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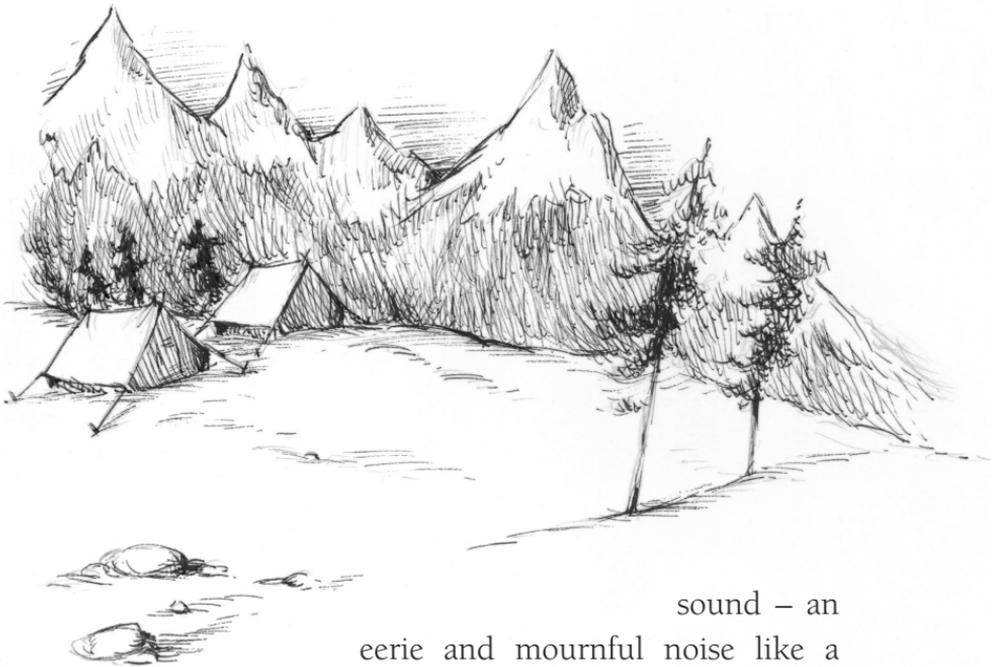
## Kidnap

About a hundred years ago something dreadful happened in the mountains near Tibet.

A beautiful young girl called Lady Agatha Farlingham was sleeping peacefully in a tent pitched on a ledge below the summit of a mountain known as Nanvi Dar. Beside her, wearing a green woolly nightcap against the bitter cold, slept her father, the Earl of Farley, and in another tent close by slept their three porters, tough natives of the Himalayas, who carried their baggage and looked after them.

The Earl had come to the roof of the world to search for rare and unknown plants which grew only in these high and dangerous places. He was a famous plant hunter and he liked his daughter Agatha too much to leave her at home in England doing all the boring things that girls had to do in those days, like painting pictures of ruins, or taking walks with their governess, or visiting the poor, who often preferred to be left alone.

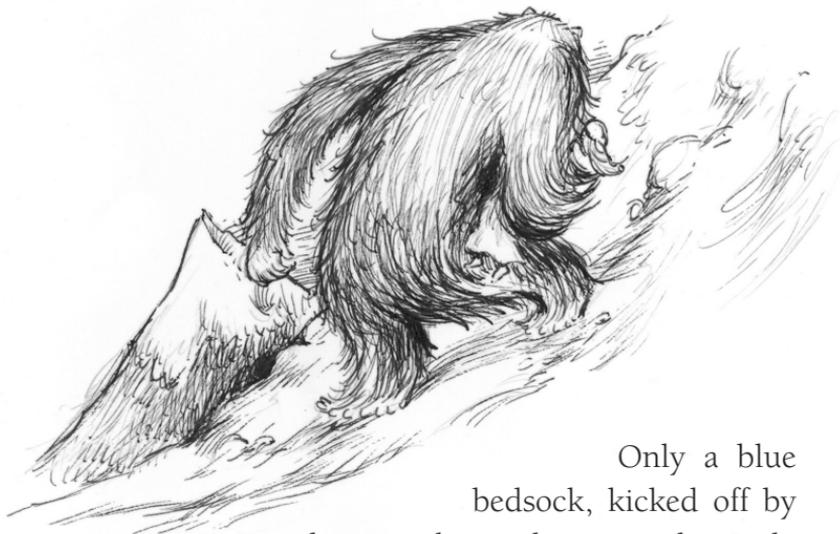
Soon after midnight on that awful night, Lady Agatha was woken by a most strange and unearthly



sound – an  
eerie and mournful noise like a  
train with indigestion.

She sat up, pulled her father's heavy tweed jacket around her shoulders and bravely stepped outside. And then it happened. Out of the blackness and the snow there loomed a ghastly, gigantic, hairy THING. Before she could even scream, a pair of huge brown arms grasped the terrified girl and then the foul beast turned and, leaping swiftly back up the sheer side of the mountain, vanished out of sight.

The poor Earl and his porters searched and searched for many days, risking death in the cruel blizzards and the raging wind, but it was useless. The fresh snow had wiped out all possible tracks.



