



AT the door of the igloo Creg paused. Under the full moon every detail of the snowy landscape was sharply defined. The shadow cast by his dogs and the light sled seemed enlarged infinitely, and Creg did not want to be discovered.

With an alertness born of years in the Eskimo country, he crept again to the sides of the low hut and peered cautiously around it, toward the sleeping village beyond.

Not a moving thing was apparent, and he returned to the door with a sudden lift of anticipation that set his mind aglow.

Within, kneeling in devotion before the altar fire, Teetsa, priestess of Tahm, worshiped while she waited the coming of her love.

Around the walls odd weapons hung in simple symbolism above crude paintings which represented Tahm, god of the northern lights in many moods.

“So my Teetsa wastes her care upon a name while her true lover waits to fly with her to love,” The watching man spoke in subdued raillery, and the girl sprang up, startled.

“David”—her low voice trembled with unwonted tones—“I ask Tahm to forgive his priestess and bless her love.”

Creg’s blue eyes danced with humor, and there was the ring of careless courage in his answer. “I come of a race which needs no gods to bless its love. Come, Teetsa, my dogs are restless, and the moon is making mountains of their shadows.”

You saw no one? Does Lashkar sleep?”

“Soundly, Teetsa; he is dead with sleep to-night.”

For the last time the little priestess stooped to replenish the sacred fire, and Creg watched her happily.

She was beautiful to a degree unusual among her people. There was a delicacy of mold in her thin, straight lips, a fineness of line in the dusky contour of her cheek that suggested the presence of a foreign strain softening the harsh blood of her Eskimo heritage. Her deep black eyes shone with strange golden lights as she bent above her altar, and the mass of glossy black hair falling about her shoulders was richly silky.

“Tahm grant that we are far away,” she whispered—“too far for Lashkar’s curse when morning comes.”

“White men are not subject to Lashkar’s curse, Teetsa, and they can manage,

regardless of Tahm. Come, girl, the northern lights are burning.”

“David”—her gaze was tenderly fearful as she faced him—“do not make fun of Tahm. You have heard of the madness he sends, and Lashkar is his mightiest priest. His curse is death.”

They left the altar in silence, and Creg arranged the robes about the girl with care, for he meant to drive swiftly that night.

Scarcely had the dogs bent to the harness with a long, low whine when Teetsa spoke.

“Lashkar knows we are gone,” she said with a sudden tremor of fear, and Creg laughed amusedly.

“Not a bit of it, Teetsa,” he said gaily. “The old boy’s asleep, and you needn’t worry. He’s only a native priest, anyhow.”

To run in long strides behind good dogs, aided by the speed of a sled, is a pleasure. If one carries some precious burden in his sled, the pleasure becomes a keen joy, and there is an exhilaration which lifts the imagination until it flies like the spring wind. Such was Creg’s feeling as he urged his team forward and felt the pull of the sled beneath his guiding hand.

He had boasted that he owned the swiftest set of dogs north of the circle, and now, as his great huskies ran, the white leader alert to the slightest word of his master, that boast seemed true.

The squat cluster of snow covered mounds, marking the village from which he fled, was lost in the expanse of leveling crystal, that glittered like diamond chips beneath the wheeling aurora.

Far to the left, beyond a broad field of bluish ice upon which the moonlight shone brilliantly clear, the deep toned Arctic roared its savage symphony, waking the vast silence with murmurous cadences.

Ten minutes after the white man had started his flight, Lashkar, the chief priest of

Tahm, paused before the door of his temple and peered in at the deserted altar.

That he had not expected to see Teetsa was evident in the vindictive set of his hard, flat features. The light in his odd piercing eyes was savagely venomous like the darting beadiness of an experienced old snake, while the heavy ivory ornament fastened to his lower lip gave his mouth a walruslike appearance of cruelty.

After one swift glance within he straightened, and his arms rose toward the bannered northern lights in a gesture of supplication.

Simultaneously his blunt fur clad feet began a weird shuffle in the packed snow, while short guttural words fell from his misshapen mouth in a chaotic chant.

