



Dark Mirror

The Dark Mirror

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THE STREET OF STRANGE FACES

I. THE DARK CORNER

THE way of the thing was ever the same: it befell without warning; or rather, the girl had never learned to take heed of signs which seemed plain enough in retrospect, when she sat alone and puzzled her pretty head with the dark riddle of this shadow life which set her so widely apart from every girl she knew and, indeed, from all the rest of humankind...

She had a day of restlessness, whose every hour brewed its new peculiar mood, whose every mood was purposeless, with times of almost feverish gaiety, causeless, fitful, fugitive, and other times when for no reason in her

knowledge she caught herself sighing long fluttering sighs that shook her strangely. So might one's spirit sigh in weariness, faint with the burden of incessant strife with some great antagonist of unguessable identity.

Toward nightfall all these were soothed away into a feeling of serene poise and self-possession; and saturate with consciousness of the rich, strong wine of vitality that quickened her, she thought of life in the likeness of a wide and placid river, wherein she drifted like a fearless swimmer-a stream whose waters were warm, sweet, and calm with a penetrating quality of delicious calm she never dreamed could be disturbed, so absolute it seemed, so permanent, so imperturbable.

Only the sighs persisted oddly, as if her spirit knew moments of melancholy of which her mind knew nothing.

And insidiously the tranquil surface of that contentment was flawed by apprehensions of nameless danger, of peril latent, stealthy and implacable; as though the swimmer surmised some monstrous shape of evil skulking unseen in those opaque deeps-or felt herself subtly ensnared by a current whose irresistible set was altogether toward destruction.

Now at length perceiving what was to come, panic paralysed in her the instinct of self-preservation: though horror brimmed the cup of being, she made no effort to fight free but, as one who knows that struggling must prove vain, resigned

herself and let the baneful current work its will with her. Fascination, too, was at work, deep within her a mad desire to go again that wild way she had so often gone, and once more be, and do, and see...

So it is, so it must be, with those to whom a drug has made itself a thing of Life and Death.

On ahead, like a bend in the river, waited that turning in her psychic life which she knew as the Dark Corner: while she lay passive in the grasp of that power which so obscurely had its rise in her yet was repugnant to her, being at once her Will and her Necessity. And as the Dark Corner drew momentarily more near, the transfusion which she termed the Change was effected by what may only be described as a convulsion of her very soul, after which came lassitude, a vast enervation in which all lingering traces of reluctance were obliterated.

Now she was no longer herself, but another woman than the one she knew, a strange woman clothed in her own flesh but in no other way akin to her Self of everyday, having no thought, impulse or emotion with which that Self could sympathise, save such as may be considered common to all her sex. Yet, incomprehensibly, consciousness of the old self-identity survived; and though (as she conceived it) dispossessed from its tenement, her Self continued by her body's side, observant, critical, intrigued, something amused...

In this wise rounding the Dark Corner, she passed into that place which she had named the Street of Strange Faces; and the enigma of this confusion of Self with non-Self was forgotten in the rush of exotic sensation and emotion, excitement and lawless joy, which invariably accompanied definite and final commitment to renewed pursuit of these transcendental adventures.

II. LEONORA

The strangest thing about the Street of Strange Faces was that neither it nor any of its Faces was really strange. She knew the Street, whose stones her feet had never trod, knew every inch of it, all its turns and windings, its doorways and byways and whither they led, its smells and sounds, its babel of tongues, its window-lights that bit the shadows with such diversity of ardour.

Together with the Faces, its windows made the Street, being of many sorts, to each its own significant illumination: hard plate glass masks of saloons beaming false fellowship, mean shop fronts of ingratiating shine, windows of homely

golden glow, others through whose latticed shutters filtered sinister gleams bespeaking the unspeakable, others again that gave only dull reflections in begrimed panes of naphtha flames flaring luridly above pushcarts arrayed in unbroken lines along the curbs.

Through this welter of light and shadow, in the sidewalk channels, the Faces passed and repassed, lurking darkly in forbidding doorways, seeking brazenly the brightest glare, coming and going without rest, in uncouth carnival: kind and brutal, cunning and naive, wicked and innocent, swarthy, fair, unique, commonplace; faces that disgusted, faces that allured, faces that meant nothing, that were mere empty mouthing masks; faces of Oriental cast, yellow and red and brown; negro faces in every shade of quartering; faces of Caucasians come together from all corners of the globe; faces twisted and working, or set and stamped with every passion flesh is heir to; grinning, leering, scowling, blazing, bacchic, austere, blank...

She knew them all: they all knew her. The sense of strangeness ebbed; with every step, with every look around, with every breath she drew, she was losing touch with that other Self which had so singularly renounced its authority and faded into impotence at the Dark Corner, but which still kept step with her, clung to her more closely than her shadow, and like a wraith of the living, watched, noted and compared while taking part in actions wholly foreign to its nature and experiencing reactions obscure to it and unintelligible.

Now the girl moved swiftly, with ease and boldness, even with a hint of arrogance: giving the Faces look for look, smile for smile, frown for frown; laughing impishly up at a tall policeman who knitted black brows over indulgent blue eyes; flinging racy retorts to the banter of a knot of men emerging from a gin-mill; chilling with glance and word the advances of those Mho should have known better; chaffing hucksters who bawled in her ears the tawdry virtues of their wares; pausing now and again to exchange more kindly persiflage with folk who held title to her liking; cutting an impudent figure, as confident and unabashed as a colt turned loose in home pastures.

Her sharp perceptions took in everything; not one considerable detail escaped their remark. And she liked it, she liked it all, she was curiously permeated to her very marrow with delight in sounds and sights and smells familiar to her senses since time beyond their earliest record.

The Street, never wide, was the narrower for its double rank of pushcarts. Between these an occasional automobile or horse-drawn vehicle went gingerly to spare the multitude of urchins, half dressed and less than half washed, of every age and almost every nationality, that swarmed upon the asphaltum. Tenement houses-their fire escapes converted into balconies lavishly draped with candid bedding and still more candid women-drew confidential heads together on high, leaving visible only a slender ribbon of cobalt sky. In between the air was sluggish, thick with unnatural haze, and rank with many odours; an unholy alliance of garlic, fried fish, boiled cabbage and stale beer maintaining debatable ascendancy over the native aroma of a stratum of society which holds soap less necessity than luxury. And the night was tumultuous with screams of children at crude play, howls of babies wallowing in neglect, bawling of street vendors, each striving to outyell his nearest competitor, clatter of tinny pianos, blare and whine of jaded phonographs, the drunken giggle of a fiddle, and from some far, high coign of forlorn complaint of a French horn tirelessly reiterating one phrase of stuttering incoherence; all relieved against a wholly normal undertone of incessant gossip and bickering.

The girl hugged to herself the joy of living; this was to her the breath of life; even more, it was enterprise, adventure, the very stuff of Romance.

She went her way smiling, with a conscious smile bred of knowledge that she was dressed in her best, in her very newest best at that, garments of a cut and cost and quality such as the Street seldom saw. But it saw them now and gave tongue to comment in strident accents and pungent phraseology, most of which the girl ignored other than by that toss of her head which was a characteristic gesture. To several critics, however, she replied with wit of the gutter, direct and hard hitting but good humoured, or on due provocation with resentment translated into irony that bit like an acid. She was very much at home.

Nevertheless, her show of nonchalance cloaked circumspection; if her looks were free and roving, they were likewise keen and watchful. Though the width of the Street was between them, she was well aware of two plain-clothes men who turned to stare when she had gone by and conferred together concerning her craftily, after the absurd manner of their kind, out of the corners of their mouths.

But that was a minor circumstance, more fun than reason for worry: let 'em rubber as much as they wanted; they hadn't anything on her-never would have. They couldn't jug a girl for wearing good clothes, even if they didn't know

where she had got them or how...

The stress on her attention was due to considerations far more weighty; and when, of a sudden, at a crossing, she descried its cause, she checked in unfeigned dismay, with startled pulses.

III. THE MAN MARIO

On the far corner a tall man, simply clothed, composed of habit, stood stirless, hands clasped lightly before him in a gesture with which the girl was well acquainted, head and shoulders lifting above the crowd. Against the tawny flames of naphtha torches his profile was sharp and black, the silhouette of an ascetic, gravely fine; but none better than she knew how its austerity was belied by haunted eyes whose sincerity could wring truth from lips that moved to frame a lie.

And he was looking for her; she knew that, too.

In a flurry so real that it touched her anger, she swung aside into the bye-street, a grim street that led anywhere but the way she wished to go. Yet she welcomed its sullen gloom and went swiftly, heedless of everything but the necessity of escaping, knowing in her heart she could not escape...

A street of sullen quiet and gloom: the sound of pursuing footfalls was soon detected, their light, sure, rapid tempo recognised. Tempted to run, the girl refrained only because flight must be interpreted as confession of weakness, of shame and cowardice.

Her name was called in a voice of resonant timbre: "Leonora! I beg of you... It is I, Mario!"

She stopped and swung round with a specious show of surprise subsiding into indifference. Tone and manner were discouraging; but her heart was faint.

"Oh, hello! It's you..."

The man paused, hat in hand, his attitude one of pleading and reproach, yet informed with an ineffaceable dignity.

"You saw me, Leonora. Why did you run—from me?"

She tossed her head. "What makes you think I did?"

"I do not think: I know. You turned up this street to avoid me. Leonora, why?"

"If you thought that—that I wanted to be left alone—why'd you follow me?"

The man lifted his hands palms uppermost, and let them fall.

"You know... I love you. I make no secret of that. I have told you—how many times?—a hundred? Yes"—his enunciation grew more rapid—"and you are not indifferent to me. You never said so, but... I know."

"Oh, I like you all right—"

"No: more than that; too much to wish to hurt me. Is it not so?"

"Why, I don't want to hurt you, of course. But—"

"Then when I see you run from me as if I were a plague, what am I to think? What am I to do? Stand still and let my hurt heart break? Or follow and beg you to tell me why?"

"Well—if you've got to know—I was in a hurry. I've got a date—and I'm late."

"And I am detaining you! Forgive me—but let me go with you a little way."

The girl shot hunted glances right and left; then, since nothing in sight promised diversion, said ungraciously: "Nobody can stop your walking with me."

"Nobody but you, Leonora. One word—"

"One word from me and you'll do exactly as you please." With a nervous laugh—"Oh, come along!"—she turned back, walking hastily, the man Mario falling in at her side. "I'd just as leave you didn't come all the way, though."

"You do not wish me to know where you go." He nodded sober confirmation of an un-uttered guess. "I see..."

"You see a terrible lot!" The girl had a spasm of irritation. "You're always seeing things. Well, what do you see now?"

“You go to meet those others”—his tone was sad—“those whom I have so often begged you—”

“Guess it’s my business who my friends are.”

“Certainly you give me no right to make it mine. That cannot affect the truth that such associations are unwise.”

“Maybe I’m best judge of that, too.”

“Leonora: why pretend to me? Deceive yourself if you must and can—but not me, not one who loves you as I do. Do not attempt it, even. It is so useless.”

With a courtesy the more gratifying because it was so novel, Mario put his hand under her arm, lightly piloting her through the human mazes of the brawling Street, which they crossed squarely and quickly left behind.

After a little while, being in the wrong, she said sulkily: “I don’t see why you’re always making out I’m trying to put something over on you. I never promised...”

“True. But you know I am right, that I would never ask anything of you not justified by man’s natural solicitude for the woman of his love. You know what these friends of yours are, and their ways, whither they lead, their inevitable end. You know, if you persist, your fate must be as theirs.”

“I guess what’s good enough for my friends is good enough for me—”

“No, Leonora: you are too good for that—or I could not love you.”

The man paused, and his hold on her arm drew the girl to an unwilling pause with him, midway down a dark, dead block of industrial buildings, with a windowless wall beside them and not a soul nearby to hear. The rays of a distant street lamp were still strong enough to reveal the intense earnestness which animated the dark, strong face bending over her, and in spite of impatience and of indignation at being cornered, the girl was distressed, more than a little humbled in her own esteem by this revelation of an affection more enduring and generous and frank than any she had ever known.

And all the while that second Self, so weirdly Leonora and yet not Leonora,

divined even more clearly than she the exquisite mettle of the spirit that shone out of Mario's eyes, and was shaken by the urgency of the message in his favour which it struggled vainly and hopelessly to impart.

"I am not a common man." Mario was stating simple fact, innocent of conceit. "I know the world outside the one you know, and the men and women who live in it. Where I go, I look about me, and reflect on what I see. I am seldom mistaken in those who interest me. And you whom I love... I tell you, Leonora, there is something fine in you, something finer than you dream, something that might ennoble you if you would give it one little chance. You are no more of this life than "I, and you do a wrong thing, a wicked and cruel thing, when you trample down that which is good in you and might bring you to a splendid destiny."

Impressed in spite of herself, touched, and flattered, too, she looked uneasily away, twisting her hands together, her tongue faltering.

"I suppose you know what you mean..."

"And you also. I mean, you could love me if you would, and in my love, in the life I offer you, become the self that today you hide away so jealously, your real self, a woman fine and strong and true, not this adventure-loving companion of rogues and vagabonds-and worse!" He gave an imploring gesture. "Ah, Leonora, if only you would give them up!"

She looked up with wistful eyes, all effrontery abandoned, only the woman remaining, the woman whom this man alone had the secret of perceiving in her. In this, indeed, resided the true reason for her fear of meeting Mario: he was disastrous to her peace of mind, her self-complacency; when she listened to him, satisfaction departed and in its stead came inquietude, with the wish to be what he would have her be, what intuition told her she could be if she would but set herself to overcome her own resistance.

She searched his face in wonder. When he disturbed her so profoundly, why did she like him so much? What was it that gave him power to charm her wits away, discontent her with all that had otherwise seemed excellent and complete, make nothing of the steel of her set purpose? Was it his love alone?

He loved her, she was satisfied of that, but with such forbearance, such consideration, tenderness and understanding as left her incredulous. In the Street love was another thing entirely, a fiercer, cruder business, brusque and selfish

without disguise-some- tiling open, direct and casual, but as essential as meat and drink. But this was different, this love Mario had for her.

Yes: and it was true, what he asserted, he too was different; there was no one like him, so gentle and strong and brave, fastidious, reserved, and thoughtful. In her world he made a figure striking and incongruous. Yet he lingered on obstinately, in part (he told her) because it was his passion to study every side of life, but mostly because he loved her and never would willingly give up hope of winning her. He would never leave, he protested, till she went with him.

Her heart misgave her; she was afraid...

“Leonora !” he pleaded. “Come with me...”

In a moment of determination she tried to put sentiment aside with a hard little laugh of scorn. “I guess you don’t understand: Red would kill me if I chucked him!”

“He would never find you where I would take you, to my home in Spain; or if he ever did, he would not dare lift eyes to you, or knowin you, a lady, moving in the world for which she was born, the girl he knew as Leonora and loved-after his fashion-with whatever feeling it is he calls love !”

In a dull voice she insisted: “You don’t know Red...”

But she was more than tempted. She liked Mario too much, better even than Red-at long last she admitted it-Red whose conquest had till now been her greatest pride. Sheer force of mind and character compelled admiration and affection for Mario: in his restricted sphere Red prevailed solely through brute cunning, hardihood, and ruthlessness. Life with Red would never lack interest; but with Mario she could be happy all her days, content and unafraid.

“Come with me, Leonora, and be your true self. Life can be beautiful...”

He played shrewdly on her most secret weakness: she was fond of believing herself somewhat better than her milieu, through some romantic accident superior in point of birth as well as, what was undeniable, in spirit and intelligence. Vistas of powerful seduction opened to her contemplation. She knew momentary intimations of a fate as strange as that which he promised her; and at heart an arrant egoist, she saw herself primitively as she had seen other

women, in her excursions into the haunts of the well-to-do, radiantly be-gowned and furred and jewelled, lolling insolently in a limousine car, Mario at her side “dressed like a gentleman”...

But this vision was swiftly dissipated by recrudescence of that fear which Red inspired, in honest conviction that no earthly power could save her from his vengeance.

“You don’t know Red.” She shook her head solemnly in a spirit of fatal prophecy. “He’d croak you, too; he’d croak us both.”

Mario smiled faintly. “I am not afraid—”

“He isn’t the only one, he’s got his gang.”

“Still I am unafraid. What are such creatures? Vermin-less than vermin, nothing!”

“You’re not afraid of dying?”

“What is life without your love?” He had a thoughtful moment. “Who knows but death may prove infinitely more wonderful than this life of ours? There is but one way of finding out...”

She heard him in a stare. The woman in her could hardly be unaffected by the handsome gravity of that extraordinary countenance, whose salient features gained so much through that Rembrandtesque play of deep shadows and dull light. And he was “talking like a book,” yet unpretendingly, as always speaking his mind without affectation. Under the spell of his mentality she acknowledged now for the first time that he was essential: all else was nothing; Red, adventure, success, the domination of personality which she had already imposed upon her environment—none of these mattered if to have them she must forego the love of Mario. And of a sudden care fastened cruel claws upon her heart and wrung from it a cry of self-betrayal.

“Maybe you’re not afraid, Mario. I don’t believe you are. But I am—afraid for you. I wish you’d go away.”

“You care that much!”

“No—not the way you mean—”

“You love me!” Her hands lifted in protest: he caught and enclosed them both in his own. His shadowed face and eyes grew luminous, his sonorous accents vibrated with emotion. “You love me, Leonora—at last.”

He was drawing her steadily toward him, all her strength seemed to have ebbed from her limbs. There was madness in the beating of her heart, madness mounting like mist into her brain. Now she was in his arms, and glad. His lips closed on hers. For a long breath she was a mere thing of reeling senses. “You love me!” “I don’t know,” she murmured—“may-”

“Tomorrow you will marry me, and we will go away—”

Stung by realisation of what had happened, she struggled to be free.

“Let me go, Mario—please!”

“You will marry me?”

“I don’t know—perhaps—yes, I will. But not tomorrow—not right away.”

“Why—?”

“Let me go—I’ll tell you.” He released her. She stepped back, shaken with love and fright, looking fearfully up and down the street. It remained dark and lonely, singularly deserted.

“Tell me what reason—”

“I can’t marry you just yet. I’ve got to break with Red so’s he won’t know it wasn’t him that broke with me. And I’ve got other things to do—things I can’t tell you about, Mario—things I’ve got to ‘tend to before I can marry you. But you can trust me: I’ve promised, and I will, as soon as ever I can...” Her voice quavered, and she thrust out her hands, fending off his arms. “Please don’t kiss me again, please let me go now. If anybody saw us and told Red...”

He made a sign of submission. “As you will, so be it, my Leonora. I will see you again—when?”

“Tomorrow. I’ll give you a ring about noon and fix to meet you—uptown somewheres, I guess. Now—I’ve got to run. Good night... dear.”

He uttered in resignation: “Good night.” With a flickering smile of fondness she turned and left him, her slight young figure flitting swiftly through the shadows. Beneath the lamp at the far street corner, she turned, looked back, saw him motionless where she had left him, surmised his look of longing and, waving a hand, ran on, wild joy in her heart contending with cold fear.

For now she had done it, and there’d be the devil to pay. But it couldn’t be helped. Though hell and heaven were leagued against them, she would go through. She always did, once she got started. And with Mario, she knew, it was as with her: he too would go through, now he knew she loved him, though Red and all the world besides should try to stop him...

Breathless, she presently modified her pace to a rapid walk, but went on blindly, through a labyrinth of streets of which she received no impression other than of a blur of dubious shadows and uncertain lights...

At length, well out of her course, she stopped, imposed coherence upon her thoughts, got her bearings, and started on anew, in a cooling mood constraining herself to forget Mario and concentrate upon the business that waited for her at her destination.

But the Self outside herself, of whose constant company she was wholly ignorant, never ceased to yearn back toward that gallant, lonely figure they two had left behind in the quiet bye-street.

IV. Ristori’s

Her walk took on the semblance of an aimless saunter. She met the policeman she had seen from a distance, looked him impudently up and down, got a blank stare in response, and passed on. Rounding a corner, she glanced idly over her shoulder; he was not even looking back. Feeling more secure, she turned sharply, half way down a block in the shadow of the Elevated, and with the calm assurance of her apparent kind entered what had once been a dwelling of some pretentiousness but now was dedicated to the decadent uses of—according to its painted signboard—“Ristori’s Table d’Hôte—Dinner with Wine 75¢.—Luncheon 50¢.”

She was later than she had thought: a glimpse of the general dining room proved that; few patrons of the establishment remained, a scattered handful lingering over liqueurs and cigarettes, elbows planted on coarse and winestained tablecloths, by pairs deeply interested in each other. Scanning their faces, she recognised nobody; and nobody paid her the least heed except a waiter who knew her by sight and scraped her a grinning bow as she started up the stairs.

In the corridor at the head of the first flight, turned to the back of the house and laid confident hand upon the knob of the furthest. It turned, but the door was stubborn. a movement of impatience she knuckled the panels with a triple knock of peculiar timing. A hum of voices in the closed room died away, a heavy tread became audible, a key grated, the door swung open. She went in, nodding lightly to the man who had admitted her and, finding herself under the concentrated regard of eleven pair of eyes, paused in the middle of the floor and struck a spirited pose.

“Good evening, folks! Pipe my new rags!”

The silence that answered her was broken after a little by Red Carnehan, who said heavily: “Hello, kid. Sit down.”

Ignoring his invitation to an empty chair on his right, she dropped her pose but remained where she had stopped, lifting her brows a little and reviewing the company with quizzical gaze.

Though both windows were open, closed shutters prevented any draught from vitiating the stuffiness of the “private dining room”—a bedchamber in the intention of the architect. In an atmosphere stifling with smells of food, alcohol, and a truculent perfume, the smoke of imitation Turkish tobacco hung in lazy, lilac reefs. Discoloured paper of a morbid pattern was parting in reluctant spirals from the walls. Dust of decades weighed down an elderly carpet and obscured its florid design. Scorbutic paint disfigured the fine old woodwork.

The man who had let Leonora in having resumed his chair, twelve were seated at a table littered with debris of a meal, unclean earthenware plates, and those high-shouldered bottles of dark glass, guiltless of labels, which seem to be the sole habitat of the vin du pays so generally known as “red ink” that to name it by this alias no longer excites a smile.

