

# The University Hatchet

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SECTION 2

### The God Smiles

By L. RON HUBBARD

#### CAST OF CHARACTERS.

**DIMI:** A White Russian girl, a cafe hostess.  
**ALEX KONRAD:** Late officer of Chang-tao Liang. Also a White Russian.  
**TAING:** Tyrannical provost marshal of Tsingtau for the new Kuomintang Regiment.  
**TING-KAI:** Head of the Tsingtau district and warlord.  
**WU:** Manager of the Wai Cafe.  
**SCENE:** A blizzarding night in Tsingtau, China; the private dining room of the Wai Cafe.

The Northwind is tugging at the windows of the private dining room. Three doors lead into the room; one on the extreme left to the main cafe, one at the back left of the stage which conceals the back stairway, and a closet. At the right of the scene, two tall windows are flanked by full-length curtains which drag on the floor, stirred by the wind. Three candles stand on the table, flickering.

As the curtain rises, Dimi is seated at the table smoking a cigarette and gazing at a locket which hangs from her neck. She is dressed in the high-necked, embroidered costume of the sing-seng girl.

Dimi is startled by a knock on the door. She tries to hide the locket, but before it can be restored, Mr. Wu throws the door open and walks into the room. He is excited.

**WU:** Dimi! Comrade Taing of the Council for order will be here in . . . (gruffly) What is that in your hand? (Breaks the chain of the locket as he snatches it. Gazes at the picture.) How the Russian becomes fascinated by the amulet of death. Little caring whose head she invites to the executioners basket. You spawn of pigs! Where did you get this picture of Alexyitch Konrad?

**DIMI:** (Who has thrown down her cigarette, stands) Perhaps the Comrade Taing forgets the minor deencies associated with gentlemen. Because I entertain your fine guests, feed them wine and smooth their ears with honey so that you can escape the tribute to the Kuomintang, is little cause for your obvious ownership. The locket please. (Holds out her hand)

**WU:** (Placing the locket in the palm) But Dimi, my heart. (whining) What would I do if these fools should rid you of that beautiful head. Am I not good to you? Do I not suffer for you, plead for you? What would I do if you were taken away?

**DIMI:** Pay your tribute, I presume. You were about to remark on Comrade Taing.

**WU:** Yes, yes. But my heart, my lily, please let me destroy that locket. It is death. Perhaps even for me. Please allow me to carry it away

The God Smiles is the prize-winning play in the one-act play contest sponsored by the REVIEW.

The staff wishes to express its gratitude to Mr. Baker and Mr. Shepard of the English Department and to Miss Brown of the Public Speaking Department who acted as judges; likewise to Paul Pearlman who kindly donated a book to be given to the winner of the contest.

from your throat. Even now they are plodding through drifts and fighting back the cold to find him. Even to utter the name is flowing life. Today alone, more than two hundred heads dangled freshly beven against the wind. Every telephone pole by the market is decorated to its fill. The executioner possesses arms of tireless metal. He would think nothing of the severance of that wonderful head. What an ignoble way to die.

**D:** No. You would rather have me rotting here under the blood stained hands of the Kuomintang. Comrade Wu, it is sometimes better to die for an ideal than to live for a pawn. I know they are hunting Kon. I know where they hunt. But they will never find him. No, not they with their wine thickened brains. Tonight, my Kon is leaving China forever.

**W:** (Startled) You are going? Oh . . .  
**D:** No. I am not going. With your paltry remittance there was barely enough for one. He leaves at daybreak in the "Tana, Maru." Ha! He is even now making off with the Comrade Taing's launch. What fools they are, these Kuomintang!

**W:** Ah, my heart, for a moment I felt that I would die. But if he is deserting you, give me the locket. It cannot serve you anything but death. Have you forgotten that last week saw you before the council? Give me the locket so that we both may live.