The mystery of the Orient has long held the mind of man questioning, perplexed, but behind the unseen forces born in the icy vastness of the north lay another barrier, more impenetrable, more appalling, before the human soul.

At the same moment that Lashkar’s first fierce word broke from his lips, Teetsa, child of the solitude, sat suddenly erect with a little cry, while her eyes were fixed upon the space just above the lead dog’s head, and her hand reached appealingly toward her lover’s arm.

“David,” she called. “David. Lashkar has spoken. The curse of Tahm is on us!”

The words of themselves awoke no terror in Creg, but he could not mistake the tense fear in Teetsa’s tone.

“Why, little fire-girl,” he stooped to say, “we are far from Lashkar now. Why do you think he has spoken?”

“I have seen the shadow-hand going before us.” Her answer fell in awed whispers from lips half stiff with fear.

“I saw nothing. Sleep, little sweetheart, your nerves are over tense to-night. In three days we will sit before the fire in Carson’s

cabin. No shadow-hand goes there, for we are white.”

“Tahm knows no race when he is angry. We are cursed, for his altar priestess has defiled his holy place.”

“Poor little superstitious girl,” Creg murmured in English. Then, to the still excited woman, he added: “Trust in the God of white men, Teetsa; He is said to be strongest of gods.”

She did not answer, and Creg gave his attention once more to his dogs. They were running low, their heavily muscled legs reaching out with an easy grace that spun miles behind them.

Toward morning Creg halted and built a fire, while Teetsa fed the hungry dogs, and set out food for herself and her lover.

When they had eaten the sleeping bag was arranged.

Creg was nearly asleep when Teetsa’s little hand crept out and closed about his fingers. He took it in his, murmuring some drowsy tenderness, and would have slept, but she spoke to him earnestly, and he could not ignore the warm, low melody of her voice in which a plaintive undertone of fear still sounded.

“Beloved,” she asked softly, “you trust in Teetsa’s love?”

With all my life.” He turned toward her, smiling.

“Tahm is angry, and the curse of Lashkar has never been without its full effect,” she hastened. “There is but one thing as powerful, the love of Teetsa. It alone may serve to save you. Oh, David!”—and her words were suddenly vital with passion “I am afraid for you, my beloved!”

With a careless laugh, sweet to her ear, he drew the girl to him and kissed her trembling lips.

“You forget, my girl, your lover is white,” he answered, and, still holding the little head against his shoulder, he fell asleep.

How long he was asleep he did not know, nor was he quite sure why he sat suddenly erect, a sharp, hot pain in his chest.

In the first moment of waking consciousness he fancied the pain had been caused by strange, wide eyes that had been staring down upon him.

As his mind cleared, he scorned the foolish idea even while he asked himself what had caused it. Instinctively he had reached for his rifle, and now, as he sat searching the snow beyond his feet for an enemy he still strangely expected to see, Teetsa sat up and her hand gripped his arm.

“Eyes of ice that burn you in sleep feel no bullet.” she said with a sharp comprehending look into his face. “Do not shoot.”

Creg stared at her in astonishment, too startled by her speech to answer.

“I am Teetsa.” she continued as though the repetition assured her. “My love cannot be weaker than the unseen things.”

Despite the pain still throbbing in his lungs, Creg laughed. “Obviously”—he answered her remark lightly as he threw aside his gun—“there are no unseen things to be stronger.”

She did not attempt to explain, but when Creg had closed his eyes again. Teetsa still lay staring into the brilliant sky; while her diminutive face was drawn in unaccustomed lines of resolution.

Several times that night Creg was roused from sleep with an increasingly strong sense of persistent eyes upon him. At first he had not been sure of anything, but as the repetitions of his feeling came, a clearer impression grew until he was able to recall the appearance of the cold orbs that obsessed him.

They were without an accompanying face, and in their icy stare he fancied light flared as though a flame burned beneath a crystal sheet of ice.

By the time he was ready to resume his

journey his nerves were over-taut, but he ascribed it to sleeplessness.

If Teetsa understood, she gave no sign, though he noticed that she watched him intently as he harnessed the dogs.

That day he drove his team with unwonted severity, and their utmost effort seemed far too slow. He was continually imagining an enemy close behind him, but whenever he turned to scan the plain only his own dim track was visible.

