

NOVEMBER

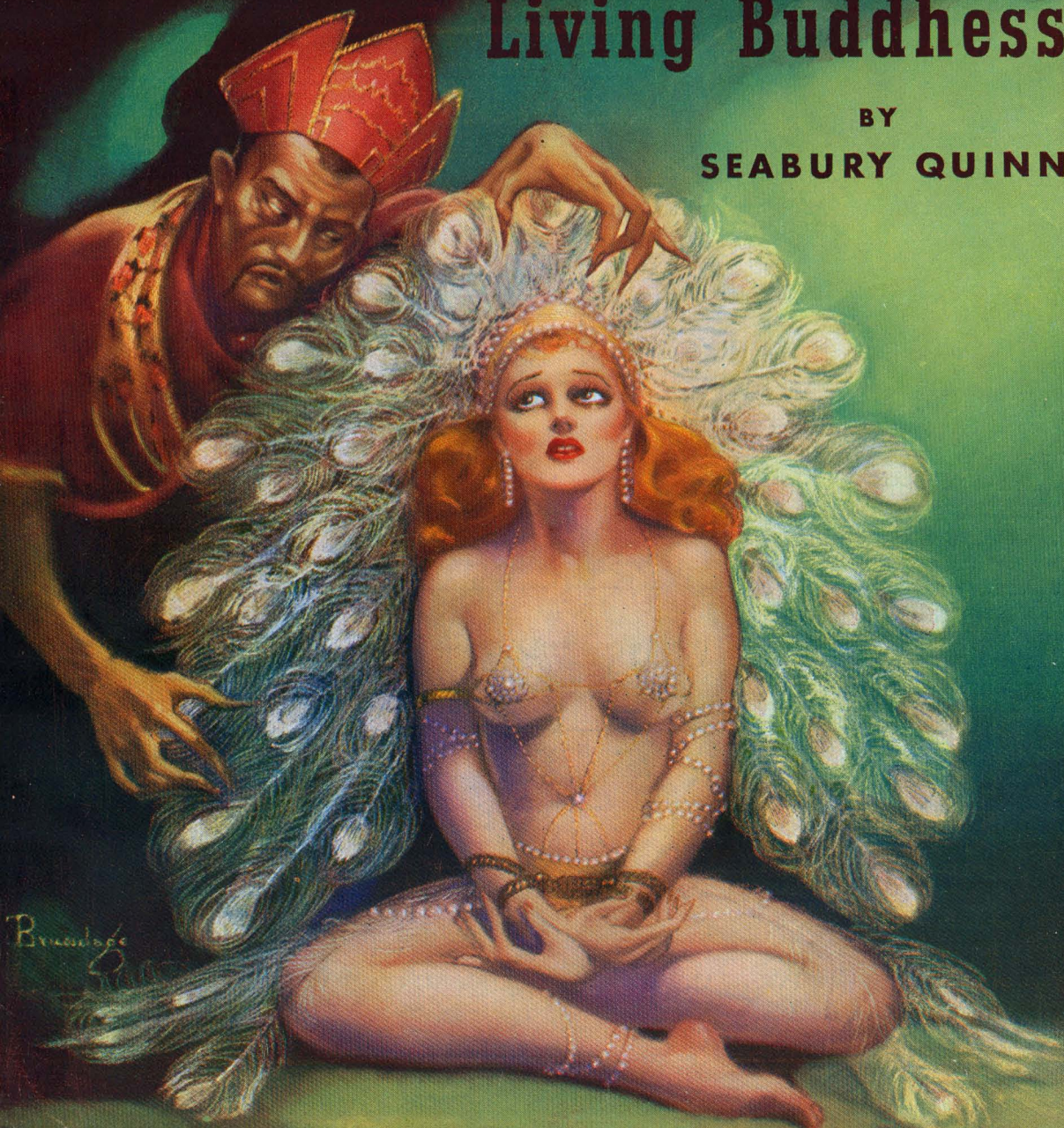
# Weird Tales

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## Living Buddhess

BY

SEABURY QUINN



A strange and curious thrill-tale of a living female Buddha

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

# Weird Tales

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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

# Living Buddhess

By SEABURY QUINN

*'A fascinating tale of a living female Buddha and the dreadful change that befell a lovely American girl—a tale of Jules de Grandin, and a dire lama from devil-ridden Asia*

THE hot, erotic rhythm of the rumba beat upon our ears with the repercussive vibrance of a voodoo drum. White dinner coated men guided partners clad in sheerest of sheer crêpes or air-light muslin in the mazes of the negroid dance across the umber tiles which floored the Graystone Towers Roof. Waiters hastened silent-footed with their trays of tall, iced drinks. The purple, star-gemmed sky seemed near enough to touch.

"Tired, old chap?" I asked de Grandin as he patted back a yawn and gazed disconsolately at his glass of dubonnet. "Shall we be going?"

"*Tiens*, we might as well," he answered with a slightly weary smile; "there is small pleasure in watching others—*grand cochon vert*, and what is that?"

"What's what?" I asked, noting with surprize how his air of boredom dropped away and little wrinkles of intensive thought etched suddenly about the corners of his eyes.

"The illumination yonder," he nodded toward the bunting-wrapped stanchions on the parapet between which swung the gently-swaying festoons of electric lights, "surely that is not provided by the management. It looks like *feu Saint-Elme*."

Following his glance I noticed that a globe of luminosity flickered from the tallest of the light-poles, wavering to and fro like a yellow candle-flame blown by the wind; but there was no wind; the night was absolutely stirless,

"H'm, it does look like St. Elmo's fire, at that," I acquiesced, "but how——"

"*P5-5-5-t!*" he shut me off, "Observe him, if you please!"

Bobbing aimlessly, like a wasp that bounces on the ceiling of the room to which it has made inadvertent entrance, the pear-shaped globe of luminance had detached itself from the gilt ball at the top of the light standard, and was weaving an erratic pattern back and forth above the dancers. Almost at the center of the floor it paused uncertainly, as if it had been a balloon caught between two rival drafts, then suddenly dropped down, landing on the high-coiled copper-colored hair of a young woman.

It fluttered weavily above the clustered curls of her coiffure a moment like a pentecostal flame, then with a sudden dip descended on the cupric hair, spread about it like a halo for an instant, and vanished; not like a bursting bubble, but slowly, like a ponderable substance being sucked in, as milk in a tall goblet vanishes when imbibed through a straw.

I do not think that anybody else observed the strange occurrence, for the dancers were too hypnotized by sensuous motion and the moaning rhythm of the music, while the diners were preoccupied with food; but the scream the girl emitted as the flickering flame sank through her high-dressed hair brought everyone up standing. It was, I thought, not so much a cry of pain as of insanity, of strange disease and maniacal excitement. It frothed and spouted from her

tortured mouth like a geyser of unutterable anguish.

"*Mordieu*, see to her, my friend, she swoons!" de Grandin cried as we dashed across the dance floor where the girl lay in a heap, like a lovely tailor's dummy overturned and broken.

With the assistance of two waiters, chaperoned by an assistant manager in near-hysterics, we took her to the ladies' rest room and laid her on a couch. She was breathing stertorously, her hands were clenched, and as I reached to feel her pulse I noticed that her skin was cold and clammy as a frog's, and little hum-

mocks of horripilation showed upon her forearms. "Every symptom of lightning-stroke," I murmured as I felt her feeble, fluttering pulse and turned her lids back to find pupils so dilated that they all but hid her irides; "is there any sign of burns?"

