

JAVA HEAD

processes again faded. With her right arm across the supine body and enveloping the face in her left sleeve, a single twist and Nettie Vollar would choke in a cloud of thick satin made gay with unfading flowers and the embroidered symbol of long life. She felt her body grow rigid with purpose when the sound of a footfall below held her motionless in an unreasoning dread.

It was not heavy, yet she was certain that it was not the woman's. A blur of voices drifted up to her, the dejected feminine tone and a thin querulous demand for surprise. Taou Yuen turned cold as stone; the sensation of oppressive danger increased until it seemed as if she, and not Nettie Vollar, were strangling. There was a profound stillness, then a shuffling tread on the stair, and Edward Dunsack entered, entered but stood without advancing, his back against a closed door.

Even since yesterday he had noticeably wasted, there were muscles of his face that twitched continuously; his hands, it seemed to her, writhed like worms. He said nothing, but stared at her with a fixed glittering vision; all his one time worship — it had been so much — was devoured in the hatred born in the Ammidon library. Frozen with apprehension she sat without movement; her face, she felt, as still as a lacquered mask.

To her astonishment — she had forgotten Nettie Vollar's existence — a shaken voice from the bed demanded.

"Uncle Edward, what's come over you! Don't you see Mrs. Ammidon? Oh —" Her speech rose in a choked exclamation. Edward Dunsack had turned the key and was crossing the room with a dark twisted face, his eyes stark and demented. Taou Yuen, swung round toward