Because of the heat all the men but one—Mr. Harry the Nut—had put off their coats

and collars, while the women had loosened their blouses at the throat. Sweat beaded faces of various complexions, ranging from the sanguine countenance of Red to the pastiness of Charlie the Coke. Leonora, looking from one to another, found each, with the exception of Red's, sullen of cast if not openly hostile. She sketched a lofty smile.

"What's the funeral?"

Red Carnehan—red of head and hand—an Italo-Celtic product, as slender, supple and sinewy as a snake, and as deadly-replied sufficiently, "Nobody's—yet," and again waved a hand toward the vacant chair. "Whyn't you sit down?" He added: "You're pretty late."

"What about it?" The girl flounced to the table and threw herself sideways into the chair. "I don't see as that's any reason why everybody's got to wear mourning."

English Addie, blonde, blousy and full-bodied, sprawled half across the table and, without removing the cigarette from her mouth, spoke in accents of cloying affection flatly denied by her semi-sober stare of jealousy.

"Maybe you won't mind tellin' us w'at mide you lite, dearie..."

Leonora experienced a qualm of misgivings. Had somebody spied on her and Mario and hurried ahead to tattle? ... Even so, that was a matter between Red and herself, nothing to excite ill-feeling in the others. But Red was apparently unruffled although unusually subdued for him, and perhaps a shade suspiciously impartial in his attitude.

She lied readily, without a quiver, naming the two plain-clothes men she had noticed in the Street of Strange Faces.

"Ennis and Corbin lamped me on the way here-if it's anything in your young life, Ad-die dear-and I had to chase all over to lose 'em."

"You did shake 'em, kid—sure?" Red demanded with keen interest.

"Sure. If I hadn't I wouldn't be here now."

"Maybe so," Charlie the Coke drawled in a voice as colourless as the flesh of his

face- “maybe not.”

“Where do you get that stuff?”

In flashing resentment Leonora swung round to face him. For a thought Charlie endeavoured to withstand her gaze, assuming a look of vacuity; but the task was beyond the compass of drug-drenched powers; his eyes shifted, their lids drooped, and his essay in insolence died miserably in a sickly grimace.

“Ah, I didn’t mean nothin’, Nora.”

“You’re a liar,” the girl stated with crisp conviction. “What’s all this, anyway? I want to know.”

Her eyes ranged again the array of faces, challenging each in turn, and getting no satisfaction ; for each in turn averted his gaze with an expression more or less sheepish and disconcerted, all but Red, Harry the Nut, and Inez, the third and only other woman present.

Red’s countenance was morose and anxious; Harry, slenderly elegant in flashy but admirably tailored clothing, wore a look of satiric amusement; Inez, like Leonora, dark and young but lacking her clear pallor of complexion and regularity of feature, confronted her with a steady stare and an unquestionable sneer.

“Well? What’s it all about? Start something, somebody-why don’t you? If anything’s gone wrong, let me in the know. I guess I’ve got as much right as anybody—”

The Nut shrugged and with supercilious nonchalance selected another cigarette from the flat gold case he was fond of displaying; a circumstance which, according to one’s bias, might or might not be taken as indicating that the case had been honestly come by. Inez seemed eager to speak, but Red forestalled her.

“It’s like this, kid: Eddie’s been pinched.”

The fact that the person in question, being under indictment for burglary, had for some time succeeded in remaining at large solely by grace of his loyal associates, might have been thought enough to rob this announcement of some of its staggering quality. But to Leonora it came as a genuine shock, and she

showed it unmistakably.

“No!” she exclaimed, and added a most unladylike phrase of mixed incredulity and regret. “When’d they get him—and where?”

“Tonight—in the place next door to Addie’s—went straight there as if they knew where he’d be and when.”

“Somebody’s squealed,” Leonora declared with conviction.

“That’s just it,” Inez affirmed significantly. “*I wonder* who!”

Leonora needed a little time before she was able to couple the thinly veiled animosity of the gathering, to which she had been sensible ever since entering, with the tone employed by Inez, something which this last would ordinarily have lacked audacity to attempt. Then immediately her temper grew incandescent.

“Meaning me?”

“Why, hon!” Inez drawled, rounding her eyes—“whatever made you think that?”

But she committed the grievous error of trying to exchange with Red a look of malicious understanding which Leonora intercepted instantly.

“Never you mind what made me think that,” she said in cold rage: “I get you: I ain’t blind and dumb. But take it from me, Inez: you chuck it and chuck it quick. If I get one more word out of you, trying to make me out a stoolpigeon—if I ever see you look that way at Red again—your people’ll have no kick coming.”

“Oh, is that so?” Inez demanded with mistaken pertness. “What do you think you’ll do?”

“Irish you,” Leonora informed her savagely—“irish you till all you’ll need will be a wood kimono lined with satin and trimmed with tin. And you know I’ll do it, too.”

Her small emphatic fist struck the table; Red’s hand closed on it.

“Easy, kid; don’t run away with the wrong idea—”

“I won’t. Don’t worry.” She wrenched her hand free. “I’m no simp. I’ve got more brains than the rest of this push lumped together—that goes for you, too, Red. And I won’t stand for insinuations from nobody—not from that rotten little cat that’s trying to make up to you—she’s always jealous of me—or anybody else. You...!” For a moment words proved inadequate. She sat in a tense posture, white with fury, breathing quickly; and even Red avoided her eyes. “Ah, you all make me sick! Eddie gets pinched—God knows how!—and you all fix on me as the squealer because I happen to be a few minutes late tonight! Why, you poor fish!” She checked abruptly, noting another questionable gap in the company. “Why pick on me? Where’s Leo Bielinsky? Why isn’t he here? If being late’s proof of squealing—he’s later than me !”

“That ain’t all, Nora,” English Addie interposed. “We want to know where you got those clothes.”

“What’s that to you? Can’t I spend my money, dress myself decent, if I want to?”

“Yes: but where’d you get the front you was wearing when Harry seen you up on Fifth Avenue yesterday?”

“He never—”

“Oh, yes, I did, Nora,” the Nut interrupted with his exasperating gentility, mincing his words in the fashion he found useful in uptown bars. “Putting on dog, too, and getting away with it great-travelling with a dame that looked like she wouldn’t take nothing from the Queen of England. I tell you, I saw you.”

“That’s another lie!” But the steadiness of Harry’s eyes was disconcerting. Unquestionably he believed his assertions. Leonora’s tongue tripped over the denial: “I wasn’t...”

“Well, then, tell us where you were at four o’clock yesterday afternoon,” Addie suggested blandly.

At that hour Leonora had been in a Second Avenue motion picture theatre with Mario: an indiscretion to which she could not possibly confess. Perceptibly she lost assurance.

“None of your damn business.”

“Better tell ‘em, kid,” Red counselled uneasily. “You got to come clean—”

“Like hell I have!” Once more the flames of rage leapt high. “I don’t owe this gang anything, much less an account of everything I do. The shoe’s on the other foot. You all know me, you all know I’m on the level. Most of you’d be up the river today if it wasn’t for me-and you know that, too. How far do you think you’d get if my brains didn’t work for you, tell you what to do and how to get away with it without the bulls tumbling? Who planned the raid on Einstein’s hock shop? Did any of you get pinched for that? Who figured out how to get those bonds away from the Chemical Trust’s messenger? Was anybody lagged for that? ... And because I take the trouble not to lead a coupla guns right up to you tonight-and because the Nut saw somebody that looked like me all dolled up on Fifth Avenue yesterday-or thinks he did—”

“It was you, all right,” Harry affirmed coolly.

Their glances met and clashed, the girl’s hot with challenge and resentment, the man’s cold with malice. For the first time she recognised in this creature an enemy. Then her super-excited intelligence, grappling with the problem of how to confute his implicit accusation, experienced a flash of memory followed by a lightning-like stroke of intuition.

“If you want to know who squealed,” she suggested deliberately, “why don’t you give Harry the office? Ask him what he does with all his time, where he gets the coin for all his swell clothes, who he talks to when he’s bulging-up to the bars of the big hotels. Ask him why the cops always look the other way when they see him coming, why he ain’t never pinched—”

With an oath Harry thrust back his chair, which overturned with a crash, and jumped up, guilt stamped upon his countenance of sudden pallor, glinting fearfully in his furtive little eyes. But in the same instant the door-left negligently unlocked after the entrance of Leonora-was hastily opened and slammed. The first to identify the man who had slipped in and now stood fumbling with the key, English Addie cried out in shrill dismay: “*Leo!*” The company turned simultaneously and with confused cries and questions got to its feet.

Slight and under normal height, panting, sweating, haggard, his face livid, eyes terrified, hatless, and with clothing dishevelled, Leo Beilinsky, alias Leo the

Blood, sank back against the door, one hand pressed to his side just below his labouring heart. The other, holding an automatic pistol, described a gesture of supplication. Red snapped oversoulder a profane demand for silence. Leo's broken phrases became audible.

"... Croaked a bull down the street... coming out of Bennie's place, Corbin and Ennis tried to jump me... Corbin got it." He gesticulated meaningly with the pistol. "Ennis took after me... Looks like a frame-up... cops everywhere I turned..."

Red demanded furiously: "What in hell'd you come here for?"

"No place else to go... cornered, I tell you... Listen!" The Russian held up a hand and, bending an ear to the door, heard sounds below inaudible to the others. "There they come now! For God's sake, get me out of this!"

"Fire-escape," Red indicated with a jerk of his head. Somebody thrust open the shutters of one window. The murderer pulled himself together, reeled across the room, and lurched out upon an iron platform grating. Immediately he disappeared.

Now the rumour was loud in the hall below, the shrill protestations of the waiters rising-above yet dominated by the deeper voices of the police. After brief but violent altercation, heavy feet came pounding up the stairs. Then panic fastened upon the wits of all those in the private dining room and stampeded them toward the fire-escape. Primitively in their fright men fought with women for first place at the window. Stifled screams of pain and anger mingled with muttered blasphemies; but the noise of milling feet alone would have been enough to betray them. Not more than two had managed to fight out to the iron platform before the police were clamouring and hammering at the door. 'Leonora, thrust brutally to one side, saw the futility of trying to escape before the maddened men, and, resigned, stood clear of the crush, watching the panels of the door tremble under a storm of kicks and blows.

Fear was absent from her temper, but she was shaken by impotent exasperation and sad with regrets. This meant an end to everything, not alone to these associations which barely an hour since she herself had planned to forsake, but to all her hope of happiness with Mario. For she had not the remotest doubt but that she, with at least a majority of the others, would be arrested, jailed and, on

the evidence of complicity in past exploits which the police spy, Harry the Nut, would be able to lay before the District Attorney, sentenced to a term of years in one or another of the State penitentiaries. It were idle, indeed, to hope for any better fate, in view of the strong likelihood that others of her associates-Inez and English Addie almost surely -would turn State's evidence.

And long before she had served out her time Mario would forget her; or, even if he did not, would never, never by any chance, make a woman with a criminal record his wife.

And this was what came of indulging her keen delight in excitement and adventure.

If only she had listened to Mario in time.

Seconds dragged like minutes, and the door still held. She began to catch at straws of hope: only three now remained in the room, Charlie the Coke-already with one foot across the sill, whimpering and mouthing curses because of inability to crowd into the press upon the fire-escape-Red, and herself.

The hammering on the door stopped. She wondered why. Charlie contrived to jam his terror-racked body out through the window. Red caught Leonora by a shoulder, roughly enough if in a rare impulse of chivalry, and tried to thrust her out after Charlie. But the crush on the platform was still too dense. She heard a dull crash and, swinging round, saw the door, its lock shattered by the impact of a brawny shoulder, slam back against the wall. The policeman who had broken it in stumbled and sprawled full length upon the floor. The plain-clothes man, Ennis, leaped in over his prostrate body. Her ears were deafened with Red's profane instructions to get herself out through the window without more delay. She made a vain attempt to obey, and had half succeeded when a rattle of shots sounded and, looking back, she saw the man Ennis pitch forward on his knees, then fall prone. The policeman, scrambling up pistol in hand, received the balance of the clip in Red's automatic, and sank slowly down upon his side.

Screaming with horror, the girl fell back from the window. Red shouldered past her, climbed out, turned and caught her by the arm and dragged her after him, still screaming like a madwoman. She tripped, her head struck heavily against the bottom of the window sash, and the lights dimmed weirdly and burned out, leaving only darkness impenetrable, and a strange hush pierced by thin echoes of

eldritch shrieks...

THE ANTAGONISTS

I. PRISCILLA

ROUSING on an elbow, Priscilla Maine found herself awake, with a racing heart, a throat swollen with a strangled cry of horror, and a mind through whose painted murk the reflection of a woman's screams ran like a thread of purple light.

Yet here was only darkness, with silence absolute...

Drugged with lees of dream, her wits at first refused to take hold on reality; and sinking back she lay in motionless suspense between dream and waking-save she panted and was shaken by the panic of her bosom-till staring vision cleared sufficiently to recognise, overhead, the rectangle of a skylight framing a violent gloom so deep that it made no impression on the shadows that enwrapped her.

With a low gasp of relief that was half a sob of fright as well, she sprang up from the divan, stumbled to the wall, and after a moment's groping flooded the studio with milky radiance from an inverted dome.

Still thrall to terror, she stood with a hand on the electric key, dazed eyes identifying one after another objects which lifelong association had made common and kindly in her sight. And in a passion of gratitude she embraced the reassurance inherent in the atmosphere of that richly furnished, spacious and silent studio, her father's workshop till his death and ever since her own.

It was true, then: she was safely restored to her own intimate environment, where nothing resembled even remotely that frowsty room where murders had been done. She had merely dreamed a dream, one more of those amazingly real dreams which she had learned to accept without protest as phenomena of slumber unavoidable, singularly harmless, and on the whole rather amusing.

So at least they seemed till this night when, for the first time, stark tragedy had stalked unbidden and unheralded, rending with ruthless hands the flimsy texture of illusion and rendering the dream more fact to her than this awakening, more true, and so much the more terrible.

Pressing palms to temples that throbbed and burned intolerably with their content of thoughts acrawl with fright and horror, she made her way to the bathroom and bathed her face with cold water, then with cologne till, in the sensory reaction of stimulated flesh and nerves, she began to feel measurably more calm and self-possessed, more Priscilla Maine than “Leonora”...

A twittering telephone recalled her to the studio. Receiver to ear, she said, “Yes? Who is it?” and heard the agitated cries of the elderly kinswoman whom she called aunt and with whom she had her home.

“Priscilla! Where have you been all evening? I’ve been half frantic... Why didn’t you let me know?”

“I haven’t been anywhere, dear—only asleep, here in the studio.”

“But I called the studio twice, and Central said you didn’t answer.”

The girl succeeded in mustering an accent of mirth. “I’m sure I didn’t, Aunt Esther. So Central must have told the truth.”

“But—one would think the bell—”

“It was one of my famous sound sleeps, dear. You know how impossible it is to wake me up when I’m sincere about sleeping. Well, this was one of those times.” She heard a complaining vague murmur—“that dreadful studio”—and laughed lightly. “Please don’t be cross, Aunt Esther; I didn’t go to do it, honest I didn’t! Mrs. Morey left in the middle of the afternoon—she had a tea on, or something—and about half after five I stopped painting and thought I’d lie down and rest a little before coming home. And now it’s...” She consulted and frowned reprovingly at her wrist watch. “I think my watch must be wrong. What time is it?”

“A quarter to eleven—”

“Really? Then it hasn’t stopped. I felt sure it was much later.”

“It’s late enough for you to be alone there, in that horrid place. Do hurry home. I’ll send Arthur with the car at once.”

“Please.”

She donned hat and cloak before a mirror in whose insusceptible depths she saw, set in her own hat and individual coiffure, the face of the girl whom in her dreams she knew as Leonora; and yet it was likewise the face of Priscilla Maine. Vainly with importunate eyes she questioned that counterfeit of two countenances. How could this thing be? Was she one woman waking and another when she slept? Was there in her a dual personality such as reading had taught her to accept as a psychological possibility? Did two natures struggle within her, one prevailing in her hours of slumber, and not always even then?

That train of speculation she was afraid to pursue too far...

II. THE PORTRAIT

Beside the mirror, a long pier glass, stood a heavy studio easel holding a full-length canvas, an unfinished portrait of herself in the Zingara dress she had once worn at a costume dance. Begun long ago, on a day when a model failed her, and carried out inconsecutively, "when she felt in the mood," the painting now neared completion; a little more work on draperies and background, and it would be ready for exhibition. Inspecting it critically, with fault-finding eyes, she saw that her work was good, almost as good as her father's. She could give herself no higher praise; and she was hard to please when her own work was in question. But here, incontestably, she had done well: the figure on the canvas lived; its striking pose was instinct with almost insolent vitality; the face was aglow with zest in life, the eyes seemed transiently arrested in an instant of gay impudence altogether charming.

Her troubled gaze turned back to the mirror's faithful presentment of a slender, modishly gowned young worldling, the finished product of a fashionable upbringing, a little proud, reserved, thoughtful, exquisite... Priscilla Maine.

But the girl on the canvas was Leonora. And in her self both lived. But which was which? Which false, which true? Was the life she knew, the life of Park avenue and Fifth, of teas, dinners, theatres, dances-relieved only by these days in the studio, her happiest, when she was painting-was this life reality or illusion? And that dream life of which she caught only fugitive glimpses, fascinating, tantalising, terrible, and related to nothing within the scope of her experience- was the dream life perhaps the life of fact?

She shook a head baffled, bewildered, and faint with wondering.

The door bell interrupted. She answered, finding as she had expected that the chauffeur was waiting to escort her to the town car which he was obliged to leave at the mouth of the Alley. She was glad of his company, when she had put out the lights and locked the studio door, for the Alley was indifferently illuminated and seemed rather grimly desolate at that hour. Their heels struck uncannily loud echoes from its uneven flagging. Its doorways were deep pockets of ambiguous shadow. Anything might happen there after dark, Priscilla told herself, and none be wiser before morning. She knew a moment of sympathy with Aunt Esther's distrustful animosity toward "that dreadful studio life."

If Aunt Esther only guessed how infinitely more dreadful was that other life which Priscilla knew in dreams...

But no one guessed. Instinctive reticence, jealousy of her privacy, reluctance to be thought different, and fear of having her sanity questioned as she herself too often questioned it, had guarded the girl's secret and kept it inviolate.

As the car turned through Eighth street, then north upon the Avenue, studiously dissipated Greenwich Villagers were seeping into the cafe of the Brevoort, all yearning to be "different." She envied them desperately, whose one desire was to be normal, commonplace, an everyday girl with no secret eccentricity to stand between her and love.

She had long since made up her mind she must never marry while this dream life continued to exert its occult influence upon her. To risk transmitting to her children a mental taint or lesion was unthinkable. So, though she met love or its likeness as often as a woman will who has not only grace, beauty, and charm of breeding, but secure position and comfortable fortune, resolutely she had put love aside, not infrequently at dear cost to herself in nights of sleepless mutiny.

Now of a sudden she remembered the man Mario (or was he merely a shadow?) and in a poignant turn of reminiscence recalled his luminous and compelling eyes, the potent magnetism of his presence, and felt anew the pressure of his lips on hers.

On hers? Or Leonora's?

She cringed low in the corner of the seat, as if fearful lest curious eyes detect the waves of colour that burned her cheeks. For in the memory of that kiss she found a sweetness ineffably precious. And in the knowledge that his love was

dedicated to that other Self, Priscilla suffered the first bitter pangs of that torment which spares not body, mind or soul, and which is jealousy.

But how should she be jealous of Leonora, if Leonora were herself?

Was it to be her fate to love one shape of dream and hate another?

III. PHILIP FOSDICK

About three in the morning, finding she could not sleep, she slipped into a dressing gown, and went to her desk, where for two hours she wrote steadily, setting forth in minute detail, as memory served, every item, incident and circumstance of her dream. Thus she found temporary distraction and ease of mind. Unaware of weariness till she had written the last word, immediately that was penned she found herself heavy with drowsiness so urgent it would hardly wait for her head to find its pillow.

Toward noon she awoke and rang for her maid. A pleasant langour tempted to indolence. She adored breakfasting in bed, and did so today with a relish somehow sharpened by a mischievous sense of playing truant, of cheating life's inordinate demands. Not the least inclination toward work influenced her decision not to visit the studio at all that day, or the dozen diverting plans she made for frittering the hours away.

Recollection of the dream recurred tardily and sluggishly, like the images that reluctantly take shape on an under-exposed photographic film, and when sharpest and most definite seemed pale and unimportant in that warm flood of sunlight which bathed her bed chamber, as little worthy of consideration as a wraith of nightmare. But it served to pique her curiosity and, when she had bathed, she took back to bed what she had written in the night and read it with care and, toward the close, something like resuscitation of those emotions which she had known during the dream itself as well as after waking up.

Putting aside the manuscript, she lay a long half hour in pensive idleness, something distraught. In the end she was aware of an imperative need for enlightenment. The thing had grown too serious, was figuring too largely in her life; if its influence was not to prove altogether ill, she must have comprehension of its nature to give her heart courage.

In all the world she knew but one person in whom she could conceive it possible

to repose such confidences...

She took the telephone from the bedside stand.

Merely to hear that low-pitched, agreeable voice with its ineradicable tinge of humour was comforting. Her clouded countenance was lighted up by a smile of gratitude-and of affection, too.

“Philip, dear! Do you know I haven’t seen you for ages?”

“That’s brazen blague, Priscilla. You know I know it and nightly bedew my pillow with tears because you haven’t called me up during the day.”

“Don’t be silly. Nothing can excuse the way you’ve been neglecting me.”

“It’s your own fault: you will insist on drenching the springtime of your life with turpentine and varnish, overlooking the most important things entirely.”

“What do you consider the most important thing in life? Yourself?”

“No: you. And next to you, letting me make love to you.”

“But, Philip, you do it so poorly, you’re so professional; you transfix me with the penetrating eye of diagnosis and prescribe: ‘Love me!’-for all the world as if love were bread pills or distilled water in a bottle labelled ‘Shake well before using’! And I really don’t feel run down enough...”

“I see. You want love slipped over on you... like bribing the cook to put a philtre in your coffee.”

