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**WEIRD EXPERIENCE IN
HOUSE OF MYSTERY**

**My Efforts to Escape From
the Power of Brilliant Chang.**

By Violet Payne

No more moving or human story has ever come to light that that of Violet Payne, the girl who gained such notoriety during the proceedings against Brilliant Chang, the most sinister figure in the history of London's Chinatown. One of Chang's most beautiful victims, Violet Payne, a country lass of respected parents, came to London in search of fame on the stage. Soon disillusioned, she became the prey of the denizens of London's underworld, and is now, after serving a sentence in Holloway for being in possession of cocaine, making desperate efforts to forget the past. Her story, written as a warning to girls like herself who believe that the stage is an easy road to fame and fortune, is one of the most poignant ever written, revealing, as it does, the traps, temptations, and lures of London's night life in the West End and in the dope-infested dens of Chinatown.

After I had learned to smoke opium in the East End of London, I discovered to my surprise that if it were inconvenient to go down to Chinatown, it could always be smoked in the West End.

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"No, Chang," I said, "I would never sell the stuff. I know too well what the craving is, and I would never condemn a fellow creature to suffer what I have suffered. May I go home now?"

Because of the nice way I spoke to him, he allowed me to go that night—or should I say that morning—and for a night or two afterwards, remembering what he had said about not being able to get the snow elsewhere, I tried to find a new source, only to fall out of the frying-pan into the fire.

One night in Soho I met the notorious Aleister Crowley.

At that time there was a little dining place which was run solely for artists. Many famous figures in the world of art used

to frequent the place, and among them was an elderly man who took my eye at once.

He was about sixty years old, with a strange, aesthetic-looking face, and very deep, penetrating eyes. To all appearances he was an artist, wearing, as he did, a large, black, broad-brimmed hat, with a long, flowing cloak over his black lounge coat, and a wonderful waistcoat embroidered with dragons.

"What a remarkable-looking man," I said to one of my friends. "Does he paint, or is he a sculptor?"

"He was neither an artist nor a sculptor, but a well-known poet. Would you care to meet him?"

My friend introduced me to Aleister Crowley, and he took a great interest in me at once.

"Come and have supper with me," he said, "and we can talk about things which interest us both."

In the course of the meal, after we had chatted about poetry and art, this peculiar man suddenly turned to me and said—

"You are in the habit of taking drugs, are you not?"

"Yes," I replied. "It's pretty evident, isn't it?"

"It is, indeed. You are like most people who take dope. You do not understand drugs. Now, there is scarcely a drug I have not taken, but I have such a power over my own faculties that they do not harm me in the least."

"You must come and see me at my studio in Chelsea," he went on.

Not knowing anything about Aleister Crowley, and being anxious to get out of Brilliant Chang's power, I told him I would come whenever he liked, and he made an appointment to see me the next day.

THE TEMPLE OF BLACK MAGIC.

He told me how to get to his studio and, little dreaming of the experience I was to go through, I followed his instructions, which were to take a tube train from Charing Cross Station to South Kensington.

From there I walked straight along the Fulham Road in a westerly direction until I came to a large house in which Aleister Crowley had his studio, or, rather, his Temple of Black Magic.

The room into which I was first ushered by a servant girl was a very ordinary-looking room furnished as a study, and

there was nothing about its appearance to give me a feeling of uneasiness. It was rather shabbily got up, to tell the truth, but in a few minutes my host entered, and having chatted for a few minutes on common-place subjects he asked me to come and see his shrines.

What a surprise awaited me. He took me straight along the passage to a large room, which was fitted up entirely with mirrors, and in the centre of which was a large figure of a Buddha.

"This is where we hold our invocations," he said, "and I hope you will be able to come and join us one night."

Fortunately for me, my first experience in this weird house in the Fulham Road, which I tell you about presently, was so terrifying that I never went back, but there was a girl in the place who was stranded in London when Crowley removed to Corsica with his shrine and his rituals, and she told me about what took place.

Crowley was the high priest of a strange cult who worshipped in the Fulham Road, and he used to put on wonderful vestments, burn incense, and chant strange incantations to the Buddha, while he fellow-worshippers, artists, poets, and society people, under the influence of various drugs, used to join in the ceremony.

On this occasion, however, all he did was to ask me if I would like to try a new drug which was more potent than cocaine, and foolishly I replied that I would not mind.

"Well, I will let you try ananolium," The name of this drug was strange to me, and I asked him what it was like.

"It is something nobody over here knows anything about," he replied. "I will mix some up, and you will try it and tell me what you think of it."

Opening a cupboard covered by a mirror panel, he took out a bottle and tumbler, poured out a quantity of liquor the colour of yellow chartreuse, and added what looked like water to it.

DRUG WHICH DEPRIVED ME OF POWER TO MOVE

"Just lie down on that divan and drink this up," he said with a smile. "It will give you a wonderful sensation."

"Will it hurt me?" I asked, feeling just a little bit nervous.

"Of course it won't. Do you think I would give you anything to hurt you? It is one of the most wonderful drugs in the world."

Feeling quite disarmed by Crowley's quiet smile and sweetly modulated voice, I lay down on the ottoman and drank the ananoliium.

It had a not unpleasant bitter taste, and after I had taken it nothing happened for a few minutes, Crowley stood over me, watching me with interest, but never so much as saying a word to me.

The liquid slowly mounted to my head, and presently I began to feel better than I had ever felt in my life. My head was wonderfully clear, so clear that I felt years and years younger. The only thing that seemed strange was the way my host continued to look at me.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

To my surprise I found I could not answer him.

"It is a wonderful drug, is it not? Can you raise your arm?"

I tried to do so, and found my arm would not move.

"Can you move your body at all?"

Try as I might, I found I was powerless to move. It was just as if my body were completely paralysed, and the strange thing about it was that I could understand everything my host said to me, and my mind was clearer than ever it had been in my life before.

"It is a most wonderful drug," went on Crowley, "and it will do you a power of good. It makes the mind more alert, and at the same time it rests every muscle and tissue of the body. You will feel when you come out of it as if you had had a refreshing sleep."

Now, I may as well tell you that since that incident I have tried to get to know about the drug ananoliium by inquiring at several chemists in the West End, merely out of curiosity, but none of them ever heard about it.

That it was actually a drug, and not merely the effect of hypnotism, I am quite convinced.

After some time I felt the power of my limbs returning. At first I realized I could move my arm, and then my neck, and, as I lay on the ottoman, I saw, or thought I saw, a cat rubbing itself against the lower part of the couch.

A GHOSTLY CAT.

Being somewhat fond of cats, I stretched out my arm to stroke it, and, to my amazement, my hand passed clean through it. This naturally frightened me. Used as I was to the hallucinations of opium-smoking. I felt this was not the effect of

the new drug, and when the girl came into the room I told her of my experience. She dismissed the matter rather lightly.

"Oh, we often see that cat there. We think it must be the one Crowley threw on the furnace one day."

Now, please don't expect me to explain this. It might be said that I was the victim of the drug and simply imagining things. He pressed me to come back and see him next day, and this I promised to do, but I had got such a fright that I made up my mind that if I had to choose between him and Chang I would choose the lesser of two evils.

It seemed as if there was nothing for it but to go back to Chang. Once or twice I tried to buy some dope off girls whom I knew to be his agents at the night clubs, but they always swore they had got none.

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