

# SPICY ADVENTURE STORIES



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# TRAIL TO

**D**ANE sat beside Nelda Ewart on the wide platform that served indiscriminately as bed, divan, and table, and looked at her uncomfortably. Everything seemed crazy to him—the whole expedition; the interview with the missionaries at the hill station in Nepal, where Nelda had been reared; the eight days' march with the two Gurkha soldiers and the interpreter, provided by the Bengal Government; the wild story of Colonel Ewart's survival as a hermit somewhere in Tibet, fourteen years after his abduction.

The news had been filtered to the mission, relayed from man to man, and thence to the Bengal Government. Dane, sent by the Government to investigate, had made the mission his first objective. He discovered that Nelda, brought up by the simple German people, themselves long since divorced from western life, had only a dim recollection of her father.

A child of four, she had been hidden by a native nurse when the Tibetan fanatics seized her father and bore him away—into a silence that had never been broken until the news arrived that he had turned Buddhist and still survived, a hermit in some inaccessible region of the snows.

**D**ANE had been three days on the march when Nelda appeared in his camp. She had fol-

lowed the little expedition, and refused to turn back. There was nothing to do but take her with them, as far as the K'ang, the high plateau of snows that girds the mighty tableland of Tibet. No woman could traverse that. Dane planned to leave Nelda at the last outpost of Nepal.

They had reached it that evening, a village inhabited by about twenty men and three women. From this village the mighty tableland arose, towering into the heavens. Four days' distance away was the sacred nunnery of Kwang-po, where Dane planned to begin his inquiries.

Samdup, his Tibetan guide, had shaken in his shoes when Dane made that proposition. "No man may enter the nunnery," he explained. "Nothing but female, dog, yak, hen . . . even the eagles—"

Dane was to learn more about those eagles.

And Samdup, who never spoke unadvisedly, had told Dane that Nelda and he must share the guest-house—which consisted of a single room—together.

**D**ANE had hardly spoken to the girl on the march, he had been so incensed at her wilfulness in following him. He spoke roughly now, to conceal the emotions that her dark beauty aroused in him.

Eighteen years old, mission-trained, educated, speaking English, German, Nepalese, and prob-

*They told him it was suicide to invade the strange Tibetan nunnery, but Dane had begun to love Nelda and, if in the nunnery, he could learn something of her missing father . . .*

# BEYOND

By **CLARK  
NELSON**



He picked her up in his arms and  
took to the winding stair.

ably half-a-dozen other languages, and yet reared like a hill-woman. After thirty years in Nepal, the good missionary and his wife had discarded European ways entirely.

"I'll have to send one of the Gurkhas back with you," Dane muttered. "I suppose one will do me as well as two. It's lucky the Government's sending a platoon to follow, in case my reception's not friendly. You've been a damned little fool, Nelda. How did you suppose your presence was going to help find your father?"

"I couldn't stay. I hate the mission, and I want to see him."

She had thrown off her coat of priceless furs, for the guest-house, heated by red-hot stones over glowing charcoal, was like a furnace. As she leaned forward, her girdle slipped, and the folds of her loose silken robe fell apart.

Beneath it she wore a single garment, girt in at the waist, but sheer enough to reveal the contours of her small, girlish breasts. Beneath the hem two thighs of milky whiteness tapered down to two rounded knees, and two slim calves. Then two slender ankles, reddened by the straps of her sandals.

Dane, hardened agent of the Government Service though he was, felt the gods of that ancient, devil-ridden land creep into his blood.

The girl must have seen the change in his face, for she pulled her robe together.

"I suppose I shall be an old maid, since there are no white men in my country, and I will not marry a native."

Dane knew it was artlessness, knew, too, how helpless Nelda

could be, should he take her in his arms. His heart was hammering a brisk tattoo against his ribs. He was glad she would be going back with the Gurkha in the morning.

"Lie down and try to sleep," he said shortly, and went out of that hut.

**O**UTSIDE, the wind from the K'ang cut like a knife. A little distance away Dane saw his Gurkhas and the interpreter crouched over a fire. He paced along the row of squalid huts, trying to shake off the memory of Nelda.

