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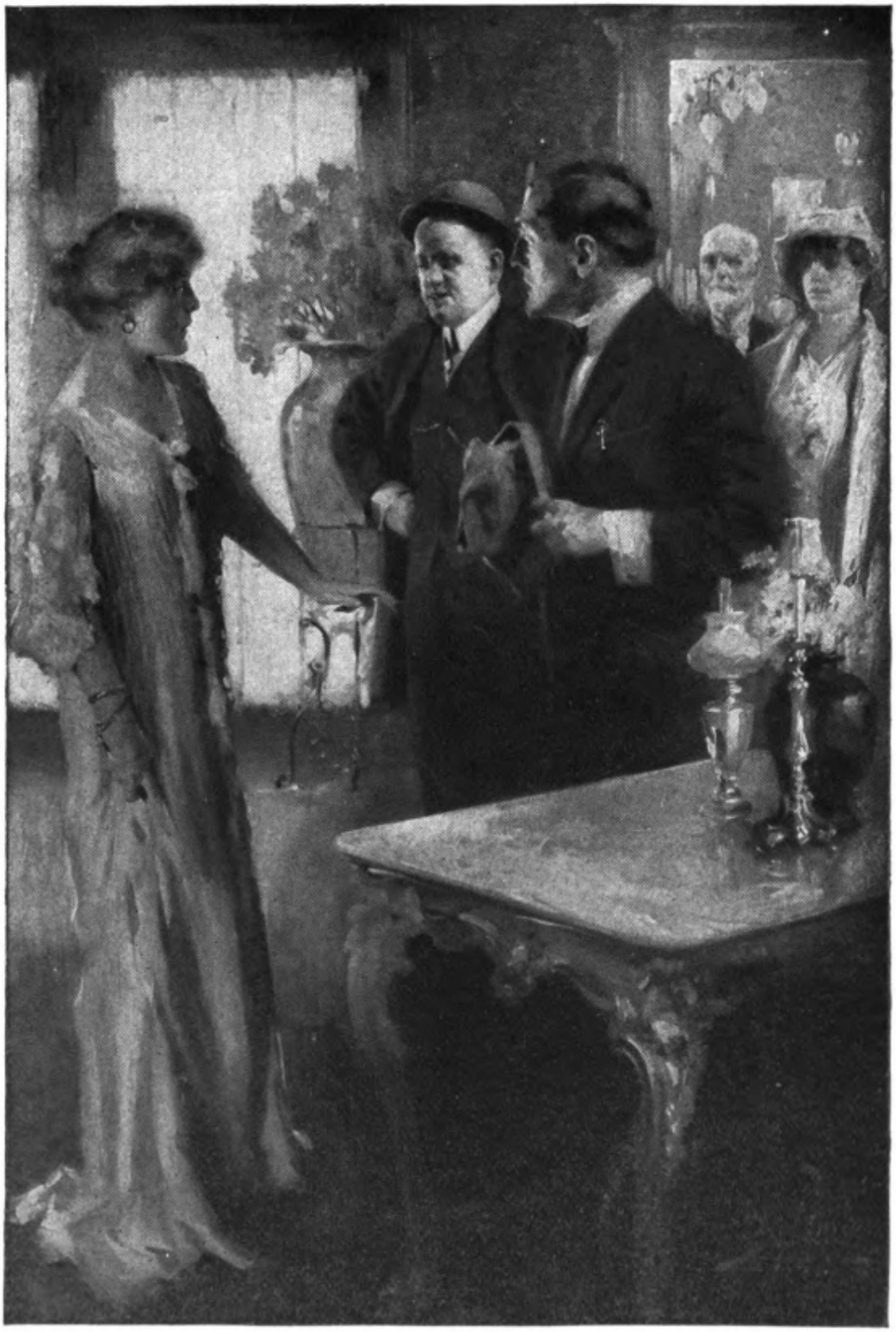

**It was Mrs. Brainard, tall, almost imperial in her loose morning gown, her dark eyes snapping fire at the sudden intrusion.**

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# The Dream Doctor

## The New Adventures of Craig Kennedy, Scientific Detective

By


## Arthur B. Reeve

*Author of "The Silent Bullet," "The Poisoned Pen," etc.*

*Illustrated by*

*Will Foster*


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THE VAN REES PRESS

NEW YORK



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# The Dream Doctor

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# The Dream Doctor

## I

## The Dream Doctor

"JAMESON, I want you to get the real story about that friend of yours, Professor Kennedy," announced the managing editor of the *Star*, early one afternoon when I had been summoned into the sanctum.

From a batch of letters that had accumulated in the litter on the top of his desk, he selected one and glanced over it hurriedly.

"For instance," he went on reflectively, "here's a letter from a Constant Reader who asks, 'Is this Professor Craig Kennedy really all that you say he is, and, if so, how can I find out about his new scientific detective method?'"

He paused and tipped back his chair.

"Now, I don't want to file these letters in the waste basket. When people write letters to a newspaper, it means something. I might reply, in this case, that he is as real as science, as real as the fight of society against the criminal. But I want to do more than that."

The editor had risen, as if shaking himself mo-



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mentarily loose from the ordinary routine of the office.

"You get me?" he went on, enthusiastically. "In other words, your assignment, Jameson, for the next month is to do nothing except follow your friend Kennedy. Start in right now, on the first, and cross-section out of his life just one month, an average month. Take things just as they come, set them down just as they happen, and when you get through give me an intimate picture of the man and his work."

He picked up the schedule for the day and I knew that the interview was at an end. I was to "get" Kennedy.

Often I had written snatches of Craig's adventures, but never before anything as ambitious as this assignment, for a whole month. At first it staggered me. But the more I thought about it, the better I liked it.

I hastened uptown to the apartment on the Heights which Kennedy and I had occupied for some time. I say we occupied it. We did so during those hours when he was not at his laboratory at the Chemistry Building on the University campus, or working on one of those cases which fascinated him. Fortunately, he happened to be there as I burst in upon him.

"Well?" he queried absently, looking up from a book, one of the latest untranslated treatises on the new psychology from the pen of the eminent scientist, Dr. Freud of Vienna, "what brings you uptown so early?"

Briefly as I could, I explained to him what it was

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that I proposed to do. He listened without comment and I rattled on, determined not to allow him to negative it.

"And," I added, warming up to the subject, "I think I owe a debt of gratitude to the managing editor. He has crystallised in my mind an idea that has long been latent. Why, Craig," I went on, "that is exactly what you want—to show people how they can never hope to beat the modern scientific detective, to show that the crime-hunters have gone ahead faster even than—"

The telephone tinkled insistently.

Without a word, Kennedy motioned to me to "listen in" on the extension on my desk, which he had had placed there as a precaution so that I could corroborate any conversation that took place over our wire.

His action was quite enough to indicate to me that, at least, he had no objection to the plan.

"This is Dr. Leslie—the coroner. Can you come to the Municipal Hospital—right away?"

"Right away, Doctor," answered Craig, hanging up the receiver. "Walter, you'll come, too?"

A quarter of an hour later we were in the courtyard of the city's largest hospital. In the balmy sunshine the convalescing patients were sitting on benches or slowly trying their strength, walking over the grass, clad in faded hospital bathrobes.

We entered the office and quickly were conducted by an orderly to a little laboratory in a distant wing.

"What's the matter?" asked Craig, as we hurried along.

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"I don't know exactly," replied the man, "except that it seems that Price Maitland, the broker, you know, was picked up on the street and brought here dying. He died before the doctors could relieve him."

Dr. Leslie was waiting impatiently for us. "What do you make of that, Professor Kennedy?"

The coroner spread out on the table before us a folded half-sheet of typewriting and searched Craig's face eagerly to see what impression it made on him.

"We found it stuffed in Maitland's outside coat pocket," he explained.

It was dateless and brief:

*Dearest Madeline:*

May God in his mercy forgive me for what I am about to do. I have just seen Dr. Ross. He has told me the nature of your illness. I cannot bear to think that I am the cause, so I am going simply to drop out of your life. I cannot live with you, and I cannot live without you. Do not blame me. Always think the best you can of me, even if you could not give me all. Good-bye.

Your distracted husband,

PRICE.

At once the idea flashed over me that Maitland had found himself suffering from some incurable disease and had taken the quickest means of settling his dilemma.

Kennedy looked up suddenly from the note.

"Do you think it was a suicide?" asked the coroner.

"Suicide?" Craig repeated. "Suicides don't usually write on typewriters. A hasty note scrawled on a sheet of paper in trembling pen or pencil, that

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is what they usually leave. No, some one tried to escape the handwriting experts this way."

"Exactly my idea," agreed Dr. Leslie, with evident satisfaction. "Now listen. Maitland was conscious almost up to the last moment, and yet the hospital doctors tell me they could not get a syllable of an ante-mortem statement from him."

"You mean he refused to talk?" I asked.

"No," he replied; "it was more perplexing than that. Even if the police had not made the usual blunder of arresting him for intoxication instead of sending him immediately to the hospital, it would have made no difference. The doctors simply could not have saved him, apparently. For the truth is, Professor Kennedy, we don't even know what was the matter with him."

Dr. Leslie seemed much excited by the case, as well he might be.

"Maitland was found reeling and staggering on Broadway this morning," continued the coroner. "Perhaps the policeman was not really at fault at first for arresting him, but before the wagon came Maitland was speechless and absolutely unable to move a muscle."

Dr. Leslie paused as he recited the strange facts, then resumed: "His eyes reacted, all right. He seemed to want to speak, to write, but couldn't. A frothy saliva dribbled from his mouth, but he could not frame a word. He was paralysed, and his breathing was peculiar. They then hurried him to the hospital as soon as they could. But it was of no use."

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Kennedy was regarding the doctor keenly as he proceeded. Dr. Leslie paused again to emphasise what he was about to say.

"Here is another strange thing. It may or may not be of importance, but it is strange, nevertheless. Before Maitland died they sent for his wife. He was still conscious when she reached the hospital, could recognise her, seemed to want to speak, but could neither talk nor move. It was pathetic. She was grief-stricken, of course. But she did not faint. She is not of the fainting kind. It was what she said that impressed everyone. 'I knew it—I knew it,' she cried. She had dropped on her knees by the side of the bed. 'I felt it. Only the other night I had the horrible dream. I saw him in a terrific struggle. I could not see what it was—it seemed to be an invisible thing. I ran to him—then the scene shifted. I saw a funeral procession, and in the casket I could see through the wood—his face—oh, it was a warning! It has come true. I feared it, even though I knew it was only a dream. Often I have had the dream of that funeral procession and always I saw the same face, his face. Oh, it is horrible—terrible!'"

It was evident that Dr. Leslie at least was impressed by the dream.

"What have you done since?" asked Craig.

"I have turned loose everyone I could find available," replied Dr. Leslie, handing over a sheaf of reports.

Kennedy glanced keenly over them as they lay

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spread out on the table. "I should like to see the body," he said, at length.

It was lying in the next room, awaiting Dr. Leslie's permission to be removed.

"At first," explained the doctor, leading the way, "we thought it might be a case of knock-out drops, chloral, you know—or perhaps chloral and whiskey, a combination which might unite to make chloroform in the blood. But no. We have tested for everything we can think of. In fact there seems to be no trace of a drug present. It is inexplicable. If Maitland really committed suicide, he must have taken *something*—and as far as we can find out there is no trace of anything. As far as we have gone we have always been forced back to the original idea that it was a natural death—perhaps due to shock of some kind, or organic weakness."

Kennedy had thoughtfully raised one of the lifeless hands and was examining it.

"Not that," he corrected. "Even if the autopsy shows nothing, it doesn't prove that it was a natural death. Look!"

On the back of the hand was a tiny, red, swollen mark. Dr. Leslie regarded it with pursed-up lips as though not knowing whether it was significant or not.

"The tissues seemed to be thickly infiltrated with a reddish serum and the blood-vessels congested," he remarked slowly. "There was a frothy mucus in the bronchial tubes. The blood was liquid, dark, and didn't clot. The fact of the matter is that the autopsical research revealed absolutely nothing but a gen-

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eral disorganisation of the blood-corpuscles, a most peculiar thing, but one the significance of which none of us here can fathom. If it was poison that he took or that had been given to him, it was the most subtle, intangible, elusive, that ever came to my knowledge. Why, there is absolutely no trace or clue—"

"Nor any use in looking for one in that way," broke in Kennedy decisively. "If we are to make any progress in this case, we must look elsewhere than to an autopsy. There is no clue beyond what you have found, if I am right. And I think I am right. It was the venom of the cobra."

"Cobra venom?" repeated the coroner, glancing up at a row of technical works.

"Yes. No, it's no use trying to look it up. There is no way of verifying a case of cobra poisoning except by the symptoms. It is not like any other poisoning in the world."

Dr. Leslie and I looked at each other, aghast at the thought of a poison so subtle that it defied detection.

"You think he was bitten by a snake?" I blurted out, half incredulous.

"Oh, Walter, on Broadway? No, of course not. But cobra venom has a medicinal value. It is sent here in small quantities for various medicinal purposes. Then, too, it would be easy to use it. A scratch on the hand in the passing crowd, a quick shoving of the letter into the pocket of the victim—and the murderer would probably think to go undetected."

We stood dismayed at the horror of such a scien-

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tific murder and the meagreness of the materials to work on in tracing it out.

"That dream was indeed peculiar," ruminated Craig, before we had really grasped the import of his quick revelation.

"You don't mean to say that you attach any importance to a dream?" I asked hurriedly, trying to follow him.

Kennedy merely shrugged his shoulders, but I could see plainly enough that he did.

"You haven't given this letter out to the press?" he asked.

"Not yet," answered Dr. Leslie.

"Then don't, until I say to do so. I shall need to keep it."

The cab in which we had come to the hospital was still waiting. "We must see Mrs. Maitland first," said Kennedy, as we left the nonplused coroner and his assistants.

The Maitlands lived, we soon found, in a large old-fashioned brownstone house just off Fifth Avenue.

Kennedy's card with the message that it was very urgent brought us in as far as the library, where we sat for a moment looking around at the quiet refinement of a more than well-to-do home.

On a desk at one end of the long room was a typewriter. Kennedy rose. There was not a sound of any one in either the hallway or the adjoining rooms. A moment later he was bending quietly over the typewriter in the corner, running off a series of characters on a sheet of paper. A sound of a closing door upstairs, and he quickly jammed the paper into his

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pocket, retraced his steps, and was sitting quietly opposite me again.

Mrs. Maitland was a tall, perfectly formed woman of baffling age, but with the impression of both youth and maturity which was very fascinating. She was calmer now, and although she seemed to be of anything but a hysterical nature, it was quite evident that her nervousness was due to much more than the shock of the recent tragic event, great as that must have been. It may have been that I recalled the words of the note, "Dr. Ross has told me the nature of your illness," but I fancied that she had been suffering from some nervous trouble.

"There is no use prolonging our introduction, Mrs. Maitland," began Kennedy. "We have called because the authorities are not yet fully convinced that Mr. Maitland committed suicide."

It was evident that she had seen the note, at least. "Not a suicide?" she repeated, looking from one to the other of us.

"Mr. Masterson on the wire, ma'am," whispered a maid. "Do you wish to speak to him? He begged to say that he did not wish to intrude, but he felt that if there—"

"Yes, I will talk to him—in my room," she interrupted.

I thought that there was just a trace of well-concealed confusion, as she excused herself.

We rose. Kennedy did not resume his seat immediately. Without a word or look he completed his work at the typewriter by abstracting several blank sheets of paper from the desk.

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A few moments later Mrs. Maitland returned, calmer.

"In his note," resumed Kennedy, "he spoke of Dr. Ross and—"

"Oh," she cried, "can't you see Dr. Ross about it? Really I—I oughtn't to be—questioned in this way—not now, so soon after what I've had to go through."

It seemed that her nerves were getting unstrung again. Kennedy rose to go.

"Later, come to see me," she pleaded. "But now—you must realise—it is too much. I cannot talk—I cannot."

"Mr. Maitland had no enemies that you know of?" asked Kennedy, determined to learn something now, at least.

"No, no. None that would—do that."

"You had had no quarrel?" he added.

"No—we never quarrelled. Oh, Price—why did you? How could you?"

Her feelings were apparently rapidly getting the better of her. Kennedy bowed, and we withdrew silently. He had learned one thing. She believed or wanted others to believe in the note.

At a public telephone, a few minutes later, Kennedy was running over the names in the telephone book. "Let me see—here's an Arnold Masterson," he considered. Then turning the pages he went on, "Now we must find this Dr. Ross. There—Dr. Sheldon Ross—specialist in nerve diseases—that must be the one. He lives only a few blocks further uptown."

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Handsome, well built, tall, dignified, in fact distinguished, Dr. Ross proved to be a man whose very face and manner were magnetic, as should be those of one who had chosen his branch of the profession.

"You have heard, I suppose, of the strange death of Price Maitland?" began Kennedy when we were seated in the doctor's office.

"Yes, about an hour ago." It was evident that he was studying us.

"Mrs. Maitland, I believe, is a patient of yours?"

"Yes, Mrs. Maitland is one of my patients," he admitted interrogatively. Then, as if considering that Kennedy's manner was not to be mollified by anything short of a show of confidence, he added: "She came to me several months ago. I have had her under treatment for nervous trouble since then, without a marked improvement."

"And Mr. Maitland," asked Kennedy, "was he a patient, too?"

"Mr. Maitland," admitted the doctor with some reticence, "had called on me this morning, but no, he was not a patient."

"Did you notice anything unusual?"

"He seemed to be much worried," Dr. Ross replied guardedly.

Kennedy took the suicide note from his pocket and handed it to him.

"I suppose you have heard of this?" asked Craig.

The doctor read it hastily, then looked up, as if measuring from Kennedy's manner just how much he knew. "As nearly as I could make out," he said slowly, his reticence to outward appearance gone,

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"Maitland seemed to have something on his mind. He came inquiring as to the real cause of his wife's nervousness. Before I had talked to him long I gathered that he had a haunting fear that she did not love him any more, if ever. I fancied that he even doubted her fidelity."

I wondered why the doctor was talking so freely, now, in contrast with his former secretiveness.

"Do you think he was right?" shot out Kennedy quickly, eying Dr. Ross keenly.

"No, emphatically, no; he was not right," replied the doctor, meeting Craig's scrutiny without flinching. "Mrs. Maitland," he went on more slowly as if carefully weighing every word, "belongs to a large and growing class of women in whom, to speak frankly, sex seems to be suppressed. She is a very handsome and attractive woman—you have seen her? Yes? You must have noticed, though, that she is really frigid, cold, intellectual."

The doctor was so sharp and positive about his first statement and so careful in phrasing the second that I, at least, jumped to the conclusion that Maitland might have been right, after all. I imagined that Kennedy, too, had his suspicions of the doctor.

"Have you ever heard of or used cobra venom in any of your medical work?" he asked casually.

