

Published quarterly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 3457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter September 8, 1930, at the postoffice at Indianapolis, Indiana, under Act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$1.00 a year in the United States, \$1.40 a year in Canada, \$1.50 in other countries. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet St., E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers. All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publisher's Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

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"A scowling glance met her from the monkey-face of old Sapit Kuching."

# The Dancer of Djogyakarta

By WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

*The story of a lovely Javanese maiden, who called the Elder Gods of the Hindus to aid her escape from the lust of white men who coveted her body*

NONNA KUCHING'S attitude toward her own Javanese was that of the Eternal Mother deep-rooted in every woman. Men were foolish and perverse, but children, if skilfully managed. She was the Dancer of Djogyakarta, dainty, childish in face and figure, but very much the Javanese woman; her men were to admire and obey, to be led about by the nose.

White men were different. She detested them all, as embodiments of the worst that is in us. It was small consolation to reflect that her lapses of virtue, albeit with them only, filled the need for

a wife and a sweetheart in these white men, who were lonely in this distant part of Java. Occasionally, not often, there had been words of appreciation of that, in incoherent murmurs, hints from very maudlin and sentimental white Tuans who had had dealings with her; generally it was all mere barter and sale, filling her soul with disgust. Occasionally, not often, there was an expression in their eyes like to this present young white Tuan, who sat on a pillow before her house veranda watching her dance. Nonna had seen before that expression, an incredulous amazement in his eyes that

this mere child, with the delicate oval face and drooping baby-mouth, with no visible eyebrows and finely modeled infantile Javanese nose—this picture of innocence dancing before him—should be in reality a grown woman complaisant to his hand.

The young white Tuan was tall and slender and handsome, with wavy brown hair brushed back over a sunburned forehead, his blue eyes with their puzzled expression of wonderment studying the art of her dance under raised brown eyebrows. His bow-curved mouth was compressed under the small and close mustache such as the Inggris [English] Tuans wore. He was no fat and beery Hollander, those bearded beasts whose reechy kisses had filled her soul with loathing. Yet she hated him vaguely; hated still more Tidak Prah, the guide, who had brought him here for the commission her father paid him. She was aware of that rabbit's presence, squatting behind his Tuan, but she bestowed on them all not a glance, concentrating her mind on the graceful steps of the Ronggeng, which is the court dance supposed to be performed exclusively before His Highness, the Sultan of Djogya.

Besides that expression of troubled incredulity that sat on her Tuan's face, there was recognition there, too. Nonna thought that out as she danced before him on the rude bamboo platform of the veranda of her kampong. She was now simply clad in a plain blue sarong and an embroidered white bodice which covered her bosom, with no ornament save a long and soft silken shawl or slendang, which left her arms and shoulders bare and served as a sort of wings to heighten the poses of her dance; but he was evidently recognizing her as that resplendent and supposedly impeccable court dancer, in the flowing, gold-embroidered sarong and tight bodice of gold-lace straps, who had

performed only the night before at the Sultan's court.

Yes, she was the same girl—a court dancer forbidden to all men—adds spice to your adventure, doesn't it, young white Tuan? teased Nonna with her eyes as she swung and pirouetted gayly through the measures, intent on her difficult dance. A discordant thump of the strings of the bamboo lyre played by her father, who squatted at the right of the platform, recalled her to her duty to her parent. The drummer at her left, dubbing at a long double-ended drum with the tattoo of his fingers, broke into a more vigorous and syncopated time. A scowling glance met her from the monkey face of old Sapit Kuching, the parent who owned her and lived by her sacrifices. It was necessary to pay less attention to the technique of her dance now, he was commanding; to put more seduction and direct invitation into it to this young white Tuan seated admiringly before her.

