



"SUN LO SING"

By Evelyn Claire Fortner

The wind howled dimly around the great dark buildings of the alley. Little Sun Lo Sing drew the worn folds of her mantle closer with her small, ivory-hued fingers. She shuddered and crept still nearer to the tenement walls, as a drunken man staggered noisily past her.

At last she reached her destination, as the faded letters over the door announced, was the "Suey Sing" restaurant. She stepped inside and walked edgily to the back of the room. Chinamen seated at the various tables, glanced admiringly at her slender beauty. But Sun Lo Sing heeded them not. As in a dream she heard the soft hiss of their opium pipes.

She passed on into the kitchen and, out of the shadows and strong odors of cooking things, an arm reached out and clutched at her angrily. "Child of Disobedience and Sorrow," cried a harsh thin voice, "Why hast thou been so tardy?"

"My father, as quickly as possible have I hurried back to Chinatown," answered the girl, as she awaited, trembling, her step-father's cruel anger. The eyes of Ling Sing, like narrow slits of onyx, gleamed maliciously and his high yellow forehead knarled and wrinkled, took on a still deeper frown, as he shook the frail body of Sun Lo Sing until her teeth chattered. Then releasing her he said sharply.

"Go now and spend the rest of this night in the cellar of mine house. In a corner shalt thou find a pallet of straw. Go now, and by this punishment wilt thou surely learn to obey Ling Sing, thy step-father and master."

Sun Lo Sing opened the trap door of the cellar and began to creep fearfully down into the dark basement, and in the blackness, sought the pallet of straw. She sighed wearily, for again she was being punished for something she had not done or rather for something which was not her fault in the least. Rats squeaked and scampered away as she passed. A huge cobweb caught her face in its soft slimy net. Finally she reached the straw and threw herself down upon it, crying as if her little heart would break.

"Oh Ai-Lo Hun, God of Beneficence," she prayed sobbingly, "Send to me an opportunity to leave the house of Ling Sing my cruel master! Nothing will I refuse to do if thou but help me, thy humble servant, in this."

Long did the Chinese girl pray to her gods and then, worn out at last, she dropped off to sleep, with the noise of the city's traffic reaching her ears faintly, as a thousand rumbling

murmurs.

In the morning she rose, stiff and aching, from her hard bed, and walked upstairs, only to find an exacting master waiting to scold and abuse her. Hard and faithfully did Sun Lo Sing work in the "Suey restaurant, until her feet ached with weariness. Likewise many months slipped by, and every night Sun Lo clasped her tiny hands and prayed, yet more earnestly, to be released from her hard life of slavery.

Then one sweet, summer morning, the one God, over all, heard and answered the prayer of the Chinese girl. She was crossing an alley street on an errand when the cry of a child attracted her attention. Turning she beheld a golden haired boy of about five years, crying piteously.

"Ah, Child of the White Man!" cried Sun Lo Sing, running up to him and taking his hand in hers, "Hast thou lost thyself?" A sob was her only answer. Taking the boy by the hand again she hurried down the street, looking in vain for a sign of his people. Turning down into a larger street she beheld, in the distance, a large car. Hurrying up to it, she looked around for a sign of its occupants. Suddenly from around a corner, a beautiful lady came running towards her and picking up the child, clasped him to her breast.

"Where did you find him? I came here to do some charity work and went into that tenement house, leaving Baby with James, the chauffeur. In a little while James came running in to tell me that, while fixing the car, he had quite forgotten Baby and when he looked around the child was nowhere to be seen. We have been looking for him in every street except that alley-way where I conclude, he must have wandered until you found him. What is your name Chinese girl and how can I reward you?"

"Oh sweet lady!" cried Sun Lo Sing clasping her hands in eagerness, "Take me away from my cruel step-father who abuses me! Long have I waited to be freed."

"I have been looking for a small girl as an under nurse-maid. How would you like to come and live with me and help take care of Baby? I will go and see your father and pay him well for you."

A smile, radiant as the dawn, passed over the face of the Chinese girl. Her dreams and prayers were to be realized at last. Stooping low she kissed the hem of the White Lady's gown. Thus did Sun Lo Sing pass into her new life of freedom and happiness.

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