"One moment, we will see," de Grandin answered, stripping off her flaring-skirted frock of white organza and the clinging slip of primavera printed satin as one might turn a glove. We had no difficulty in examination, for except for a lace bandeau bound about her bosom and a pair of absolutely minimal gilt-leather



"Atop the perfect, cream-white body was another face, an old face, a wicked face, a face with Mongoloid features."

sandals she was, as Jules de Grandin might have said, "as naked as his hand." Her skin was white and fine and smooth, with that appearance of translucence seen so often in red-headed people, and nowhere did it show a trace of burn or blemish. But even as we finished our inspection a choking, rasping wheeze came in her throat, and her stiffened body fell back lax and flaccid.

"Quickly," cried de Grandin as he turned her on her face, knelt above her and began administering artificial respiration; "have warm blankets and some brandy brought, my friend. I will keep her heart and lungs in action till the stimulants arrive."

ALMOST an hour had elapsed when the girl's lids finally fluttered up, disclosing sea-green eyes that held a dreamy, slightly melancholy look. "Where am—I?" she asked feebly, voicing the almost universal question of the fainting. "Why—you're *men*, aren't you?"

"We are so taken and considered, *Mademoiselle*," de Grandin answered with a smile. "You had expected otherwise?"

"I—don't—know," she answered listlessly; then, as she saw her badly frightened escort at the door: "Oh, George, I think I must have died for a few moments!"

De Grandin motioned the young man to a chair beside the couch, tucked a blanket-end more snugly round the girl's slim shoulders, and bent a smile of almost fatherly affection on the lovers. "*Corbleu*, *Mademoiselle*, we—Doctor Trowbridge and I—feared you were going to die permanently," he assured her. "You were a very ill young woman."

"But what was it?" asked the young man. "One moment Sylvia and I were dancing peacefully, the next she screamed and fainted, and——"

"*Précisément*, *Monsieur*, one is permit-

ted to indulge in speculation as to what it was," de Grandin nodded. "One wonders greatly. To all appearances *le feu Saint Elme*—the how do you call him? Saint Elmo's light?—took form upon a flagstaff by the dancing-roof, but that should happen only during periods of storm when the air is charged with electricity. No matter, it appeared to form and dance about the pole-tops like a naughty little child who torments a wandering blind man, then *pouf!* the globe of fire, he did detach himself and fall like twenty thousand bricks on *Mademoiselle*. This should not be. Saint Elmo's light is usually harmless as the gleaming of the firefly in the dark. Like good old wine, it is beautiful but mild. Yet there it is; it struck your lady's head and struck her all unconscious at the selfsame time.

"What was your sensation, *Mademoiselle*?" he added, turning from the young man to the girl.

"I hardly know," she answered in a voice so weak it seemed to be an echo. "I had no warning. I was dancing with George and thinking how nice it would be when the rumba finished and we could go back and get a drink, when suddenly something seemed to fall on me—no, that's not quite right, I didn't feel as if a falling object struck me, but rather as if I had received a heavy, stunning blow from a club or some such weapon, and as though every hair in my head was being pulled out by the roots at the same time. Then something seemed to spread and grow inside my head, pushing out against my skull and flesh and skin until the pain became so great I couldn't stand it. Then my whole head seemed to burst apart, like an exploding bomb, and——"

"And there you were," the young man interrupted with a nervous laugh.

She gave him a long, troubled look from heavily-fringed eyes. "There I was," she assented. "But where?"

"Why, knocked all in a heap, my dear. We thought you were a goner. You would have been, too, if these two gentlemen hadn't happened to be doctors, and dining at the table next to us."

"That isn't what I mean," she answered with a little, puzzled frown. "I was—I *went* somewhere while I was unconscious, dear. I—I half believe I died and had a glimpse of Paradise—only it wasn't at all as I'd imagined it."

"Oh, nonsense, Syl," her sweetheart chided. "Maybe you imagined you saw something while you were out cold, but——"

"Tell us what it was you saw, *Mademoiselle*," de Grandin interrupted in a soothing voice. "How did your vision differ from your preconceived idea of Paradise?"

She lay in quiet thought a moment, her green eyes wide and dreamy, almost wistful. Finally: "I seemed to be in a great Oriental city. The buildings were of stone and towered like the Empire State and Chrysler buildings. Their tops were overlaid with gold leaf or sheet copper that shone so brilliantly that it fairly burned my eyes as the fierce sun beat down from a cloudless sky. I was on a portico or terrace of some sort, looking down a wide street reaching to a thick, high-gated wall, and through this gate came a procession. Hundreds of men on horseback carried lances from which silk flags fluttered, and after them came musicians with drums and flutes and tambourines and cymbals, and the music that they made was lovely. Then there were marching women, walking with a kind of dancing step and singing as they came. There were jewels and flowers in their straight, black hair, jewels in their ears and noses, necklaces of beaten gold and pearls and rubies and carved coral around their throats, and jeweled bands of gold around their arms and wrists. Bright

gems flashed in the chain-gold belts that clasped their waists; around their ankles they had wire circlets hung with bells that chimed like laughter as they walked. They wore skirts of bright vermilion tied with girdles of blue silk, and their hands and toes and lips and nipples were all dyed brilliant red. Next came a great array of soldiers bearing shields and lances, then more musicians, and finally a herd of elephants which, like the women, wore belled bands of gold around their ankles. But while the women's bells were sweet and clear and high, the gongs upon the elephants were deep and soft and mellow, like the deep notes of marimbas, and the bass and treble bell-notes blended in a harmony that set the pulses going like the beat of syncopated music."

"*Eh bien, Mademoiselle*, this Paradise you saw was colorful, however much it may have lacked in orthodoxy," de Grandin smiled. But there was no answering gleam of humor in the girl's green eyes as she looked at him almost beseechingly.

"It thrilled me and elated me," she said. "I seemed to understand it all, and to know that this procession was for *me*, and *me* alone; but it frightened me, as well."

"You were afraid? But why?"

"Because, although I knew what it was all about, I didn't."

De Grandin cast a look of humorous entreaty at the young man seated by the couch. "Will you translate for me, *Monsieur*? Me, I have resided in your so splendid country but a scant twelve years, and I fear I do not understand the English fluently. I thought I heard her say she understood, yet failed to understand. But no, it cannot be. My ears or wits play the *mauvaise farce* with me."

"I don't quite know how to express it," the girl responded. "I seemed to be

two people, myself and another. It was that other one who understood the pageant and who gloried in it, and that's what frightened me, for that other one who knew that the procession was to honor him was a man, while I was still a woman, and——" She paused, and tears formed in her eyes, but whether she were weeping for lost womanhood or from vexation at her inability to find the words to frame her explanation I could not decide.

"Come, come, young lady; that's enough," I ordered in my sternest bedside manner. "You've suffered from a heavy shock, and people in such cases often have queer visions. There's nothing medically curious in your having seen this circus parade while you were unconscious, and that feeling of dual personality is quite in keeping, too. If you feel strong enough, I suggest you get your clothes on and let us take you home."

"**Q**UEER what aberrations people have following electric shock," I mused as we paused in the pantry for a final good-night drink. "I remember when I was an interne at City Hospital I had an ambulance case where a woman had been struck by a live wire fallen from a trolley pole. All the way back to the hospital she insisted that she was a cow, and lowed continuously. Now, take this Dearborn girl——"

"Precisely, take her, if you please," de Grandin nodded, his mouth half full of cheese and biscuit, a foaming mug of beer raised half-way to his lips. "Is hers not a case to marvel at? She is struck down all but dead by a ball of harmless *feu Saint-Elme*, and while unconscious sees the vision of a thing entirely outside her experience or background. She could not have dreamed it, for we dream only that of which we know at least a little, yet——" He drained his mug of beer,

dusted off his fingers and raised his shoulders in a shrug. "*Tenez*," he yawned, "let the devil worry with it. Me, I have the craving for ten hours' sleep."