When he made camp again he was unaccountably reluctant to go to bed, and Teetsa spoke at last, a subdued pathos in her usually happy voice as though she could no longer refrain from revealing her thought.

“David,” she said, coming to him and slipping her arms about his neck, her cheek pressed against his, “to-night Teetsa sleeps with her hands upon your heart. Surely they still hold power to heal the burn of the ice-bound eyes.”

He was unwillingly compelled to admit to himself that she had touched upon the cause of his restlessness, but he could not bring himself to admit that her belief was accurate.

“All right,” he agreed, half laughing; “but, of course, the whole business is silly. What is the shadow-hand, Teetsa?”

She hid her face against his shoulder, and her muffled answer came as though she spoke against her better judgment. “It is the hand of the spirit-guide. It points to the gates of death, beloved.”

At last Creg slept, but he had scarcely closed his eyes when he started up with a cry and gripped his gun.

Teetsa was alert in an instant, her lashes gemmed with tears and a new rich note of passion in her voice.

“Beloved,” she said quickly, “I will dance to Tahm, and my dance will please him, for Teetsa moves even as Tahm moves. See, I will dance till even Lashkar’s word be

trampled dead.”

Before he could gather his excited nerves to demand explanation of the wild panic that had roused him, Teetsa was standing in the snow at the blanket end, her tiny feet setting a fine white cloud adrift as they began their dance.

By the time he was composed she was swirling in swift circles, and Creg watched in silent wonder.

Heedless of the bitter cold she had slipped her garments from her shoulders, and her body shone in the radiance of the moon with the suddenly animated life of an old ivory statue. Her arms were out in an expression of appeal toward the northern lights, and their undulating motion was intense with grace.

Above her upturned face the great aurora wheeled in vivid green, yellow, and red across the arc of a black sky.

Her flying hair spread about her in a free sheen, while she chanted a barbaric melody, keeping the sentient beauty of her body’s motion in rhythm to its swift, impassioned cadences.

As abruptly as she had begun the dance ended, and Teetsa threw herself into Creg’s arms, her gasping breath warming his cheek while she showered him with kisses.

“Oh, my man,” she sobbed, “I have seen. It is upon you the curse is come. I will not have it so. No, for my love is clean, and I can fight even the gods to have it live. David, David, the war for your soul must be all mine! I am only a woman, and I am weak, but my love is strong. Beloved, see I will keep them back. I—I, Teetsa, will not be robbed of love.”

To Creg most of what she said seemed without meaning, but he was too swept with the passion of her clinging arms to think, and there had come a sudden surcease from the pain again filling his chest with darts of flame.

“It is gone,” she whispered as he answered her kisses—“the pain is gone? Ah, I

knew I could do it. See, I will always be here, my lips shall wash away the burn of the unseen eyes with the dew of my youth. My hands will keep guard with their life over my man. David, oh, David, I love you!"

Sleep was gone from him, however, for try as he might the dread of that fearful awakening, lungs feeling as though they were filled with fire, kept him staring into the sky.

Beside him the girl, too, was awake, her soft little hands, warmly reassuring as a child's upon her breast.

It was with a ghastly chill at his heart that he realized suddenly sleep was no longer necessary to produce the pain. It came darting through him with lightning intensity, and he found that, wide awake as he was, he could see those eyes. Turn where he would they were opposite his—unblinking, bodyless, terrible!

"Teetsa, do you see them?" He could not repress the question that burst from him in a rush of fear, and his hand trembled as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

With all the tenderness of a mother, her voice full of the intense passion of her soul, the girl tried to reassure him, but he could not escape the staring vision.

As the night passed he grew less able to control his nerves, and at last he sprang up, his whole frame quivering, for he could have sworn that his throat was gripped in unfleshed hands.

Again it was Teetsa who freed him from the dread, but he did not even think of the weakness he displayed when he implored her to keep her tiny palms upon his throat.

"They can't reach through you, Teetsa," he kept muttering, "your hands are alive and love."

The shaggy white leader of his team sat up unnaturally and lifted his nose in a long wail toward the sinking moon.