She laughed delightedly: “That’s it, Philip! Subtly does it.”

“Thanks for the tip. I’m making a note of it. So don’t be surprised if you wake up one fine morning and find yourself madly in love with me.”

“I won’t be; and I wouldn’t even mind—”

“Priscilla!”

“But I’m not now. So don’t lose your head.”

“Why not, when my heart?”

“Please! I called up to ask a very serious question.”

“Shoot.”

“What’s a psycho-analyst, Philip?”

“Well, I’m one-a cross between a quack and a confidence man.”

“I know; but what do you do when you’re duly functioning as such?”

“You mean, how do I make a living?”

“No-only what do you do to make people pay you fat fees.”

“Why, I pry into their souls, if they happen to have any, and ferret out all their secrets—those they purposely try to keep from me, and those they themselves don’t know anything about.”

“Do many people have secrets they don’t know about?”

“More often than not we suffer from the pressure of secrets buried so deep in the subconscious we don’t even suspect their existence.”

“How do you do it, Philip-find such things out?”

“By low cunning mostly, Priscilla; I ask apparently innocent questions that ain’t, and lay traps and beguile patients into giving themselves away, in various ways no real gentleman would stoop to.”

“And what happens then?”

“Why, naturally, when I’ve dug up the scandal, found out what it is that makes the soul sick, I talk to the patient like a Dutch uncle, show him how foolish he is to let himself be affected by things past mending, and tell him how to overcome his weakness. Sometimes even that isn’t necessary; secrets thrive in the dark, you know; expose them to the sunlight and, as often as not, they shrivel up and vanish right under the patient’s very eyes. In which case there’s no use arguing: he’s already cured.”

“I see... Philip: will you do me a favour, psycho-analyse me?”

“What’s the good? I did that long ago.”

“Really, Philip?” Misgivings put a tremor into her voice. “What did you find out?”

“That you’re the dearest, sweetest—”

“No-please! I’m in earnest.”

“Hello!” He was impressed. “What’s up?”

“I think I’ve got a buried secret, and I want you to exhume it and see what it’s made of.”

“Are you serious?”

“Desperately.”

“Mm... What are you doing this afternoon?”

“Having you to tea, if you can come.”

“I’ll come whether I can or not. But what about Aunt Esther? We can’t have a third present if we’re to talk confidences.”

“Let’s have tea at the studio.”

“Same objection: Ada Moyer—”

“I’ll get rid of her somehow. She’s perfectly human, Philip, and knows quite well she’s only there as a lay figure, a sop to Aunt Esther’s prejudices about the disgracefully unconventional life of an artist I perversely insist on leading-for a few hours every day.”

“Right-o! The studio. What time? Four?”

“Please. I’ll be waiting-and so glad to see you, Philip.”

“There!” the eminent psycho-analytic physician complained, “there you go,

taking all the joy out of life. Just when I'm figuring that the fee I'll exact of you ought to buy me a Rolls-Royce, you spoil it all by overpaying me in the beginning."

"How, Philip?"

"Didn't I hear you promise to be glad to see me?"

IV. LOVE?

Ada Moyer was a pretty, vivacious, fluffy little woman, thoroughly mondaine and contented with herself, her husband, her world. Entirely lacking in any special aptitude for painting, she dabbled in oils a bit, partly because it afforded her an outlet for much superfluous energy that might otherwise have got her into mischief, partly because she was fond of Priscilla, believed her by way of being a genius, and was glad to lend the girl the show of chaperonage without which she must have had a difficult time of it with Aunt Esther. But Mrs. Moyer was as apt as not to absent herself from the studio for days at a time; and on this afternoon Priscilla found nothing to indicate that the other had been there at all.

Glad to be spared the necessity of explaining that she wanted to be alone with Philip Fosdick, the girl moved alertly round the room, superintending the preparation of tea by the maid she had brought with her, placing the table and the chairs the way she wanted them-setting the stage for a scene which, she felt instinctively, might affect most intimately all her days to come. In spite of this tolerably grave consideration, she was in a most cheerful mood, more than once caught herself humming the latest irresistible fox-trot, and when she stopped to think about it appreciated that the pleasure of anticipation was largely responsible for her good temper. She was always pleased when Philip was about. He was, she thought, the dearest man she knew. He never failed to amuse her, to bring out in her all her best and most engaging qualities; and consciousness of the love he had for her was something she would not willingly have forfeited. She was only sorry she didn't love him in return; at least, not in the way Philip wanted and deserved to be loved; but in her own way, with a very quiet, undemonstrative and enduring affection, a vastly different thing from what she might have given had she not set her face so steadfastly against love and all its arts... vastly different, too, from such love as had thrown Leonora into the arms of Mario

She paused, a slight frown puckering her delicately lined brows.

Strange how the memory of that caress had power to tug at her heart strings! Stranger still that anything as fantastic as that shadowy love of shadows should seem so real, more real than all else in the content of her dream, even its culminating tragedy... more real, indeed, than anything in this world of reality wherein she moved and lived and had her being...

In a long stare she comprehended the studio as with strange eyes, perceiving afresh the substantial beauty of its time-mellowed furnishings: the well chosen pieces of period mahogany shining with contented lustre; the handsome draperies of rich stuffs matchlessly coloured and toned, brocades, tapestries, embossed velvets, illuminated leathers of antique Spanish artistry; the framed canvases on its walls and those unframed others that turned to them bashful faces, standing on the floor; the fine old rugs whose collection had been her father's hobby; the darkly polished floor darkly mirroring all things that caught the light; the great wide fireplace with its massive dogs of brass; the bookshelves laden with well-bound works on art; the wide, mullioned window in the south wall whose heavy draperies she had thrown back to let in the sun.

Was all this, with its so intimate associations with humanity, like humanity itself no more than such stuff as dreams are made of?

It was none of it so real to her as Mario's kiss...

She gave a gesture of doubt and anxiety. If this were not love, what was it? Not sanity: how could one love a phantom? ... She began to regret the weakness which had moved her to call up Philip Fosdick. How could she bring herself to confess this secret even to him? How keep it hidden from him? How hope to deceive that keen insight which had lifted him to his present high place in the ranks of psycho-pathologists? She was anything but proficient in deception and concealment; life thus far had afforded her too little reason for mastering such accomplishments.

She sang no more, but awaited Philip's coming with more misgivings than she liked.

V. CONFESSION

Philip Fosdick had a way of exorcising constraint and implanting confidence

even in those who had no special liking for him. And Priscilla was genuinely attached to him, more so than she knew. When he took her hands and held them well apart while he looked her over with shrewd, humorous, indulgent eyes, she found it impossible to refrain from answering his smile with one in kind. And when she saw how well he looked, how very much alive and alert-mentally and physically Philip always seemed to concert pitch and never to know a let-down-hesitation and doubts were swept away like leaves before an autumnal wind.

“I suspected it,” he announced, nodding sagely: “you’re a fraud—and thank God for that! I’ve been quite upset about you ever since you telephoned, ‘Cilla. But nobody ever looked so wholesomely lovely as you who ‘let concealment, like a worm i’ the bud, feed on her damask cheek.’ Now give me tea, please, and tell me All.”

She made a little moue of petulance. “I knew you’d laugh at me!”

“I hoped I would.”

Philip flopped boyishly into his favourite chair, helped himself to a cigarette, and watched Priscilla narrowly while she sugared his cup with the traditional two lumps, added the slice of lemon, and drowned both in tea. Never had she seemed more beautiful or more perfectly poised. Impossible, he told himself, there could be anything amiss with a creature of such radiance! Some girlish notion, nothing more serious...

“Well?” he demanded with mock brusque-ness when she gave him his cup. She hesitated with her adorably shy smile. “Come now! I’m called in as a physician; so this is business; let’s get it over with.”

“Give me time to think.”

“Against the rules. How can I unmask your shameful duplicity, whatever it is, if I give you time to build up barriers? Besides, you’ve had all afternoon to make up your mind what you wanted to tell me. Now-out with it!”

So there was nothing for it but compliance.

“How long have you known me, Philip?”

“Let me see... To the best of my recollection, since you were about a year old; I

remember coming into the nursery unexpectedly and finding you—”

“Never mind! You’ve known me all my life.”

“And loved you all mine, barring the first ten years, during which you were as yet nonexistent.”

“Have you ever observed anything in me that led you to believe I was abnormal in any way?”

He contemplated a frivolous reply, but seeing the gravity in her eyes refrained.

“Never!” said Philip solemnly.

“Well, there *is* something... Philip: I have dreams.”

“That’s good. You look so angelic I was beginning to be afraid you really weren’t human; and I’d much rather love a woman than an angel, ‘Cilla.”

“But the strangest dreams... Let me tell you. And please don’t laugh, Philip. It isn’t any laughing matter.”

He drew the soberest face of sympathy imaginable. “Go on.”

“As far back as I can remember, I’ve every now and then had a special sort of dream that seemed very real to me. Even as a little girl -though then, I think, they weren’t so definite... But when I began to grow into long dresses, the dreams took on a certain form they’ve kept ever since.”

“Form?”

“Well, perhaps the best way to describe them is to say that they’re not ordinary dreams at all, confused, you know, and meaningless.”

“Few dreams are meaningless, if one knows how to analyse them.”

“But these are different this way: they’re like chapters from another life; as if one picked up a book, opened it at random, and read part of a story that had neither beginning nor end but still intelligible form, much like life, where one incident grows naturally out of another... you know.”

“That’s clear enough.”

“And in all these dreams I seem to see myself, precisely my identical self in looks at least, living through events and adventures in surroundings such as I’ve never seen but only read about.”

“Such as?”

“What I fancy slums must be like. The self I see in dreams belongs there—dresses, acts, talks precisely like a girl who’s never had any advantages to speak of, much education or contact with the pleasant side of life. All the same she is myself... much as if I put on some disguise so complete it disguised even my speech and habits of thoughts, even my sentiments and impulses. This girl does and says things I never could and, awake, have never thought of. But to her they seem quite right, the natural and right things to do and say. The truth is, most of the time she’s rather self-satisfied and pleased with everything—the life she leads, the people she knows, the fun she has—everything.”

“I understand.” Now unfeignedly intrigued, Philip had abandoned all pretence of treating the matter lightly, and was sitting forward, cigarette smouldering between his fingers, his eyes intently searching Priscilla’s face. “Tell me something about the content of these dreams. Go back as far as you can—

“My first memories are very vague,” Priscilla told him; “I don’t recall being impressed that they were strange or in any way real. They were childish and simple impressions of another little girl who was rather unhappy most of the time. I think she lived with an old woman—a wretched old witch of a woman who was cruel to her, seemed to hate her and enjoy beating her—in a mean little flat somewhere. The old woman used to tell fortunes with cards in the front room. But all that’s very vague now. I don’t remember much more, except that the little girl used to play a great deal in the streets.”

“But when she—or you—grew up, the dreams became more real?”

“Yes: about that time something happened to the old woman, I presume she died, and the girl was left alone to look out for herself. I don’t know what she did for a living because I never saw her except at night. Then I would meet her, or rather find myself with her in the Street of Strange Faces...”

A questioning look obliged Priscilla to break off here and explain about the river,

the Dark Corner, and the Street.

“And then we,” she resumed—“or she—would start off and have curious experiences. She’d meet people she knew, sometimes people I knew, too, through being with her when she’d met them before, but not always; and interesting things would happen. I’m afraid she’s a bit of a flirt, Philip, but I never knew her to do or think of doing anything wrong till lately. Then, somehow she fell in with a rather tough set. One of them was a sort of desperado, a gang leader such as one sometimes reads about in the newspapers, named Red Carnehan—”

“So you remember names!”

“Oh, perfectly; places, too. If I ever saw them, if there really are such places, I should know them instantly, I’m sure... And this Red Carnehan fell in love with her, and they became engaged—I guess. She was brighter, more intelligent than he, and she planned things for him to do, with his gang-robberies and such things, as far as I know—and how to escape the consequences. Another man, named Mario, loved her, too; but he wasn’t one of Red’s gang; in fact he was bitterly opposed to her having anything to do with it, and always begging her to give it up and marry him. But she was afraid of Red, and always refused. I think she always meant to marry Red Carnehan until last night...”

Priscilla paused and was so long silent, staring at the floor, lost in thoughts and emotions conjured up by this near approach to her latest dream, that Philip found it necessary to prompt her.

“What happened last night?”

“The dream that frightened me so I had to tell somebody and thought of you.”

“Then, tell me...”

She rose, crossed to a desk, came back with the manuscript.

“I’d rather you’d read it, if you don’t mind, Philip. I wrote the story out last night, as clearly as I could remember. And here it is... But first, tell me what you think.”

“I don’t know yet, Priscilla. It’s apparently the most extraordinary case that has

come under my observation since I've been practising."

"You—you don't think it means-insanity, do you?"

His laugh reassured even more than his words. "Bless your heart, no! The insane don't have coherent dreams, or talk about them intelligibly. Don't worry about that... But, frankly, I don't know what to think. There must be an explanation, because nothing in nature is without its cause. But in this case it's something that will want a deal of hunting, I'm afraid; and we'll have to get all our facts together before I can even hazard a guess. Now let me read, please."

He concentrated so completely over the manuscript that he seemed utterly forgetful of her presence, and did not so much as look up when, after a time, weary of studying his expression without knowing what thoughts moulded it, Priscilla rose and began to wander restlessly about the studio.

It seemed that he would never finish reading...

VI. THE EVENING PAPER

She was standing to one side of the south window, abstractedly looking down over Mac-dougall Alley, when she heard Philip utter a startled exclamation and jump up from his chair.

Turning she saw him approaching, the scribbled pages of her narrative crushed in his hand, his face dark with amazement.

"This is more than extraordinary," he declared—"it's impossible, incomprehensible!... Priscilla, tell me; have you by any chance seen the afternoon papers?"

Premonition started a hand fluttering toward her bosom. "Why... no."

"You're sure?"

"But of course, Philip!" And then, alarmed by his look of doubt—"What is it? Why do you ask?"

"Half a minute." Philip crossed to the console table near the door, where he had left his hat and stick and a folded newspaper, and came back with the latter,

hastily shaking out its sheets. “I remember noticing a news story on my way here,” he said abstractedly, as he scanned the columns—“story curiously like yours in some respects—about some gangster or other on the lower East Side who shot a detective in the street last night, then took refuge in a restaurant, and escaped after shooting two others. I’m not sure the name’s the same, but... Ah!” The backs of his fingers tapped the paper smartly. “Here it is... You see.”

A headline smote her understanding like a blow in the face:

“GANG MURDERS ON LOWER
EAST SIDE”

But the text swam illegibly under her blurring gaze. Even Philip’s voice seemed remote, at times barely audible.

“Yes, the same names: Leo Bielinsky, the gangster, a Russian suspected of being a Bolshevik agent—naturally; all Russians are’ nowadays—Ennis and Corbin, plain-clothes men—Ristori’s restaurant. No mention of Mr. Carnehan, though, or anybody else except the proprietor of Ristori’s, who swears he never saw Bielinsky before last night. Apparently your friends made a clean getaway,

Priscilla caught his arm with imploring hands.

“Philip! It isn’t true! It can’t be! Tell me it isn’t !”

Seeing her face of waxen pallor, her dilate eyes in which horror flickered, he dropped the newspaper, freed his arm gently, and took her hand in the firm, calm and encouraging clasp of the physician.

“Steady, ‘Cilla, old girl, steady on! Of course it isn’t true—not the way you mean. There’s an explanation somewhere short of witchcraft, and I’ll find it for you, Priscilla, I’ll dig it out if I have to chuck my practice to the dogs and give the rest of my life to the job!”

THE HAUNTED WOMAN

I. CATECHISM

THERE was an interlude of which she retained no memory more than a confused impression of a time of stress and conflict, of struggling with all her might to hold fast to reason, sustained throughout, it may be saved, by a sense of Philip's sympathy and strength...

A crisis was reached and passed. Growing more calm-or rather more numb than calm-Priscilla found herself in a roomy armchair with a serious-faced Philip Fosdick seated squarely in front of her, holding her two hands in a grasp so compelling that it narrowly escaped being painful, and talking steadily in even, persuasive accents, infinitely soothing and heartening.

"There!" He was alert to the first indication of returning self-control. "You're better already. Now rest quietly till you've got yourself well in hand, and remember always I'm standing by."

"Have I been silly, Philip?" She essayed an apologetic smile, disengaging her hands to make instinctive dabs at her hair. "Hysterical?"

"Not a bit. You're not that sort. You had a shock, enough to stagger anybody, but you've reacted famously, and now all you need do is sit tight and consider this thing coolly and sensibly."

"But how can I?" Look and gesture were once more distracted. "Why, I don't even know whether I'm myself or where I am—"

"You do: you know you're right here, in your own studio—"

"How can I be sure? I thought I was, last night, but it seems I wasn't—I was, heaven knows how far away, in that dreadful place, when *that* happened-not here at all !"

"Rubbish: you were here asleep, here where you woke up. You merely dreamed you were elsewhere—with what psychic provocation remains to be seen. There are such riddles a-plenty still to be solved in the phenomena of somnambulism,

in spite of the long strides we've made of late years in psychical research."

Tight lipped, eyes intent, she nodded, then shook her head. "I hear you—or think I do—and seem to understand. But how is one to know what to think? Are you Philip Fosdick or a figure in a dream? Which am I, Priscilla Maine or Leonora?"

"You'll know before we finish: that's a promise, 'Cilla. Look at me, please, and listen: You've had a singularly coincidental dream which, coming as a climax to a long series of dreams quite as singular, seems past understanding. But it isn't. Nothing in life is. There's an explanation, a perfectly simple and natural one, for everything, and it can be got at if only we go after it in the right way. I daresay this case '11 demand a lot of patience and time and some tolerably stiff thinking; but its cause is waiting to be found and can't elude us if we stick at it, keep our heads, and never say die. Which is precisely what we're going to do, you and I."

Words and manner carried a measure of conviction. She searched his face and found it, as one always found it, a face to inspire confidence and hope, a strong face boldly yet finely modelled, thoughtful of cast, and illuminated by the most honest eyes she had ever seen, the face of a strong man, sincere, faithful and dependable.

"Thank you, Philip," she said. "I'm trying to believe, but you don't know how hard it is."

"That's where you're wrong: I do know; I understand perfectly. On the other hand, I know there's nothing unnatural in nature, there can't be; and therefore we can't fail to solve this problem except through your lack of faith in me. If you'll trust me, help me all you can, be absolutely frank—"

"I'll do my best... Of course, I've got to; I'll never have a minute's peace till I know the truth. Ask me anything you like, and I'll tell you the truth if I know it."

"I'm sure you will—"

"But, Philip: tell me one thing first."... She faltered and looked uneasily aside. "You don't... you don't think I'm—wrong any way—mentally, I mean?"

Fosdick laughed with calculation, a laugh that scouted the suggestion and at the same time was indulgent.

“Absolutely not. You’ve got the Tightest mind I know. But you’re anything but obvious, ‘Cilla, you’re as complex a personality as any I’ve ever known. You’re strongly intuitive-or more or less what we term psychic -sympathetic, impressionable, susceptible to influences that work on you without your knowledge. You’d have to be, or you couldn’t paint so well. You may mix your paints with brains, as Whistler advised, but *you* apply them with emotion; I mean you feel, and paint what you feel more than what you see; otherwise your pictures would be mere cut and dried reports of surfaces. Artists are like that, the good ones, who do work worth while, whether it’s painting or sculpting or writing or acting or fiddling or anything creative. With such people the subconscious is very thinly veiled by the conscious, whereas with most of us, simple-minded and unimaginative creatures, consciousness is an indurated husk, tough and stubborn. That’s one reason why I’m promising you we won’t have much difficulty locating the seat of your troubles. Whatever it is, the truth is known to your subconscious self, and that is bound to tell us, soon or late.”

“But how, Philip?”

For the first time since he had shown her the newspaper Priscilla’s tone and manner were unaffected by mental strain. Fosdick suppressed a glimmer of satisfaction, seeing he had succeeded in so interesting her that she was less sensible of what rightly or wrongly she considered a menace to her reason, than of the fascinating problem it presented.

“If we fail to get at the trouble by straight analysis-collecting, dissecting and comparing known facts-we’ll catch the subconscious betraying itself. It always does, ‘Cilla. No matter how jealously it may try to hoard its secret, it can’t help flirting with the temptation to discuss it indirectly, and so in the end it always lets the cat out of the bag. That’s what makes my job so interesting: one never knows what word or phrase, gesture of nuance of expression, will give the clue one needs. So if we fail to make visible progress in direct examination, be sure that some time, when we’re least expecting it, the subconscious will prompt you to drop the hint that will lead us straight to the heart of the mystery.”

She nodded eagerly, already well persuaded and only too anxious to believe.

“How shall we begin?”

“Feel strong enough to have a go at it now? Good! Then let’s get our facts in

order, first the things we know beyond dispute.”

Philip produced a pocket book, found a fair page, and at its top penned the notation: “*Priscilla Maine—age, 21.*”

“Where were you born?”

“Here—in New York. At least I presume I was. Does it matter?”

“Can’t say as yet.” Philip’s words followed his fountain pen: “Your father was Henry Hobart Maine, of this city; a portrait painter; made a great deal of money, inherited more; was forty-eight when he died, five years ago, leaving you, his sole heir, a handful of millions. Your mother died when you were born, if my memory serves.”

“Yes.”

“Her name?”

“I... don’t know.”

Philip’s brows lifted. “Didn’t your father tell you?”

“Never.” The girl’s eyes clouded. “He always seemed so distressed when my mother was mentioned, I learned not to ask questions.”

“Then he never told you anything about her?”

“No. Neither did anybody else.”

“Odd. Must have been something uncommon to make him avoid the subject with his own child. Ever strike you that way?”

“Sometimes.” Priscilla hesitated, looking down at a forefinger which traced a pattern on the arm of the chair.... “Does it seem heartless of me, I wonder? I was always so happy, life was so kind, father so thoughtful never to let me know an unsatisfied wish—I’m afraid I never bothered about my mother much.”

“That’s human enough. Still, somebody must know... Your Aunt Esther?”

“I’m afraid not. She married before father did, and went to England to live and

never came back till her husband died, a few years ago. She isn't really my aunt, you know."

