

# The Cursed Idol

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It was all foggy. Everything on the road below was invisible, and the steep downhill path, slippery with dew. I had to clamber down the Tibet Road cautiously. Still, it was very exhilarating and I felt as though I was moving along an uncanny path in a dreamland. The tender caress of fog on my exposed face was exciting. I had to go further down to reach the *paan* and cigarette stall. Once I turned the corner, the stall was now visible through the tapestry of fog. I started traipsing in the direction of the stall and a meek female voice gave me a start. I turned my head and noticed a stout Nepali woman, aged around thirty, standing only a few feet from me. She repeated, “*samay keti bhayo?*” – and then, finding me to be a Bengali, she asked in broken Bangla, “What’s the time by your watch?” I pulled back the sleeve of the jacket to peek at the watch and replied, “Seven thirty.” She walked a few paces ahead, only to turn around and remark, “You seem to be a tourist.”

“Yes, I’m from Kolkata.”

“How long have you been here?”

“Arrived just yesterday.”

“Which hotel have you checked in?”

Before I could reply, I heard the harsh voice of the Bihari stall owner, “Renu, leave this place immediately or I’ll call the police. You’re again disturbing the tourists?”

She seemed to panic at the name of the police, and left the place hurriedly after uttering obscenities in Nepali at the stall owner who chased her away. He was still panting for breath after returning to the shop. I was really bewildered at the sudden turn of events. Collecting himself, the stall owner explained that this woman was a call girl, used to luring tourists to sexual orgies in exchange for money. He said, “It’s good for you that I intercepted in time and she could not extract the name of your hotel. But I am apprehensive that she would find out nonetheless. So, inform the matter to the manager in advance. Otherwise, if she queries about you at the hotel reception, they might think otherwise of you. But I know your character and you’re to be cautious, so that it’s not besmirched without any reason.”

Returning to the hotel, I related the matter to the manager and he started laughing aloud thinking about the condition of an orthodox person like me facing a call girl. He told me that Renu was not a prostitute in the true sense, as she used to reside with her widower father and a ten year old son. Her husband had eloped with another girl and was now settled at Darjeeling. He told me that there were very few streetwalkers in the town as such; perhaps she was an exception. The professional escorts could be there, but they didn’t disturb the innocent tourists. They made contact through the internet.

I forgot the matter soon and hastened to meet the Lama at the Tibetan institute. He gave me the good news that he had learnt about antique Tibetan stuff in the house of an old man. The agent of the man would contact me in the evening at my hotel.

The agent came in the evening – a Nepali teenage boy with dirty blotches on sunken cheeks, and his shabby coat, unwashed for years, emitted a filthy odor. He was seated on the floor of the lobby as the manager would not permit such a fellow to sit on the sofa. As soon as I entered the lobby, the boy stood up, bowed and offered me the letter from the Lama. I was startled to notice that his teeth were snow-white in sharp contrast to his demeanor and outfit. The brief note indicated that this boy would lead me to the old curio man.

After getting my assent, the boy announced he would arrange for a hired vehicle, a resort for the night stay and all other accoutrements required for the venture. I gave him the necessary advance for booking a vehicle and the resort, as well as five hundred rupees as his fee and some extra cash to buy a fresh sweater and coat, emphasizing that he should immediately get properly washed with soap and hot water. The manager explained to him in Nepali that he ought to be neat and clean before escorting a wealthy gentleman like me.

The night saw me happy that soon I would be in possession of some rare authentic Tibetan curios which my rich collection lacked. My father was a rich businessman and I was the lone issue of my parents. I did a PhD in archaeology from a US university and had decided to be a professor at some university there. But the sudden death of both the parents in a plane crash made me utterly lonely; returning home I sold all the shares of my father's company, invested the money in shares of reputed corporations and took to traveling sites of pilgrimage, but peace of mind was to be found nowhere. While touring Rajasthan I came across a Bengali lady professor from Kolkata and we fell in love with each other. She was a nice lady and did away with all my loneliness. I loved her deeply and was obedient and faithful to her. She inspired me to be a freelance journalist and write articles on antiques. My father already had a good collection and I went on enriching it by collecting rare articles from various places. However, I did not have any collection of Tibetan curios. So now I was elated to have the opportunity to get access to them.

