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THE GREAT BEAST.

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For 50 years Aleister Crowley—"the wickedest man alive"—performed sex-magic rites that shocked the world. His spiritual descendants are still practicing today.

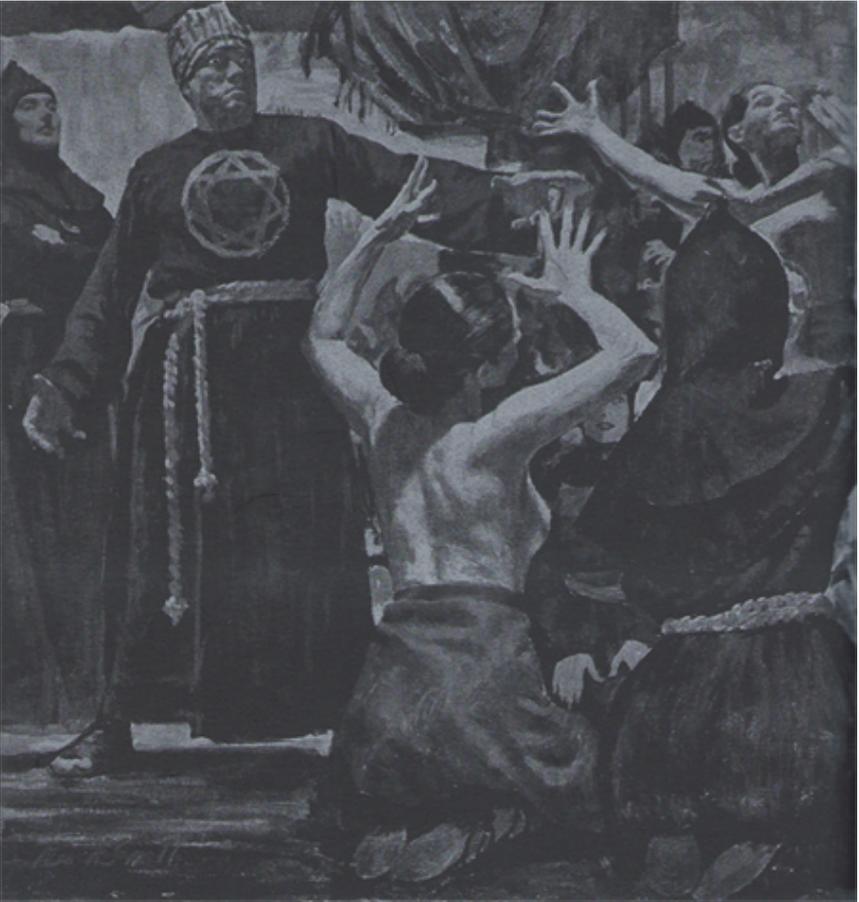
Isadora Duncan, the dancer, was sitting with another girl at a sidewalk café in Montparnasse when the ladies saw a strange figure approaching. It was a man, well over medium height, clad in a brilliant blue suit with knickerbockers. The man's head was shaved except for a strip of hair down the center like an Indian's scalp lock.

The man leered at Miss Duncan's attractive friend. "Have you ever had a serpent's kiss?" he asked.

Before the astonished girl could answer, the man took her hand and bit her wrist, piercing the skin with two teeth which had been filed to sharp points.

The girl developed blood poisoning from the bite but subsequently recovered—which made her luckier than most women who came in contact with this strange man. He was Aleister Crowley, world famous as "The Wickedest Man Alive." Virtually every woman who became involved with him either committed suicide or went insane.

Crowley was a devil worshiper and the last of the great "ceremonial magicians." A ceremonial magician is one who claims he can invoke demons through such devices as incantations, geometric designs and special magical unguents. At one time or another, Crowley operated an occult society in Sicily, was a Buddhist monk, established several records as a mountain climber and was a famous big-game hunter. He was as remarkable sexually as he was physically and mentally. Some of his followers who still worship him as a sort of supernatural being are practicing today, in America and in Europe.



Aleister Crowley was born in Leamington, England, on October 12, 1875. His father, a wealthy ex-brewer, was a minister of a religious group called the Plymouth Brethren. Aleister was enormously impressed at his father's ability to sway crowds and send them into emotional spasms as "the spirit took possession of them." The boy displayed a passionate interest in religion and read everything on it he could find.

There is no doubt that young Aleister was a genius. He could read when he was 4. Two years later, a kindly relative showed the boy how to play chess. After playing one game, the boy was able to beat his instructor. At school, a visiting examiner gave the boys a two-hour test in arithmetic, explaining that no one could possibly answer all the questions in that time. In 20 minutes Aleister placed his finished paper on the table and asked innocently, "Where is the rest of the examination, sir?" He had completed the test without making a mistake.

Together with his abnormal brilliance, Aleister had what he later proudly called "an inquiring mind." Hearing that a cat had nine lives, he declared:

"I caught the cat, and having administered a large dose of arsenic, I chloroformed it, hanged it above the gas jet, stabbed it, cut its throat, smashed its skull, and, when it had been pretty thoroughly burnt, drowned it and threw it out the window that the fall might remove the ninth life. The operation was successful."

Although the boy took an extreme delight in cruelty, he also had a fierce desire to be the victim. Frequently at school, when the bigger boys were bullying him, Aleister would continually beg, "Be cruel to me, please! Oh, be cruel to me!"

When Aleister was still a child, his father died, leaving the boy in the care of his widowed mother and his uncle. Aleister has always respected his father but despised his mother. His uncle was a religious fanatic—no one could mention the word "cab" because cabs were mechanical contrivances and so forbidden by God. When Aleister was discovered reading a book about snakes, his uncle flung the book out the window because it was a snake that has tempted Eve. The boy retaliated by holding his uncle up to ridicule. During a very formal party, Aleister's uncle, with ponderous humor, asked the boy, "Do you know the names of the two bad kings?"

"No, I don't," said Aleister.

"Smo-King and Drin-King," said his uncle coyly.

After the polite laughter had died down Aleister remarked, "But uncle, you've forgotten the third bad king."

"Who is that?" asked his astonished uncle.

Aleister told him—and broke up the party. He was beaten until his uncle could no longer wield the cane.

At this time, the boy was writing hymns so magnificent they were being sung in churches. He was also reading obscure philosophical treatises in Greek and Latin. Aleister was probably tottering on a razor edge between genius and madness. An incident at school decided the issue.

One of the periodic epidemics of homosexuality that occur in many boys' schools had broken out and the masters had caught one of the boys involved. The boy was ordered, under threat of whipping, to name his accomplices. The boy named Aleister. Crowley was brought to the headmaster who ordered the boy to confess. Aleister had no idea what he was supposed to confess;



The sacrificial cat went wild and proceeded to climb the magician's frame, while the group continued its chanting.

he admitted to a list of ordinary schoolboy sins. He was told that he was lying and the floggings began.

The floggings went on for days. Frantic with pain, the boy confessed to every crime of which he had ever heard . . . including robbery and murder. Finally the master gave up and had Aleister expelled, sending him home with a note for his mother.

When his mother read the letter, she turned on the boy in a frenzy, "You're not a human being, You're the Great Beast prophesied in Revelations!" she screamed at him.

Instead of being horrified. Aleister was fascinated. He went to the Bible and read in Revelations 13: "And I beheld a beast,

and he had two horns like a lamb and he spake as a dragon . . . and he doeth great wonders . . . and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do . . . and his number is six hundred threescore and six."

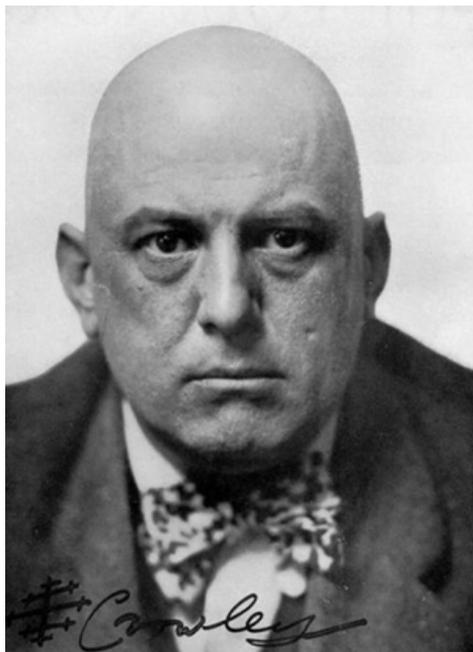
There is more to the effect that the Beast shall place his mark on his followers and there shall be a Scarlet Woman who is the Beast's prostitute.

The child had long been tortured by agonizing problems, and was unable to understand why he was different from other children. Now his mother's statement that he was the Great Beast made everything clear. So profound an effect did her remarks have on the abnormal, brilliant boy that from then on he thought and referred to himself as the Great Beast. As a man, he signed his letters "The Great Beast" or sometimes more simply "666."