"Distant cousin, I believe?"

"A third cousin—but the only living relative I have."

"Did she ever mention your mother?"

"Only once, and then only to say she understood father's married life wasn't a happy one."

"Didn't she say why?"

"She didn't know."

"Somebody must," Fosdick repeated testily. "Now if only my father were living..."

"Yes: he would know, if anybody. He was father's dearest friend."

"Well, there's our first big question mark. Now—"

"Philip—you don't think—possibly—the reason the marriage was unhappy was because of—anything—like mental trouble on my mother's side?"

"No!" Fosdick declared with just the right degree of pained forbearance. "Do try to cure yourself of that notion, 'Cilla. It's ridiculous; there's nothing wrong with your mind any more than with mine. Neither dreams nor psychic susceptibility are symptoms of insanity. You're as right as rain, every way.... I was just coming back to you. Let's see"—his pen hung poised—"you had the happiest of childhoods—that I know—and the usual education; and thus far you've lived an average life, the sort of life our sort of girls do live nowadays. Setting aside your painting, you're conventional enough, and all your tastes are soundly feminine: you like fun and friends and pretty frocks, books, music, the theatre, admiration; you've never once known hunger or hard work or, barring what you may haveread, anything about the harsh and seamy sides of life."

"Does all that matter?"

“Everything matters, young woman. Remember: you’re now a Case. To continue...” Philip hesitated, eyeing her with a frown of whimsical apprehension. “I know you’ve never been engaged, but whether you’ve ever been in love...” Priscilla coloured, but shook her head. His eyes narrowed. “Honour bright?”

“Oh, I’ve had crushes, of course; every girl has; and I’ve always been awfully fond of you—”

“Fond!” he groaned.

“I’ve been afraid of love, Philip, because of these dreams. It didn’t seem right to think of marrying with such a cloud hanging over me.”

He grunted impatiently, scowled at his notebook, shrugged, pursued: “The dreams began in childhood, you say, and were infrequent and formless until about your fifteenth year. Then they began to seem real, and therefore to play an important role in your life, to occupy your thoughts more or less and exercise a secret influence on all your motives and actions. You made up your mind you were ‘not like other girls,’ and that made you timid about contracting close friendships or giving anybody your confidence.... I presume you never kept a diary, or any record of the dreams? You couldn’t give me any idea how often they occurred... at what intervals?”

“No... I never thought...”

“Pity. It might be helpful if we could prove periodicity, even eccentric. However, if they go on... That’s one thing you must promise me: always tell me as soon as you’ve had a dream; let me talk to you about it before the impression has a chance to fade; and always write it down, too, the way you did this one.”

“I will—of course.”

“You’ve never consulted anybody else?”

“Never a living soul.”

“Not even your father?”

“Not even him.”

“Too bad: there’s no outlet so helpful as talking about one’s troubles. Everybody ought to have at least one confidant.”

“I couldn’t talk to anybody, I simply couldn’t risk their thinking me—queer.”

“I understand... Now let’s see if we can get a line on this from another angle. How were you feeling yesterday? Any way unusual?”

“Restless and unsettled—couldn’t seem to keep my interest fixed on anything for ten minutes at a time—otherwise very well, rather jolly, you know, inclined toward a lark of some sort.”

“What did you do with yourself all day?”

“Nothing much. I had a model in the morning, but didn’t like what I was doing and let her go before noon. In the afternoon I worked on my portrait of myself till the light began to change and—”

“Didn’t know you were painting your own portrait, ‘Cilla. May I see it?” ”
“Why, of course!”

II. AUTO-HYPNOSIS

Delighted, as always when someone she liked showed interest in the work she loved so well, the girl forgot her preoccupation in a twinkling and, jumping up, gaily linked Philip’s arm and led him across to the tall canvas beside the pier glass.

“There!” she laughed—“did you know Priscilla Maine could be like that?”

Impressed by his first glance, Philip merely uttered a thoughtful “*Hmm!*” and in silence studied the portrait with an intelligent appreciation not unmixed with wonder.

Priscilla released his arm and stepped back, pleased by this mute tribute, pleased as well to have her own overnight impression confirmed, experiencing that rare, warm glow of gratification which only an artist knows when he looks upon his handiwork and finds it good.

Well drawn and modelled, daringly yet sensitively painted with an unerring

sense of colour and values, the girl in gipsy dress was amazingly spirited and convincing. There was arresting challenge in that impudently tossed head with its laughing mouth of scarlet and dark eyes agleam with charming insolence under lowered lashes.

“Well done,” said Philip simply.

“I’m so glad you like it, Philip. Harkness”—she named a dealer known to both—“wants to show it in his galleries.”

“I like it immensely, only... I can’t get over an odd notion that it isn’t you. The likeness is extraordinary—I remember well the night you wore that costume—and yet, somehow. .,”

“You see it, too?” Philip turned to her with a sharp glance. She laughed consciously. “I didn’t myself till last night, after I’d waked up. Then with the dream fresh and real in my thoughts, I saw I’d painted not myself but that other Self. The girl you see there isn’t Priscilla Maine, not the Priscilla you and I know; she’s Leonora.”

“Good Lord!” Philip looked grave. “Were you thinking of her while painting?”

“No-not consciously, not that I remember.”

“And yet, without your knowledge, you must have been...”

He moved nearer the picture to examine it more closely.

“It brings everything back so clearly,” the girl mused; “it gives me the strangest feeling of unreality, makes me wonder which is which; which the living woman, which the shadow...”

The voice behind him trailed off into a pensive murmur. And for longer than Philip appreciated there was unbroken silence while he stood frowning at the portrait in the abstraction of conjecture, one after another weighing theory and surmise and rejecting all, vainly ransacking memory for precedent with which to compare this case.

He made a movement of exasperation and, simultaneously becoming conscious of the stillness, looked round to see the girl posed in a stare, gaze steadfast at the

portrait, her look dull and remote: head thrown back a trifle, hands hanging with palms exposed in a gesture curiously appealing, her respiration abnormally slow and deep.

Fosdick took a quick step to her, crying: " 'Cilla!" She seemed not to hear. He said in sharp insistence: "Do you hear, 'Cilla? Come out of it!" That broke the spell. She roused like a sleeper waking: intelligence slowly reformed her countenance. Sighing softly, she drew a hand across her eyes, then with an uncertain smile extended it to him. Philip clasped it between his own.

"Now what?" he demanded with brusque good humour.

"I've had the funniest sensation... I was thinking about the painting, wondering if, perhaps, I'd done something extraordinary and weird, painted my own soul into the figure on the canvas—you know—so that it really lived and was me while I was merely a shell of flesh and blood... and suddenly it seemed to me my fancy had come true, that I was really there on the canvas looking into the room here, seeing myself, I mean seeing Priscilla Maine, and wondering about her and about you, as if I'd never known either of us, as if I were a stranger in my own studio... Do you understand, Philip? It must sound so wild and silly..."

"It doesn't," he said quietly. "But I think we'd better stop looking at the picture for a while. Besides I want another cup of tea, and you need one."

Retaining her hand, he led the girl back to the tea table, made her sit down, then resumed his own chair.

With obvious effort Priscilla busied herself with the tea things; her bewildered look persisted.

"What was it, Philip? What made me feel that way?"

"Auto-hypnosis—a mild phase—superinduced by excitement and fretting. Nothing to worry about. And still... Frankly, I don't like it. I wouldn't care to have it happen too frequently. It's no good encouraging that sort of thing; each time it happens it breaks down resistance, makes you only the more susceptible to the next suggestion. If I were you, I'd drop that portrait, put it out of sight and mind till we've settled this question—opened it up and let light into its darkness, and so relieved your doubts and fears."

“Perhaps you’re right,” Priscilla demurred, “but-I don’t know. It makes me unhappy to have unfinished work on hand. I’m afraid I won’t forget, even if I do turn its face to the wall. Don’t you think I might better finish it up, and get it out of the studio altogether?” But Philip’s disapproval was manifest. “Please!” she begged her prettiest. “It only means another day or two; then I can let Harkness have it and forget all about it.”

“I can’t say yes, ‘Cilla. I shouldn’t be at all surprised if it turned out that the portrait was wholly to blame for last night’s experience, I mean for the peculiar content and trend of your dream.”

She was frankly puzzled and said so.

“The power of suggestion it has exerted on your thoughts,” he explained. “Till yesterday you never expressed it even to yourself; but subconsciously, I haven’t any doubt, the thought has always been at work, that it wasn’t yourself you were painting but the heroine of your dream story, another woman of a different life with an independent spirit and mentality. And then-of course, all this is sheer guesswork-there are associations inherent in the concept of gipsy girl and a gipsyish existence, romantic, adventurous, full of dangers, twists and turns and thrills: such thoughts may well have dictated the character and course of the dream, though you were never actively aware of thinking them.”

“I wonder...” Priscilla sipped her tea. “Maybe you’re right... But still I don’t see why I shouldn’t go on with the painting. Just one more day, Philip—”

“Confound you !” Philip exploded with an irritated laugh—“you know how hard it is for me to refuse you anything. But it’s no good this time, ‘Cilla. I won’t have you agitating yourself with that painting till you’ve entirely recovered poise. For that matter, it would be better for you to keep away from the studio altogether for a few days. You’ve been living entirely too much within yourself. You want distraction, amusements, to break up this habit of morbid introspection. ,Get out and about,see people, go to restaurants and plays and dances more—”

“How can I enjoy such things with this trouble?”

“That’s just it. Until we find the explanation, which may take time, you’re bound to keep worrying unless you go out more into the world. I’m in earnest about this, Priscilla: promise to keep away from the studio for at least three days.”

“If you insist,” she conceded with a suspicion of a pout—“I presume I’ve got to do as the doctor orders.”

“Then that’s settled,” Philip asserted with reckless complacency.

III. THE PRESCRIPTION

Priscilla had a pensive moment. “Hypnotism?” she echoed her thought: “I wonder if that’s one way... Do you think you could get at the truth, Philip, if you were to hypnotise and then cross-examine me?”

“I’d rather not except as a last resort. Hypnotism demands such complete surrender to the will of the hypnotist, it tends to underminethe independence of the ego which is essential to the right development of the individual.”

“But what else can we do?”

“Many things... To begin with, I want to take this story home with me and go over it word by word. As it stands, in its intrinsic significance, it’s an absolutely unique human document, utterly artless and honest. The clue we need may be in it, in some unconscious betrayal of repressed emotion or desire; it may lie hidden in some turn of phrasing, even in some unusual word, the word you wouldn’t ordinarily use to express your thought. Such things can only be got at through close study.”

“What else?”

“Oh, plain sleuthing, for one thing-like digging into the mystery of your parents’ marriage, finding out why they were unhappy, and especially who your mother was and what sort of family she had behind her-whether, in short, it’s possible that you’ve inherited some psychic tradition. There are families, for instance, that hand down from generation to generation the clairvoyant tendency we know by the name of second sight.”

“You don’t believe in such things-you, a modern scientist!”

“The more modern the scientist, ‘Cilla, the more open his mind. I may not be wholly credulous, but I won’t deny anything I can’t disprove. People have been burned as witches who only made use of natural laws of which their day was ignorant but which science today recognises and openly utilises for the common

good.... Finally,” Philip added, “we may find the police useful.”

Priscilla started sharply. “The police!” she repeated in a tone of protest.

“Why not?” Philip tapped the manuscript of the dream story. “Don’t forget we have here an amazingly circumstantial and convincing narrative, with names and places plainly stated. Now if you actually did, through some freak of psychic activity-‘travelling clairvoyance,’ or whatever it is-have firsthand knowledge of this Bielinsky business... Well, his isn’t the only name mentioned. And if you remembered his accurately, and the plain-clothes men, Ennis and Corbin, and Ristori’s-why shouldn’t the others be real names of real persons as well? English Addie and Inez, Harry the Nut and Charlie the Coke, Red Carnehan...”

Struck by a circumstance whose significance had till now escaped him, he paused for thought, unheeding the signs of disconcertion betrayed by Priscilla.

“I say! If you dreamed true, neither of the policemen who entered that upstairs room lived to tell what they found there. Then Bielinsky is credited with two murders of which he’s innocent. I fancy Police Headquarters will be deeply interested if I can persuade them Red Carnehan was the author of the killings in Ristori’s!”

Priscilla’s cup and saucer clattered.

“You mustn’t!” she cried, her eyes wide, her features drawn with dismay. “You mustn’t do that, Philip! Don’t you understand-don’t you know what will happen if you do? Red wouldn’t hesitate an instant if he thought I’d-if he thought Leonora had told. He’d croak-I mean, he’d kill her, Philip !”

“Oh, come!” Philip put down his cup and tried to speak reassuringly. “You’re taking this too seriously—”

“I’m not. It is serious: it’s life or death!” She was suddenly on her feet, gesticulating in a manner utterly out of character. Philip got up to face her, and tried to interrupt, but she wouldn’t listen. “It’s the way they do with squealers-informers, that is-people who tell. I know what I’m talking about. They kill them, or get them killed !”

“Easy, ‘Cilla. Don’t lose your head.”

She didn't even hear. "Red's suspicious already," she declared. "He's rowed a lot with Leonora about Mario. He told me... I mean, I remember his telling Leonora he thought Mario was a dick-a detective-and if he caught her talking to him again, or anything happened to make him think she'd talked too much, he'd kill her first and Mario next."

She threw out hands that shook with passionate anxiety. "Promise me you won't go to the police, Philip-for my sake, for Leonora's, for Mario's!"

"For Mario's sake?" Philip's eyes darkened. "To be sure: I'd forgotten about Mario. And he seems to be rather a more important personage than I—"

"I_ she_ loves him, Philip-and he loves Leonora. And his influence is good for her. I know, if you won't tell-I don't know how I know, but I do-Mario will find a way to save her, he'll get her away from those others and marry her and make her good, and make Jicr happy, too. Give him-give both of them a chance, Philip! Please! If anything should happen to either of them, I—"

"Priscilla!"

The imperative tone shocked her into momentary silence. But her attitude remained that of supplication, she still trembled in frantic anxiety and besought his generosity with pleading hands.

"It shall be as you wish," Philip told her. "Do you understand?"

"You won't-you promise not to go to Headquarters?"

"I promise. For the time being, at least, I'll keep away from the police-but on one condition... Are you listening?"

"Yes-yes, Philip—"

"You must stop this fretting-take things quietly. And you must come away from the studio with me at once. I'll see you home, and this evening-if Aunt Esther will have me-I'll drop round for dinner. After that, if you've nothing else arranged, we might do a play. If you like, I'll scare up some others and make it a box party, and afterwards we can drop in at the Club de Vingt for a dance. What do you say?"

The panic in her eyes gave way to daze, then to dawning comprehension. She smiled feebly, her hands sketched a sign of apology and chagrin.

“I’ve been silly again! What have I been saying, Philip?”

“It doesn’t matter. Will you give me this evening and do your best to help me enjoy it?”

“It sounds awfully jolly, and I’m sure it’ll do me heaps of good. Philip”—her eyes were dangerously kind—“don’t think me ungrateful. You’re so good to me. You’re such a dear...”

“I know,” said Philip with a rueful smile. “But I hope that won’t be my only epitaph.”

THE HAUNTING PORTRAIT

I. IN THE AIR

THAT was the year of the impetuous Spring: March brewed weather whose golden graciousness she stole from May, April brought times of summer heat, such as that afternoon when Priscilla fell asleep in the studio and dreamed her dream of terror. Days followed as rare, unseasonable enough but sweet with the warm delight of youth anticipating the richness of maturity, with nights of wonder whose winds walked suavely beneath skies of velvet, purple, dense and soft. Topcoats and heavy wraps went early and unmourned to limbo, summer furs appeared to stress the delicacy of summery frocks. Shop windows bloomed with displays of sheer and dainty fabrics exquisitely tinted, like beds of exotic flowers under glass. In between them the Avenue saw confused and distracting shows of living flowers, drifting up and down, eddying in groups, pausing lightly. And by day and night as well the Town abandoned itself to such frivolity as had no precedent in the maddest chapters of its history. Between twelve and twelve it was difficult to secure a table at any of the more favoured restaurants unless one had been thoughtful enough to make reservation long in advance. Plays offering the sorriest of entertainment prospered beyond relief. At one in the morning rushing tides of motor cars rendered the passage of Fifth avenue as perilous as at five in the evening. The more retiring social life was proportionately more gay and restless, its brief post-Lenten season incandescent with a brilliance unparalleled in the memory of the most elderly idler. Everywhere there was endless feasting, dancing, coquetry, laughter, love in idleness. Announcements of engagements popped in well-nigh continuous fusillade; and after dark all the kindly shadows in the parks were murmurous with the voices of humbler sweethearts. Love was in the air, as omnipresent as the dust of gold sprayed into the night by flaming sky-signs. It found few immune, none quite insensible to the preoccupation it imposed so generally. Even Priscilla, though she made no sign...

II. ANALYSIS

Love worried Philip Fosdick with relentless importunity, whether he were behind the desk in his consultation room, doing his best to give his best to those unfortunates who sought him out to lay open distressed hearts and bespeak his sympathy and healing counsel, or whether he sat in solitude cudgelling his wits

for insight into the mystery that shadowed the happiness of the woman he loved.

The problem mocked his shrewdest efforts. Practice and study, personal contact and observation together with close examination of cases recorded by others, had long since made him, as he believed, familiar with every phase of psychosis, hysteria, and neurosis, as well as with these psychic phenomena which will at times develop in persons of seemingly normal idiosyncrasy, from simple dreaming to somnambulism in all its guises, with hallucination, trance, ecstasy, telepathy, and telaesthesia, and the various forms of hypnosis.

However nearly akin they might be to more

than one of these, what Fossdick for want of a better name continued with Priscilla to term her “dreams” persisted in defying classification by virtue of a perverse sort of intrinsic uniqueness. For they were in no sense true dreams, having none of the features peculiar to those fantastic inventions of the mind uncensored by waking consciousness. They were utterly without traceable relation to anything in the memory of the subject or her personal circumstances and environment. Nor were they, as is every ordinary dream, a jumble of condensed and disfigured impressions unintelligible but to the trained perceptions of the analyst. On the contrary they were, as communicated to Fossdick, coherent, dramatic, picturesque, convincing reports of happenings which, if they fell short of the rounded completeness of the invented story, were strikingly like reels inconsecutively viewed in some cinema of entrancing interest.

Further: Priscilla was not hysterical, neurotic, or anaemic. Neither was she of unsound mind. Hallucinations, trance and ecstasy take shape only in the miasmata of insanitary mental and physical states. The man who since her earliest days had adored and watched over her, knew few minds more clear of vision, unprepossessed by illusions, or capable of straight, honest reasoning. But it was not more sane than her well nourished, groomed and guarded body.

To a certainty, however, the “dreams” were telepathic. And Fossdick had already seen they could be stimulated by auto-suggestion -as when Priscilla” had suffered a sense of translated identity while puzzling over her portrait of “Leonora.” So, too, without question, they fell within the definition of *telces-thesia* as “any direct sensation or perception of objects or conditions independent of the recognised channels of the senses, and also under such circumstances that no known mind external to the percipient’s can be suggested

as the source of the knowledge thus gained” But in either case the link was missing; there was no “known mind” with which Priscilla’s could conceivably communicate with such intimate sympathy whilst she slept, but only “Leonora’s.”

But was “Leonora” anything more than a fancy born of subliminal recognition by Priscilla of the fact that she was the vessel of a dual personality? Or, if there were a real Leonora, what was the nature of the affinity that linked her mind with Priscilla’s?

Indisputably Leonora was to Priscilla a living fact, a dissociate personality leading an independent and factual existence. On the other hand, constantly by word of mouth and in writing Priscilla referred to Leonora as her “other Self”—a plain and direct lead to the solution expressed by the term dual personality. And (as Philip had told the girl) in the unconsidered, spontaneous phraseology of a naive subject the key to the riddle may frequently be found.

And yet, Fosdick had repeatedly to remind himself, the projection of a secondary personality through any considerable distance in space, or the creation of a new and strange environment for its activities, was a phenomenon as yet even to be suggested by the most pretentious charlatan or the most credulous pseudo-scientific student of the psychic.

Nevertheless, he felt constrained provisionally to adopt the hypothesis of dual personality and upon it base the beginnings of his survey.

III. THE AMATEUR SLEUTH

Dredging the past for the truth about Priscilla’s mother brought to light nothing that seemed helpful. In twenty-odd years New York itself had changed almost beyond recognition and the constitution of its society had been made over again and again till few of the original elements remained. Then, too, the memory of man is peculiarly brief concerning the troubles of others. Henry Hobart Maine, one of the most successful of American portrait painters and in his day a conspicuous figure in the social life of the city, nevertheless had made few close friends, and of these only one had survived him by a year or two—Philip’s father. Priscilla’s “aunt,” Mrs. Trowbridge, being duly pumped, proved to be as ignorant as the girl had said she was concerning the marriage of her kinsman. She knew indefinitely that “there had been trouble”: its nature, its cause, its outcome, were

alike outside her knowledge and alien to her interest. Apparently she had never been anything more than she was to-day, an amiably self-centred soul, comforted and sustained by those delusions of personal importance which are so essential to the insignificant.

From other sources, by dint of guarded and seemingly casual but persistent gossiping in the lounges of clubs frequented by the elder generations, Fosdick learned that Maine had been regrettably guilty of a romantic indiscretion in marrying a woman of a world outside his own. But her very name had been forgotten. He found, indeed, nobody who remembered Mrs. Maine, and but few who recalled the tradition of a hot-blooded, high-spirited creature whose hopeless impatience of restraints and conventions defied all Maine's half-hearted attempts to reconcile his wife with his friends and mode of life, till, discouraged, he disappeared with her and for some years absented himself utterly from New York. Concerning this period of his life nothing definite was known; there was a suggestion that he had devoted it to travel in South America. But it was certain that he had returned with a girl child and without a wife. This last was presumed to have died, though there were whispers to the contrary, that "incompatibility" had dictated a separation. Maine never made any explanation but, it appeared, quietly resumed his place and thenceforth devoted himself steadfastly to his profession and the care of his daughter. A gentleman of grave presence relieved by a whimsical turn of speech, with eyes tolerant and humorous, yet with a hint of pain lurking ever in their smile: Philip remembered him well. He lived to see Priscilla give promise of carrying on the torch of his genius, even as her dark loveliness foreshadowed something of the furore it was destined to create....

