

The Fiendish
Bucket List
of
Dr. Fu Manchu

By Thomas Hudson

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Dedication:

To Sax Rohmer who introduced the world to his master criminal during the early part of the 20th century. He has been portrayed as twisted and evil and an assassin, and he has been portrayed as—if you look at him—a cartoon character in the original *Jonny Quest* cartoons (Dr. Sin anyone?)

How sad that we have become so P.C. that there may never be another interpretation of him.

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The Fiendish Bucket List of Dr. Fu Manchu

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A look into the later years of one of the
world's most insidious characters.

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Forward By The Author

The very first time I read a synopsis of a Fu Manchu story, way back in about 1971, I was struck by the similarity in the setup of Sax Rohmer's stories with those of one Arthur C. Doyle. A detective with his companion, a doctor—who “narrates” the stories—on the hunt for an evil mastermind.

If that doesn't smell of Holmes, Watson and Moriarty, I can't think what does.

Of course in Rohmer's case the main character is the criminal. Still...

Where I can see only the evil in Moriarty, the cunning and cold-bloodedness of the man, Fu Manchu struck me as a man of circumstance doing the very best he could. As a criminal he could not be bested. As an assassin, he was ruthless.

And so it went until 1980 and the late, great Peter Sellars' *Fiendish Plot of Dr. Fu Manchu*. With Sellars playing both Fu Manchu and Nyland Smith, the surreal and often strained action on screen sent my understanding of the character of Fu Manchu reeling.

It has never recovered.

So, as I was searching for a short story to fill some down time leading up to Christmas 2014, I perused my DVD collection and came upon a couple films I wanted to watch again: *Bucket List* and Sellars' *Fu Manchu*.

Guess what happened next!

Thomas Hudson

December 2014

第一章 可怕的新闻

1—Terrible News

The curved, yellow and horribly chipped fingernails reached across empty space, clicking errantly on the five bone china cup before finding their intended target.

“Another cup, my dear Commissioner Smith?” the ancient Chinese man, favoring his guest with what he dearly hoped would be interpreted as a friendly smile. He had so much trouble mastering friendly. Lord knows it had been years, decades even, and yet unless he concentrated the results generally appeared as friendly as a large snake baring its fangs to a helpless field mouse.

And, before, this would not have been a bad thing. It had served him well in his... endeavors over the years.

Chief Commissioner Sir Denis Nayland Smith (MBE, OBE, CBE, Knight Commander) leaned over and picked the cup from his host's fingernails. “You really must trim those horrible things, Fu. I mean, really. You've already spilt two cups today. They can't get a grasp. Here,” he said standing and heading to the sideboard, “let me be mother this time around.”

He had taken up the ancient bone china cup from his host's hands on his way over.

“Still attempting to poison yourself with five cubes?”

Dr. Fu Manchu let out a raspy chuckle. “What does not, or in my case, has not killed me, makes me strong! And do not think for a moment I do not see you tip that small silver flask into your cup whenever you think my gaze is averted.”

“Yes, well... Then let us make a toast,” Smith said as he sat down, handing Fu Manchu his cup, “declaring that to each his own slow method of suicide!”

The two men had met nearly sixty years earlier when Smith had been a colonial police officer in Burma and Fu Manchu had been a criminal mastermind and the man believed to be responsible for many of the paid killings of both Burmese government officials and British military men. At the time Smith fully believed Fu Manchu to be at least a dozen years his senior, but as he looked over his steaming cup of Darjeeling he could swear that he now appeared to be the older of the two.

Except when he looked into the unfathomable eyes of the mad he once had sworn to eliminate from the surface of the Earth. Those eyes held images that belied Fu's statement of only being one year older than Smith.

“A penny for them... oh wait. Now that we decimalized I suppose I should offer you a new pence for those deep thoughts of yours, Denis. Hmmm?”

The spell broke and Denis Smith blinked, then smiled.

“Much of the same old, same old, my nemesis... my friend. Only now, with Petrie having shuffled off this too, too mortal coil of ours, it all seems rather empty. Not to say I don't cherish our weekly tea, but Petrie's stories were singularities. Wonderful stuff!”

Fu sighed. He, too, felt an emptiness with the passing of Dr. Petrie this past weekend. The man had been Watson to Smith's Holmes and the one responsible for chronicling their exploits. Dr. Petrie had never failed to bring a short tale with which to entertain at their teas, and his stories rarely failed to be both entertaining as well as intriguing.

Fu sighed again and took a sip from his cup before setting it carefully onto its saucer. He untangled his fingernails from the knot they had made around the handle and steeped his fingers in front of his face.

Smith glanced at his companion and sensed there was something even deeper on the aged Chinese man's mind than the death of one-third of their little circle.

“Fu? You offered me a new pence for my

thoughts, but I believe your own might be worth as much as a ten-pence piece." He was looking at Fu Manchu as the man turned his head slowly to look back at him. "Perhaps even a shiny pair of the pieces?"

With a derisive snort, Fu Manchu shoved himself into a standing position and began to pace.

"Oh, Denis, Denis, Denis, my dear Commissioner Denis Nayland Smith and all of those horrible letters that appear after your name! Money for my thoughts? Ha, and ha again, sir! They are yours for free, but I must warn you that you will find deep, dark and dangerous secrets in there. Ones I don't even wish to reconsider at this point in my life. But," he said, softening his tone and turning to face Smith, "there are a few that have the tenacity of rutting rams in that they constantly butt their heads into mine in attempts to achieve freedom. Or, possibly to burst my head open relieving me of burdens."

Smith rose and walked past Fu, patting the man on the shoulder in a comforting manner, before taking the teapot into the small kitchen to make a fresh pot. From that other room, he called out, "What tea now? Lapsang? Huang Guanyin? I see you have some ban tian yao as well along with this tatty box of P.G. Tips. So?"