At the cry Creg started as though he expected some more dreadful sound, and

Teetsa was too occupied with her care of David to see the splendid animal sink, forelegs spread, as though some force had crushed him to the snow.

When the team was again in harness it was crippled, for the leader had been found dead, and Creg had been unable to discover anything that could explain the dog's sudden end.

Travel became tediously slow, for he, too, was unable to stride easily beside the sled. Try as he would, his control over muscles, steeled by exercise, was gone. All day they persisted in the flight toward Carson's cabin, but their camp was less than half the distance it should have been from that of the preceding night.

Hour after hour through that sleepless vigil kept against invisible things, Creg waged a less and less reasoned war with breaking nerve. The time came when he huddled in a shivering heap, speech falling from loose jaws in tremulous uncertainty, and over him like an animate expression of love. Teetsa showered such devotion as only her untrained primitive heart could show.

The defiant indifference of the Anglo-Saxon was gone. Even the courage of the strong had faded out, leaving a cowering man who ceased even to assert the old familiar disbeliefs, and prayed for a moment's respite from staring eyes that burned.

Even the dogs seemed unnaturally stirred, for they huddled in a compact gray mass, staring with curious eyes at the girl who lavished comforting caresses upon their master.

All the lightness of expression was gone from Teetsa's face, and under her burning eyes, so deeply shot with fear, dark shadows gathered, dulling the ivory clarity of her skin. She talked incessantly, sometimes whispering passionate love, sometimes praying to her god in anguished tones, but always her thoughts were of Creg.

Gradually a new phrase appeared in her prayers, and as time crept past, leaving her lover less and less master of himself, she grew panicky, repeating it again and again.

“Not the madness of madresses, O Tahm, not that!” she cried aloud at last, and flung herself upon her knees in supplication, holding clasped hands toward the glory of color that flashed in tremulous splendor through the starry sky.

Who can describe the strange, wild thoughts that leap like ghastly creatures in a shattered brain? There is a far unknown realm of soul where human minds run riot without guide or will. Upon the threshold of that dread expanse the soul of Creg had hovered for hours, held only by the voice of Teetsa’s love. At last that too ceased to hold, for the man was driven by the fury that only the Eskimos know when their gods are called in wrath by their mightiest priests.

It had come with appalling speed. Among the natives it is said that, six days are required to destroy a grown man’s mind. In less than half that time the madness of the arctic broke into chaos within Creg. It came with a swift rage against the very things he had most loved.

Teetsa had seemed to understand from the first, and she had spent her energy untiringly against the forces whose power she adored, but it had been in vain.

With a sudden energy born of chaos Creg sprang to his feet. “By God!” he shrieked. “I’ll not be smothered by a woman while those damned eyes burn me through.”

At his cry Teetsa stood erect, her little head proudly poised, and into her figure came a dignity becoming the power of her love.

“It is come,” she said simply—“Tahm has decreed. An altar maid has defiled his holy law. Then, David, see, she will wash clean the sin and buy you peace again.”

Without a moment’s pause she raised his long, keen knife above her head, while the

dogs crowded close, whining with unwonted savagery or fear. She could not know, and in the simplicity of her faith she thought the god of her land had said that she should be torn by them.

Even then she did not hesitate, but as the knife came down her fingers relaxed and the blade fell far from her as though flung by an unseen hand.

“Lashkar!” she screamed, sinking till her head lay in the snow, her black hair spread upon its smooth surface in a sheen. “What is the curse that even my blood buys nothing back?”

The silence gave no answer. Only the great lights swept the sky in blazing color.

David had fallen back, and sat swaying monotonously to and fro, while his loose lips, wet with saliva, muttered gibberish.

Slowly the girl harnessed the restless dogs, and with infinite pains pushed Creg upon the sled.

With the resolution born of despair she spoke to the dogs, and the sled moved forward toward the distant cabin of Creg’s friend.

Alone in his little cabin, Carson turned from the scrutiny of the outer world to glance at his watch.

Outside the pallid light of those sallow northern days spread a sickly glow upon the snow. A swift wind, cold as the space beyond the stars, blew from the booming arctic. Great gray clouds sped across steely skies like driven things, and Carson instinctively heaped new wood upon his fire.