Disappointed but not discouraged, Fosdick turned to other avenues of investigation.

Bound by his pledge to Priscilla not to consult the police, discreet employment of channels of information provided by a wide acquaintance among newspaper men nevertheless brought him all Police Headquarters knew about the Bielinsky affair. The man, it seemed, had been sought in the first instance on a warrant charging him with violation of the Espionage Act in spreading Bolshevik propaganda. Nothing was known concerning the party in the room at Ristori's by way of which the Russian escaped after adding two murders to his score. The proprietor of the restaurant, held as a material witness, stoutly denied knowing Bielinsky or any of the tenants of the private dining room, all of whom had, he insisted, left some time before the tragedy. The name of Red Carnehan had not

been mentioned in connection with the crime. There was, however, such a person, a notorious gang-leader of the lower East Side.

Considering it essential that he should learn more of Mr. Carnehan and his friends, and perceiving but one way to gain that information without breaking his promise to Priscilla, Philip adopted it without more hesitation.

On the following morning, Priscilla, calling up his office, was informed that Dr. Fosdick had been suddenly called out of town on a case of vital importance.

IV. MERE PAINT AND CANVAS?

After one week of gadding about, of shopping and theatres and dances and motoring, Priscilla felt quite fed up with distractions. She was as fond of amusement and personal success as any girl that ever breathed, but not so constituted as to be able to fritter time away forever without a qualm of conscience—that scourge and consolation in one of the creative temperament. In short, she wanted to get back to her work, and wouldn't be happy till she did.

And why not? she demanded when she failed to get Philip on the telephone and secure his professional permission to return to the studio. "A few days" of trifling was all he had stipulated ; and those few had served. She dreamed no more of Leonora or Red Carnehan or Mario. Today, all that, indeed, seemed remote and unimportant. What though she had dreamed a nightmare which coincided so mysteriously with actual events as to scare her nearly out of her wits? After all, it was at worst a dream; and in this delightfully substantial and matter-of-fact world, coincidences don't count with anybody except novelists hard up for a plot....

She found Ada Moyer pottering with a hopeless daub of a still life, spent most of the morning giggling and gossiping, carried her off to the Ritz for luncheon, and left her there with some friends who needed a fourth at bridge: an arrangement perfectly agreeable to Priscilla; it was hard enough at any time to settle down to work after a spell of idling, it was the next thing to an impossibility with Ada on the premises.

The quiet of the empty studio was soothing and grateful. Through windows wide to the slow moving airs of that sultry afternoon drifted the drone of the quarter, a sound restful in its implication of a community tranquilly seeking to justify itself with works. Priscilla sighed contentedly, wheeled the heavy easel over to its

stand beside the pier glass, shrugged into a paint-smeared smock, and in the next fifteen minutes did nothing whatever but sit in a chair before the self-portrait, in stirless, intent study of her work.

Again it seemed good in her sight, decidedly the best thing she had ever done; and yet she was dissatisfied; something was wrong, something was missing without which it could not prove convincing.

The head she must not touch, lest one misjudged stroke mar the excellence of its spirited gesture. Neither could she see any way to improve her painting of the figure. The folds of the skirt needed some little attention, not much, possibly half an hour's work. .. No: the fault was in a background treatt^ in a fashion too academic and tame to suit"that brilliant counterfeit of life.

At length, rising, Priscilla took up her jtol-i

^ ette and from fat shining tubes squirted upon its satiny surface sleek coils of colour, cadmium, burnt sienna, orange vermilion, black, ultramarine, a tiny blob of crimson lake. Then with swift, sure brushwork she overlaid the insipidity of the original background with an impressionistic scheme of soft, deep tones of night relieved by hints of tawny lights.

For hours she worked steadily, absorbed, till a premature change in the light broke the spell. With a slight frown of annoyance she looked up to find the frosted glass of the north-light overcast with pale blue shadow. A second glance through windows whose draperies were motionless in the heavy air discovered the western sky dark with beetling cliff on cliff of slaty cloud.

No matter: her task was ended, and sooner than she had thought it would be. A few days more and she could varnish....

She put aside brushes and palette, shut the windows (through which now a cold, strong draught was blowing) drew the draperies close, and returned to the chair before the portrait.

The concentration of the working mood was still strong in her. For some time she remained in quiet contemplation of the tremendous improvement she had wrought in the canvas, without appreciating the true significance of what unconsciously she had accomplished; for those sombre, atmospheric depths with their remote play of lights now framed the figure of Leonora truly in its native

background.

The slow, thoughtful smile provoked by this discovery merged slowly into a look of abstraction ever more profound as reverie led her insensibly back to memories of the Street of Strange Faces whose dim reaches stretched away indefinitely behind that painted shape of dream. The effect of return to old associations grew strong, she could veritably see, she could almost smell and hear the Street...

She knew a period of mental uncertainty, of daze and wonder, out of which grew the sensation she had once before experienced of confusion of identity with the woman in the portrait. Inexplicably something impalpable yet essential seemed to go out from her to the other, with whose spiritual essence it blended intimately, so that for the moment she had no true existence save upon that painted surface, where she paused, hesitant, doubtful, confused, as on some dark strange threshold, before passing on and away into a vague half world, a place of vast and shapeless spaces where there was neither light nor darkness, wherein consciousness grew faint and the sense of Self was blotted out entirely...

V. BEYOND THE THRESHOLD

Out of nothingness, out of a sort of inert chaos, spectral walls like veils of mist took shape, closed in, added unto themselves a floor and ceiling, assumed a semblance of stability, became a box-like room wherein her spirit was pent in a mood of sluggish and melancholy mutiny: a room hatefully familiar to her in its every hideous detail: its poisonous wallpaper, stained ceiling and threadbare linoleum, its iron sink in the corner, its rude chairs and common table cluttered with soiled crockery and a gas-stove linked to an overhead jet by frayed tubing, its shelf from which hung articles of dejected clothing, its shaky iron bedstead with sagging springs and the lumpy mattress upon which her Self lay, half dressed and half conscious, too bored to care whether she waked or slept...

Weariness and disconsolation were eloquent in her posture as she rested on her side, a hand between her head and the emaciated pillow, and written legibly in bluish shadows under listless eyes, in sallow cheeks whose normal hue was clearest pallor barely warmed by glowing health, in the unstudied disarray of her masses of fine black hair, in the sullen cast of her firm lipped mouth.

A mutter of far thunder swelled and died.

The girl moved only her eyes, looking up to a window that revealed the storm-

black sky.

What mattered it to her whether or not it rained? She was condemned, apparently, to endless imprisonment in this dismal place whose threshold her foot had not crossed in so many days she had lost count of them.

She shuddered and once more lay still, surrendering to the enervation of thoughts that pursued one deadly round, discovering never one new thing to lend them animation.

The room grew dark, the sky more savage. A sword of lightning slashed the gloom, and again distant thunder boomed and grumbled into silence.

By the pert tin clock whose stridulation was the only voice her hiding place had heard in days, the hour was barely five.

She wondered why she had taken the trouble to look. What was the use of it, this keeping count of time? What was time indeed but waste, one long-drawn torment of waiting in idleness and impotence for the sign that never came to set her free?

She could have shrieked for sheer exasperation of ennui without alloy. She told herself that anything were better than such a fate as this. Why not shriek till her cries fetched the police? Or, better still, arise, go forth, and court arrest? A cell in the Tombs were preferable to this place of proved security. Was she less a prisoner here than she would be there?

But she did not shriek, she did not move, she did nothing, but remained as she had been on awaking from the desolating stupidity of unneeded sleep, so still she scarcely seemed a living, breathing being.

More lurid lightning, a deeper diapason of thunder, again that breathless hush...

Of a sudden she left the bed and in one soundless bound gained the middle of the floor, where she paused in the crouch of a hunted thing at bay, her wide gaze fastened to the door.

Through a wait so long that she concluded her hearing must have been at fault, she heard nothing. She relaxed, drew a deep breath-and grew rigid with alarm when she heard the noise repeated, a stealthy knocking on the panels.

Putting out a bare arm, she caught up a cheap red cotton kimono and wrapped herself in it, then moved to the door in stockinged feet.

Now that fumbling knock was unmistakable, and with an ear to the crack between door and frame she seemed to detect a panting murmur: "Nora!... Nora!..."

She called guardedly: "Who's there?" A voice of greater confidence replied: "Me-Charlie-le' me in!" She drew a bolt and turned the knob, distrustfully opening the door a few inches with a shoulder to it, prepared to slam it shut with all her might should she find cause to think she was being tricked. In the outer murk, the pale contour of a face she knew was just discernible. She stood aside and let its owner enter. He came in with shuffling feet, sidling, and slouched against the wall, his limbs a-quiver with the jerking palsy of the drug addict. She welcomed him curtly, with a scowl.

"Well? What do you want?"

The Coke returned a twisted, placating grimace.

"I don't want nothin'. Red sent me to tell yuh he wants yuh."

"Red!" She caught her breath sharply. "Where?"

"I dassent tell. He made me take me oat'. But he wants yuh."

"When? How?"

"T'night. He says it's all right. Ristori's kep' his trap shut. Th' bulls ain't wise to Red and Leo's hang-out. He wants yuh shou'd come to him t'night."

"He does?" There was a trace of challenge in her tone that was less disguised when, after brief deliberation, she demanded: "Suppose I don't? What if the bulls pipe me in the street? Suppose I don't come?"

The dope slave shuffled spasmodically.

"Red says yuh're to—"

"So *you* say. But how do I know he does? How do I know Red sent you here to

tell methat? How do I know this ain't some dodge the Nut put you up to-or Inez?"

"Hones' t' Gawd, Nora, yuh got me wrong!" the Coke protested. "I ain't seen the Nut, nor Inez either, sinst that night. Red sent me."

"Prove it."

"How'm I gonna do that?"

"Go back to Red and bring me something to prove he sent you-that silver ring he wears -anything."

"I would, Nora"—the protestation was convincingly earnest—"but I dassent. Red'll half kill me if I go back without yuh. Besides, it ain't safe, goin' there too offen. The bulls might see and follow me."

"Well, what about me? What if they see and follow me? I suppose it's all right if I get pinched along with Red and Leo." The girl gave a gesture half impatient, half defiant. "Nothing doing. You tell Red I said so."

"Red says, tell yuh if yuh don't come t'night somepin yuh won't like'll happen to that Wop what's stuck on yuh."

Mario!... Her lips framed without uttering the name. She retreated a pace, convulsively tightening the fist that clutched the folds over the kimono above her bosom.

"What-what are you talking about?"

"What Red said to tell yuh. Take it from me, Nora, yuh better do like he says. Somebody's been givin' him an earfull about yuh an' that Spanish guy—"

"Spanish guy?" she echoed shrilly. "I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Maybe so, maybe not." The Coke licked his lips with a furtive tongue.

"Anyhow he's sore. If I was yuh, and didn' want no more trouble I'd do like Red says."

After a while the girl said sullenly: "How am I going to find him if you w♦n't

tell me where he is?”

“I’ll take yuh there. Red said I should. It’s all right, Nora-yuh don’t hafta be afraid—”

“Don’t worry about me. What time?”

“Ten o’clock tonight.”

“Where’ll I meet you?”

“In the room upstairs at—”

A lurid flame of lightning dried speech upon his lips. Terrified, he cowered back to the wall. Darkness fell. Thunders shook the tenement on its foundations, crash upon rippling

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crash. Half stunned, the girl felt the leash upon her senses slipping. Her hands caught wildly at nothingness...

VI. THE STORM.

Body and soul seemed welded into one taut string vibrating in agonised response to the fury of the tempest: she found herself standing far from the chair in front of the easel, in quivering affright gazing oversoulder at the featureless long rectangle of the portrait in the shadows.

Rain sluiced the skylight in windwhipped waves, with a crisp, tearing noise. Thunder rocked the skies, ripped and raved, rumbled away in lessening reverberations. A lull fell, loud with the monotonous drum of rain upon the roof. Then without warning the gloom was abolished by a ghastly lilac glare-and the face on the canvas started out of its dark background with an uncanny look of life, the gay mockery of its smile distorted into grinning malice. Instantaneously blacked out as thunder once more smote and rattled, it lingered stubbornly before the vision of the girl, like the sun blot that hangs before dazzled eyes. She was fain to switch on the lights to lay that ghostly leer.

Even then she dared not look again. With head averted, she swung the easel round so that the painting faced the wall.

Still she was ill at ease in the company of the thing. She could not forget how that cold electric blaze had seemed to wake the painting into goblin life, transient but terrible. The memory of its jeering smile persisted. Like a spectre unseen but importunate at her shoulder, round a corner of her consciousness, denied but insistent, the notion lurked of the work of her own hands turned monster, preternaturally inspired with a spirit of fatal animus...

She had a crawling shiver of superstitious dread. Commonsense was powerless to comfort her with its assurance that she had merely had one more hypnotic hallucination induced by auto-suggestion. Instinct insisted commonsense for once was wrong, that there was more in this than the human mind, fettered to the claims of natural laws, could comprehend or cope with. Surely supernatural forces were here at work.. ,

She strove without success to cast out that thought....

Comparing her wrist watch with memory of the hour marked by the clock in Leonora's refuge, she reckoned her lapse from full waking consciousness had not lasted longer than five minutes: in that scant spell her soul had journeyed far, tarried a while in communion with another, and returned with a freight of fears, of doubts, and cares, that threatened the stability of her reason; in those few moments the work of a week had been undone. She stood now where she had been immediately after the last preceding dream, poised perilously near the verge of derangement, haunted by a shape of fear no whit less awful if it were after all only the creature of her imagination.

No: in even worse case; for then she had only her own self to fear for; while now (so she conceived) the lives of others hung in the balance, lives as real to her as her own, though she knew them through the medium of dreams alone.

Within five hours her other self must go to keep an assignation with a murderer. Fancy pictured Leonora stealing through streets of sinister shadow to that rendezvous with a fate inscrutable...

But not for Leonora was all this torture of solicitude. Through unhappy mischance Mario had been marked for Red's enmity. And where Red hated, tenure of life was treacherous...

Now it was revealed to her that, however inexplicable the affinity of their souls, however dissimilar their circumstances and irreconcilable their ways of thought and standards, in this respect Leonora and Priscilla Maine were one: in love of Mario.

Acknowledging this incredible fact without protest, Priscilla told herself she had loved Mario always, ever since that time, long past, when he had first figured in her life of dreams. And contemplating the prospect of living through the night to come, under whose impenetrable cover Mario and Leonora must work out their dark entangled destinies, while she waited, powerless to help or hinder, in an ignorance irremediable and maddening, Priscilla felt a shadow fall athwart her understanding, as black and cold as Death.

RENDEZFOUS WITH DESTINY

I. THE CLOCK

IN New York even hope and despair may meet at times on common ground; for if it shower, only the most desperate of optimists will try to get a taxicab by telephone. By the time Priscilla Maine had spent twenty minutes and all her patience garnering snubs from one arrogant cab company after another, the van of the storm had passed, dragging its heaviest guns on rumbling caissons, leaving the completer subjugation of the stunned and cringing city to the endless legions of the rain. Her own car was being used by Mrs. Trowbridge for a dinner visit out of Town. The outlook from the windows offered no more promise of an early end to the downpour than the steady tempo of its pounding on roof and skylight. In her present state of mind and nerves the prospect of stopping on indefinitely in the studio was insufferable.

Resigning herself, then, to a drenching, the girl locked up and scampered through swimming streets to Fifth avenue-where she waited three minutes that seemed ten till a trudging bus consented to pick her up. At the uptown end of her journey, likewise, she had two blocks to run, from Fifth avenue to Park, before she got home with hat, suit, furs and temper all demoralised.

While her maid prepared a bath, she begged off by telephone from a dinner engagement to which she had long been looking forward. Tonight she felt it would be impossible to hold her own, with anxiety on account of Mario and Leonora forever at her elbow, a gibbering spectre.

A hot bath and the ease of negligé should have lent her some tranquillity, but did not. She made the merest pretence of dining from a tray in her room. She could not forget...

Past seven: in less than three hours Leonora must start upon her journey...

And she could do nothing... nothing!... but wait and wonder and wring useless <hands...

The evening aged with desolating deliberation, the tension of anxiety became maddening, the need to *know* a consuming prepossession. By nine Priscilla was

beside herself, pacing madly to and fro, the creature of exquisite torments, hagridden by premonitions so awful she dared not name them even to herself.

A little before ten an inexplicable change in the texture of her emotions made her aware that the peak of her transports had been reached and passed. Of a sudden she found herself more calm, not with the calm of misgivings set at rest, rather with that of courage dauntlessly addressing itself to a forlorn hope.

Intuition divined the explanation: In that strange, deep sympathy which made them one, her mental and emotional processes faithfully reflected Leonora's; what agonies of doubts and fears she had suffered tonight were but replicas of those which Leonora had suffered. But now the time of waiting was no more: Leonora had left her hiding place and, committing herself bravely to her dark adventure, had found relief in action.

If only she might be with Leonora tonight as she had so often been, seeing what she saw, doing what she did, knowing what she knew, participating in every reaction of her wits and perceptions...

But the barrier of Priscilla's waking consciousness stood out between them like a wall unscalable, not to be undermined, impregnable except through accident, through some casual combination of mood and humour to which she had not the key.

Only if she could sleep, it was possible, she might dream...

Darkening her bedchamber, she went to the window, opened it, and tarried a little in its recess, looking out.

Rain was still falling, torrential, lancing the night with its myriad slender, silver, slanting jets, brimming gutters, flooding sidewalks, blackening and burnishing roadways to the semblance of rivers of ink that mirrored a multitude of lights. The air, not cold but saturate, carried a pungent smell of cleanliness. Motor cars went sedately, ripping their tires crisply from the wet. Under ebony umbrellas, foot-farers forged blindly into the wind or scudded briskly before it. The mutter of traffic was muted to inconsequence by the unbroken crepitation of falling water.

She thought of Leonora struggling through that scouring tempest to an unknown bourne...

The clock struck ten.

She turned back to her bed, threw herself down upon it without undressing, and closed her eyes. Immediately she opened them again: there could be no sleep for her till mind and spirit were fagged out altogether.

She lay unmoving, wide eyes staring blindly into the tempered darkness.

On her dressing table the convex crystal of a French clock caught a clear beam from some street light and was transfigured into the likeness of a little captive moon of dead white glare. Upon this, the brightest spot in the room, Priscilla's gaze focussed naturally. For minutes on end she watched it, in a phase of lethargic fascination which was rewarded when the little moon began to grow, to spread out, its cold light filling the room, the world, and all the spaces of her consciousness, so that spellbound perceptions grew faint, then failed, and she was no more aware of herself as Priscilla Maine, an individual entity, but only as a pinpoint of anonymous being adrift in the measureless incoherence of infinity....

II. THE STEET

She had neither raincoat nor umbrella: demoniac squalls hailed such defenceless prey, and gusts of pelting drops stung the bare flesh of her face like birdshot. Long before she managed to weather the corner and found herself in the street, her thin cloak was soaked through and so was all beneath it, her shoes were squelching, her sodden skirts, harried by the wind, were clinging tenaciously to her legs, making progress incredibly difficult. Yet she did not mind, but found a kind of savage delight in battling with the elements, gaining ground against their malicious will. Following long confinement to that room of unspeakable boredom there was compensation and to spare in this false sense of freedom, in the mere fact that she was at last at large, enough to render her indifferent to damaged clothing as well as to the clammy discomfort with which it plastered her chilled body. She leaned her slim young body against the wind and gladly fought it for every breath and step, she relished keenly the wet sweetness of the air, the gurgle of rushing gutters, the lilliputian drumfire of the rain, the motley cheer of weeping windows. But for these last one might pardonably have taken the Street for part of some drowned city peopled by grey ghostly shapes, figures glimpsed darkly through sweeping waves of rain as they scurried from curb to curb, lumbered down the wind or, like Leonora, plodded doggedly against its

howling opposition. But few such were visible at any time: humanity braved the elements that night solely under the lash of elemental appetites, such as the necessity of beer, and then made its excursions as brief as might be. Even the police hugged shelter....

A night of terror, she thought, with a shiver as much of dread as of cold, pausing in the lee of a corner to regain her breath before renewing contest with the storm; a night when anything might happen...

Resolutely she put that thought behind her; she did not dare to be afraid. And lest she be tempted again to think and falter, she spurred herself pitilessly on once more.

At length she turned aside into a sullen street, ill lighted, wholly desolate in all its visible length save for the shining welcome of saloon windows on the ground floor of a dilapidated dwelling in the middle of the street: beacons marking the end of the first stage of her journey.

III. THE HOP-JOINT

The saloon, a boozing ken of the lowest order, occupied quarters first intended for a shop. Empty show windows, flanking a double doorway, were backed by screens of machine-carved wood stained to mock mahogany and hung with beer lithographs. To one side, under a sign-gilt lettering on a black ground: "Family Entrance"—a single door stood open on a short hallway which led to a dreary room behind the bar, where local sots of both sexes sat in sodden congress over tables sticky with dregs, their feet scuffling in coarse, damp sawdust. To the right of this door a window with a ledge broke the sidewall, communicating with the bar for the convenience of neighbouring ladies and other fastidious souls who, rather than risk social contamination by entering a common bar-room, fetched empty pails of tin and carried them away filled with nourishment for home consumption. To the left a constricted staircase ascended to regions of uninviting darkness. Leonora, however, mounted with confidence and, finding a blank shut door at the top, planted a confident finger on a pushbutton which she could not possibly have located by sight.

A venomous buzz responded. Shuffling feet drew near the door, in which a grille opened, letting out a shaft of strong light which fell squarely on the girl's face.

She said coolly: " 'Lo, John. Le' me in."

The head framed in the square of the grille uttered a noise, inarticulate, something between a grunt and a growl. A chain bolt rattled. The door swung inward. Leonora entered, paused, faced the guardian of the portal—a Chinese, aged, shrivelled of face, shrunken of body, impassive-whom she addressed with the brusque insouciance of old acquaintance.