Fu sighed, something he hated doing but found himself in the act of more times than

he cared to recall. "Behind the P.G. Tips box you will find a low, wooden box with some lao cong shui hsien tea. It is my last and from ancient bushes grown on Formosa—or rather what they call Taiwan these days. One of the small bundles of that in a very full pot of water not quite at the boil, so you had best let me attend to it." He headed for the kitchen.

"It is a very delicate, almost honey flavor but brews up so dark you would be allowed to believe you had used too much. And, I sense that your little flask will come in handy for you, but I will add a small portion of plum wine to mine."

They made the tea, allowed it to steep for—as Fu insisted—a full eleven minutes before he carefully plucked the bundle out of the pot and set it aside on a small saucer on the windowsill over his sink.

"I shall get another half pot from that at a future date," he declared.

Smith carried the pot into the parlour, poured them fresh cups and set it on the sideboard. His flask was nearly empty—he had to believe it must have gained a small hole at the rate the liquor inside disappeared these days!—and so he tipped the last of it into his cup.

Fu Manchu reached under his chair to retrieve a squat green bottle containing a visible preserved plum inside and about a

third of the bottle filled with liquid. He poured a small portion into his cup, looked at the bottle longingly, and then added another portion equal to the first.

“To our continued very good health,” toasted Denis Smith.

“Or, at least to yours,” Fu said in a subdued voice before taking an appreciative sip.

Peering through the rising steam coming from his own cup, Smith’s eyes narrowed and he tried to peer inside the meaning of those words.

“How is that?” he finally asked giving up the attempt.

Fu sighed. “Dammit!” he shouted “Stop it, stop it stop it!”

Now, thoroughly taken aback, Denis stared at the Asian. He had been party to only one other tirade by the man and that had been back in 1937 in Shanghai. Cautiously, Smith sat down and looked at the other man.

“Stop what, precisely?” he inquired.

Fu sat down heavily. “I am sick to the teeth of sighing. I ponder something from the past and I sigh. I look at a simple cup of tea and I sigh. I am sick of sighing. I never sigh. I am Fu Manchu! Sighing is for those with regrets and those who are weary. I am not weary. I have no regrets. And yet, I

sigh! Damn me!”

Denis Smith looked at his friend. “Fu, you and I are both old. We are both weary. And, I do not know about you, but a lifetime without regrets may not have been such a good lifetime. The seven Hells and netherworlds know that I have regrets. I believe that they are our own ways of letting us know that it is time to get our affairs in order.”

Fu Manchu. Master criminal, former assassin for hire, and doctor, sighed. He looked positively miserable.

第两章 体会他的错误

2—Knowing He Has Done Wrong

The two men sat in silence for nearly twenty minutes. During that time Fu sighed and almost silently cursed himself three times. Finally, having had enough of wallowing in self pity, he spoke.

“Smith? I mean, David? Let me ask you something.” He looked at his friend who nodded.

“Fine. Allow me first to tell you something I know has bothered you for decades. The answer to the singular question of *why*? Why did I so easily fall into a life of dealing pain and death? Why did I turn it into an almost art form? And most specifically, why did I on the eve of my turning sixty years of age divorce myself of that former life and abandon the entire Asian Pacific Rim where there must still be many who seek to destroy the insidious, nefarious, fierce and depraved Fu Manchu?”

Smith shrugged. “I assumed that you had tired of the life, perhaps even grew bored at how easy it all was, and decided there was no more challenge in it.” Smith brushed the left edge of his gray mustache with his right index knuckle.

Fu sputtered. "How? How could you know that?" he demanded rising from his chair, glowering at his former enemy. He ran out of anger and steam at the same time and sat back down. "Please tell me how you know this?"

Smith laughed a deep, throaty and phlegmy laugh that ended in a small coughing fit. He took several gulps of his tea and single malt concoction and soon settled down.

"Oh, Fu. What an utterly silly question. How could I know? Because of the simple fact that I, too, grew weary of the hunt and chase, of the narrow misses and even the occasional captures only to see you slip through the bungling fingers of others. I grew so damnably tired of it that, if you will recall, I was the first of us to call it a day. Petrie was damned glad to see the back end of it all and followed me into retirement. It was you who took those additional months to come to the sane conclusion that we had all run our best races and needed to be put to pasture."

"Of, in the case of Petrie who, as the saying goes I believe, died in the *saddle*. Although what a horse's saddle and the wobbly thighs of a substantial woman such as the widow Penderton have to do with one another I cannot connect. Perhaps it is a, well, a *British* thing." Fu looked at Smith through slitted eyes.

Denis Smith did something he rarely did these days. He blushed at the mention of true reason for the demise of their third member. Seduced by wine, bosoms that could smother four men at once, and the promise of ‘a night to be remembered,’ Petrie had dined with Eloise Penderton, accompanied her to a one-act play at a local theater, and then let himself be led to her boudoir where the exertion had proven far too much for him and his heart stopped mid-stroke.

“He died thinking, I’m sure, of England and our Queen,” Smith assured his friend.

“Ha! He died probably thinking, ‘Now, why is my heart not beating... oh, damn!’ ” Fu offered by way of an alternative.

Their conversation would have continued had Fu’s doorbell not sounded. He rose, excused himself, and went to pick up the meager day’s post. He returned with a single letter in his right hand.

“Important?” Smith inquired.

“Possibly. Something from my doctor’s surgery. Help me get this opened. I used to use my fingernails but, as you have pointed out, they have grown out of control. I can’t even keep a good, sharp edge on the right index finger and you know how I used to love slitting throats with that!” He handed the envelope over.