The boy came on time next morning and looked fresh and jovial in his new outfit. We reached Namchi market by noon; after lunch at a hotel, we bought our dinner packets, drinking water, candles and other essentials for the night stay at the newly constructed resort which had no electricity connection yet. It occurred to me that the large half-built resort at that desolate place in candle light would be eerie and appropriate for inspecting antique Tibetan curios. The path was craggy and the vehicle jolted vehemently. By late afternoon we reached the resort amidst a small valley covered with pines and rhododendrons. The place looked beautiful and uncanny in the reddish glow of the setting sun. The driver left with the vehicle for Namchi market, mentioning that he would return by early morning to pick us up.

The boy raced down a narrow causeway and was lost behind the turn of the hill. It was dark inside; I lit the candles, and the half-finished room, where we would be staying, looked mystical. The other rooms were locked. There were two wooden cots in our room. The boy had already brought mattresses which were rolled up at the corner of the room. He would unpack them after he returned. I went out to the balcony and looked around. All sides except the fourth sloped gently up the tree-clad hills, while the fourth went steeply down through

bushes and thickets. So, it was not a valley proper but a saddle point. The Bhutia hotel owner had chosen an excellent place for the resort but he would have to spend much to get electricity and water connections.

The boy emerged at the turn of the hill and I hastened to open the door. He was almost running and was panting now. After settling down, he informed me that the old man could not come up to the resort and so I would have to visit his place to browse through the curios. I got ready in no time and accompanied the boy down the steep causeway. It was broken and narrow and I stumbled twice, but the bushes on both the sides saved me from falling down. The wooden house of the old man was at the upper end of the small village with houses scattering down a valley that sloped gently down to meet the steep hills around. It was already evening and I switched on my torch.

The house was at the end of the village and other houses, not more than forty, were away from this house. He liked to live alone in peaceful quiet, I thought. The house consisted of a small bedroom and a kitchen and was lighted by a dim lamp. The man had a large puckered face and deep creases on the forehead, the hair around the baldness were all creamy white and there was no trace of hair on the face except a small goatee down the chin; the snub nose was very large and his small eyes were luminous and intelligent. He greeted me with affable smile and requested me to be seated on the stone slab placed at the corner of the room. At the far end of the room there was a beautiful statue of Buddha. He asked if I would like to have *chhaang* (the locally made strong alcoholic drink) which I instantly declined. I, however, consented to spice-tea.

After tea I came right to business and the man asked me to follow him. He carefully closed the entrance door, asked the boy to stand guard and took me stooping through the small door to a narrow passage which caved into the hillside and ended up at the approach of a flight of stairs going steeply down. He carried a lamp and I lighted my torch to step carefully down the steep staircase. At last we reached an underground room much larger than the upper one and lo, there were innumerable antique articles stacked on a stone ledge that jutted out of the sidewall which was but the hillside. Examining the articles I was utterly disappointed as most of them were trash, occasionally displayed in curio shops at Gangtok and Darjeeling. The old man smiled enigmatically and said, 'I know what you're thinking, sir. But I've not given you so much trouble for these trifles. I'll show you something that you must like, I hope. This is a rare thing and had been brought along by my ancestor right from Tibet.'

The way he talked ignited my curiosity. An enigmatic smile played on his lips and in the flickering light of the lamp he looked like an aboriginal man. I felt as though I was transported by a time machine to the pre-historic ages and an eerie sensation coursed down my spine. The old man removed the trash articles and took out a wooden box about two feet long. He slowly raised the lid and hesitated for a while, his looks betraying panic, and in a trembling voice he muttered, 'Here's something that I'm sure would interest you, but I must relate the hazards associated with it.' He slowly handed out an idol and I bent forward to peer at it. In