In his strong, weather-beaten old face concern was written, for he had expected Creg ten days earlier, and the prolonged absence of his friend was no longer easily explained.

As he stepped to a peg and took down the fur cap which he drew over his shaggy gray head, his favorite dog rose from before the fire, stretched tawny legs, and eyed his master interestedly.

“Shall we go after him, Beach?” The man’s deep voice was answered by a happy wag of the bushy tail.

Carson smiled grimly, his heavy brows gathering in a frown of perplexity, and strode to the door.

As he did so there came an unaccustomed noise from beyond that set the big dog rigid at his master’s heel. The low, wild whine of eager, homing dogs was heard, then a stranger sound, and Carson flung open the door with an oath.

Teetsa staggered forward, half carrying the shaking wreck of a man who jabbered incoherently, and held his hands in piteous pleading before bloodshot, sunken eyes.

“Creg, old man, in God’s name, what is it?” Carson lifted his friend to a bed against the wall and stooped over him.

For answer the wreck uttered a guttural laugh, and Carson turned with pain in his kindly eyes to stare at Teetsa.

“The madness of Tahm,” she said simply. “It came so soon.”

She sank down in weariness before the open fire, and sat in melancholy languor.

“Damned bunk!” Carson was quick with his reply. “That foolishness is for you natives. We are white men.”

“There is David,” she answered so low that he could scarcely hear, and her little hand pointed toward the man on the bed. “You have seen my people when the curse came down. See David now.”

“What happened?” Carson bent again above his friend. “Tell me everything, and if you lie, I’ll make you pay. This is no superstitious Eskimo. What made him sick?”

With a simple dignity Teetsa told him all that had occurred, touching with fine reserve upon her love, and explaining in elaborate detail about the priest, Lashkar, and his power.

“I am a child of Tahm,” she concluded, “but I have sinned. The power to help is gone.

Only the vision to see the unseen remains. Lashkar is coming here. I have seen that in the night.”

“If he does—” Carson began, then, ashamed at so slight a confession of faith in her tale of supernatural things, he stopped and began busily preparing some hot soup before the fire.

Too tired to help him, Teetsa let her head sink slowly on her arm and slept upon the floor until Carson lifted her and laid her on the other rough bed opposite Creg.

When the soup was ready, Carson fed his friend as one feeds a baby, listening carefully the while in an attempt to make some meaning of the man’s persistent chatter.

What he heard only added the more to his perplexity, for Creg was incoherently imploring Teetsa to hide the ice-bound eyes.

Toward the end of that day silence fell upon the cabin. Teetsa still slept, and Creg had sunk into a stupor from which Carson feared he might never recover.

To the man walking the floor in deep agitation there were a host of unanswerable questions which came unbidden and would not be still. Was Teetsa’s story true? Could such a thing exist as the power of a native priest to bring madness with his incantations to a false god?

Carson was not a religious man, and he had never paid much attention to any god, but now, under the anxiety about Creg, he found himself, again and again, tempted to throw himself upon his knees and implore the aid of his own Deity, whose strength he had previously accepted indifferently.

There must be some great guiding hand, he argued, some mighty will behind the vast expanse of star and sun. Was that Tahm? Surely not, unless perchance—and he rejected the thought vehemently—all gods were the same ultimate power under many names.

At last he went outside, leaving the door open, for his troubled mind wanted

expanse, the larger freedom of vision to be found beneath the arching sky.

Through the open door the broad bars of green and crimson, a wave in the heavens, shot vital color which glowed with an intense beauty.

Scarcely had Carson disappeared around the corner of his cabin when into the space before the door strode Lashkar, grim, taciturn, and composed.

As he entered the room Teetsa leaped to her feet with a cry, her eyes wide with terror. "Lashkar, you have come!"

Without a word the priest sat down before the fire.

As though she realized her helplessness, yet could not abandon the struggle for her lover's soul, Teetsa flew to Creg, and hovered over him with nervous little gestures of protection.

It was so Carson found them when he returned. As his eyes met the glittering pupils of Lashkar's, he grew suddenly alert, and his hand reached for a rifle.