Smith tore the end open and shook out the single folded piece of paper. He handed it back to his host.

Fu Manchu perused the letter, making the occasional tutting noise with his tongue. He turned the page over and stared at the blank back, then turned it back and re-read the entire front.

“Good or at least interesting news?” Smith asked.

“No,” Fu answered shaking his head slowly from side to side. “I wouldn’t say that. Or,” he brightened, “perhaps I might at that! Here. You interpret it for yourself.” He handed the letter to Smith and reached under his chair for the plum wine bottle. He poured a full cup’s worth and drank it in a single draught.

The fairly simple typed and signed letter was easy enough to decipher:

Professor Wang Man Fuchu
622 Downs Crescent
London, Gamble Hill LS21

Sir;

It is with regret that I must inform you of the results of your recent series of tests at my surgery.

To wit, your inflammation of the interior colon

has been determined by laboratory testing to be of a cancerous nature. It is in such a position that surgery in the form of removal of that section of the colon, suturing of the remaining tissues and a lengthy course of specialty foods would only hold an approximate 35% success rate.

I stand ready to refer you to a medical surgeon specializing in such matters, but it is my opinion that a gentleman of your years might be better suited to attempt one or more of the ancient herbal potions so popular among your kind, and then to live the remaining year or so of your life as you see fit.

Yours,

And the signature, like those of countless physicians who evidently felt it mandatory to have indecipherable handwriting, was completely unreadable.

“Wang?” Smith asked incredulously.

Fu nodded. “Certainly. Do you not think that I should disguise my identity even now? That is the name I took as soon as I entered this country.”

Smith looked from the paper to his friend. “I must tell you two things in all honesty, Fu. Firstly, I am truly sorry for this news. It seems that within a year or so

I will be proved of my best friend and my best nemesis. Secondly, I will tell you as gently as possible, a six-year-old child could see through this Wang name! Why not something that does not have the letters of your actual name in it?"

Fu Manchu looked like a scolded puppy. "I thought it clever enough," he said somewhat petulantly. But, I suppose you are right." He caught himself in mid sigh, stifling it disguised as a yawn.

"What can I help you to do?"

Fu looked at Smith. "I must tell you that I knew of the content of that envelope since this day last week. I steamed it open, read it, cursed my misfortune for a day only to have that replace with the [passing of D. Petrie, and then resealed it until today. What actually came in the post was an advertising circular for a chemists specializing in ointments for piles."

"Hardly sporting of them to send you something like that given your condition, ahhh, *vis-a-vis* your hind area. But my question remains. What can I do to help you from this moment on?"

Fu steepled his fingers together again, intermeshing the nails in such a manner that he could not easily get his hand apart.

"For starters, get the clippers," he said. "These damnable things come off as of today!"

“I’ll do you one better, Fu. Or ought I to call you Mr. Wang in public?”

Fu Manchu looked at Denis Smith as if seeing him for the very first time. “I am under a death sentence already. Why prolong things my trying to be clever and not using my own name?”

“Fine, then Fu, you and I are going out and to a small salon about three blocks from here. There, your hands will be soaked, the nails trimmed, the cuticles prised up and shoved back into position, and you will leave with hands nearly as manicured as my own.”

As they left the small flat, Fu admitted, “We both know that I have been what you English would term a right bastard. Correct?”

“More than correct. An absolute fact.”

“Fine, then I have spent this recent week reading articles in books regarding how to have dignity in your final years or months. That evidently begins with admitting to all sins, both those large and terrible, and those small and insignificant. Can you attest to the fact that I have been an evil man?”

Smith snorted. “Attested with an imagined Bible under my left hand.

“Good. I agree. Of course that is in the past and I have been what I think you call a

model citizen for these past eight years. Still, that cannot alleviate the pain and suffering many were exposed to when I was being evil.”

“Right,” Smith said slowly, not quite knowing where this was all going.

“Part of what I have read tells me that I must admit wrongdoing to those I have hurt.” He looked Smith and shrugged. “How can this be possible? Most of those I have hurt, I have done so to a point of success that they were hurt to death.”

Denis nodded. He could see this road being a long and twisted one, made more so by patches of darkness and thunderous storms.

第三章 做名单

3—Making a List

Over the following two days Fu Manchu spent hours and hours peering into the dark recesses of his memories in an attempt to catalogue each and every bad thing he had done, each and every individual he had inconvenienced, injured or killed, and anything else he felt ought to be detailed regarding his criminal past.

Somehow, he felt, he ought to approach this in a more inscrutable manner, but emotions he had managed to suppress most of his life kept coming forth. And, with them, more of the damnable sighing.

He spent an entire hour standing in front of his hallway mirror muttering to himself, "I will not sigh. I will not sigh."

It had done little good as once he finished the exercise he stood as tall as his aged body could manage, gave his image a slight nod...

...and sighed.

For his part, Denis Nayland Smith, spent an equal amount of time going through his substantial collection of personal dairies in which he had kept as many of his dealings with the insidious

Chinese man as possible over the many years and decades of their association.

It humoured him to see how, over the years, both his signature and even his name had changed. Originally he had felt that Denis was too common a name for someone destined for greatness and so he had insisted on being addressed, informally, as Nayland. That had changed at one point to D.N. Smith, and finally D. Nayland Smith.

Such puffery had given way to common sense upon his retirement when he once again embraced the informality of Denis.

As he looked through his records he started to see something that had eluded him for those many decades.

“That bugger!” he gushed out as he slammed his right fist down onto one of his diaries. “That blasted and bloody man always knew where I was a purposely dropped clues and lagged behind long enough to be glimpsed. Damn him! He’s played me for a fool!”

Smith jumped from his chair, grabbed his hat and scarf and rushed from his dwelling. He hailed one of the small, black taxicabs and they rushed off the sixteen blocks to the flat of Fu Manchu.