He began to worship Satan. He had always had an abnormal interest in the weird, grotesque and supernatural. Now he plunged into the study of the occult with feverish devotion. The boy obtained complex books on the theory of occultism at libraries and easily mastered them. He tried desperately to summon up demons. Failing that, he tried to put curses on his uncle, the schoolmasters and everyone else he hated. He had an affair with his uncle's housemaid on his mother's bed; primarily to humiliate his mother. Although none of his attempts at magic were successful, the boy felt confident that he needed only more experience or a superior type of incantation to get results.

In 1895, Crowley entered Cambridge University. At 21, he inherited a fortune of some 40,000 pounds (about \$200,000) from his father's estate and for the first time in his life Crowley found himself completely independent. His first act was to purchase an extensive library—not only on occultism but on poetry, literature, science, politics, and all the other subjects he had been forbidden to read as a boy.

Soon the young man began to exhibit an amazing sexual drive. "Abstinence for even forty-eight hours was impossible," he wrote. There were no prostitutes in Cambridge and Crowley lamented that he had "to waste uncounted priceless hours in chasing what ought to have been brought to the back door every evening with the milk." He despised women, and likened his need for them to a drug addict's need for morphine. He believed they should be kept as slaves, locked up in harems for the use of men, or better yet, simply made public property.



**Aleister Crowley—sodomist, sadist
and satyr supreme.**

Crowley's pictures at this time show him as a handsome young man with dark, wavy hair, well over middle height, inclined to be heavy but in good physical condition.

While in college, Crowley also developed a passion for mountain climbing. To Crowley, the more difficult and dangerous a climb, the better. He began by climbing the chalk cliffs at Beachy Head in southern England. These cliffs are only a few hundred feet high but the crumbling chalk is so unreliable that few climbers care to run the risks involved. Some of the pinnacles on these cliffs which Crowley climbed alone have probably never been ascended before or since. A.F. Mummery, then considered to be the most outstanding rock-climber in England, climbed on Beachy Head as a member of a trained team and later wrote a book in which he claimed that due to the treacherous nature of the chalk, the cliffs were unclimbable except by a series of long traverses. Crowley wrote that he had gone straight up them and alone. When Mummery doubted his statement, Crowley had himself photographed making the climbs. Instead of being hailed a hero by the Alpine Club, the boy was furious to find his exploits described in the mountain climbing journals under the heading "Insensate folly takes various forms."

Crowley avenged himself in typical fashion. A few months later, the Alpine Club proudly announced the first ascent of the difficult and dangerous Pillar Rock by a lady climber. Crowley promptly dragged a dog to the top and announced "the first ascent by a bitch." For a lone climber to ascend Pillar Rock was an amazing feat: to do it carrying a dog was even more remarkable, but the Alpine Club never forgave Crowley. When he later applied for membership, he was blackballed. To humiliate the club, Crowley would wait until a group of its members had performed some outstanding climb and then supplicate the performance single-handed, picking a far more difficult route than the club members had selected and making the climb in far less time.

There was no question that Crowley was a remarkable skillful and daring climber but, as the indignant Alpine Club pointed out, mountain climbing is supposed to be an art, not an exhibition of suicidal recklessness. Crowley was emotionally incapable of working as a member of a trained team, which is the fundamental requirement for all really advanced climbing, and as a result his climbs were regarded as "stunts" rather than serious achievements. But as a "lone wolf" he set up several records for single climbs—on the Devil's Chimney at Beachy Head and later on the Ortler in Switzerland and on the Aiguille du Geant, to name only three of many.

Crowley developed the technique of glissading (sliding down a steep slope of snow or ice) to a remarkable degree. Occasionally as a joke, he would join some party of climbers and, explaining that he was a raw amateur, lost in the mountains, beg to go with them. While the party was working along the ridge of some long, tricky slope. Crowley would give a sudden scream and fall. While the horrified climbers watched, he would glissade to within a yard of the edge and stop himself by deft use of his alpenstock and crampons. Then he would climb back and join the group again as though nothing had happened. By repeating this trick at intervals, he generally managed to reduce not only the climbers but the guides to hysterical wrecks before they reached level ground.

But all Crowley's interests were subordinated to his overwhelming mania for magic. Magic became an obsession with him. He even learned Hebrew in order to read the Cabala, an ancient Jewish text containing, among other things, old magical rites. One evening, a policeman patrolling the beach at Eastbourne (an English seaside resort) saw a young man standing in a circle drawn on the sand, surrounded by burning pots of

incense and loudly chanting incantations. It was Crowley trying to summon undines (beautiful water spirits) from the waves. No undines appeared. These repeated failures did not shake Crowley's faith. He sought desperately for some master, an experienced magician who could teach him how to get results. Finally, during his last year at the university, Crowley found him.

Through a mountain-climbing acquaintance he heard of a magical society called the Order of the Golden Dawn. This society was reputed to summon up spirits, perform miracles, and was engaged in advanced studies of the occult arts far beyond the comprehension of the ordinary man. Mad with excitement, Crowley rushed to London. He managed to meet the members of the order, some of whom were the leading authors, poets and actresses of the day. Gaining admittance to the order was not easy, but at last Crowley was accepted. He joyfully left the university without graduating.

The Golden Dawn was probably the highest-class occult group ever assembled. Its head was a man named Samuel Mathers who was in his own nearly as queer a customer as Crowley himself. Mathers was the son of a clerk in a London merchandising house but he called himself MacGregor Mathers and claimed to be the son of a Highland chief. He dressed in a kilt with a dagger stuck into his stocking. He ruled the order as Hitler ruled the Reichstag, demanding that all members obey him implicitly, and threatened to strike down by magic anyone who defied him.

When Crowley joined the Golden Dawn, he was a brilliant young man, a real student of occultism, and murderously alert to frauds. Confident that the members of the order actually did possess the powers he had always dreamed of obtaining, he began to study the mysterious information they gave him with the same fierce intensity with which he engaged in sex and mountain climbing.

The mysteries of the Golden Dawn—since published—take up seven thick volumes and are a mixture of the Cabala, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the mystery religions of Greece and Rome, the Hermetic Mysteries, and Eliphas Levi (who collected many of the medieval magic formulas) . . . seasoned with stuff from the Rosicrucians, Masons, and Theosophists.

Crowley was disappointed. "After binding me with the most terrible of oaths, they gravely intrusted into my keeping a copy of the Hebrew alphabet!" To Crowley, who knew more about occultism than the whole order put together, this was a hell of a note.

Crowley would have left the order, but he met one member of the group who was actually practicing demonism and was able to summon up evil spirits. This individual was a handsome but haggard young man about Crowley's own age named Allan Bennett.

Bennett was living in a London slum in desperate poverty. Crowley was living in a handsome apartment on fashionable Chancery Lane which he had rented under the name of Count Vladimir Svareff. Crowley managed to persuade Bennett to move in with him. Under Bennett's direction, the two young men set about redecorating the apartment to make it suitable for the invocation of demons. Two "temples" were constructed in the apartment. One temple was white, the walls being lined with six huge mirrors. The other temple was painted black and contained an altar supported by the figure of a Negro standing on his hands. In this temple was kept a human skeleton which the boys fed with blood and live birds. They hoped to bring it to life.

Allan Bennett was a drug addict. At that time, narcotics could be purchased at any drugstore. Bennett used opium, morphine, cocaine and sniffed chloroform. Bennett introduced Crowley to the use of drugs. In addition, both young men were heavy drinkers. Bennett didn't have enough energy left for much else, but Crowley kept a steady stream of women flowing through the apartment. They ranged from the lowest prostitutes to the wife of a colonel stationed in India.

The two young men were constantly experimenting with magical incantations. One night, after a heavy drinking bout, they filled the room with the fumes of narcotic plants, took drug injections and attempted to cast a powerful spell guaranteed to call up demons. It was a weird sight. The cabalistic signs marked in chalk on the floor, the pots of reeking incense, the skeleton with bloody jaws, and the two men dressed in black robes waving their wands made of witch-hazel and muttering incantations in ancient tongues. At last, just before dawn, their efforts were successful. Crowley describes the scene:

"And then the fun began! Round and round tramped the devils, an endless procession: three hundred and sixteen of them we counted, described, named, and put sown in a book. It was the most awesome and ghastly experience I had ever known."

Crowley finally considered himself a genuine magician.

Because of his remarkable physical stamina, this kind of life produced no harmful effects on Crowley, but Bennett cracked under the strain. He became a mental and physical wreck. It

was obvious that if he were to live he must not only drop the study of magic but also go to some better climate than the cold and damp of England. Bennett wanted to become a Buddhist monk so Crowley sent him to Ceylon. Since the neighbors had begun to complain about the goings on in Chancery Lane, Crowley also looked for other quarters.

He bought an old estate called Boleskine in Scotland near Loch Ness (later famous as the home of a sea serpent). The ruins of an old castle clung to the cliffs above the manor house and there were no other homes for miles. The huge house was laid out like a Roman noble's villa with magnificent formal gardens sweeping down to the lake, and included a staff of highly trained British servants.