A figure beckoned to him from the entrance of a hut. Dane turned, and saw that it was a Tibetan girl. As he approached, he saw that she was about eighteen years of age, plump, pretty in the native way, and laughing as if existence were the most amusing thing in the world.

Two slender arms went up. Two brown hands caught Dane's shoulders.

"Ah, white man, would you like to talk with me awhile?" she asked. "All my six husbands are on the high plateau, searching for our sheep, and I do not like to be alone."

Her friendliness, her utter unconcern did not astonish Dane. He knew that polyandry was the custom in that district, where there were nearly a dozen men for every woman.

He laughed, a little uneasily.

A frightened cry, a scuffling somewhere behind him cut short any reply on his part. Dane ran back toward the guest-hut, outside which a number of figures were

struggling. That cry had been Nelda's.

"It is all right; don't shoot, sahib," came the voice of one of the Gurkhas. "These dumb beasts do not understand our ways. They think that women belong to all. No harm has been done, save that I laid out one of them with my pistol butt."

But it would have taken a harder blow to stun a Tibetan. Mumbling and scowling, the fallen man arose and rejoined his companions, chattering excitedly some little distance away. Samdup, the interpreter, however, was already making matters clear.

"I'm afraid," whispered Nelda, clinging to Dane.

He put his arm about her. "I told you you were a little fool to have come here," he said. "Tomorrow morning you start back for the mission with one of the Gurkhas."

He curled up in his blankets at the base of the stone platform, listening all night to Nelda breathing above him. But he knew she wasn't sleeping any more than he was.

Yes, he would be glad when he saw the last of her in the morning.

"I WILL go to the nunnery, lord," said Samdup, "though all know that it is death for any male to enter it. Perchance the white man's magic is powerful enough to overcome the spells of the devil-women there. But assuredly they will know nothing of Ewart Sahib, or, if they know, they will not tell."

"Tell me more of this nunnery," said Dane.

"The sahib knows that it is the abode of the great Panyang Lama, the only creature of the male sex who may abide in it?"

"I've heard something about it. How many women has he?"

"They say there are a score and half a score," answered Samdup. "They are taken when infants from the villages about here, which accounts for the scarcity of women in this part of Tibet. Thus, verily, these people are like brute beasts in the manner of their lives.

"Well, sahib, these women, brought to the nunnery in infancy, worship the Panyang Lama as a god, being, as they think, the only man who exists, and a divine being sent down from heaven for them. And each new moon, for a week, they worship him with abominable rites.

"But they say, sahib, that the devil-woman who rules the nunnery, Munshing—accursed one!—possesses spells that can kill with the glance of the eye or the outstretched finger. Verily I am afraid. And yet I go to death for love of the sahib and the Government I serve."

They were toiling up the K'ang. The last valley of Napal lay behind them. In front of them was an icy wall, over which the wind swept in icy blasts. They were perhaps half-way up to the edge of the great snow-bound plateau that is Tibet. With snowshoes on their feet and ice-picks in their hands, they panted upward.

Dane looked back at Nelda, toiling bravely up that icy wall, with a Gurkha on either side of her. What a fool he had been not to have sent her home when she first

appeared at his camp in the lowlands!

It was Samdup, the interpreter, who had explained that it would be impossible now for Nelda to return. The cowardly Tibetans of the Nepal border, in their greediness for women, would dog her and the Gurkha, murder him while asleep, and bear the girl away to some village where her fate would be viler than the imagination could picture.

**A**LL day they toiled upward, stopping only twice, in places sheltered by overhanging rocks, to drink scalding tea with a scum of melted butter, and to snatch a few mouthfuls of cold mutton. Once they were on the K'ang itself, there would be caves; there might even be villages, but it was essential that they should reach the summit before nightfall, lest a storm send avalanches of snow hurtling down upon them.

The sun, glaring weirdly out of a bank of heavy snowclouds, was dipping into the horizon when at last they stood upon the summit, breathless. The wind, roaring like a thousand fiends, sent up scurries of snow from a surface that never thawed, even in summer. Far beneath them they could see the warm valleys of Nepal. In front was nothing but an icy desolation.

Samdup touched Dane on the arm. "See, sahib!" he said, pointing northward. "It is the nunnery of the Yanyang Lama and of Munshing, the accursed woman!"