Dr. Ross wheeled in his chair, surprised.

"Why, yes," he replied quickly. "You know that it is a test for blood diseases, one of the most recently discovered and used parallel to the old tests. It is known as the Weil cobra-venom test."

"Do you use it often?"

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"N-no," he replied. "My practice ordinarily does not lie in that direction. I used it not long ago, once, though. I have a patient under my care, a well-known club-man. He came to me originally—"

"Arnold Masterson?" asked Craig.

"Yes—how did you know his name?"

"Guessed it," replied Craig laconically, as if he knew much more than he cared to tell. "He was a friend of Mrs. Maitland's, was he not?"

"I should say not," replied Dr. Ross, without hesitation. He was quite ready to talk without being urged. "Ordinarily," he explained confidentially, "professional ethics seals my lips, but in this instance, since you seem to know so much, I may as well tell more."

I hardly knew whether to take him at his face value or not. Still he went on: "Mrs. Maitland is, as I have hinted at, what we specialists would call a consciously frigid but unconsciously passionate woman. As an intellectual woman she suppresses nature. But nature does and will assert herself, we believe. Often you will find an intellectual woman attracted unreasonably to a purely physical man—I mean, speaking generally, not in particular cases. You have read Ellen Key, I presume? Well, she expresses it well in some of the things she has written about affinities. Now, don't misunderstand me," he cautioned. "I am speaking generally, not of this individual case."

I was following Dr. Ross closely. When he talked so, he was a most fascinating man.

"Mrs. Maitland," he resumed, "has been much

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troubled by her dreams, as you have heard, doubtless. The other day she told me of another dream. In it she seemed to be attacked by a bull, which suddenly changed into a serpent. I may say that I had asked her to make a record of her dreams, as well as other data, which I thought might be of use in the study and treatment of her nervous troubles. I readily surmised that not the dream, but something else, perhaps some recollection which it recalled, worried her. By careful questioning I discovered that it was —a broken engagement."

"Yes," prompted Kennedy.

"The bull-serpent, she admitted, had a half-human face—the face of Arnold Masterson!"

Was Dr. Ross desperately shifting suspicion from himself? I asked.

"Very strange—very," ruminated Kennedy. "That reminds me again. I wonder if you could let me have a sample of this cobra venom?"

"Surely. Excuse me; I'll get you some."

The doctor had scarcely shut the door when Kennedy began prowling around quietly. In the waiting-room, which was now deserted, stood a typewriter.

Quickly Craig ran over the keys of the machine until he had a sample of every character. Then he reached into drawer of the desk and hastily stuffed several blank sheets of paper into his pocket.

"Of course I need hardly caution you in handling this," remarked Dr. Ross, as he returned. "You are as well acquainted as I am with the danger attending its careless and unscientific uses."

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"I am, and I thank you very much," said Kennedy. We were standing in the waiting-room.

"You will keep me advised of any progress you make in the case?" the doctor asked. "It complicates, as you can well imagine, my treatment of Mrs. Maitland."

"I shall be glad to do so," replied Kennedy, as we departed.

An hour later found us in a handsomely appointed bachelor apartment in a fashionable hotel overlooking the lower entrance to the Park.

"Mr. Masterson, I believe?" inquired Kennedy, as a slim, debonair, youngish-old man entered the room in which we had been waiting.

"I am that same," he smiled. "To what am I indebted for this pleasure?"

We had been gazing at the various curios with which he had made the room a veritable den of the connoisseur.

"You have evidently travelled considerably," remarked Kennedy, avoiding the question for the time.

"Yes, I have been back in this country only a few weeks," Masterson replied, awaiting the answer to the first question.

"I called," proceeded Kennedy, "in the hope that you, Mr. Masterson, might be able to shed some light on the rather peculiar case of Mr. Maitland, of whose death, I suppose, you have already heard."

"I?"

"You have known Mrs. Maitland a long time?" ignored Kennedy.

"We went to school together."

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"And were engaged, were you not?"

Masterson looked at Kennedy in ill-concealed surprise.

"Yes. But how did you know that? It was a secret—only between us two—I thought. She broke it off—not I."

"She broke off the engagement?" prompted Kennedy.

"Yes—a story about an escapade of mine and all that sort of thing, you know—but, by Jove! I like your nerve, sir." Masterson frowned, then added: "I prefer not to talk of that. There are some incidents in a man's life, particularly where a woman is concerned, that are forbidden."

"Oh, I beg pardon," hastened Kennedy, "but, by the way, you would have no objection to making a statement regarding your trip abroad and your recent return to this country—subsequent to—ah—the incident which we will not refer to?"

"None whatever. I left New York in 1908, disgusted with everything in general, and life here in particular—"

"Would you object to jotting it down so that I can get it straight?" asked Kennedy. "Just a brief *résumé*, you know."

"No. Have you a pen or a pencil?"

"I think you might as well dictate it; it will take only a minute to run it off on the typewriter."

Masterson rang the bell. A young man appeared noiselessly.

"Wix," he said, "take this: 'I left New York in 1908, travelling on the Continent, mostly in Paris,

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Vienna, and Rome. Latterly I have lived in London, until six weeks ago, when I returned to New York.' Will that serve?"

"Yes, perfectly," said Kennedy, as he folded up the sheet of paper which the young secretary handed to him. "Thank you. I trust you won't consider it an impertinence if I ask you whether you were aware that Dr. Ross was Mrs. Maitland's physician?"

"Of course I knew it," Masterson replied frankly. "I have given him up for that reason, although he does not know it yet. I most strenuously object to being the subject of—what shall I call it?—his mental vivisection."

"Do you think he oversteps his position in trying to learn of the mental life of his patients?" queried Craig.

"I would rather say nothing further on that, either," replied Masterson. "I was talking over the wire to Mrs. Maitland a few moments ago, giving her my condolences and asking if there was anything I could do for her immediately, just as I would have done in the old days—only then, of course, I should have gone to her directly. The reason I did not go, but telephoned, was because this Ross seems to have put some ridiculous notions into her head about me. Now, look here; I don't want to discuss this. I've told you more than I intended, anyway."

Masterson had risen. His suavity masked a final determination to say no more.

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# II

## The Soul Analysis

THE day was far advanced after this series of very unsatisfactory interviews. I looked at Kennedy blankly. We seemed to have uncovered so little that was tangible that I was much surprised to find that apparently he was well contented with what had happened in the case so far.

"I shall be busy for a few hours in the laboratory, Walter," he remarked, as we parted at the subway. "I think, if you have nothing better to do, that you might employ the time in looking up some of the gossip about Mrs. Maitland and Masterson, to say nothing of Dr. Ross," he emphasised. "Drop in after dinner."

There was not much that I could find. Of Mrs. Maitland there was practically nothing that I already did not know from having seen her name in the papers. She was a leader in a certain set which was devoting its activities to various social and moral propaganda. Masterson's early escapades were notorious even in the younger smart set in which he had moved, but his years abroad had mellowed the recollection of them. He had not distinguished himself in any way since his return to set gossip afloat, nor had any tales of his doings abroad filtered through to New York clubland. Dr. Ross, I found to my sur-



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prise, was rather better known than I had supposed, both as a specialist and as a man about town. He seemed to have risen rapidly in his profession as physician to the ills of society's nerves.

I was amazed after dinner to find Kennedy doing nothing at all.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Have you struck a snag?"

"No," he replied slowly, "I was only waiting. I told them to be here between half-past eight and nine."

"Who?" I queried.

"Dr. Leslie," he answered. "He has the authority to compel the attendance of Mrs. Maitland, Dr. Ross, and Masterson."

The quickness with which he had worked out a case which was, to me, one of the most inexplicable he had had for a long time, left me standing speechless.

One by one they dropped in during the next half-hour, and, as usual, it fell to me to receive them and smooth over the rough edges which always obtruded at these little enforced parties in the laboratory.

Dr. Leslie and Dr. Ross were the first to arrive. They had not come together, but had met at the door. I fancied I saw a touch of professional jealousy in their manner, at least on the part of Dr. Ross. Masterson came, as usual ignoring the seriousness of the matter and accusing us all of conspiring to keep him from the first night of a light opera which was opening. Mrs. Maitland followed, the unaccustomed pallor of her face heightened by the plain black dress.

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I felt most uncomfortable, as indeed I think the rest did. She merely inclined her head to Masterson, seemed almost to avoid the eye of Dr. Ross, glared at Dr. Leslie, and absolutely ignored me.

Craig had been standing aloof at his laboratory table, beyond a nod of recognition paying little attention to anything. He seemed to be in no hurry to begin.

"Great as science is," he commenced, at length, "it is yet far removed from perfection. There are, for instance, substances so mysterious, subtle, and dangerous as to set the most delicate tests and powerful lenses at naught, while they carry death most horrible in their train."

He could scarcely have chosen his opening words with more effect.

"Chief among them," he proceeded, "are those from nature's own laboratory. There are some sixty species of serpents, for example, with deadly venom. Among these, as you doubtless have all heard, none has brought greater terror to mankind than the cobra-di-capello, the *Naja tripudians* of India. It is unnecessary for me to describe the cobra or to say anything about the countless thousands who have yielded up their lives to it. I have here a small quantity of the venom"—he indicated it in a glass beaker. "It was obtained in New York, and I have tested it on guinea-pigs. It has lost none of its potency."

I fancied that there was a feeling of relief when Kennedy by his actions indicated that he was not going to repeat the test.

"This venom," he continued, "dries in the air into a

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substance like small scales, soluble in water but not in alcohol. It has only a slightly acrid taste and odour, and, strange to say, is inoffensive on the tongue or mucous surfaces, even in considerable quantities. All we know about it is that in an open wound it is deadly swift in action."

It was difficult to sit unmoved at the thought that before us, in only a few grains of the stuff, was enough to kill us all if it were introduced into a scratch of our skin.

"Until recently chemistry was powerless to solve the enigma, the microscope to detect its presence, or pathology to explain the reason for its deadly effect. And even now, about all we know is that autopsical research reveals absolutely nothing but the general disorganisation of the blood corpuscles. In fact, such poisoning is best known by the peculiar symptoms—the vertigo, weak legs, and falling jaw. The victim is unable to speak or swallow, but is fully sensible. He has nausea, paralysis, an accelerated pulse at first followed rapidly by a weakening, with breath slow and laboured. The pupils are contracted, but react to the last, and he dies in convulsions like asphyxia. It is both a blood and a nerve poison."

As Kennedy proceeded, Mrs. Maitland never took her large eyes from his face.

Kennedy now drew from a large envelope in which he protected it, the typewritten note which had been found on Maitland. He said nothing about the "suicide" as he quietly began a new line of accumulating evidence.

"There is an increasing use of the typewriting ma-

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chine for the production of spurious papers," he began, rattling the note significantly. "It is partly due to the great increase in the use of the typewriter generally, but more than all is it due to the erroneous idea that fraudulent typewriting cannot be detected. The fact is that the typewriter is perhaps a worse means of concealing identity than is disguised handwriting. It does not afford the effective protection to the criminal that is supposed. On the contrary, the typewriting of a fraudulent document may be the direct means by which it can be traced to its source. First we have to determine what kind of machine a certain piece of writing was done with, then what particular machine."

He paused and indicated a number of little instruments on the table.

"For example," he resumed, "the Lovibond tintometer tells me its story of the colour of the ink used in the ribbon of the machine that wrote this note as well as several standard specimens which I have been able to obtain from three machines on which it might have been written.

"That leads me to speak of the quality of the paper in this half-sheet that was found on Mr. Maitland. Sometimes such a half-sheet may be mated with the other half from which it was torn as accurately as if the act were performed before your eyes. There was no such good fortune in this case, but by measurements made by the vernier micrometer caliper I have found the precise thickness of several samples of paper as compared to that of the suicide note. I need hardly add that in thickness and quality, as well

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as in the tint of the ribbon, the note points to one person as the author."

No one moved.

"And there are other proofs—unescapable," Kennedy hurried on. "For instance, I have counted the number of threads to the inch in the ribbon, as shown by the letters of this note. That also corresponds to the number in one of the three ribbons."

Kennedy laid down a glass plate peculiarly ruled in little squares.

"This," he explained, "is an alignment test plate, through which can be studied accurately the spacing and alignment of typewritten characters. There are in this pica type ten to the inch horizontally and six to the inch vertically. That is usual. Perhaps you are not acquainted with the fact that typewritten characters are in line both ways, horizontally and vertically. There are nine possible positions for each character which may be assumed with reference to one of these little standard squares of the test plate. You cannot fail to appreciate what an immense impossibility there is that one machine should duplicate the variations out of the true which the microscope detects for several characters on another.

"Not only that, but the faces of many letters inevitably become broken, worn, battered, as well as out of alignment, or slightly shifted in their position on the type bar. The type faces are not flat, but a little concave to conform to the roller. There are thousands of possible divergences, scars, and deformities in each machine.

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"Such being the case," he concluded, "typewriting has an individuality like that of the Bertillon system, finger-prints, or the *portrait parlé.*"

He paused, then added quickly: "What machine was it in this case? I have samples here from that of Dr. Ross, from a machine used by Mr. Masterson's secretary, and from a machine which was accessible to both Mr. and Mrs. Maitland."

Kennedy stopped, but he was not yet prepared to relieve the suspense of two of those whom his investigation would absolve.

"Just one other point," he resumed mercilessly, "a point which a few years ago would have been inexplicable—if not positively misleading and productive of actual mistake. I refer to the dreams of Mrs. Maitland."

I had been expecting it, yet the words startled me. What must they have done to her? But she kept admirable control of herself.

"Dreams used to be treated very seriously by the ancients, but until recently modern scientists, rejecting the ideas of the dark ages, have scouted dreams. To-day, however, we study them scientifically, for we believe that whatever is, has a reason. Dr. Ross, I think, is acquainted with the new and remarkable theories of Dr. Sigmund Freud, of Vienna?"

Dr. Ross nodded. "I dissent vigorously from some of Freud's conclusions," he hastened.

"Let me state them first," resumed Craig. "Dreams, says Freud, are very important. They give us the most reliable information concerning the individual. But that is only possible"—Kennedy

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emphasised the point—"if the patient is in entire *rapport* with the doctor.

"Now, the dream is not an absurd and senseless jumble, but a perfect mechanism and has a definite meaning in penetrating the mind. It is as though we had two streams of thought, one of which we allow to flow freely, the other of which we are constantly repressing, pushing back into the subconscious, or unconscious. This matter of the evolution of our individual mental life is too long a story to bore you with at such a critical moment.

"But the resistances, the psychic censors of our ideas, are always active, except in sleep. Then the repressed material comes to the surface. But the resistances never entirely lose their power, and the dream shows the material distorted. Seldom does one recognise his own repressed thoughts or unattained wishes. The dream really is the guardian of sleep to satisfy the activity of the unconscious and repressed mental processes that would otherwise disturb sleep by keeping the censor busy. In the case of a nightmare the watchman or censor is aroused, finds himself overpowered, so to speak, and calls on consciousness for help.

"There are three kinds of dreams—those which represent an unrepressed wish as fulfilled, those that represent the realisation of a repressed wish in an entirely concealed form, and those that represent the realisation of a repressed wish in a form insufficiently or only partially concealed.

"Dreams are not of the future, but of the past, except as they show striving for unfulfilled wishes.

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Whatever may be denied in reality we nevertheless can realise in another way—in our dreams. And probably more of our daily life, conduct, moods, beliefs than we think, could be traced to preceding dreams."

Dr. Ross was listening attentively, as Craig turned to him. "This is perhaps the part of Freud's theory from which you dissent most strongly. Freud says that as soon as you enter the intimate life of a patient you begin to find sex in some form. In fact, the best indication of abnormality would be its absence. Sex is one of the strongest of human impulses, yet the one subjected to the greatest repression. For that reason it is the weakest point in our cultural development. In a normal life, he says, there are no neuroses. Let me proceed now with what the Freudists call the psychanalysis, the soul analysis, of Mrs. Maitland."

It was startling in the extreme to consider the possibilities to which this new science might lead, as he proceeded to illustrate it.

"Mrs. Maitland," he continued, "your dream of fear was a dream of what we call the fulfilment of a suppressed wish. Moreover, fear always denotes a sexual idea underlying the dream. In fact, morbid anxiety means surely unsatisfied love. The old Greeks knew it. The gods of fear were born of the goddess of love. Consciously you feared the death of your husband because unconsciously you wished it."

It was startling, dramatic, cruel, perhaps, merciless—this dissecting of the soul of the handsome

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woman before us; but it had come to a point where it was necessary to get at the truth.

Mrs. Maitland, hitherto pale, was now flushed and indignant. Yet the very manner of her indignation showed the truth of the new psychology of dreams, for, as I learned afterward, people often become indignant when the Freudists strike what is called the "main complex."

"There are other motives just as important," protested Dr. Ross. "Here in America the money motive, ambition—"

"Let me finish," interposed Kennedy. "I want to consider the other dream also. Fear is equivalent to a wish in this sort of dream. It also, as I have said, denotes sex. In dreams animals are usually symbols. Now, in this second dream we find both the bull and the serpent, from time immemorial, symbols of the continuing of the life-force. Dreams are always based on experiences or thoughts of the day preceding the dreams. You, Mrs. Maitland, dreamed of a man's face on these beasts. There was every chance of having him suggested to you. You think you hate him. Consciously you reject him; unconsciously you accept him. Any of the new psychologists who knows the intimate connection between love and hate, would understand how that is possible. Love does not extinguish hate; or hate, love. They repress each other. The opposite sentiment may very easily grow."

The situation was growing more tense as he proceeded. Was not Kennedy actually taxing her with loving another?

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"The dreamer," he proceeded remorselessly, "is always the principal actor in a dream, or the dream centres about the dreamer most intimately. Dreams are personal. We never dream about matters that really concern others, but ourselves.

"Years ago," he continued, "you suffered what the new psychologists call a 'psychic trauma'—a soul-wound. You were engaged, but your censored consciousness rejected the manner of life of your fiancé. In pique you married Price Maitland. But you never lost your real, subconscious love for another."

He stopped, then added in a low tone that was almost inaudible, yet which did not call for an answer, "Could you—be honest with yourself, for you need say not a word aloud—could you always be sure of yourself in the face of any situation?"

She looked startled. Her ordinarily inscrutable face betrayed everything, though it was averted from the rest of us and could be seen only by Kennedy. She knew the truth that she strove to repress; she was afraid of herself.

"It is dangerous," she murmured, "to be with a person who pays attention to such little things. If every one were like you, I would no longer breathe a syllable of my dreams."

She was sobbing now.

What was back of it all? I had heard of the so-called resolution dreams. I had heard of dreams that kill, of unconscious murder, of the terrible acts of the subconscious somnambulist of which the actor has no recollection in the waking state until put under

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hypnotism. Was it that which Kennedy was driving at disclosing?