"Do not shoot!" Teetsa spoke pleadingly. "If Lashkar dies, all hope is gone!"

"See here!" Carson faced the Eskimo resolutely. "If you have done this, stop it now, or"—and he indicated certain things hanging upon his wall—"the mind of a white man can devise torture as fiendish as your own."

"Tahm has spoken." The old priest was impassive.

"Rubbish! You stop this!" Carson indicated Creg, who had begun a terrible jerky writhing, as though his whole body was alert with pain.

"Look!" As Lashkar spoke Creg grew still, and his eyes opened as a dead man's open.

Carson sprang to him and stooped to examine his face.

Creg's body was as cold as death, the limbs stiffening and his open eyes glazed, but there was a faint pulsation of his heart which

reassured his friend.

Suddenly Teetsa uttered a short, gasping moan, and Carson, whirling to see what had happened, faced the door, which slowly opened as though moved from without.

His hand still resting on Creg's heart, Carson stared, while his lips grew dry and hot. Then, as the door swung wide, he, too, gave vent to an uncontrollable ejaculation of fear, for Creg stood smiling in the open door.

There was no denying the truth of his sight, yet Carson knew that his hand was resting upon Creg's chest. As the full significance of the situation struck him, he fumbled nervously for his handkerchief and wiped his dampening face.

His tongue seemed paralyzed, but at last he managed to speak, though his words sounded hard, as if coming through set jaws.

"Creg, for God sake, man, what are you doing? Get back into your body!"

As he realized the absurdity of that speech, he stood up, swearing angrily, and stepped toward Lashkar. His mind kept accusing him of being a fool, insane, or hypnotized.

"Watch. Tahm guides." Lashkar's tone was edged, and Carson found to his fear and surprise that his own muscles grew rigid. He tried to spring upon the Eskimo, but he could not move. It was as though the power to act had been stolen by the priest's word.

Still denying the evidence of his senses, Carson glanced at Teetsa. She, too, was standing as though petrified, her face the most despairing he had ever imagined.

Lashkar rose and began a low, wild chant, while his body jerked in accompaniment like a man suffering from St. Vitus's dance.

The image of Creg—Carson thought of it as the soul of his friend, though his mind rebelled at the thought—moved toward the bed on which his body lay.

When he stood beside it an expression

of exaltation amounting to ecstasy crept into the face, and his hand rose above his head. As it did so it was bathed in the inpouring stream of light from the leaping aurora.

Teetsa moaned piteously, and Carson swore, but he could not move. Straining every atom of will he was still powerless.

The uplifted hand of that spirit-man standing beside his own body closed in a grip of steel as though he held some object which he had received from the light above him.

Lashkar's hymn rose to a more strident cadence.

Before his eyes Carson realized that the unbodied soul of Creg had found a knife in the light of the aurora. He tried to shout that it was a lie, a trick of a native sorcerer, but his tongue would not move. His body was cold despite the fire, and perspiration poured from his face.

His chaotic mind kept repeating, "impossible," but his eyes refuted the thought, and in desperation his mental activity ran riotously, beating with persistent negations against the solid wall of his vision, as a frightened animal charges the glass of a cage window.

Carson faced the unexplainable, the vast incomprehensible mystery of the human soul there in the silent north, and he was inadequate, hopelessly incapable of explanations.

What he saw was beyond negation, yet he denied, for that knife held high above the spirit's head was not of steel, but of light. It flickered, gleamed, and burned with the blended depth of those wheeling lights in the sky outside.

"The knife of Tahm!" Teetsa had screamed, and then, with a last desperate effort, she broke the spell that held her, and flung herself upon her lover's body.

"David"—her rich voice poured anguished love from parched, dry lips—"David. I can save you that, at least. The knife

will not hurt Teetsa. She is a child of Tahm."

It was true. Carson felt his blood ran as he saw the spirit drive downward, as though to stab his own body, but Teetsa was there, and as the flashing color touched her it bent, snapped audibly and vanished.

Simultaneously the spirit disappeared, and Creg stirred beneath Teetsa, who sobbed happily when he opened his eyes.