Crowley adopted the title of the "Laird of Boleskine" (laird being roughly the Scottish equivalent of the English "lord"), announced that he was now a member of the nobility, and had a coronet embossed on his notepaper. He turned one of the rooms at Boleskine into a temple, imported a pack of savage dogs to guard the estate, and settled down to business.

In quick order the housekeeper ran away, the lodgekeeper who had been a strict teetotaler took to drink, a medium whom Crowley had brought down from London to help him in his work fled during the night and became a prostitute. Then one of the gardeners went insane and tried to murder Crowley.

Crowley himself began to show the effects of his magical researches. Demons appeared to him and explained that they were at war with the angels to prevent the squaring of the circle. They led him to Golgotha, and Crowley found himself watching the crucifixion, but when he came closer he saw that it was he himself who was on the cross. "Then it is really I who have been sent to redeem mankind!" he shouted.

Other visions followed. Sometime the room grew so dark that he was unable to see sufficiently to make his magical notes. Then he fell into a trance and found himself floating over seas full of monsters with half-formed faces. "Am I totally obsessed?" he screamed. At last, the true explanation came to him. "I am naturally possessed with the most essential asset for a magician . . . a singular perfection." Now he knew that he was actually a god and should be worshipped as one.

Crowley honestly believed that his visions were being sent by some superior power to prepare him for his life's work. Fanatically ambitious, he decided to found a new religion with himself as the head. Branches of this cult would be started in various parts of the world, each branch operating as a secret

society with elaborate rituals somewhat like the Golden Dawn. Crowley visualized a gigantic international organization, completely under his control, that would bring him enormous wealth and fame.

His first act was an attempt to take over the leadership of the Golden Dawn, to use that order's prominent people in establishing his new world organization. Crowley knew that the members resented Mathers, the order's arrogant head. Mathers at the time was in Paris. The ancient Egyptian goddess, Isis, had appeared to Mathers and ordered him to announce her divinity so Mathers had rented a theater and was offering public demonstrations of what he called Isis worship (including oriental dances by some chorus girls). He had also met a woman who called herself Fraulein Anna Sprengler and who claimed to have great psychic powers. Mathers was positive that Miss Sprengler could teach him how to get in touch with supernatural forces.

Crowley went to Paris. He told Mathers of the growing resentment in the Golden Dawn and made him a proposition. "Appoint me your representative with full powers, and I'll guarantee to put down the revolt," he promised Mathers. "Your work here with Fraulein Sprengler is too important to be interrupted." The bemused Mathers did as Crowley suggested.

Crowley hurried back to London and presented himself to the order as the emissary of Mathers and Fraulein Sprengler. Without telling Mathers, he drew up an oath which all members of the order would have to take, swearing absolute obedience to Crowley. Anyone refusing to take the oath would be "struck dead by a fearful concentration of magical power."

The terrified members were on the point of taking the oath when a desperate letter arrived from Mathers. Fraulein Sprengler had turned out to be a certain Madam Horos, a carnival palm reader, and she had bolted with all the money Mathers had made from the Rites of Isis. Mathers asked the order to send him return fare to London.

"If that fool Mathers had only kept quiet, all the members would have sworn the oath and I'd have had them in the palm of my hand." Crowley lamented. But the damage was done. Crowley's plan to seize control of the order was revealed. Shortly thereafter, the Order of the Golden Dawn disintegrated, Mathers drank himself to death in Paris and Crowley. Instead of being the head of a powerful organization, found himself angrily described as a "black magician" by his former friends.

Crowley was 25 years old. Most young men his age might have taken a brief rest after inheriting a small fortune, becoming a drug addict and lousing up the most powerful occult group in Europe. But Crowley started on a world tour, intending to start branches of his new religion of his new religion in various parts of the globe. His first stop was Mexico City.

"I am spiritually at home with Mexicans." Crowley happily announced soon after he had rented a magnificent house overlooking the Alameda, Mexico City's most beautiful park. "They have not been poisoned by hypocrisy."

Crowley quickly set about establishing his new cult. He had learned to do whirling dervish dances to make himself dizzy enough to fall readily into a trance state; while in this condition he recited "revelations" which he claimed were given him by supernatural beings. These revelations were by no means simply gibberish. Crowley had an immense knowledge of occult lore. (His interpretations of the theory of mysticism, later collected in pamphlets, now bring \$25 each when obtainable. Serious occult students consider them about the best things of their kind ever done.)

Crowley was able to convert a number of prominent Mexicans to his new creed. One of these men was Don Jesus Medina, the descendant of a Spanish grand duke and a high official in Mexican Free-Masonry. Don Jesus became the head of Crowley's Mexican group.

With his usual astonishing energy, Crowley set out alone to travel through some of the wildest parts of Mexico, and in 1900 Mexico was pretty wild. Since the country was full of bandits, Crowley became a crack shot. Years later, he gave demonstrations of his skill; placing a bottle on its side, neck toward him, he could shoot out the bottom without breaking the neck. After a few brushes with Crowley, the bandits learned to leave him alone.

On one of his rare visits to Mexico City, Crowley met an old mountain-climbing friend named Eckenstein. Eckenstein was the only climber for whose skill and daring Crowley had any respect. The two men formed a team and set out on a series of climbs still probably unequalled in the history of Mexican climbing.

"Naturally we broke all records," Crowley wrote casually but truthfully of their exploits. They spent three weeks climbing Mt. Iztaccihuatl from every possible side. They also climbed all the peaks in the Colima district and the Toluca area. Then they hiked from Mexico City to Vera Cruz, stopping off to climb every likely-looking peak.

The two Europeans naturally attracted the attention of the Mexican press. A reporter was sent out to interview Eckenstein and Crowley the day before they proposed to climb Mt. Popocatepetl. After listening to Crowley's boasting, the reporter decided the two men were frauds.

"I wish I could join you in your climb, so I could study the technique of two such wonderful mountaineers," the reporter suggested slyly.

"Nothing is easier," said Crowley. "We start at daybreak tomorrow."

Crowley and Eckenstein tied the reporter between them and started up the mountain at breakneck speed. Within a mile, the reporter collapsed but Eckenstein dragged him on while Crowley followed behind, jabbing the man in the rear with the sharp point of his alpenstock. They climbed the difficult and dangerous mountain in one unbroken spurt and when they reached the top, the reporter was half dead, half frozen, and nearly unconscious from terror.

Eckenstein returned to Europe and Crowley settled down in Mexico City, surrounded by his admiring disciples. But soon the group became alarmed at Crowley's sexual pranks. A world-famous prima donna who was on tour in Mexico became so fascinated with this dynamic young man that she left her husband to live as his mistress. The prima donna was not enough to satisfy Crowley. He delighted in filling the house with the lowest type of Mexican prostitutes. Finally the prima donna walked out on him. Many of his disciples left him in disgust. Crowley had a row with Don Jesus and decided to leave Mexico.

Crowley went to San Francisco but was unable to attract any converts. "America is a frenzied madhouse of money-making," he reported angrily. "Life in all its forms is rank and gross. Its only motive is the vanity and vulgarity of attempting something big."

He took a ship to Japan. During a stopover in Hawaii, he met a beautiful young woman. She was the wife of an American lawyer and her little boy was ill. Her husband had sent her and the child to Hawaii hoping the climate would help the boy. Crowley so impressed the young woman that she abandoned her child and followed him to Japan where they lived together for a few weeks. At the end of that time, Crowley told her that he was going on to Ceylon and needed her no longer.

"But what will I do?" she wept.

"Go back to your provider," he told her contemptuously.

On the way to Ceylon, Crowley composed a long poem on the romance entitled *Alice: an Adultery*, in addition to his other skills, Crowley was an accomplished poet. Until now, though, his poems had been of a frankly pornographic nature. This poem—his first serious work—instantly received world-wide recognition and praise. Charles Richard Cammell, editor of *The Atlantis Quarterly*, considered *Alice*, as a love lyric, second only to Shelley's "*Epipsychidion*" and Rossetti's "*The Blessed Damo-sel*." Viola Bankes, a well-known British critic and poet, wrote "To read (these lines) brings tears to the eyes and a kind of breathless wonder in the heart."

Crowley followed *Alice* with a serried of other poems, some of them lyrical, some of them mystical and some pornographic. These latter were so offensive the British custom agents wouldn't allow them to be brought into England. But critics, while deploring the subject matter, admitted that artistically they were works of the highest talent. Crowley paid little attention to the fuss about his poetry. He was still obsessed with the idea of his cult which he now called "Crowleyanity."

In Ceylon, Crowley again met Allan Bennett who had become a Buddhist monk. Crowley entered the monastery with him and spent several months there, studying Buddhism and practicing yoga. He learned to assume the difficult position called padmasana which only a few Europeans had ever mastered and was able to throw himself into a trance state almost instantly by an effort of will.

