned!" he reflected bitterly. "If she's not a spy, she's a prize!"

He made an attempt to explode the suspicion that was gathering against him. On hearing the Malay's words, he went ashore and summoned the silent groups of men to the courtyard of Abadir's house. The Arab himself stood behind him, a sneer of a smile on his lips as the

other spoke to the seamen adventurers of Telua.

"I have given my word that the ship of white men is no spy," he said. "She will depart as she came, and no man among you shall suffer by her coming. This I swear to you, I who have finished with white men and have made my dwelling among you. If any man believes that I am breaking faith with him let him stand forth and speak."

His gaze moved slowly over the faces of the crowd, but no one spoke. Lawless fighting men they were, who had shed blood and whose blood had mingled in the waters of the Islands' seas. They were adventurers, but there was something of nobility in their weather-hardened faces. They hated white men because they sought to set a rule and dominion over the shores that were their heritage from the beginning of time. Tuan Jim knew the secrets of their hearts, their indomitable pride and their fierce love of freedom. There was something about them—perhaps it was the bitter hopelessness that he knew lay at the heart of their rebellion—that had made an irresistible appeal to him. He, too, had become an Ishmael, with every man's hand against him.

"The strange yacht is nothing to me," he said. "No more than a gull that rests upon a sandbank and vanishes again with the flowing of the tide."

"I do not doubt your words, O hater of white men!" a voice rang out.

In the moments that followed a growing murmur moved through the crowd. It seemed to merge with the beat of the surf on the shore of Telua, acclaiming the man who was called Tuan Jim. He heard it with a fierce thrill of exultation. They had not lost their faith in him!

"Yet if you are a hater of white men, O Tuan"—it was Abadir's voice behind

him, incisive, mocking—"why do you wish the yacht to depart?"

Tuan Jim turned to his questioner and saw a sneer about his lips. The Arab did not mean to lose this opportunity of triumphing over him. If the yacht were allowed to go, there might never be another chance of breaking the power which the white man had over the men of Telua—a power which rested on their faith in him. Let his word—the much spoken-of word of Tuan Jim—be put to the test! Let him show who were his people!

He saw the challenge boldly written in the Arab's face. All the enmity which had been smoldering against him flamed in the black eyes.

A feeling that was akin to fear gripped Tuan Jim's heart. Not the fear of a pistol shot or the broad head of a spear—a man might meet those things with a smile—but fear of life itself if he should lose men's faith again. There had been those unforgettable years before he had cut himself off in desperation from the life of white men. . . . A man might be an outcast, but if he found some spot on God's earth where he could look men straight between the eyes and know that they believed in him, life was yet worth while. And he had found such a spot in Telua, the refuge of the last of the adventurers of the Islands. If they no longer trusted him—

"Why should not the yacht depart, Abadir, forgetting us and by us forgotten?" he asked, striving against that secret fear that laid cold fingers about his heart.

"White men who sail for no profit in strange seas do not forget, O *Tuan*, unless they are dead," answered the Arab.

"And if they were dead, would not the vengeance of white men follow as surely as the rising of the sun? He who kills

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white men and hopes to escape death is a fool."

"Yet white men's bones lie hidden in these seas, *Tuan*!" answered the Arab craftily. "And the yacht lies hidden from all eyes save our own. Why, then, should she depart, bearing tongues that may wag?"

The murmur that had run through the crowd died away. Tuan Jim was aware of the clustering men as a solid phalanx of silence, intent on the sword-play of words between Abadir and himself.

"The white men on the yacht deceive you, O *Tuan*. You have lived so long away from them that you have forgotten their cunning."

Abadir continued to press his advantage, forcing the issue artfully to a question of opposing loyalties. For whom was Tuan Jim concerned—them, or the white people whose blood ran in his veins? Cunningly he made it appear that it was not his word he doubted, but his faith that the yacht's departure would not result in evil for Telua.

The silence of the crowd made it clear that the Arab's words had their effect. He felt their eyes on him, as they waited to hear what he would say. The word of Tuan Jim was being put to the test!

Over the heads of the crowd he could see the white hull of the stranded yacht. She seemed to flaunt herself in the sunlight. What did men's doubt of him and the bitterness in his heart matter to her?

"You will see that no harm comes to me from these barbarians," her beautiful presence seemed to convey.

A flash of anger came into his eyes. What claim, after all, had she on him? There was not one man he could call friend in the world from which she came. Why should it matter whether that elegant hull of hers went up in flames?

But his anger died swiftly. Whatever

happened there was only one course open to him. She must be got away somehow, no matter how much he had to lie and deceive to achieve that end. Only one man aboard her had harmed him. Every one else had a claim on him. There were her crew—and that child who had smiled at him as though *she* knew quite well the sort of man he was.

His gaze left the white hull of the yacht. The Malays still waited for the words that would declare whom Tuan Jim had chosen. He would have to find some means of getting the yacht away, giving his word to them that she should remain. He must gain time to make his plans.