the flickering light the metallic linings of the reddish robe of the fourteen inch idol glistened and almost blinded my eyes. The man held the figure in front of the lamp. My eyes got transfixed at the enchanting idol. The body was adorned with an ornamented tight-fitted red robe and only the head was open. The sharp nose and the blue eyes (made of topaz stone, the man told me later on) revealed mockery and cruel sadism but it expressed cajolery at the same time. The sharp heavy boobs, glued tightly to the robe, sloped down to the flat belly and slim waist line which again bulged at the back into heavy enticing butts that curved gently down to the thighs and slender legs. I remained spellbound for some time. My trance broke at the blubbering of the old man: 'You have liked it I'm sure and would be ready to pay the price I would offer, but babu, think twice before you possess this idol of the vindictive goddess.'

'I don't believe that an idol could be alive and vindictive. So I must have such an invaluable thing and am ready to pay your price.'

'It's your choice, but still it would be a sin on my part if I don't disclose everything.'

The man started relating the story of the idol made of a very hard but light Burmese teak and plastered with a rubbery substance. It was originally the property of his Tibetan ancestor who was a *tantric* engaged in occult rites. He had brought this idol from Burma and disregarding the warnings of his preceptor, he started secret worship of the goddess. One night, everybody in the house was waken by his shrill frightened voice. Breaking open his door the next morning, a local lama found him dead with his eyes bulging out in front of the idol. Following the removal of the corpse, the lama entered the room alone and adorned the idol with this sacred robe. Thereafter, he sealed the room, and for two generations the idol remained in the room which was never opened.

This old man's grandfather brought it along while he left Tibet for Sikkim. Nobody, however, opened the box containing the idol, and it was kept in an underground room of their house in the village. That is, until the wife of this old man discovered it; finding the robe dirty, she had taken it out for a wash, putting it on the idol again thereafter. But that very night she became insane and committed suicide after a few days.

Nobody except this old man knew the reason of her insanity. But again, he forgot to take adequate precaution, and one day his only son was missing. Considering it a bad omen, the man entered the cellar at night only to find his son dead embracing the idol. Once again a pious lama was invited to adorn the idol with a new sacred robe as his son had torn open the old one.

I hardly believed this cock and bull story but was still puzzled at his endeavor to dissuade me and lose the opportunity to earn sumptuous money in exchange for something he had no use of. I reasoned it out in this way. Although he was badly in need of money, he was subconsciously unwilling to part with this invaluable ancestral property; this subconsciously possessiveness had goaded him to fabricate such a blood chilling story. I did not hesitate a moment to express my strong desire to possess the article. We came out of the cellar and I paid him much more than the amount he had demanded. He once again cautioned me not to uncover the body of the idol. I assured him, and left knowing well that I

would never be able to resist the temptation to divest this voluptuous body of the robe. With my scientific bent of my mind, I was confident that no misfortune would befall me at watching the enticing nudity. All the way back, I thought of rearranging the story with further fabrications along with the article on the idol. I must first consult experts on *Bajrajaan*-Buddhist idols about the origin of the worship of this goddess in Burma and Tibet. The idol resembled the image of *Yakshinis* observed in many Buddhist monasteries and *gumphas*.

Returning to hotel I called my wife and informed her that I was in possession of a rare curio which she would like for sure. I also talked for some time with my charming son, a class three student of a reputed English medium school. He asked me to buy a Sikkim stamped t-shirt he had seen one of his classmates wearing. In the evening I went to the Nehru market and bought the t-shirt, and from the Lal market below bought some beautiful sweaters for my wife and son, and also sacred wheels and tiny bells, a specialty of Sikkim. I sat for some time in the flower adorned mall and watched the play of multicolored light on the dancing fountains. The fountain right in front of me was tinged orange; the vapors sprinkling around gave my face a gentle touch and my vision gradually lost into the mystic land of the glowing vapor. I visualized the enlarged idol of the *Yakshini* dancing enticingly, swaying her voluptuous figure and inviting me.