Only a blue  
bedsock, kicked off by  
the struggling girl, remained to Lady  
Agatha's distraught father. He took it back to  
England, to his ancestral home at Farley Towers,  
and slept with it under his pillow for the rest of  
his life. And when people asked him what had  
happened to his lovely daughter, he always said  
she must have lost her memory and wandered  
away and been buried by an avalanche. Because he  
simply wouldn't believe what all the porters told  
him: that his daughter had been carried away by a  
yeti – that vile monster who can tear a human being  
limb from limb, or crunch one up in a single bite. A  
creature so terrible and fearsome that it is known as  
The Abominable Snowman.

But of course the porters were right. Agatha *had*  
been carried away by a yeti. He had run with her  
high over the sacred mountain of Nanvi Dar, and all

her kicks and struggles and screams felt no more to his brute strength than the hiccuping of a flea. Until at last the thin air, the bitter cold and blind terror brought release and the poor girl mercifully fainted.

When she came round she knew at once where she was. There could only be one place as beautiful as this: heaven. The sky above her head was a marvellous rich, royal blue with little fleecy clouds. The grass on which she lay was soft and sweet-smelling and studded with beautiful flowers: tiny blue gentians, golden primulas, scarlet lilies. Agatha sat up. She felt sore and bruised but that was understandable. You couldn't die and go to heaven without feeling a little bit uncomfortable.

She looked around. The air was warm, and she saw trees covered in red and white and cream blossoms as big as plates. There was a stream, crystal clear and bubbly, with kingfishers darting about its banks. Far above her an eagle circled lazily. She was in a broad valley, surrounded on every side by sheer, jagged cliffs and escarpments. And then to her surprise, beyond the steep ridges which surrounded the valley, she saw the unmistakable outline of the peak of Nanvi Dar, glittering white in the early morning sun.

“Perhaps I haven't died after all,” said Lady Agatha.

And there was something else that didn't go with the idea of heaven in the least. A few metres away from her, sitting so quietly that she had taken it for a boulder or the stump of a huge tree, was an absolutely enormous dark brown beast. It wasn't a bear; it was much, much bigger than a bear. It wasn't a man; it was much, much hairier than any man. And then she remembered. A yeti. She had been carried away by a yeti over mountains so dangerous that she could never make her way back alone. She was trapped here in this secret valley, perhaps for ever.

"I should feel terribly frightened," thought Agatha.

But feeling frightened is an odd thing. You either feel it or you don't, and Agatha didn't. Instead she got up and walked quietly towards the yeti. Then she leaned forward and put her hand on the yeti's arm. At once she was buried up to the elbow in long, cool, silky, tickly hair, masses and masses of it.

The yeti leaned forward. He blew softly with his lower lip to clear away his hair – and then Lady Agatha Farlingham became the first human ever to see a yeti's face.

She thought it a most interesting and distinguished face. Yetis have huge, round, intelligent eyes as big as saucers. If you stop and look into a yeti's eyes,

instead of just running away and screaming, you can't be afraid. Yetis also have snub noses and big ears and the ears have a most useful flap on them, an ear *lid*, which they can close. This saves them from getting earache in the fierce Himalayan winds, and is also useful when they don't want to hear what people are saying. Their mouths are big and generous-looking.

Best of all are their smiles. "Before I had seen a yeti smile," Lady Agatha used to say, "I didn't know what a smile was." Not only was the yeti's smile beautiful, it was very, very comforting to anyone who might be worrying about being eaten. If you want to know what a person eats, look at his teeth. The yeti's teeth were white and even and quite flat, like the teeth of a very clean sheep, and Agatha understood immediately not only that the yeti *wouldn't* eat her but that he *couldn't* eat her. And in fact, as she found out later, yetis are the strictest and most careful vegetarians.

"Oh, I *like* you," said Agatha, holding out her hand.

A great burden seemed to fall off the yeti's back. He got up and stood there, waiting, with his head on one side, till Agatha got up too, and then he began to lead her along the floor of the valley towards

a little copse of slender Himalayan birches where some yaks were peacefully grazing. And as he walked, Agatha saw that his enormous feet – each about the size of a well-fed dachshund – had eight toes and were put on back to front. And this, of course, was why later when people tried to track yetis in the snow they never found them. Yetis who seem to be going are really coming, and yetis who seem to be coming are really going. It is as simple as that.

Suddenly the yeti stopped, bent down to a little hollow by the bank of the stream and began to clear away the dried grass and sticks which covered it. When he had finished he grunted in a pleased sort of way and then he moved aside so that Agatha could see what he had uncovered.

“Oh!” said Agatha. Sleeping peacefully, curled up in each other’s arms, were two fat, furry baby yetis. She bent down to touch the one nearest to her. Its silly, big feet were pulled round its plump stomach and when it opened its eyes and looked at her, they were a deep and lovely blue.

Then she tickled the other yeti and it twitched in its sleep and woke too, and *its* eyes were a rich and serious brown.

But the yeti father had begun to look anxious.



Something wasn't right. He began to stir the babies round, prodding and digging and turning them over like underdone sausages. And then he pounced, and with a proud grunt, held something out to Agatha.

It was another baby yeti – but so small and squashed and funny-looking that it might just as well have been an old glove or a tea cosy or a run-over cat. And when it opened its eyes and looked at her, Agatha got a shock. One of its eyes was a bright and piercing blue, the other was a deep and serious brown.

“A wall-eyed yeti,” said Agatha in amazement.  
Later she called him Ambrose.