Bennett and Crowley finally quarreled. Crowley was an enthusiastic big-game hunter, and Bennett, an ardent Buddhist, considered that killing any animal was equivalent to murder. When Bennett discovered that Crowley was not only shooting game but later going back to admire the rotting carcasses and writing odes to the maggots, Bennett refused to have anything more to do with him. Crowley would not give up his shooting. He left for India and spent the next few months exploring the wilder northern regions with a handful of coolies, shooting buffaloes, leopards, tigers and wild boars. He used a Mauser .303—a suicidally light weapon for big game—and several times nearly got himself killed.

Crowley won no more recruits to Crowleyanity in India than in San Francisco. The Indians treated him well and even allowed him to enter the sacred temple at Madura, a privilege never before extended to a white man. But they considered their own yogis and holy men far more advanced in occultism than Crowley. Crowley, on the other hand, believed that the Indians should obey him without question.

"The most fatal mistake has been our imbecile weakness in allowing Indians to become aware that Englishmen are not wholly divine," Crowley remarked bitterly. "It was atrocious folly to allow Indians to come to England and study, to mix freely. India should be kept in order to its own salvation and to our great credit and profit." This was not a point of view that appealed to most Indians and Crowleyanity failed to catch on.

Crowley decided that to gain followers he would have to become an internationally known figure: he would have to perform some great feat that would bring him universal recognition. But what? While he was debating, Eckenstein supplied the answer.

The second highest mountain in the world is Chogo Ri, or K2 as the survey maps list it. K2 was the highest mountain then accessible to climbers: Mr. Everest, in Tibet, was closed to all outsiders. K2 is 28, 250 feet above sea level, only about 900 feet less than Everest itself. At that time even getting within sight of K2 was a tremendous undertaking. Only three expeditions had ever seen K2, and no one had ever dreamed of attempting to climb it. Yet while Crowley was recuperating from a trip down the Irrawaddy River, a letter came from Eckenstein saying that he was organizing an expedition to climb K2. Crowley was offered a position as second in command.

Crowley was excited. Here was his chance to perform some feat that would make his name known around the world. He enthusiastically accepted, and met the rest of the expedition at Delhi. In addition to Eckenstein, there was a young Englishman, a Swiss doctor, and two Austrian climbers. Crowley took a strong dislike to everyone in the group except Eckenstein. He suggested that he and Eckenstein go on alone and abandon the others, but Eckenstein refused.

The party went by rail to the Punjab. There they took horse-drawn carts and went on to Kashmir. When the driver of one of the carts complained about the furious pace that Crowley was setting. Crowley grabbed the man by his beard (a mortal insult) and, dragging him from his seat, beat him unconscious. The other members of the party were shocked by such behavior.

At Srinagar, the carts had to be left behind and everything packed into *kiltas* (vase-shaped baskets) to be carried on the backs of coolies. A bodyguard of Pathans also had to be recruited to protect the party from the hill tribes. The expedition went on until it reached the famous Zogi-La Pass between Kashmir and Balistan. The pass was deeply covered by snow and the porters collapsed under their loads. Eckenstein went on

to find the best route while Crowley was left in charge of the porters. Surprisingly, Crowley spent the day rushing up and down the line, encouraging one porter, exhorting another, giving a hand to a third.

The party went on and on through "the most monotonous and ugliest landscape I have ever seen," as Crowley described it. In some places, they were able to secure ponies. In others, they had to use swinging rope bridges hanging like spider webs over the seemingly bottomless ravines. They encountered sand storms that stopped the expedition for several days. They crossed rivers of mud and bathed in hot springs, surrounded by hundreds of miles of solid snow banks. Finally, they reached the little village of Askoley, the last settlement between them and the plateau on which K2 stands.

Here the first serious quarrel arose between Crowley and other members. Each man was to be limited to 40 pounds for his personal belongings. Crowley was carrying along a small library of books on poetry, mysticism and other subjects which he refused to leave behind. The other members demanded that Crowley observe the same weight restrictions as themselves. Crowley refused. Eckenstein finally ordered Crowley to give in.

"I wasted no words," said Crowley later. "I merely shrugged my shoulders and said my books went along or I left the expedition. Needless to say, I carried my point."

Since he was the best climber, next to Eckenstein, it was decided that Crowley would head the expedition's advance party while the rest followed more slowly. He ascended the plateau by means of the great Baltoro glacier.

"Here I had my first real taste of conditions peculiar to the Himalayas," Crowley later wrote. "There is a violent alternation of heat and cold between day and night. The result is that a few minutes of sunshine produces revolutionary results. A thick hard crust of snow disappears almost instantaneously and leaves one floundering in a mass of seething crystal. Rocks break loose in a way which takes men of merely Alpine experience by surprise. My first warning was when two enormous stones which anywhere else would have stayed where they were for years, fell about 20 yards in front of my advanced guard."

From the plateau Crowley studied the peak of K2 with the eye of an expert mountaineer. He decided that the southeast face offered the best chances and sent back word to Eckenstein. Then he pressed forward. He established a series of camps as he climbed and finally, at 17,332 feet, he stopped at Camp

10. The weather was good and the remaining 10,000 feet seemed to offer no insurmountable difficulties. Crowley sent a hurried message to the main group to join him. They must make the final assault as soon as possible while the weather held.

When the rest of the expedition reached Camp 10, they were in a sorry state. Everyone was suffering from frost bite, snow blindness, altitude sickness and malnutrition. Crowley's insistence on taking his books meant that some of the supplies had had to be left behind and as Crowley bitterly observed, "My fellow climbers were ready to murder each other for a lump of sugar." Shortly after they arrived at Camp 10, a tremendous blizzard broke. The tent ropes were tied to boulders but the force of the wind tore them loose and the men spent the night clinging to the ropes to prevent the tents being blown over the precipices. Crowley was savagely criticized for choosing such an exposed spot. Several of the men broke under the strain. One man began spitting blood. Another went crazy. Eckenstein was constantly vomiting and could keep nothing on his stomach.

When the blizzard cleared, Crowley was all prepared for the final assault, going up the southeast side.

"No," Eckenstein said. "First we must send out a reconnaissance party to pick up the best route. You say the southeast face is the best, but that is simply a guess on your part."

"My guess is better than another man's certainty," said Crowley loftily. But, to his chagrin, the others agreed with Eckenstein. Two men were sent out. They returned a few days later to report that the best route was up the northeast slope. In spite of Crowley's protests, this was the route the group selected.

It is now known that Crowley was right. The American expeditions of 1938 proved that the southeast slope is the only practical way up K2. Crowley was probably correct when he later claimed, "If they had only followed my advice, we could have walked to the top with little trouble." On the northeast slope, the party reached a height of 22,000 feet. Then they collapsed. Two of them were down with pulmonary troubles. Even Crowley had an attack of an old affliction, malaria.

Defeated, the expedition turned back. But they had accomplished something. They had made the first assault on K-2 and lived longer at 20,000 feet than any other men. Still, the whole expedition was so badly managed that serious climbers prefer to ignore it. An expedition led by the Duke of Abruzzi which

didn't get as far as Crowley's is even now officially considered to be the first attempt on K2.

Crowley, still determined to establish his religious cult, traveled to Egypt and thence to Paris.

In Paris, his luck suddenly turned. Not even jaded Parisian society had ever seen anything like this big young Englishman who was a renowned mountain climber, world traveler, big-game hunter, and magician. Crowley became the sensation of the Latin Quarter, holding court in a little café, the Chat Blanc, among such notables as Rodin, Marcel Schwob, Somerset Maugham, Arnold Bennett, William Henley and Sir Gerald Kelly, president of the British Royal Academy.

Most of these eminent men didn't know what to think of Crowley. They admired his poetry. He wrote an ode to Rodin which Schwob translated into French, receiving universal acclaim. One of his paintings—"Four Red Monks Carrying a Black Goat across the Snow to Nowhere"—revealed a remarkable knowledge of composition and color. The painting shows four red-robed figures carrying a black, long-horned goat across a glacier, with the cloud-shrouded peaks of the Himalayas rising in the background. Sir Gerald Kelly was deeply interested in his work and believed that Crowley possessed great talent as an artist. A small group considered Crowley, if not a god, at least a semi-supernatural creature.

Crowley, always an exhibitionist, did everything possible to play up to this interest. He shaved his head except for a single strip of hair down the center. He wore a flowing black cape and carried a cane surmounted by a baby's skull. He made a habit of ordering his meals backwards, starting with dessert and ending with the soup. He talked darkly of his magical powers and had his room fitted out like an oriental temple. Somerset Maugham, then a young man, was so impressed by Crowley that he wrote a novel about him called *The Magician*.

All during this time, Crowley was feverishly experimenting with incantations, charms, spells, and invocation, endeavoring intently to become "a real magician."

