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**Astounding Secrets of the Devil Worship-
pers' Mystic Love Cult**

**Revealing the Intimate Details of Aleister
Crowley's Unholy Rites, His Power Over
Women Whom He Branded and Enslaved,
His Drug Orgies, His Poetry and Mysticism,
His Startling Adventures Around the Globe
as "the Beast of the Apocalypse"**

By W. B. Seabrook

Chapter VI.

Every week in the magazines and newspapers, you see new exposes of the extraordinary spread of the drug evil in America.

You have probably read of the brave fight, which ended in his death, that Wallace Reid made, after drugs had gripped him: of Evelyn Nesbit, who fought unsuccessfully her battle against cocaine and heroin and escaped their awful thrall, only to be brought down with pneumonia that almost snuffed out her life: of thousands of other people, less well known, whose bodies and souls have been destroyed, or who have recovered only after suffering terrible tortures.

You have read, and are still reading, from day to day, of the enormous extent of the narcotic traffic, of hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth seized in this or that city.

Usually these narcotics of which you read are morphine, cocaine, heroin, opium, veronal. Occasionally, but rarely, you come upon a paragraph or a passing mention of hasheesh—that strange Oriental drug which figures so extensively in the magical tales of the East.

That you hear less of hasheesh than of the other narcotics is not because it is less dangerous or less harmful, but simply because it is less known to America and the Western World.

Indeed, it was so little known as a narcotic in the United States that it was left completely out of the list in the passage of the Harrison Federal anti-narcotic laws, and up to two years ago you could buy it (though practically nobody did) in any well-

stocked drug store. It is a vegetable product, the essence taken from the flowering tops of Indian hemp.

It stood on the shelves labeled simply, "Cannabis Indica—Poison," and usually the druggist himself only knew of it as an ingredient in the manufacture of certain corn plasters and occasionally in veterinary medicines.

He little dreamed that his "Cannabis Indica" was simply a distilled solution of hasheesh—the dangerous Oriental drug of the "Arabian Nights" stories.

There is sometimes a danger, when giving the public "inside information" such as I am presenting in this chapter, that it will serve, instead of a warning, merely as a "lead" by which drug addicts can get a new source of supply. But there is no such danger in this case. The door has been shut. New laws have been passed. And the authorities have learned enough, at least, about hasheesh to make it as inaccessible as any other banned narcotic.

Furthermore, anyone who would experiment with this poison, after first learning the whole truth about, as it will be told in these pages, would be crazy.

I learned what I know about hasheesh—and I know a good deal—from Aleister Crowley, that strange mixture of genius, debauchee, and mystic, who has touched at one time or another, I believe, every height and depth of which humanity is capable.



Crowley in His Studio, Seeking Inspiration from His Favorite Chinese Idol, "Ha Toi," Which He Carries with Him in His World Wanderings. On the Wall Above Crowley's Head Is One of His Own Weird Paintings.

I was present at a number of the so-called "hasheesh orgies" which went on in Crowley's New York studio, at 63 Washington Square South, and I propose to give you an accurate account of one of them.

The little that is publicly known about hasheesh outside the Orient is a mixture of truth and fable. As Crowley himself said, few Europeans or Americans "have dared to crush in arms of steel this creation of the Djinn; to steal from its poisonous scarlet lips the kisses of death—only to read in its infinite sea-green eyes the awful price of surrender—black madness."

The words sound extravagant, high-flown, but they are not. Crowley himself was one of the first persons, and one of the few Englishmen, who ever experimented extensively with this dangerous drug. He learned about it first in the Orient, where many yogis and "holy men" employ hasheesh to help them attain the mystic state of "Samadhi," or "oneness with the universe." He took it to "loose the girders of the soul," just as these Oriental mystics did. He escaped from the "black madness," but you must remember that he is a man of extraordinary, almost superhuman, will-power, who had engaged in many other practices that would destroy the body and mind of the average person, and has managed to come through them, scarred, but vigorous.

From his experiences he has analyzed the effects on the brain of hasheesh—a scientific analysis that has been accepted as authoritative.

The first symptom, psychologically, is that you are thrown into an absolute state of introspection. You perceive your thoughts, and nothing but your thoughts. Your will is not at first involved. It is a state of powerful looking-inward of a purely impersonal kind.

But with a larger dose the images of thought begin to pass more rapidly through your brain. And they are no longer recognized as mere thoughts, but imagined as actual, material things. They become visions and hallucinations. The ego and will become alarmed and may be attacked and overwhelmed. Being swept away on the tide of restless and uncontrollable visions is a terrible experience.

You may get glimpses of ineffable beauty and splendor, dazzling, intense, passionless bliss. But there come, too, the awful shapes of delirium and madness, destroying the mind that fails to control and dominate them. The despair and terror of the universe become concentrated in yourself. What poignant agony, what moaning abjectness! What vain folly to seek paradise in drugs!

I know these things now. I did not know them when Crowley invited me to take hasheesh in his studio with a party of his

friends. I accepted because of the extraordinary accounts I had read in Baudelaire, Poe, Dumas and certain Oriental stories of the effects of this mysterious drug.