**I**T WAS shortly after dinner the next evening that my office telephone began a clangor which refused to be denied. When, worn down at last by the persistence of the caller, I barked a curt "Hullo?" into the instrument, a woman's voice came tremblingly. "Doctor Trowbridge, this is Mrs. Henry Dearborn of 1216 Passaic Boulevard. You and Doctor de Grandin attended my daughter Sylvia when she fainted at Graystone Towers last night?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"May I ask you to come over? Doctor Rusholt, our family physician, is out of town, and since you're already familiar with Sylvia's case——"

"What seems to be the trouble?" I cut in. "Any evidence of burning? Sometimes that develops later in such cases, and——"

"No, thank heaven, physically she seems all right, but a little while ago she complained of feeling nervous, and declared she couldn't be comfortable in any position. She took some aromatic spirits of ammonia and lay down, thinking it would pass away, but found herself too much wrought up to rest. Then she started walking up and down, and suddenly she began muttering to herself, clapping and unclapping her hands and twitching her face like a person with Saint Vitus' dance. A few minutes ago she fainted, and seems to be in some sort of delirium, for she's still muttering and twitching her hands and feet——"

"All right," I cut the flow of symptoms short; "we'll be right over."

"Looks as if the Dearborn girl's developing chorea following her shock last

night," I told de Grandin as we headed for the patient's house. "Poor child, I'm afraid she's in for a bad time."

"Agreed," he nodded solemnly. "I fear that he has managed to break in——"

"Whatever are you maundering about?—at your confounded ghost-hunting again?" I interrupted testily.

"Not at all, by no means; quite the contrary," he assured me. "This time, my friend, I damn think that the ghost has hunted us. He has, to use your quaint American expression, absconded with our garments while we bathed."

**S**YLVIA DEARBORN lay upon the high-dressed bed, her burnished-copper hair and milky skin a charming contrast to her apple-green percale pajamas. She was not conscious, but certainly she was not sleeping, for at times her eyes would open violently, as though they had been actuated by an unoiled mechanism, and her arms and legs would twitch with sharp, erratic gestures. Sometimes she moaned as though in frightful torment; again her lips would writhe and twist as though they had volition of their own, and once or twice she seemed about to speak, but only senseless jabber issued from her drooling mouth.

De Grandin leant across the bed, listening intently to the gibberish she babbled, finally straightened with a shrug and turned to me. "*La morphine?*" he suggested.

"I should think so," I replied, preparing a half-grain injection. "We must control these spasms or she'll wear herself out."

Deftly he swabbed her arm with alcohol, took a fold of skin between his thumb and forefinger and held it ready for the needle. I shot the mercy-bearing liquid home, and stood to wait results. Gradually her grotesque movements

quieted, her moans became more feeble, and in a little while she slept.

"Give her this three times a day, and see that she remains in bed," I ordered, writing a prescription for Fowler's solution. "I don't think you'll need us, but if any change occurs please don't hesitate to call."

**M**RS. DEARBORN took me at my word. The blue, fading twilight of early dawn limned the windows of my chamber when the bedside telephone began its heartless, sleep-destroying stutter, and I groaned with something close akin to anguish as I reached for it.

"Oh, Doctor Trowbridge, won't you come at once?" the mother's frightened voice implored. "Sylvia's had another seizure, worse—much worse—this time. She's talking almost constantly, but it seems she's speaking in a foreign language, and somehow she seems *changed!*"

Years of practise had made me adept at quick dressing, but de Grandin bettered my best efforts. He was waiting for me in the hall, debonair and well-groomed with his usual spruce immaculateness, and had even found time to select a flower for his buttonhole from the epergne in the dining-room.

A single glance sufficed to tell us that our patient suffered something more than simple chorea. The pseudo-purposive gesticulations were no longer evident; indeed, she seemed as rigid as she had been the night before when we treated her for lightning-shock, and her skin was corpse-cold to the touch. But her lips were working constantly, and a steady flow of words ran from them. At first I thought it only senseless gabble, but a moment's listening told me that the sounds were words, though of what language I could not determine. They were sing-songed, now high, now low, with irregularly stressed accents, and, somehow, reminded



me of the jargon Chinese laundrymen are wont to use when talking to each other. Queerly, too, at times her voice assumed a different timbre, almost high falsetto, but definitely masculine. Constantly recurring through her mumbled gabble was the phrase: "*Oom mani padme—oom mani padme! Hong!*"

"Do something for her, Doctor! Oh, for the love of heaven, help her!" Mrs. Dearborn begged as she ushered us into her daughter's bedroom; then, as I laid my kit upon a chair: "Look—look at her face!"

Whatever changes may be present in his patients'—or his patients' relatives'—appearance, a doctor has to keep a poker face, but retaining even outward semblance of unruffled nerves was hard as I looked in Sylvia Dearborn's countenance. A weird, uncanny metamorphosis seemed taking place. As though her features had been formed of plastic substance, and that substance was being worked by the unseen hands of some invisible modeler, her very cast of countenance was in process of transshaping. Somehow, the lips seemed thickened, bulbous, and drooped at the corners like those of one whose facial muscles had been weakened by prolonged indulgence in the practise of all seven deadly sins, and as the mouth sagged, so the outer corners of the eyes appeared to lift, the cast of features was definitely Mongol; the slant-eyed, thick-lipped face of a Mongolian idiot was replacing Sylvia Dearborn's cameo-clear countenance.

"*Oom mani padme—oom mani padme!*" moaned the girl upon the bed, and at each repetition her voice rose till the chant became a wail and the wail became a scream; dry-throated, rasping, horrible in its intensity: "*Oom mani padme—oom mani padme! Hong!*"

"Whatever——" I began, but de Grandin leaped across the room, staring

as in fascination at the sick girl's changing features, then turned to me with a low command:

"Morphine; much more morphine, good Friend Trowbridge, if you please! Make the dose so strong that one more millionth of a grain would cause her death; but give it quickly. We must throw her speaking-apparatus out of gear, make it utterly impossible for her to go through the mechanics of repeating that vile invocation!"

I hastened to comply, and as Sylvia sank into inertia from the drug:

"Come, my friend, come away," he bade. "We must go at once and get advice from one who knows whereof he speaks. She will be all right for a short time; the drug will not wear off for several hours."

"Where the dickens are we going?" I demanded as he urged me to make haste.

"To New York, my friend, to that potpourri of intermixed humanity that they call Chinatown. Oh, make speed, my friend! We must hasten, we must rush; we must travel with the speed of light if we would be in time, believe me!"

WHERE Doyers Street makes a snake-back turn on its way toward the Bowery stood the taciturn-faced red-brick house, flanked on one side by a curio-dealer's ménage whose windows showed a bewildering miscellany of Chinese curiosa designed for sale at swollen prices to the tourist trade and on the other by a dingy eating-house grandiloquently mislabeled The Palace of Seven Thousand Gustatory Felicities. Shuttered windows like sleeping eyes faced toward the narrow, winding street; the door was flush with the front wall and seemed at first glance to be rather inexpertly grained wood. A second look showed it was painted metal, and from the sharp, unvibrant sound the knocker gave as de

Grandin jerked it up and down, I knew the metal was as thick and solid as the steel wall of a safe..

Three times the little Frenchman plied the knocker, beating a sharp, broken rhythm, and as he let the ring fall with a final thump there came an almost soundless *click* and a hidden panel in the door slipped back, disclosing a small peep-hole. Behind the spy-hole was an eye, small, sharp and piercing as a bird's, curious as a monkey's, which inspected us from head to foot. Then came a guttural "*Kungskee-kungskee*," and the metal door swung open to admit us to a hall where a lantern of pierced brass cast a subdued orange glow on apricot-hung walls, floors strewn with thick-piled Chinese rugs, carved black-wood chairs and tables, last of all a crystal image of the Buddha enthroned upon a pedestal of onyx.