**D:** A locket which you might use to betray me? No, Comrade Wu, I am used to the nearness of death. I have slept with its icy fingers near me since the first day of the revolution, ten years ago. Nothing seems real any more but death. But I choose to bear my own cup. And Kon is akin to luck in your beggared jargon. (Lights a cigarette and walks to the window) For once, the wind has served me well.

(Comrade Taing strides into the room, snow falling from his fat shoulders as he removes his coat)

**TAI:** Happiness. Ah, we have gaiety and laughter. Go get me a bottle of your best wine, Wu. Hurry.

(Exit Wu)

What is the thing which buttes your pretty head, blossom?

**D:** (Turning from the window and gazing at Taing) The storm, perhaps. I do not like the wind.

**T:** Nor I! Nor I! By all that is hollioh. And for hours I, the great Taing, have struggled through drifts with a company of soldiers searching for that eternally damned, three-times damned renegade.

**D:** Then you have news of him?

**T:** Who? If you mean this father-of-pigs, Alex Konrad, NO! Tonight he is gone, but this afternoon, he walked the streets of Tsingtau. People saw him! The streets of Tsingtau in his grey coat and rebel cap! Ah, he shall pay for flouting the dignity of the Council for Order.

**D:** More labor for the executioner. I had thought you were exhausted of boxes in which to case the grinning heads.

**T:** Ah, Dimi, you are possessed of the talent for making a smile. No, (seats himself at the table, wearily. Dimi sits across from him) No executioner shall touch Alex Konrad. Oh no. I shall do it with these hands. Ah what a pretty spectacle he shall make. What a beautiful bit of raw flesh. Death by a thousand cuts, Dimi. Do you think that will serve?

**D:** A cigarette? (Lights it for him) You love your work, do you not?

**T:** Ah, that I do. The best provost marshal in all China. Think of that! Word has come from the commander in chief to the north, and even he remarks it. It must be so. Two hundred heads! Think of it! Two hundred heads, Dimi and all in one day! It is wonderful.

**D:** And each one will repay you a hundred fold. I hope you will not wait long for that reward.

**T:** Oh no. I shall not have to wait. The treasury is bursting with money. The merchants have been very kind. And so have we. Indeed we have. They are allowed, twenty-four hours to pay their tax. After that, they are put aside painlessly. Ah yes, the Kuomintang is of good heart.

(Enter Wu with wine which he places before Taing)

**D:** Are you really so set upon apprehending this Konrad?

(Wu shoots Dimi a warning glance and hovers in the doorway)

**T:** What are you waiting for, Comrade? Dimi, Alex Konrad is the greatest menace abroad.

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Until I have the extreme pleasure of hacking his body into bits, I shall scarcely eat.

D: Then perhaps, having great respect for your welfare, I had better tell you where you can find this Konrad.

T: (Halting glass in mid air) WHAT! Why didn't you tell me this before!

D: You recall the little yellow hut on the polo grounds? He will be there tonight until daybreak. I have it of a cooie.

T: (Pushing himself to his feet) Then I go. Soldiers are waiting for me downstairs. I shall get this renegade tonight. (Throws glass to table where it chatters. Gazes at it a moment) A sign! Such is the fate of those who bow not when Taing speaks. (Picks up coat and starts for the door) But wait! It is the devil's own walk to the Polo Ground on a night such as this. Are you sure?

D: Very.

T: (Places handle on doorknob) Then I go! Tomorrow I shall be back. If you are right, I shall reward you, but if you are wrong . . . No man can long hide from the great Taing. Nor a woman. Good night, my heart. I promise you a box seat at his execution. (Exit)

D: A good voyage to you, Taing, and may the snowdrifts enfold you. (Slouches to the window and gazes out) It is too much to hope that Kon might have placed a trap for you, Comrade Taing. Too much to hope. (Lights a cigarette and sighs) For once the wind and snow will aid instead of hurt the ones I love. It will drown the spattering exhaust of Taing's launch. It will hide the grey figure of Kon from these devil's children. It will make impassable the drifting highways. And the morrow to find the TANA MARU putting to sea and placing Kon in safety. After that I shall breathe, and wait until word comes from Manila that he is safely landed and in funds. Ah, for that I shall live, and kiss the bald heads of these fools the Kuomintang, to sip their liquors and breathe the poison of flattery into their inflating ears. Blow, you wind, and snarl out the . . . (there is a knock on the door at the back of the stage. Dimi stares a moment and then creeps toward the door, laying her hand upon the knob. From her stocking she draws a thin knife which she holds poised. She jerks the door open, disclosing a muffled figure in grey. Dimi throws up her arms and drops the knife.) KON! (Throws her arms about his neck.)