Nonna exercised her charms obediently. Her eyes concentrated on his; her arms swayed seductively, her body moved provocatively. How she hated this part! Really, Nonna thought, as she addressed herself to him, managing all these men—her father who lived on her and who had many beatings for her if she did not do her part—these white Tuans who bought her for an evening, this whole hateful league of men against her—they were almost too much for the Eternal Mother instinct in a girl of fifteen! It was all gross and unfair and cruel. There was the Sultan, too, who had more than once hinted that she might become one of his retinue; but above all there was the young prince Yusuf Sengang, who really loved her, who came courting after fowls-take-their-perches time but who could not get his uncle's permission to marry her. Really it required a deal of managing! Might Allah, the Merciful, the Compass-

sionate, show her the way out, thought Nonna as she went on with this hateful business of captivating the white Tuan.

There was irresolution in his eyes now; then the challenge of the primal male in him. Why, yes; if the lady made advances, it was for him to be gallant! It was at least better, this reluctance, than the usual lascivious hunger with which gross and bearded Hollanders or dark and oily Portuguese came here. But she hated him, nevertheless.

Others were watching him, too, and from the musicians shot out of nowhere in particular the usual wadded-up note, to fall in a curve into his lap. Nonna knew what it contained; a scrawl in Javanese-English appointing him to meet her that night at ten in the familiar old Hindoo shrine back in a secluded part of the Sultan's gardens. Nonna watched him surreptitiously open the note, while the natives grinned. A flush spread over his features; a glance of lowered respect, somewhat stern; then a nod of acquiescence. A spasm of loathing attacked her. How long, O Allah, Protector of the Innocent—how long?

NONNA retired to her room for a good fit of weeping after the musicians had gone to the men's rooms of her kampong and the white Tuan had departed in tow of that scoundrel, Tidak Prahū. She rose from her couch about five o'clock and put on the resplendent court dress. A final look in the mirror, before calling her *ebro* or tilt-carriage for the evening's drive. It was the face of a child that was reflected there; not a wrinkle or a line, the kind of innocent face she had seen on white mem-sahib children, girls of twelve. Delicate, almost invisible arched eyebrows on the smooth brown forehead; scanty black hair done smoothly back so as to bring out the childish contours of head and neck; no visible ears, soft and warm brown almond-

shaped eyes, eyes not narrow or oblique as with the Chinese but wide and disdainful. She was born men's hearts to snare; born, if the world had consulted her about it, to trample on all men with cool aloofness.

All save One. For him were the depths of those eyes. In the Name of Allah, *when?* All she wanted of Life was Yusuf, and a little brown baby that would be something of them both! And, because of her father and the Sultan—this!

She hated particularly white men, for they forced her to forego her reserve, that precious reluctance of womankind without which the world would be in chaos. If women were to take the initiative, eager, compelling, as men did! Nonna had very definite ideas as to just how far a girl should go. A dainty and delicate coquetry; a reserved display of her charms; half-daring, half-shy flirtations—beyond that the thing became distasteful, men's province. But to be forced out of the protection of these instincts, to become bold and seductive, of a wanton brazenness—*ugh!*

An old crone, a slave of her father's, set out tiffin for her on a flat bamboo table and laid a cushion before it on the floor. Nonna partook moodily. Tonight, again! She knew how Yusuf felt about it. To the Javanese youth it was all very simple. She was innocent, in his eyes, since these affairs with the white Tuans were none of her seeking. Once they were married, all that would be of the past and he would look only for faithfulness to him forever. The thing must be managed, somehow; this young white Tuan must be her last—and there must be no krissing him, as Yusuf would want, either!

SHE drove out through palm-shaded roads, past the *dessas* or native Javanese villages which bordered it on every side. In Djogya-town many were the

salaams and friendly greetings from the deposed Mataram nobility, proud and poor; dependent, as was prince Yusuf Sengang himself, solely on the Sultan's bounty—now that the Dutch government had shorn both him and them of their temporal power. Nonna was well known to them all; a great favorite at court. None of them knew of these private affairs of hers with the whites, arranged at her own home and consummated in the old Hindoo shrine in the Sultan's gardens.