Our usher was a small man dressed in the black-silk jacket and loose trousers once common to Celestials everywhere, but now as out of date with them as Gladstone collars and bell-shaped beaver hats are in New York. Tucking hands demurely in his jacket sleeves, he made three quick bows to de Grandin, murmuring the courteous "*Kungskee-kungskee*" at each bow. The little Frenchman responded in the same way, and, the ceremony finished, asked slowly, "Your honorable master, is he to be seen? We have traveled far and fast, and seek his counsel in a pressing matter."

The Oriental bowed again and motioned toward a chair. "Deign to take honorable seating while this inconsequential person sees if the Most Worshipful may be approached," he answered in a flat and level voice. There was hardly any trace of accent in his words, but somehow I knew that he first formulated his reply in Chinese, then laboriously

translated each syllable into English before uttering it.

"Who is it we have come to see?" I asked as the servant vanished silently, his footfalls noiseless on the deep-piled rugs as if he walked on sand.

"Doctor Wong Kim Tien, greatest living authority on Mongolian lore and Oriental magic in the world," de Grandin answered soberly. "If he cannot help us——"

"Good Lord, you mean you've dragged me from the bedside of a desperately sick girl to consult a mumbo-jumbo occultist—and a Chinaman in the bargain?" I blazed.

"Not a Chinaman, a Mongol and a Manchu," he corrected.

"Well, what the devil is the difference——"

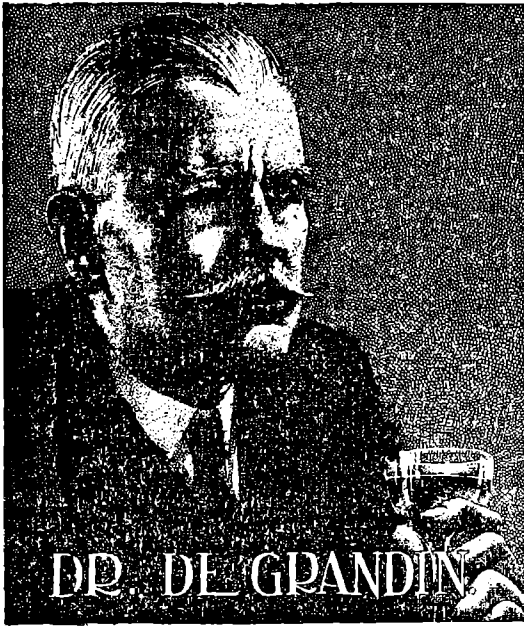
"The difference between the rabbit and the stoat, *parbleu!* Do you not know history, my friend? Have you not read how this people conquered all the country from Tibet to the Caspian and from the Dnieper to the China Sea—how they laid the castles of the terrible Assassins in heaps of smoking ruins——"

"Who cares what they did before Columbus crossed the ocean? The fact remains we've left a critically ill patient to go gallivanting over the country to consult this faker, and——"

"I would not use such words if I were you, my friend," he warned. "A Manchu's honor is a precious thing and his vanity is very brittle. If you were overheard——"

The messenger's return cut short our budding quarrel. "The Master bids you come," he told us as if he were about to usher us into the presence of some potentate.

We climbed flight after flight of winding stairs, and as we went I was impressed with the fact that the place seemed more a fortress than an ordinary



I HAD no preconceived impression of the man we were to meet, save that he would probably look like any Chinaman, butter-colored, broad-faced, button-nosed, probably immensely fat, and certainly a full head shorter than the average Caucasian.

The man who crossed the room to greet de Grandin was the opposite of my mind's picture. He was exceptionally tall, six feet three, at least, and lean and hard-conditioned as an athlete. Straight, black hair slanted sleekly upward from a high and rather narrow forehead, his nose was large and aquiline, his smooth-shaved lips were thin and firm, his high cheekbones cased in skin of ruddy bronze, like that of a Sioux Indian. But most of all it was his eyes that fascinated me. Only slightly slanting, they were hooded by low-drooping lids, and were an indeterminate color, slate-gray, perhaps, possibly agate; certainly not black. They were meaningful eyes, knowing, weary, slightly bitter—as if they had seen from their first opening that the world was a tiresome place and that its ever-changing foibles were as meaningless as ripples on a shallow brooklet's surface.

The room in which we stood was as unusual in appearance as its owner. It was thirty feet in length, at least, and occupied the full width of the house. Casement windows, glazed with richly painted glass, looked out upon the rooftops of the buildings opposite and the festooned backyard clotheslines of the tenements that clustered to the north. Chinese rugs woven when the Son of Heaven bore the surname Ming strewed the polished floors, and the place was warmly lighted by two monster lamps with pierced brass shades. The furniture was oddly mixed, lacquered Chinese pieces mingling with Turkish ottomans like overgrown boudoir pillows, and here and there a bit of Indian cane-ware.

house. Steel doors were everywhere, shutting off the corridors, closing stairheads, making it impossible for anything less potent than a battery of field guns to force a passage from one floor to another, or even from the front to the rear of the building. Thick bars were at each window, and in the ceilings I caught glimpses of ammonia atomizers such as those they have in prisons to subdue unruly convicts. But if the place was strong, it was also lovely. Porcelains, silks, carved jades, choice pieces of the goldsmith's art, were everywhere. Walls were hung with draperies which even I could recognize as priceless, and the rugs we trod must have been well worth their area in treasury notes. Finally, when it seemed to me we had ascended more steps than those leading to the Woolworth Building's tower, our guide came to a halt, held aside a brocade curtain and motioned us to pass through the steel door which had been opened for our coming. De Grandin led the way and we stepped into the study of Doctor Wong Kim Tien.

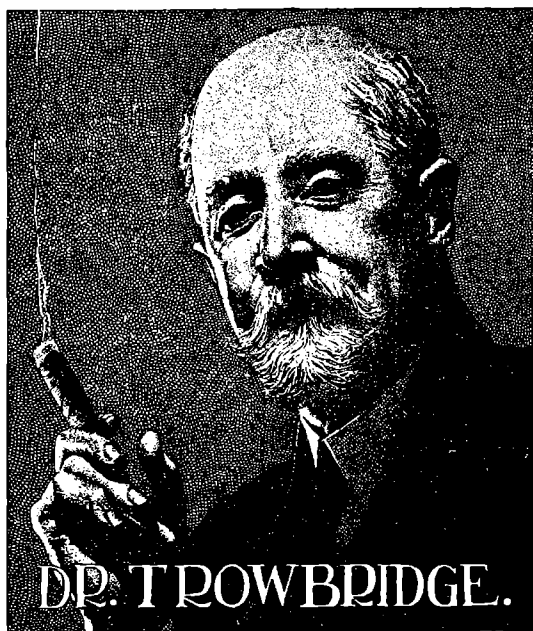
Book-shelves ran along one wall, bound volumes in every language of the Occident and Orient sharing space with scrolls of silk wound on ivory rods. Other shelves were filled with vases, small and large, with rounding surfaces of cream-colored crackle, or blood-red glaze or green or blue-and-white that threw back iridescent lights like reflections from a softly changing kaleidoscope. Upon a high stand was an aquarium in which swam several goldfish of the most gorgeous coloring I had ever seen, while near the northern windows was a refectory table of old oak littered with chemical apparatus. Glass-sided cases held a startling miscellany—mummified heads and hands and feet, old weapons, ancient tablets marked with cuneiform inscriptions. An articulated skeleton swung from a metal stand and leered at us sardonically.

"Kungskee-kungskee, little brother," our host greeted, clasping his hands before his blue-and-yellow robe and bowing to de Grandin, then advancing to shake hands in Western fashion. "What fair wind has brought you here?"