I abruptly stood up and rushed unconsciously towards the fountain and stumbled on the grill fencing raising roars of laughter from the boys and girls seated around. They might have taken me to be a drunkard. I soon came to senses and in utter embarrassment for my stupidity hastened to leave the place. I returned to the hotel and stacked the gifts in my suitcase. An uncanny hilarity took possession of me and I started crooning a film song. The dancing idol with all its lustful gestures had taken possession of me, and in my mind's eye it soon assumed the shape of Renu, the call-girl I happened to meet near the cigarette stall and I felt a strong desire for her. I was a bit embarrassed as I had never experienced earlier such an amorous inclination towards a woman other than my wife. But I could not shake Renu off my mind and she, intermingling with the *Yakshini*, made me hot and crazy.

I felt very tired after dinner and switched off even the night lamp and fell fast asleep. I had a bad dream of a vehement quarrel with my wife. In a fit of anger I started abusing her in filthy language. She remained morose and silent all through and this raised my anger beyond control. I dragged her by the hair. My son tried to intervene and I pushed him aside. His head crashed against the wall and my sleep broke. Even in the cold weather my garments were soaked in sweat. I got up in a terrible mood and changed the shirt and pajamas. Then all of a sudden I remembered the rare Tibetan idol. In the darkness of the room I groped for the box and it was there. I lifted the lid and was astonished to find a glow emanating from the idol making it visible with all its alluring voluptuousness. I handed it out and held it near my face. The foam coating must contain some phosphorescent element which had made it glowing in the darkness. The eyes were sparkling as though inviting me and the large pointed boobs seemed to be heaving. I remained spellbound for a while. An excitement was building up; I felt horny, and disregarding all the warnings of the old man, I stripped open the body of the

idol, and it made me crazy. I touched the boobs which had spongy softness and elasticity. I ran my fingers through the entire idol again and again. The butts and the triangle were all spongy like the boobs. Would the idol kill me like the son of the old man? No, it was a cock and bull story, I thought. I could not resist kissing the idol from head to feet most passionately and wildly. I held her tight against my lips for a long time. Although I did not die, unlike the old man's unfortunate son, I kept my mouth tightly shut as I apprehended that the foam coating might contain some poisonous substance that had killed the son of the old man. I felt extremely sleepy and replaced the idol in the box and fell asleep as soon as I touched the bed. I dreamt of the call girl Renu embracing me passionately ending up in wild love making.

I rose late the next morning. The idol and Renu streamed through my mind alternately and eventually mingled into one, enhancing my desire for Renu. I thought I should somehow find her. It was foggy all around. I took my breakfast and traipsed through the ocean of fog for the cigarette stall. As soon as I approached the steep rise that led to the turn where the pan shop was situated, I was startled by a loud giggle. Hot blood rushed up my spine as Renu emerged from the fog. She smiled lustfully and greeted me. I brazenly ran my devouring eyes through her skimpily clad voluptuous body. The bulge of her large boobs on the pink sweater made me almost hysterical and I found a striking resemblance of her with the idol. She got closer to me and swayed her heavy butts in the style of a dancer to send blood up my spine again. I caught hold of her hand and she smiled approvingly. I felt I must have her by any means and at any cost. I patted her on the back and muttered in a conspiratorial voice, 'Let's go somewhere.' She giggled with the horny swaying of her body and said, 'Come with me then!' I followed her through the dense fog without knowing where she was leading me.

Soon we were moving down a narrow causeway and we had to remain close to each other. Occasionally, my conscience and conservative nature would overcome me and the call girl would appear like a vampire leading me to my doom. But soon all such inhibitory feelings vanished and my inner mind mocked my utter foolishness. The fog had become denser. I could not resist kissing her madly and she returned warmly. 'My house is not far off,' she said in an insinuating tone. She was right and in a short while we were in her bed in a heavenly union as I had never experienced before. I thought what a fool I had been to marry a weakling Bengali girl, and in a moment all my hitherto-cherished self-styled morality was swept away. I felt the joy of freedom from inhibitions that had prevented me so far from enjoying life in full. Her body in deep embrace once again reminded me of the idol and I felt Renu was turning into the idol. I pressed her head against my chest and said passionately, 'Would you marry me and go away with me to some place?'