“Charlie anywheres about?”

With racial economy of gesture the Chinese jerked a thumb toward the rear of the house, and turned to refasten the door. Leonora moved down the hall, disdainfully sniffing tainted air, and entered a large room whose atmosphere was mephitic with the unforgettable, sickly sweet fumes of opium. Here, in half curtained bunks or on thin mattresses upon the floor, in a forbidding half light furnished by a single, closely shaded lamp, perhaps a dozen men and women lay in uncouth postures, deep in drugged stupors. One only was in apparently complete possession of her wits: the woman Inez of whom Leonora had seen nothing since that fateful night at Ristori’s.

Inez alone recognised in any way this addition to the company, looking up with a sullen face from her seat on the edge of a mattress on which lay, with limbs asprawl and face of ghastly pallor upturned to the dim light, his mouth half open, his eyes half closed, the thick stem of an opium pipe dangling from limp fingers, the man whom Leonora had come to meet.

In a seizure of dismay so overpowering as to blind her completely to the sneer of gratification which Inez sought in vain to dissemble, Leonora dropped to her knees beside the man and shook his shoulders with frantic hands.

“Charlie!” she cried in a voice urgent with fright and entreaty—“wake up, Charlie! For God’s sake, wake up!”

The man’s head rolled from side to side with horrifying limpness, his lips moved tremulously without closing, otherwise he made no sign. So complete was the eclipse of sensibility in him that nothing survived but the automatic functioning of his physical system. He might have been lifeless, he had better been dead.

Not one person in the room so much as turned a head when the cries of the frantic girl disturbed the quiet, not even Inez; for though she had mastered her betraying smile, that one had no need to stir in order to watch Leonora. Evil exultation continued to inform her cold eyes as long as they were unobserved;

but Leonora found them quick with specious sympathy when, at length appreciating the futility of her efforts, she loosed her hold on Charlie's shoulders and sank on her heels.

"My God!" she said, with a stricken face- "what'm I going to do?"

"What's the trouble, dearie?" Inez spoke with cloying sweetness, but the other was too far gone in despair to notice, or to care if she had noticed. "Anything I can do to help?"

"I don' know"-Leonora shook her head slowly—"guess not."

"Whyn't you tell me and find out?" Inez leaned across the body of the drug victim and placed a coarse red hand affectionately over Leonora's. "You can trust me, I guess. We're all in this mess together, ain't we?"

"It's only Red," Leonora responded dully. "He said for me to come to him tonight. He sent word by Charlie-said I'd *got* to come tonight. Charlie promised he'd meet me here and show me the way. He wouldn't tell me-said Red made him swear not to. I don't see why... But I wish to God Charlie'd kept his word to me like he did to Red."

"What do you mean?"

"I was afraid of this." She nodded at the unconscious man. "Charlie promised me he wouldn't smoke more'n two pipes."

Inez laughed shrilly. "Guess he must've had six," she declared: "I rolled three pills for him since I came in."

"And now he's down and out," Leonora pursued, "and I don't know how to find Red, and he won't take any excuses... Inez, I'm scared!"

"You poor kid!" Inez tightened her clasp on Leonora's hand. "But you don't have to worry. I'll take you to Red."

"You?" Leonora cried, staring. "How d'you know?"

"Oh, I been there half a dozen times at least."

The smile of conscious triumph, which Inez could not suppress, was unspeakably offensive, and brought back vividly to mind the rivalry which had always existed between them and which had flared up into open hostility at their last rencontre. Hot resentment kindled in Leonora's eyes, hot colour flushed her cheeks; but she dug teeth into her underlip and grimly fought down the impulse to give her anger tongue. Not only was that precisely what Inez wanted, but it might prove fatal. There was more than pride at stake, there was the life of him who loved her and whom she loved. Nothing, indeed, but that love of hers for Mario had broken down her will to refuse Red's summons: only the threat of Red's vengeance wreaked on Mario had made her supple to the gangster's will. And now, if she quarrelled with Inez, that one would never show her the way to Red. Anything (she repeated, in her secret thoughts) might happen...

"Leo told you," she muttered.

"Sure he did," Inez agreed cheerfully. "You don't suppose Leo's leary of me like Red is of you, Nora dear? Why, I've known all along where them two was layin' up."

Long lashes drooped to veil Leonora's smouldering eyes. Inez's malicious smile flashed and faded. The other clenched her hands into tight fists, then opened them. She looked up, pride conquered and trampled under foot by love.

"Inez," she pleaded simply: "I got to see Red tonight or... I don't know what'll happen. *Please* take me to him, Inez !"

The woman delayed her response for a moment, that she might relish the full flavour of her triumph. Then, jumping up, she said:

"Sure I will, dearie. C'mon: le's go."

IV. THE ROOFS

Again the night, the wind, the rain, the laborious transit of dim, weltering streets...

Elbow to elbow, heads bowed, the two women trudged in tight-lipped silence, for the gale was greedy of their breath, and save in screams they could not make themselves heard above its clamour. Avoiding main travelled streets, Inez led through a tortuous maze of murky backways, till they came to a sinister block of

towering, teeming tenements, into which, plucking Leonora by the sleeve, she turned.

In the unsavoury lower hall Leonora spoke incredulously: "Not here?"

Inez gave a negative gesture: "I should say not. Across the roofs... You don't suppose I'm such a simp as to lead a dick to the right door, do you?"

"You don't think we're followed?" Leonora demanded in quick alarm.

Inez nodded emphatically. "I know we was."

"Who was it? Could you see?"

"Nobody I ever seen before; a new bird, I guess, from some uptown precinct. Coarse worker, too: he must've spotted you first, 'cause he was waitin' when we came out, and trailed us all the way."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"What's the use? You know now, don't you? It wouldn't 've done you any good to know in the street, as long's I knew and had sense enough to lead him wrong, like this.... C'mon."

They began to run up long flights of stairs lighted only by single gas jets low-turned on every other landing, and noisome with stratified stench of evil cookery and things worse yet; the predominating race tenanted each successive floor indicated by its dominant effluvium, were it garlic, boiled cabbage, fried fish, or the subtle, penetrating, undisguisable odour of opium smoke. Gusts of voices lifted in rude laughter or more commonly quarrelsome issued from doorways that stood as a rule wide. Once there was a sound of weeping, too, sickening dull wails of some woman cruelly used. And always the inevitable squalling of children fretful in unhappiness.... On the top landing Inez paused to peer over the rail. "That's him," she panted, nodding.

Leonora joined her. At the bottom of the gloomy, deep well of the staircase the foreshortened figure of a man was visible, his upturned face a mere blur of flesh color. But something individual in the pose caught Leonora's eye and prodded what she took for some memory half erased.

“That’s no dick,” she declared impulsively.

“How d’you know?”

“I don’t know, but somehow I do. Seems like I must’ve seen him somewhere before.”

“Well, if he ain’t no pussyfooter, what for’s he followin’ us?”

“I don’t know,” Leonora repeated vaguely. “Maybe I’m wrong...”

She was not, as the Self knew that journeyed with her, though she did not suspect its company....

An iron ladder rose to a trap door through which they crawled out upon the roof.

Here the blackness was oppressive, relieved only by a dull reflection of the city’s glow on the low hung canopy of cloud; and the tempest had unhindered sweep. Time and again vicious blasts all but carried the two women off their feet. Rain driving in vast sheets half blinded them and rendered their passage of the roofs doubly perilous. They slipped, stumbled, blundered, bruised their bodies against unseen obstacles, their shins upon low copings dividing house from house (for the roofs were fortunately all on a level) and more than once by the narrowest of margins escaped pitching headlong to death at the bottom of some dark airshaft.

Leonora had lost all sense of reckoning and was beginning to wonder how Inez could hold on so confidently when this last stopped, knelt, and began to tug at the heavy hatch of another trap door. Leonora assisting, between them they threw it back, and descended a second iron ladder into a hallway indistinguishably unlike that which they had just left. But Inez seemed to recognise it instantly.

“It’s all right,” she whispered harshly, pausing half way down the ladder when Leonora stood on the landing below. “The door on the left, at the back. You know the high sign. I’ll be shutting this trap. Look sharp-before somebody lamps us!”

She climbed back a couple of rungs to wrestle with the hatch, while Leonora, turning to the door designated, saluted its panels with the peculiar rap which alone would be acknowledged by Red.

For some time she waited, hearing no sounds from the far side of the door, hearing indeed nothing other than the bluster of the storm and Inez petulantly anathematising the clumsy and obstinate hatch. Presently the thing fell into place with a crash, and the girl turned, looking to see Inez drop to the landing and surprised that she did not, but with a surprise no sooner conceived than smothered in a greater. For the door swung open suddenly, and a voice she knew, for whose accents she had hungered ceaselessly for days on end—neither Red's voice nor Leo's—cried in amazement:

“Leonora!”

And looking up into the face of the man Mario, the girl uttered a broken cry of wonder and gladness. She did not understand how this thing had come about, that she should find here the man she loved where she had thought to find that other whom she feared with fear so profound that it was twin with hatred. But it didn't matter; in the stunning joy of that surprise, nothing seemed to matter except that chance had led her at last to Mario, in spite of all her struggles to keep away from him, to deny love and self lest she entangle him as well in the toils of her misfortunes.

She went as naturally to his arms as a child in trouble to the arms of its father: Inez, Red, Leo, the police—everything—forgotten in the happiness of that meeting.

Gently drawing her across the threshold, Mario shut the door between them and the world.

V. THE HAVEN

“So you have come to me... at last!”

She lifted her rain-sweet face from the warm

haven of his shoulder, blindly yearning toward his lips... and remembered. Fear lanced that ecstasy like pain. With a convulsive movement she wrenched away her lips and struggled from his arms.

“Leonora!” he protested—“what is it?”

“Red!” she gasped, staring wildly round—“Leo—where are they?”

“How should I know? What are those two to me-to us?”

“Where are we?”

“In my rooms, as you see... well beyond the reach of those cutthroats!”

“But”—a dubious hand faltered to her cheek -“I came here to meet Red. He sent for me. Inez brought me.”

“Then Inez led you amiss, dear-no: aright!” His arms again enfolded her. “And thank God for that!”

Confused, she fell into a silence, misgivings benumbed by wonder. Impossible to couple the thought of Red, or any similar association, with quarters of such strange quality, all but impossible to credit the fact of their existence in that shabby tenement of sorry fortunes or, indeed, anywhere within the boundaries of a neighbourhood so mean. Incredulity yielded only to recognition of the plan of the rooms, something reduplicated four times on every floor of every building on the block. But here taste and means had transfigured the commonplace into an abode of such luxury as the girl had seldom dreamed of-indeed, had never seen but in the pages of illustrated magazines.

In this main room, dark hangings disguised the walls, with framed paintings like glowing windows open on exotic landscapes, and shelves heavy laden with volumes in rich bindings. An antique Chinese rug of exquisite artistry hid in part a polished dark floor of parquetry. Upon a library table of old Spanish oak books, manuscripts and objets d’art were lustrous in the warm light of a lamp of wrought brass. Wide-armed chairs of deep upholstery in leather offered caressing invitation to weary limbs. An atmosphere of studious repose soothed excited sensibilities.

A bedchamber partly visible through one open door offered a strong contrast of almost Spartan simplicity with soberly tinted walls, a narrow day bed of mahogany and unpretentious chairs and dressing table to match this last.

Through still another door a glimpse of white enamelled walls, stainless porcelain and nicked fittings proved that a civilised bathroom had there been installed, in a building whose every other tenant was content with such facilities for personal cleanliness as were afforded by the common kitchen sink.

The girl shook a bewildered head.

“And you’ve lived here all along, Mario !”

“Here I have come to rest, Leonora, worn out with the weariness and disappointment of fruitless searching for you. Since that day when you did not call me up and meet me, as you promised, but disappeared without word or sign- I have been half a madman. How could you torture me so?”

“I didn’t mean to-I couldn’t help myself.”

“Where have you been?”

“Not far... hiding.”

“From the police? Because of that business at Ristori’s? You were involved in that? Carnehan, too, and all those others, as well as Bielinsky?” She nodded to every question. “I feared this! Tell me what happened. Why did you not come to me first of all?”

“I was afraid—”

“Afraid of the man who loves you, whom you love? You do love me, Leonora?”

“Yes,” she murmured—“yes, with all of me, Mario.”

“Then why?”

“I was afraid of Red. He swore he’d have you murdered if I ever spoke to you again.”

“That, then, was the only reason why you wouldn’t communicate with me, send me one word to say you still lived, you were well, you thought of me?”

“I didn’t want anything to happen to you...”

“Yet death itself were preferable to such torments of doubt!”

“I know, Mario, I know. Wasn’t I suffering the same way? I wanted you so much, I needed you, I thought about you all the time, dear, day and night...”

There was an interlude.

“If there’d been any chance,” she resumed when it was possible for her again to speak... “But if I’d written you, or called up, or tried any way... I was watched every minute. I didn’t dare, dear... for your sake.”

“And I thought you had deserted me... Ah, forgive me!”

“Red’s sure you train with the cops, and he and Leo are desperate. They’ve had it all fixed for days to lay up in a safe place over in Jersey, but they can’t make a getaway; the bulls are watching too close, they’re all over.”

“But why Carnehan? The papers said nothing of him in connection with the affair, only the man Bielinsky.”

“It was Red done up those two at Ristori’s. Leo wasn’t even in the room. Because Red killed ‘em both, we all beat it without anybody seeing us except Ristori. He was in the hall, just outside the door, and saw everything. And nobody knows how much he’s talked, but the cops have been at him ever since. Maybe he didn’t tell anything, like the papers say. Maybe he got the third degree and spilled everything he knew. Then there’s Harry. He’s gone South-I mean, disappeared-and if he once gets where he thinks he’s safe, he’ll squeal sure as death. Likely he has already. Only Headquarters knows, and it isn’t saying. Sometimes, you know, they have sense enough to work that way, keep all they know under their hats and pretend they’re gunning for somebody besides the bird they’re really after. So now it’s niaybe Red they’re laying for onthe quiet, all the while they’re kicking up this row about Leo, making out they think he’s the only one... Don’t you see?”

“All but why you had to hide...”

“Because I was in the room when it happened. Ristori saw me. Harry knew I was there. Besides, the cops are looking for anybody who knew Leo-and they know I know him. If they get me on the carpet, and then a warrant’s sworn out charging Red with murder, no matter if I haven’t peeped a word I’ll get the credit for squealing.”

“I see now. My poor, hunted love!” Mario gave a gesture of decision. “No matter. Now you are with me, there is no more to fear.... All that is ended!”

In those eyes that looked up so hungrily to his, doubt contended with desire to be persuaded.

“I wish I could see how it’s ended...”

“Because you have come to me, because I shall take you away with me tonight-far, far from these haunts of crime and terror-and make you my wife!”

“Oh, if you only could !”

“What is to prevent?”

She hesitated, then cried in passionate protest: “I can’t, Mario, I can’t. The risk’s too big. I tell you, you don’t know Red. He never gives up. He’ll follow us to the end of the earth. It isn’t me alone-it’s you. How can I do anything I know’ll mean your death?”

“Never fear!” The Spaniard had a short laugh of scorn. “Do you imagine that good Mr. Carnehan will remain long at liberty, now that I know what you’ve just told me?”

For a long moment she said nothing, but after one short step back from him stood staring with widening eyes of dismay and protest.

“You don’t mean you’d squeal, Mario!”

“Why not?”

“It means the Chair for Red 1”

“Shall that stop me when your life and happiness are at stake? Am I to let the life of a thug continue to stand a constant menace to the woman I love?”

She started forward and caught the lapels of his coat with frantic hands. “Mario, you mustn’t! You mustn’t go to the cops! It’s death, I tell you-yours and mine.” He shook his head with a compassionate smile that only served to excite her to a higher pitch of distracted pleading. “Mario! if you do, they’ll get us, they’ll get both of us-sure!”

“But every word you say proves there is no room for the three of us in this

world. It is his life or ours... Resign yourself, Leonora. No argument can move me."

"But you can't, Mario-you can't! I won't let you. I won't be the kind of a girl that'll squeal on a pal!"

"It is no fault of yours, dear, if I make proper use of information which came to me by chance."

"No, Mario-please!" she sobbed. He shook his head. She flung angrily away, then swung back, her countenance ablaze. "Do you think I'd go away with you if you did that-marry you-go on loving you, even? Well, you're wrong, you're dead wrong, Mario. Get me right: I love you but... You do like you say, and I'll see you damned !"

VI. RECALLED

Somewhere a tiny bell began to ring.

At first no more than ghostly echo in the dimensionless and silent vast which lay between intelligence and body, that shrill small voice gained strength of its very perseverance, became a thin thread of importunate sound, calling, calling, without pause or pity, till it fairly ground its character into that indefinitely dissociate mentality; a telephone was ringing.

The body resting on the bed in that darkened chamber stirred uneasily and flung out a hand of ineffective protest. The noise persisted relentlessly. The somnambulist started up on an elbow, made as if to rise, sank back again with a sigh of relief when the ringing was suddenly interrupted.

She lay with open eyes, unwinking, in a confusion of divided consciousness aware of the snug darkness of that room so intimately her own, of the rain clashing outside the window, of the wan light streaming in from the street, of the blank, moonlike face of the little clock upon the dressing table; and at the same time living intensely in that distant place where two wills were contending, striving each to impose upon the other its conception of what was right, fair, just, and inevitable.

It was as if her mind were a photographic plate upon which two scenes had been developed: one wherein her common self of everyday was resting securely at

home, one in which that wild other self of her dreams disputed hotly with the man she loved, in surroundings strange to both selves till that hour.

Of the two scenes, the stranger was the stronger; all her interest was centred therein, and all other things were negligible beside the issue of that struggle, since that issue must be (this she knew the passionate certitude) nothing less than life or death, life with love or death with shame.

And she was racked with the imperative need of making Leonora understand that Mario was right, that no good could come of standing out against him, that nothing but good could come of yielding to his insistence, the fruit of his great love and greater wisdom. Percipience of her bodily environment was waning swiftly: with all her strength she was willing herself back to Leonora...

The telephone began again to gibber, in short, strident bursts of sound demanding her heed.

She faltered, hesitated, looked back. In bitter resentment, she understood she could go no further, accomplish nothing, till that insensate thing had been silenced.

And no time to waste: Leonora needed her too much. She must respond...

In sleep-waking, the girl roused with measured movements that cost her incalculable effort, sat up on the side of the bed, drew the telephone to her. It continued to chatter angrily till the receiver was actually at her ear and she had said: "Hello?"

Out of the enigma of night Philip Fosdick's voice cried: "Priscilla!"

She answered without emotion: "Yes?"

"It is I—Philip."

In the same toneless voice, she said: "Yes, Philip."

"Did I wake you up? Sorry! I had to."

"Yes..."

“Listen to me, Priscilla: I’ve seen Leonora ! I saw her in the street, followed her for blocks, lost her when she entered a tenement; and now I’m on the watch, waiting for her to come out. I had to be sure you were at home —safe—so I called up from a pay station. Are you all right?”

“Yes, Philip.”

“Are you quite awake? You don’t seem to understand. I tell you, I have seen Leonora-the girl you dream about-a living woman so like you I couldn’t at first believe it wasn’t you in disguise!”

“Yes, Philip.”

“So now you needn’t worry any more. I’m on the right track at last. The problem will be solved in no time, once I clap my eyes on that girl again.”

“Yes, Philip.”

“Priscilla! Can’t you say any thing else? Is anything the matter?”

“No, Philip...” She pursued in the same level accents, speaking slowly, as if with difficulty finding words: “I am quite all right... I... am safe with Mario now... Mario will take good care of me. Good-night.”

Without waiting for his reply, she hung up the receiver, replaced the telephone on the bedside stand, sighed, and again stretched out upon the bed.

Immediately deep sleep enfolded her senses like a warm cloud of darkness, and her soul fared forth once more on its far quest.

VII. SURRENDER

Our of that blank void grew light and shade in a nebulous swirl of formless patches. Effort to adjust one’s senses to such confusion induced sensations of fatigue, frustration, and some vertigo. With one’s eyes open it was worse. One shut them and so found slight relief. The swirl continued. Only by slow degrees did it subside. It seemed long before one dared open eyes again. The first thing recognized was the concerned dark face of Mario...

She was in one of the big leather chairs. Mario knelt with an arm round her

shoulders, lifting them forward a trifle that she might drink with more ease from the glass of dark red wine which he was offering her.

“What...?” she essayed in a husky whisper.

“Drink before you try to talk.” His tone was tenderly imperative. With an insistence as gentle he pressed the glass to her lips. She found a dazed smile for these solicitous eyes, yielded, and swallowed a mouthful of wine of a sort she had never tasted, fruity, aromatic on the tongue, warming, invigorating. She drank again, gratefully draining the glass.

“Excellent!” Mario let her head back to the cushion, rose, put the glass aside, returned. “You feel better, stronger, eh?”

She nodded, but her smile was still bewildered.

V

“What happened, Mario?” I felt so funny, all of a sudden, just when the telephone began to ring: and then... I don’t seem to remember.”

“The telephone has not rung, Leonora.”

“But I heard it!”

“A ringing in your ears, perhaps. Don’t you know you fainted?”

“Fainted!” She started indignantly. “But I never in my life! Why should I faint? I’m all right.”

In proof of this assertion she sank weakly back.

“You are overwrought.” Mario drew up a chair and sat down. “For days you have been living at high nervous tension, never knowing what fatality the next hour might bring forth. Tonight, against your wish and judgment, you came out to meet a man you fear and loathe-braving the peril of arrest as well as the brutality of this storm. Your clothing is wet through, you are shivering. You suffered a shock at meeting me by chance. Then we quarrelled...” He lifted her hands to his lips, one after the other. “The sum of such physical, nervous and emotional stress was toomuch, Leonora: you fainted without a sign of warning. I

caught you barely in time.”

“I suppose I must’ve, if you say so, Mario. ... But I don’t understand. I remember our rowing

-“Think of that no more,” Mario pleaded and, at the same time, insisted. “You and I must never quarrel. There can be no excuse for misunderstanding when our hearts are one.” She nodded meekly. “Tell me one thing only,” he pursued. Her eyes promised. “Who is Philip?”

