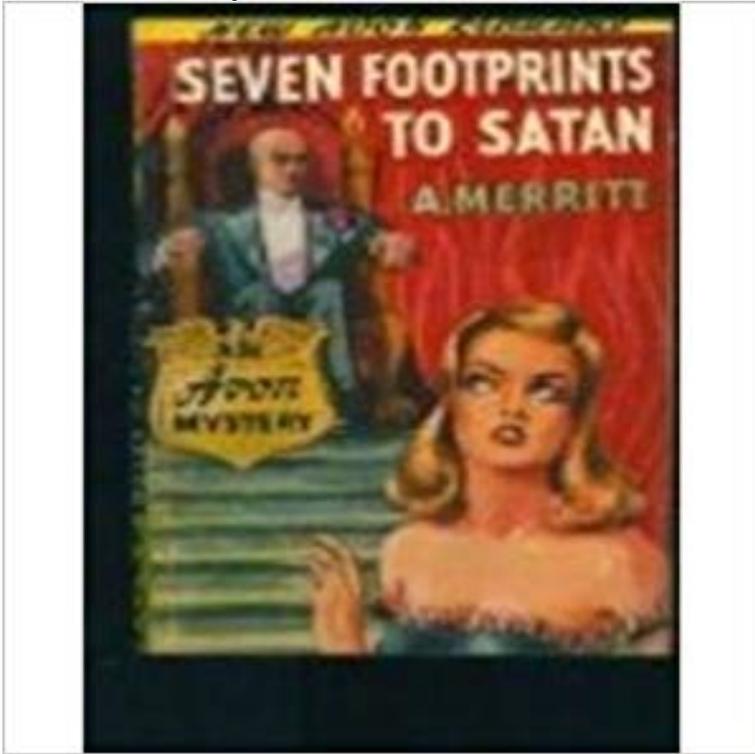


Seven Footprints to Satan



Seven Footprints To Satan by Abraham Merritt. a selection from CHAPTER 1 The clock was striking eight as I walked out of the doors of the Discoverers Club and stood for a moment looking down lower Fifth Avenue. As I paused I felt with full force that uncomfortable sensation of being watched that had both puzzled and harassed me for the past two weeks. A curiously prickly cold feeling somewhere deep under the skin on the side that the watchers are located an odd sort of tingling pressure. It is a queer sort of a sensitivity that I have in common with most men who spend much of their lives in the jungle or desert. It is a throwback to some primitive sixth sense since all savages have it until they get introduced to the white man s liquor. Trouble was I couldn t localize the sensation. It seemed to trickle in on me from all sides. I scanned the street. Three taxis were drawn up along the curb in front of the Club. They were empty and their drivers busy talking. There were no loiterers that I could see. The two swift side-rubbing streams of traffic swept up and down the Avenue. I studied the windows of the opposite houses. There was no sign in them of any watchers. Yet eyes were upon me intently. I knew it. The warning had come to me in many places this last fortnight. I had felt the unseen watchers time and again in the Museum where I had gone to look at the Yunnan jades I had made it possible for rich old Rockbilt to put there with distinct increase to his reputation as a philanthropist it had come to me in the theater and while riding in the Park in the brokers offices where I myself had watched the money the jades had brought me melt swiftly away in a game which I now ruefully admitted I knew less than nothing about. I had felt it in the streets and that was to be expected. But I had also felt it at the Club and that was not to be expected and it bothered me more than anything else. Yes I was under

strictest surveillance. But why That was what this night I had determined to find out. At a touch upon my shoulder I jumped and swept my hand halfway up to the little automatic under my left armpit. By that suddenly I realized how badly the mystery had gotten on my nerves. I turned and grinned a bit sheepishly into the face of big Lars Thorwaldsen back in New York only a few days from his two years in the Antarctic. Bit jerky aren t you Jim he asked. What s the matter Been on a bender Nothing like it Lars I answered. Too much city I guess. Too much continual noise and motion. And too many people I added with a real candor he could not suspect. God he exclaimed. It all looks good to me. I m eating it up-after those two years. But I suppose in a month or two I ll be feeling the same way about it. I hear you re going away again soon. Where this time Back to China I shook my head. I did not feel like telling Lars that my destination was entirely controlled by whatever might turn up before I had spent the sixty-five dollars in my wallet and the seven quarters and two dimes in my pocket. Not in trouble are you Jim he looked at me more keenly. If you are I d be glad to-help you. I shook my head. Everybody knew that old Rockbilt had been unusually generous about those infernal jades. I had my pride and staggered though I was by that amazingly rapid melting away of a golden deposit I had confidently expected to grow into a barrier against care for the rest of my life make me as a matter of fact independent of all chance I did not feel like telling even Lars of my folly. Besides I was not yet that hopeless of all things a beachcomber in New York. Something would turn up. Wait he said as some one called him back into the Club. But I did not wait. Even less than baring my unfortunate gamble did I feel like telling about my watchers. I stepped down into the street.

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