They were bloodshot, uncomprehending, mad, but Carson sighed with relief, for they were, at least, human and alive.

Slowly Teetsa rose and faced Lashkar, a look of triumph in her eyes that lit her face with resplendent glory.

The old priest broke into a wilder dance, his ugly face twisting while he sang, and the perspiration, wet upon his flat cheeks, glistened in the firelight.

"Not so, adulteress," he howled—"defiler of altars! See!"

His long arms shot out toward the door and Teetsa turned.

Carson, too, looked, and his strength failed. Unable to believe, unable to deny, powerless to act, he sank in a sitting posture, staring wide-eyed at the vision beyond the open door.

As though stirred by unseen feet, the snow was turning in a small circle and drifting up as it had lifted when Teetsa danced.

The girl sank beside Carson, gripping his hand. "I can do no more." she sobbed. "Call upon your white God."

Carson tried to mutter a prayer, but his unaccustomed mind was too paralyzed by what he saw.

In the center of the drifting snow an iridescent swirl of vivid purple and red color, spun like a miniature tornado, growing higher and higher until it was as tall as a man.

Rising from the snow it seemed a revolving pillar of fire, whose flame was vital color. It gleamed brilliantly, casting rainbow-

hued shadows on the surrounding snow.

Lashkar's chant rang, echoing fiendishly in the cabin.

The column spun like gyrating motion, so fast that it dizzied the watchers, yet they could not close their eyes.

For a moment it remained stationary, then, still whirling, it moved toward the door and entered.

With a last wild cry Teetsa faced Lashkar. "I will go," she pleaded swiftly. "Will the sin be then made clean?"

Lashkar nodded, while his dance became a grotesque tumble.

Without a word Teetsa rose, her head proudly erect, and her eyes alight with a great love. "I come, Tahm," she whispered. "Lead the way."

The flashing column moved again toward the outer snow, and Teetsa, proudly graceful, followed.

After her Lashkar leaped, sometimes squatting, sometimes springing into the air, legs spread like some strange, misshapen image of a disordered brain.

"Teetsa!" Carson found tongue at last. "Stop!"

She did not look back, and he saw her going steadily nearer to that whirling fire as though she went to a lover.

Years later, when Carson recalled that scene, his forehead would grow damp and his body cold.

The broad plain of crystal white, the spinning beauty of unnatural fire, the little girl of the land, head erect with black hair falling back, and the grotesque Lashkar, all remained eternally vivid in his memory.

Slowly, yet with seeming speed, the strange procession passed from sight around the corner of the cabin, and Carson, freed from the spell that bound him, sprang up with a sharp ejaculation.

At the same instant Creg sat up and spoke.

"Teetsa," he said plainly—"Carson, for God's sake, where is she? What brought me here?"

"Creg, thank God, old man!" Carson strode to his friend, who was standing uncertainly beside the bed, like a man just roused from a deep sleep.

"What is it? Speak, Carson!"

Carson quickly explained everything.

When he finished, Creg, who had been walking the floor, sprang to the door.

Together they went out under the sweeping aurora, and bent over to follow the footsteps of a maiden in the snow.

For two hundred yards they went steadily forward, then the track ended. Search as they would they found no trace of her beyond a circle hollowed in the snow as though a revolving cylinder had spun there. In it Teetsa's footsteps ended.

At last they gave up in bewildered despair and turned to seek Lashkar. He was gone, vanished completely, and far as they could see the level snow was unspotted by a living thing. Not even a footprint indicated the direction he had taken.

Again in the cabin Carson spoke. "Creg," he blurted after a long silence, "it's impossible. I don't believe it."

Creg lifted his head from his arm. His face was lined with sorrow and misery, and there was a look of uncomprehending resignation in his deep, sad eyes.

Unconsciously he quoted Teetsa. "Make no fun of gods," he said slowly. "They are all we have—all upon whom we can depend,"

"Nonsense!" Carson kicked a brand back into the fire viciously. "We aren't natives, man. We've been sick of a crazy fever."

"Teetsa is gone." Creg's answer dropped heavily from his set lips and his head bowed. "I know only that, Carson, and I loved her."