

before the jade jar designs. Then he took a small dagger from his belt. Carefully he chipped away the ivory bits that made the seal.

A moment, just a moment, he hesitated before eagerly lifting the god's head, which formed the cover. With a soft cry, he fell back on the cushion and gazed expectantly at the jar. A pungent whiff of perfume, growing ever stronger, filled the room. It stirred a thousand emotions within the boy, who sank low among his cushions. His awed eyes saw a pale light which seemed to come from the depths of the jar, forming a halo about the top. As he watched, fascinated, it grew brighter, until it seemed as if a yellow flood of molten gold, had been poured into the room. An articulate muttering, like distant thunder, mumbling ominously, came to his ears. The dark blue draperies had changed to blood red, and the yellow shower from the jar emeshed the room like a web.

A blare of brass, crashing cymbals mingling with discordant notes and a gold figure leapt from the jar in a sinister revel of golden green Gold! Shimmering, glittering, shining with malign radiance! Selfish incarnate!

Suddenly the boy was conscious of a pounding and bellowing like a wounded forest animal.

Terrified, he realized it was his grandfather, just as Hok-su-min rushed into the room. Enraged, the philosopher neither heeded the exotic perfume emanating from the jade jar nor did he see the gold figure. He was consumed by hatred of the grandson who had dared to steal his key and enter his sacred Blue Room. The air in the room choked and nauseated him. He felt stifled and weak. In a paroxysm of fury he thrust his

arm through the great glass window. Immediately the atmosphere cleared. The strange perfume grew fainter and commenced to dissolve. The music reached a wild crescendo and began a reeling descent. The yellow mist grew thinner and floated through the open window—only a perfume vision fading at the onslaught of air!

Nun Li cowered among his cushions, his eyes wide with wonder and fright. Suddenly he saw the gold creature seem to pour itself like molten gold across the room, slipping toward the broken window. With a loud cry, he struggled to his feet and stumbled forward grasping frantically at the gold mist as it floated silently past him. Stretching his arms madly, he leaned far out of the window, so far that he lost his balance and fell. Down, down, down, dropped his body until it was received into the waiting river below.

Calm now, Hok-su-min remained quietly by the window looking up at the stars. His anger had vanished—floated away with the pale mist of perfume. Hok-su-min was a great philosopher. Throughout China his fame had spread, and numerous legends were told of him. He had devoted long years to study and to profound meditation. All his life had been a pathway reaching to a great finale—a golden hour—when he should see all the beauty and of ages past. Yet that hour had come and gone without his knowing it, for in that supreme time his hate had quite outweighed his love. He had let beauty go past unknowingly.

Hok-su-min cried softly. He moved gently through the silken halls and returned to the Scarlet Room.

"Life," he reflected, "is very strange." And he poured himself of jasmine-scented tea.