Smith paid his cabbie along with a generous tip and raced up the stairs to the front doors. A woman was coming out and

he pushed past her rather than announcing his arrival on the building's intercommunications system.

Well!" huffed the woman not used to being so unceremoniously brushed aside. "Just you see if I don't tell my husband about this tonight. He's an important man in—" but by then the doors had shut and Smith was already one flight up heading down the hallway.

He was about to raise a fist and hammer on Fu's door when it opened to the smiling face of the man himself.

"Ah, Denis. Please do come in. I am certain we have much to discuss including how abominably I have treated you over these many years. I've been listing my faults so that I might make amends."

He motioned to the parlour and Smith, now thoroughly deflated of his anger—thought truth to tell most of it had dissipated during the taxi ride—rather meekly complied and moved to take his usual chair.

"Ah. This is nice, is it not?" Fu asked favouring Smith with a smile the former officer had never before seen... at least not on Fu's face. Fu pointed to a pile of papers on the table next to his own chair. "See these? I have been going through everything I have done to many, many people over the years. It was been a difficult journey for me beginning with exactly what

year it all started. You see, I have always been vague about my age, but when it has suited me I have dropped hints of unimaginable years.”

Denis Smith knew this, but he also knew Fu Manchu’s real age. Or, at least the age his mother had told him about.

“You see, I had almost convinced myself of a 1806 birth date for nearly twenty years. It changed to, I seem to recall, 1857. But as we both know, my actual birth year was 1867.”

Surely,” blurted out Smith, “it was 1879. Why, your own mother told me once—”

“Ah, but she was not my mother. She was an actress in Hong Kong to whom I paid the quite princely sum of... well, by today’s money it would have been well over two Pounds and a few pence. A month’s wages for her back then!”

Smith silently counted the years. “So, you are actually ninety-three years old?”

Fu sighed but appeared to only slightly chastise himself for the sound. “Yes. It is true. I am quite a bit older than you, my dear Denis. But let us not speak of trivial matters. What has brought you here, I fear, is the terrible manner in which I led you along. You have every right to strike me for it; I shall raise no hand to defend myself. I might suggest a strike along the right side of my neck as in its current aged and

scrawny state you can surely break it, releasing me.”

Denis Smith sat back. He stared at his nemesis and friend, and he started to laugh. It began as a rumbling noise at the back of his throat and progressed into a near whooping cough series of gasps and utterances.

Fu Manchu sat rigid, the same smile on his face as before, and waited.

Once the episode subsided, and Smith took a sip of the tea sitting to his right—a fleeting thought crossed his mind regarding how Fu could have known about his impending arrival and having already made the tea—before taking a deep breath.

“Fu. Did you really play me all those years? Was I truly such a terrible police man, detective and Inspector?”

Manchu’s smile softened, as did his eyes.

“No, Denis. I merely spotted those times when you seemed to either go off course or were taken off of it by the fools you worked for. Then, and only then,” he held up one now-manicured finger, “did I step back to re-lay the trail. You see, much like that Arthur Conan Doyle’s detective, Sherlock Holmes, I found you to be the only man capable of making my life of crime worthwhile. I am your Moriarty in a way, although I must admit that I am much

smarter. I suppose it is a difference in real life, and the fantasy writings of an author. The criminal cannot be more intelligent than the man who puts his actions to paper.”

Smith reached inside his jacket and withdrew several folded pieces of writing paper.

“Speaking of paper, I have made a list of each case in which I pursued you over the decades. I can see you have done much the same although I must admit to being somewhat startled at the sheer number of pages you appear to have filled.”

They moved to the dining table and spread out their pages. Smith, having the better handwriting of the two, took up his fountain pen and a fresh stack of paper and the two men began to go through all of Fu Manchu’s crimes over the years.

It was a task of many hours. As the sun went down and the room darkened, Fu rose to turn on his electric lights. He also went to the telephone and made a call. All Smith could make out was the sing-song of the Mandarin or Cantonese Fu was speaking. The man could speak nine Asian languages and dialects.

Smith was happy of his command of the Queen’s English plus a few “police” words in Burmese, Cambodian, Farsi, and Cantonese. Things like “Halt,” and “Stop,

Police.”

Twenty minutes later a knock came on Fu's door. He went to answer it, coming back a minute later with a hand-tied bundle of containers.

As he unpacked things, going to his kitchen to gather plates and forks, he explained. “I know people at a local Chinese restaurant. For me, they make deliveries.”

The two men finished their food and their work three hours later.

第四章 两次检查它

4—Checking it Twice

Both men slept in their own beds that night, and both men were hampered in their sleep by thoughts that there were things missing from both of their lists. Important things, and things that mattered!

Before breakfast time the next morning Denis Nayland Smith had bathed, put on clean clothing and headed for Scotland Yard.

He presented his credentials to a young police woman—something new since his retirement when woman were referred to as “girls” and they only handled the typing and tea brewing—who looked at it, made a note of his former badge number, and asked him to take a seat across the room.

Smith sat while the woman made a call, looked somewhat stunned at what she was being told, and hung up coming over to him.

“I am so sorry, Sir Smith. I didn’t recognize, or rather I didn’t realize that you were the head of all this once. I’m Constable Maureen Darien. Please, come with me and I’ll take you to the

Commissioner's office."

All the way to the office of the man who had replaced him, Denis Smith listed to a non-stop apology from the young woman. Finally, having had enough and still not quite at the final corner that would put them at the office he stopped, placing a hand on her shoulder to stop her as well.

"If I might call you Maureen for a moment, please stop apologizing. I dare say you weren't out of grammar school when I left here. And with no sign of my official photograph in the lobby anymore, you could not be expected to know who I was. Now, let's go see Toby!"