One evening in a crowded café Crowley suddenly appeared in the doorway, clad in his ceremonial robes and wearing the peaked hat of a wizard. Solemnly, he walked around the room, muttering an incantation and waving his wand. Then he left. No one dared mention the matter to him, but a few days later Crowley, while talking to a man who had been in the café that evening, remarked, "I have discovered how to make myself in-

visible. The other evening I walked through the café in my robes and no one saw me."

"But we did see you," said the friend, hesitatingly.

"You couldn't have!" Crowley roared. "If you did, why didn't someone speak to me?"

It was during this period that Crowley filed two of his teeth to needle-like points and went around biting young women in Montparnasse.

Fresh from his triumphs in Paris, Crowley returned to England. There he went to see Sir Gerald Kelly, a man of wealth and social prominence, and of considerable influence. At Kelly's country estate, Crowley met the man's younger sister, Rose. Rose was a handsome, high spirited girl who was just recovering from an unhappy love affair. She was fascinated by Crowley. In spite of Kelly's violent objections, the couple eloped and were married.

They went to Egypt on their honeymoon. Almost at once Rose discovered that being married to Crowley was a rugged proposition. Crowley insisted on spending their wedding night in the King's Chamber in the center of the great pyramid. The place was alive with bats. All night long Crowley muttered incantations and tried to summon up the animal-headed gods of ancient Egypt. He claimed he did produce strange lights of a curious bluish phosphorescence by which the hordes of bats were clearly visible. By morning, Rose was almost hysterical.

The couple went on to Ceylon for some big-game shooting, where Crowley's guides finally refused to go hunting with him any longer. "Sahib, you aren't hunting, you're trying to kill yourself." One man told him.

Rose was pregnant and beginning to crack under the strain. Once a flying fox (a giant bat) with a four-foot wing span landed on her head, and she went frantic while the bat clung to her hair, screaming and biting. Crowley finally managed to kill it. That night, Crowley was awakened by "the squealing of a dying bat." He found Rose naked, hanging by her legs to the mosquito net frame above her bed, squealing exactly as the dying bat had done. When he tried to get her down, she clawed and spit at him and it was a long time before he could get her back to human consciousness. "It was the finest case of obsession that I had ever had the good fortune to observe." Crowley wrote triumphantly.

Rose finally grew so bad that Crowley took her back to Boleskine for the last weeks of her pregnancy. Even here, Crowley continued his magical researches. One night, Rose awakened to

find her husband in white robes standing beside the bed, a sword in one hand and a bowl of fresh blood in the other.

"What are you doing?" asked the terrified woman.

Crowley frowned at the interruption. "I am casting a spell so your child will be born a monster."

The baby, a girl, turned out to be perfectly normal. Crowley was disappointed but rallied under the blow. He announced that the child would be the Virgin Mary of his new faith and named her Nuit Ma Ahathoor Hecate Sappho Jezebel Lilith."

At this time, one of the men from the K-2 expedition—a Swiss doctor named Jacot Guillarmod—turned up at Boleskine with a startling proposition.

"I am preparing another expedition to the Himalayas to climb Kanchenjunga, the world's third highest mountain." The doctor told Crowley. "I want you to lead the party."

Crowley considered. A successful assault on Kanchenjunga would bring him instantaneous world renown. "If I am to be leader, all other members of the expedition must swear to obey me implicitly," he stated.

"Agreed!" said the doctor.

When Eckenstein heard that Crowley was to command the expedition, he refused to join. But Dr. Guillarmod enlisted the services of two Swiss army officers who were experienced Alpinists. The four men sailed for India. Here they were joined by a fifth climber, a young Italian who had lived for many years in India and was to act as interpreter.

Kanchenjunga was almost the same height as K-2 and a very tough proposition. Because of its exposed position, it gets the full force of any storms that may be going as well as the concentrated heat of the sun. As a result, Kanchenjunga is famous for its avalanches. These avalanches are so terrible and dramatic (they can be seen for many miles away) that the natives regard the mountain with superstitious terror.

The expedition reached the base of the mountain with comparatively little trouble, as such things go. Then, as before, Crowley led the advance party while the rest followed more slowly with the heavy equipment. Crowley pressed on at his usual killing pace and established his base camp within two miles of the summit. Again, as at K-2, he sent back an order for the rest to hurry and join him for the final rush to the top.

This was easier said than done. Most of the coolies with the main party had deserted, and Dr. Guillarmod and his friends were temporarily stuck until de Righi (the Italian) could return to the nearest village and get more men. Crowley had had

trouble with his own coolies but solved it in typical Crowley fashion. When the coolies refused to go on, Crowley had knocked one mad down with his alpenstock and beaten the others so brutally that they became more afraid of him than of Kanchenjunga. Later, when the coolies refused to cross a snow slope overhanging a sheer drop of several thousand feet, Crowley performed his famous glissade. Throwing himself at the slope head first, he shot down the almost perpendicular grade until he was within a few feet of the edge. There he stopped himself, climbed up again, and went on without bothering to glance back at the dumbfounded coolies. The coolies followed him, deciding that he was under the special protection of the mountain gods.

When Dr. Guillardmod and his party finally arrived at the base camp. Crowley was furious at their delay. But if the doctor had any tendency to be apologetic he soon forgot apologies in his horror at the situation. Crowley had agreed to outfit his own coolies but the doctor discovered that the men had no equipment of any kind, not even shoes with crampons. Some of the men were actually walking barefoot in the snow. One overloaded coolie had already fallen to his death because he could not keep his footing. Dr. Guillardmod denounced Crowley as a murderer.

Crowley shrugged, "You agreed to follow my orders without question," he said. "Either you obey me or we give up the expedition."

"Very well," said the doctor grimly. "Then we give up the expedition."

Although it was already late in the afternoon, the furious doctor refused to stay in the same camp with Crowley. He decided to return to one of the lower camps. De Righi and one of the Swiss army officers decided to go with him.

At the last minute, three of Crowley's coolies begged the doctor to let them come too. "Let us go anywhere to get away from this cruel sahib," they pleaded. The coolies had no equipment, not even shoes. Their presence on the rope constituted a real menace to the whole party. But their terror was so real that the doctor at last reluctantly consented.

The six men started down the mountain, roped together. They were forced to move slowly because of the coolies. They were still within earshot of Crowley's camp when one of the coolies slipped and started rolling down the slope, pulling the rest of the party with him. It started an avalanche. The doctor

and de Righi somehow managed to stop their fall but the army officer and the three coolies were buried under the snow.

The two survivors tried to dig them out. Crowley and the other climber who had remained with him heard their cries for help. The climber went to their aid but Crowley refused to move. The men worked desperately all night to dig out their buried comrades but by the time they reached them, the men were dead.

The next morning, the exhausted survivors saw Crowley march down the side of the mountain. He went straight to Darjeeling, a mountain town. He stayed at the hotel there a few days, then went tiger hunting with a rajah he had met. As far as he was concerned, the dead men were "mutineers" and deserved their fate. He refused to interest himself in the matter.

This affair caused a scandal that made headlines all over the world. Crowley got the fame he had so long desired but it was the wrong kind. He was never again able to find any group of men willing to climb with him.

In Calcutta, Crowley was joined by his wife and baby daughter. Rose had brought the baby out to India in a desperate attempt at a reconciliation with her remarkable husband.

Crowley now announced another grandiose plan: a walk across China, accompanied by his wife and baby. In 1906, China was an incredibly wild area, inhabited by roving bandit tribes and much of it completely unmapped. The little family set out on foot with a handful of coolies to carry the luggage.

The trip was a living nightmare. Crowley had recurrent attacks of malaria. He had taken up opium smoking and smoked 25 pipes a day. Most of the time he was out of his head, either with malaria or opium. During his deliriums, he held conversations with the great philosophers of the past who sat in a circle around him and argued obscure metaphysical points.

The coolies finally mutinied and Crowley had to hold them off with a rifle until he and his family could escape down a river in a dugout. At last, Rose collapsed. Crowley left her and the baby in a Chinese village while he went on. Miraculously, he managed to reach Shanghai.

Meanwhile, Rose started out for Rangoon with the baby. With the sympathetic help of the local villagers she just managed to make it, but little Nait Ma Ahathoor (etc.) wasn't so lucky; the baby died on the way. Rose was sent back to Boleskine by the British consul. She was already several months pregnant with another child by Crowley.

This second child—also a girl—was born at Boleskine a few days before Crowley's return. He named the child Lola Zaza. Rose was in a state of complete mental and physical collapse which Crowley's return did nothing to improve. Due to his oriental studies, Crowley had developed something which he called "sex-magic." Sex-magic consisted of a series of weird performances which, when mastered, would bring wealth, cure sickness, defeat your enemies and so on. Soon Boleskine was packed with women cooperating with the Great Beast in his experiments. Once when Rose objected, Crowley hung her up by the heels, stark naked, to witness a performance.

Rose began to drink more and more heavily. She ran up a bill for 150 bottles of whisky in three months. Finally the wretched woman became insane and had to be committed to an asylum. She died there a few years later. The courts demanded that Crowley make some settlement on the baby, Lola Zaza. Crowley retorted that he had no more money, which was by now almost true, but he later inherited some \$20,000 from his mother and this money was used for the support of the child.