'You are already married and you have a son too, you told me,' she said in a mocking tone.

'Hell with them. I would divorce the wife if necessary.'

'Everybody says so in bed and then forgets.'

'But I'm authentic. I no longer have any attraction for my wife after having the experience of real pleasure.'

‘Then are you ready to make provisions for my father and son?’

‘How much do you need for them?’

She giggled, scrutinizing my face, and said, ‘Fifty thousand now for buying my father articles for his grocery shop and ten thousand every month. This is for them and for me I want a bank balance, say of fifty thousand more.’ She told that she had a bank account and she may also accept account payee check.

The amount was trifling for me and I readily agreed. She at first could not believe my words, but when I assured her that I would issue her a check right after returning to hotel and pay the cash the next day after withdrawing the money from my Siliguri account, she was ecstatic and dragged me into another blissful orgy. She said I need not take the trouble of withdrawing money from the bank and may pay the entire amount in checks.

I took her along. Coming to the turn of the road close to the hotel, I asked her to wait there as I did not like the hotel manager to have any knowledge of my hobnobbing with this call girl. I issued a check of two lakh rupees, making her eyes bulge out in astonishment as she could not believe her eyes. She turned her eyes toward me to study if I was joking with her or trying to lead her to trouble. I assured her that it was real and within a few days the amount would be transferred to her account. I gave her ten thousand rupees in cash and told I would pay the required cash the next day.

For other expenses I needed money and so I had to go to Siliguri the next day. I booked room at a hotel at Ranipole over mobile phone and checked out of the hotel at Tibet Road. Renu accompanied me to Ranipole. Dropping her along with my belongings at the new hotel I went to Siliguri and withdrawing adequate money from various accounts returned by the same vehicle.

The night was heavenly with wild love making. Renu fell fast asleep out of exhaustion but I could not sleep. The idol drew me like magic and almost in a hypnotic fit I got to the box, opened it and was excited to visualize the striking resemblance between Renu and the idol. My gaze remained transfixed for a long time on the enlivened idol. I got so excited that I had to rouse Renu from sleep. She was drowsy at first but soon her vigor and passion returned and we were lost into the bliss-land again.

Next morning we returned to Gangtok leaving all the belongings except the idol-box at the Ranipole hotel. Renu convinced her father that she had got a good job at Siliguri that would keep her away for some time but she would meet him and her son once a week. They could guess what sort of job it was but did not mind, as they were accustomed to her staying away for such jobs. What mattered to them was the money and this time it was a very attractive one. She stayed at Gangtok for a few days to buy articles for her father’s shop and garments and books for the boy. But she spent every night with me at Ranipole. Finally we left for Siliguri. In the meantime I had rented a house of a Marwari smuggler at a desolate place near the Gulma-Mohargaon tea estate. The first floor was meant for his men who occasionally arrived to take contraband goods stored in the cellar. The upper storey, offered to me was, however, completely vacant.

I called my wife and informed her that I would have to go to a remote place to collect some rare curios and for about a fortnight I won't be able to contact them as there was no mobile tower at the place. Her voice revealed worry and sadness. I cut off the connection and switched off the cell phone. For a moment I felt my conscience prick at my brutal treatment of her and my innocent son, but Renu's emergence in some transparent apparel swept away the silly feelings. Soon she got ready for the journey and the hired car had come on time and was honking to alert us.

The vehicle as directed by me dropped us at the entrance of the house that was about hundred meters from the main road and surrounded by bushy sal, pine and jarul trees. It was completely invisible from the main road. I paid off the car and we went upstairs. Renu had bought a broom and other household necessities. In a moment she got busy sweeping and cleaning the rooms and I waited at the balcony watching the Kanchenjunga peaks. They were now covered with specks of reddish clouds that appeared ominous to me. To my consternation, it sent tremors down my spine. The uncanny clouds above seemed to take the shape of the *Yakshini* idol, menacingly casting her vindictive glances at me. I could no longer withstand it and hastened back to the room.