At the informal mention of Sir Toby Smythe-Ponde's name, she turned beet red.

A minute later Smith was being warmly greeted by the man residing in the highest chair in the public side of British policing.

"Toby."

"Ah, Denis. You're looking dashedly good these days. Don't know if you've heard but Her Nibs is having me stand down as of next month. I'll be joining you in the ranks of the 'Didn't you used to be...' But, I see that you have a request. I'll assume you would like my assistance. Fine. I and the Yard owe you many favours. Sit. So, as a Smythe to a Smith, tell old Toby what he can do to help."

Smith sat and spent the next half hour

going over what he and Fu Manchu had been up to.

At first Smythe-Ponde was shocked to learn that the international criminal Fu Manchu was living right in London.

“Ah, but Toby, none of the offenses for which he is still wanted occurred in England. He cannot be jailed for anything as long as he remains on English soil. So, please put that gleam in your eyes away.”

They discussed Smith’s request.

“Well, certainly we can put that monster valve tube and wire to use. Can you leave those pages you showed to me or should I have a photostatic copy made?”

“I’d prefer to keep hold of the originals if that’s fine with you.”

A secretary was called in and the papers were duly copied, the originals handed back to Denis. He smiled. “I see someone tried to get a fingerprint or two from these. Won’t do any good. Only mine are on those pages, along with yours.”

Smythe-Ponde smiled. “Fine. Sorry. Normal precautions and all that. We ought to have things entered and run through by this time on, oh... say Monday coming. Four-day turn is the best in the business. Will that do?”

Smith said it would be fine. “And, Toby? Don’t have anyone follow me. You will recall that I literally wrote the book along

with Dr. Petrie on tailing suspects.”

Sir Toby blushed.

Good to his word, Denis spotted nobody nor any car following him on the way back to his home. He made a quick call to Fu to tell him what was going on and to suggest that the Asian man be on the lookout in case Sir Toby gave into what was known as “Copper’s temptation.”

Fu Manchu perused the list of additional crimes and misdemeanors that had been culled from the public and private records of Scotland Yard. Periodically he tutted, mad a not on his own list, and continued. He crossed out more than a half dozed listings muttering about how he “didn’t want to take the blame/glory/responsibility for the crimes of others!”

For his part Denis Smith was also adding to his personal list by looking over Fu’s right shoulder.

“I didn’t know you strangled that man in Indonesia!” he exclaimed at one point.

“What? Oh, bother!” Fu said as he furiously scribbled out another of Sir Toby’s listings. “I was confusing that with the phony Anglican Bishop I dispatched in Shanghai the following year. See,” he said pointing his manicured finger at a listing five lines down. “That one!” he stated proudly.

But, his mood changed to that of depression by the time he completed his cross-listing exercise.

“This does not bode well, Fu,” Denis told him as they moved back to their comfortable chairs and the fresh pot of Oolong tea just steeping.

Fu’s eyes narrowed, a feat that, given his almond-shaped eyes and natural tendency to squint, almost made his appear to be asleep.

“And what does that mean?” he inquired in a singsong voice that carried a hint of menace.

“Oh,” Denis replied, “it is like that dashed children’s holiday song about Saint Nicholas. You know the one.” He sang in a warbling voice:

*‘He sees you when you are sleeping,
and knows when you are awake.
He knows if you have been bad or good,
so be good for goodness sake!’*

Fu’s eyes widened into saucers. He puffed, then made gurgling noises in his throat and finally exhaled, turning as red as a yellow-skinned man could.

Alarmed at his friend’s appearance, Denis leapt up and gave Fu his tea cup.

“Drink, old friend and I shall call for a physician.”

“No,” Fu nearly choked getting out. “I am fine. It is just that your little song so offended my sense of how music should sound that I was momentarily more willing to cease breathing than to listen to any more of it!”

The Chinaman straightened himself in his chair and took another sip of his tea before returning it to the saucer.

“What?” he inquired seeing Denis Smith still standing above him, his own face now as red as a beetroot.

“You utter rotter!” Smith declared. “I shall have you know that I was third baritone on the Scotland Yard Men’s Chorale for more than five years!”

Fu, on seeing how his words had cut into Smith’s ego quickly moved to ease any unintended pain. “Denis. I am sorry. Forgive my little, ummm, joke. It was in poor taste and I only used it to disguise my own anguish at what is now abundantly clear.”

Now relaxing and sitting down, Smith asked, “And what might that be, Fu?”

Fu Manchu picked up the notepad he had carried over from the table and shook it gently in the direction of his guest. “This. This entire and mostly accurate listing of my adventures. My deeds. My very life, Denis. I have always noted the passing of my life and time in small, very brief

segments. Like individual lines of a lifelong poem. The punctuation for each line has been the result of whatever actions I took. Then, a fresh line and that above, or behind, me relegated to the past.”

“But this listing of everything changes that?”

“It does,” Fu admitted. “And as measured against your little...” he cleared his throat, “*song*, I now see that when the final tally is taken, I have been a *very naughty boy!*”

第五章 鼠! 淘气!

5—Rats! Naughty!

There was little Denis Nayland Smith could think to say at that moment.

In his own mind Dr. Fu Manchu had been one of the naughtiest of men the world had produced, and it was only through his admiration of the near perfection of the man that their friendship had blossomed.

In his own mind, Fu Manchu saw Denis Smith as the only man who had ever been capable of admiration, If not for his techniques, then his dogged determination to pursue the hunt.

But now, ah yes, now, as his life was under sentence of termination by an errant cluster of his own body's cells gone horribly wrong, Fu realized that his own mortality exactly matched that of each and every one of his victims. In the end, the only thing coming is death. And, the only comfort to be clutched onto was one's beliefs in what happens the moment the heart ceases to beat.