K: (Stepping into room and disentangling himself with a chuckle) How have you been, sweetness? Got anything to drink? It's cold as hell out there.

D: (Suddenly sober) Why didn't you go, Kon? Why didn't you leave while you could? Just a moment ago, Taing was here with a bloody curse for every letter in your name. I sent him out to look for you.

K: Interesting. Where did you send the old ghoul?

D: Why, to the Polo Grounds where you spent last week. He took a squad of his soldiers with him.

K: Whole squad, eh? Well, well, they have a very pleasant surprise awaiting them. (Takes off his coat with Dimi's help and throws them upon the sofa) I put a potato masher grenade on the doorknob. Heh. All they do is pull, the release unwinds, and sowlie! we are no longer interested in Comrade Taing. I thought some of them might call. Good joke, isn't it? This Taing's champagne? A beastly mess he made of it.

D: I wish you'd gone, Kon. I feel that this is the last. Taing smashed that glass there, and mumbled of its symbolism. I'm afraid.

K: It has been the "last" for us so many times, little one, that I thought you would be getting used to it by this time. (Pours out a glass of champagne and drinks it. Lights a cigarette.)

D: Why did you come back?

K: Maybe I was afraid I would catch cold in all this snow. Listen, Dimi, I'm ashamed of you. Really I am. Thought I would run off to Manila and leave you here to face the music. All for the want of a few paltry dollars. It's the same to me whether I eat, sleep, live or die. You know that, or at least ought to. I'm ashamed to think that you would believe me the type of chap who would leave his only girl just to save his own worm-eaten hide. Tears and a brass band, Dimi. And what the merry hell are we going to do now? How much money have you?

D: Enough for a small bowl of rice. You have about three hundred in gold, haven't you?

K: And the exchange is about two-eighty. Maybe it will be higher tomorrow. That's what comes of voting with the wrong machine gun. And the slight difference of blue and black. Each turning the other red. How much does old Wu keep in that strongbox downstairs?

D: Oh, Kon! You wouldn't take that chance.

K: Why not? (Draws an automatic and balances it in his hand.) There are about eight guards down there and seven shots in this pistol. Maybe if I knew some higher mathematics, I could spread them around.

D: There are more than that. I have seen them this very evening.

K: (Crushing cigarette) Well there's no use waiting here for the gods to smile. Come, we had better go together before anyone should take it in their head to call. Get your coat and a bag. We'll try to stretch the three hundred.

D: (Walking across the room to the closet) All right, I'll be ready in a moment. Ting-Kai might come.

K: He is head of this district isn't he? Worth a few million, too. Better take the heaviest coat you have. It's cold as hell. Ugly brute, this Ting-Kai. Have you seen him often?

D: Tried to make love to me last night. Just a minute, I . . .

(There is a knock on the door. Dimi throws her coat onto the closet floor and closes its door. Kon glances about for a place to hide and dives behind the window curtain where he is completely hidden. Dimi opens the door.)

D: Why, why good evening, Comrade Ting-Kai.

TK: (Striding into the room) What's the matter with you? Your face is pale! (Strips off his coat, throwing snow over the rug, and throws it with his visored fur hat, onto a chair.) Aren't you well?

D: Why yes. Certainly. Very well, thank you. Some wine? I just opened a bottle for you.

TK: How did you know I was coming?

D: Oh, I saw you from the window, of course.