“Philip?” Her look was completely blank. “I don’t know any Philip...”

“You are sure?” Intent search of her face satisfied him. “Strange! In your faint, you spoke that name, as if you were talking in your sleep you said distinctly: ‘Yes, *Philip*’; and again: ‘No, *Philip*... I am safe with Mario now!’”

“I don’t know.” She drew a hand over perplexed brows. “And yet... it’s funny... like an echo, what you say I said.”

“No matter.” With decision, the Spaniard dismissed the puzzle, took her hands in a firm grasp and held her eyes with a gaze earnest and commanding. “For the present forget all that, forget everything but that we are united now and forever. Nothing-nothing, Leonora-can come between us now. We cannot permit it, we will not. Love such as ours is not to be denied or paltered with upon any conceivable consideration. As I am wholly yours, so you must henceforth be mine; and to us all the rest must be ‘such stuff as dreams are made of.’ You understand that, Leonora? I have your promise?”

His will seemed to beat in waves upon her understanding; she felt unable to entertain one independent thought. Nor could she wish to. Never since childhood had she so surrendered to domination. But now... She knew a strange, dear joy in submitting. She bowed her head, then lifted it to show him adoring eyes.

“Yes, Mario...”

“So that is settled!”

Mario got up and strode into the bathroom. Water began to gush loudly into the tub. He brought back a light, warm robe of fleecy stuff.

“You are cold and wet; a hot bath will make you another woman. Then put this on. Meanwhile, I will find dry clothing for you, and a cab. Tonight you sleep uptown: the best and quietest hotel in the city will be the safest. In the morning I will call for you, we will go to get the license for our marriage. By noon you will be my wife. By nightfall we will be far from New York.”

They kissed. Mario lifted her to her feet.

“The door latches of itself. If anyone knocks, pay no attention. I shall be back in a few minutes, and have my key.”

In a staring daze, utterly an unthinking puppet of love and gratitude, she saw him go. The sense of his personality lingered, precious and compelling: she did not feel alone.

She moved slowly toward the bathroom, unconscious fingers loosening her sodden blouse. Finding the tub nearly full, she shut off the taps. Only with the silence that followed did appreciation of her solitude come home.

The glow of happiness ebbed from eyes and face and heart, intimations of terror stirred and began to writhe like serpents in the background of her thoughts.

Till then, in her wonder and delight, she had accepted without question the easy explanation that Inez had lost her way upon the roofs and brought her to the wrong house.

Even so: Red must be hidden somewhere in the same block of tenements. Suppose he were to learn where she was now... Suppose Inez had not blundered, but deliberately and with malicious intent had led her to Mario, then had gone to tell Red...

Intuition linked the poles of fact and surmise, completing the circuit of conviction. Instantaneously Leonora perceived with hideous clearness that Inez had planned this in revenge for the long series of defeats she had suffered in their rivalry, something for which Inez alone had been in the first instance responsible. It was Inez who had made Charlie hit the pipe too often, thus clearing the way for this supreme trick of treachery. This made it plain why Inez had not followed to the door to Mario's flat, but had climbed back to the roof and shut the trapdoor. Now Leonora no longer guessed, she knew Inez had gone straightway to tell Red that Leonora, refusing to answer his call, had taken

refuge with Mario instead.

Beyond shadow of reasonable doubt, Red was even now on his way to make good his threats.

What if he were lurking in the hallways of the house, or in the dark of the street outside the door? And Mario going unsuspectingly to his death...

Perhaps it was not yet too late to scream a warning down the stairs...

Madly Leonora ran to the door, tore with trembling fingers at the latch, and threw it open to find Red standing on the threshold, a shape of grimmest menace, his slender, feline body poised alertly, an automatic pistol in the hand at his right hip, an evil snarl twisting his cruel lips, murder in eyes whose glance shot directly past the girl to the room beyond.

Before she could lift a hand the man darted in, caught her arm and sent her reeling to the middle of the room, and kicked the door to behind him.

She staggered against the table and caught hold of it to save herself a fall. Carnehan was at her side before any sound could issue from lips which his hard palm sealed brutally. His pistol nuzzled her bosom.

"One peep out of you-!" he rasped. Cunning eyes raked the room suspiciously. "Where's that damn' wop?"

VIII. CARNEHAN

She tried to speak, but a dry mouth and a constricted throat refused their office. She could only shake her head, in dumb fright (with piteous eyes).

With a grunt of impatience the gangster released her, flung across the room in two cat-like bounds, stopping to peer in through the doors to bedchamber and bathroom and satisfy himself that Mario was skulking in neither.

He came back at a slow prowl, with staring menace in his eyes and a mirthless grin. "Where is he?" He seized her arm in a grasp intentionally savage. "Why'n't you answer me?"

Pain unsealed pale lips on which her whisper rustled: "I don't know—"

“That’s a lie!”

Her wrist suffered a more violent wrench. She cried out in protest: “Please, Red! I don’t know-hones’ I don’t know where he’s gone. He went out just a minute ago—”

“What for?”

“He-he said he’d get me some dry things to put on. Mine’s all soaked.”

“Well”—a grimace made the man’s face terrible—“then he’ll be back before long. I’ll wait-thanks!”

“For God’s sake, Red !”

“Ah, shut your trap!” He cast her arm free violently, and stood back. “So you thought you could gyp Red Carnehan and get away with it! You little fool!”

She attempted no reply. The first spasm of consternation passing, the faculty of concentrated thought returned. To this what is termed the courage of despair contributed measurably. As far as she herself was concerned, Leonora despaired. But she was not solely concerned with self.

She entertained not the faintest hope of escaping her fate at the hands of Red Carnehan. Whether she lived or died, she conceived, didn’t matter. But it was otherwise with Mario. Him she must save somehow, by some heroic exercise of wit and spirit...

Yet in the beginning she cast about in vain for ruse or wile that might serve. Alone, defenceless, in the company of a man armed and determined, murder in heart and mind: a man insane with jealousy and hatred, alike bred of sheer fear, the fear of the assassin living moment by moment in the shadow of arrest: what-could she do against such odds?

She could think of nothing, positively nothing. And yet, she knew, there must be some way out. If only she could find it...

She knew herself to be clever, far cleverer than Red-as she had once boasted to his face. Her wits had yet to fail her, however extreme or exigent the occasion. Give her time to think and she could circumvent him. But now that one essential

element, time, was lacking. Impossible to guess how soon Mario might return. And then there was Red's impatience to be reckoned with...

Her look of a trapped animal faded; in its stead her face reflected concentration of thought amounting almost to abstraction. She seemed to consider Carnehan out of a fathomless composure, as she might one factor in an engrossing problem in whose solution she was vitally interested.

This change in her annoyed the man intolerably. Not only was any semblance of indifference offensive, but he had learned to distrust the girl's moments of thoughtfulness. If his intelligence was not of a high order, he had at least cunning, with acumen enough to feel and fear the finer mettle of her mentality. Instinctively he sought an outlet for his exasperation in a break of lurid blasphemy.

"Whyn't you say somethin'?" he concluded, gesticulating wildly with the pistol. "What you standin' there for, dumb's a cat. Whyn't you try to come clean by lyin'?"

She responded quietly: "What's the use? Even if I told you the truth it wouldn't do any good. You've made up your mind—"

"You said it. I'm wise, and I've got you where I want you. If you think you can put anything over on me now-well, try it. That's all: try it. I wish you would."

She shrugged wearily, then enquired in tone of moderate curiosity: "Where's Inez waiting for you?"

"How d'you know?" He was obviously posed. "What's Inez got to do?"

"You know well enough it was her told you I was here."

"Well... what if she did?"

"Nothing-only she brought me here first."

"Like hell 1"

"Yes"—the girl ignored the interruption- "I didn't even know where he lived, no more'n I knew where to look for you. So Inez framed me, just to put me in bad

with you.”

“Ah, tell’t to Sweeny.”

“Ask Charlie, if you don’t believe me-ask him after he comes to at Sing Ho’s tomorrow. He’ll tell you he promised to meet me there tonight and bring me to you. But when I got there, Charlie was dead to the world. Inez said he must’ve had six pills at least; she’d cooked three for him herself. Then she said she’d show me the way to where you and Leo was laying up; and when I said all right, she brought me here, left me at the door and blew. And then... What could I do? I didn’t know where to find you, and I was cold and wet and tired.”

Her statement carried conviction. Against his wish the man believed her; and because it was against his wish he was the more irritated and chose to deny his belief. His glare was ugly.

“So that’s the stall, is it?”

“You ask Charlie. He’ll tell you the truth -you needn’t look to get it out of Inez-only he’ll tell you too late.”

“What do you mean, too late?”

“Too late to stop you making a damn’ fool of yourself.”

“How’s that? How’m I goin’ to make a damn’ fool out of myself?”

“I don’t know yet; but I hope you don’t think I’m such a flat as to think you’ve come here tonight just for a friendly talk.”

“You’re dead right there!” His laugh rang with brutal scorn. “I’ll say I didn’t come for no friendly talk with him and you.”

“Well... what did you come for?”

She confronted him with sullen yet fearless eyes. His own shifted. He had little stomach for plain speech. The instinct of his kind was strong in him, to kill, if he could, what he feared. But to declare his purpose openly in anticipation, to discuss it in cold blood with an intended victim, was more than he had bargained for. Inarticulately resentful of such squeamishness in himself, he looked furtively

aside, licking his lips; and discovered the decanter of Madeira which Mario had left un-stoppered on the table, after opening it for Leonora.

Thus reminded that he had drunk nothing for nearly an hour-whereas, ever since they had taken to hiding, he and Bielinsky had subsisted mainly on raw red whiskey-Carnehan brimmed an ordinary drinking glass with the wine and drank it in one long draught, grateful for its pungent warmth, deluded by its mellow smoothness.

Now Madeira may not wisely be taken on top of rye whiskey. Conscious of reinforced bravado, the man leaned against the table, his back to it, leering truculently.

“What did I come for? Oh, I dunno. What d’you think?”

“You’ve threatened me often enough, if you ever caught me with him again...”

He nodded in a heavy humour. “You got right, kid. No girl of mine can pass me up for any stool pigeon or dick that ever lived—”

“He isn’t.”

“And get away with it. You wait-you’ll see!”

She shut her eyes. In spite of herself she shuddered. He laughed with gratification, and her eyes reopened of a sudden, passionately unafraid, seeking first the pistol in his hand, then his face.

“You’re going to... kill me, Red!”

“I’ll say I am.”

In spite of his shamefaced smirk, he meant it in deadly earnestness. She had another shudder, but fought it down without releasing his gaze.

After a minute she said: “Very well: I’m ready, only—”

He interrupted: “You’re worse’n ready; you’re in a heluva hurry. His turn comes first, yours next. Get me?”

“But”—she implored his credulity with clasped hands extended—“I tell you, you’re wrong about him, Red. He hasn’t got anything to do with the cops-honest to God, he hasn’t!”

“Maybe you think so—”

“It’s the truth, Red. Kill me, if you’ve got to -I guess you think I’ve earned it-but don’t go making any mistake about him—”

“I ain’t.” The Madeira was working powerfully. A flash of unwonted insight visited his sodden intelligence. “You wouldn’t be beggin’ for that pill if you wasn’t stuck on him. And that’s enough. Bull or no bull, he ain’t goin’ to live to say he stole Red Carnehan’s girl!”

“You’re wrong, Red-you’re all wrong,” she protested wildly. “And anyhow, whatgood’ll it do you? Don’t you know you’re just playing Inez’s game?”

“G’wan. Inez ain’t nothin’ to me.”

“I know she isn’t, and she knows it, too, and that’s why. Don’t you see? You turned her down for me, and she’s been crazy jealous ever since. Now she gets even with us both-gets me out of the way right off the bat and sends you to the Chair for it. My God, Red! you don’t trust that hellcat, do you? Don’t you know she’s only waiting to fix things safe for Leo before she squeals on you?”

“Ah, forget it!” That, together with more profanity, silenced her. “Le* me and Inez alone. Mebbe I did pass her up for you; but that’s a long time ago, and she’s forgot all about it by now. She don’t think of nobody but Leo.”

“If you believe that, you’re as big a boob as she thinks.”

“Maybe-but not as big a one as you think.” Carnehan emptied the decanter into the glass and swilled it at a gulp. ” ‘Most anybody I’m strong for can fool me once, but not even you can fool me twice.”

“Inez has.”

“Ah, sure! You’d say so...”

But there was an accent of doubt in his jeering retort, and in the look he gave the

girl as well. Far gone in befuddlement, he was unsure of himself, unsure of anything within the scope of his perceptions, and uneasy. What if Leonora were telling the truth about Inez? Inez whom he secretly despised, Leonora who was worth a score of Inez's sort...

"How do you mean she's fooled me twice? '* he demanded thickly.

"First, when she made you think I cared anything about anybody but you, Red." The girl inched nearer, playing to perfection a part upon which her life depended-her life and Mario's. "She was the one told you about Mario-lied to you, told you I was seeing him often-a man I hardly knew, hadn't spoken to a dozen times in all my life. And you swallowed everything she had to say against me, you believed the first whisper you heard against me-instead of coming to me and finding out the truth for yourself. Why, Red, before tonight I never have seen that man anywheres but, in the street, and then only to pass the time of day! But you'd take anybody's word instead of mine, you'll believe anybody except the girl that loves you!"

Her hands came lightly to rest upon his forearms. He gave them no welcome but made no move to repulse them. The uncertainty in his eyes was giving way to another emotion, one which the girl knew too well. She moved still closer, and one hand stole slowly up to his shoulder.

"Won't you be fair to me, Red? You know you're everything to me. But what's Inez to you that you've got to let her come between us and spoil everything? We were so happy before you listened to her lies... Please, Red, please!"

There was an instant's pause, vibrant with the passion of her purpose and his doubts. But that very moment of indecision told her she was winning-had already won.

Her arm moved round his neck, drawing his head down. He resisted stubbornly, but of a sudden yielded. With a low cry he crushed her to him. The hard stubble of his beard, unshaven for three days, rasped her sensitive skin. The reek of his breath was sickening as he sought the fragrance of her mouth. But she steeled herself, repressed her shudder of repulsion, let him have his way, even mustered a show of response that contented him. For if her flesh crawled, her heart sang; she had won. He had dropped his pistol; it lay unheeded on the table beside them. She nestled more closely into his embrace, breathing broken terms of

endearment in answer to his half-coherent words. The movement brought her nearer the table and the pistol, almost between it and Carnehan. He did not seem to notice. She debated the next move, trying to scheme some way to free a hand without exciting his suspicions, so that she might grope behind her until her fingers found the weapon...

What sound it was that startled him, whether a footfall on the stairs or a door banging on one of the lower floors, s!c never knew. But the man lifted his head sharply, listening, and his embrace relaxed.

He muttered: "What was that?" "I didn't hear anything, Red..." With no more warning she thrust him vigorously from her. Altogether taken by surprise, he stumbled backwards, grasping at the air, his face a tragicomic mask of maudlin stupefaction, until the wall behind him brought him up. At the same tune understanding smote him like a thunderbolt. He pulled himself together and started for her, but ducked smartly and again fell back on finding himself under the threat of his own pistol.

But the reaction was involuntary, dictated by instinct more than by conscious fear. Drink and rage had put him well beyond the influence of that emotion. He could not grasp the possibility of her carrying out that threat implicit in her attitude. He knew only that he had been tricked and must be revenged.

For a little neither spoke nor moved. The girl was motionless, tense, her eyes dark with settled purpose in a face abnormally pale with excitement. The man stood in a semi-crouching pose, swaying slightly from side to side: shoulders bowed, head thrust forward, murder glimmering in bloodshot eyes. A dull growling issued from his half-open lips. Abruptly, making nothing of the pistol, he charged headlong.

She had not dreamed he would dare... The pistol exploded in a wavering hand, and its shot went wide; but its fire scorched the face of the beast and added the pang of physical pain necessary to make his madness blind lust to kill.

His body crashed into hers with terrific force. Both reeled back against the table. Ponderous as it was, this last swung out of place. The lamp toppled, rolled upon its side, and went over the edge with a noise of splintering glass.

The girl, borne bodily back across the table, lay kicking and struggling while Carnehan's hands closed round her slender throat. Somehow she had lost hold of

the pistol. Her ineffective fingers tore at wrists of steel.

A gust of hot air rose round her head. She saw Red's face fitfully illumined by a bluish glare. The glass reservoir of the lamp had broken, and the oil, spreading upon the rug, had caught fire of the flickering wick. She redoubled her efforts, but the pressure upon her windpipe was cruel beyond description, her brain was reeling, so was all the world. Darkness was closing in upon her like a black fog....

Then something happened, something miraculous intervened. Too dazed to comprehend, at first conscious only of the freedom of her throat, she was caught up and carried swiftly away.

Set upon her feet, she found herself in the hall, at the head of the stairs, Mario supporting her with an arm. To his anxious enquiry, she returned a ghastly smile and a feeble shake of her head.

"What happened?" she creaked in a voice she did not know as her own.

"I returned-thank God!-in time!"

"But Red?"

"Knocked senseless-back there—"

Through the open doorway she caught a glimpse of a room that seemed a well of raging flames, violet, orange and green. Then Mario picked her up again and started down stairs.

On the first landing she heard him shouting the alarm of fire. She struggled, and he put her down, but held her hand and dragged her with him as they plunged down flight after flight.

Before they had accomplished half of that descent, the house was buzzing like a hive of enraged bees. On the lowermost landing they had fairly to fight their way through the crowd of panic-stricken tenants swarming out of their cells.

A motor cab was waiting at the curb. Mario hustled her into the vehicle, followed, and slammed the door. Evidently the driver was already instructed: he made off without delay. Leonora collapsed, sobbing weakly, upon the bosom of

Mario.

IX. AT MIDNIGHT

And sobbing as though her heart must break, the girl Priscilla came back to herself in the ordered and luxurious security of that quiet home on Park avenue.

But it was some time before her bemused wits were able to grasp the singular circumstances that attended this return, or this awakening-whichever it was. She had been recalled too suddenly, too harshly, from that weird realm of her life in dreams to the sane world of her waking existence. Everything seemed so unnatural that only the natural could have seemed abnormal in her understanding; and at first she found nothing strange in the fact that she, who had lost consciousness in darkness, quiet and solitude, should regain it in a confusing glare of light, see the intent, anxious countenance of Philip Fosdick bending over her, as he sat on the edge of the bed, holding her by the shoulders, and hear the bleating of her Aunt Esther, who stood beside Philip, kneading together vague and futile hands.

But her sobs ceased when the oddness of it all at length struck home, and Priscilla sat up, shaking off Philip's hands and instinctively drawing her negligee together over her nightdress.

"Why, Philip!" she stammered. "And Aunt Esther! Is anything the matter?"

"I fancy you can tell us that," Philip suggested mildly with a sympathetic smile.

"I'm sure I don't understand in the least." This was Aunt Esther. "It seems very peculiar, I must say. Dr. Fosdick called a few minutes ago and insisted on seeing you. He said he had telephoned you some time ago, and you answered him so peculiarly, he wanted to make sure you were all right. So I brought him up—"

"I think you understand, 'Cilla," Philip interposed in a guarded manner.

"And we found you writhing and moaning in your sleep-and do what we could it seemed impossible to wake you up!"

"I see," said Priscilla—"I understand. I'm sorry to have worried you so...."

She tried to smile reassuringly for Philip's sake, but the attempt was not

altogether a success. Her memories were too vivid, too moving, the pain in her heart too new and keen. Her lips quivered, her wide dazed eyes once more brimmed with tears.

Fosdick looked aside to Mrs. Trowbridge. "Priscilla's in a highly nervous state," he explained with the authority of the physician. "But I've been studying her for some time and have the case, I think, well in hand. If you don't mind telephoning my office that I can't get there within an hour or two, I think I can quiet her so that she'll sleep naturally for the rest of the night."

But he knew very well that the office telephone would not be answered, and that it would take Aunt Esther at least ten minutes to find that out...

When they were alone he turned again to Priscilla.

"You must tell me your dream, 'Cilla dear -let me help you all I can."

In the stress of her emotion, quite thoughtlessly, acting wholly upon an impulse of gratitude and affection, she rested a hand upon his shoulder and her cheek against that.

"You can't do anything," she insisted in a broken whisper—"nobody can. They've escaped, Philip—she and Mario have—they love each other and are going to be married and... Oh, it's so impossible, so mad, so silly of me! But I can't help it. I'm jealous, Philip—I'm wild with jealousy—jealous of a thing of dream!"

THE GATHERING STORM

I. THE PLAIN MAN, ANDREWS

DAILY from nine till noon Dr. Philip Fosdick sat in his consultation room, a grave, pleasant spoken, quiet-mannered gentleman, dispensing interest, sympathy and wisdom without stint to all and sundry who thronged his waiting room with careworn faces and one by one filed in to lay bare to him sick bodies, minds and souls.

Ordinarily Fosdick enjoyed these hours dedicated to general practice, something which he was determined never to relinquish altogether, who held the mind, the spirit and the flesh of man to be so inextricably interwoven and interdependent that no physician could deal fairly with either element who neglected the other two or either of them.

Today, however, he found himself irked by his patients, attending with a divided mind to their complaints-the undercurrent of his thoughts constantly preoccupied with the riddle of Leonora and Priscilla Maine.

So he was relieved when the clock struck twelve, and for once he enforced inflexibly his to see nobody after office hours but by appointment.

Alone, he tilted back in his chair, clasped hands behind his head, and focussed his gaze upon remote abstraction. A look of pain lurked in the clear and steady eyes of grey, disconsolation in the set of his firm, thin-lipped mouth: the debacle of a love, for many years the ruling motive of his life, foreshadowed in his meditation.

Not for an instant had he forgotten the confession of love for 'Mario implicit in Priscilla's confession of jealousy of Leonora.

From the first sensitive to the girl's romantic interest in this man, Fosdick had seen in it no cause for active concern so long as Mario remained no more ponderable than a figure in a dream. But now it appeared that, like Leonora, whom Fosdick had seen in the flesh; like Bielinsky, known to and wanted by the police; like the gunman Carnehan whose haunts Fosdick had been frequenting in search of a key to the riddle: like all these folk, Mario was a thing of flesh and

blood, and so perilous to all Fosdick's hopes of happiness, and Priscilla's, too.