“Tell me about rest of your song,” he requested in a quiet voice.

Denis, lost in his own thoughts, looked

up. "What? Oh, the song. Yes. Well, it has to do with Saint Nicholas, or Santa Claus as the Americans are want to call the gentleman. Well," he had to think a moment how the rest of the song went. "Ah, well, the premise of the song is to get children to behave, especially during the holidays. It seems that come Boxing Day the lessons in the song are put into the same boxes as the strung popcorn and the other baubles that hang on the Christmas trees. Basically, it is to tell them to watch out, not cry or pout, and behave since Nicholas is coming. And, as I mentioned earlier, he has the ability to see children day or night, knows if they have behaved or been acting as spoilt brats, so..." and Denis's understanding of the song faltered.

"Ah. So be good if only for the sake of goodness?" Fu offered.

"Quite."

There was a silence between them that stretched out to nearly two minutes. "Denis?"

"Yes, Fu?"

"Is this Saint also a god? I only ask because I have never held room in my mind for a god. Surely I do know of some of them. Enough to realize that there have been far more and bloodier killings in the name of something or someone who always existed in the far past and has only recently

been chronicled by mere men. And, it has always seemed that the present representatives of these deities do everything they might in order to hold power over the people beneath them. And to find ways to part these lesser men of their earnings. Is your Saint Nicholas one of these gods?"

Smith had to laugh. "No, Fu. In fact he is the only one of the lot of 'em to take nothing and bring everything. His sole position in life is to bring presents to people on the celebration of the supposed birth of the Christchild. At least, in the Christian religions."

He spent another half hour explaining the immaculate birth, the wise men, their gifts—except he listed them as gold, frankincense and mirth—the crucifixion and later rising.

"So, you celebrate the birth of a child most probably conceived out of wedlock and then lied about by the mother, how he was cruelly nailed to a wooden post and then how his body disappeared after being buried in a cave?" Fu snorted. "Wild animals. Any fool can see that! It is no wonder why most people fail to revere this man. No. Give me Saint Nicholas and his spirit of giving as my god of choice."

Denis Smith had a headache by this time and decided to not try to correct Fu on any of his misconceptions.

“Do you think I will survive until this next Saint Nicholas Day?” Fu inquired with a hint of hope in his voice.

“Not certain. That damned doctor of yours was vague in his letter. I suggest that we pay the man a visit to see if he can quantify your condition to a more definite timeline.”

The next morning Smith picked Fu Manchu up in a taxicab at nine in the morning. Fu, dressed in one of his many colorful silken robes, his long mustache adorned by a series of hollowed beads of many colors, settled in next to his friend.

The drive took fifteen minutes as an impromptu strike by one of the trade unions had several of the main avenues blocked. Fu mumbled something about the, “damnable unionists,” causing their driver, a member of another union, to drive even farther afield. But even he could not stretch out the thirty block drive by too much.

Fu insisted on paying and took so long in searching through his robe and many inside pockets for his purse that the driver finally roared off without being paid, shouting curses back at the pair.

“Hee-hee-hee,” Fu chuckled. “Try to rob the great Fu Manchu with that obvious false route!”

Denis placed his small pocket notebook back after having recorded the cab’s license

number “just in case” the subject of fare-shirking ever came up.

The doctor’s nurse didn’t really want to allow Fu and Smith on to see the doctor as they had no appointment. Smith pulled out his old Scotland Yard badge—the one he had “lost” just before it had been time to hand it in at retirement—causing her eyes to go wide. They went even wider when he told her:

“I’m certain he would rather speak with me here than to be publicly dragged out, placed into a police wagon and hauled into Scotland Yard in full view of the public and press.”

Fu had wiggled his eyebrows to punctuate this statement and she had jumped from her desk and fled into the doctor’s office.

When they were comfortably seated across from the medical practitioner, he nervously asked the purpose of their visit.

“My nurse told me you were here to arrest me!”

“Nonsense! The girl must be suffering from vapors or some such thing. No,” Denis assured the physician, “I come with my friend, uhh...”

“Wang Man Fuchu,” offered Fu.

“Right. My friend the professor here is in receipt of this letter from you, or signed

by you, which basically notifies him of imminent death, but offers no details regarding treatment options, things he might do to prolong his life, or even the estimated duration of his life.”

The doctor re-read his note and scowled. “I honestly don’t recall signing this. I do recall the test results and that they are not encouraging, but as to this...” The doctor shrugged and handed the letter back to Smith.

The trio sat in near silence with only Fu very lightly singing *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* under his breath. A full minute passed before Smith rapped his right knuckles on the desk.

“Fine. Fine and dandy. We have a letter notifying my friend of his impending death that you do not recall signing. This leaves us with two mysteries. I believe I can solve one and you must provide the answers to the other. First,” and Denis turned in his chair and called out, “Nurse! Come in here!” He turned back to face the doctor.

When the young woman came in Smith picked up and held out the letter to her. She took it with trepidation and glanced at it turning first deathly pale and then bright pink.

“Miss Evans? Did you type up this letter?” She nodded looking pensive at what might be coming. “Good. And did you

sign the doctor's name to this letter?" Denis inquired levelly. Another nod but accompanied by several tears running down her cheeks. He dismissed her with a wave.

"Well, doctor, this only laves it up to you to fill in the details of my friend's future. And, please do not allow the fact that I hold numerous knighthoods given me by Her Majesty influence the freedom with which provide the details." He gave the doctor a rather cobra-like smile.

"And," added Fu, "he knows if you've been bad or good. I would strongly suggest that you be good and tell Denis what it is I must be told!"

Fu's smile was somewhat less inviting.