"Tiens, I hardly know myself," the little Frenchman answered as he performed the rites of introduction and the Manchu almost crushed my knuckles in a vise-like grip. "It is about a woman that we come, an American young woman who suffered from a seeming lightning-stroke two nights ago and now lies babbling in her bed."

The Manchu doctor smiled at him ironically. "This one is honored that the learned, skilful Jules de Grandin, graduate of the Sorbonne and once professor at the *École Médical de Paris* should seek his humble aid," he murmured. "Have you perhaps administered the usual remedies, given her hypnotics to control her nervousness——"

"Grand Dieu des artichauts!" the



Frenchman interrupted; "this is no time to jest, my old one. I said a *seeming* lightning-stroke, if you will recall, and if you will attend me carefully I shall show you why it is I seek your so distinguished help."

Quickly he rehearsed the incidents of Sylvia's mishap, recalled the floating ball of fire which struck her down, told of her vision of the Orient city; finally, dramatically: "Now she lies and murmurs, '*Oom mani padme—oom mani padme!*'" he concluded. "Am I, or am I not, entitled to your counsel?"

"My little one, you are!" the other answered. "Wait while I change my clothes and I will go at once to see this girl who chants the Buddhist litany in her delirium, yet has never been outside this country."

Arrayed in tweeds and Panama the Oriental savant joined us in a little while and we set out for Sylvia Dearborn's.

"What is that chant she keeps repeating?" I asked as we left the tunnel and started on the road across the meadows.

"'*Oom mani padme*' is literally 'Hail the Jewel of the Lotus,' Doctor Wong

replied, "but actually it has far more significance than its bare translation into English would suggest. Gautama Siddhartha, or Buddha, as you know him, is generally shown as seated in a giant lotus blossom, you know, and for that reason is poetically referred to as the Jewel of the Lotus. But this phrase of worship has acquired a special significance through countless repetitions. It is the constant prayer of the devout Buddhist, it is inscribed on his sacred banners and on his prayer wheels, and one 'acquires merit'—something like obtaining an indulgence in the Roman Catholic faith—by constantly repeating it. To the followers of Buddha it is like the *Allah Akbar* to the Mohammedan or the *Gloria Patri* to the Christian. It is at once praise and prayer in all Buddhistic ceremonies, and with it they are all begun and ended. For a Buddhist to say it is as natural as to draw his breath, but for an American young lady, especially of such narrow background as your patient's, to begin intoning it is more than merely strange; it is incredible, perhaps indicative of something very dreadful."

**T**HE morphine torpor was relinquishing its hold on Sylvia when we reached her. From time to time she rolled her head upon the pillow, moaning like a person who dreams dreadful dreams. Once or twice she seemed about to speak, but only thick-tongued sounds proceeded from her mouth. De Grandin tiptoed to the window and raised the blind to bring the patient's face in clearer definition and as the lances of bright sunlight slanted sharply down upon the bed the girl rose to a sitting posture, flung out her arms as though to ward off an assailant and cried out in a voice honed sharp with fear, "No, no, I tell you; I won't let you! You can't have me! I won't——" As suddenly as it had com-

menced, her outburst ceased, and she fell back on the pillows, breathing with the heavy, gasping respiration of one totally exhausted.

De Grandin bent and rearranged the bed-clothes. "You see?" he asked the Manchu. "She suffers from the fixed idea that someone or some *thing* seeks to enter in her—*grand Dieu*, it comes again, *l'extase perverse!* Behold her, how she metamorphosizes!"

A subtle change had come into the young girl's face. The corners of her eyes went up, her mouth drooped at the corners, and her firmly molded lips appeared to swell and thicken. A sly, triumphant smile spread across her altered countenance, and she roused again, glancing sidewise at us with a cunning leer.

"*Empad inam moo!*" she exclaimed suddenly, for all the world like a naughty child who giggles a forbidden phrase. "*Empad inam moo!*" But the voice that spoke the singsong words was never hers. It was a high, cracked tone, like the utterance of an adolescent whose voice has not quite finished changing, or the treble of a senile graybeard, but it was definitely masculine.

"*Dor-je-tshe-ring!*" Doctor Wong exclaimed, and:

"*Kilao yeh hsieh ti to lo!*" that alien voice replied ironically, speaking through the girl's fast-thickening lips as a ventriloquist might make his words appear to issue from his dummy's painted mouth.

Doctor Wong addressed a very diatribe of hissing gutturals at the girl, and she answered with a flow of singsong syllables, shaking her head, grinning at him with a sly malevolence. They seemed to be in deadly argument, Wong urging something with great earnestness, Sylvia replying with cool irony, as though she were defying him.

At last the Manchu turned away. "Renew the opiate, my friend," he ordered

wearily. "It will not last as long this time, but while she is unconscious she will rest. Afterward"—he smiled a hard-lipped smile—"we shall see what can be done."

"You have a plan of treatment?" I inquired.

"I have," he answered earnestly, "and unless it is successful it would be much better that you made this dose of morphine fatal."

The girl fought like a tigress when we tried to give her the narcotic. Scratching, biting, screaming imprecations in that strange heathen tongue, she beat us off repeatedly with the frenzied strength of madness, and it was not until they fairly hurled themselves upon her and held her fast that I was able to administer the morphine. This time the drug worked slowly, and almost an hour had elapsed before we saw her eyelids droop and she sank into a troubled sleep.

"I think it would be well if we secured two nurses used to handling the insane," advised de Grandin as we quit our bedside vigil. "It would be nothing less than murder to administer another dose of morphine after this; yet she must be protected from herself and we cannot remain here. We have important duties to perform elsewhere."

I telephoned the agency and in less than half an hour two stout females who looked as if they might be champion wrestlers in their leisure time reported at the Dearborn home. "*Pipe d'un chameau!*" de Grandin chuckled as he viewed our new recruits; "I damn think Mademoiselle Sylvia will have more trouble with those ones than she had with Doctor Wong and me, should she take a notion to go walking in our absence!"

Instructions given to the nurses, we set out once more for New York, Wong and de Grandin talking earnestly in whispers,

I with a feeling I had blundered inadvertently into a fairy-tale, or come upon a modern version of the Mad Hatter's tea party.

LUNCHEON waited at the house in Chinatown and was served by Doctor Wong's diminutive factotum, who had changed his black-silk uniform for a short jacket of bright red worn above a skirt of blue, both embroidered in large circles of lotus flowers around centers of conventional good-fortune designs. The meal consisted of a clear soup in which boiled chestnuts and dice of apple floated, followed by stewed shellfish and mushrooms, steamed shark fin served with ham and crabmeat, roast duck stuffed with young pine needles, preserved pomegranates and plums, finally small cups of rice wine. Throughout the courses our cups of steaming, fragrant jasmine tea were never allowed to be more than half empty.

"A question, *mon ami*," de Grandin asked as he raised his thrice-replenished cup of rice wine; "what was it Mademoiselle Dearborn said when first the change came on her? It sounded like——"

"It was the anagram of '*Oom mani padme—empad inam moo.*'" Doctor Wong's words were crisp and brittle, without a trace of accent. "To say it in a Buddhist's presence is gratuitous sacrilege, much like repeating a Christian prayer backward, as the witches of the Middle Ages were supposed to do when meeting for their sabbats. It is the *hong* or sign manual of certain heretical Buddhist sects, notably those who have blended the *Bon-Pal*, or ancient devil-worship of Tibet, with Buddhist teachings."

"And what was it you said to her?" I asked.