"I swear," said Tuan Jim solemnly, "that the white men's ship shall not depart. If she moves but a cable's length from the sandbank where she rests I will answer for it with my life!"

A sound ran through the crowd in the courtyard, swelling into a cheer that drowned the distant thunder of the surf.

Tuan Jim had chosen!

ONCE he had given his word that the yacht should remain a prisoner of the shallows, there had been no difficulty in restraining the men of Telua from boarding her. As long as she did not leave, she remained harmless. Her housed sails were evidence of her captivity by day, and by night, the bright, unmoving light that glowed at her forestay. Men no longer talked in groups that became silent at the approach of Tuan Jim. He had given his word and promised to answer for it with his life.

Even Abadir made no further trouble. He professed an outward satisfaction with things as they were. He knew that Tuan Jim's life was forfeit if the yacht did not remain, and he had taken the precaution of having a score of fighting men

and a large canoe ready at a moment's notice if any attempt should be made to move her. Half a dozen pairs of eyes gazed through the darkness watching for any telltale movement of the light. Abadir was content. He held the white man now in a cleft stick.

Tuan Jim had paid one more visit to the yacht, ostensibly to inform the people on board that their vessel was not to be moved, and that they must be confined to her until their fate had been decided by the people ashore. Actually nothing of the kind was mentioned in the five minutes he spent in her saloon with her captain and owner. . . .

On the day he had given his promise, he surrendered his weapons to Abadir, and had asked that he and two armed men should remain with him every night on board the *Wanderer*.

"My movements by day are plain to all men's eyes," he had explained with a smile. "But by night I might vanish, hoping to escape at the full of the tide in the ship of white men."

But the Arab had declined the mocking invitation. He had taken adequate precautions. At some time, he knew, the other's hand must be forced. The yacht could not remain isolated indefinitely from the shore or the people on board must starve. Sooner or later Tuan Jim must resort to fresh tactics. Meantime he could enjoy in secret the spectacle of the white man waiting for the trap that must inevitably close on him.

Tuan Jim did not turn in on the night when the tides had worked round again to the top of the springs. He had seen the light that marked the yacht's position on the sandbank blink out as dusk fell, and watched it, steady and unmoving, through the hours of darkness. An expression of anxiety came into his face as the swing of the brig athwart the creek

told him the tide had reached the full, but when she had swung to the ebb, and the light on the sandbank still remained perfectly motionless, he began to smile to himself quietly. It wanted three hours to dawn. By that time—

"Why do you not sleep, *Tuan*?" the whispered voice of his Malay *serang* interrupted his thoughts. "The tide ebbs fast and the light of the white men's ship has not moved. There is no need to watch, *Tuan*. She is safe."

The Malay could not see the expression on Tuan Jim's face. He heard his quiet: "Call me at dawn—as on that morning when the ship of white men first came."

Then he heard the diminishing sound of his footsteps moving aft.

TUAN JIM was awakened by the excited words of his *serang*.

"She has gone, O *Tuan*! The ship of white men has gone! Nothing remains but a spar thrust into the sand with a light hanging from the top of it! It is that we have watched, believing the ship to be there! Shall I——?"

"Yes," he interrupted with a smile, "bear the news to Abadir with all speed! Awaken every man in Telua. I will follow."

He saw the lantern hanging from the spar—the spar that he had told them on board the yacht to thrust over the side into the soft sand just as dusk fell. And the lantern had been hung from it so that the light appeared in its usual position at the yacht's forestay. It gleamed feebly now in the dawn, as though it were weary of a deception that was no longer necessary.

An excited crowd was gathering in the

courtyard of Abadir's house. Men pointed to the spar thrust in the sand, and pressed round Tuan Jim as though they waited to hear what he had to say now of the cunning of white men. There was a note of anger in some of the voices, which spread and became an inarticulate snarl of sound as those nearest him saw the smile on his face. Hands were raised as though to strike him, and he heard his name spat from lip to lip with contempt.

"He has helped them to escape!" shouted a voice. "Down with the traitor! Kill the dog of a white man!"

Abadir awaited him at the foot of the steps that led up to his house. The black eyes glinted triumphantly, and a hand caressed a pistol at his belt.

"I have come, O Abadir," said Tuan Jim, "to hear your last word. And I perceive," he added with a glance at the hand at his belt, "you have it ready."

He saw the hand lift the pistol so that the crowd could see it, and heard the Arab's voice raised above the tumult.

"What is the fate of a traitor in Telua?"

Out of the confused growl of sound came one word, harsh, insistent:

"Death!"

Tuan Jim's eyes did not waver from those of the Arab. He felt a strange contentment in that long moment of waiting. He seemed to see his honor in the eyes of men as something merely outward and unimportant, something to be smiled at—as that child on the yacht had smiled at his cutthroats' appearance. . . .

A flame flashed from the muzzle of Abadir's pistol.

Out on the sandbank the deceptive light of the lantern was no longer visible. The splendor of the sun had blotted it out.