第六章 傅的桶名单

6—Fu's Bucket List

Dr. Fu Manchu, murderer of 197 and 1/2 people, opium provider with enough to ruin more than ten thousand people, perpetrator of 229 crimes involving property that was not his one moment and was his the next, and defiler of virgins too numerous for him to bother recounting—but certainly numbering in the dozens!—sat impassively in his chair sipping at a cup of his P.G. Tips Pekoe tea. At times such as this he didn't feel like making tea with his precious store of loose leaves was warranted.

“Did you understand what the doctor was telling you?” he asked. “I ceased listening as soon as he began speaking of blood counts and such. I always through the character of Dracula was a blood count. Not something inside of my body.”

Denis grinned. This in spite of the news the physician had imparted, that being the Chinaman had between eight months and one year before his cancer would cripple his ability to function, and another few weeks before he would find release.

“Why, Fu. You have a sense of humour after all.”

“I find it coming with great age. Absolutely nothing amused me for most of my life. My naughty life. You know, Denis,. I feel that I must atone in some way. It is, as we have discussed, too late for nearly all those I have wronged. And so I have decided to make a special list of things I want to do that are good for others.”

Smith nearly sputtered his mouthful of tea.

“Nice? Good? You, Fu?”

Fu Manchu sat back in his chair. With a smug look on his face he muttered, “I have decided to follow the teachings of the great Saint Nicholas. The man who I consider to be the only one of the supposedly holy personages to be thought of as a god. My God, Nicholas! And, I shall follow his examples by making a list of nice things I can do before I pass from this Earth to sit on his right hand, or some such foolish notion.”

Fu Manchu finally assembled a list of thirty-nine people or companies he felt he had most wronged and set about writing to each of them, explaining that he was a changed man but would, should the recipient request it, forward a check in the sum of one-hundred Pounds Sterling to the by way of settlement.

This was item number one on the list of Things I must Do Prior to My Demise.

As the next few weeks went on he received back more and more of his letters marked, variously, as “Undeliverable,” or “Addressee Deceased,” of other such notations. In all it appeared that just nine of his letters arrived, somewhere, but there were no responses.

After a full month Fu told Denis he was finished with his first listed item.

“I shall now turn my full attention to learning the art of cookery. Toward this, I have sent a messenger with a note to Mrs. Fanny Cradock of television fame. I have long enjoyed her programmes on the BBC and now believe only she can teach me how to be a gourmet chef.”

Denis turned partly away from Fu to hide his face. “And, just how long do you believe Mrs. Cradock will be needing in order to manage this transformation?”

Fu thought a moment. “I believe one full afternoon should be sufficient. Am I not Fu Manchu? I can master anything in a day!”

Denis went to answer a knock on Fu’s door. A young man, perspiring in spite of the coolness of the early September weather stood there holding an envelop.

“Return message, sir,” he reported. Denis took the envelop, fished a twenty pence piece from his pocket and handed it over.

“Many thanks to you and yours, sir!” the boy said turning and leaving.

“What is that?” Fu asked as Denis brought the envelop into the parlour. “I believe, from the looks of it, that is a response to your letter to Mrs. Cradock. Care to have me read it or would you prefer to enjoy that honour?”

Fu’s dismissive hand gesture told Denis to go ahead.

“Dear Mr. Fu,” he read. “I am uncertain if you understand how important a personage I am, but you’ve have a lot of nerve suggesting that I get over to your abode and teach you how to be a cooking genius such as I am. I am keeping your ten Pound note for having the effrontery to annoy me like as you have did. And it is signed, F. Cradock”

Wearily, Fu picked up a piece of paper from his side table and crossed off item two on his list.

“How many does that leave, Fu?”

“If I discount the three I now believe to be unattainable—such as a personal interview by that nice Mr. Parkinson on television—and believe me, Denis, when I say I would be a most intriguing person to grace his stage—then I am left with two items to accomplish before I pass onto my final rest at the North Pole and spend eternity with the God Nicholas.”

Denis Smith had a small coughing fit, enough to cover his stifled laughter. Finally he composed himself. “Wonderful. And, what are these two items?”

“The first is of only small consequence. I wish to go back to the place of my birth. China. Alas, I have recently discovered that my small village was destroyed during the Boxer Rebellion and all potential relatives put the death. Starting at the tender age of thirty-two, I was made an orphan. I am a man alone.” He sighed, snapped his fingers and muttered, “damn!” and then regained his composure.

Again, he picked his list from the table and made a scribbled cross out of the impossible item.

Denis sat and looked at Fu who was looking much older than he had ever seemed before.

“Uhh, Fu? Might I ask something, and will you promise to give me a straight answer?”

“I shall attempt to answer you in the most truthful manner possible.”

Fine. Then perhaps you can tell me how it is possible for you to have been born in a village destroyed some time between 1989 and 1901—the years of the Boxer Rebellion—at a time when you now say you were thirty-two, and still hold to an earlier claim to have been born in 1879?”

Fu smiled. "It was you who assumed that was the year of my birth. Did I not tell you that I was born in 1867? I was, and add to that thirty-two years and you get 1899, the year I was deprived of my loving family."

Smith's shoulders sagged. He had so hoped to get Fu to admit to continued evasion on his birth.

"Forgive me. I do recall that discussion, and your mathematics add up. So," he changed his tone to announce a change in subject, "what is the final item on your must do before death list?"

* * * * *

Three weeks to the day, Fu Manchu sat on a deck chair on the passenger deck of the Cunard *Adventurer*, a medium size cruise liner. Small enough to only have two classes of passengers who intermingled, he was taking full advantage of each and every Purser and Attendant asking for his own tea to be brewed, to his specifications, and served in his own teapot and cups.