Dr. Ross moved nearer to Mrs. Maitland as if to reassure her. Craig was studying attentively the effect of his revelation both on her and on the other faces before him.

Mrs. Maitland, her shoulders bent with the outpouring of the long-suppressed emotion of the evening and of the tragic day, called for sympathy which, I could see, Craig would readily give when he had reached the climax he had planned.

"Kennedy," exclaimed Masterson, pushing aside Dr. Ross, as he bounded to the side of Mrs. Maitland, unable to restrain himself longer, "Kennedy, you are a faker—nothing but a damned dream doctor—in scientific disguise."

"Perhaps," replied Craig, with a quiet curl of the lip. "But the threads of the typewriter ribbon, the alignment of the letters, the paper, all the 'finger-prints' of that type-written note of suicide were those of the machine belonging to the man who caused the soul-wound, who knew Madeline Maitland's inmost heart better than herself—because he had heard of Freud undoubtedly, when he was in Vienna—who knew that he held her real love still, who posed as a patient of Dr. Ross to learn her secrets as well as to secure the subtle poison of the cobra. That man, perhaps, merely brushed against Price Maitland in the crowd, enough to scratch his hand with the needle, shove the false note into his pocket—anything to win the woman who he knew loved him, and whom he could win. Masterson, you are that man!"

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The next half hour was crowded kaleidoscopically with events—the call by Dr. Leslie for the police, the departure of the Coroner with Masterson in custody, and the efforts of Dr. Ross to calm his now almost hysterical patient, Mrs. Maitland.

Then a calm seemed to settle down over the old laboratory which had so often been the scene of such events, tense with human interest. I could scarcely conceal my amazement, as I watched Kennedy quietly restoring to their places the pieces of apparatus he had used.

"What's the matter?" he asked, catching my eye as he paused with the tintometer in his hand.

"Why," I exclaimed, "that's a fine way to start a month! Here's just one day gone and you've caught your man. Are you going to keep that up? If you are—I'll quit and skip to February. I'll choose the shortest month, if that's the pace!"

"Any month you please," he smiled grimly, as he reluctantly placed the tintometer in its cabinet.

There was no use. I knew that any other month would have been just the same.

"Well," I replied weakly, "all I can hope is that every day won't be as strenuous as this has been. I hope, at least, you will give me time to make some notes before you start off again."

"Can't say," he answered, still busy returning paraphernalia to its accustomed place. "I have no control over the cases as they come to me—except that I can turn down those that don't interest me."

"Then," I sighed wearily, "turn down the next one. I must have rest. I'm going home to sleep."

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"Very well," he said, making no move to follow me.

I shook my head doubtfully. It was impossible to force a card on Kennedy. Instead of showing any disposition to switch off the laboratory lights, he appeared to be regarding a row of half-filled test-tubes with the abstraction of a man who has been interrupted in the midst of an absorbing occupation.

"Good night," I said at length..

"Good night," he echoed mechanically.

I know that he slept that night—at least his bed had been slept in when I awoke in the morning. But he was gone. But then, it was not unusual for him, when the fever for work was on him, to consider even five or fewer hours a night's rest. It made no difference when I argued with him. The fact that he thrived on it himself and could justify it by pointing to other scientists was refutation enough.

Slowly I dressed, breakfasted, and began transcribing what I could from the hastily jotted down notes of the day before. I knew that the work, whatever it was, in which he was now engaged must be in the nature of research, dear to his heart. Otherwise, he would have left word for me.

No word came from him, however, all day, and I had not only caught up in my notes, but, my appetite whetted by our first case, had become hungry for more. In fact I had begun to get a little worried at the continued silence. A hand on the knob of the door or a ring of the telephone would have been a welcome relief. I was gradually becoming aware of the fact that I liked the excitement of the life as much as Kennedy did.

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I knew it when the sudden sharp tinkle of the telephone set my heart throbbing almost as quickly as the little bell hammer buzzed.

"Jameson, for Heaven's sake find Kennedy immediately and bring him over here to the Novella Beauty Parlour. We've got the worst case I've been up against in a long time. Dr. Leslie, the coroner, is here, and says we must not make a move until Kennedy arrives."

I doubt whether in all our long acquaintance I had ever heard First Deputy O'Connor more wildly excited and apparently more helpless than he seemed over the telephone that night.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Never mind, never mind. Find Kennedy," he called back almost brusquely. "It's Miss Blanche Blaisdell, the actress—she's been found dead here. The thing is an absolute mystery. Now get him, *get him.*"

It was still early in the evening, and Kennedy had not come in, nor had he sent any word to our apartment. O'Connor had already tried the laboratory. As for myself, I had not the slightest idea where Craig was. I knew the case must be urgent if both the deputy and the coroner were waiting for him. Still, after half an hour's vigorous telephoning, I was unable to find a trace of Kennedy in any of his usual haunts.

In desperation I left a message for him with the hall-boy in case he called up, jumped into a cab, and rode over to the laboratory, hoping that some of the care-takers might still be about and might know some-

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thing of his whereabouts. The janitor was able to enlighten me to the extent of telling me that a big limousine had called for Kennedy an hour or so before, and that he had left in great haste.

I had given it up as hopeless and had driven back to the apartment to wait for him, when the hall-boy made a rush at me just as I was paying my fare.

"Mr. Kennedy on the wire, sir," he cried as he half dragged me into the hall.

"Walter," almost shouted Kennedy, "I'm over at the Washington Heights Hospital with Dr. Barron —you remember Barron, in our class at college? He has a very peculiar case of a poor girl whom he found wandering on the street and brought here. Most unusual thing. He came over to the laboratory after me in his car. Yes, I have the message that you left with the hall-boy. Come up here and pick me up, and we'll ride right down to the Novella. Good-bye."

I had not stopped to ask questions and prolong the conversation, knowing as I did the fuming impatience of O'Connor. It was relief enough to know that Kennedy was located at last.

He was in the psychopathic ward with Barron, as I hurried in. The girl whom he had mentioned over the telephone was then quietly sleeping under the influence of an opiate, and they were discussing the case outside in the hall.

"What do you think of it yourself?" Barron was asking, nodding to me to join them. Then he added for my enlightenment: "I found this girl wandering bareheaded in the street. To tell the truth, I thought

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at first that she was intoxicated, but a good look showed me better than that. So I hustled the poor thing into my car and brought her here. All the way she kept crying over and over: 'Look, don't you see it? She's afire! Her lips shine—they shine, they shine.' I think the girl is demented and has had some hallucination."

"Too vivid for a hallucination," remarked Kennedy decisively. "It was too real to her. Even the opiate couldn't remove the picture, whatever it was, from her mind until you had given her almost enough to kill her, normally. No, that wasn't any hallucination. Now, Walter, I'm ready."

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# III

# The Sybarite

WE found the Novella Beauty Parlour on the top floor of an office-building just off Fifth Avenue on a side street not far from Forty-second Street. A special elevator, elaborately fitted up, wafted us up with express speed. As the door opened we saw a vista of dull-green lattices, little gateways hung with roses, windows of diamond-paned glass set in white wood, rooms with little white enamelled manicure-tables and chairs, amber lights glowing with soft incandescence in deep bowers of fireproof tissue flowers. There was a delightful warmth about the place, and the seductive scents and delicate odours betokened the haunt of the twentieth-century Sybarite.

Both O'Connor and Leslie, strangely out of place in the enervating luxury of the now deserted beauty-parlour, were still waiting for Kennedy with a grim determination.

"A most peculiar thing," whispered O'Connor, dashing forward the moment the elevator door opened. "We can't seem to find a single cause for her death. The people up here say it was a suicide, but I never accept the theory of suicide unless there are undoubted proofs. So far there have been none in this case. There was no reason for it."

Seated in one of the large easy-chairs of the recep-



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tion-room, in a corner with two of O'Connor's men standing watchfully near, was a man who was the embodiment of all that was nervous. He was alternately wringing his hands and rumpling his hair. Beside him was a middle-sized, middle-aged lady in a most amazing state of preservation, who evidently presided over the cosmetic mysteries beyond the male ken. She was so perfectly groomed that she looked as though her clothes were a mould into which she had literally been poured.

"Professor and Madame Millefleur—otherwise Miller,"—whispered O'Connor, noting Kennedy's questioning gaze and taking his arm to hurry him down a long, softly carpeted corridor, flanked on either side by little doors. "They run the shop. They say one of the girls just opened the door and found her dead."

Near the end, one of the doors stood open, and before it Dr. Leslie, who had preceded us, paused. He motioned to us to look in. It was a little dressing-room, containing a single white-enamelled bed, a dresser, and a mirror. But it was not the scant though elegant furniture that caused us to start back.

There under the dull half-light of the corridor lay a woman, most superbly formed. She was dark, and the thick masses of her hair, ready for the hairdresser, fell in a tangle over her beautifully chiselled features and full, rounded shoulders and neck. A scarlet bathrobe, loosened at the throat, actually accentuated rather than covered the voluptuous lines of her figure, down to the slender ankle which had been the beginning of her fortune as a danseuse.

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Except for the marble pallor of her face it was difficult to believe that she was not sleeping. And yet there she was, the famous Blanche Blaisdell, dead—dead in the little dressing-room of the Novella Beauty Parlour, surrounded as in life by mystery and luxury.

We stood for several moments speechless, stupefied. At last O'Connor silently drew a letter from his pocket. It was written on the latest and most delicate of scented stationery.

"It was lying sealed on the dresser when we arrived," explained O'Connor, holding it so that we could not see the address. "I thought at first she had really committed suicide and that this was a note of explanation. But it is not. Listen. It is just a line or two. It reads: 'Am feeling better now, though that was a great party last night. Thanks for the newspaper puff which I have just read. It was very kind of you to get them to print it. Meet me at the same place and same time to-night. Your Blanche.' The note was not stamped, and was never sent. Perhaps she rang for a messenger. At any rate, she must have been dead before she could send it. But it was addressed to—Burke Collins."

"Burke Collins!" exclaimed Kennedy and I together in amazement.

He was one of the leading corporation lawyers in the country, director in a score of the largest companies, officer in half a dozen charities and social organisations, patron of art and opera. It seemed impossible, and I at least did not hesitate to say so. For

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answer O'Connor simply laid the letter and envelope down on the dresser.

It seemed to take some time to convince Kennedy. There it was in black and white, however, in Blanche Blaisdell's own vertical hand. Try to figure it out as I could, there seemed to be only one conclusion, and that was to accept it. What it was that interested him I did not know, but finally he bent down and sniffed, not at the scented letter, but at the covering on the dresser. When he raised his head I saw that he had not been looking at the letter at all, but at a spot on the cover near it.

"Sn-ff, sn-ff," he sniffed, thoughtfully closing his eyes as if considering something. "Yes—oil of turpentine."

Suddenly he opened his eyes, and the blank look of abstraction that had masked his face was broken through by a gleam of comprehension that I knew flashed the truth to him intuitively.

"Turn out that light in the corridor," he ordered quickly.

Dr. Leslie found and turned the switch. There we were alone, in the now weird little dressing-room, alone with that horribly lovely thing lying there cold and motionless on the little white bed.

Kennedy moved forward in the darkness. Gently, almost as if she were still the living, pulsing, sentient Blanche Blaisdell who had entranced thousands, he opened her mouth.

A cry from O'Connor, who was standing in front of me, followed. "What's that, those little spots on her

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tongue and throat? They glow. It is the corpse light!"

Surely enough, there were little luminous spots in her mouth. I had heard somewhere that there is a phosphorescence appearing during decay of organic substances which once gave rise to the ancient superstition of "corpse lights" and the will-o'-the-wisp. It was really due, I knew, to living bacteria. But there surely had been no time for such micro-organisms to develop, even in the almost tropic heat of the Novella. Could she have been poisoned by these phosphorescent bacilli? What was it—a strange new mouth-malady that had attacked this notorious adventuress and woman of luxury?

Leslie had flashed up the light again before Craig spoke. We were all watching him keenly.

"Phosphorus, phosphoric acid, or phosphoric salve," Craig said slowly, looking eagerly about the room as if in search of something that would explain it. He caught sight of the envelope still lying on the dresser. He picked it up, toyed with it, looked at the top where O'Connor had slit it, then deliberately tore the flap off the back where it had been glued in sealing the letter.

"Put the light out again," he asked.

Where the thin line of gum was on the back of the flap, in the darkness there glowed the same sort of brightness that we had seen in a speck here and there on Blanche Blaisdell's lips and in her mouth. The truth flashed over me. Some one had placed the stuff, whatever it was, on the flap of the envelope, knowing that she must touch her lips to it to seal it.

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She had done so, and the deadly poison had entered her mouth.

As the light went up again Kennedy added: "Oil of turpentine removes traces of phosphorus, phosphoric acid, or phosphoric salve, which are insoluble in anything else except ether and absolute alcohol. Some one who knew that tried to eradicate them, but did not wholly succeed. O'Connor, see if you can find either phosphorus, the oil, or the salve anywhere in the shop."

Then as O'Connor and Leslie hurriedly disappeared he added to me: "Another of those strange coincidences, Walter. You remember the girl at the hospital? 'Look, don't you see it? She's afire. Her lips shine—they shine, they shine!'"

Kennedy was still looking carefully over the room. In a little wicker basket was a newspaper which was open at the page of theatrical news, and as I glanced quickly at it I saw a most laudatory paragraph about her.

Beneath the paper were some torn scraps. Kennedy picked them up and pieced them together. "Dearest Blanche," they read. "I hope you're feeling better after that dinner last night. Can you meet me to-night? Write me immediately. Collie."

He placed the scraps carefully in his wallet. There was nothing more to be done here apparently. As we passed down the corridor we could hear a man apparently raving in good English and bad French. It proved to be Millefleur—or Miller—and his raving was as overdone as that of a third-rate actor. Madame was trying to calm him.

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"Henri, *Henri*, don't go on so," she was saying.

"A suicide—in the Novella. It will be in all the papers. We shall be ruined. Oh—oh!"

"Here, can that sob stuff," broke in one of O'Connor's officers. "You can tell it all when the chief takes you to headquarters, see?"

Certainly the man made no very favourable impression by his actions. There seemed to be much that was forced about them, that was more incriminating than a stolid silence would have been.

Between them Monsieur and Madame made out, however, to repeat to Kennedy their version of what had happened. It seemed that a note addressed to Miss Blaisdell had been left by some one on the desk in the reception-room. No one knew who left it, but one of the girls had picked it up and delivered it to her in her dressing-room. A moment later she rang her bell and called for one of the girls named Agnes, who was to dress her hair. Agnes was busy, and the actress asked her to get paper, a pen, and ink. At least it seemed that way, for Agnes got them for her. A few minutes later her bell rang again, and Agnes went down, apparently to tell her that she was now ready to dress her hair.

The next thing any one knew was a piercing shriek from the girl. She ran down the corridor, still shrieking, out into the reception-room and rushed into the elevator, which happened to be up at the time. That was the last they had seen of her. The other girls saw Miss Blaisdell lying dead, and a panic followed. The customers dressed quickly and fled, almost in panic. All was confusion. By that time a police-

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man had arrived, and soon after O'Connor and the coroner had come.

There was little use in cross-questioning the couple. They had evidently had time to agree on the story; that is, supposing it were not true. Only a scientific third degree could have shaken them, and such a thing was impossible just at that time.

From the line of Kennedy's questions I could see that he believed that there was a hiatus somewhere in their glib story, at least some point where some one had tried to eradicate the marks of the poison.

"Here it is. We found it," interrupted O'Connor, holding up in his excitement a bottle covered with black cloth to protect it from the light. "It was in the back of a cabinet in the operating-room, and it is marked 'Ether phosphoré.' Another of oil of turpentine was on a shelf in another cabinet. Both seem to have been used lately, judging by the wetness of the bottoms of the glass stoppers."

"Ether phosphoré, phosphorated ether," commented Kennedy, reading the label to himself. "A remedy from the French Codex, composed, if I remember rightly, of one part phosphorus and fifty parts sulphuric ether. Phosphorus is often given as a remedy for loss of nerve power, neuralgia, hysteria, and melancholia. In quantities from a fiftieth to a tenth or so of a grain free phosphorus is a renovator of nerve tissue and nerve force, a drug for intense and long-sustained anxiety of mind and protracted emotional excitement—in short, for fast living."

He uncorked the bottle, and we tasted the stuff. It was unpleasant and nauseous. "I don't see why

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it wasn't used in the form of pills. The liquid form of a few drops on gum arabic is hopelessly antiquated."

The elevator door opened with a clang, and a well-built, athletic looking man of middle age with an acquired youngish look about his clothes and clean-shaven face stepped out. His face was pale, and his hand shook with emotion that showed that something had unstrung his usually cast-iron nerves. I recognised Burke Collins at once.

In spite of his nervousness he strode forward with the air of a man accustomed to being obeyed, to having everything done for him merely because he, Burke Collins, could afford to pay for it and it was his right. He seemed to know whom he was seeking, for he immediately singled out O'Connor.

"This is terrible, terrible," he whispered hoarsely. "No, no, I don't want to see her. I can't, not yet. You know I thought the world of that poor little girl. Only," and here the innate selfishness of the man cropped out, "only I called to ask you that nothing of my connection with her be given out. You understand? Spare nothing to get at the truth. Employ the best men you have. Get outside help if necessary. I'll pay for anything, anything. Perhaps I can use some influence for you some day, too. But, you understand—the scandal, you know. Not a word to the newspapers."

At another time I feel sure that O'Connor would have succumbed. Collins was not without a great deal of political influence, and even a first deputy may be "broke" by a man with influence. But now here

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was Kennedy, and he wished to appear in the best light.

He looked at Craig. "Let me introduce Professor Kennedy," he said. "I've already called him in."

"Very happy to have the pleasure of meeting you," said Collins, grasping Kennedy's hand warmly. "I hope you will take me as your client in this case. I'll pay handsomely. I've always had a great admiration for your work, and I've heard a great deal about it."

Kennedy is, if anything, as impervious to blandishment as a stone, as the Blarney Stone is itself, for instance. "On one condition," he replied slowly, "and that is that I go ahead exactly as if I were employed by the city itself to get at the truth."

Collins bit his lip. It was evident that he was not accustomed to being met in this independent spirit. "Very well," he answered at last. "O'Connor has called you in. Work for him and—well, you know, if you need anything just draw on me for it. Only if you can, keep me out of it. I'll tell everything I can to help you—but not to the newspapers."

He beckoned us outside. "Those people in there," he nodded his head back in the direction of the Millefleurs, "do you suspect them? By George, it does look badly for them, doesn't it, when you come to think of it? Well, now, you see, I'm frank and confidential about my relations with Blan—er—Miss Blaisdell. I was at a big dinner with her last night with a party of friends. I suppose she came here to get straightened out. I hadn't been able to get her on the wire to-day, but at the theatre when I called

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up they told me what had happened, and I came right over here. Now please remember, do everything, anything but create a scandal. You realise what that would mean for me."