The imposing ruins of the Prambanam Temples came in sight. Nonna had the true Mohammedan's contempt for Hindoo idols and human figures, carved against the express command of Allah, the One True God. She yawned and eyed disdainfully the bas-relief friezes on Prambanam picturing incidents from the Mahabarata; she gaped at the Shivas and Kalas and Ganeshas seated in their shrines. She had no conception of the vast antiquity of these gods, nor of their still potent influence on the human race. To her they were but foolish labors of foolish men, set up, stone upon stone, into vast temples; stone god after stone god hoisted into niches some thousand years ago—only to be swept into oblivion by the advancing armies of One True God. That Shiva was hoary with venerable antiquity when her Mahomet was born; that while Brahm dreams the Gods die not—these were verities that had never entered her mind. . . . Yet—and yet—

She began to grow reflective, as the carriage slowly paced around through the maze of temples, and she studied now the squatting stone figures, each and all marked with that impenetrable and enigmatic smile of Asia. What was the secret locked in those stone lips? What did these gods know that man did *not* know? She eyed them finally with yearn-

ing disquietude. Had they, after all, something for her; something that the later prophets had missed? Surely there was something wrong with the Koran's prophets of Allah that they had no solution for her and her problem! Her Mahomet had nothing but very strict and sharply defined instructions as to women of her profession. A dancing girl was a dancing girl—also a courtesan—and she was to bear no children or be stoned with stones. There was Another—Nonna had heard of Him once, from a very drunk and maudlin sub-lieutenant of police—who had simply said, "Woman, go and sin no more." All very easy to *say*—but what if one had a father who owned a palm mid-rib whip in which there were many beatings? And a lover willing to rescue her but whose whole life was bound about by the Sultan's bounty?

But the Elder Gods knew none of these things, nor cared. Serene and enigmatic, they sat in their shrines, stone, gray with the centuries, the ageless smile of Asia on their faces, the smile of that supreme wisdom born of indifference. "Worship us or do *not* worship us, it is all one. Ye are men, and ye make your own Gods, some to pull down and destroy, some to elevate for a little—but to Us ye come in the end!" their expression hinted.

A four-faced Brahm sat dreaming out of the topmost pinnacle of Prambanam, looking all ways, seeing all, indifferent, biding his time:

"I am Brahm, the Universe; the Known and the Unknown!" he seemed to whisper into Nonna's vague fancies. "All the creeds, the doubts, and the thoughts of man are Me. The Earth, the Stars, and all Life that on them is, are one with Me. The Gods are Me. Follow whom ye will—to Me ye return, for I am Him whom ye follow."

Yearning, eager questionings filled

Nonna's whole being as she halted her *ebro* and sat studying the impassive face of the Brahm so far above her. "O Brahm! What hast thou for me?" she implored with her baby lips. Surely there was a hidden Truth in these Elder Gods, these beings forgotten and neglected of the present generation! They would not fail her, as Mahomet had done. One and all, for they were but different manifestations of the Brahm, surely these Elder Ones had a message for her—or none had! There was something here, if she could only think down into it! Those wise, all-knowing, all-concealing faces!

And their Message came at length into her soul: "Man, woman—your world is *within you alone*. We gave you Life. It is yours. What you do with it, what you think, is yours to say, no one else. Ye are foolish who lean on this and that God, for they were born but yesterday and tomorrow will be gone and their mouths stopped with dust. But We, who are Life, We remain! Woman, arise and take! Thou alone hast dominion over thy soul!"