Renu soon got accustomed to the new life, and like a true wife performed all the family chores including shopping from the Sukna market, cooking, sweeping and mopping the floors, and washing clothes. At times I used to roam around the nearby places and meet various people at Siliguri. Renu was always jovial notwithstanding her daily chores. She visited her father and son after a week and told me that they were very happy at her new job which meant plenty of money according to their standards.

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Renu decamped with three lakh rupees and my diamond-set gold rings which I had kept in the drawer of the table. She would never return I knew. She knew very well that I would not be able to pursue her because of my social position. I, however, had nothing to say against her.

The night before she fled, my sleep was suddenly broken by her shrill cry and I hastened out of bed switching on the light. I found her standing near the bathroom door and trembling in terror. I reached up to her just in time to hold her before she lost consciousness and carried her to bed. Strangely, the idol box, which had been at the far end of the room, was now in front of the bathroom door. Mesmerized, I returned to the box; my hair rose on its end to find the lid of the box jerking upwards as if trying frantically to be free from the pressure of the heavy spice-grinding stone-slab, which, I guessed, Renu had placed over the lid. Suddenly I turned intrepid and, removing the stone slab, opened the lid of the box. The idol stopped struggling and turned quiet, but its eyes revealed blood-chilling vengeance. I could not endure its vehement glances and put the stone in place again after shutting the lid. I was horrified, too, but did not reveal it to Renu who had regained consciousness by this time. She held me tight and implored that we leave this room at once and spend the rest of the night in the adjacent smaller room. I carried all our belongings to the smaller room after I

had shifted Renu, locked the door of the larger room, and remained sleepless on the floor of the smaller room for a long time. Renu seemed unwilling to recount at that moment what had terrorized her and I did not insist. Eventually we fell asleep out of exhaustion.

In the morning, Renu prepared breakfast as usual. When we sat down to eat, she told me why she had panicked. She had to go to the toilet in the middle of the night. She did not switch on the light lest it should disturb my sleep. But as she groped her way towards the bathroom door, she was astonished to notice a ray of light emanating from something close to the bathroom. Looking closely she discovered the box, the lid of which was wide open, and the nude idol inside was emitting rays of light and its terrifying eyes were rolling with unimaginable vengeance. With a quick presence of mind, she forced down the lid and put the stone-slab over it. The sound of something constantly striking the inner side of the lid terrorized her and she could not help shrieking before she lost consciousness.

I went out for a walk in the high road; upon returning, I discovered Renu gone. She left the main door wide open. Instinctively, I opened the bag containing money, check books, and ATM cards. She had taken only the cash. Later upon opening the drawer, I found the costly rings gone, too.

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I no longer had the indiscretion to open the door of the larger room and inspect the idol, although at times I felt a strong inner urge to do so. A deep, primal fear urged me to leave the house at once leaving the idol where it was.

I stacked all my garments and other essential articles in my suitcase and the handbag and walked up to Sukna where I withdrew money from an ATM and hired a vehicle for Siliguri. I booked a room at a hotel of dubious reputation near Siliguri North railway station. Lying in bed in the hotel room I started planning the future course of my life. It occurred to me for a while to call my wife and return to my peaceful ethical living. But I could not contain the idea for a long time. I felt a deep hatred for my worthless wife, as the blissful nights with Renu flashed across my mind. No, it would be a sheer folly to return to her, I thought. I was now completely metamorphosed and had no way to get back to my former life. It occurred to me that with money I could get access to plenty of voluptuous call girls and decided to look for one right at that moment. At times I thought that everything concerning the idol was simply an illusion and that I should go back to the rented house, but an uncanny terror held me back.