Kennedy said nothing. He simply laid down on the desk, piece by piece, the torn letter which he had picked up from the basket, and beside it he spread out the reply which Blanche had written.

"What?" gasped Collins as he read the torn letter. "I send that? Why, man alive, you're crazy. Didn't I just tell you I hadn't heard from her until I called up the theatre just now?"

I could not make out whether he was lying or not when he said that he had not sent the note. Kennedy picked up a pen. "Please write the same thing as you read in the note on this sheet of the Novella paper. It will be all right. You have plenty of witnesses to that."

It must have irked Collins even to have his word doubted, but Kennedy was no respecter of persons. He took the pen and wrote.

"I'll keep your name out of it as much as possible," remarked Kennedy, glancing intently at the writing and blotting it.

"Thank you," said Collins simply, for once in his life at a loss for words. Once more he whispered to O'Connor, then he excused himself. The man was so obviously sincere, I felt, as far as his selfish and sensual limitations would permit, that I would not have blamed Kennedy for giving him much more encouragement than he had given.

Kennedy was not through yet, and now turned

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quickly again to the cosmetic arcadia which had been so rudely stirred by the tragedy.

"Who is this girl Agnes who discovered Miss Blaisdell?" he shot out at the Millefleurs.

The beauty-doctor was now really painful in his excitement. Like his establishment, even his feelings were artificial.

"Agnes?" he repeated. "Why, she was one of Madame's best hair-dressers. See—my dear—show the gentlemen the book of engagements."

It was a large book full of girls' names, each an expert in curls, puffs, "reinforcements," hygienic rolls, transformators, and the numberless other things that made the fearful and wonderful hair-dresses of the day. Agnes's dates were full, for a day ahead.

Kennedy ran his eye over the list of patrons. "Mrs. Burke Collins, 3:30," he read. "Was she a patron, too?"

"Oh, yes," answered Madame. "She used to come here three times a week. It was not vanity. We all knew her, and we all liked her."

Instantly I could read between the lines, and I felt that I had been too charitable to Burke Collins. Here was the wife slaving to secure that beauty which would win back the man with whom she had worked and toiled in the years before they came to New York and success. The "other woman" came here, too, but for a very different reason.

Nothing but business seemed to impress Millefleur, however. "Oh, yes," he volunteered, "we have a fine class. Among my own patients I have Hugh Dayton, the actor, you know, leading man in Blanche Blais-

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dell's company. He is having his hair restored. Why, I gave him a treatment this afternoon. If ever there is a crazy man, it is he. I believe he would kill Mr. Collins for the way Blanche Blaisdell treats him. They were engaged—but, oh, well," he gave a very good imitation of a French shrug, "it is all over now. Neither of them will get her, and I—I am ruined. Who will come to the Novella now?"

Adjoining Millefleur's own room was the writing-room from which the poisoned envelope had been taken to Miss Blaisdell. Over the little secretary was the sign, "No woman need be plain who will visit the Novella," evidently the motto of the place. The hair-dressing room was next to the little writing-room. There were manicure rooms, steam-rooms, massage-rooms, rooms of all descriptions, all bearing mute testimony to the fundamental instinct, the feminine longing for personal beauty.

Though it was late when Kennedy had finished his investigation, he insisted on going directly to his laboratory. There he pulled out from a corner a sort of little square table on which was fixed a powerful light such as might be used for a stereopticon.

"This is a simple little machine," he explained, as he pasted together the torn bits of the letter which he had fished out of the scrap-basket, "which detectives use in studying forgeries. I don't know that it has a name, although it might be called a 'rayograph.' You see, all you have to do is to lay the thing you wish to study flat here, and the system of mirrors and lenses reflects it and enlarges it on a sheet."

He had lowered a rolled-up sheet of white at the

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opposite end of the room, and there, in huge characters, stood forth plainly the writing of the note.

"This letter," he resumed, studying the enlargement carefully, "is likely to prove crucial. It's very queer. Collins says he didn't write it, and if he did he surely is a wonder at disguising his hand. I doubt if any one could disguise what the rayograph shows. Now, for instance, this is very important. Do you see how those strokes of the long letters are—well, wobbly? You'd never see that in the original, but when it is enlarged you see how plainly visible the tremors of the hand become? Try as you may, you can't conceal them. The fact is that the writer of this note suffered from a form of heart disease. Now let us look at the copy that Collins made at the Novella."

He placed the copy on the table of the rayograph. It was quite evident that the two had been written by entirely different persons. "I thought he was telling the truth," commented Craig, "by the surprised look on his face the moment I mentioned the note to Miss Blaisdell. Now I know he was. There is no such evidence of heart trouble in his writing as in the other. Of course that's all aside from what a study of the handwriting itself might disclose. They are not similar at all. But there is an important clue there. Find the writer of that note who has heart trouble, and we either have the murderer or some one close to the murderer."

I remembered the tremulousness of the little beauty-doctor, his third-rate artificial acting of fear for the reputation of the Novella, and I must confess

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I agreed with O'Connor and Collins that it looked black for him. At one time I had suspected Collins himself, but now I could see perfectly why he had not concealed his anxiety to hush up his connection with the case, while at the same time his instinct as a lawyer, and I had almost added, lover, told him that justice must be done. I saw at once how, accustomed as he was to weigh evidence, he had immediately seen the justification for O'Connor's arrest of the Millefleurs.

"More than that," added Kennedy, after examining the fibres of the paper under a microscope, "all these notes are written on the same kind of paper. That first torn note to Miss Blaisdell was written right in the Novella and left so as to seem to have been sent in from outside."

It was early the following morning when Kennedy roused me with the remark: "I think I'll go up to the hospital. Do you want to come along? We'll stop for Barron on the way. There is a little experiment I want to try on that girl up there."

When we arrived, the nurse in charge of the ward told us that her patient had passed a fairly good night, but that now that the influence of the drug had worn off she was again restless and still repeating the words that she had said over and over before. Nor had she been able to give any clearer account of herself. Apparently she had been alone in the city, for although there was a news item about her in the morning papers, so far no relative or friend had called to identify her.

Kennedy had placed himself directly before her, lis-

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tening intently to her ravings. Suddenly he managed to fix her eye, as if by a sort of hypnotic influence.

"Agnes!" he called in a sharp tone.

The name seemed to arrest her fugitive attention. Before she could escape from his mental grasp again he added: "Your date-book is full. Aren't you going to the Novella this morning?"

The change in her was something wonderful to see. It was as though she had come out of a trance. She sat up in bed and gazed about blankly.

"Yes, yes, I must go," she cried as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Then she realised the strange surroundings and faces. "Where is my hat—wh-where am I? What has happened?"

"You are all right," soothed Kennedy gently. "Now rest. Try to forget everything for a little while, and you will be all right. You are among friends."

As Kennedy led us out she fell back, now physically exhausted, on the pillow.

"I told you, Barron," he whispered, "that there was more to this case than you imagined. Unwittingly you brought me a very important contribution to a case of which the papers are full this morning, the case of the murdered actress, Blanche Blaisdell."

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# IV

## The Beauty Shop

IT was only after a few hours that Kennedy thought it wise to try to question the poor girl at the hospital. Her story was simple enough in itself, but it certainly complicated matters considerably without throwing much light on the case. She had been busy because her day was full, and she had yet to dress the hair of Miss Blaisdell for her play that night. Several times she had been interrupted by impatient messages from the actress in her little dressing-booth, and one of the girls had already demolished the previous hair-dressing in order to save time. Once Agnes had run down for a few seconds to reassure her that she would be through in time.

She had found the actress reading a newspaper, and when Kennedy questioned her she remembered seeing a note lying on the dresser. "Agnes," Miss Blaisdell had said, "will you go into the writing-room and bring me some paper, a pen, and ink? I don't want to go in there this way. There's a dear good girl." Agnes had gone, though it was decidedly no part of her duty as one of the highest paid employés of the Novella. But they all envied the popular actress, and were ready to do anything for her. The next thing she remembered was finishing the coiffure she was working on and going to Miss Blaisdell.



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There lay the beautiful actress. The light in the corridor had not been lighted yet, and it was dark. Her lips and mouth seemed literally to shine. Agnes called her, but she did not move; she touched her, but she was cold. Then she screamed and fled. That was the last she remembered.

"The little writing-room," reasoned Kennedy as we left the poor little hair-dresser quite exhausted by her narrative, "was next to the sanctum of Millefleur, where they found that bottle of ether phosphoré and the oil of turpentine. Some one who knew of that note or perhaps wrote it must have reasoned that an answer would be written immediately. That person figured that the note would be the next thing written and that the top envelope of the pile would be used. That person knew of the deadly qualities of too much phosphorised ether, and painted the gummed flap of the envelope with several grains of it. The reasoning held good, for Agnes took the top envelope with its poisoned flap to Miss Blaisdell. No, there was no chance about that. It was all clever, quick reasoning."

"But," I objected, "how about the oil of turpentine?"

"Simply to remove the traces of the poison. I think you will see why that was attempted before we get through."

Kennedy would say no more, but I was content because I could see that he was now ready to put his theories, whatever they were, to the final test. He spent the rest of the day working at the hospital with Dr. Barron, adjusting a very delicate piece of ap-

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paratus down in a special room in the basement. I saw it, but I had no idea what it was or what its use might be.

Close to the wall was a stereopticon which shot a beam of light through a tube to which I heard them refer as a galvanometer, about three feet distant. In front of this beam whirled a five-spindled wheel, governed by a chronometer which erred only a second a day. Between the poles of the galvanometer was stretched a slender thread of fused quartz plated with silver, only one one-thousandth of a millimetre in diameter, so tenuous that it could not be seen except in a bright light. It was a thread so slender that it might have been spun by a miscroscopic spider.

Three feet farther away was a camera with a moving film of sensitised material, the turning of which was regulated by a little flywheel. The beam of light focused on the thread in the galvanometer passed to the photographic film, intercepted only by the five spindles of the wheel, which turned once a second, thus marking the picture off into exact fifths of a second. The vibrations of the microscopic quartz thread were enormously magnified on the sensitive film by a lens and resulted in producing a long zigzag, wavy line. The whole was shielded by a wooden hood which permitted no light, except the slender ray, to strike it. The film revolved slowly across the field, its speed regulated by the flywheel, and all moved by an electric motor.

I was quite surprised, then, when Kennedy told me that the final tests which he was arranging were not to be held at the hospital at all, but in his labor-

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atory, the scene of so many of his scientific triumphs over the cleverest of criminals.

While he and Dr. Barron were still fussing with the machine he despatched me on the rather ticklish errand of gathering together all those who had been at the Novella at the time and might possibly prove important in the case.

My first visit was to Hugh Dayton, whom I found in his bachelor apartment on Madison Avenue, apparently waiting for me. One of O'Connor's men had already warned him that any attempt to evade putting in an appearance when he was wanted would be of no avail. He had been shadowed from the moment that it was learned that he was a patient of Millefleur's and had been at the Novella that fatal afternoon. He seemed to realise that escape was impossible. Dayton was one of those typical young fellows, tall, with sloping shoulders and a carefully acquired English manner, whom one sees in scores on Fifth Avenue late in the afternoon. His face, which on the stage was forceful and attractive, was not prepossessing at close range. Indeed it showed too evident marks of excesses, both physical and moral, and his hand was none too steady. Still, he was an interesting personality, if not engaging.

I was also charged with delivering a note to Burke Collins at his office. The purport of it was, I knew, a request couched in language that veiled a summons that Mrs. Collins was of great importance in getting at the truth, and that if he needed an excuse himself for being present it was suggested that he appear as protecting his wife's interests as a lawyer. Kennedy

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had added that I might tell him orally that he would pass over the scandal as lightly as possible and spare the feelings of both as much as he could. I was rather relieved when this mission was accomplished, for I had expected Collins to demur violently.

Those who gathered that night, sitting expectantly in the little armchairs which Kennedy's students used during his lectures, included nearly every one who could cast any light on what had happened at the Novella. Professor and Madame Millefleur were brought up from the house of detention, to which both O'Connor and Dr. Leslie had insisted that they be sent. Millefleur was still bewailing the fate of the Novella, and Madame had begun to show evidences of lack of the constant beautification which she was always preaching as of the utmost importance to her patrons. Agnes was so far recovered as to be able to be present, though I noticed that she avoided the Millefleurs and sat as far from them as possible.

Burke Collins and Mrs. Collins arrived together. I had expected that there would be an icy coolness if not positive enmity between them. They were not exactly cordial, though somehow I seemed to feel that now that the cause of estrangement was removed a tactful mutual friend might have brought about a reconciliation. Hugh Dayton swaggered in, his nervousness gone or at least controlled. I passed behind him once, and the odour that smote my olfactory sense told me too plainly that he had fortified himself with a stimulant on his way from the apartment to the laboratory. Of course O'Connor and Dr. Leslie were there, though in the background.

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It was a silent gathering, and Kennedy did not attempt to relieve the tension even by small talk as he wrapped the forearms of each of us with cloths steeped in a solution of salt. Upon these cloths he placed little plates of German silver to which were attached wires which led back of a screen. At last he was ready to begin.

"The long history of science," he began as he emerged from behind the screen, "is filled with instances of phenomena, noted at first only for their beauty or mystery, which have been later proved to be of great practical value to mankind. A new example is the striking phenomenon of luminescence. Phosphorus, discovered centuries ago, was first merely a curiosity. Now it is used for many practical things, and one of the latest uses is as a medicine. It is a constituent of the body, and many doctors believe that the lack of it causes, and that its presence will cure, many ills. But it is a virulent and toxic drug, and no physician except one who knows his business thoroughly should presume to handle it. Whoever made a practice of using it at the Novella did not know his business, or he would have used it in pills instead of in the nauseous liquid. It is not with phosphorised ether as a medicine that we have to deal in this case. It is with the stuff as a poison, a poison administered by a demon."

Craig shot the word out so that it had its full effect on his little audience. Then he paused, lowered his voice, and resumed on a new subject.

"Up in the Washington Heights Hospital," he went on, "is an apparatus which records the secrets of the

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human heart. That is no figure of speech, but a cold scientific fact. This machine records every variation of the pulsations of the heart with such exquisite accuracy that it gives Dr. Barron, who is up there now, not merely a diagram of the throbbing organ of each of you seated here in my laboratory a mile away, but a sort of moving-picture of the emotions by which each heart here is swayed. Not only can Dr. Barron diagnose disease, but he can detect love, hate, fear, joy, anger, and remorse. This machine is known as the Einthoven 'string galvanometer,' invented by that famous Dutch physiologist of Leyden."

There was a perceptible movement in our little audience at the thought that the little wires that ran back of the screen from the arms of each were connected with this uncanny instrument so far away.

"It is all done by the electric current that the heart itself generates," pursued Kennedy, hammering home the new and startling idea. "That current is one of the feeblest known to science, for the dynamo that generates it is no ponderous thing of copper wire and steel castings. It is just the heart itself. The heart sends over the wire its own telltale record to the machine which registers it. The thing takes us all the way back to Galvani, who was the first to observe and study animal electricity. The heart makes only one three-thousandth of a volt of electricity at each beat. It would take over two hundred thousand men to light one of these incandescent lamps, two million or more to run a trolley-car. Yet just that slight little current is enough to sway the gossamer strand of quartz fibre up there at what we call the 'heart

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station.' So fine is this machine that the pulse-tracings produced by the sphygmograph, which I have used in other cases up to this time, are clumsy and inexact."

Again he paused as if to let the fear of discovery sink deep into the minds of all of us.

"This current, as I have said, passes from each one of you in turn over a wire and vibrates a fine quartz fibre up there in unison with each heart here. It is one of the most delicate bits of mechanism ever made, beside which the hairspring of a watch is coarse. Each of you in turn, is being subjected to this test. More than that, the record up there shows not only the beats of the heart but the successive waves of emotion that vary the form of those beats. Every normal individual gives what we call an 'electrocardiogram,' which follows a certain type. The photographic film on which this is being recorded is ruled so that at the heart station Dr. Barron can read it. There are five waves to each heart-beat, which he letters P, Q, R, S, and T, two below and three above a base line on the film. They have all been found to represent a contraction of a certain portion of the heart. Any change of the height, width, or time of any one of those lines shows that there is some defect or change in the contraction of that part of the heart. Thus Dr. Barron, who has studied this thing carefully, can tell infallibly not only disease but emotion."

It seemed as if no one dared look at his neighbour, as if all were trying vainly to control the beating of their own hearts.

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"Now," concluded Kennedy solemnly as if to force the last secret from the wildly beating heart of some one in the room, "it is my belief that the person who had access to the operating-room of the Novella was a person whose nerves were run down, and in addition to any other treatment that person was familiar with the ether phosphoré. This person knew Miss Blaisdell well, saw her there, knew she was there for the purpose of frustrating that person's own dearest hopes. That person wrote her the note, and knowing that she would ask for paper and an envelope in order to answer it, poisoned the flap of the envelope. Phosphorus is a remedy for hysteria, vexatious emotions, want of sympathy, disappointed and concealed affections—but not in the quantities that this person lavished on that flap. Whoever it was, not life, but death, and a ghastly death, was uppermost in that person's thoughts."

Agnes screamed. "I saw him take something and rub it on her lips, and the brightness went away. I —I didn't mean to tell, but, God help me, I must."

"Saw whom?" demanded Kennedy, fixing her eye as he had when he had called her back from aphasia.

"Him—Millefleur—Miller," she sobbed, shrinking back as if the very confession appalled her.

"Yes," added Kennedy coolly, "Miller did try to remove the traces of the poison after he discovered it, in order to protect himself and the reputation of the Novella."

The telephone bell tinkled. Craig seized the receiver.

"Yes, Barron, this is Kennedy. You received the

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impulses all right? Good. And have you had time to study the records? Yes? What's that? Number seven? All right. I'll see you very soon and go over the records again with you. Good-bye."

"One word more," he continued, now facing us. "The normal heart traces its throbs in regular rhythm. The diseased or overwrought heart throbs in degrees of irregularity that vary according to the trouble that affects it, both organic and emotional. The expert like Barron can tell what each wave means, just as he can tell what the lines in a spectrum mean. He can see the invisible, hear the inaudible, feel the intangible, with mathematical precision. Barron has now read the electro-cardiograms. Each is a picture of the beating of the heart that made it, and each smallest variation has a meaning to him. Every passion, every emotion, every disease, is recorded with inexorable truth. The person with murder in his heart cannot hide it from the string galvanometer, nor can that person who wrote the false note in which the very lines of the letters betray a diseased heart hide that disease. The doctor tells me that that person was number—"

Mrs. Collins had risen wildly and was standing before us with blazing eyes. "Yes," she cried, pressing her hands on her breast as if it were about to burst and tell the secret before her lips could frame the words, "yes, I killed her, and I would follow her to the end of the earth if I had not succeeded. She was there, the woman who had stolen from me what was more than life itself. Yes, I wrote the note, I poisoned the envelope. I killed her."