**N**ONNA KUCHING drove back to Djogya a changed girl. She was done with Mahomet, for a mightier than he had spoken to her, the Brahma of Prambanam. She was only a dancing girl, as her Javanese world viewed her, but she was more than that, now, a dominant and determined woman's soul, freed from false convention, determined to mold her life and those around her henceforward by her will. It could and would be done, if she had the courage to do it. The Elder Gods knew Life; all that had come after them was futile piffle, lies, and would soon vanish and men return to Them. While Brahm dreams——

Prince Yusuf could take her or leave her, that night, she had decided. As for the white Tuan, a scornful smile tinged

her lips. All the insults to her helpless person were to be revenged upon him that night. No *krissing* or anything violent like that, which her woman's soul abhorred, but a thing humiliating, arousing the laughter of the very Gods, a soul-satisfying and complete woman's revenge on them all. The broad and obscene Malay sense of humor quivered on her lip as she thought over possible retributions and finally came to a climax in a shrill trill of childish laughter. This white Tuan—would that there were more of them, the more detestable ones, of odious memories, to witness and learn!

The iron scenery of this part of Java strengthened her resolution as she drove back. Great bare and rock-ribbed cones of volcanoes, some extinct, some inactive, a few—Bromo, Tosari and his fellows on the far horizon—arose clouded with fumes of smoke and shreds of vapor in the clear blue of twilight. She would do it! She was Woman, the Manager; these men, all of them, brown *and* white, were but naughty children, to be spanked or to be led where she would!

**T**HERE was no sign of this inward revolt as she entered the thatch-roof kampong and flung herself idly on the mat to await Yusuf Sengang. A little garden of papayas and bougainvillea gave on her window; flanking it, two huge and slatting bananas. Fireflies were illuminating the night outside, winking in myriad twinkles of light in the great waringen trees which overshadowed the Sultan's gardens. Presently there was a soft calling of her name, and a slender brown hand pushed over the window. It bore a rope of pearls, which Nonna took with little soft cries of delight over the beauty of the lovely things.

"Ai, Nonna! My all—to purchase these!" whispered Prince Yusuf's voice. His turbaned head appeared over the

bamboo railing. There were soft love words, spoken in whispers, the sedate and discreet Malay courtship. He was a slender youth, seemingly as much a boy as she was a girl. There was no maturity visible in his face; yet it was there, the placid and unruffled maturity that looks on life with a right sense of its proportions and meets its onslaughts with the keen temper of a welded Malay blade. He was a good deal more of a man than he looked, this Prince Yusuf, in his resplendent and somewhat effeminate court dress.

Nonna listened awhile to the familiar endearments, enjoying them while she might, for no one could foresee the outcome of the step she was about to take.

"Enough, Yusuf, my prince and my lord!" she interrupted him. "When do we go before the Sultan's *badji* to be married?"

Yusuf waved his hands despondently. "Thou knowest, Light of Java, I am utterly dependent upon my uncle. When the Sultan says——"

"And I am *not* dependent, Yusuf! Dear as thou art to me, this night we go—or never."

The youth's almond eyes suddenly darkened. Nonna knew that expression well, the sudden Malay rage, ferocity. He had put his all into this gift for her—and to be treated thus! Then it softened to love and admiration again. "*Hai!*—My queen of dancers! A brave flash of spirit—but of no avail. What would you?"

"Take me, or leave me, dream of my eyes," purred Nonna softly. "Out into the wide world I go tonight. Here are back thy pearls—yet do I love thee!"

"But I have nothing—where can we go?—where?" wailed Yusuf, all his comfortable world of the Sultan's court suddenly stricken from under his feet. Life without the prospect of Nonna, however

dimly in the future but nonetheless a certainty to the timeless East—blankness—misery!

"I would die without thee, pearl of Java!" he murmured. "Speak not of going. We must wait. All will come in time."

"Are not two who love enough for life?" asked Nonna. "Two to raise the rice, to wield the parang that a home may be built? Is not the whole wide Preanger open to us? There we can find peace. These *gewgaws*"—holding up the pearls—"and others that thou and I possess, will buy land enough. For seed rice there is the *desa* bank, and coolies to plant it. Let us live, and *not* wait, my prince!"

Yusuf was immeasurably shocked—what had come over Nonna, the meek and submissive Mohammedan girl? But he hid it under the usual impassive Malay mask. He was also much perturbed for himself; to forego his position and his cherished nobility at the Sultan's court, to incur the old despot's sure displeasure—and all for this beautiful dancing girl, who had affairs with white Tuans! He took refuge in his religion, as most men do when they wish to coerce women.