Far in the distance a huge building looking like a serrated peak, stood clear against the northern sky.

"It is death for us all," wailed the interpreter. "Yet I go at your behest, sahib."

"Meanwhile," said Dane, "let's make a camp in the shelter of those rocks."

The grunting Gurkhas flung down their packs upon the hard-frozen snow. In the lee of the docks a layer of yak-manure, their principal burden, was laid and ignited, and the kettle set on to boil. They huddled in their sheepskins, drinking the eternal tea, their eyes streaming from the acrid smoke. Dane lit his pipe. Nelda cuddled against him for warmth. The low voices of the two Gurkhas broke the silence of the night. Overhead, stars, brighter than any stars seen elsewhere, filled the heavens.

"You were a fool to come," Dane said to Nelda. "I was a bigger fool to let you come."

She nestled against him. "Don't be angry with me, Dane," she pleaded. "I have never seen a white man, except Herr Osthuizen and his wife."

She began sobbing desolately against his shoulder.

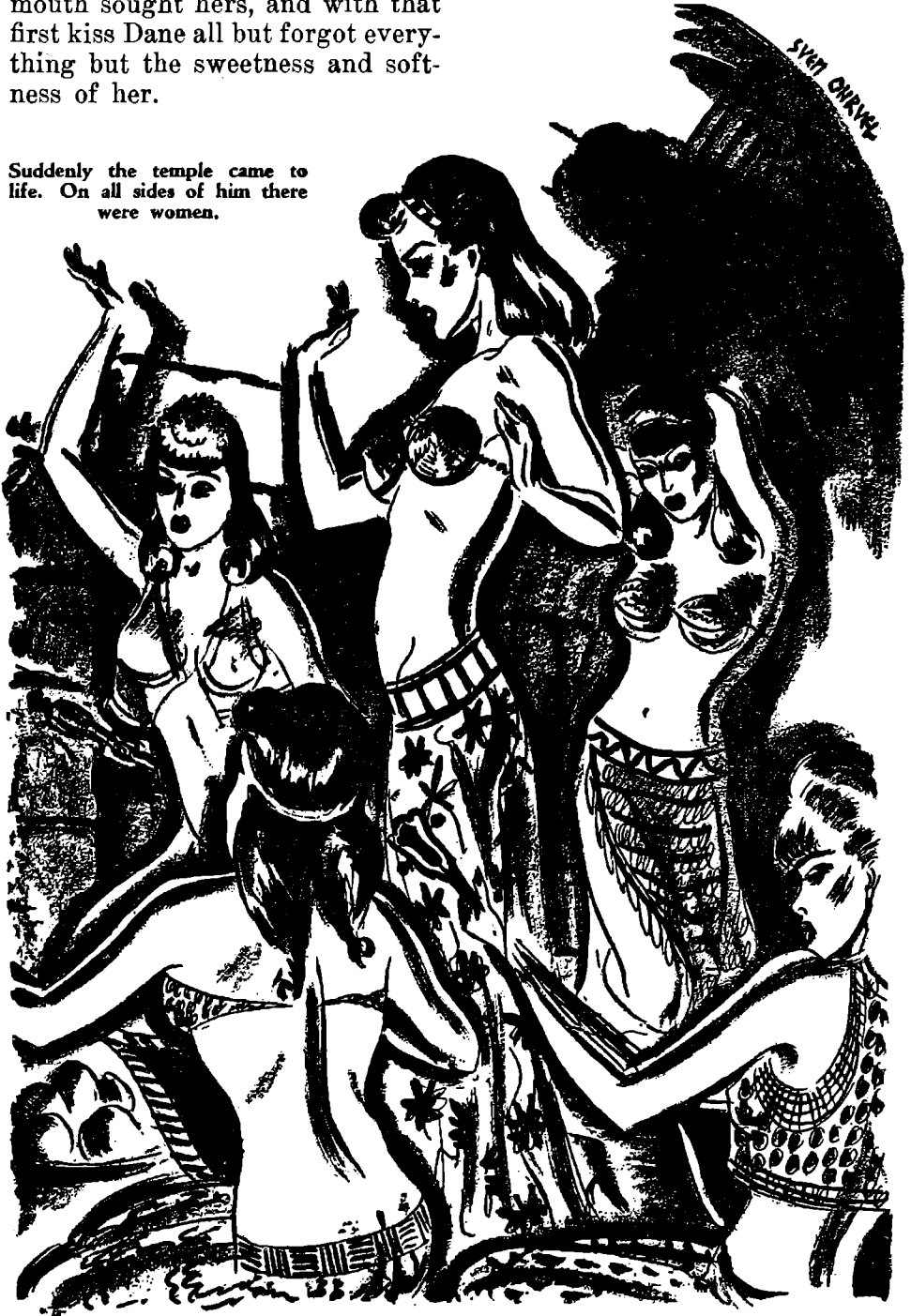
**D**ANE'S heart beat hard again as he felt her cheek against his own, and her arms about his neck. In the icy night, in the fantasy of their situation, he felt reality slipping away from him; he was conscious only of the warmth of her presence.