He was not, however, taking advantage of the unseasonably warm weather during his and Denis' crossing. Clad from neck to ankle in his colorful silk robes and with a rather ornate, almost pagoda-shaped hat perched on his head, almost no sun touched any of his skin.

Denis, now sitting in short pants and a

short sleeved shirt on the lounge chair next to him kept suggesting that Fu go a little easier with his demands.

“Surely, Denis, these menials are here to serve my every wish. Why should I not take advantage of them?”

“Because,” Smith explained for the third time on their already four-day voyage, “we are not traveling in one of the staterooms. We are not what would have been considered first class passengers a decade ago. And, because it is not the way these liners work these days.”

But,” nearly sputtered Fu Manchu, “I am a doctor! That should count for something!”

A rather plump woman sitting on the other side of Denis overhead this exchange and propped herself up to look over Denis’ lap. “Oh, doctor! Coo-ee! Doctor? I have been having a terrible time with my legs and back. Can I book an appointment with you in an hour? I would be ever so gratified if you could accommodate me.” She actually had batted her eyelashes.

Fu stood up and came over to sit next to Denis on his chair, “My dear woman. Please sit up as straight as you can. Ah,” he said as she complied. “Yes.. It is exactly as I thought and all just from a momentary glimpse at your physique.”

“What-ummmm-what is it? Please tell

me the worst. I can take it!”

Fu reached out his perfectly manicured right index finger toward her. “May I?” he asked making a slight poking forward motion.

“Well,” she said now a bit hesitant, “I suppose it is permissible since you are a doctor.”

Fu poked her gently in the right shoulder. “Hmmm,” he muttered. He poked her in her right bosom deeply enough to nearly hide his finger to the first knuckle. “Hmmm?” he muttered as she turned bright red.

He pushed his finger into her bulging midsection and then her right hip before again making a, “Hmmm,” sound.

He sat back and looked her in the eyes.

“What? What is it? Oh, please tell me!”

“Fine,” Fu said standing up, now towering over her. “You are a fat pig of a woman and will most likely die from your weight within the next decade. And, do not worry. I shall not bill you for my services!”

He walked away leaving Denis to shrug and sputter before departing.

Later that day the Chief Purser found Fu standing at the back of the ship. “I must have a word with you about your conduct vis-a-vis Mrs. Patterson, sir!” He placed a

hand on Fu's left shoulder.

Fu pulled the man back up from his position hanging upside down over the churning waters below a minute later.

"I would suggest that you understand both the facts and the person with whom you speak. Good day."

The Chief Purser said nothing about the incident to anyone.

* * * * *

Five days later the two men stood in front of a ticket booth at Disneyland in California. The train ride cross America had been uneventful and even peaceful. Now, they stepped forward and up to the ticket window.

"Two seniors," Denis said sliding a twenty dollar note under the dip in the counter.

"I'm sorry, sir. We only do adults, junior and children And, you need to pay for admission, that's seven bucks for you two, plus whatever ride tickets you wand. So..." she left it hanging while she waited for his decision.

"Uhh, fine. Then two of your seven adventures booklets, please." She pushed down on a button and a small ticket stub popped up along with a booklet. She repeated this and pushed them back through the dip in the counter along with

his change.

“Next!”

Denis looked at Fu Manchu who stood to one side looking very tired.

“Perhaps we could come back tomorrow, Fu. Perhaps a night’s rest would be good for both of us?”

“No. We must do this today,” the Chinaman insisted.

The went inside and both marveled at the Main Street as they walked along. Five times Fu had to shoo children away who appeared to think he was some sort of wizard and part of the park’s show.

“We must go to the following,” Fu declared. “It is a small world, the submarine ride, the jungle cruise and the Tiki Birds before the final ride, I wish to take.”

Smith sensed something was going on by the tone of Fu’s voice, but merely asked, “And, what is that final ride?”

“The large mountain over there,” he said pointing at the Matterhorn. “My reading says that it is a most impressive journey.”

They made it though all of the rides in record time. Not just because October was a slow season for the park, but because many people on seeing how withered and old Fu appeared suggested he get front of

queue privileges.

It was just past three that afternoon when they eased themselves into the low seats of the simulated bobsledges. Fu pulled a piece of paper from a hidden pocket in the recesses of his robe and handed it back to Denis.

“Please put this in your pocket and only remove it once the ride has concluded.” He paused a moment before adding, “I thank you, my friend, for a most interesting life.”

Denis wanted the ride to pause and he nearly shouted out to the safety operator, but their sledge jerked forward and the headed around a corner and up a steep incline. Reaching the top they swung to the left while a matching car to their right headed in the opposite direction. Around, up, down, and over they went for several minutes before ending up right where they began.

Denis could sense the dead weight of his companion. There was no motion from Fu as the attendant told them to hurry and get out. Then, turning pale, the young man made a signal and the gearing went silent. The yells from people still inside could be heard over the announcement that they would be on the move momentarily.

Several husky men jumped down next to the car and picked Fu Manchu from the car, carrying him carefully up several stairs and

out through the line of customers. A sort of golf cart pulled up, Fu's still form loaded on the back and covered with a sheet.

With Denis perched on the passenger seat, they moved away quickly entering a small tunnel.

A doctor and nurse were waiting for them and Fu's body was whisked away leaving Denis alone. He pulled out the piece of paper, almost knowing what it would contain.

It was Fu Manchus final list. Only one thing remained:

*9. To die on a mountain so I might
be forever with My God, Nicholas.*

Denis Nayland Smith wept. His tears went on for fully three minutes before he heard someone stepping up behind him.

A soft voice spoke down to him. "They say that even the best can often not do the things they wish. It would appear that I fainted from the excitement. Come, Denis. Let us go home. I am tired."