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All the intense hatred that she had felt for that other woman in the days that she had vainly striven to equal her in beauty and win back her husband's love broke forth. She was wonderful, magnificent, in her fury. She was passion personified; she was fate, retribution.

Collins looked at his wife, and even he felt the spell. It was not crime that she had done; it was elemental justice.

For a moment she stood, silent, facing Kennedy. Then the colour slowly faded from her cheeks. She reeled.

Collins caught her and imprinted a kiss, the kiss that for years she had longed and striven for again. She looked rather than spoke forgiveness as he held her and showered them on her.

"Before Heaven," I heard him whisper into her ear, "with all my power as a lawyer I will free you from this."

Gently Dr. Leslie pushed him aside and felt her pulse as she dropped limply into the only easy chair in the laboratory.

"O'Connor," he said at length, "all the evidence that we really have hangs on an invisible thread of quartz a mile away. If Professor Kennedy agrees, let us forget what has happened here to-night. I will direct my jury to bring in a verdict of suicide. Collins, take good care of her." He leaned over and whispered so she could not hear. "I wouldn't promise her six weeks otherwise."

I could not help feeling deeply moved as the newly reunited Collinses left the laboratory together. Even

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the bluff deputy, O'Connor, was touched by it and under the circumstances did what seemed to him his higher duty with a tact of which I had believed him scarcely capable. Whatever the ethics of the case, he left it entirely to Dr. Leslie's coroner's jury to determine.

Burke Collins was already making hasty preparations for the care of his wife so that she might have the best medical attention to prolong her life for the few weeks or months before nature exacted the penalty which was denied the law.

"That's a marvellous piece of apparatus," I remarked, standing over the connections with the string galvanometer, after all had gone. "Just suppose the case had fallen into the hands of some of these old-fashioned detectives—"

"I hate post-mortems—on my own cases," interrupted Kennedy brusquely. "To-morrow will be time enough to clear up this mess. Meanwhile, let us get this thing out of our minds."

He clapped his hat on his head decisively and deliberately walked out of the laboratory, starting off at a brisk pace in the moonlight across the campus to the avenue where now the only sound was the noisy rattle of an occasional trolley car.

How long we walked I do not know. But I do know that for genuine relaxation after a long period of keen mental stress, there is nothing like physical exercise. We turned into our apartment, roused the sleepy hall-boy, and rode up.

"I suppose people think I never rest," remarked Kennedy, carefully avoiding any reference to the ex-

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citing events of the past two days. "But I do. Like every one else, I have to. When I am working hard on a case—well, I have my own violent reaction against it—more work of a different kind. Others choose white lights, red wines and blue feelings afterwards. But I find, when I reach that state, that the best anti-toxin is something that will chase the last case from your brain by getting you in trim for the next unexpected event."

He had sunk into an easy chair where he was running over in his mind his own plans for the morrow.

"Just now I must recuperate by doing no work at all," he went on slowly undressing. "That walk was just what I needed. When the fever of dissipation comes on again, I'll call on you. You won't miss anything, Walter."

Like the famous Finnegan, however, he was on again and gone again in the morning. This time I had no misgivings, although I should have liked to accompany him, for on the library table he had scrawled a little note, "Studying East Side to-day. Will keep in touch with you. Craig."

My daily task of transcribing my notes was completed and I thought I would run down to the *Star* to let the editor know how I was getting along on my assignment.

I had scarcely entered the door when the office boy thrust a message into my hand. It stopped me even before I had a chance to get as far as my own desk. It was from Kennedy at the laboratory and bore a time stamp that showed that it must have been received only a few minutes before I came in.

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"Meet me at the Grand Central," it read, "immediately."

Without going further into the office, I turned and dropped down in the elevator to the subway. As quickly as an express could take me, I hurried up to the new station.

"Where away?" I asked breathlessly, as Craig met me at the entrance through which he had reasoned I would come. "The coast or Down East?"

"Woodrock," he replied quickly, taking my arm and dragging me down a ramp to the train that was just leaving for that fashionable suburb.

"Well," I queried eagerly, as the train started. "Why all this secrecy?"

"I had a caller this afternoon," he began, running his eye over the other passengers to see if we were observed. "She is going back on this train. I am not to recognise her at the station, but you and I are to walk to the end of the platform and enter a limousine bearing that number."

He produced a card on the back of which was written a number in six figures. Mechanically I glanced at the name as he handed the card to me. Craig was watching intently the expression on my face as I read, "Miss Yvonne Brixton."

"Since when were you admitted into society?" I gasped, still staring at the name of the daughter of the millionaire banker, John Brixton.

"She came to tell me that her father is in a virtual state of siege, as it were, up there in his own house," explained Kennedy in an undertone, "so much so that, apparently, she is the only person he felt he

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dared trust with a message to summon me. Practically everything he says or does is spied on; he can't even telephone without what he says being known."

"Siege?" I repeated incredulously. "Impossible. Why, only this morning I was reading about his negotiations with a foreign syndicate of bankers from southeastern Europe for a ten-million-dollar loan to relieve the money stringency there. Surely there must be some mistake in all this. In fact, as I recall it, one of the foreign bankers who is trying to interest him is that Count Wachtmann who, everybody says, is engaged to Miss Brixton, and is staying at the house at Woodrock. Craig, are you sure nobody is hoaxing you?"

"Read that," he replied laconically, handing me a piece of thin letter-paper such as is often used for foreign correspondence. "Such letters have been coming to Mr. Brixton, I understand, every day."

The letter was in a cramped foreign scrawl:

JOHN BRIXTON,
Woodrock, New York.

American dollars must not endanger the peace of Europe. Be warned in time. In the name of liberty and progress we have raised the standard of conflict without truce or quarter against reaction. If you and the American bankers associated with you take up these bonds you will never live to receive the first payment of interest.

THE RED BROTHERHOOD OF THE BALKANS.

I looked up inquiringly. "What is the Red Brotherhood?" I asked.

"As nearly as I can make out," replied Kennedy, "it seems to be a sort of international secret society.

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I believe it preaches the gospel of terror and violence in the cause of liberty and union of some of the peoples of southeastern Europe. Anyhow, it keeps its secrets well. The identity of the members is a mystery, as well as the source of its funds, which, it is said, are immense."

"And they operate so secretly that Brixton can trust no one about him?" I asked.

"I believe he is ill," explained Craig. "At any rate, he evidently suspects almost every one about him except his daughter. As nearly as I could gather, however, he does not suspect Wachtmann himself. Miss Brixton seemed to think that there were some enemies of the Count at work. Her father is a secretive man. Even to her, the only message he would entrust was that he wanted to see me immediately."

At Woodrock we took our time in getting off the train. Miss Brixton, a tall, dark-haired, athletic girl just out of college, had preceded us, and as her own car shot out from the station platform we leisurely walked down and entered another bearing the number she had given Kennedy.

We seemed to be expected at the house. Hardly had we been admitted through the door from the porte-cochère, than we were led through a hall to a library at the side of the house. From the library we entered another door, then down a flight of steps which must have brought us below an open courtyard on the outside, under a rim of the terrace in front of the house for a short distance to a point where we descended three more steps.

At the head of these three steps was a great steel

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and iron door with heavy bolts and a combination lock of a character ordinarily found only on a safe in a banking institution.

The door was opened, and we descended the steps, going a little farther in the same direction away from the side of the house. Then we turned at a right angle facing toward the back of the house but well to one side of it. It must have been, I figured out later, underneath the open courtyard. A few steps farther brought us to a fair-sized, vaulted room.

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# V

# The Phantom Circuit

BRIXTON had evidently been waiting impatiently for our arrival. "Mr. Kennedy?" he inquired, adding quickly without waiting for an answer: "I am glad to see you. I suppose you have noticed the precautions we are taking against intruders? Yet it seems to be all of no avail. I can not be alone even here. If a telephone message comes to me over my private wire, if I talk with my own office in the city, it seems that it is known. I don't know what to make of it. It is terrible. I don't know what to expect next."

Brixton had been standing beside a huge mahogany desk as we entered. I had seen him before at a distance as a somewhat pompous speaker at banquets and the cynosure of the financial district. But there was something different about his looks now. He seemed to have aged, to have grown yellower. Even the whites of his eyes were yellow.

I thought at first that perhaps it might be the effect of the light in the centre of the room, a huge affair set in the ceiling in a sort of inverted hemisphere of glass, concealing and softening the rays of a powerful incandescent bulb which it enclosed. It was not the light that gave him the altered appearance, as I concluded from catching a casual confirmatory glance of perplexity from Kennedy himself.



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"My personal physician says I am suffering from jaundice," explained Brixton. Rather than seeming to be offended at our notice of his condition he seemed to take it as a good evidence of Kennedy's keenness that he had at once hit on one of the things that were weighing on Brixton's own mind. "I feel pretty badly, too. Curse it," he added bitterly, "coming at a time when it is absolutely necessary that I should have all my strength to carry through a negotiation that is only a beginning, important not so much for myself as for the whole world. It is one of the first times New York bankers have had a chance to engage in big dealings in that part of the world. I suppose Yvonne has shown you one of the letters I am receiving?"

He rustled a sheaf of them which he drew from a drawer of his desk, and continued, not waiting for Kennedy even to nod:

"Here are a dozen or more of them. I get one or two every day, either here or at my town house or at the office."

Kennedy had moved forward to see them.

"One moment more," Brixton interrupted, still holding them. "I shall come back to the letters. That is not the worst. I've had threatening letters before. Have you noticed this room?"

We had both seen and been impressed by it.

"Let me tell you more about it," he went on. "It was designed especially to be, among other things, absolutely soundproof."

We gazed curiously about the strong room. It was beautifully decorated and furnished. On the

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walls was a sort of heavy, velvety green wall-paper. Exquisite hangings were draped about, and on the floor were thick rugs. In all I noticed that the prevailing tint was green.

"I had experiments carried out," he explained languidly, "with the object of discovering methods and means for rendering walls and ceilings capable of effective resistance to sound transmission. One of the methods devised involved the use under the ceiling or parallel to the wall, as the case might be, of a network of wire stretched tightly by means of pulleys in the adjacent walls and not touching at any point the surface to be protected against sound. Upon the wire network is plastered a composition formed of strong glue, plaster of Paris, and granulated cork, so as to make a flat slab, between which and the wall or ceiling is a cushion of confined air. The method is good in two respects: the absence of contact between the protective and protected surfaces and the colloid nature of the composition used. I have gone into the thing at length because it will make all the more remarkable what I am about to tell you."

Kennedy had been listening attentively. As Brixton proceeded I had noticed Kennedy's nostrils dilating almost as if he were a hound and had scented his quarry. I sniffed, too. Yes, there was a faint odour, almost as if of garlic in the room. It was unmistakable. Craig was looking about curiously, as if to discover a window by which the odour might have entered. Brixton, with his eyes following keenly every move, noticed him.

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"More than that," he added quickly, "I have had the most perfect system of modern ventilation installed in this room, absolutely independent from that in the house."

Kennedy said nothing.

"A moment ago, Mr. Kennedy, I saw you and Mr. Jameson glancing up at the ceiling. Sound-proof as this room is, or as I believe it to be, I—I hear voices, voices from—not through, you understand, but from—that very ceiling. I do not hear them now. It is only at certain times when I am alone. They repeat the words in some of these letters—'You must not take up those bonds. You must not endanger the peace of the world. You will never live to get the interest.' Over and over I have heard such sentences spoken in this very room. I have rushed out and up the corridor. There has been no one there. I have locked the steel door. Still I have heard the voices. And it is absolutely impossible that a human being could get close enough to say them without my knowing and finding out where he is."

Kennedy betrayed by not so much as the motion of a muscle even a shade of a doubt of Brixton's incredible story. Whether because he believed it or because he was diplomatic, Craig took the thing at its face value. He moved a blotter so that he could stand on the top of Brixton's desk in the centre of the room. Then he unfastened and took down the glass hemisphere over the light.

"It is an Osram lamp of about a hundred candle-power, I should judge," he observed.

Apparently he had satisfied himself that there was

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nothing concealed in the light itself. Laboriously, with such assistance as the memory of Mr. Brixton could give, he began tracing out the course of both the electric light and telephone wires that led down into the den.

Next came a close examination of the ceiling and side walls, the floor, the hangings, the pictures, the rugs, everything. Kennedy was tapping here and there all over the wall, as if to discover whether there was any such hollow sound as a cavity might make. There was none.

A low exclamation from him attracted my attention, though it escaped Brixton. His tapping had raised the dust from the velvety wall-paper wherever he had tried it. Hastily, from a corner where it would not be noticed, he pulled off a piece of the paper and stuffed it into his pocket. Then followed a hasty examination of the intake of the ventilating apparatus.

Apparently satisfied with his examination of things in the den, Craig now prepared to trace out the course of the telephone and light wires in the house. Brixton excused himself, asking us to join him in the library up-stairs after Craig had completed his investigation.

Nothing was discovered by tracing the lines back, as best we could, from the den. Kennedy therefore began at the other end, and having found the points in the huge cellar of the house where the main trunk and feed wires entered, he began a systematic search in that direction.

A separate line led, apparently, to the den, and

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where this line feeding the Osram lamp passed near a dark storeroom in a corner Craig examined more closely than ever. Seemingly his search was rewarded, for he dived into the dark storeroom and commenced lighting matches furiously to discover what was there.

"Look, Walter," he exclaimed, holding a match so that I could see what he had unearthed. There, in a corner concealed by an old chest of drawers, stood a battery of five storage-cells connected with an instrument that looked very much like a telephone transmitter, a rheostat, and a small transformer coil.

"I suppose this is a direct-current lighting circuit," he remarked, thoughtfully regarding his find. "I think I know what this is, all right. Any amateur could do it, with a little knowledge of electricity and a source of direct current. The thing is easily constructed, the materials are common, and a wonderfully complicated result can be obtained. What's this?"

He had continued to poke about in the darkness as he was speaking. In another corner he had discovered two ordinary telephone receivers.

"Connected up with something, too, by George!" he ejaculated.

Evidently some one had tapped the regular telephone wires running into the house, had run extensions into the little storeroom, and was prepared to overhear everything that was said either to or by those in the house.

Further examination disclosed that there were two separate telephone systems running into Brixton's

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house. One, with its many extensions, was used by the household and by the housekeeper; the other was the private wire which led, ultimately, down into Brixton's den. No sooner had he discovered it than Kennedy became intensely interested. For the moment he seemed entirely to forget the electric-light wires and became absorbed in tracing out the course of the telephone trunk-line and its extensions. Continued search rewarded him with the discovery that both the household line and the private line were connected by hastily improvised extensions with the two receivers he had discovered in the out-of-the-way corner of a little dark storeroom.

"Don't disturb a thing," remarked Kennedy, cautiously picking up even the burnt matches he had dropped in his hasty search. "We must devise some means of catching the eavesdropper red handed. It has all the marks of being an inside job."

We had completed our investigation of the basement without attracting any attention, and Craig was careful to make it seem that in entering the library we came from the den, not from the cellar. As we waited in the big leather chairs Kennedy was sketching roughly on a sheet of paper the plan of the house, drawing in the location of the various wires.

The door opened. We had expected John Brixton. Instead, a tall, spare foreigner with a close-cropped moustache entered. I knew at once that it must be Count Wachtmann, although I had never seen him.

"Ah, I beg your pardon," he exclaimed in English which betrayed that he had been under good teachers in London. "I thought Miss Brixton was here."

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"Count Wachtmann?" interrogated Kennedy, rising.

"The same," he replied easily, with a glance of inquiry at us.

"My friend and I are from the *Star*," said Kennedy.

"Ah! Gentlemen of the press?" He elevated his eyebrows the fraction of an inch. It was so politely contemptuous that I could almost have throttled him.

"We are waiting to see Mr. Brixton," explained Kennedy.

"What is the latest from the Near East?" Wachtmann asked, with the air of a man expecting to hear what he could have told you yesterday if he had chosen.

There was a movement of the portières, and a woman entered. She stopped a moment. I knew it was Miss Brixton. She had recognised Kennedy, but her part was evidently to treat him as a total stranger.

"Who are these men, Conrad?" she asked, turning to Wachtmann.

"Gentlemen of the press, I believe, to see your father, Yvonne," replied the count.

It was evident that it had not been mere newspaper talk about this latest rumored international engagement.

"How did you enjoy it?" he asked, noticing the title of a history which she had come to replace in the library.

"Very well—all but the assassinations and the intrigues," she replied with a little shudder.

He shot a quick, searching look at her face. "They

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are a violent people—some of them," he commented quickly.

"You are going into town to-morrow?" I heard him ask Miss Brixton, as they walked slowly down the wide hall to the conservatory a few moments later.

"What do you think of him?" I whispered to Kennedy.

I suppose my native distrust of his kind showed through, for Craig merely shrugged his shoulders. Before he could reply Mr. Brixton joined us.

"There's another one—just came," he ejaculated, throwing a letter down on the library table. It was only a few lines this time:

"The bonds will not be subject to a tax by the government, they say. No—because if there is a war there won't be any government to tax them!"

The note did not appear to interest Kennedy as much as what he had discovered. "One thing is self-evident, Mr. Brixton," he remarked. "Some one inside this house is spying, is in constant communication with a person or persons outside. All the watchmen and Great Danes on the estate are of no avail against the subtle, underground connection that I believe exists. It is still early in the afternoon. I shall make a hasty trip to New York and return after dinner. I should like to watch with you in the den this evening."

"Very well," agreed Brixton. "I shall arrange to have you met at the station and brought here as secretly as I can."

He sighed, as if admitting that he was no longer master of even his own house.

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Kennedy was silent during most of our return trip to New York. As for myself, I was deeply mired in an attempt to fathom Wachtmann. He baffled me. However, I felt that if there was indeed some subtle, underground connection between some one inside and some one outside Brixton's house, Craig would prepare an equally subtle method of meeting it on his own account. Very little was said by either of us on the journey up to the laboratory, or on the return to Woodrock. I realised that there was very little excuse for a commuter not to be well informed. I, at least, had plenty of time to exhaust the newspapers I had bought.

Whether or not we returned without being observed, I did not know, but at least we did find that the basement and dark storeroom were deserted, as we cautiously made our way again into the corner where Craig had made his enigmatical discoveries of the afternoon.

While I held a pocket flashlight Craig was busy concealing another instrument of his own in the little storeroom. It seemed to be a little black disk about as big as a watch, with a number of perforated holes in one face. Carelessly he tossed it into the top drawer of the chest under some old rubbish, shut the drawer tight and ran a flexible wire out of the back of the chest. It was a simple matter to lay the wire through some bins next the storeroom and then around to the passageway down to the subterranean den of Brixton. There Craig deposited a little black box about the size of an ordinary kodak.