Doctor Wong broke the porcelain stopper from a teapot-shaped container of *n'gapi* and decanted a double-thimbleful

of the potent, amber-colored liquid into his cup before he answered. "Buddhism, Doctor Trowbridge, is like every other old religion. It far outdates Christianity, you know, and for that reason has had just that many more centuries in which to acquire incrustations of heresy. Like Christianity and Mohammedanism, it has been preached around the world, and its convents number millions. But the old gods die hard. Indeed, I think it might be said they never truly die; they merely change their names. Exactly as one may see survivals of the deities of ancient Rome none too thickly veiled in the pantheon of Christian saints, or discern strong vestiges of Gallic Druidism in the pow-wows and Hex practises of the Pennsylvania yokels, so the informed observer has no difficulty in seeing the ill-favored visages of the savage elder gods peering through the fabric of many heretical Buddhist sects. Some of these are harmless, as the Maryology of certain sects of Christians is. Some are extremely mischievous, as was the grafting of demonolatry on mediæval Christianity, with witchcraft persecutions, heresy huntings and other bloody consequences."

He lit an amber-scented cigarette, almost as long and thick as a cigar, and blew a cloud of fragrant smoke toward the red-and-gold ceiling, looking quizzically at me through the drifting wreaths. "You know the Khmers?"

"Never heard of them," I confessed.

His thin lips drew back in a smile, and little wrinkles formed against the ruddy-yellow skin stretched tight across his temples, but his heavy-hooded eyes retained their look of brooding speculation. "I should have strongly doubted your veracity if you had answered otherwise," he told me frankly.

"Long ago, so long that archeologists

have refused to place the time, there boiled up out of India one of those strange migrations which have marked Asia since the first tick on the clock of time. It was a people on the march; across the lowlands, up the foothills, over the dragon-toothed mountains they came, kings with their elephants, priests in their golden carts, warriors a-horseback, the common people trudging arm to arm with their goods and chattels and their household gods in bundles on their backs. They swarmed across broad rivers, splashed neck-deep through marshes, crashed through the darkness of the matted jungle land. And finally they came to rest in that part of lower Asia which we call Cambodia today. There they built a mighty nation. They raised great cities in the jungle waste—not only Angkor Thom, their capital, which had a population of a million and a half—but other towns of brick and stone, stretching clear across the Cambodian peninsula. Brahmanism was their state religion, and the temples which they built to Siva the Destroyer are the puzzle and despair of modern archeologists. Later—sometime in the Fifth Century as the West reckons time—missionaries came preaching the religion of the Lord Gautama, and Buddhism became the chief faith in the land. But the old gods die hard, Doctor Trowbridge. While images of Buddha replaced the Siva idols in the temples the philosophy of Buddha did not replace Brahmanism in the people's hearts, and the old religion mingled with and fouled the new system. In their sculpture they show the Lord Gautama seated side by side with the seven-headed cobra; some of their ornamental friezes show whole rows of Buddhas carrying a giant serpent. It was a degenerate and schismatic sect that flourished in the jungle."

HE PAUSED and helped himself daintily to another stoup of rice wine. Then:

"Two hundred years after Indian missionaries had preached the doctrines of the Buddha to the Khmers, other zealous bonzes penetrated far Tibet. The new faith took quick root, but it was like the seed that fell on stony ground in your Gospel parable. Pure Buddhism could not flourish into blossom in those devil-haunted uplands of the Himalayas. The thing which finally grew was a superstitious system which resembled Indian and Chinese Buddhism about as closely as the hierarchy of the Abyssinian Orthodox Church did the Twelve Apostles who followed your great teacher. With its crude admixture of the Bon-Pal of ancient Tibet and degenerate Buddhism, it is almost pure demonolatry, and the outgrowth of it is that queer system known as Lamaism. Sacrilegiously—when everything is taken into account—the leading lamas please to call themselves Buddhas, and centuries ago the doctrine that the Buddha never dies, but is reincarnated in his priests and lamas from one generation to another, was announced.

"There is more than one 'Living Buddha.' Besides the Dalai Lama of Tibet there are several 'living gods' in outer Mongolia, all lineal descendants of the Lord Gautama through infant-reincarnation."

"Infant-reincarnation?" I echoed, mystified.

"Exactly. As each successive Living Buddha falls into his final illness, subordinate lamas seek a fitting substitute in some infant born at the time the Living Buddha breathes his last, and into the body of the new-born child the soul of Buddha passes. So, according to tradition, it has been passed and repassed for countless generations,

"But there was among the ancient lamas a man who did not wish to have his soul incorporated in the new flesh of a whimpering infant; who did not want to start life with no recollection of his former incarnation, and this man, named 'The Thunderbolt'—*Dor-je-tshe-ring* in the Tibetan—decided to develop magic powers whereby he could pass consciously into the body of a living adult person, crowd out the other's soul—or consciousness or personality, whichever term you choose—and continue living with the full retention of his faculties and in the vigor of young manhood. It came about as close to immortality as any earthly thing could, you see."

"I should say so, if it could be worked."

"It could, and has. There is ample testimony in the ancient records that he did it not once but many times. Nor was it merely poetry that named him Thunderbolt. When he was about to expire from one body, the records tell us, his soul was seen to issue from his lips in the form of a small ball of fire, and pass from his old body to the new one. The body of the person struck by this fiery ball at once collapsed, with every evidence of being struck by lightning. Sometimes it would struggle, as if it had been seized with nervous spasms, but eventually these fits of resistance passed, and when they did, the stricken body spoke with *Dor-je-tshe-ring's* voice, acted as he had in his former fleshy habitation and, to a great degree, assumed his facial aspects.

"Tibet is superstition-ridden and the sorcerers and lamas can do things there no other country would permit, but it appears the Thunderbolt became unbearable even there; so with a thousand vengeful hillmen in pursuit, he fled down to the lowlands of Cambodia where, sometime in the period corresponding to



the Western calendar's Eighth Century, he appeared in all his glory, having assumed the body of the reigning Buddhist dignitary as his own. Dor-je-tshe-ring was probably the foremost heretic of his day. He was among the earliest, if not the very first, to institute recital of *Oom mani padme* in reverse—offering conscious and intended insult to the Buddha by chanting *Empad inam moo* at Buddhist ceremonies.

"He ruled high-handedly in Angkor Thom for many years, and—this is believed by many historians—it was he who led them to oblivion. However that may be, the fact remains that the disappearance of the Khmers is one of the great mysteries of all time. There they were, a mighty nation with a high degree of culture, owners of proud cities, populous and powerful. Then one day, as abruptly and mysteriously as they came, they vanished. Their crowded cities were left empty as a tomb despoiled by grave-robbers, their market-places were deserted, their sanctuaries had no priests to serve them. Overnight, apparently, the Khmer Empire, the Khmer culture, the entire Khmer nation, disappeared. They did not die. Explorers have found no skeletal remains to evidence a plague or widespread massacre in their great, empty cities. They simply vanished, and the tiger and the lizard occupied their courts, the jungle flowed back to their streets and squares and palaces and temples."

"Quite so, but what's all this to do with Sylvia Dearborn?" I asked.

"Everything, by blue!" de Grandin answered quickly. "Tell him, *mon vieux*—tell him what you told me of the Khmer capital!"

Doctor Wong inclined his head. "Doctor de Grandin is correct," he nodded. "I think there is a strong connection. You recall Miss Dearborn's telling you about her vision of an ancient Oriental

city? Her description closely parallels that of a countryman of mine, Tcheou-Ta-Quan, who was ambassador to Angkor Thom in the early Thirteenth Century."

Going to a lacquered bookcase he took down a slim volume bound in vellum, thumbed through its crackling parchment pages, and began to read:

"When the king of Angkor leaves his palace he moves with a troop of horsemen at the head of his column. After the guard of cavalry are standard-bearers with fluttering flags, and behind them march the music-makers. Next in the procession are hundreds of concubines and girls of the palace . . . after them are other women of the palace carrying objects of gold and silver. Following them are the men-at-arms, the soldiers of the palace guard. In their wake come chariots and royal carriages all of gold and drawn by bulls. Behind these are the elephants in which ride nobles and ministers of the government. Each rides beneath a red umbrella.

