



SPICY- ADVENTURE STORIES

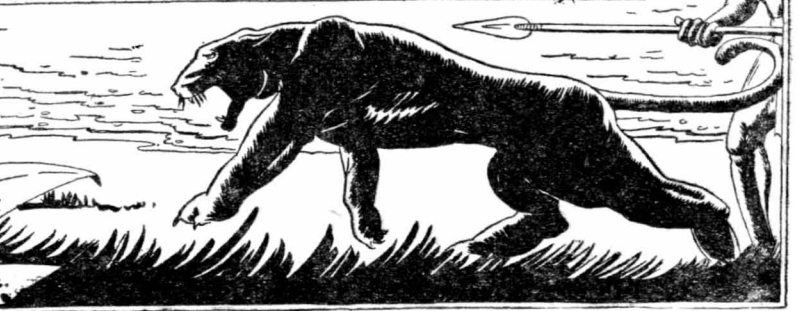
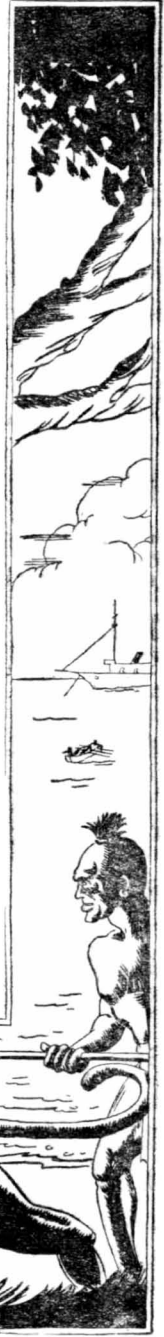
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TALE of the Perfect Women

Women without physical flaw! Women who have been taught that nothing is so important as pleasing men! Bill Lane goes into Mongolia to see if it's so!



By GUY RUSSELL

BILL LANE sat in Yumen's one and only 'Foreign' Bar, drinking raw, made-in-Japan, imitation whisky from a dirty glass, and tried to like the place. There wasn't much to like; either about Yumen, the Foreign Bar, or Bill's fellow customers. But he decided that he'd better like it. He was spending the first of what threatened to

be a long succession of solitary nights in Yumen.

And Yumen was a hell of a place to be spending even one night. The powers-that-were of the Urco Company who paid Bill Lane's modest salary had been somewhat upset over a recent evening in southern Changsha, when Bill had incurred the severe displeasure of one



of Changsha's most important citizens.

In the space of an hour or so, Bill Lane had drowned a dozen of that citizen's best hired men, disclosed a very embarrassing secret of the citizen's, and then thrown the citizen himself into a cold, muddy river. All to rescue one appealing bit of blonde femininity for whom Lane had some better, more personal use.

So Urco sent Lane to Yumen, their last, northern outpost in desolate, Sin-

kiang Province of North China, right on the edge of the Gobi. Supposedly for Bill's own good. To get him out of the vengeful reach of the old Chinese who got the involuntary bath, and who had managed to swim ashore. But, when Lane saw Yumen, he realized that his immediate superiors had also had a little punishment in mind.

Craddock, the lean, sour Yankee whom

Bill Lane was relieving in Yumen, settled back in his chair at the other side of Lane's table, and groaned.

"Here comes the floor show! Thank God this's the last time I'll ever have to watch that damned yellow slut squirm her belly muscles!"

LANE looked at the 'floor show', one voluptuous, black-eyed half-caste girl with a wisp of beaded cloth across swelling, ivory breasts and another about full-blown hips. When she began to dance, he couldn't have wrenched his eyes away if he'd tried. And he had no desire at all to try. But he wondered a little at Craddock's distaste.

Bill Lane, himself, had seen worse looking girls in better places than the Foreign Bar. And she could dance! She moved in slow, suggestive writhings to the beat of the queer, tinny music, and movement rippled across her dimpled, creamy stomach like tiny snakes.

"Wow!" Lane breathed. "Talk about ball-bearings! Has she got 'em in all the best places!"

The dancer saw Lane staring and she shot an approving glance over his huge, blond bulk. But some innate feminine instinct insisted that he make the first move. So she concentrated on Craddock.

She came toward their table, eyes smiling a frank invitation. The cadence of the music speeded up and she abandoned herself completely to mad, sensual posturings. A faint patina of perspiration gleamed over her lush, velvet body in the smoky light, and Lane's blood began to hammer.