For an hour or so we sat with Brixton. Neither

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of us said anything, and Brixton was uncommunicatively engaged in reading a railroad report. Suddenly a sort of muttering, singing noise seemed to fill the room.

"There it is!" cried Brixton, clapping the book shut and looking eagerly at Kennedy.

Gradually the sound increased in pitch. It seemed to come from the ceiling, not from any particular part of the room, but merely from somewhere overhead. There was no hallucination about it. We all heard. As the vibrations increased it was evident that they were shaping themselves into words.

Kennedy had grasped the black box the moment the sound began and was holding two black rubber disks to his ears.

At last the sound from overhead became articulate. It was weird, uncanny. Suddenly a voice said distinctly: "Let American dollars beware. They will not protect American daughters."

Craig had dropped the two ear-pieces and was gazing intently at the Osram lamp in the ceiling. Was he, too, crazy?

"Here, Mr. Brixton, take these two receivers of the detectaphone," said Kennedy. "Tell me whether you can recognise the voice."

"Why, it's familiar," he remarked slowly. "I can't place it, but I've heard it before. Where is it? What is this thing, anyhow?"

"It is some one hidden in the storeroom in the basement," answered Craig. "He is talking into a very sensitive telephone transmitter and—"

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"But the voice—here?" interrupted Brixton impatiently.

Kennedy pointed to the incandescent lamp in the ceiling. "The incandescent lamp," he said, "is not always the mute electrical apparatus it is supposed to be. Under the right conditions it can be made to speak exactly as the famous 'speaking-arc,' as it was called by Professor Duddell, who investigated it. Both the arc-light and the metal-filament lamp can be made to act as telephone receivers."

It seemed unbelievable, but Kennedy was positive. "In the case of the speaking-arc or 'arcophone,' as it might be called," he continued, "the fact that the electric arc is sensitive to such small variations in the current over a wide range of frequency has suggested that a direct-current arc might be used as a telephone receiver. All that is necessary is to superimpose a microphone current on the main arc current, and the arc reproduces sounds and speech distinctly, loud enough to be heard several feet. Indeed, the arc could be used as a transmitter, too, if a sensitive receiver replaced the transmitter at the other end. The things needed are an arc-lamp, an impedance coil, or small transformer-coil, a rheostat, and a source of energy. The alternating current is not adapted to reproduce speech, but the ordinary direct current is. Of course, the theory isn't half as simple as the apparatus I have described."

He had unscrewed the Osram lamp. The talking ceased immediately.

"Two investigators named Ort and Ridger have used a lamp like this as a receiver," he continued.

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"They found that words spoken were reproduced in the lamp. The telephonic current variations superposed on the current passing through the lamp produce corresponding variations of heat in the filament, which are radiated to the glass of the bulb, causing it to expand and contract proportionately, and thus transmitting vibrations to the exterior air. Of course, in sixteen- and thirty-two-candle-power lamps the glass is too thick, and the heat variations are too feeble."

Who was it whose voice Brixton had recognised as familiar over Kennedy's hastily installed detectaphone? Certainly he must have been a scientist of no mean attainment. That did not surprise me, for I realised that from that part of Europe where this mystical Red Brotherhood operated some of the most famous scientists of the world had sprung.

A hasty excursion into the basement netted us nothing. The place was deserted.

We could only wait. With parting instructions to Brixton in the use of the detectaphone we said good night, were met by a watchman and escorted as far as the lodge safely.

Only one remark did Kennedy make as we settled ourselves for the long ride in the accommodation train to the city. "That warning means that we have two people to protect—both Brixton and his daughter."

Speculate as I might, I could find no answer to the mystery, nor to the question, which was also unsolved, as to the queer malady of Brixton himself, which his physician diagnosed as jaundice.

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# VI

## The Detectaphone

FAR after midnight though it had been when we had at last turned in at our apartment, Kennedy was up even earlier than usual in the morning. I found him engrossed in work at the laboratory.

"Just in time to see whether I'm right in my guess about the illness of Brixton," he remarked, scarcely looking up at me.

He had taken a flask with a rubber stopper. Through one hole in it was fitted a long funnel; through another ran a glass tube, connecting with a large U-shaped drying-tube filled with calcium chloride, which in turn connected with a long open tube with an up-turned end.

Into the flask Craig dropped some pure granulated zinc coated with platinum. Then he covered it with dilute sulphuric acid through the funnel tube. "That forms hydrogen gas," he explained, "which passes through the drying-tube and the ignition-tube. Wait a moment until all the air is expelled from the tubes."

He lighted a match and touched it to the open up-turned end. The hydrogen, now escaping freely, was ignited with a pale-blue flame.

Next, he took the little piece of wall-paper I had seen him tear off in the den, scraped off some powder



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from it, dissolved it, and poured it into the funnel-tube.

Almost immediately the pale, bluish flame turned to bluish white, and white fumes were formed. In the ignition-tube a sort of metallic deposit appeared. Quickly he made one test after another. I sniffed. There was an unmistakable smell of garlic in the air.

"Arseniureted hydrogen," commented Craig. "This is the Marsh test for arsenic. That wall-paper in Brixton's den has been loaded down with arsenic, probably Paris green or Schweinfurth green, which is aceto-arsenite of copper. Every minute he is there he is breathing arseniureted hydrogen. Some one has contrived to introduce free hydrogen into the intake of his ventilator. That acts on the arsenic compounds in the wall-paper and hangings and sets free the gas. I thought I knew the smell the moment I got a whiff of it. Besides, I could tell by the jaundiced look of his face that he was being poisoned. His liver was out of order, and arsenic seems to accumulate in the liver."

"Slowly poisoned by minute quantities of gas," I repeated in amazement. "Some one in that Red Brotherhood is a diabolical genius. Think of it—poisoned wall-paper!"

It was still early in the forenoon when Kennedy excused himself, and leaving me to my own devices disappeared on one of his excursions into the underworld of the foreign settlements on the East Side. About the middle of the afternoon he reappeared. As far as I could learn all that he had found out was that the famous, or rather infamous, Professor Mi-

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chael Kumanova, one of the leaders of the Red Brotherhood, was known to be somewhere in this country.

We lost no time in returning again to Woodrock late that afternoon. Craig hastened to warn Brixton of his peril from the contaminated atmosphere of the den, and at once a servant was set to work with a vacuum cleaner.

Carefully Craig reconnoitred the basement where the eavesdropping storeroom was situated. Finding it deserted, he quickly set to work connecting the two wires of the general household telephone with what looked very much like a seamless iron tube, perhaps six inches long and three inches in diameter. Then he connected the tube also with the private wire of Brixton in a similar manner.

"This is a special repeating-coil of high efficiency," he explained in answer to my inquiry. "It is absolutely balanced as to resistance, number of turns, and everything. I shall run this third line from the coil into Brixton's den, and then, if you like, you can accompany me on a little excursion down to the village where I am going to install another similar coil between the two lines at the local telephone central station opposite the railroad."

Brixton met us about eight o'clock that night in his now renovated den. Apparently, even the little change from uncertainty to certainty so far had had a tonic effect on him. I had, however, almost given up the illusion that it was possible for us to be even in the den without being watched by an unseen eye. It seemed to me that to one who could conceive of

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talking through an incandescent lamp seeing, even through steel and masonry, was not impossible.

Kennedy had brought with him a rectangular box of oak, in one of the large faces of which were two square holes. As he replaced the black camera-like box of the detectaphone with this oak box he remarked: "This is an intercommunicating telephone arrangement of the detectaphone. You see, it is more sensitive than anything of the sort ever made before. The arrangement of these little square holes is such as to make them act as horns or magnifiers of a double receiver. We can all hear at once what is going on by using this machine."

We had not been waiting long before a peculiar noise seemed to issue from the detectaphone. It was as though a door had been opened and shut hastily. Some one had evidently entered the storeroom. A voice called up the railroad station and asked for Michael Kronski, Count Wachtmann's chauffeur.

"It is the voice I heard last night," exclaimed Brixton. "By the Lord Harry, do you know, it is Janeff the engineer who has charge of the steam heating, the electric bells, and everything of the sort around the place. My own engineer—I'll land the fellow in jail before I'll—"

Kennedy raised his hand. "Let us hear what he has to say," remonstrated Craig calmly. "I suppose you have wondered why I didn't just go down there last night and grab the fellow. Well, you see now. It is my invariable rule to get the man highest up. This fellow is only one tool. Arrest him, and as

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likely as not we should allow the big criminal to escape."

"Hello, Kronski!" came over the detectaphone. "This is Janeff. How are things going?"

Wachtmann's chauffeur must have answered that everything was all right.

"You knew that they had discovered the poisoned wall-paper?" asked Janeff.

A long parley followed. Finally, Janeff repeated what apparently had been his instructions. "Now, let me see," he said. "You want me to stay here until the last minute so that I can overhear whether any alarm is given for her? All right. You're sure it is the nine-o'clock train she is due on? Very well. I shall meet you at the ferry across the Hudson. I'll start from here as soon as I hear the train come in. We'll get the girl this time. That will bring Brixton to terms sure. You're right. Even if we fail this time, we'll succeed later. Don't fail me. I'll be at the ferry as soon as I can get past the guards and join you. There isn't a chance of an alarm from the house. I'll cut all the wires the last thing before I leave. Good-bye."

All at once it dawned on me what they were planning—the kidnapping of Brixton's only daughter, to hold her, perhaps, as a hostage until he did the bidding of the gang. Wachtmann's chauffeur was doing it and using Wachtmann's car, too. Was Wachtmann a party to it?

What was to be done? I looked at my watch. It was already only a couple of minutes of nine, when the train would be due.

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"If we could seize that fellow in the closet and start for the station immediately we might save Yvonne," cried Brixton, starting for the door.

"And if they escape you make them more eager than ever to strike a blow at you and yours," put in Craig coolly. "No, let us get this thing straight. I didn't think it was as serious as this, but I'm prepared to meet any emergency."

"But, man," shouted Brixton, "you don't suppose anything in the world counts beside her, do you?"

"Exactly the point," urged Craig. "Save her and capture them—both at once."

"How can you?" fumed Brixton. "If you attempt to telephone from here, that fellow Janeff will overhear and give a warning."

Regardless of whether Janeff was listening or not, Kennedy was eagerly telephoning to the Woodrock central down in the village. He was using the transmitter and receiver that were connected with the iron tube which he had connected to the two regular house lines.

"Have the ferry held at any cost," he was ordering. "Don't let the next boat go out until Mr. Brixton gets there, under any circumstances. Now put that to them straight, central. You know Mr. Brixton has just a little bit of influence around here, and somebody's head will drop if they let that boat go out before he gets there."

"Humph!" ejaculated Brixton. "Much good that will do. Why, I suppose our friend Janeff down in the storeroom knows it all now. Come on, let's grab him."

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Nevertheless there was no sound from the detectaphone which would indicate that he had overheard and was spreading the alarm. He was there yet, for we could hear him clear his throat once or twice.

"No," replied Kennedy calmly, "he knows nothing about it. I didn't use any ordinary means to prepare against the experts who have brought this situation about. That message you heard me send went out over what we call the 'phantom circuit.'"

"The phantom circuit?" repeated Brixton, chafing at the delay.

"Yes, it seems fantastic at first, I suppose," pursued Kennedy calmly; "but, after all, it is in accordance with the laws of electricity. It's no use fretting and fuming, Mr. Brixton. If Janeff can wait, we'll have to do so, too. Suppose we should start and this Kronski should change his plans at the last minute? How would we find it out? By telepathy? Believe me, sir, it is better to wait here a minute and trust to the phantom circuit than to mere chance."

"But suppose he should cut the line," I put in.

Kennedy smiled. "I have provided for that, Walter, in the way I installed the thing. I took good care that we could not be cut off that way. We can hear everything ourselves, but we cannot be overheard. He knows nothing. You see, I took advantage of the fact that additional telephones or so-called phantom lines can be superposed on existing physical lines. It is possible to obtain a third circuit from two similar metallic circuits by using for each side of this third circuit the two wires of each of

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the other circuits in multiple. All three circuits are independent, too.

"The third telephone current enters the wires of the first circuit, as it were, and returns along the wires of the second circuit. There are several ways of doing it. One is to use retardation or choke-coils, bridged across the two metallic circuits at both ends, with taps taken from the middle points of each. But the more desirable method is the one you saw me install this afternoon. I introduced repeating-coils into the circuits at both ends. Technically, the third circuit is then taken off from the mid-points of the secondaries or line windings of these repeating coils.

"The current on a long-distance line is alternating in character, and it passes readily through a repeating-coil. The only effect it has on the transmission is slightly reducing the volume. The current passes into the repeating-coil, then divides and passes through the two line wires. At the other end the halves balance, so to speak. Thus, currents passing over a phantom circuit don't set up currents in the terminal apparatus of the side circuits. Consequently, a conversation carried on over the phantom circuit will not be heard in either side circuit, nor does a conversation on one side circuit affect the phantom. We could all talk at once without interfering with each other."

"At any other time I should be more than interested," remarked Brixton grimly, curbing his impatience to be doing something.

"I appreciate that, sir," rejoined Kennedy. "Ah, here it is. I have the central down in the village.

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Yes? They will hold the boat for us? Good. Thank you. The nine-o'clock train is five minutes late? Yes—what? Count Wachtmann's car is there? Oh, yes, the train is just pulling in. I see. Miss Brixton has entered his car alone. What's that? His chauffeur has started the car without waiting for the Count, who is coming down the platform?"

Instantly Kennedy was on his feet. He was dashing up the corridor and the stairs from the den and down into the basement to the little storeroom.

We burst into the place. It was empty. Janeff had cut the wires and fled. There was not a moment to lose. Craig hastily made sure that he had not discovered or injured the phantom circuit.

"Call the fastest car you have in your garage, Mr. Brixton," ordered Kennedy. "Hello, hello, central! Get the lodge at the Brixton estate. Tell them if they see the engineer Janeff going out to stop him. Alarm the watchman and have the dogs ready. Catch him at any cost, dead or alive."

A moment later Brixton's car raced around, and we piled in and were off like a whirlwind. Already we could see lights moving about and hear the baying of dogs. Personally, I wouldn't have given much for Janeff's chances of escape.

As we turned the bend in the road just before we reached the ferry, we almost ran into two cars standing before the ferry house. It looked as though one had run squarely in front of the other and blocked it off. In the slip the ferry boat was still steaming and waiting.

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Beside the wrecked car a man was lying on the ground groaning, while another man was quieting a girl whom he was leading to the waiting-room of the ferry.

Brixton, weak though he was from his illness, leaped out of our car almost before we stopped and caught the girl in his arms.

"Father!" she exclaimed, clinging to him.

"What's this?" he demanded sternly, eying the man. It was Wachtmann himself.

"Conrad saved me from that chauffeur of his," explained Miss Brixton. "I met him on the train, and we were going to ride up to the house together. But before Conrad could get into the car this fellow, who had the engine running, started it. Conrad jumped into another car that was waiting at the station. He overtook us and dodged in front so as to cut the chauffeur off from the ferry."

"Curse that villain of a chauffeur," muttered Wachtmann, looking down at the wounded man.

"Do you know who he is?" asked Craig with a searching glance at Wachtmann's face.

"I ought to. His name is Kronski, and a blacker devil an employment bureau never furnished."

"Kronski? No," corrected Kennedy. "It is Professor Kumanova, whom you perhaps have heard of as a leader of the Red Brotherhood, one of the cleverest scientific criminals who ever lived. I think you'll have no more trouble negotiating your loan or your love affair, Count," added Craig, turning on his heel.

He was in no mood to receive the congratulations of the supercilious Wachtmann. As far as Craig

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was concerned, the case was finished, although I fancied from a flicker of his eye as he made some passing reference to the outcome that when he came to send in a bill to Brixton for his services he would not forget the high eyebrowed Count.

I followed in silence as Craig climbed into the Brixton car and explained to the banker that it was imperative that he should get back to the city immediately. Nothing would do but that the car must take us all the way back, while Brixton summoned another from the house for himself.

The ride was accomplished swiftly in record time. Kennedy said little. Apparently the exhilaration of the on-rush of cool air was quite in keeping with his mood, though for my part, I should have preferred something a little more relaxing of the nervous tension.

"We've been at it five days, now," I remarked wearily as I dropped into an easy chair in our own quarters. "Are you going to keep up this debauch?"

Kennedy laughed.

"No," he said with a twinkle of scientific mischief, "no, I'm going to sleep it off."

"Thank heaven!" I muttered.

"Because," he went on seriously, "that case interrupted a long series of tests I am making on the sensitiveness of selenium to light, and I want to finish them up soon. There's no telling when I shall be called on to use the information."

I swallowed hard. He really meant it. He was laying out more work for himself.

Next morning I fully expected to find that he had

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gone. Instead he was preparing for what he called a quiet day in the laboratory.

"Now for some *real* work," he smiled. "Sometimes, Walter, I feel that I ought to give up this outside activity and devote myself entirely to research. It is so much more important."

I could only stare at him and reflect on how often men wanted to do something other than the very thing that nature had evidently intended them to do, and on how fortunate it was that we were not always free agents.

He set out for the laboratory and I determined that as long as he would not stop working, neither would I. I tried to write. Somehow I was not in the mood. I wrote *at* my story, but succeeded only in making it more unintelligible. I was in no fit condition for it.

It was late in the afternoon. I had made up my mind to use force, if necessary, to separate Kennedy from his study of selenium. My idea was that anything from the Metropolitan to the "movies" would do him good, and I had almost carried my point when a big, severely plain black foreign limousine pulled up with a rush at the laboratory door. A large man in a huge fur coat jumped out and the next moment strode into the room. He needed no introduction, for we recognised at once J. Perry Spencer, one of the foremost of American financiers and a trustee of the university.

With that characteristic directness which I have always thought accounted in large measure for his success, he wasted scarcely a word in coming straight

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to the object of his visit. "Professor Kennedy," he began, chewing his cigar and gazing about with evident interest at the apparatus Craig had collected in his warfare of science with crime, "I have dropped in here as a matter of patriotism. I want you to preserve to America those masterpieces of art and literature which I have collected all over the world during many years. They are the objects of one of the most curious pieces of vandalism of which I have ever heard. Professor Kennedy," he concluded earnestly, "could I ask you to call on Dr. Hugo Lith, the curator of my private museum, as soon as you can possibly find it convenient?"

"Most assuredly, Mr. Spencer," replied Craig, with a whimsical side glance at me that told without words that this was better relaxation to him than either the Metropolitan or the "movies." "I shall be glad to see Dr. Lith at any time—right now, if it is convenient to him."

The millionaire connoisseur consulted his watch. "Lith will be at the museum until six, at least. Yes, we can catch him there. I have a dinner engagement at seven myself. I can give you half an hour of the time before then. If you're ready, just jump into the car, both of you."