"In carriages or golden chairs or thrones borne on the backs of elephants are the wives and favorite concubines of the king, and their parasols are golden.

"The king himself comes last, standing on an elephant and holding in his hand the sacred sword, while soldiers riding elephants or horses crowd closely by his side as he proceeds through the city.

"THE similarity between Miss Dearborn's vision and Tcheou-Ta-Quan's description of a state procession in the Khmer capital is very close, and when it is remembered that the Living Buddha of Angkor occupied an ecclesiastical position analogous to that of the Archbishop of Canterbury, if not quite as exalted as that of mediæval Popes, the meaning of her vision is quite plain. In my mind there is no doubt that *through the eyes of Dor-je-tshe-ring* she watched a ceremonial procession in which the king and his retinue marched through Angkor Thom to do their Living Buddha honor. That accounts for her saying 'one part of me seemed to understand it, while the other didn't', and also for her feeling of a dual personality, as if she were man and woman in one body."

"You see?" de Grandin asked.

"I don't think——"

"Then in heaven's name, do not boast of it, my friend. Cannot you understand? How else could this American young lady, this girl who never in her life had been to Europe, much less to lower Asia, behold that ceremonial march of ghosts from a long-forgotten past? This never-sufficiently-to-be-deprecated old one has struck down Mademoiselle Dearborn with his 'thunderbolt' and has entered into her. He is forcing forth her mind, he is making her assume the features of his so vile monkey-face; he is leaving her a living body while he kills her soul!"

"But how could he come over here, and why should he assume a woman's body? I thought the Living Buddha always is a man——"

Doctor Wong smiled frostily. "The best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft a-gley," he quoted. "According to the ancient chronicles his soul in fire-ball form passed seven times about the earth with the speed of sound before it struck the body of his victim. We do not know where Dor-je-tshe-ring's former body was when physical death took place, but we may allow for some deviation in his calculations. Instead of returning to China, or Manchukuo, or perhaps Korea or Siam, where his expiring body lay, his malignant spirit came to rest on that hotel rooftop in New Jersey. He may have been disconcerted by this happening, or, more probably, he intended to strike down the nearest masculine body to his place of rest, but through another error in his calculations, he struck Miss Dearborn's body instead. There seems to be a definite limit to his power. Once before he made an error; that time he entered the body of a cripple, and as he could not leave his earthly tenement till natural death ensued, he led the poor, unfortunate bit of deformed flesh a miserable dance until he literally wore it out. Then

he was able to transfer his headquarters to a home more suited to his wishes."

"But certainly," de Grandin seconded. "Our learned friend knew all these things, and being a mathematician as well as a philosopher, he found that two and two made four when added. Accordingly he damn suspected that the finger of this execrable Dor-je-tshe-ring was in the pie up to the elbow, and when he heard the poor young woman reciting Buddhist invocations in reverse, he taxed the villain with his act of trespass, calling him by name. And what was it he said? '*Ki lao yeh hsieh ti to lo*,—the honorable gentleman has my thanks,' by dammit. The sixty-times-accursed scoundrel not only admitted his so vile identity, he thanked our friend for recognizing him!"

My senses whirled from their wild talk no less than from the unfamiliar rice wine. "If what you say is true," I asked, "how are we to call back Sylvia's wandering spirit and expel this other from her?"

"That is for Doctor Wong to say," de Grandin answered.

"That is for me to *try*," the Oriental amended. "I will do the best I can. Whether I succeed or fail is for whatever gods may be to say. If you have completed luncheon, we can begin to make our preparations, gentlemen."

WONG's apparatus was assembled quickly. At his sharply-spoken order the servant brought a slab of lucent, polished jade from one of the tall lacquered cabinets and laid it on the long refectory table. It must have been of priceless value, for it was at least a foot in length by a full eight inches wide, and certainly not less than one inch thick. Going to a locked steel chest Wong took a tiny phial of bright ruby glass, spilled a single drop of amber fluid from it on the slab of jade and began to polish it

with a wad of gleaming yellow silk. As he rubbed the oil across the jade slab's gleaming face there crept through the room a perfume of an almost nameless sweetness, so rich and heady that my senses fairly reeled with it. For perhaps five minutes he worked silently, then, apparently satisfied, laid his silken buffer by and wrapped the jade block in a bolt of violet tissue.

In a tall, glass-fronted case stood a row of ancient bottles, fragile objects of exquisite delicacy, flat-bodied, small-mouthed, each with a tiny spoon attached to its stopper. One of shadowed malachite, one of glowing amber, one of richly-gleaming coral he lifted from their shelves, and from each he scooped a minute portion of fine powder, stirred them carefully with a thin amber rod, then dusted them into a phial of gray agate and closed the bottle-neck with a rock crystal plug.

Finally, while the servant brought a Buddhist prayer wheel with disk of polished silver and uprights of age-black poplar wood, he took two tall, thick candles of blue wax set in crystal standards, wrapped them in a length of silken tissue, drew a censer of antique red gold from its case of cinnabar and ivory, and nodded to us.

"If you are quite ready, let us go," he suggested courteously.

"**H**AS she rested quietly, *Mademoiselle?*" de Grandin asked the more feminine-looking of the amazonian nurses when we arrived at Sylvia's room.

"Yes, sir, mostly. Once or twice she's been delirious, muttering and groaning, but she really hasn't given us much trouble."

"Thank you," he responded with a bow. "Now if you and your companion will await us in the hall, we shall begin our treatment. Come quickly if we call,

but on no account come in the room or permit anyone else to enter till we give the word."

They made their preparations quickly. Sylvia's bed was moved until her head lay to the west and her feet east, that she might receive the natural magnetic currents of the earth. They stripped her green pajamas off, anointed her forehead, breasts, hands and feet with some pungently sweet-smelling oil, then crossed her hands upon her bosom, the right one uppermost, and bound her wrists together with a length of purple silk, that she might not change her posture. Her slender ankles were then crossed as they had crossed her wrists, and bound firmly with a red-silk sash. Beneath her head they put a pillow of bright-yellow silk embroidered with a swastika design in black. At one side of the bed they set the jade slab upright, and across from it they stood the dark-blue candles with the silver prayer wheel behind them. Doctor Wong filled the golden censer from the agate bottle, snapped a very modern cigarette-lighter into flame, lit the candles and set the incense glowing.

The scented smoke filled the room as wine may fill a bottle, penetrating every cranny, every crevice, every nook, sinking deep into the rugs and draperies, billowing and rolling back from walls and ceiling. It was curiously and pungently sweet, yet lacked the heavy, cloying fragrance of the usual incense.

They had drawn the blinds and pulled the curtains to, and the only light within the chamber came from the two tall candles which burned straight-flamed in the unwavering air, sending their yellow rays to beat upon the mirror-lustered surface of the slab of jade.

De Grandin put his hand upon the prayer wheel and at a word from Wong began to spin its disk. Astonishingly, the

polished silver of the whirling disk caught up the candle rays, focused them as a lens will focus sunlight, and shot them back in a single sword-straight ray against the slab of glowing jade. Queerly, too, although he did not move the wheel's base, the beam of light moved up and down and crosswise on the jade mirror; then, as though it were a liquid stream, it seemed to ebb and flow as moonlight spreads on gently-running water.

Doctor Wong was chanting in a low, monotonous voice, long, singsong words which rose and fell and seemed to slip and glide into one another until his canticle was more like a continuous flow of sound than words and sentences and phrases.