She was shivering, despite her fur coat, and Dane opened his sheepskin robe, and they gave warmth to each other. Yes, but the soft, yielding curves of her seemed to draw him more closely to her, and he could feel the rounded orbs

of her breasts pressed hard against him, and heard the caught, in-drawn breaths. Instinctively his mouth sought hers, and with that first kiss Dane all but forgot everything but the sweetness and softness of her.

His hands groped and found the smooth, warm, surface of her back. She clung to him tightly, and her

Suddenly the temple came to life. On all sides of him there were women.



mouth closed on his with a pressure that seemed to draw all sentience from him, save of her proximity.

"Is this wrong, as I have been taught?" she whispered. "When shall I ever again meet a man of my own race?"

Something told him, if he remained strong now and protected her the black gods of Tibet could never overcome him. For, like most white men who have spent years along the northern Indian border, he had half-consciously assimilated much of the Indian lore.

Warm in the bitter cold, he pressed her more closely in his arms, feeling her pliant in his tightening arms. . . .

Then yells, shots, scuffling brought him abruptly to himself.

Dim figures were rushing toward him through the darkness. He saw the two Gurkhas stumble and go down under thudding clubs. As he reached frantically for his revolver, three figures leaped at him.

Women, nude save for skins about their waists—he could see the curves of their swaying breasts. A club thudded hard upon his forehead, and he sank down into a pit of blackness.

**D**ANE was faintly conscious of being carried through what seemed an eternity of blackness. Again he grew unconscious, to become aware later of a stabbing light that pierced his eyeballs to the brain. Then rest—merciful rest, and silence.

It was the memory of Nelda, flooding back through his consciousness, that brought him to

himself. Overhead he could hear the swoop of mighty pinions. Dane opened his eyes, and a black harpy swept so close above him that he could smell the fetid odor of its foul body and wings.

He was lying upon a high, stone platform on the summit of a low hill. He was lying amid a debris of bones, picked white and clear—human bones, the bones of those who had died and had been given to the eagles, in accordance with the Tibetan practice. His body was strapped tightly to the stones, but, with devilish ingenuity, his captors had left his arms and legs free, in order that his torture might be prolonged.

High overhead a score of eagles were circling in the sky, circling, swooping, watching him, as if discerning something formidable in this corpse that moved, and yet impelled by their hunger toward their feast.

A huge black bird swooped downward and dived at Dane's eyes. Dane flung up his arm and struck at the gaping beak and little, avid eyes. With a whir, the air-devil passed, and another swooped, and, as it passed, its beak tore a red ribbon of flesh from Dane's bare thigh.

Another and another swooped. Dane's clenched fist struck one of them, glancing as lightly as in a dream off the feathered body. The eagles were growing bolder, or more frantic. A tuft of hair was torn from Dane's head; the under-clothing which his captors had left was torn to tatters by the rending beaks and claws. A cry, more of horror than of pain escaped Dane's



lips as a beak sank deep into his forearm.

After that, Dane seemed to fight through an eternity of nightmare, straining desperately but unavailingly to break the bonds that held him. His strength was failing him. Just a few minutes more, and he would be lying there, blinded and helpless, to be devoured alive, rent into strips of writhing tissue.

