

## JAVA HEAD

the advancing figure, heard a long fluttering breath behind her. Perhaps Nettie Vollar had died of fright. The terror in her own brain dried up before an overwhelming realization — she had betrayed herself to the principle of evil. She was lost. Her thoughts were at once incredibly rapid and entirely vivid, logical: Edward Dunsack, ruined, in China; herself blinded, confused, destroyed in America. Yesterday she had held him powerless with the mere potency of her righteousness; but now she had no strength.

There was a loathsome murmur from his dusty lips. He intended to kill her, to mar and spoil her throat, a degradation forbidden by Confucius, an eternal disfigurement. This filled her with a renewed energy of horror. . . . Here there was none but a feeble woman to hear her if she called. She rose mechanically, a hand on the table; Taou Yuen saw Nettie Vollar's deathly pallid face rolled awkwardly from the pillow, and the bowl of opium. There were twenty or more pills. Without hesitation, even with a sense of relief, she swept the contents of the bowl into her palm. The effort of swallowing so many hard particles was almost convulsive and followed with a nauseous spasm.

Exhausted by mental effort she sank into a chair and a dullness like smoke settled over her. The figure of Edward Dunsack retreated to an infinite distance. The smoke moved in a great steady volume — the eternal and changeless Tao, without labor or desires, without. . . . Hatred requited with virtue . . . attracting all honor — mounting higher and higher from the consuming passions, the seething black lives of her immeasurable fall.