The nude girl on the bed stirred restlessly. She sought to take her hands down from her bosom, to uncross her feet, but the bandages prevented, and she lapsed back in what seemed a quiet sleep.

The long-drawn, uninflected chant proceeded, and the incense thickened in the room until I felt that I was being smothered. Where the prayer wheel whirled there came a low, monotonous humming, something like the droning hum made by an electric fan, but more penetrating, more insistent. It seemed to come from earth and air and sky, from the walls themselves, and to fill the atmosphere to overflowing with a spate of quivering sound that tore the nerves to tatters, shattering all inhibitions and dredging up dark memories and hates from the murk of the subconscious mind. I felt that I was going mad, that in another instant I should scream and tear my garments, or fall driveling and mouthing to the floor, when the sudden change in Sylvia's face caught and centered my attention.

Something alien had flowed into her

features. Atop the perfect, cream-white body lying bound upon the bed was another face, an old face, a wicked face, a face with Mongoloid features steeped and sodden in foul malice.

A whining child-moan trickled from the thickening lips; then with a scream of fear surcharged with hatred she sat up struggling on the bed, tearing at the bonds that held her wrists, fighting like a thing possessed against the bandages that held her long, slim feet crossed on each other. But the silken fetters held—they had been tied with seven knots and sealed with red wax stamped with the ideograph of Lord Gautama!

And the low, monotonous chant went on, the incense foamed and frothed and billowed through the room, the gleaming candlelight pulsed throbbingly against the jade reflector, the silver wheel whirled on, giving off its nerve-destroying murmur.

"*Grand Dieu!*" I heard de Grandin's whisper rasping through the whirring of the wheel. "Observe her—look, Friend Trowbridge, he comes; he is emerging!"

Wearied by her futile struggles, Sylvia had fallen back upon the bed, and as her head sank flaccidly upon the black-embroidered yellow pillow, from her mouth, squared in a scream, there came a flow of luminance. Yet it was not merely light, it was a shining thing of ponderable substance, swelling as it reached the air till it hung above her face like a pear-shaped phosphorescent bubble joined to her by a single gossamer thread of fiery brilliance.

Idiotically—like a nervous woman tittering at a funeral—I giggled. More than anything else the dreadful tableau reminded me of a conjurer disgorging the collapsible property egg he has pretended to swallow.

The beam reflected from the swiftly whirling prayer wheel's silver disk cut

athwart her face and, as if it had been a sharpened sword, clipped the ligature of luminance tethering the pyriform excrescence to her lips.

The brightly-glowing globe seemed to shrink in upon itself, to acquire added weight and solidarity, yet oddly to become more buoyant. For an instant it hovered in midair above her face, as though undecided which way it should float; then, suddenly, like an iron-filing drawn to a strong magnet, it dropped upon the light-beam slanting from the prayer wheel to the plinth of jade and slid along the lucent track like a brakeless motor car gone headlong down a hill.

The impact was terrific. The jade rang like a smitten gong, a dreadful clang of sound, a shrill, high, wailing note as though it—or the ball of luminosity—had cried out in mortal anguish, a note of tortured outcry that thinned and lengthened to a sickening scream of torment. It hung and quivered in the incense-saturated air for what seemed an eternity, until I could not say if I still heard it or if tortured ear-drums held it in remembrance, and would go on remembering it till madness wiped the recollection out.

The jade was shattered in a thousand slivered fragments and the light-globe was dissolved in vapor thin as cirrous clouds that race before the rushing storm-wind, and blended with the hovering brume of incense. But a foul odor, rank and sickening as the fetor from decaying flesh, spread through the room, blotting out the perfume of the incense, bringing tears to our eyes and retchings to our stomachs.

"*Barbe bleu*, he had the fragrance of the rotten fish, that one!" exclaimed de Grandin as he raced across the room to fling the windows open and began to fan the air with a bath towel.

I looked at Sylvia. The invading presence had withdrawn and her lovely features were composed and calm. She lay there flaccidly, only the light flutter of her bosom telling us she was alive. I took her wrist between my thumb and forefinger. Her pulse was striking eighty clear-cut beats a minute. Normal. She was well.

THEY cut the silken bandages from wrists and ankles, drew her green pajamas on and tucked her in beneath the bed-clothes. Then, while I went to order broth and brandy ready for her waking, Wong and de Grandin packed their apparatus in its soft silk swaddling-clothes, swept up the bits of shattered jade and drew their chairs up to the bedside.

We sat beside her till the dawnlight blushed across the eastern sky and day, advancing, trod upon the heels of night.

With the coming of the day she wakened. She lay against the heaped-up pillows, warm, relaxed and faintly smiling. One arm was underneath her head and the attitude showed her lines of gracious femininity; charming, tenderly and softly curved. Against the whiteness of the pillows and the counterpane her copper hair and fresh-blown cheeks glowed like an apricot that ripens in the sun.

But when she sat up with a sudden start her lovely color drained away and violet semicircles showed beneath her eyes. The glint of waking laughter that had kindled in her face was stilled and we could see fear flooding in her glance as blood wells through a sodden bandage. She licked dry lips with a tongue that had gone stiff, and her hands fluttered to her mouth in the immemorial, unconscious gesture of a woman sick with mortal terror. "Oh"—she began, and we heard the hot breath press against her

words, as if her laboring heart were forcing it against them—"I thought——"

"Do not attempt to do so, *Mademoiselle*," de Grandin told her with firm gentleness. "You have been severely ill; this is no time for thought, unless you wish to think of getting well all soon, and of the one who comes tonight—*eh bien*, my little pigeon, have I not seen it in his eyes? But certainly! Drink this, if you please; then compose yourself to think of Monsieur Georges and the pretty compliments that he will whisper when he sees you lying here so beautiful—and filled to overflowing with returning strength. But certainly; yes, of course!"

WE PAUSED upon the Dearborn porch, weary with our vigil, but happy with the happiness of men who see their plans succeed. "How did you do it——" I began, but de Grandin cut my question off half uttered.

"Those things of Doctor Wong's were ancient things—and good things," he explained. "For more generations than the three of us have hairs upon our heads they have served the good of mankind—the sacred incense from the very tree beneath which Buddha sat in contemplation, the oil with which the Emperors of China were anointed, the clear, pellucid jade that casts back only good reflections, the candles made from wax of bees that drew their nectar in the very fields in which Gautama walked and preached, and last of all the prayer wheel that has recorded countless holy men's devout petitions to the Lord of Good—call Him what you will, He is the same in every heart filled

with the love of man, whatever name He bears.

"Against these things, and against the ancient formulæ our friend Wong chanted, the evil one was powerless. *Parbleu*, they drew him forth from her as one withdraws the fish of April from the brooklet with a hook!"

"But," I ventured doubtfully, "isn't there a chance he may come back to plague——"

"I hardly think so," Doctor Wong replied. "He smashed the sacred mirror of *pi yü*—jade, that is—but in breaking it he also broke himself. You smelled the stench? That was his evil spirit vanishing. For almost countless generations he had occupied the flesh, first in one body, then another. Dissolution—putrefaction—was long in overtaking him, but at last it sought him out. No, Doctor Trowbridge, I think the world has seen the last of Dor-je-tshe-ring, 'The Thunderbolt.' He has struck down his last victim, he has sucked in his last——"

"*Morbleu*, I am reminded by your reference to the sucking in!" de Grandin interrupted as he glanced at the small watch strapped on his wrist.

We looked at him in wonder. "Of what are you reminded, little brother?" asked Doctor Wong.

"In fifteen little minutes they will open. If we hurry, we can be among the first!"

"The first? What is it that you want?"

"Three, four, perhaps half a dozen of those magnificent old-fashioned cocktails; those with the so lovely whisky in them. Come, let us hasten!"