"And what does the Koran say about young couples who flaunt their Sultan and disobey their fathers to run off into unknown principalities?" he asked. (The Preanger was just over the border.)

"The Koran be damned!" exclaimed Nonna, in as near an approach to that vigorous Anglo-Saxon expression as the soft and courteous Malay speech permits.

Yusuf stood aghast. Blasphemy! The woman was mad! He gaped at her, open-mouthed.

"Oh, Yusuf, our gods are but of yesterday, and those who made them scarce cold in their graves!" Nonna drove on at him relentlessly. "What do *they* know of Life? Have we not asked Mahomet in

our prayers, and has he anything to say?" she inquired scornfully. "Nought, but to endure and obey! *Pish!* I have talked with the Elder Gods, Yusuf, my prince. *They* know! When two meet at twilight in the young rice, there give they Life. All else is rubbish, the dreams of men."

"You have talked with Them, the sacrilegious idols on Prambanam, carved in defiance of the Prophet?" quavered Yusuf, his religion also knocked from under him by this new and *not* submissive Nonna.

"Yea, they talked to *me!* To Them we return in the end. The rest is lies! Tonight I go, dearest prince—and *thou* goest with *me!*" she insisted. "What stops us? The commands of the Koran, say you? They are lies, misery, striking down hope and love. Such things be lies! . . . Money? Position? They are naught. We have enough! Sell these baubles and come, my prince!"

Yusuf hesitated, eyeing with dawning approval and admiration this confident and courageous Nonna, who had dared to put her finger upon the bonds which held them both, and who dared, further, to brush them magnificently aside. He was half won to do and dare himself. There would be complications; the Sultan's displeasure; beginning life anew as a simple land-owner in a new province. But the Dutch government would see that he had no actual interference from Djogyakarta, no halting them back, no imprisonment. They were free to go where they liked under the white man's law. They had money enough to start, too; the jeweller who lived near the Residency would see to that, show him pearls enough. She was right; this way led Life! One thing alone troubled him:

"You have come by no affliction by these white Tuans?" he asked her, simply and directly.

"Allah be praised, no!" exclaimed Nonna, most inconsistently in view of what she had just said about the Elder Gods. It was not lost on Yusuf. She was still a devout Mohammedan—with reservations, which need not be known except to them two. It mattered a good deal, over in the Preanger, which was quite as devout Muslim as Djogya. It would not do for her to proclaim the Elder Gods there openly!

"And that reminds me," went on Nonna, "there is a Tuan coming to the shrine in the Sultan's gardens this night. A young and handsome Tuan, new to Java I think. His eyes were troubled over me when I was dancing before him this afternoon; yet will he come—like them all. But I would be revenged on them all through him, my prince."

Yusuf laid hand on kris and scowled, "Say but the word, Flower of Djogya!" he gritted through clenched teeth.

"Hoo! Always something violent, you men!" caroled Nonna softly. "Think how that would ruin everything, and bring down the wrath of the Kumpanie [the Dutch government] upon us all, in that you had slain a white Tuan! But there is a pond in the Sultan's gardens, a fish pond, full of ugly, squat frogs and great water lilies"—Nonna meant these huge Victoria Regias, the Sultan's pride, with round flat leaves a yard across—"and a vile slime and a stench arises from it when the coolies do wade in there to pluck the lotus flowers. This Tuan will come to me at the shrine at ten knocks, as white men count time. He will speak soft and false words of love, and then—will seize me," she shuddered, while again Yusuf laid hand on kris. "Then, my prince, I would that, when I cry out '*Djaga!*' [Beware!], four strong coolies seize that white man, in all his spotless linens, with the pearl buttons upon the



white jacket of him"— Nonna's shapely hands made vigorous pantomimes—"Then thou and I will go quickly."