**T**HEN suddenly the birds retreated, circling high into the sky. A figure was standing by the platform, and at first Dane thought it was Samdup or one of the Gurkhas. Then there came the slashing of his bonds, and he sat up, to look into the face of the village woman.

"Ohé, so I came just in time, white man!" she exclaimed in Nepalese. "A little while, and there would have been no more left of you than those bones."

Dane leaped from the platform, forgetful of his cramped body and aching head. "Where is she, the woman I brought with me?" he demanded.

"Ohé, do not search for her! She has been taken to the nunnery where the Panyang Lama and Munshing, the holy woman, rule. And none who pass this way may ever return. As for the black soldiers whom you brought with you, they are already food for the eagles. But I shall take you back to my home, and you shall be my chief husband, and the other shall serve you."

"I must get on," Dane muttered in English. But the woman understood.

"You will go? You will go to your death then. Ohé, and you will

never be mine until the Wheel of rebirth has made its cycle. Come, pay me for the life that I have given back to you!"

Dane stared at her speechlessly. All about him were the eternal snows, overhead the eagles were whirling, swooping angrily, with outspread wings and gaping beaks; in front of him stood the village girl, smiling invitingly.

She pulled the heavy sheepskin coat from her shoulders, and drawing nearer until her plump breasts brushed him, she took him by the hands. And nothing of all this phantasmagoria was real, except the presence of her. The black gods who control the Wheel of life were shrieking in Dane's ears, and filling him with a terrible fear.

**A**FTER that he was barely conscious of staggering on, through nights and days, under a huge revolving sun and a white, leering moon, foodless, toward that mighty fane that gradually grew clearer, nearer. Afterward he remembered that the village woman had given him her sheepskin coat, without which he must have perished in the cold. The sun was half-way down the west when Dane awoke from a daze, and saw that he was approaching the nunnery at last.

He pulled himself together. The witchcraft of Tibet was strong—he half believed in it—but he must save Nelda Ewart from whatever fate those devils had in store for her.

Dane looked up and saw the new moon like a feather in the sky, and remembered that Samdup had told him about the rites in the temple.

A thrill of horror ran through him, and suddenly he knew that he was sane again, and master of the black gods that ruled the land.

Despite his anxiety he could not repress his stupefaction at the sight of the great nunnery. High on the plain it rose, immense, portentous, evidently the work of ages, for it was as large as a king's palace, and was built entirely of squared blocks of stone.

In the center was a massive pile, square in shape, with a wing thrust out on either side. Above the central structure was an enormous, rotund thing that gradually took shape as Dane approached, until he saw that it was a huge head.

It was a stone head of the Buddha, looking like a small dome, and in the gray light of the afternoon, instead of the reposeful smile of the Perfected One, it seemed to leer like some vulturine god.

Dane stumbled on, too weary to consider entering by subterfuge. Unarmed, helpless, he knew that he could trust only to his native wit, and perhaps the Abbess's fears of offending the representative of the Indian Raj.

The great bronze-bound doors of the temple stood wide open. Dane entered. At first he could see nothing; then he perceived the enormous figure of the Buddha facing him, at the end of the vast hall, the roof of which was level with its shoulders, so that the head protruded into the sky.

Lights burned before it, banners hung from the roof, partly obscuring the vast interior. The temple appeared empty.

But somewhere a gong was ham-

mering monotonously, and somewhere Dane could hear the reiterated "*Om Mani Padmi Hum*," the Buddhist invocation, repeated by women's voices.

Dane advanced to the altar before the idol—and suddenly the temple came to life. From all sides they came rushing in upon him, a mob of women in saffron robes.

**T**HEY tore at his clothing, shrieking like fiends, clawing at him, dragging him this way and that, their yellow faces distorted with maniacal rage. Dane was losing the last vestiges of his attire. His coat was gone, his flannel shirt had been torn from his back, his underclothing was in rags.

And then, as suddenly as it had begun, the attack ceased. Suddenly the enraged females drew off from him and prostrated themselves upon their faces in a ring about him.

Dane gaped about him, completely at a loss. His face was bleeding from the scratches of feminine nails, his underclothes were shreds; he stooped and picked up his sheepskin coat to cover his all but nudity.

They were clawing about him, kissing his feet, murmuring what sounded like blandishments, and Dane was utterly dumbfounded at the change.