Beside Craddock, she danced so close that a firm breast almost brushed his shoulder. At her nearness, Craddock leaped to his feet, cursing. He caught

the girl by a wrist and spun her roughly away. She stumbled and fell on the slippery floor.

"Hey, what the hell!" Lane growled, surprised and a little angry. "That wasn't necessary, was it? After all, you don't have to man-handle the girl, just because she likes you, do you?"

"No," Craddock muttered. "I'm sorry." He followed the dancer and helped her to her feet. Mumbling an apology, he pressed a coin in her palm. She smiled, but straight at Bill Lane.

Craddock said, "Let's get out of here. Do you mind?"

"No," Lane said, "I think maybe it's a good idea." There was a nasty murmur at the other tables about the room. "We'll probably save the bouncer a job, if we do."

Craddock turned toward the door but Lane followed the little dancer. He touched her elbow with one big hand and whispered in her ear. She nodded and smiled. Lane went after Craddock, grinning. It had been a long time since Hankau and Jean Jerrold.

OUTSIDE, he said, "Craddock, not that it's any of my business, but what made you get up on your ear like that? Do you know our little girl-friend?"

"I was in Yumen when she came, a few months ago, if that's what you mean. I've seen her dancing in there, a hundred times, I suppose."

"That wasn't exactly what I meant. I just made a date for myself and I was wondering if maybe there wasn't some reason why she's poison to you. Something that might be a good thing for me to know, too."

"No," Craddock said, slowly, "it's nothing like that. The girl is all right,

as far as I know. It's . . . something else."

"Well, I wasn't being inquisitive. I was just surprised at the way you blew up, all of a sudden."

"Made rather an ass of myself, I guess. But . . . well, you'll think I'm insane if I tell you what made me do it."

"You don't have to tell me anything, you know," Lane said puzzled. "As I said, I was just curious for reasons of my own."

"I know. But . . . I haven't had a chance to talk about this, and I'd like to."

"Well, if you want to get something off your chest, go ahead. I'm a good listener."

"You know, don't you," Craddock started, "that I just got back from an inspection trip up North. Was gone about a month."

"Yeah, you told me. Got snatched by some bandits, out in the Gobi, didn't you?"

"Not bandits. Priests."

"Priests! !"

"Priests, monks, filthy yellow devils—whatever you want to call them."

"How'd you happen to get mixed up with them?"

"Fifty miles north, at Shidun, we've a storage tank. That's where I was supposed to go. But I heard that there was some good hunting in the Sutusin-tag, just above Shidun."

"They're in Mongolia, aren't they?"

"They are. No one knows that better than I do, now. Mongolia comes down in a little point, almost to Shidun. I crossed the border to get into the mountains. And . . . followed a trail right up to the gate of a damned monastery."

"Brothers didn't like trespassers, eh?"

"No, they treated me very well, except. . . ." Craddock paused.

When he continued, there was a queer, sleepy monotony in his tone. Lane glanced at him sharply, in the half-light of the street, but the other's eyes were wide and staring.

"Lane," he said, "did you ever see a perfect woman?"

"Perfect!" Bill Lane said, startled. "No, I've seen a lot of women, of all shapes and sizes, but I never saw one I'd call perfect. Anything but that."

"I mean a woman without a physical flaw. A woman whose body you could watch and touch and twist and turn from long, red-gold hair to slender, tiny feet without ever finding a mistake or a blemish? A woman who had been taught from birth that there was nothing of any importance in her life except pleasing a man—any man—in any and every way she could. And who had been taught by experts."

"Hey!" Lane exclaimed. "You didn't take to hitting the little pipe with your friends up there, did you? If I had dreams like that, I'd spend all my time asleep."

"I didn't expect you to believe me. Especially you. You've never been *fou* about a woman, have you, Lane? You're too hard-headed. I know. So was I. . . . once."

"Wait a minute," Bill Lane objected. "I didn't say I didn't believe you. I don't know, yet, whether I do or not, because I still don't know what you're talking about."

"Those monks," Craddock said, slowly, ". . . who kept me practically a prisoner for a month . . . breed such women!"

"Breed them!"

The girl behind him, Bill faced the rain of arrows.



CRADDOCK nodded. "I don't know any other word for it. They breed and raise them like cattle."

"But . . . ? The monks were Chinks, weren't they?"

"Mongols—squatty, powerful Mongols. But the women weren't. I think they were mostly Georgians—what people call Circassian—because they all had that heavy, reddish gold hair and pure, pale skins."

"Some of them must have been half-breeds! If the monks were Mongols."

