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## A Simple Act of Piety

by Achmed Abdullah

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HIS affair that night was prosy. He was intending the murder of an old Spanish woman around the corner, on the Bowery, whom he had known for years, with whom he had always exchanged courteous greetings, and whom he neither liked nor disliked.

He did kill her; and she knew that he was going to the minute he came into her stuffy, smelly shop, looming tall and bland, and yellow, and unearthly Chinese from behind the shapeless bundles of second-hand goods that cluttered the doorway. He wished her good evening in tones that were silvery, but seemed tainted by something unnatural. She was uncertain what it was, and this very uncertainty increased her horror. She felt her hair rise as if drawn by a shivery wind.

At the very last she caught a glimmer of the truth in his narrow-lidded, purple-black eyes. But it was too late.

The lean, curved knife was in his hand and across her scraggy throat--there was a choked gurgle, a crimson line broadening to a crimson smear, a thudding fall--and that was the end of the affair as far as she was concerned.

A minute later Nag Hong Fah walked over to the other end of Pell Street and entered a liquor-store which belonged to the Chin Sor Company, and was known as the "Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment." It was the gathering-place for the Chinese-born members of the Nag family, and there he occupied a seat of honor because of his wealth and charity and stout rectitude.

He talked for about half an hour with the other members of his clan, sipping fragrant, sun-dried Formosa tea mixed with jessamine-flowers, until he had made for himself a bullet-proof alibi.