I consulted the manager and he showed me a large number of profiles. I selected a few and he contacted them. Only two of them were free that night. I chose a twenty eight year old Bengali widow and made an appointment with her at dinner in a bar-cum hotel. She came on time; after an early dinner, we had a vigorous session. She was charming, and besides, she knew some *Kamasutra* tricks that gave me intense pleasure. She had some important family business to take care of that night and left after one wild session, promising to return the next evening; seeking to reassure me, she accepted only half of her usual fee. I had already proposed to her for going out with me to some place for about a month. She gladly accepted the proposal for a month's Bhutan trip. She was virtually free from obligations as she had no

issues and her parents used to reside with her elder brother; but she needed a few days' preparation for such a lengthy stay. I decided not to remain attached to a single woman, and so did not want to engage in any long term attachment with this widow – unlike in the case of Renu. I was very much relieved as the thought of the idol no longer perturbed me. Unlike Renu, this woman seemed to have no resemblance with the idol and I was gratified to think that the relation with her had made me free from the curse of the idol.

So I was on the eve of a vigorous and worth living life. I felt happy and fell asleep as soon as I had switched off the light.

At midnight my sleep broke as I stumbled on something hard. At first, I thought it was a dream, but soon realized it was real enough, and I had so far been sleepwalking along the Hill Cart Road. The hotel at Siliguri had a whole-night bar and the main gate remained open all through the night. So it had not been difficult for me to sneak out unnoticed.

But I had never before suffered from this sleepwalking syndrome. I felt something was attracting me with irresistible force. Looking around in the light of the street lamps, I realized I was not far from the rented house and the idol now reappeared before my mind's eye. I hastened up, ignored the pain on the forehead because of the hard fall and accelerated my pace. I had no longer any fear for the idol. On the contrary, I felt a deep attraction for the *Yakshini*. As I got closer to the path leading to the house, I visualized the nude idol enlarged into a voluptuous full sized woman, standing at the entrance to the house with arms spread out to receive me. I started running towards the blissful union.

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Last night my feet had skidded on a banana peel and I fell unconscious by the shoulder of the high road. When I came to, it was still dark; I was awash with horror when I remembered how I happened to be there. I did not lose a moment to run away from the proximity of the cursed idol and race back to the hotel. I entered right into the bar, so that the gatekeeper could not suspect anything fishy; after spending some time amidst crazy drunkards, I returned to my room and fell asleep.

Manisha, the escort, called me early in the morning to inform with regret that she had decided to meet her parents that day, and therefore, would be unable to attend me at night, but would over-compensate the next day. I felt blank and dejected, but decided against contacting the second best from the escort profile. As the day drew to a close, I started feeling some change within me. Fragments of disjointed imageries started rushing through my head in quick succession, and eventually I was seized with an intense desire to encounter the idol again.

I'm to stop writing the diary right now as my brain is getting jumbled and I'm visualizing the foggy image of the *Yakshini* beckoning me for the eternal union.

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Inspector Mitra remained transfixed for a long while after going through the diary that he found in the hotel room of the famous journalist Alok Majumdar. The late Mr. Majumdar was run over by some heavy vehicle on the highway the last night. All these were the trashy

and frenzied scribbling of a psychotic person, he thought. He had also found a book on Tibetan tantric cult in the suitcase of the journalist. It occurred to him that the journalist might have lost his head because of some erratic practice of occult religious rites. But he must first find out the hidden house and the idol; At least, the contraband goods stored by the smuggler would be unearthed.

Inspector Mitra drove alone by his police Jeep. He discovered the house easily, and broke into the larger room where he found the box. The exquisite nude idol made him spellbound. Nobody else had yet learnt about the diary and the idol. He covered the box with a sheet of newspaper and hid it under the seat of the vehicle. He then informed the local police station. Soon a large contingent of constables led by a second officer arrived at the spot. Searching the house, plenty of cocaine and heroin stashed in the cellar was discovered and seized, and the Marwari was arrested. Interrogating the smuggler closely convinced Inspector Mitra that he had no idea about the idol. After completion of the necessary formalities, he dined at a hotel and burnt the diary after returning home. Luckily his wife and daughter had not yet returned from Kolkata. So he was free to enjoy the charm of the voluptuous idol.

He switched off the light, shut the windows and opened the box in complete darkness and was astonished to find the idol luminous, as was written in the diary. He took it in his hands and held it in front of him. An eerie sensation coursed through him as the idol in his hand seemed to be vibrant with life, and the scintillating eyes, inviting him.