"The priests never touched them. At least, not often. The priest—and the girl—are killed immediately if there is even a faint suspicion of anything like that."

"Then what the hell? I don't get it."

"If you decided to stop drinking, and then were sent to prison for a year where you couldn't get anything at all

to drink, would you deserve any credit for stopping? These priests are sworn to chastity and"

"And so they raise their own temptations. I see. But wait a minute! How old were the women?"

"Young! All of them girls, hardly more than children."

"Then I don't see, again. Where do they get the girls?"

"I said they breed them. The male? Damned fools like me!"

"You? And you were there a month?" Lane grinned. "No wonder you didn't fall for the little girl in that dive."

"It wasn't that. After those girls up north all women will always be repulsive to me. Words aren't much good, I know. Lane, those priests have been woman-breeders for God knows how many generations. For that many generations, every boy, and every girl-child who showed the least, tiniest, unlovely defect has been killed. No sculptor ever dreamed of such models."

Bill Lane said, "I guess I've only one more question. What made you leave?"

"I was luckier than anyone will ever be again," Craddock said. Then, bitterly, "At least, that's what I thought for a few hours. Now, I know that I'll never be able to forget them, awake or asleep."

"I still don't know why you left."

"I got away, when I heard that I was to be killed."

"That was tough," Lane admitted. "But you did get away, didn't you?"

Craddock stared at him. "Yes," he said, "I got away. But don't think that you could. You'd better stay a long way away from the Sutusan-tag."

Suddenly, his voice rose to a hoarse scream. "Stay away from them! Stay away from them, do you hear!"

"Easy," Lane soothed. "I've no de-

signs on your red-headed babes. When I set up as a gigolo, I want to do it on my own time."

"Sorry," Craddock mumbled. "I guess I am a little mad."

CRADDOCK left for the south the next day. It was almost a full twenty-four hours before Bill Lane was able to leave to look over the tank at Shidun.



North from Shidun, he took with him young Yin Fu, his Chinese clerk, who knew every dialect in Sinkiang Province. Yin had much to say about the "bad men" who infested the nearby foot-hills but Lane laughed him into silence.

The second day out, in the edge of those hills, it wasn't so easy. So Lane swung the boy toward his tough little Chinese pony and grimly ordered him to mount. Yin looked fearfully at his boss's huge fists and rode dumbly on.

Lane had gone as far as Craddock's meagre instructions would take him and Yin had no assistance to offer. He turned a deaf ear to all questioning, and

Lane began to be afraid that his trip had been for nothing. Until, late in the afternoon and high in the hills, he found that it hadn't.

They turned a sharp corner in the narrow trail, around a jagged rock outcropping, and rode into the midst of a dozen broad-shouldered, cruel-faced men. They waited in a small open space, long, vicious arrows set to the strings of great horn bows. Bill Lane could only hope that these were the people he'd come looking for.

Round, flat, droopy-mustached faces didn't make them look much like any monks Bill had ever seen. Things looked bad, if they weren't. Maybe, even if they were.

They took the rifle from the crook of Lane's arm and tied his hands behind his back. Firmly, but not as roughly as they might have. Yin did not fare so well. They yanked his wrists together and bound them so tightly that Lane could see the dark blood swelling the boy's hands. When they started Yin up the trail with a lusty kick, Lane spoke.

"Yin," he called, "tell them that, if they harm you, they won't be able to talk to me. And ask 'em where they're taking us."

Yin chattered, hesitantly, and one of the men rumbled an answer. Yin said, "Excellence, they say that they care not whether they speak with you or not. They say that we go to a place they call 'the lesser home of he-who-cannot-die' and for me to be still before they pluck out my tongue and bind it over my teeth."

Lane grinned. "Nice guys. Better keep still, Yin. They look as if they'd enjoy doing it."

But he noticed that Yin received no more kicks. They climbed, on foot in single file, higher and higher up the steep path. Two of the brothers led the ponies along behind. The shafts of the setting sun were level across the boulders when their stocky, yellow leader came out into the opening of a narrow, rock-strewn valley.

At the other end, Lane saw grim, towering, stone walls set tightly against the sheer face of the gully on either side. A wide doorway opened blackly and a few narrow openings were evidently windows.

Lane thought, "If that's the place

Craddock was talking about, I guess I should have asked him how he got out."

Fifty yards from the walls, a moving shadow crossed Lane's path. He looked up. A huge vulture was wheeling slowly about something hanging high above. Shock pulled with tiny fingers the hair at the base of his skull as he saw what that 'something' was.