Three other persons had been invited: Natasia Fedorovna, a beautiful Russian actress, who had come over from Paris; Ai Nasaki, a Japanese poet, who did extraordinary sword-dances; and an Englishman, who had lived for years in the Orient as a member of the diplomatic service. Of course, Lea "The Dead Soul," was also present. So there were six of us, four men and two women. We had been asked to eat lightly and to bring pajamas and dressing gowns. Hasheesh, like opium, sometimes produces nausea if one has eaten heavily. Anything but loose clothing would be uncomfortable, as hasheesh, Crowley said, should be taken lying down.



Natasia Fedorovna, the Beauty of the Russian Stage,
Who was Invited to Crowley's Amazing "Hasheesh Party."

The big studio had been arranged for the occasion. Three mattresses, covered with heavy Oriental tapestries and piled with cushions, had been laid on the floor alongside the low couch.

Crowley, clad in heavy Chinese pajamas of dark blue, was seated at a little table, preparing the drug, which he had in a bottle, a nauseous, sticky, dark-green liquid solution, with a characteristic sickening odor something like that of decaying grass.

Twelve drops of it constituted a dose, to be repeated every hour or so if effects were slow in coming. Some of it he put into ordinary druggist's capsules, and some he dropped into small glasses of sherry, to take away the bad taste. You could either swallow the stuff in the sherry, or take it like a pill in the capsules and wash it down with a glass of wine or coffee.

A half hour, an hour, sometimes an even greater length of time, elapses before you begin to feel any effects. So after each had taken the prescribed dose we made ourselves as comfortable as possible on the couch and cushions to await what would happen.

Nasaki, the Japanese, promised to dance, did not take any hasheesh at first. He went into an adjoining room and presently came out in the dress of an old Samurai warrior, but without the hideous mask that sometimes goes with that costume. In broken English he explained that he was going to do the dance of a battle in a mountain pass which a handful of Japanese had held against invaders until all but he was killed, and the latter left wounded and dying on the field. He did it to the accompaniment of an odd chanting, a rhythmic recitation in his native tongue. It was pantomime rather than our American idea of dancing. But it was very effective. Retiring and stripping himself of everything but a cloth around his loins, he did another dance called "The Bat and the Willow Tree." It was clear and more precise than the so-called "Greek classical dancing," but very beautiful. He told us it had been danced in exactly that manner in Japan since the seventh century, handed down from generation to generation, and that not a single gesture had been changed.

"We should begin to feel something soon," said Crowley, who was lying on the hard floor, staring at the ceiling. We were all more or less silent and presently Crowley began to chant, in a low, deep monotone.

"Oom ma na padma oom; oom ma na padma oom."

You have probably seen the syllables before, perhaps in Kipling's account of the Red Llama, "Kim." It is the chant, or "mantra," used by the Buddhist holy men to work themselves into a trance state. Over and over again, always in the same changeless, deep monotone, Crowley repeated the supposedly magical words. As if from a great distance one heard the repeated, booming, "Padma oom!" like some great faraway, muffled, brass band. And presently it subsided. Perhaps he had gone into the trance he sought, I thought.

As for the rest of us, we began to be, frankly, a little bored. There we lay, in the dimly lighted, quiet room—and nothing whatever happened.

"Do you feel anything yet?" the Englishman asked the Russian girl. "No, monsieur," she responded in French—"unless a slight tingling in my toes, but I think that's just because my foot's gone to sleep." And so we talked, intermittently, rather stupidly, it seemed to me, for some time.

Suddenly, without warning, the drug "got" me. A great surge like an electric wave seemed to run through my blood and nerves

and to sweep me into another world. My last normal thought was one of alarm and a feeling that I had "let myself in" for a good deal more than I had expected. This wave passed as quickly as it had come, and left me, I imagined, with an amazing clarity of thought, such as I had never experienced in normal moments. The conversation was still going on. Instead of seeming stupid now, it was astounding and brilliant. In every trivial word spoken by others I discovered, or imagined that I was discovering, a wealth of hidden and important meanings. I joined in the conversation, and then my first actual hallucination occurred. I was talking to the Russian girl, who lay about four feet from me. I could see her face, and her white forehead gleaming in the dim light. As she spoke, her words seemed to be coming from her brain instead of from her mouth—and I saw them, as plainly as I now see the lines on a sheet of paper. They were a fan-shaped network of tiny golden shafts of light, like incandescent wires, that shot out from her forehead toward mine. My own thoughts, likewise, became golden wires or rays that darted from my forehead to meet hers. In the sentences or thoughts where we understood or agreed, the rays from her brain seemed halfway to meet mine and merge into a single ray, establishing a connection between her brain and mine. When we disagreed, or didn't fully understand what the other was saying, the rays or wires became tangled.