The museum to which he referred was a handsome white marble building, in Renaissance, fronting on a side street just off Fifth Avenue and in the rear of the famous Spencer house, itself one of the show places of that wonderful thoroughfare. Spencer had built the museum at great cost simply to house those treasures which were too dear to him to entrust to a

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public institution. It was in the shape of a rectangle and planned with special care as to the lighting.

Dr. Lith, a rather stout, mild-eyed German savant, plunged directly into the middle of things as soon as we had been introduced. "It is a most remarkable affair, gentlemen," he began, placing for us chairs that must have been hundreds of years old. "At first it was only those objects in the museum that were green that were touched, like the collection of famous and historic French emeralds. But soon we found it was other things, too, that were missing—old Roman coins of gold, a collection of watches, and I know not what else until we have gone over the—"

"Where is Miss White?" interrupted Spencer, who had been listening somewhat impatiently.

"In the library, sir. Shall I call her?"

"No, I will go myself. I want her to tell her experience to Professor Kennedy exactly as she told it to me. Explain while I am gone how impossible it would be for a visitor to do one, to say nothing of all, of the acts of vandalism we have discovered."

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# VII

# The Green Curse

THE American Medici disappeared into his main library, where Miss White was making a minute examination to determine what damage had been done in the realm over which she presided.

"Apparently every book with a green binding has been mutilated in some way," resumed Dr. Lith, "but that was only the beginning. Others have suffered, too, and some are even gone. It is impossible that any visitor could have done it. Only a few personal friends of Mr. Spencer are ever admitted here, and they are never alone. No, it is weird, mysterious."

Just then Spencer returned with Miss White. She was an extremely attractive girl, slight of figure, but with an air about her that all the imported gowns in New York could not have conferred. They were engaged in animated conversation, so much in contrast with the bored air with which Spencer had listened to Dr. Lith that even I noticed that the connoisseur was completely obliterated in the man, whose love of beauty was by no means confined to the inanimate. I wondered if it was merely his interest in her story that impelled Spencer. The more I watched the girl the more I was convinced that she knew that she was interesting to the millionaire.

"For example," Dr. Lith was saying, "the famous



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collection of emeralds which has disappeared has always been what you Americans call 'hoodooed.' They have always brought ill luck, and, like many things of the sort to which superstition attaches, they have been 'banked,' so to speak, by their successive owners in museums."

"Are they salable; that is, could any one dispose of the emeralds or the other curios with reasonable safety and at a good price?"

"Oh, yes, yes," hastened Dr. Lith, "not as collections, but separately. The emeralds alone cost fifty thousand dollars. I believe Mr. Spencer bought them for Mrs. Spencer some years before she died. She did not care to wear them, however, and had them placed here."

I thought I noticed a shade of annoyance cross the face of the magnate. "Never mind that," he interrupted. "Let me introduce Miss White. I think you will find her story one of the most uncanny you have ever heard."

He had placed a chair for her and, still addressing us but looking at her, went on: "It seems that the morning the vandalism was first discovered she and Dr. Lith at once began a thorough search of the building to ascertain the extent of the depredations. The search lasted all day, and well into the night. I believe it was midnight before you finished?"

"It was almost twelve," began the girl, in a musical voice that was too Parisian to harmonize with her plain Anglo-Saxon name, "when Dr. Lith was down here in his office checking off the objects in the catalogue which were either injured or missing. I had

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been working in the library. The noise of something like a shade flapping in the wind attracted my attention. I listened. It seemed to come from the art-gallery, a large room up-stairs where some of the greatest masterpieces in this country are hung. I hurried up there.

"Just as I reached the door a strange feeling seemed to come over me that I was not alone in that room. I fumbled for the electric light switch, but in my nervousness could not find it. There was just enough light in the room to make out objects indistinctly. I thought I heard a low, moaning sound from an old Flemish copper ewer near me. I had heard that it was supposed to groan at night."

She paused and shuddered at her recollection, and looked about as if grateful for the flood of electric light that now illuminated everything. Spencer reached over and touched her arm to encourage her to go on. She did not seem to resent the touch.

"Opposite me, in the middle of the open floor," she resumed, her eyes dilated and her breath coming and going rapidly, "stood the mummy-case of Ka, an Egyptian priestess of Thebes, I think. The case was empty, but on the lid was painted a picture of the priestess! Such wonderful eyes! They seem to pierce right through your very soul. Often in the daytime I have stolen off to look at them. But at night—remember the hour of night, too—oh, it was awful, terrible. The lid of the mummy-case moved, yes, really moved, and seemed to float to one side. I could see it. And back of that carved and painted face with the piercing eyes was another face, a real

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face, real eyes, and they looked out at me with such hatred from the place that I knew was empty—"

She had risen and was facing us with wild terror written on her face as if in appeal for protection against something she was powerless to name. Spencer, who had not taken his hand off her arm, gently pressed her back into the easy chair and finished the story.

"She screamed and fainted. Dr. Lith heard it and rushed up-stairs. There she lay on the floor. The lid of the sarcophagus had really been moved. He saw it. Not a thing else had been disturbed. He carried her down here and revived her, told her to rest for a day or two, but—"

"I cannot; I cannot," she cried. "It is the fascination of the thing. It brings me back here. I dream of it. I thought I saw those eyes the other night. They haunt me. I fear them, and yet I would not avoid them, if it killed me to look. I must meet and defy the power. What is it? Is it a curse four thousand years old that has fallen on me?"

I had heard stories of mummies that rose from their sleep of centuries to tell the fate of some one when it was hanging in the balance, of mummies that groaned and gurgled and fought for breath, frantically beating with their swathed hands in the witching hours of the night. And I knew that the lure of these mummies was so strong for some people that they were drawn irresistibly to look upon and confer with them. Was this a case for the oculists, the spiritualists, the Egyptologists, or for a detective?

"I should like to examine the art gallery, in fact,

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go over the whole museum," put in Kennedy in his most matter-of-fact tone.

Spencer, with a glance at his watch, excused himself, nodding to Dr. Lith to show us about, and with a good night to Miss White which was noticeable for its sympathy with her fears, said, "I shall be at the house for another half-hour at least, in case anything really important develops."

A few minutes later Miss White left for the night, with apparent reluctance, and yet, I thought, with just a little shudder as she looked back up the staircase that led to the art-gallery.

Dr. Lith led us into a large vaulted marble hall and up a broad flight of steps, past beautiful carvings and frescoes that I should have liked to stop and admire.

The art-gallery was a long room in the interior and at the top of the building, windowless but lighted by a huge double skylight each half of which must have been some eight or ten feet across. The light falling through this skylight passed through plate glass of marvellous transparency. One looked up at the sky as if through the air itself.

Kennedy ignored the gallery's profusion of priceless art for the time and went directly to the mummy-case of the priestess Ka.

"It has a weird history," remarked Dr. Lith. "No less than seven deaths, as well as many accidents, have been attributed to the malign influence of that greenish yellow coffin. You know the ancient Egyptians used to chant as they buried their sacred dead: 'Woe to him who injures the tomb. The dead shall

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point out the evildoer to the Devourer of the Underworld. Soul and body shall be destroyed.'"

It was indeed an awesome thing. It represented a woman in the robes of an Egyptian priestess, a woman of medium height, with an inscrutable face. The slanting Egyptian eyes did, as Miss White had said, almost literally stare through you. I am sure that any one possessing a nature at all affected by such things might after a few minutes gazing at them in self-hypnotism really convince himself that the eyes moved and were real. Even as I turned and looked the other way I felt that those penetrating eyes were still looking at me, never asleep, always keen and searching.

There was no awe about Kennedy. He carefully pushed aside the lid and peered inside. I almost expected to see some one in there. A moment later he pulled out his magnifying-glass and carefully examined the interior. At last he was apparently satisfied with his search. He had narrowed his attention down to a few marks on the stone, partly in the thin layer of dust that had collected on the bottom.

"This was a very modern and material reincarnation," he remarked, as he rose. "If I am not mistaken, the apparition wore shoes, shoes with nails in the heels, and nails that are not like those in American shoes. I shall have to compare the marks I have found with marks I have copied from shoe-nails in the wonderful collection of M. Bertillon. Offhand, I should say that the shoes were of French make."

The library having been gone over next without anything attracting Kennedy's attention particu-

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larly, he asked about the basement or cellar. Dr. Lith lighted the way, and we descended.

Down there were innumerable huge packing-cases which had just arrived from abroad, full of the latest consignment of art treasures which Spencer had purchased. Apparently Dr. Lith and Miss White had been so engrossed in discovering what damage had been done to the art treasures above that they had not had time to examine the new ones in the basement.

Kennedy's first move was to make a thorough search of all the little grated windows and a door which led out into a sort of little areaway for the removal of ashes and refuse. The door showed no evidence of having been tampered with, nor did any of the windows at first sight. A low exclamation from Kennedy brought us to his side. He had opened one of the windows and thrust his hand out against the grating, which had fallen on the outside pavement with a clang. The bars had been completely and laboriously sawed through, and the whole thing had been wedged back into place so that nothing would be detected at a cursory glance. He was regarding the lock on the window. Apparently it was all right; actually it had been sprung so that it was useless.

"Most persons," he remarked, "don't know enough about jimmies. Against them an ordinary door-lock or window-catch is no protection. With a jimmy eighteen inches long even an anæmic burglar can exert a pressure sufficient to lift two tons. Not one window in a thousand can stand that strain. The only

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use of locks is to keep out sneak-thieves and compel the modern scientific educated burglar to make a noise. But making a noise isn't enough here, at night. This place with all its fabulous treasures must be guarded constantly, now, every hour, as if the front door were wide open."

The bars replaced and the window apparently locked as before, Craig devoted his efforts to examining the packing cases in the basement. As yet apparently nothing down there had been disturbed. But while rummaging about, from an angle formed behind one of the cases he drew forth a cane, to all appearances an ordinary Malacca walking-stick. He balanced it in his hand a moment, then shook his head.

"Too heavy for a Malacca," he ruminated. Then an idea seemed to occur to him. He gave the handle a twist. Sure enough, it came off, and as it did so a bright little light flashed up.

"Well, what do you think of that?" he exclaimed. "For a scientific dark-lantern that is the neatest thing I have ever seen. An electric light cane, with a little incandescent lamp and a battery hidden in it. This grows interesting. We must at last have found the cache of a real gentleman burglar such as Bertillon says exists only in books. I wonder if he has anything else hidden back here."

He reached down and pulled out a peculiar little instrument—a single blue steel cylinder. He fitted a hard rubber cap snugly into the palm of his hand, and with the first and middle fingers encircled the cylinder over a steel ring near the other end.

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A loud report followed, and a vase, just unpacked, at the opposite end of the basement was shattered as if by an explosion.

"Phew!" exclaimed Kennedy. "I didn't mean to do that. I knew the thing was loaded, but I had no idea the hair-spring ring at the end was so delicate as to shoot it off at a touch. It's one of those aristocratic little Apache pistols that one can carry in his vest pocket and hide in his hand. Say, but that stung! And back here is a little box of cartridges, too."

We looked at each other in amazement at the chance find. Apparently the vandal had planned a series of visits.

"Now, let me see," resumed Kennedy. "I suppose our very human but none the less mysterious intruder expected to use these again. Well, let him try. I'll put them back here for the present. I want to watch in the art-gallery to-night."

I could not help wondering whether, after all, it might not be an inside job and the fixing of the window merely a blind. Or was the vandal fascinated by the subtle influence of mysticism that so often seems to emanate from objects that have come down from the remote ages of the world? I could not help asking myself whether the story that Miss White had told was absolutely true. Had there been anything more than superstition in the girl's evident fright? She had seen something, I felt sure, for it was certain she was very much disturbed. But what was it she had really seen? So far all that Kennedy had found had proved that the reincarnation of the priestess Ka

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had been very material. Perhaps the "reincarnation" had got in in the daytime and had spent the hours until night in the mummy-case. It might well have been chosen as the safest and least suspicious hiding-place.

Kennedy evidently had some ideas and plans, for no sooner had he completed arrangements with Dr. Lith so that we could get into the museum that night to watch, than he excused himself. Scarcely around the corner on the next business street he hurried into a telephone booth.

"I called up First Deputy O'Connor," he explained as he left the booth a quarter of an hour later. "You know it is the duty of two of O'Connor's men to visit all the pawn-shops of the city at least once a week, looking over recent pledges and comparing them with descriptions of stolen articles. I gave him a list from that catalogue of Dr. Lith's and I think that if any of the emeralds, for instance, have been pawned his men will be on the alert and will find it out."

We had a leisurely dinner at a near-by hotel, during most of which time Kennedy gazed vacantly at his food. Only once did he mention the case, and that was almost as if he were thinking aloud.

"Nowadays," he remarked, "criminals are exceptionally well informed. They used to steal only money and jewels; to-day it is famous pictures and antiques also. They know something about the value of antique bronze and marble. In fact, the spread of a taste for art has taught the enterprising burglar that such things are worth money, and he, in turn, has educated up the receivers of stolen goods to pay

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a reasonable percentage of the value of his artistic plunder. The success of the European art thief is enlightening the American thief. That's why I think we'll find some of this stuff in the hands of the professional fences."

It was still early in the evening when we returned to the museum and let ourselves in with the key that Dr. Lith had loaned Kennedy. He had been anxious to join us in the watch, but Craig had diplomatically declined, a circumstance that puzzled me and set me thinking that perhaps he suspected the curator himself.

We posted ourselves in an angle where we could not possibly be seen even if the full force of the electrolier were switched on. Hour after hour we waited. But nothing happened. There were strange and weird noises in plenty, not calculated to reassure one, but Craig was always ready with an explanation.

It was in the forenoon of the day after our long and unfruitful vigil in the art-gallery that Dr. Lith himself appeared at our apartment in a great state of perturbation.

"Miss White has disappeared," he gasped, in answer to Craig's hurried question. "When I opened the museum, she was not there as she is usually. Instead, I found this note."

He laid the following hastily written message on the table:

Do not try to follow me. It is the green curse that has pursued me from Paris. I cannot escape it, but I may prevent it from affecting others.

LUCILLE WHITE.

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That was all. We looked at each other at a loss to understand the enigmatic wording—"the green curse."

"I rather expected something of the sort," observed Kennedy. "By the way, the shoenails were French, as I surmised. They show the marks of French heels. It was Miss White herself who hid in the mummy-case."

"Impossible," exclaimed Dr. Lith incredulously. As for myself, I had learned that it was of no use being incredulous with Kennedy.

A moment later the door opened, and one of O'Connor's men came in bursting with news. Some of the emeralds had been discovered in a Third Avenue pawn-shop. O'Connor, mindful of the historic fate of the Mexican Madonna and the stolen statue of the Egyptian goddess Neith, had instituted a thorough search with the result that at least part of the pilfered jewels had been located. There was only one clue to the thief, but it looked promising. The pawnbroker described him as "a crazy Frenchman of an artist," tall, with a pointed black beard. In pawning the jewels he had given the name of Edouard Delaverde, and the city detectives were making a canvass of the better known studios in hope of tracing him.

Kennedy, Dr. Lith and myself walked around to the boarding-house where Miss White lived. There was nothing about it, from the landlady to the gossip, to distinguish it from scores of other places of the better sort. We had no trouble in finding out that Miss White had not returned home at all the night before. The landlady seemed to look on her as a woman of

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mystery, and confided to us that it was an open secret that she was not an American at all, but a French girl whose name, she believed, was really Lucille Leblanc—which, after all, was White. Kennedy made no comment, but I wavered between the conclusions that she had been the victim of foul play and that she might be the criminal herself, or at least a member of a band of criminals.

No trace of her could be found through the usual agencies for locating missing persons. It was the middle of the afternoon, however, when word came to us that one of the city detectives had apparently located the studio of Delaverde. It was coupled with the interesting information that the day before a woman roughly answering the description of Miss White had been seen there. Delaverde himself was gone.

The building to which the detective took us was down-town in a residence section which had remained as a sort of little eddy to one side of the current of business that had swept everything before it up-town. It was an old building and large, and was entirely given over to studios of artists.

Into one of the cheapest of the suites we were directed. It was almost bare of furniture and in a peculiarly shiftless state of disorder. A half-finished picture stood in the centre of the room, and several completed ones were leaning against the wall. They were of the wildest character imaginable. Even the conceptions of the futurists looked tame in comparison.

Kennedy at once began rummaging and exploring.

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In a corner of a cupboard near the door he disclosed a row of dark-colored bottles. One was filled halfway with an emerald-green liquid.

He held it up to the light and read the label, "Absinthe."

"Ah," he exclaimed with evident interest, looking first at the bottle and then at the wild, formless pictures. "Our crazy Frenchman was an absintheur. I thought the pictures were rather the product of a disordered mind than of genius."

He replaced the bottle, adding: "It is only recently that our own government placed a ban on the importation of that stuff as a result of the decision of the Department of Agriculture that it was dangerous to health and conflicted with the pure food law. In France they call it the 'scourge,' the 'plague,' the 'enemy,' the 'queen of poisons.' Compared with other alcoholic beverages it has the greatest toxicity of all. There are laws against the stuff in France, Switzerland, and Belgium. It isn't the alcohol alone, although there is from fifty to eighty per cent. in it, that makes it so deadly. It is the absinthe, the oil of wormwood, whose bitterness has passed into a proverb. The active principle absinthin is a narcotic poison. The stuff creates a habit most insidious and difficult to break, a longing more exacting than hunger. It is almost as fatal as cocaine in its blasting effects on mind and body.

"Wormwood," he pursued, still rummaging about, "has a special affinity for the brain-cells and the nervous system in general. It produces a special affliction of the mind, which might be called absinthism.

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Loss of will follows its use, brutishness, softening of the brain. It gives rise to the wildest hallucinations. Perhaps that was why our absintheur chose first to destroy or steal all things green, as if there were some merit in the colour, when he might have made away with so many more valuable things. Absintheurs have been known to perform some of the most intricate manœuvres, requiring great skill and the use of delicate tools. They are given to disappearing, and have no memory of their actions afterward."

On an ink-spattered desk lay some books, including Lombroso's "Degenerate Man" and "Criminal Woman." Kennedy glanced at them, then at a crumpled manuscript that was stuck into a pigeonhole. It was written in a trembling, cramped, foreign hand, evidently part of a book, or an article.