TWO naked bodies, chained face to face and knee to knee, hung head downward from a great iron hook set into the stone. A man and a woman. The man was one of the broad, yellow-skinned priests, but the girl's body gleamed white in the glancing sun and her hair streamed down in a rich, ruddy cloud.

The vulture swooped down, insolently careless of the men below, and tore at the girl's face. Bill Lane jerked still in mid-step as he saw her body twist in an unmistakable, convulsive movement. She was alive!

The man behind shoved at his back and Lane forced his eyes away. There didn't seem to be much Bill Lane could do for her but swear bloody and ten-fold vengeance. And he did that. There was still a .45 in his arm-pit, with seven smashing blows of death in each of two clips. He prayed that his captors might not have heard of shoulder holsters.

Through the doorway, they led him along a hall and then down interminable stone steps. At the door of a tiny, cell-like room, they untied his hands and pushed him in. One came back, almost immediately with a bowl of tasteless, gruel-like food. Later, he heard Yin begging at great length of his most reliable Chinese god. He knew that the boy must be somewhere near.

They returned for him, hours later. They brought Yin along, back of the

stairs. Lane thought that there were more steps, this time, and that they must be near the roof of the dank honey-combed structure.

Finally, they brought him, the frightened Chinese boy with him, into a great, high-ceilinged room. A score of the monks stood about a throne in the center. The brothers wore drab, dirt-colored robes but he on the throne was garbed in bright yellow.

Lane stared at him. He was old, so dried and wrinkled with age that the American shuddered to think how old he must be. Little bright eyes, like bits of wet stone, stared back at Lane. A voice came through yellow parchment lips in a high, cracking chant.

Lane shook his head and pointed to Yin. "What's on the old devil's mind?" he asked the boy.

"He asks from whence we come," Yin quavered.

"Tell him. Shidun."

"He says he knows that. His men watched us come."

"If he knew, why the hell did he ask?" Lane grunted.

"He says that he wished to test the truth of our words. He asks where the tall, dark man has gone."

"Say that the dark man is dead. You're a pretty good liar, Yin. Say that he died of an arrow wound and was buried before we left. And ask him what the devil he thinks he's going to do with us."

The mummy spoke at some length. Then its high voice raised in a sharp command. Two of the brethren shoved Lane into a low chair at the base of the throne.

YIN, at Lane's feet, chattered rapidly. "He says, Excellence, that he has great need of you. You are large and

strong and your eyes are clear. The snows have come and gone three times since a girl-child has been born within the walls and that his white-bodied female devils will soon grow old and gaunt. Then his children will no longer gain the Inner Mystery through the racking tortures of fierce battle with desire. I do not know what he means, Excellence."

Bill Lane grinned. "I do. That is, I hope I do. And I hope that his 'female devils' aren't *too* old and gaunt."

One, at least, wasn't. Lane's breath was caught in his throat in pure wonder at the girl who stepped through parted hangings at the foot of the throne. From high-piled hair the color of raw, red gold, down her whole sensuous body she was pure, flawless loveliness. Her single, clinging, silken garment was cut and slashed in a dozen artful, shameless places until the gleaming marble beneath it was a hundred times the sinuous, seductive thing it would have been, even nude.

She danced—slowly—to the muted throbbing of a drum. Danced a thousand age-old, nameless hungers into Lane's throbbing head. Her eyes never left him through the hours that she danced before him. He knew that it could be only minutes . . . no man could live longer without breathing.

When she slipped back through the hangings, he followed after her, all will of his own gone before that curving white-hot body which was graven on his brain forever. An ugly yellow priest caught him by the arm. Lane swore at him but the words couldn't come through the dry furnace of his mouth.

The man grinned evilly and nodded. At a word from the throne, he led Bill Lane through the hangings and down a

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narrow, twisting stairway. Other draperies barred their way and he pushed Lane through.

The dancer stood beside a wide, low couch in a dim alcove, tearing at the silken stuff about her waist with frantic fingers. As Bill Lane shoved aside the velvet draperies, the knot came loose and her costume slid down alabaster thighs in a rippling shower. Lane leaped toward her and she raised her arms to him. He crushed firm, lifting breasts against his shirt. He found her mouth.

Her body moving against him, slowly and inexorably, she pulled him toward her. . . .

LATER, much later, sanity returned. Lane lay on his side and looked about him. He found himself in a long corridor of such alcoves. From each of them, bright eyes watched him, tiny tongues caught between white teeth and panting lips. Their owners lay, in mute appeal, in such an array of inviting postures that Lane blinked to assure himself that he was awake.