But a Tibetan woman in saffron robes, looking about five-and-thirty years of age, came down the aisle toward him. She stopped and watched him, smiling.

"Please come this way, Mr. Dane; there seems to have been a misunderstanding," she said. "I

am Munshing the Abbess; I have been expecting you."

Her perfect English, her knowledge of his name puzzled Dane still more. In utter bewilderment, he stepped over the bodies of the groveling women, and followed the Abbess past the huge Buddha, into a very European room.

There was European furniture, a writing-desk, a fine Bokhara rug upon the floor; there were clocks—four or five of them; and there was Munshing, looking at Dane with a smile on her comely face.

"The fools," she laughed. "They thought the Panyang Lama was the only man in the world, and you have undeceived them! Yes, I heard that you were coming to see Colonel Ewart. He contrived to send some message in a moment of aberration. But he will never return. He has adopted the life of a hermit, hoping to attain the state of a Boddhisatva, with only one more incarnation before reaching Nirvana.

"It is unfortunate that you brought his daughter on your wild quest, for it is the rule that none who enters the sacred nunnery of Kwang-po may ever return to the outside world. Still, there is solace here."

Still smiling, Munshing spread her hands with a slight gesture, that stripped the saffron robe from her body to the hips, displaying a profusion of feminine beauty that, despite his weakness, set Dane's heart to pumping wildly.

**M**UNSHING laughed melodiously. "The fate that reared me in an Indian mission brought me here twelve years ago," she said.

"I am a woman, and the Panyang Lama grows old and stupid, and I am tired of sharing his companionship with my foolish girls. You shall stay with me, Dane. He shall join Colonel Ewart in the subterranean chamber, in darkness for the rest of his life, and you shall become the Panyang Lama!"

She came nearer, swaying as she moved, radiating an indescribable power of femininity that made Dane's senses swoon. He knew that if she overcame him, he would lose his soul forever, and, with a mighty effort, he thrust her away.

"I have come for Colonel Ewart's daughter," he cried. "Where is she?"

At that moment the gongs and conches in the temple broke out in a mad, discordant medley, and, mingled with it the screams of the women.

"Damn you, you witch, where is she?" cried Dane. "Tell me, or—!"

His hands dropped to his sides. For the life of him he couldn't move an inch. He saw Munshing's mocking face through a white haze.

"Ah, you will think better, Dane," she laughed.

She clapped her hands, and two of the temple girls entered and prostrated themselves before her. She spoke to them in Tibetan, which Dane didn't understand.

But, as they moved away, he found himself following them against his will; his feet seemed to drag his reluctant body, and all the while Munshing's silvery laughter tinkled in his ears.

Past the huge statue, before

*(Continued on page 123)*

# Trail to Beyond

[Continued from page 97]

which, in the dim light of a hundred butter-lamps, a score of girls lay prostrate, down a flight of stone steps apparently running beneath the statue, down another flight and along a stone corridor, into an open cell.

Upon the threshold Dane strove in vain to stay himself. The hypnotic spell persisted. In another moment the door had clanged upon him, and he was alone in utter darkness.

**T**HE moment he was alone, the spell lifted. Dane hurled himself madly against the door. It did not yield an inch. Again and again, in a fury of desperation. For he remembered *this was the night of the new moon, when Nelda would be initiated into the abominable rites of the debased Tibetan Buddhists.*

Again and again, till he sank back, hopeless and helpless. And hours seemed to go by in the blackness, while Dane agonized there.

He knew that he loved Nelda; her childishness, her helplessness, the sweetness of her filled him with horror at the fate reserved for her. If he couldn't save her, he meant to die, but first to break Munshing's hypnotic spell and take her with him to black *Avitchi*, the lowest Buddhist hell.

Suddenly he heard a key turn in the heavy lock. A voice whispered to him in the darkness. Dane stepped forward, caught at the

form of the girl who crouched before him, whispering in Tibetan.

Dane understood nothing, but he realized that she was worshiping him as a god, felt her hands patting his chest in wonder. And, with a sort of telepathic insight, he knew what was passing in her mind. Another god had come, another man-god to supplant the Panyang Lama.