But this was nothing to what happened next. Suddenly, as I lay quiet, staring, the ceiling of the room began to shoot up, the walls seemed to recede, and I was in an enormous, well-like hall, in which I was as small as an ant looking at the sky. The voices of the others came to me as if from an immense distance in space. A little while ago, there had been an empty open fireplace, near where I lay. This fireplace now was the arched doorway of a cathedral, its top higher than the tallest mountain, lost in clouds.

My mind, racing madly, and completely beyond control, was seizing on every impression that came to my senses from outside, and distorting it. Lea, "The Dead Soul," rose to get a drink of water. I watched her passing across the room. It seemed to take her hours, days, and weeks—eternity. She was like a person seen walking across the desert—seen from an immense distance, so that she seemed going at a snail's pace. It would take her centuries, I thought, and I forgot all about her. Presently she must have turned on the water, for I heard the sound, but again distorted it, and imagined myself to be in the Garden of Versailles, surrounded by flowers, palaces, statues, while the great fountain was playing, sending its jets and cascades against the blue sky.

But don't imagine that all my hallucinations were pleasant. They soon turned from beauty to nightmare and horror. Natasia, the Russia girl, must have been getting a totally different effect from the hasheesh. Where it had seized my mind and sent it off into fantastic imaginings, I think it must have taken hold more directly on her emotions, her nerves, her physical self. For I saw that she had stripped off most of her clothing and was dancing alone, as if totally unconscious of the others' presence, in a mad abandon, as if every nerve and muscle of her body had been galvanized by a series of electric shocks from which she could not escape.



At first this seemed very beautiful, but suddenly a horrible thing occurred. Her rounded flesh, as she danced, seemed to be melting away, and then where I had seen a beautiful woman, I

saw a hideous thing form the tomb, a million time more frightful than any skeleton, doing an awful dance of death. I wanted to cry out—to shriek, but my throat was dry and contracted. It was this that suddenly turned my hallucinations inward—made me acutely conscious of my own body. And this is one of the characteristic “hells,” I am told, in which the confirmed hasheesh fiend inevitably suffers unspeakable tortures. I became aware of mysterious movements going on within me, all horribly distorted and magnified. My heart was an enormous hammer, beating with tremendous force, as if each stroke would burst through my chest. My breathing, really normal, I learned afterward, was like some mighty wind sweeping in and out of my lungs. There was a fearful dryness in my throat. I thought I was going to die. This, too, passed, and there came other visions—some beautiful—some so hideous that they cannot be described. Finally I went to sleep, in a deep stupor, that lasted until the next day.

Mind you, this was just an “experiment” with hasheesh—an experiment which I tried because I wanted to “know,”—which I repeated once, at the expiration of more than a year—and which I have never repeated again.

If anything I have said has given you the slightest inclination to try such a crazy experiment, I want to tell you briefly the experience of an American who began it as an “intellectual test” and ended by becoming an addict. He finally was saved, after going through unspeakable tortures, but I want you to remember that there are others who began the same way and ended in suicide or madness. This particular man, made a record of one night of horror through which he went. From this record I shall quote. He had awakened, while under hasheesh, in the middle of the night:

“It was an awakening which, for torture, had no parallel in all the stupendous domain of nightmare sleep. Beside my couch stood a bier form whose corners drooped the folds of a heavy pall; outstretched upon it in state lay a most fearful corpse, whose livid face was distorted with the pangs of assassination. The traces of a great agony were frozen into fixity in the tense position of every muscle, and the dead man’s finger nails pierced his palms.

“Two candles at the head and two at the feet of the bier made the ghastliness more unearthly. I pressed my hands against my eyeballs till they ached, in a vain effort to shut out the sight.

“But, oh, the horror unspeakable! I behold the walls of the room slowly gliding together, the ceiling coming down, the floor ascending, as of old the lonely captive saw them, whose cell was doomed to be his coffin. Nearer and nearer I am forced toward the corpse.

"I cowered in abject fear. I tried to cry out, but speech was paralyzed. The walls came closer and closer together. Presently my hand lay on the dead man's clammy forehead. I made my arm as straight and rigid as a bar of iron, to resist, but of what avail? Slowly my elbow bent with the ponderous pressure, nearer grew the ceiling. I was forced into the embrace of the corpse. I stifled. I was insane with terror. The stony dead eyes stared up into my own—a maddening peal of laughter rang close beside my ear. I was being crushed in those horrible arms—and I felt all sense blotted out in the darkness.

As for Aleister Crowley, if what I am writing were fiction instead of truth, I might point my moral by telling you that he had become an addict, a "hasheesh fiend"—but it would be a lie. That extraordinary man, one in a million, whose admirers say he is protected from everything because of his "holiness" and whose enemies think he has the power of the Devil incarnate, plunged into these excesses when it pleased him.

Less than a month after the experience of which I have told you, he was camping on Aesopus Island, up on the Hudson, hard and brown as an athlete, painting "Do What Thou Wilt" in enormous red letters over the sides of the rocks, for passengers on river steamers to see. How he "went broke" in his "hermitage" on Aesopus Island, and how he sent to New York and asked a young countess to come to the island, I shall tell in the next chapter.

(To Be Continued)