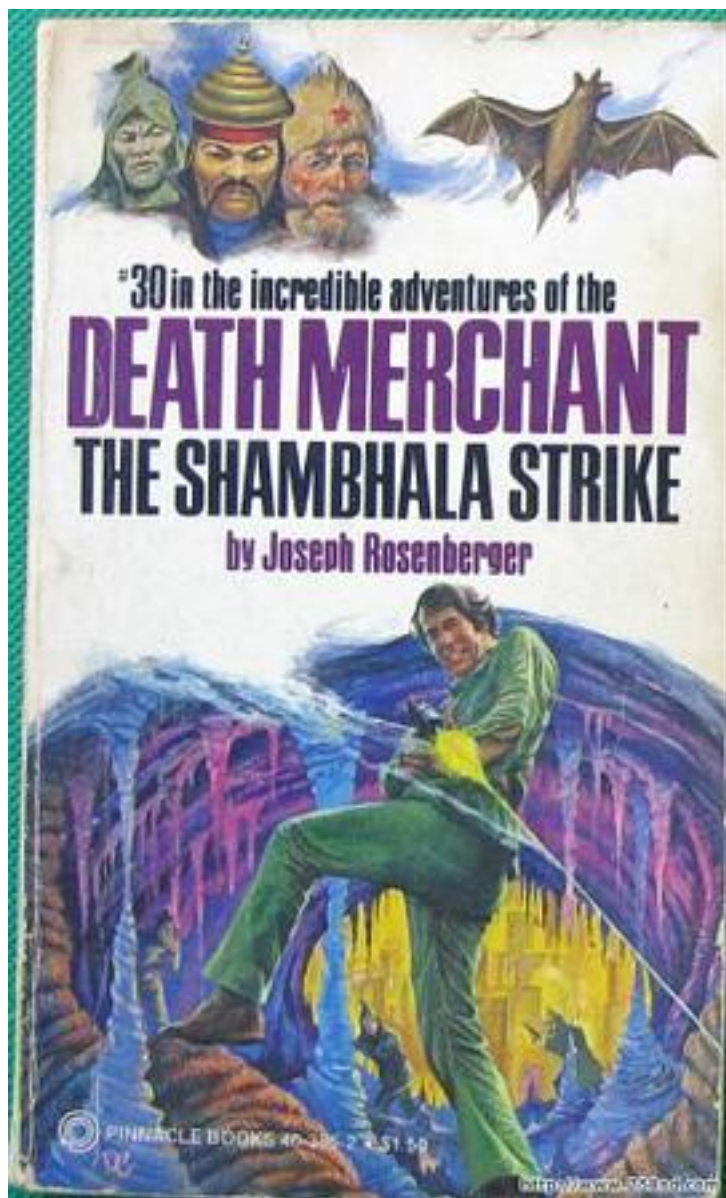


The Shambhala Strike



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Tulku of the Gompa (monastery) then a meal of tea and roast lamb and mixed vegetables with the Tulku and a dozen other ecclesiastical dignitaries each of whom was a lama. Only Karni Padme Hum and Dumvar Gatze-Ding another lama spoke English; yet the conversation did not lag mainly because Foster Cross and Loren Eaton two of the Black Berets who were conversant with Dzongkhai talked not only with the lamas but with the four Bhutanese soldiers after which Cross and Eaton translated to Camellion and the others. There had been religious music the small orchestra consisting of two gyalings (a kind of hautboy or oboe) two ragdongs (huge Bhutanese trumpets) and two kettledrums. A bell striking a special rhythm peculiar to Eastern temples was sounded as a prelude. After a few moments silence the deep-toned ragdongs rumbled for a while then the gyalings by themselves sang a slow musical phrase supremely moving in its simplicity. They repeated it with variations supported by the bass notes of the ragdongs which finally joined the kettledrums that imitated roiling thunder in the distance. The melody flowed as smoothly as the water of a deep river without interruption or emphasis or passion yet producing a strange acute sense of distress as if all the suffering of the beings wandering from world to world since the beginning of the ages was breathed out in this weary desperate lamentation. At the time the Death Merchant had felt very uneasy his intuition in high gear. Hostile forces had seemed to gather around him and he had had the feeling of being possessed by invisible beings who urged him to leave the country who warned him that he would not be able to advance any farther that his search for the fabled Shambhala would only result in dismal failure.

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