Crowley wrote a long poem immortalizing his love for Rose. It was called *Rosa Mundi* and won great critical acclaim. G. K. Chesterton praised Crowley's ability. Another critic called it "the greatest love lyric in the language." Crowley also published 50 hymns to the Virgin Mary which were warmly praised by Alice Meynell, a Catholic critic and poetess. Later, when Mrs. Meynell found out who'd written them, she fainted.

Crowley's cult, "Crowleyanity," was at last taking hold. Crowley had published a book called *The Book of the Law* which was to be the bible of his new religion. The basic creed of this book is expressed by the phrase "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." From then on, Crowley began all his letters with his motto, prefaced most of his remarks with it, and even had it painted on the sides of cliffs.

Converts to this new religion sprang up all over the world. Some of these people were futile individuals who were ready to admire any strong personality. Some were intellectuals who thought that anyone so strongly denounced by the church and press must be a hero fighting popular prejudice. Some saw in Crowley's defiance of convention a reflection of their own desire to kick over the traces. Still others, who felt that both life and religion had failed them, saw in Crowleyanity a magnificent new dream.

"I will make every man and woman a star!" cried Crowley and many believed him. There was also a group which took pride in following a leader who talked in such mysterious terms that ordinary mortals couldn't follow what he said.

In 1914, the first World War broke out. Crowley promptly left for the United States. He had an idea of organizing the Irish Americans under the banner of Kaiser Wilhelm and building up a powerful group with himself as its head, backed by Imperial Germany. He announced that he was an Irishman, although he had never set foot in Ireland and had no Irish blood, and began to write inflammatory articles for the pro-German newspapers. Though he never obtained any Irish-American support he managed to establish his cult in this country. In later years, the American branch of this cult provided his main source of income. His followers erected a temple in the Palomar Mountains, California, where they worshiped both Crowley and the Greek God, Pan.

In New York, Crowley acquired a mistress named Leah Fae-si. This girl, a Bronx singing teacher, fell so completely under Crowley's spell that she allowed him to brand her between the breasts with what Crowley called "The Mark of the Beast." It was a cross in the center of three concentric circles. Crowley used a Japanese dagger, red hot, to do the branding. Leah was so delighted with the mark that she used to sit around half naked in their apartment so visitors could admire it. Crowley announced that Leah was now the "scarlet woman" foretold in Revelations who was "the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth." Of all his mistresses, Leah stuck with Crowley the longest and became as integral a part of his life as any woman could.

After World War I, Crowley returned to Europe with Leah and another mistress named Ninette Shumway whom he'd picked up on the boat. Ninette was given the "magical" name of Sister Cypris. In the next few years, Crowley collected so many mistresses that he had to keep them numbered (Concubine 1, Concubine 2, etc.) However, Leah and Sister Cypris remained the principal ones.

In America, Crowley had conceived the most grandiose of all his schemes, a scheme by which he intended to stand or fall. He would establish a magical colony on the island of Sicily which would be the headquarters for Crowleyanity. Here young men and women would be trained as agents and leaders in the vast international empire he was building. They would be dispatched to various parts of the globe either to start branches of

Crowleyanity or else take over the administration of groups already started. Crowley would remain in Sicily with his "General Staff" to direct the actions of his agents.

There is a striking similarity between the workings of this group, as Crowley conceived it, and the operations of modern communism. Like the communists, Crowley planned on having cells, operated by dedicated agents, whose purpose was to undermine national and religious loyalties and substitute a blind devotion to Crowleyanity. Anyone joining the cult was sworn to absolute obedience and forbidden to read, discuss, or even think of any matters not approved by Crowley. If the local authorities interfered with the activities of a group, the group leader was instructed to protest that it was a case of "religious intolerance" and issue a plea to liberal-minded people to come to the defense of the group against whom the authorities were conducting a "witch-hunt." Crowley had already tried this trick several times himself and found that it always worked out very well.

Crowley purchased an old villa near the little town of Cefalu in northern Sicily and moved in with his two mistresses and several devoted followers. A farmhouse was transformed into a "Temple of Magic." The "Great Circle of Power" and the "Mystic Pentagram" were drawn on the floor of the main room. Crowley used his artistic ability to ornament the walls with pictures of sexual intercourse. Some of these drawings were so grotesque that they gave visitors the horrors and Crowley nicknamed the place his "Chamber of Horrors." An altar was erected with a niche to hold the "Cakes of Light" which, in the Black Mass, take the place of the Eucharist. "The Book of the Law" was placed on a stand where the Bible is usually found in Christian churches. Crowley's magical apparatus—bells, swords, chalices, robes, crystal balls, candlesticks, etc.—were hung on the walls. There was a throne for Crowley and a smaller one for Leah, his official "Scarlet Woman."

A remarkable collection of people straight out of Kraft-Ebing soon gathered at what Crowley called his "Abbey of Thelema." There was a Hollywood motion-picture actress, a well-known woman writer, a drunken American sailor, a few wealthy men and women looking for a new thrill, and a professor of mathematics from Cambridge University. In occult circles, the Abbey became famous. Crowley seemed in a fair way to be at last achieving his ambition.

Crowley now went to England to get fresh recruits for the Abbey. In his typical dramatic style, he painted his face and

lips, put on a curly wig, and dressed up as a highland chief. In this outfit, he strolled about fashionable Mayfair and soon found himself the lion of Bohemian society. He picked up several new followers, including one young man, Raoul Loveday, who was married to a pretty artist's model named Betty May.

Raoul was an effeminate, nervous young man of 23. He had long, wavy hair and an impulsive boyish way about him. Betty, however, was strictly a tough tomato. A slum child, Betty learned the facts of life early, and had become an entertainer in the famous Café Royal. Before she was 16 she had stabbed a white slaver, knocked out a rapist with a whisky bottle, and had for her patrons a number of wealthy, prominent men—including, it was alleged, the sculptor Epstein who was fascinated by the girl's almost Oriental beauty. Later, Betty had the drug habit. After she cured herself by sheer will power, she returned to London, picking up odd jobs as a model or dancing in cafes.

In London, she had met young Raoul, then an undergraduate at Oxford and several years her junior. When she offered to marry her, she quickly accepted this chance at respectability. Through his family's help, Raoul got an excellent job and he and Betty May had settled down to a comfortable middle-class life when Aleister Crowley arrived in London, looking for candidates for the Abbey.

Crowley met Raoul at a literary tea. For the next two days and nights, Raoul disappeared while his frantic wife searched for him. The third night, when Raoul came home, he reeked of ether; he and Crowley had been sniffing the stuff. Betty put him to bed. From her own experience, she tried to explain to him the dangers of drug addiction.

A few nights later, Crowley appeared at the apartment. He was dressed in his highland costume and had his face painted. In his hand he carried a staff five feet long with a carved snake twined about it. "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law," he announced as he entered.

Betty raised the roof. She told Crowley what she thought of him in the simplest terms. The Master Magician merely smiled at her. Finally Betty marched out of the apartment, thinking Raoul would follow her. "That was a great mistake," she later admitted. When she returned the next morning, Crowley was only just leaving.

Thus began a weird duel between Betty and the Great Beast for possession of Raoul. Betty changed apartments but Crowley discovered the new address and followed them. He introduced

Raoul to drugs, and Betty believed he hypnotized her emotional young husband.

When Crowley returned to Sicily, Raoul insisted on following him. Betty raved, begged, threatened . . . all to no avail. She enlisted the help of Raoul's parents but they, too, were helpless.

"If you won't go with me, I'll go alone," Raoul told her. Desperate, Betty decided to accompany him. The Abbey was already notorious and Betty hoped that after a few days there, Raoul would become disgusted and return to England.

They arrived at the village of Cefalu late in the evening. When the villagers heard where they were going, they did their best to stop them. "That monster keeps a light burning in his lair to attract travelers, and those who go never come back again," the warnings went. Raoul insisted on going on.

Crowley himself opened the barred door of the Abbey. He admitted Raoul quickly enough but tried to slam the door shut on Betty. She finally forced her way in.

She found herself in the Chamber of Nightmares and, although a lady of considerable experience, she later admitted the frescos nearly made her sick. She met Cypris—a pregnant, terrified woman, always looking over her shoulder as though expecting a blow and shaking with fear whenever a door was opened. Leah arrived, "tall and haggard," wearing a monk's robe dyed red in keeping with her title as Scarlet Woman. Dishes full of narcotics were everywhere, like cigarettes are displayed in an ordinary house. There were also loaded revolvers lying about, for protection against the villagers who occasionally attacked the Abbey.

Betty found life at the Abbey strangely dull. She was the only member of the community who wasn't perpetually knocked out on drugs or drink or from practicing sex-magic.