Involuntarily, he tried to rise. But he sank back, grinning. "Sorry, ladies," he sighed. "Maybe some other time."

At the sound of his voice, his former guide came through the curtains and motioned him up. He climbed wearily to his feet and shook himself. The dancer caught at his hand and he bent to kiss a pearl-veined wrist.

"Don't worry, baby," he promised. "I'll be back."

He followed the Mongol out. Now, his mind had cleared and cooled and he knew what had to be done. The yellow man, careless now, took him down to his cell alone. As the man reached to lift down the bar across the door, Lane hooked his right fist sharply up. His knuckles met bone, just below the man's ear, with a solid crack. The man crumpled without a sound.

Lane leaped across his inert body to the door of Yin's cubicle. He yanked the bar away and dragged the boy, sputtering with fright, out into the corridor.

They had no warning, other than the bow-string's twang, too late, of the arrow that struck through Yin's throat. Lane jerked the heavy automatic from under his arm and fired. A screaming gurgle rose above the gun's booming roar.

"One down!" Lane muttered grimly. "One for you, Yin. But I guess you don't care a hell of a lot, now. Sorry, kid."

Smoking pistol in hand, he ran to the stairway. Before his second step, he dove back to pull blouse and trousers from the dead boy's body. Yin Fu would have no more use for them and Bill Lane hoped *he* might.

For some reason, they weren't looking for him on the narrow stairway to the women's sleeping quarters. He burst, unhindered, into the alcove he had so recently left. He pulled the red-haired girl, half-nude and half-awake, to her feet.

"Here!" he ordered, "get into these! Quick!"

The girl gasped in uncomprehending bewilderment. So Lane pushed her back to the couch and, lifting white legs high, slid Yin's trousers down over them. He jammed her into the blouse and pulled her out of the room behind him.

He thought he could find his way back through the maze of stair-and hallways but there were going to be graver obstacles than loss of direction. Almost immediately, they all but collided with two of them. On the twisting steps, there wasn't room to pull the big bows. Lane's gun roared twice before the priests could close with him, and the way was clear into the main corridor.

Into, but not through it! At the far end, a smoky torch was coming toward them. Lane couldn't tell how many men were with it. He had to waste a bullet, but a snap shot sent the flare smouldering to the floor. Arrows whistled past them in a deadly swarm. Bill Lane shoved the red-headed girl behind his broad back, and crept slowly through the black dark.

HE stumbled once and the sound brought more hissing arrows. One tore through his coat and nicked the muscles of his upper arm. In sudden rage, he emptied the remainder of his clip down the hall. It brought a bedlam of screams, with an undercurrent of fright.

On the chance that his volley had scattered the yellow men, he re-loaded and made a break for the door. He clawed it open and swung the girl out, just ahead of another dozen arrows, thudding into the great door.

The ponies were tied a few steps away. Bill threw the girl aboard the nearest one and sent it scuttling down the valley with a mighty slap. He waited a moment to see the door come open. It yawned wide, spewing a stream of bowmen, but the heavy automatic could drill through three men at that range. Jammed in the narrow gateway, the slaughter was too much for the monkish pursuers and the survivors crawled back to safety.

Bill Lane leaped into the other saddle and pounded after the girl.

TWO weeks later, Lane laughed at her, across the rich carpet of a hotel room in Shanghai. From her easy chair, she wrinkled lovely puzzled brows at

him. In diaphanous Parisian negligee, she was even more maddening, Bill was discovering. She kindled a roaring flame in his blood that raged higher every time he looked at her.

"It's like this, Red," he told her. "I quit my job with Urco—it wasn't much of a job, anyway—to bring you down here. And after buying you all those mosquito-bar nightshirts like that one—not that it isn't worth the money to see you under 'em—I've got just enough dough to get you and me to Hollywood."

He tinkled the ice in a tall drink and chuckled again. "I know you don't understand a damn' word I say. But that doesn't matter. All I have to do, between here and the States, is teach you to write a name which you can sign to a contract, in front of witnesses. Then you'll be the great La Something-or-other, who no spiks Eengleesh, and I'll be your manager. And, Red, will we be sitting pretty!"

She crossed the room to touch him with soft, caressing fingers. "Man-n-ger-r?" she parroted doubtfully. Then, smiling, she moved her hips in a slow, inviting undulation. "Manger-r?"

Lane roared. "Baby," he chuckled, "your English may be lousy but you can sure get an idea. That will certainly be part of the contract!"