TK: Odd. In fact, very odd. I entered by the back door. Well, never mind, never mind. I have a question to ask you. (Seats himself at the table and pours out a glass of the champagne) You certainly are drunk if you drank all that while I was coming up the stairs. But never mind. I have news. Great news for you. (Smiles and pats Dimi's shoulder) Tonight I have moved into the old German residence at the top of the hill. The large one with the huge doors. And tonight several merchants kindly offered their wares that I might equip the mansion free of charge. Nice of them, was it not?

D: Yes, yes, very nice of them. (Her head flickers toward the sofa. Kon's cap and grey coat are lying in plain sight. She stiffens)

TK: They offered their wares; I have a house. But I have excise for neither one. Understand, lily?

D: Oh yes.

TK: Then you will come? Then you will live at the German house? Ah, it makes me very happy. Of course, it took me some little time to decide. There have been rumors, you know.

Rumors about a certain rebel and yourself. But I am very great now, and the very great are too mighty to believe the rabble. Still, to make sure of your continued loyalty to me, I have captured Alexyitch Konrad.

D: What?

TK: Oh, do not let it so affect you. Tell me, are these rumors the tidings of truth?

D: No, of course not. You have captured him?

TK: Perhaps not exactly that, but a short time ago, I received word that a patrol had been tracing his movements. Vile wretch, that Konrad.

D: They traced him?

TK: They were but a few minutes behind him when I last heard. But a mere block from this cafe. Of course, however, you have no connection with him. None whatever.

D: But why should I? I scarcely know the man.

TK: Then you have seen him?

D: Oh, let us forget these petty bickerings of your war. You spoke of a house. (Glances first at the curtain and then at the cap and cloak on the sofa. She shifts uneasily in her chair.)

TK: Below there is a guard of a hundred men. They are to safely escort you and protect you in your new home. You will go, then?

D: Ah yes, yes, but not tonight.

TK: What! Not tonight? But I had planned for days, I had slaved to . . . Why will you not come with me?

D: I . . . I am not feeling as I should. (Lets her eyes jump from the curtain to the sofa again)

TK: Oh, but you must come. You will be so happy with me that you will . . . Wait (Stares at cap and cloak) Wait! What is that. (Jumps to his feet and snatches them up) There is something wrong about tonight. I felt it when (Rips out the band of the cap) Alex Konrad! (Stares at the band) Alex Konrad! Where is he? (Shakes Dimi, violently) Where is he?

D: Don't! Don't. (Buries her head in Ting-Kai's coat.) He has gone. But he is coming back to kill me. Help me! Help me, Ting-Kai.

TK: Where has he gone. Tell me quickly.

D: To that . . . Wait, I will point out the very place from the window. Come! (Pulls Ting-Kai across the room and gesticulates, placing Ting-Kai between herself and the curtain.)

(Kon's hand shoots out, grasping the muzzle of his gun. Strikes Ting-Kai on the skull and throws back the curtain to watch him melt to the floor.)

D: Thank God!

K: Thank yourself. Next tap, wasn't it? I guess his coat ought to fit me, hadn't it? About the same size.

D: (Knelling over the unconscious Ting-Kai) A bag of coins. (Tosses it to Kon)

K: And heavy! Several hundred here. (Thrusts it into his pocket)

D: And here's a sheaf of papers. Good.

K: (Catches them and pockets them.) Identification and official passes. Better haul than I ever hoped for.

(Kon walks to the closet, picking up Dimi's coat and bag. Throws the coat around her shoulders, and then picks up Ting-Kai, carrying him to the closet. He shuts the door and dons the Chinese's wraps.)

K: Pretty good fit, isn't it? (Pulls fur visor down over his face) From now on, we are Comrade Ting-Kai and wife. That is until we get to Manila. (Opens the closet door and throws the grey cap and trench coat over the unconscious figure.) Just the right touch of irony. All set, Dimi!

D: All set, Kon, I mean Comrade Ting-Kai. All out for Manila!

EXIT  
CURTAIN