Raoul loved the Abbey. He describes the place with dewey-eyed enthusiasm. The drawings on the Abbey's walls, he felt were highly moral because they disgusted people with sexual excesses. The Black Mass he understood as intended to "exalt the mind by poetic appeal to the Forces of Nature." The motto "Do What Thou Wilt" merely meant that the ideal man would always do right by the power of his will. The Great Beast was not really a dope fiend, but, due to his bad attacks of asthma he occasionally had to take small doses of drugs under a doctor's prescription.

Betty and the Great Beast were sworn enemies from the start. Crowley ordered her to stand beside him with a basin of

water and a towel during meals so he could wash his hands at intervals. (Spoons and forks were not allowed in the community.) Betty took up her position but emptied the basin of water over the Great Beast's head. A horrified gasp went up from the group but Crowley ignored the incident and the meal went on as though nothing had happened.

Betty never stopped her efforts to get Raoul away from the Abbey, and Crowley, who was practicing sex-magic with the young man, hated here for it. Never strong, Raoul was growing steadily weaker. Not only was he now on drugs and exhausted by sex-magic, but Crowley had a rule that none of his followers should use the word "I," as no one but Crowley could be considered a real person. Anyone saying "I" by mistake had to slash himself with a razor. All the members of the community carried razors around with them for this purpose. Raoul was soon covered with cuts. He lost so much blood that Betty was seriously disturbed at his condition.

Crowley loved to goad Betty. One evening, he took out a large knife, and remarked, "Tonight we will sacrifice Betty." Betty had seen animals sacrificed at the Abbey and was really frightened, since Raoul seemed to accept the idea without a murmur. She ran away and hid in the hills. The next morning, cold and tired, she returned to the Abbey.

Raoul was disgusted with her. Crowley was only being humorous, he told her. "Can't you appreciate his delightful wit?"

A sudden catastrophe brought matters at the Abbey to a crisis. A stray cat had scratched Crowley and the Great Beast decreed: "That animal must be sacrificed within three days!"

The cat was caught and kept in a sack for the occasion. Raoul, whom Crowley was training to be his Magical Heir, was to perform the ceremony, with Crowley acting as coach.

The ritual took place in the temple and Betty was a reluctant witness. The candles had been lighted, the incense pots poured out clouds of fumes, and a sacred fire was burning in the center of the Circle of Power. The inhabitants of the Abbey, in full costume, sat around the circle to watch the sacrifice. Raoul, robed and masked, conducted the ceremony which lasted for two hours. At last came the time for the sacrifice.

Raoul opened the bag and reached in for the cat. The cat—a good, big, husky tom—came boiling out of the bag, scratching and spitting, proceeded to climb the magician's frame. Raoul, still weak from loss of blood, screamed with pain and made a wild jab at the cat with his sacrificial dagger. The cat attacked the magician while the worshipers, still chanting the magic in-

cantation, watched with horror. Raoul was yelling for help and stabbing at the raging cat. Finally, he managed partly to decapitate it. The cat went running around the circle, while the worshipers screamed and tried to get out of the tortured animal's way. Raoul stood helpless.

Finally the furious Crowley grabbed the cat and poured ether over the animal's head. Then he handed it to Raoul. Leah recovered sufficiently to come forward with a silver chalice. Raoul managed to hack the cat to death while Leah caught the blood in her cup. Then she handed the cup to Raoul. Betty reports "he drained it to the dregs," and fell back in a faint.

That night Raoul was delirious. Betty wanted to send for a doctor but Crowley refused, maintaining he could cure the young man by acts of sex-magic with his concubines.

Newspapers were forbidden at the Abbey but Betty had arranged to have a villager bring them up to her. A few days later, she was reading a newspaper to Raoul when Crowley burst into the room and tore it out of her hands. Betty really hit the ceiling. She threw everything in the room at Crowley, including the oil lamp and water pitcher. One of the loaded revolvers, used to cow the villagers, was lying on a table. Betty snatched it up and fired at the magician. She missed and before she could fire again. Crowley grabbed her.

"His head was clean shaven so I couldn't get a grip on his hair," Betty reported regretfully.

Crowley was a man of great strength and he carried the kicking and biting Betty out of the room and gave her a boot in the direction of the village. "Get out of here and don't come back." He warned her.

Betty raced down the twisting mountain trail to the village. There she started writing an account of the Abbey to the police and the British Consul. While she was writing, Leah appeared with Betty's suitcases. The Scarlet Woman was at first inclined to gloat over Betty's disgrace, but when she discovered what the girl was up to, Leah hot-footed it back to the Abbey. Soon one of the other Abbey women hurried down with a note from Crowley. The whole affair had been an unfortunate misunderstanding. Of course, Raoul could have a doctor. If Betty would only come back, everything would be forgotten and forgiven. Crowley ended with a postscript that Raoul was much worse and badly needed Betty to nurse him.

Betty returned to the Abbey. A doctor was sent for. He pronounced Raoul seriously ill of a combination of nervous collapse and acute enteritis from drinking polluted water. In spite of

everything the doctor could do, the sick young man grew steadily weaker. Two days later, he died. The villagers refused to allow the dead man to be buried in the local cemetery, so Crowley arranged to have Raoul buried nearby.

The inhabitants of the Abbey put on their robes and solemnly carried the coffin to the grave. Crowley's two illegitimate children by his concubines running ahead, singing happily, "We're going to bury Raoul! We're going to bury Raoul!" By the grave, Crowley performed a beautiful ceremony, reciting one of his own hymns which could have been sung in church without criticism.

Betty returned to England, and promptly sold the story of her experiences in the Abbey to the newspapers. The sensation this story caused was so great that one of Crowley's ardent supporters later angrily wrote, "There has never been anything like it in literary history!"

The Sicilian authorities were broad-minded men but the newspaper storm that burst around their heads was too much for them. Crowley was ordered to leave the country.

He had no choice but to obey. He left the Abbey in charge of a brilliant young professor of mathematics, Norman Mudd, who had given up a promising career to follow Crowley.

Crowley and Leah sailed for Tunis. Crowley was virtually penniless. Cocaine had ceased to give him the necessary kick and he had turned to heroin. Now he needed two shots of heroin to get out of bed in the morning. He began to suffer from drug poisoning. He had constant diarrhea, spasmodic vomiting, was covered with boils and found it impossible to sleep even under a heavy dose of morphine.

Crowley had developed these symptoms before and had always been able to stop taking dope until he recovered. Now he discovered that he couldn't stop.

How he managed to find enough money to support himself and Leah is something of a mystery. He could sometimes find a wealthy woman interested in occultism who was willing to fork over a few dollars to be instructed in the mysteries of the East. He had a number of followers scattered around the world and these were good for an occasional loan. But things were tough. Crowley tried constantly to find some way to raise money.

He wrote Trotsky, in Russia, offering for a consideration to put on a world-wide campaign to destroy Christianity. He tried to start another Abbey but had no luck. He had hardly enough to pay for his daily shots of heroin.

During this time Crowley admitted, "I am a mere trifler, existing by a series of shifts of one kind or another," Yet people continued to believe in the Great Beast.

Crowley and Leah managed to scrape up enough money to get them to Paris, hoping there to find a more fertile field for the Great Beast's talents. In Paris, Crowley tried every trick he could to raise money. He wrote to newspapers, suggesting that they give him a job as a foreign correspondent. He quoted his well-known sympathy with the lower classes as proof that he's be just the man to head a labor movement, but no union wanted him. He offered to join the communists. He tried to found some new, occult religion or pseudo-philosophy that might become a fad among the café set as existentialism was, but he didn't have the right touch.

The Abbey in Sicily gradually disintegrated. The starving Sister Cypris had left the Abbey and gone to live as the mistress of a Sicilian peasant, by whom she had another child. But Sister Cypris kept her standards and insisted that the child be respectfully addressed as "Master Bastard III." Crowley's other children at the Abbey were adopted by various relatives of their mothers, although one woman said that trying to control them was like "trying to tame wild animals."

Except for Leah, Norman Mudd was now the last of the Great Beast's disciples. The ex-professor left the deserted Abbey and came to Paris to help out. Crowley tried to sell the Abbey but there were no takers. Years later, he managed to dispose of the crumbling villa for a few liras.

Crowley was now 50 years old, crippled by drugs, and penniless. He had pawned everything, even the last of his "magical jewels." He was thrown out of his hotel for non-payment of rent. He tried to persuade Mudd to insure himself heavily in Crowley's favor and then commit suicide, but Mudd declined. However, Mudd was willing to do everything else to help his master. He peddled Crowley's magical pamphlets. He went to England and tried to interest prominent people in the tragic case of "England's greatest writer and philosopher." He wrote furious letters to the newspapers, signed "Norman Mudd, M.A. (Mathematical Scholar of Trinity College)" demanding justice for Crowley and imploring the people of England to come to the defense of their greatest poet and philosopher who was being persecuted by "middle class prejudice."

By a miracle, Crowley's fortunes suddenly took a turn for the better. He ran into an elderly American woman named Dorothy Olsen. Dorothy was rich, bored and had dreams of being

an intellectual. She was hoping to see the *real* Europe that the ordinary American tourist never sees. Crowley promised to show it to her.

