

"Billy, do you know where the ruined temple of Muk Ru is? It stands in the middle of a thick jungle, where the minra and the snake-weed grow. They'll tell you it's haunted, Billy, and don't you laugh at them, don't you laugh. I laughed at them when they told me. They couldn't scare me with their heathen story. They said that in the early days the high priest Ram had killed the dancing girl of the Punja Bakru when she came there to worship, and since then no one has passed through the gates of the ruined temple and not gone mad. I laughed at them, Billy, when they told me. They couldn't scare me with their heathenish story. They couldn't—"

I saw that O'Hean was becoming excited, so I tried to change the subject by asking him to pass me the decanter. He filled my glass and his hand shook like an old man with the palsy. He took up the decanter, which was about half full, and throwing back his head drank the remaining half almost at a swallow. Then he placed it on the table with a crash and turning, cursed the waiter roundly for not bringing him a full one. The waiter looked at me inquiringly and I raised my eyebrows slightly. He took the decanter and noiselessly left the room. O'Hean nervously lighted the cigar which I passed to him, and with a gravity that comes only from old age or strong drink, began wiping off the liquor he had spilt on the sleeve of his coat. No sooner had the waiter returned with the filled decanter than O'Hean began his steady sip, sip, sip, and continued for at least a quarter of an hour.

"I went out to the Temple of Mak Ru, Billy, about dusk. Were you ever in the jungle about dusk? Way in deep, where the light just filters through the green tangle and everything is still, where even the trees don't seem to sound in the wind, but just wave and wave? You wouldn't like the looks of the temple, Billy. I didn't like it. It's all fallen in, and the moss grows over the idols on the gate. Even the little creek that runs over the rocks by the side of the temple doesn't make any sound, but just runs and runs. I didn't want to go inside, but they weren't going to scare me with their heathen story. But I was afraid to go in, Billy, I was afraid to go in."

I'll admit that O'Hean had gotten on my nerves by this time, and I tried to persuade him to take a walk with me, down Broadway. He didn't seem to hear me, but kept on in the same monotonous drawl, his blood-shot eyes shifting now to one side of the room,