Dane put his arm about her and walked from the cell. He felt her supple body clinging to him; she was faint from emotion, dreaming of heaven knew what treachery whereby she might supplant Mushing and win Dane's love.

Dane knew the infinite instability of women, untamed and untrammelled by civilization; it was as if he had understood her speech. Gently he drew her up the lower flight of stairs. At the top, where there was a faint reflection from the butter-lamps above, he looked into her face.

She pointed at a door set in the rear of the base of the enormous idol.

From the temple above came the monotonous chant of the worshipers. But from high overhead, *from within the idol* came the wild, maenad scream of women.

**D**ANE run up, panting as the stairs seemed to circle perpetually, ran up in utter darkness, hearing faintly the clash of cymbals and the booming of the gongs below. Overhead that maenad screaming was growing wilder. Not far now—not far now—Ah God, the scream of a white girl, of Nelda!

Suddenly a beam of dazzling

light shone through the darkness. The stairs terminated in a platform, illumined, not by any interior light, but by a light without. Dane realized that he had reached the Buddha's head. That light shone through the enormous eye, and it was nothing but the light of the stars, blinding after the darkness.

From within the chamber came that wild screaming. Dane flung himself against the door; it gave, and he found himself in a round chamber, which was the Buddha's head.

Softest rugs and divans filled it. Dane didn't glance at them. Instantly his eyes took in the occupants. There were four girls and a man—and the Abbess, Munshing, seated on a low footstool, watching. . . .

The man was tall, slender, robed in saffron, and on his face was one of the devil's masks of the Tibetans, a hideous thing that gave him the very aspect of a devil.

He was releasing a Tibetan girl, who was screaming in ecstasy, as if she had been drugged. Two others were dragging Nelda forward.

They had stripped her completely, save for a tenuous garment about her hips, while she fought furiously, screaming—screaming Dane's name! The masked devil who was the Panyang Lama was bending forward, the mask a leer of hideousness.

And Munshing was watching. . . . As Dane leaped into the room, Munshing was the first to see him. She sprang to her feet as if to run between him and Nelda.

**D**ANE bounded past her. He drove his fist into the Panyang Lama's midriff, doubling him up with pain. He shouted like a madman. The Lama staggered back, as if bewildered, glanced right and left, and bolted for a door in the rear.

Munshing was at Dane's side, clinging to him. He thrust her away, leaped after the fleeing devil before he could lock the door, and followed him into a hollow, slippery bowl.

The Panyang Lama turned with a howl of imprecation. He struck at Dane who closed with him. As they fought, Dane realized that the bowl was the Buddha's ear. Far beneath, through the aperture in the temple roof, Dane could see the body of the huge statue, and the prone worshippers, black dots upon the ground in the faint light of the butter-lamps.

The Lama was fighting desperately, but it was Dane who was the madman. He grappled him with both hands about the throat, lifted him, lifted him. . . . He heard the weakening whistles come through the constricted windpipe, saw the eyes glaring at him through the

slits in the hideous mask, and lifted him—lifted him. . . .

“For God’s sake—!”

A white man’s voice, the words of an Englishman or American behind the mask! Suddenly Dane knew! In horror he released his hold. The Lama stumbled, tried to straighten himself, and, reeling, plunged over the edge of the slippery ear, down—three hundred feet down, whirling to his death upon the ground beneath.

But, as he fell, the mask slipped, and, in the fear-distorted features behind it, Dane knew he had found the man he had come to seek.

Sick with horror, he turned back. There were now three figures in the room—Nelda, swooning on the floor, and the girl who had freed him, standing over the dead body of Munshing, the Abbess, a dripping knife in her hand.

“NO, do not take off his mask,” said Dane to the officer of the Gurkha platoon, which, guided by the village woman, had followed hard upon his footsteps. “Let him be buried in it, since otherwise his soul would have to pass through even more hells than it is bound for, according to the Buddhist belief.”

Later Dane said to Nelda, “Your father died years ago, and was buried in some place unknown. The story that he was still living was untrue. Now I shall take you back.”

“To the Mission?” asked Nelda. And she clung to him, whimpering. “Don’t take me there,” she whispered.

Then she smiled happily, for in Dane’s face she saw her answer.