"Oh, the wickedness of wealth!" it began. "While millions of the poor toilers slave and starve and shiver, the slave-drivers of to-day, like the slave-drivers of ancient Egypt, spend the money wrung from the blood of the people in useless and worthless toys of art while the people have no bread, in old books while the people have no homes, in jewels while the people have no clothes. Thousands are spent on dead artists, but a dollar is grudged to a living genius. Down with such art! I dedicate my life to righting the wrongs of the proletariat. *Vive l'anarchism!*"

The thing was becoming more serious. But by far the most serious discovery in the now deserted studio was a number of large glass tubes in a corner, some broken, others not yet used and standing in rows as if waiting to be filled. A bottle labelled "Sulphuric

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Acid" stood at one end of a shelf, while at the other was a huge jar full of black grains, next a bottle of chlorate of potash. Kennedy took a few of the black grains and placed them on a metal ash-tray. He lighted a match. There was a puff and a little cloud of smoke.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "black gunpowder. Our absintheur was a bomb-maker, an expert perhaps. Let me see. I imagine he was making an explosive bomb, ingeniously contrived of five glass tubes. The centre one, I venture, contained sulphuric acid and chlorate of potash separated by a close-packed wad of cotton wool. Then the two tubes on each side probably contained the powder, and perhaps the outside tubes were filled with spirits of turpentine. When it is placed in position, it is so arranged that the acid in the centre tube is uppermost and will thus gradually soak through the cotton wool and cause great heat and an explosion by contact with the potash. That would ignite the powder in the next tubes, and that would scatter the blazing turpentine, causing a terrific explosion and a widespread fire. With an imperative idea of vengeance, such as that manuscript discloses, either for his own wrongs as an artist or for the fancied wrongs of the people, what may this absintheur not be planning now? He has disappeared, but perhaps he may be more dangerous if found than if lost."

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# VIII

# The Mummy Case

THE horrible thought occurred to me that perhaps he was not alone. I had seen Spencer's infatuation with his attractive librarian. The janitor of the studio-building was positive that a woman answering her description had been a visitor at the studio. Would she be used to get at the millionaire and his treasures? Was she herself part of the plot to victimise, perhaps kill, him? The woman had been much of an enigma to me at first. She was more so now. It was barely possible that she, too, was an absintheur, who had shaken off the curse for a time only to relapse into it again.

If there were any thoughts like these passing through Kennedy's mind he did not show it, at least not in the shape of hesitating in the course he had evidently mapped out to follow. He said little, but hurried off from the studio in a cab up-town again to the laboratory. A few minutes later we were speeding down to the museum.

There was not much time for Craig to work if he hoped to be ready for anything that might happen that night. He began by winding coil after coil of copper wire about the storeroom in the basement of the museum. It was not a very difficult matter to conceal it, so crowded was the room, or to lead the



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ends out through a window at the opposite side from that where the window had been broken open.

Up-stairs in the art-gallery he next installed several boxes such as those which I had seen him experimenting with during his tests of selenium on the afternoon when Mr. Spencer had first called on us. They were camera-like boxes, about ten inches long, three inches or so wide, and four inches deep.

One end was open, or at least looked as though the end had been shoved several inches into the interior of the box. I looked into one of the boxes and saw a slit in the wall that had been shoved in. Kennedy was busy adjusting the apparatus, and paused only to remark that the boxes contained two sensitive selenium surfaces balanced against two carbon resistances. There was also in the box a clockwork mechanism which Craig wound up and set ticking ever so softly. Then he moved a rod that seemed to cover the slit, until the apparatus was adjusted to his satisfaction, a delicate operation, judging by the care he took. Several of these boxes were installed, and by that time it was quite late.

Wires from the apparatus in the art-gallery also led outside, and these as well as the wires from the coils down in the basement he led across the bit of garden back of the Spencer house and up to a room on the top floor. In the upper room he attached the wires from the storeroom to what looked like a piece of crystal and a telephone receiver. Those from the art-gallery terminated in something very much like the apparatus which a wireless operator wears over his head.

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Among other things which Craig had brought down from the laboratory was a package which he had not yet unwrapped. He placed it near the window, still wrapped. It was quite large, and must have weighed fifteen or twenty pounds. That done, he produced a tape-measure and began, as if he were a surveyor, to measure various distances and apparently to calculate the angles and distances from the window-sill of the Spencer house to the skylight, which was the exact centre of the museum. The straight distance, if I recall correctly, was in the neighborhood of four hundred feet.

These preparations completed, there was nothing left to do but to wait for something to happen. Spencer had declined to get alarmed about our fears for his own safety, and only with difficulty had we been able to dissuade him from moving heaven and earth to find Miss White, a proceeding which must certainly have disarranged Kennedy's carefully laid plans. So interested was he that he postponed one of the most important business conferences of the year, growing out of the anti-trust suits, in order to be present with Dr. Lith and ourselves in the little upper back room.

It was quite late when Kennedy completed his hasty arrangements, yet as the night advanced we grew more and more impatient for something to happen. Craig was apparently even more anxious than he had been the night before, when we watched in the art-gallery itself. Spencer was nervously smoking, lighting one cigar furiously from another until the air was almost blue.

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Scarcely a word was spoken as hour after hour Craig sat with the receiver to his ear, connected with the coils down in the storeroom. "You might call this an electric detective," he had explained to Spencer. "For example, if you suspected that anything out of the way was going on in a room anywhere this would report much to you even if you were miles away. It is the discovery of a student of Thorne Baker, the English electrical expert. He was experimenting with high-frequency electric currents, investigating the nature of the discharges used for electrifying certain things. Quite by accident he found that when the room on which he was experimenting was occupied by some person his measuring-instruments indicated that fact. He tested the degree of variation by passing the current first through the room and then through a sensitive crystal to a delicate telephone receiver. There was a distinct change in the buzzing sound heard through the telephone when the room was occupied or unoccupied. What I have done is to wind single loops of plain wire on each side of that room down there, as well as to wind around the room a few turns of concealed copper wire. These collectors are fitted to a crystal of carborundum and a telephone receiver."

We had each tried the thing and could hear a distinct buzzing in the receiver.

"The presence of a man or woman in that room would be evident to a person listening miles away," he went on. "A high-frequency current is constantly passing through that storeroom. That is what causes that normal buzzing."

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It was verging on midnight when Kennedy suddenly cried: "Here, Walter, take this receiver. You remember how the buzzing sounded. Listen. Tell me if you, too, can detect the change."

I clapped the receiver quickly to my ear. Indeed I could tell the difference. In place of the loud buzzing there was only a mild sound. It was slower and lower.

"That means," he said excitedly, "that some one has entered that pitch-dark storeroom by the broken window. Let me take the receiver back again. Ah, the buzzing is coming back. He is leaving the room. I suppose he has found the electric light cane and the pistol where he left them. Now, Walter, since you have become accustomed to this thing take it and tell me what you hear."

Craig had already seized the other apparatus connected with the art-gallery and had the wireless receiver over his head. He was listening with rapt attention, talking while he waited.

"This is an apparatus," he was saying, "that was devised by Dr. Fournier d'Albe, lecturer on physics at Birmingham University, to aid the blind. It is known as the optophone. What I am literally doing now is to *hear* light. The optophone translates light into sound by means of that wonderful little element, selenium, which in darkness is a poor conductor of electricity, but in light is a good conductor. This property is used in the optophone in transmitting an electric current which is interrupted by a special clockwork interrupter. It makes light and darkness audible in the telephone. This thing over my head

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is like a wireless telephone receiver, capable of detecting a current of even a quarter of a microampere."

We were all waiting expectantly for Craig to speak. Evidently the intruder was now mounting the stairs to the art-gallery.

"Actually I can hear the light of the stars shining in through that wonderful plate glass skylight of yours, Mr. Spencer," he went on. "A few moments ago when the moon shone through I could hear it, like the rumble of a passing cart. I knew it was the moon both because I could see that it must be shining in and because I recognised the sound. The sun would thunder like a passing express-train if it were daytime now. I can distinguish a shadow passing between the optophone and the light. A hand moved across in front of it would give a purring sound, and a glimpse out of a window in daylight would sound like a cinematograph reeling off a film.

"Ah, there he is." Craig was listening with intense excitement now. "Our intruder has entered the art-gallery. He is flashing his electric light cane about at various objects, reconnoitring. No doubt if I were expert enough and had had time to study it, I could tell you by the sound just what he is looking at."

"Craig," I interrupted, this time very excited myself, "the buzzing from the high-frequency current is getting lower and lower."

"By George, then, there is another of them," he replied. "I'm not surprised. Keep a sharp watch. Tell me the moment the buzzing increases again."

Spencer could scarcely control his impatience. It

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had been a long time since he had been a mere spectator, and he did not seem to relish being held in check by anybody.

"Now that you are sure the vandal is there," he cut in, his cigar out in his excitement, "can't we make a dash over there and get him before he has a chance to do any more damage? He might be destroying thousands of dollars' worth of stuff while we are waiting here."

"And he could destroy the whole collection, building and all, including ourselves into the bargain, if he heard so much as a whisper from us," added Kennedy firmly.

"That second person has left the storeroom, Craig," I put in. "The buzzing has returned again full force."

Kennedy tore the wireless receiver from his ear. "Here, Walter, never mind about that electric detective any more, then. Take the optophone. Describe minutely to me just exactly what you hear."

He had taken from his pocket a small metal ball. I seized the receiver from him and fitted it to my ear. It took me several instants to accustom my ears to the new sounds, but they were plain enough, and I shouted my impressions of their variations. Kennedy was busy at the window over the heavy package, from which he had torn the wrapping. His back was toward us, and we could not see what he was doing.

A terrific din sounded in my ears, almost splitting my ear-drums. It was as though I had been suddenly hurled into a magnified cave of the winds and a cataract mightier than Niagara was thundering at me.

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It was so painful that I cried out in surprise and involuntarily dropped the receiver to the floor.

"It was the switching on of the full glare of the electric lights in the art-gallery," Craig shouted. "The other person must have got up to the room quicker than I expected. Here goes."

A loud explosion took place, apparently on the very window-sill of our room. Almost at the same instant there was a crash of glass from the museum.

We sprang to the window, I expecting to see Kennedy injured, Spencer expecting to see his costly museum a mass of smoking ruins. Instead we saw nothing of the sort. On the window-ledge was a peculiar little instrument that looked like a miniature field-gun with an elaborate system of springs and levers to break the recoil.

Craig had turned from it so suddenly that he actually ran full tilt into us. "Come on," he cried breathlessly, bolting from the room, and seizing Dr. Lith by the arm as he did so. "Dr. Lith, the keys to the museum, quick! We must get there before the fumes clear away."

He was taking the stairs two at a time, dragging the dignified curator with him.

In fewer seconds than I can tell it we were in the museum and mounting the broad staircase to the art-gallery. An overpowering gas seemed to permeate everything.

"Stand back a moment," cautioned Kennedy as we neared the door. "I have just shot in here one of those asphyxiating bombs which the Paris police invented to war against the Apaches and the motor-car

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bandits. Open all the windows back here and let the air clear. Walter, breathe as little of it as you can —but—come here—do you see?—over there, near the other door—a figure lying on the floor? Make a dash in after me and carry it out. There is just one thing more. If I am not back in a minute come in and try to get me."

He had already preceded me into the stifling fumes. With a last long breath of fresh air I plunged in after him, scarcely knowing what would happen to me. I saw the figure on the floor, seized it, and backed out of the room as fast as I could.

Dizzy and giddy from the fumes I had been forced to inhale, I managed to drag the form to the nearest window. It was Lucille White.

An instant later I felt myself unceremoniously pushed aside. Spencer had forgotten all about the millions of dollars' worth of curios, all about the suspicions that had been entertained against her, and had taken the half-conscious burden from me.

"This is the second time I have found you here, Edouard," she was muttering in her half-delirium, still struggling. "The first time—that night I hid in the mummy-case, you fled when I called for help. I have followed you every moment since last night to prevent this. Edouard, don't, *don't!* Remember I was—I am your wife. Listen to me. Oh, it is the absinthe that has spoiled your art and made it worthless, not the critics. It is not Mr. Spencer who has enticed me away, but you who drove me away, first from Paris, and now from New York. He has been only—No! No!—" she was shrieking now, her eyes wide

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open as she realised it was Spencer himself she saw leaning over her. With a great effort she seemed to rouse herself. "Don't stay. Run—run. Leave me. He has a bomb that may go off at any moment. Oh—oh—it is the curse of absinthe that pursues me. Will you not go? *Vite! Vite!*"

She had almost fainted and was lapsing into French, laughing and crying alternately, telling him to go, yet clinging to him.

Spencer paid no attention to what she had said of the bomb. But I did. The minute was up, and Kennedy was in there yet. I turned to rush in again to warn him at any peril.

Just then a half-conscious form staggered against me. It was Craig himself. He was holding the infernal machine of the five glass tubes that might at any instant blow us into eternity.

Overcome himself, he stumbled. The sinking sensation in my heart I can never describe. It was just a second that I waited for the terrific explosion that was to end it all for us, one long interminable second.

But it did not come.

Limp as I was with the shock, I dropped down beside him and bent over.

"A glass of water, Walter," he murmured, "and fan me a bit. I didn't dare trust myself to carry the thing complete, so I emptied the acid into the sarcophagus. I guess I must have stayed in there too long. But we are safe. See if you can drag out Delaverde. He is in there by the mummy-case."

Spencer was still holding Lucille, although she was much better in the fresh air of the hall. "I under-

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stand," he was muttering. "You have been following this fiend of a husband of yours to protect the museum and myself from him. Lucille, Lucille—look at me. You are mine, not his, whether he is dead or alive. I will free you from him, from the curse of the absinthe that has pursued you."

The fumes had cleared a great deal by this time. In the centre of the art-gallery we found a man, a tall, black-bearded Frenchman, crazy indeed from the curse of the green absinthe that had ruined him. He was scarcely breathing from a deadly wound in his chest. The hair-spring ring of the Apache pistol had exploded the cartridge as he fell.

Spencer did not even look at him, as he carried his own burden down to the little office of Dr. Lith.

"When a rich man marries a girl who has been earning her own living, the newspapers always distort it," he whispered aside to me a few minutes later. "Jameson, you're a newspaperman—I depend on you to get the facts straight this time."

Outside, Kennedy grasped my arm.

"You'll do that, Walter?" he asked persuasively. "Spencer is a client that one doesn't get every day. Just drop into the *Star* office and give them the straight story. I'll promise you I'll not take another case until you are free again to go on with me in it."

There was no denying him. As briefly as I could I rehearsed the main facts to the managing editor late that night. I was too tired to write it at length, yet I could not help a feeling of satisfaction as he exclaimed, "Great stuff, Jameson,—great."

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"I know," I replied, "but this six-cylindered existence for a week wears you out."

"My dear boy," he persisted, "if I had turned some one else loose on that story, he'd have been dead. Go to it—it's fine."

It was a bit of blarney, I knew. But somehow or other I liked it. It was just what I needed to encourage me, and I hurried uptown promising myself a sound sleep at any rate.

"Very good," remarked Kennedy the next morning, poking his head in at my door and holding up a copy of the *Star* into which a very accurate brief account of the affair had been dropped at the last moment. "I'm going over to the laboratory. See you there as soon as you can get over."

"Craig," I remarked an hour or so later as I sauntered in on him, hard at work, "I don't see how you stand this feverish activity."

"Stand it?" he repeated, holding up a beaker to the light to watch a reaction. "It's my very life. Stand it? Why, man, if you want me to pass away—stop it. As long as it lasts, I shall be all right. Let it quit and I'll—I'll go back to research work," he laughed.

Evidently he had been waiting for me, for as he talked, he laid aside the materials with which he had been working and was preparing to go out.

"Then, too," he went on, "I like to be with people like Spencer and Brixton. For example, while I was waiting here for you, there came a call from Emery Pitts."

"Emery Pitts?" I echoed. "What does he want?"

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"The best way to find out is—to find out," he answered simply. "It's getting late and I promised to be there directly. I think we'd better take a taxi."

A few minutes later we were ushered into a large Fifth Avenue mansion and were listening to a story which interested even Kennedy.

"Not even a blood spot has been disturbed in the kitchen. Nothing has been altered since the discovery of the murdered chef, except that his body has been moved into the next room."

Emery Pitts, one of the "thousand millionaires of steel," overwrought as he was by a murder in his own household, sank back in his easy-chair, exhausted.

Pitts was not an old man; indeed, in years he was in the prime of life. Yet by his looks he might almost have been double his age, the more so in contrast with Minna Pitts, his young and very pretty wife, who stood near him in the quaint breakfast-room and solicitously moved a pillow back of his head.

Kennedy and I looked on in amazement. We knew that he had recently retired from active business, giving as a reason his failing health. But neither of us had thought, when the hasty summons came early that morning to visit him immediately at his house, that his condition was as serious as it now appeared.

"In the kitchen?" repeated Kennedy, evidently not prepared for any trouble in that part of the house.

Pitts, who had closed his eyes, now reopened them slowly and I noticed how contracted were the pupils.

"Yes," he answered somewhat wearily, "my private kitchen which I have had fitted up. You know, I am on a diet, have been ever since I offered the one hun-

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dred thousand dollars for the sure restoration of youth. I shall have you taken out there presently."

He lapsed again into a half dreamy state, his head bowed on one hand resting on the arm of his chair. The morning's mail still lay on the table, some letters open, as they had been when the discovery had been announced. Mrs. Pitts was apparently much excited and unnerved by the gruesome discovery in the house.

"You have no idea who the murderer might be?" asked Kennedy, addressing Pitts, but glancing keenly at his wife.

"No," replied Pitts, "if I had I should have called the regular police. I wanted you to take it up before they spoiled any of the clues. In the first place we do not think it could have been done by any of the other servants. At least, Minna says that there was no quarrel."

"How could any one have got in from the outside?" asked Craig.

"There is a back way, a servants' entrance, but it is usually locked. Of course some one might have obtained a key to it."

Mrs. Pitts had remained silent throughout the dialogue. I could not help thinking that she suspected something, perhaps was concealing something. Yet each of them seemed equally anxious to have the marauder apprehended, whoever he might be.

"My dear," he said to her at length, "will you call some one and have them taken to the kitchen?"

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# IX

# The Elixir of Life

AS Minna Pitts led us through the large mansion preparatory to turning us over to a servant she explained hastily that Mr. Pitts had long been ill and was now taking a new treatment under Dr. Thompson Lord. No one having answered her bell in the present state of excitement of the house, she stopped short at the pivoted door of the kitchen, with a little shudder at the tragedy, and stood only long enough to relate to us the story as she had heard it from the valet, Edward.

Mr. Pitts, it seemed, had wanted an early breakfast and had sent Edward to order it. The valet had found the kitchen a veritable slaughter-house, with the negro chef, Sam, lying dead on the floor. Sam had been dead, apparently, since the night before.

As she hurried away, Kennedy pushed open the door. It was a marvellous place, that antiseptic or rather aseptic kitchen, with its white tiling and enamel, its huge ice-box, and cooking-utensils for every purpose, all of the most expensive and modern make.

There were marks everywhere of a struggle, and by the side of the chef, whose body now lay in the next room awaiting the coroner, lay a long carving-knife with which he had evidently defended himself. On



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