Yusuf began to grin. His broad Malay humor was tickled at the vision of that sacred white Tuan being thus dealt with. He burst into an uproarious laugh, then stifled it with a sigh.

"*Hoi!* These be evil times!" he said, fondling regretfully the handle of his keen kris. "A woman's revenge, that! Better the old days, when the kris nudged the white man sharply if he dared tamper with our women! However, it shall be as thou would have it, Ornament of all Java! Then do we go and begin life together. Farewell, Prince Yusuf of Djogya!—Salaam, dessaman rice-grower of the Preanger! But for thee, my beauty! . . . I will attend now to the matter of the pearls." He took them back, kissed her hand fervently, and was gone in the darkness.

**T**HE Resident's clock was striking ten when Nonna stood before the dark stone shrine, one of those relics of ancient Hindoo days in Java with which the Sultan's gardens are filled. Shrubbery hid it in a maze of foliage; a great clump of blue bamboo hung over it and half hid the stone godling peering out at her from a niche above. Nonna shuddered as she glanced within its dark depths. There were the mats and pillows, spread out as usual by her father's retainers. Here had been made many sacrifices for golden florins, but this was the last, and it was to end in a manner particularly satisfying to her. To humiliate the white beast;—a feeble return, but a return, just the same, for the humiliations she had endured! Why could they not let a dancer *be* a dancer and enjoy her art alone?

Nonna lay down inside the shrine (which once had held one of the Elder Gods) and lounged carelessly, a pillow

under her bare brown arm, a cigarette at her lips. Her bare rounded knee jutted out provocatively from a fold of her sarong. She wished this thing over with quickly, for Prince Yusuf was hidden somewhere near, with four strong coolies. . . .

A faint crunch on the gravel path. A tall form approached, clad in tropical whites, with the upstanding military collar of a white blouse. Faint glint of pearl buttons in the firefly gleams and the starlight; the red glow of a cigarette tip.

But this white man did not at once seat himself on the edge of the mat and begin making love. Instead he sat himself down cross-legged on the gravel outside, his topee taken off, his head, with the sheen of well-groomed hair on it, just visible under the stars to Nonna as he smoked in reflective puffs of his cigarette.

"I know you, dancer-girl," he began at last in fluent Malay. "You are Nonna Kuching, of the court. I saw you dance there, at the last big entertainment the Sultan gave. Why, then, do you do this?"

His tone seemed gently reproving, reproachful. It was the first word spoken to her by a white Tuan with the least hint of human kindness in it. Nonna listened with awakened interest. Strange talk, this!

"Didst thou note the musician to my left this afternoon, O Tuan? The little monkey-man, with eyes like an ape, who played the bamboo lyre?" she inquired.

"I saw, dancer-girl. He managed—this. But why? Thou art but a child, Nonna, a little graceful child. This that thou doest is for women."

"He is my father, Tuan. There are many beatings if I only dance, as my soul would."

"For pity! I thought as much. Therefore did I come here, Nonna. Why dost thou not abandon this, and marry a youth of thine own people? Is it money? Is it

*adat* [law]?" So Nonna heard his kindly tones, yet he had got up and now sat on the edge of her mat, his eyes glinting with a growing admiration for the physical perfections of her. His cigarette tip was glowing frequently; inhalations under the spell of awakening passion.

Nonna recognized the symptoms and her heart hardened. Still, if it pleased the white Tuan to talk kindly she would listen on. Perhaps he would not lose control, in spite of himself, and go away blameless—to be spared.

"Nay, it is not money, nor law, white Tuan," she answered. "I love One. Knowest thou him? The prince Yusuf Sengang?"

"I've seen him!" sniffed the young white Tuan. "Another child!"

"Nay, it is but our faces that are young, we Javanese. I am a woman—see!" exclaimed Nonna artlessly exposing her tiny breasts.

The white Tuan eyed her avidly. He leaned over, beginning to caress her tentatively. "Why, then, do ye not marry?" he asked, his voice quivering with the sensations that were rising within him.

