

At length the boldest shuffled forward. The others followed timidly. They appeared terrified in the extreme. It was as though they had believed their master to be invulnerable. And he was dead. Possibly they conjectured that he had been slain by an agency more than mortal. The group of Chinese clustered about the altar, whispering, regarding the body of Chung. Apparently they had not bethought themselves of the foreigner who was held a prisoner in the temple.

O'Shea rose in his shadowy corner and moved wearily past the Painted Joss. It was better to have the thing finished. He came upon the Chinese like an apparition. Their wits were so fuddled that the sight of him had the effect of another shock. If he had been powerful enough to slay the mighty Chung, then the demons were his allies. Perceiving their dazed condition, he forebore to shoot, and advanced abreast of the altar. The path to the doorway was clear, but he had not the strength to make a run for it. The hope of life, miraculously restored to him, was in the possibility that they might stand and gaze at him a little longer.

He had walked a half-dozen steps farther when one of the crowd yelled. The spell was broken. They raced after him like wolves. He turned and steadied himself and pulled trigger until the revolver was empty. The onset was checked and thrown into bloody confusion. O'Shea had summarily convinced them that whether or not the demons were in league with him, the devil was in this ready weapon of his.