Within a week, Dorothy was not only Crowley's mistress but his devoted slave. She insisted, however, that she would have to be given the official title of the Scarlet Women. Without hesitation, Crowley elevated her to this position and notified Leah that she was deposed. Then Crowley and Dorothy departed for Cairo.

Leah, who with her addiction to drugs had now developed T.B. was left to starve in Paris. But what broke Leah's heart was the loss of the proud title of Scarlet Woman. Throughout the horrors of the haunted Abbey, the terrible days in Algiers and the even worse ones in Paris, she had always clung to that. Now there was nothing left for her.

Leah dragged herself to the American Consul and begged to be returned to America. But she had renounced her citizenship years before—Crowley considered it humiliating for anyone to be a citizen of a middle-class nation like the United States—and permission was refused her. Penniless, Leah managed to get a slavey's job in a cheap restaurant.

Here Mudd found her when he returned from his trip to England. The two miserable people lived together, Leah practicing incantations to make Crowley return to her and Mudd translating Crowley's magical invocations into mathematical formulae. He had discovered that Crowley, in addition to his other virtues, was "the world's greatest mathematician." By pooling their resources, they managed to survive.

Crowley, meanwhile, was living in a luxurious villa in North Africa with Dorothy, sampling vintage wines, buying more magical jewels, and giving elaborate parties to those members of the nobility and international set who happened to be passing through.

Both Mudd and Leah wrote Crowley, imploring him to help them but all they got was a letter urging them to rise above "material considerations." And Crowley now delivered another crushing blow to this wretched pair. He had met a wealthy retired American business man who wished to become his follower. Crowley appointed this man his Magical Heir and wrote Mudd that he was deposed.

For a time it seemed that Mudd would go mad. Then he locked himself in his cellar room, spent the night carefully studying the magical formulae he had worked out in mathematical terms, and the next morning announced that he, not Crowley,

was really the new Messiah and that the new world religion should be called Muddism. When Crowley heard of this, he was furious. He wrote Leah, ordering her to supply him with proof that Mudd had stolen some of the money he'd made selling Crowley's magical pamphlets in England. If she refused, Crowley threatened to excommunicate her from Crowleyanity. Leah refused to obey Crowley's command, and both she and Mudd were excommunicated.

Mudd received the verdict in silence. With his few francs, he took a boat to the little island of Guernsey in the English channel. There he fastened the legs of his trousers with bicycle clips, filled his trouser legs with stones, and threw himself in the bay. The police found the body a few days later. What happened to Leah is a mystery.

Meanwhile, Crowley was living with Dorothy in a magnificent villa just outside Tunis, soaking up sunshine, brandy and heroin. He had recovered from the long spell of hard luck following the collapse of the Abbey and was feeling his old self again. He released a magical proclamation, announcing that it had been revealed to him that he was to take on himself the sins of the world and redeem mankind. His followers all over the world hailed this pronouncement, but Dorothy was not enthusiastic. She was drinking heavily and had taken to drugs. She had begun to see visions. She was also pregnant. Crowley announced that the child would be the first of a new dynasty of superior humans.

Dorothy and Crowley had managed to run through her fortune in less than a year.

He continued to have a great attraction for women, and in the next few years had a succession of mistresses. In 1929, Crowley received an order from the police to leave France. Crowley claimed that a stupid French detective thought that a coffee-grinding machine he had in his rooms was an apparatus for distilling cocaine. Crowley was then living with a woman from Nicaragua named Maria Teresa Ferrari de Miramar whom he called his "High Priestess of Voodoo" as well as his Scarlet Woman. (He now bestowed the title of Scarlet Woman on each of his mistresses in turn, although some of them only lasted a few days.) Crowley wanted to take Maria Teresa with him to England but her father, a respectable old gentleman living in Nicaragua, appealed to the French authorities to prevent her leaving the country.

Both the French and British refused to honor Maria's passport, arguing that they were doing the woman a good turn. As

one of the French officials put it, "Every woman who becomes involved with this man either kills herself or goes insane."

Crowley was furious. He and Maria got married. As the wife of a British subject, she could not be legally prevented from going to England and Crowley triumphantly sailed for London.

Maria soon began to develop the same symptoms as Rose, Leah, Dorothy and the rest of Crowley's women. She started drinking heavily and using drugs. Crowley left her for an American girl artist, with whom he ran off to Portugal.

Either Crowley's technique for driving women crazy had improved or they weren't building women the way they used to. The artist almost immediately started going to pieces. Rose, Crowley's first wife, had lasted three years, Leah lasted six and even the weakest of his former concubines had stuck it out for several months before having to be put away. But after only a few weeks in Portugal, the artist fled to the American Consul who had her shipped out of the country. She was pregnant, had developed fits of hysterical sobbing, tried several times to commit suicide and had started holding conversations with her own astral body. Later, she killed herself.

Crowley went on to Germany. Here, he encountered a rich American and his wife who were seeking a guru (a teacher). Crowley took a trip to Paris with the wife, sending the bills to her husband, who paid them. Crowley's honeymoon with the rich American's wife was somewhat marred by the fact that Maria Teresa in London was dunning him for support.

Crowley countered by trying to divorce Maria on grounds that she was a hopeless drunkard. Unfortunately, the Great Beast had been sending Maria letters boasting of his amatory exploits and no court would grant a divorce in his favor. Maria solved the problem by going stark, raving mad. She announced that she was the daughter of the king and queen and they were trying to make her commit incest with the Prince of Wales. She was removed to an insane asylum where she finally died.

Not even Crowley could keep up this routine forever. The wonder is that he was able to keep it up as long as he did. Even when he was in his 60's, daily consuming enough heroin to kill a roomful of people, he was still skipping around Europe. In 1930, he settled in London, where he seldom had more than one mistress at a time. It was no longer an easy matter for him to pick up a rich woman at any café or talk people into turning over their life's savings to him. Financially, his position gradually grew more and more desperate.

Again, he tried to raise funds. He invented a perfume, guaranteed to attract members of the opposite sex. He also put out an "Elixir of Life," which he sold for whatever the traffic would bear. It was supposed to rejuvenate old men. But his most successful venture was the Kubla Khan #2 cocktail, which he claimed was a powerful aphrodisiac. The receipt for this cocktail is now available.

"Take equal amounts of gin, calvados and crème de menthe. Add 20 drops of laudanum (opium dissolved in grain alcohol) and stir in one tablespoon of cantharides (Spanish Fly). Add ice, stir but do not shake, and serve with straws.

In 1933, a lady named Nina Hamnett, who had for years been a prominent member of the international set, published a book about her life called *Laughing Torso*. Nina had known Crowley off and on for many years. In the book she referred to him as a black magician and mentioned some of the old scandals concerning the Abbey in Sicily. Of all the dozens of newspaper stories, magazine articles, and books that had been written about the Great Beast, Nina's remarks were probably the mildest—in fact, she even admired Crowley for his heroic battle against conventions. But Crowley was desperately in need of funds at the time. He decided to sue Nina Hamnett and her publishers.

The case turned out to be the most sensational thing of its kind since the trial of Oscar Wilde, Betty May was called in to give evidence on what had gone on at the abbey. All Crowley's old pornographic poems were unearthed, as were accounts of his magical ceremonies. The trial lasted four days. Then the judge, Mr. Justice Swift, stopped the testimony.

"I have been over forty years engaged in the administration of the law," said Mr. Swift with deep feeling. "I thought that I knew of every conceivable form of wickedness, but I have learned in this case that we can always learn something more if we live long enough. I have never heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous and abominable stuff as that which has been produced by the man who describes himself as the greatest living poet. Does the jury still want the case to go on?"

The jury returned a verdict for Nina Hamnett without leaving the box.

Crowley was hard hit by World War II which cut off his income from the United States. He retired to a boarding house near Hastings. Here he lived out his last days, still taking his daily dose of 10 grains of heroin. He was not lonely. To the little boarding house came a steady stream of people; students of

the occult, admirers of his poetry, connoisseurs of the grotesque, and people who remembered him in the great days of the Chat Blanc and the abbey in Sicily. His name still remained synonymous with magic throughout Europe. During the bombing of London, Lord Haw Haw suggested in one of his broadcasts that as the prayers of the clergy didn't seem to be having much effect, the British might try having Aleister Crowley celebrate a Black Mass in Westminster Abbey.

Crowley himself changed little. At one moment, he could remark seriously that it was curious that Warwickshire (his birthplace) should have given England her two greatest poets "for one must not forget Shakespeare." A few minutes later, he would be weeping bitterly and muttering. "What a fool I've been!" He believed in magic up to the end and was constantly experimenting with new incantations which he hoped would bring results.

Crowley died peacefully in bed on December 1, 1947, at the age of 72. He had been working on a talisman that would bring him a great fortune. His last words were "I am perplexed . . ."