Nonna stifled a sigh. Why was it that her little slender body seemed to excite a flame of desire in all men! This Tuan meant well, perhaps, but his feelings were becoming too strong for him.

"Because the Sultan will not permit him," she answered, drawing away from him gently. "Perhaps he wishes me for a concubine himself. Perhaps he knows secretly of this that my father makes me do. Yusuf is dependent on him alone. Thou knowest, Tuan; we Javanese are poor but proud. It is long to wait."

"Thou shalt have him, Nonna! I, too, have influence with the Sultan. A word in his ear might avail much," he declared confidently. Yet his caresses had become still more fervent.

"Couldst thou!" Nonna had thrown herself back on the pillows, her bare arms crossed behind the sleek little knot of black hair ornamented with the spreading filaments of an aigrette. She did not seem to realize how unconsciously alluring she was, in her graceful and girlish bare shoulders, in the clinging silks which followed closely the delicate lines of her figure, in her gorgeous brown eyes that were looking tenderly upon this strangely compassionate white Tuan. But she felt that he was fast losing that stern and somewhat aloof resolution with which he had come here. The tension had become electric between them; the infinitely enticing, in such a virginal figure of woman as this, would soon beget an outburst of human passion, sweeping all his fine words, all his noble intentions, away.

But it was characteristic of the hypocritical white men to talk the nobler the more guilty their thoughts, Nonna knew.

"Child! Child!—To think that thou art old enough to be married!" he gloated, caressing her yet more. "But I shall help. And if it is money——" He dug into his pocket, while Nonna heard the crisp rustle of a ten-florin note. "Bah, it is nothing!" he ejaculated vexedly. "All I have with me, but there is more—much more, if it will help."

But the rustle of that note had awakened the savage in Nonna. *This* was what he had brought—for another purpose! The white Tuan was simply lying! They all lied, only this was a new set of lies! She made no move to take the florins, for she was Nonna of the Elder Gods, now, and this was a bad man-child, who needed whipping. Should she listen him out? Let him play out his futile, if well-intentioned, farce? His real desires would soon enough break out!

He was trying to fondle and pet her now, all the same time talking nobly, un-

mindful of her disdainful reluctance: "Yes, I shall help. I'll speak to the Sultan and you shall have your prince—but—oh, what's the use?—Nonna! Nonna, little girl!—Just once—for me——" He broke down, thrusting the note into her hand, pleading, begging, conscienceless, utterly unmindful of anything now but her, her, *her!* His arm had swept around her slender waist, his lips sought her shrinking face——

It had come, the lamentable truth! "Pheu!—Hypocrite! That talks kindly but art no better than the rest of them!—*Djaga!*" Nonna repulsed him disgustingly.

There was a swift rush in the bushes; then that white man seemed to melt away backward. The white body of him was swept kicking around the shrine, horizontally between four dark and struggling coolies. He cursed once or twice, but brown hands stopped his outcry. Nonna sprang out of the shrine, for the gleam of a kris had caught her eye.

"No! Yusuf! No!" she hissed, grab-

bing his arm. "The Tuan meant well, doubtless, but he was too much for himself. He has done no evil—come!"

Taking his hand Nonna ran swiftly out of the garden. Behind them they heard a resounding splash but no outcry. The four coolies had hurled that white man unceremoniously into the Sultan's lily pond. It was a squidgy place, of vile and bottomless mud under the Victoria Regia lilies. Men sent in there to gather lotus blossoms floundered for hours in the slimy ooze of the bottom before reaching shore! The white man would not dare cry out for help. His dignity forbade that. He would get out of that pond alone and in silence, and sneak to his hotel, a loathsome thing of slime and mud.

Nonna chuckled softly. "A woman's revenge, my lord!" she murmured to Yusuf as they fled. The latter shook his head; the kris, if you asked him! But the whole grove seemed to whisper with the laughter of the Elder Gods, as Nonna and Yusuf left the garden and set their faces toward Life.

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