For Mario, in love with if not already married to Leonora, was lost to her already. However heavily it might cost her, Priscilla must resign herself to renunciation. And then... Time would have to do the rest, with its magical hands of healing and obliteration. In time Priscilla would forget, and be healed, and would find herself anew. And then another's turn would come.

He had been patient now these many years, he could be patient a little longer. And while he waited he would be helping her; he who alone could help her to forget. For her dreams must cease, they must be stopped by one means or another, so that the figures of Mario and Leonora might no longer haunt and torment her. It could be done, they could be stopped, it was a question of means merely. Fosdick pondered two, alike distasteful: drugs and hypnotism. Sincerely Fosdick believed he chose the lesser evil when, taking a pad of blanks, he jotted down a formula for a sedative which he hoped might give the girl nights of dreamless sleep without harmful reaction.

The assistant who answered his summons took the prescription to be filled, and at the same time announced a Mr. Andrews, calling by appointment.

Ushered in, he sat himself in the easy chair beside Fosdick's desk, mumbling a cigar and nursing a rusty derby on his knees: a commonplace citizen incarnate at the mean of his unremarkable mediocrity, distinguished by nothing whatever more than an utter lack of distinction; the sort of man who, as we say, would pass in a crowd-unseen.

To Fosdick's pleasant query: "Well, Andrews, what luck?" he replied mildly: "Guess I got your party located all right."

"So soon?" Fosdick's manner betrayed some excitement. "Where?"

"Hotel Walpole," Mr. Andrews stated in a voice exasperatingly matter-of-fact.

"You're sure?"

"Well, she answers your description. Registered about twelve last night. Seemed all fussed up. Wore a long cloak and no hat. A dark-complected guy that come with her fixed up for her room and everythin'-paid in advance, because she didn't bring no baggage-and beat it as soon's he'd said good night."

“Under what name did she register?”

“Nora O’More.” Mr. Andrews produced a slip of tracing paper from a worn leather wallet. “I took a copy off the register.”

Fosdick studied briefly the traced signature: a round, firm, but unformed hand.

“Is she at the Walpole now?”

“Nope-she flew the coop with the dark-complected guy about ten this mornin’. He called for her with a tourin’ car, a Pierce-Arrow, a Jap chauffeur and a skirt what looked like a lady’s-maid. The doorman at the Walpole says he noticed particular because he never seen a Jap chauffeur before.”

“Did he remember where they told the chauffeur to drive?”

“They didn’t. That seemed to be all fixed. The dark bird hands your party into the car, and the Jap has her goin’ before the porter can nip his tip.”

“He didn’t notice the license number, I presume?”

“Nope, he didn’t.”

Fosdick frowned thoughtfully for a moment. “Did you call up the Marriage License Bureau?”

“Uh-huh, but nobody like them parties has applied there today for permission to hitch. If they shows up later, one of the clerks is a friend of mine, he’ll gimme a buzz.”

“Where do people go, as a rule, when they want to marry in a hurry and without publicity?”

“Jersey City, gen’ly; sometimes Stamford, Conn.”

“Wish you’d get in touch with both places.”

“Sure.”

Fosdick hesitated, then reminded himself of other appointments.

“I presume there’s nothing more...”

“Nope, only-yunno that Carnehan?”

“Did you find him, too?”

“Yeah,” said Mr. Andrews placidly—“in the Morgue.”

“Hello!” Fosdick sat up with a start. “How did that happen?”

“He kicked off in a ten’ment fire last night. Maybe you seen the notice about it in this mornin’s papers?”

“About the fire, yes; but—”

“Well, a guy I know down to P’leece Headquarters gimme the noos. It seems Carnehan and Bielinsky-Leo the Blood, what shot up a harness bull and a coupla plain-clothes at Histori’s a while ago, yunno-anyway he got the credit for all of the shootin’; but it seems somebody slipped Headquarters the tip it was Carnehan bumped off the detectives, only Headquarters wasn’t lettin’ on it knew, hopin’ Carnehan’d maybe think it was all right to come up for air, and do it... Well, anyway: them two is layin’ up in a flat in one of them ten’ments. Bielinsky just manages to get out before the staircase caves, and is spotted and pinched when he tries to sneak through the fire lines. He says Carnehan was slow gettin’ to the stairs, account of him bein’ stewed, and this mornin’ they takes Leo to the Morgue and shows him the stiffs they’d dug outa the ruins and he identifies one as Carnehan.”

“But are the police satisfied with his identification? I understand the members of these gangs are rather loyal to one another. Bielinsky may have lied to give Carnehan another chance.”

“Oh, I dunno. I guess Headquarters must’ve figured it was Carnehan before they called on Leo. Only my friend says they finds this body in the ruins of the ten’ment next door, where the fire started, instead of the house where these two birds was hidin’. Butthat’s easy explained if Carnehan tried to get away acrost the roofs. Yunno them old-lave ten’ments: fire-traps, that’s all. Once a blaze gets goin’ in one of them, they go like a stack of packin’ boxes. And that gale last night helped a lot...”

II. RESIGNATION

When he called, late in the afternoon, through some blessed accident Fosdick found Priscilla alone, a graceful, pensive shape of charm beside the tea table in the very English drawing-room which the doggedly Anglicized taste of Mrs. Trowbridge had created in an otherwise uncompromisingly American residence.

And she had a brave smile of welcome for him, although he fancied it a trifle forced; for the effort she was making to keep a stiff upper lip seemed only too apparent to his solicitous regard.

“Philip, I do believe you’re never on time!”

“Seldom if ever,” he asserted solemnly. “One must sport a professional mannerism or two, you know, to hold the confidence of one’s clientele, if one simply won’t wear a beard or tote a shabby black bag.”

“I almost think,” he said, “I’d prefer the beard, *plus* punctuality, this afternoon at least. Next to sitting through a musical comedy, I don’t know anything more enervating than waiting for the doctor’s call.”

“I’m sorry, ‘Cilla,” he protested contritely. “I really was more keen to get here than you could possibly have been to see me.”

“Don’t be too sure.” Philip found something almost pathetic in this fugitive flash of her rare coquetry. “I was lonely, waiting, with no company but my thoughts.”

“But not unhappy?”

“No-o,” she admitted dubiously, giving him tea—“nor happy, either; rather, I should say, resigned.”

His narrowed eyes questioned eloquently. She responded with another sad little smile: “You see, Philip, they-they’re married.”

“How do you know?” His eyes were wide enough now.

She shook her head. “I can’t tell you, but I do. It was just before noon. I was in my room, alone, wondering-trying to think things out some way. And suddenly-there’s no explaining-I *knew* it had happened. It was nothing like a dream: I

haven't the remotest idea how or where they were married, I only know they were."

He studied her closely, detecting no trace of hysteria in her manner. She was rather more pale than usual, but at the same time more composed than in several days. There were melancholy shadows beneath her eyes, but the eyes themselves were calm, clear and direct.

"Tell me as nearly as you can..." She overcame a reluctance: "I slept well enough, after you left last night, heavily but without dreams that I remember: but I woke up with a sense of strain, a tension of nerves, as if subconsciously waiting for something to happen. It got worse as the morning wore on, though I fought it as hard as I knew how, and I had a feeling of suppressed excitement, too. And then—as I say—about noon, the tension snapped. Without the least warning it was gone, there was nothing left, just emptiness—you know—desolation. And after a little time of that, peace of a sort: the feeling one has when something terribly important that's been a long time hanging fire is at last settled, even if it's settled disappointingly. So I knew"—the least suspicion of a tremor crept into her voice—"it was over and done with, they were married, the thing was finished."

"Weren't you glad?"

"In a way, yes. I had a sense of happiness, but it wasn't mine, it didn't rise in me, it was her happiness I was sharing. Then even that left me, nothing remained, only the forlornest loneliness, Philip... as if I'd lost something I could never regain. I presume I have. Somehow I've got a notion I shall never see Leonora again, even in my dreams. Do you think it's possible I'll never dream again—that way?"

"I hope so, 'Cilla—with all my heart!"

She sat very still for a time, gaze downcast to the hands that held her teacup.

"I suppose I hope so, too," she said faintly. in. Mother O'more

"I'VE got news," Fosdick offered. Priscilla looked up sharply, under knitting brows. "Though, I imagine from what you've told me, it will seem less news than confirmation—in a way." He was quick to satisfy her movement of impatience: "There's every reason to believe Leonora spent last night, after the

fire, at the Walpole, and Mario called for her there this morning, about ten o'clock, with a motor car. He had a Japanese chauffeur and another woman with him, presumably a maid. Apparently the man has means of his own."

"He has, I think. But how do you know all this?"

"I had a man, a private detective, make the rounds of the hotels, first thing this morning -on the off-chance that Mario had acted on his suggestion, if you remembered it correctly, of putting Leonora up for the night at the best and quietest place in town."

"You employed a detective, Philip? After your promise 1"

"Hold on, 'Cilla! I promised I wouldn't go near Police Headquarters or let the truth leak out about what happened at Ristori's. And I was better than my word. In the beginning I sleuthed for you all on my own-spent the better part of three days snooping around the lower East Side in a slop-shop suit, unshaven, my nails in mourning, till I got what I was after, established indisputably the fact that your dreams were true telaesthetic visions-clairvoyant-whatever you care to call them-anything but hallucinations of a disordered mind. More than that, I proved that Leonora was as real a creature as you are, not a sort of secondary personality you'd been projecting more or less involuntarily into phases of life utterly outside your comprehension and experience."

"I know, Philip." She leaned forward to touch his hand in gratitude. "Don't think me unappreciative. If you only knew what it means to have my heart lightened of that fear !"

"Then I don't think you ought to complain if I turn over routine investigation work to a private detective, a man of absolute discretion who is not in the Police Department, who hasn't even heard your name, who thinks I'm interested in this Leonora for reasons purely personal to myself."

"I don't complain, Philip. I was surprised, and at first didn't understand. You see-I presume I'm too much Leonora or she's too much me-but I can't somehow help sharing her feelings. She was wretchedly afraid the police might send Red to the electric chair on information they'd got through her—"

"They'll never do that now," Philip interrupted. "Carnehan is dead." The girl uttered a little cry, something between pity and thanksgiving, and sank back,

staring. “Yes. His body was found in the ruins of the tenement house this morning. Bielinsky, who was arrested fleeing “the flames, identified the remains.... So that fear passes, ‘Cilla.”

She rested her head wearily against the back of the chair and shut her eyes. “So that fear passes,” she repeated in a whisper. A little shiver ran over her body. “I can’t think it’s wrong of me to be glad...”

“It isn’t. It’s only human.”

“But a death so frightful !”

“Don’t think about that, think how good it is that you-that Leonora need no longer fear death at every turning.”

“Do you suppose she knows?”

“It’s in all the evening papers. She must learn of it sooner or later, wherever she is.”

“Then-then your man didn’t find out where they went from the Walpole?”

“No. But the presumption is, they went either to Jersey or Connecticut to get married, as people do when they want to avoid publicity. I fancy they’d do that, to leave no clue for Carnehan-not yet knowing there was no more necessity.”

“Then nothing stands between her and her happiness....” Almost imperceptibly the muscles round mouth and eyes tightened in pain. So did her hands tighten convulsively on the arms of the chair. Then with a start the girl sat up, smiling a smile of uncertain apology, shaking her head vigorously as if to rid it of a tormenting swarm of thoughts. “There can’t be any mistake, I suppose... You’re sure it was Leonora who stopped at the Walpole?”

“Not sure, but satisfied. She answered the description, and though she registered under what sounds like an assumed name, ‘Nora O’More’—”

“Yes,” Priscilla interrupted quickly; “she’d be likely to use that name.”

“Why?”

“Because... why because... I don’t quite know.” She laughed a little at herself, and sobered into momentary thoughtfulness, her eyes clouding with mental effort. Then they cleared. “Of course! O’More was the name of the old woman Leonora lived with as a child-‘Mother O’More,’ the neighbours called her. I’d forgotten till you jogged my memory.”

“Mother O’More,” Fosdick repeated: “possibly a clue. If you’ve no objection, I’ll set Andrews, my detective, to work on it. It can’t be so long ago-neither you nor Leonora is old enough-you’d think somebody in that part of town would remember an elderly woman who practised fortune telling with cards, no doubt a bit of a neighbourhood character, called Mother O’More. If we can find out what became of her, or even where and how precisely she lived when alive...”

“I suppose all that and more that we want to know is buried in my subconsciousness! I don’t believe there was ever much of anything that Leonora knew or felt that I didn’t know and feel, Philip. Even when I didn’t dream and wasn’t actively thinking about her, I always had that sense of being identified with her, of being *with* her, somehow, in some inexplicable way, all the time.... Don’t you think it might be worth while to try to stimulate my latent memories by hypnotism, perhaps?”

Fosdick stubbornly opposed that. “Only as a last resort. I’m frankly distrustful of the psychic effect on you, if we excite your subliminal consciousness by too much nagging. Far better let your subconscious slumber-far better you should forget rather than remember too much!”

“Yes,” she assented, uncertainly, and nodded with wistful eyes. “I want to forget if I can, as quickly as I can.”

“You must. You must try. It would be a good thing if you never dreamed again of Leonora.”

“But one can’t control one’s dreams!”

“I’m not so sure. I believe it might be done. I can help a little, I think-but really it all rests with you.”

“I suppose so...” She was puzzled, intent. “But what to do?”

“It’s a matter of will power simply. You can do it if you will, but you must want

to heart and soul.”

Her face was at once dark with thought and flushed with hope-beyond all telling sweet.

“But I do, Philip-I want so much to forget, more than you know. I want so much to think there’s nothing strange about me any more, I’m just a normal human being like any other girl. I want never to think again...” She caught herself up in confusion and did not complete the thought. More subdued, she continued: “I promise faithfully to do all I can, whatever you think best.”

“Well, as I say, it’s all up to you. You’ve got to make yourself mistress of your own mind, make it think what you want it to think and forget and disregard everything else, no matter how insistently it may claim attention. If thoughts of Leonora press upon you, there’s only one thing to do-put them firmly aside, force yourself to concentrate on something else, your work by choice. Keep yourself constantly occupied, constantly doing and going, keep every minute filled. Paint every day till you’re tired out; but don’t stop then. When you’ve worked till you feel ready to drop, play till you can’t think, and then as you drift off to sleep fix your thoughts steadfastly on something like your work. On no account permit yourself to drowse off wondering about Le’ onora. It may, it will come a bit hard at first, but it can be managed all right if you’ll stick at it and never say die. And once you’ve mastered the trick of thought control, you’ll find it tremendously profitable in so many ways. You’ll paint better, for one thing. It will give you no end of self-confidence to feel your mind is your servant, not your master.”

“My work will help,” she agreed. “I’m so glad you want me to keep on. Somehow I was afraid you wouldn’t.”

“On the contrary, you must paint as if your life depended on it.”

“Then you think there’s no more danger-in the studio-associations?”

“Not since this afternoon,” he said smiling. “The portrait is no longer there.”

“My portrait gone!” Distress vibrated in her voice. “What has become of it?”

“Harkness has it.” Fosdick laughed, pleased by her bewilderment and at the same time apprehensive of the effect of his confession. “You see, you left the

studio key on your dressing table last night; I saw it there and borrowed it. This afternoon I took Harkness to see the portrait, and he was so enthusiastic-it's really fine work, you know-he insisted on carting it off with him then and there. Inasmuch as that was precisely what I wanted, I let him have his way."

"But Philip!-I'm not sure it's fit to be shown yet!"

"Harkness is."

"And it must be framed—"

"Trust Harkness to see to that, too....It's no use, 'Cilla. I had to get that thing out of your way, and if I had waited for your permission it might have meant weeks of delay. Oh, I know you-like every artist, never satisfied with your work, always wanting to keep it by you and study it and put on finishing touches it doesn't need. But now that the portrait's disposed of, you may use the studio as freely as you like.... Which reminds me: here's the key."

She took it from him brusquely, at once annoyed and gratified, her face slightly flushed with the one emotion, her eyes luminous with the other.

"I like your impudence!"

"We strive to please."

Divided between anger and mirth, she compromised by giving free rein to both, so that resentment was swiftly swept away in laughter.

"Philip, you are incorrigible!"

"I have to be, to get my own way."

IV. AFFINITY

It was the philosopher Kant, they say, who found that he could abolish from his consciousness even the torture of gout by concentrating his attention steadily upon an impersonal subject: a discovery which so stimulated the medical imagination of his time that the modern school of psychotherapy, or healing by hypnotic suggestion, had then its beginnings.

Cold force of intellect working in the tranquillity of provincial life enabled the thinker of Konigsberg to forbid his mind to recognise the living fact of pain. Priscilla Maine had neither. Her ways of thought were no more undisciplined than those of most young women of her caste and generation; but, it is true, the course of education through which she had progressed, comfortably enough, had not so much trained her mind as fallowed it for training. Her understanding was quick, she thought clearly enough for all her purposes, but inconsecutively and for the most part indifferently. And her surface life alone teemed with distractions; innumerable interests of no particular moment constantly claimed consideration, and got it, wasting her time and fatiguing her capacity for constant mental effort. Only when contemplating her work or pondering this mysterious liaison that linked her life with Leonora's was she prone to protracted spells of reverie. And reverie may by no means be confused with ratiocination.

Then, too, it is easier far to endure and even to forget an anguish of the flesh than it is to deny the hunger of the heart. Strangely the kiss of Mario on the lips of Leonora had awakened the woman that had so long slept in Priscilla Maine. And now she was bidden to forget not only him but self as well! It was hard. Our emotions have a power to rack us beside which the mutiny of flesh diseased or torn with wounds is slight to insignificance.

The girl suffered atrociously at first. But nobody knew; or Philip Fosdick alone suspected something of what she was going through. He could not know all, for even to him she said little or nothing, and went sweetly through her days with a high head and eyes of lying calm. But he was sick with sympathy for her and so in some measure quick with intuition. He too had known...

He helped her more than she knew, indeed, for he contrived to devote to her more time than a physician had any right to, with so many patients leaning heavily on him for comfort. Anything but an ardent lover in his outward attitude, who knew too well his time was not yet, he was nevertheless a persevering one, and never permitted Priscilla to forget that his love enveloped her as the sea a swimmer, that it was something as sustaining as the sea, as deep and as abiding. She was aware, and glad, and grateful, daily more so.

And though he refused to experiment with obvious forms of hypnotism such as mesmeric gestures and the induced trance, he worked insidiously upon her by suggestion, not so much at the expense of her spiritual independence as to its re-establishment and invigoration. It was never, "You must, for it is my will"; but

always, “You can if you will”—though far more subtly....

Now a word of encouragement disguised as abstract philosophising, again a hint buried in some amusing anecdote of his practice, at another time an innuendo thrown out in casual commentary on human relations: all shrewdly calculated to make her thoughtful; thus gradually self-confidence was built up in her anew, she began to perceive the truth, like a light dim at the far end of a tunnel, that nothing mundane transcends the power of the informed, self-regulated and applied will, that not even the mortal ache of longing can withstand it. So vaguely she began to apprehend a coming time when, instead of flying from her sorrow, it might be to a state more unhappy yet, she would be able to face it, even to outface it unafraid, its master and her own.

But that was only toward the end...

Meanwhile she was faithful to her word, faithfully regulated her life in accordance with the scheme suggested by Fosdick. She started a portrait of Ada Moyer and worked at it steadily every morning, and in amazingly few sittings managed to make the painted canvas body forth the impish charm of that lady, her irresistible gay impudence. This in spite of the fact that Ada posed poorly and pervaded the studio with an atmosphere of infectious irresponsibility that was most demoralising to a serious-minded artist—and did Priscilla no end of good.

In the afternoons she laboured more soberly but no less successfully upon a composition employing two professional models, a mother and daughter—painting famously well, with a decision new in her work, with a dashing technique whose secret she had newly surprised and whose manipulation proved an abiding joy.

In between there were luncheons at Avignon, Del’s, the Ritz, with the women of her world, and others with professional workers like herself in dingy, amusing little holes of restaurants with which that part of Greenwich Village immediately adjacent to her studio was riddled. And after the light failed there were teas, motoring and bridge parties, dinners, the theatre, dances...

Alike to work and to play she gave herself without reserve, entering with unwonted animation (though nobody thought it feverish) into whatever diversion the hour offered. And if at times there was an undernote of sadness in her

laughter, shadowed wistfulness in her eyes, weariness in her gesture, she was the first to notice and swift to dissemble. So that none remarked any change in her, more than an access of loveliness and charm at once elusive and insistent, and she was more than ever sought after, importuned, courted, wooed. A dozen conquests were added to her score in that too brief lull. A dozen men, amiable, personable, suitable partis, men she liked, forgot all other women and haunted the ways she most frequented, keen to earn the guerdon of her smile; every one of them ready to marry her out of hand if she showed the least tendency to take him seriously. But she seemed altogether unaware of them, save as friends, and moved sedately among them, adorably pretty, tantalizingly desirable, exasperatingly detached. In those days she liked all men and loved none... none but one...

Not Philip Fosdick.

With herself she was honest and unpretending: If Mario was never for her, she was for no one else. She thought about it as little as she might, because she appreciated the hopelessness of her case, and wanted desperately to be her own self once more, rid of this restless longing, free to devote herself and her life to all that was left to her in life, all that really mattered now-her work. But she could not readily forget...

That would take time. She was patient in confidence of ultimate emancipation. Already she had gained much. The question of her sanity no longer harassed her. More: she had ceased to dream of Leonora.

Or rather, she no longer remembered what she dreamed. She wakened every morning from a night whose dream content was blank -if she had dreamed at all. She was far from satisfied, however, that she had ceased to dream. It seemed to her that she had ceased merely to remember. For in spite of the cessation of her dreaming the sense of the liaison persisted; never had she felt more near to Leonora, more intimately a sharer in her psychic life.

Now and again there would come without warning, without any encouragement of conscious wish or thought, a feeling of identity with that other, of understanding, of personal participation in Leonora's happiness, that brought a strange exaltation of spirit, paradoxically akin to that happiness which life refused her. And at such times she would experience indefinite, teasing glimpses into Leonora's present circumstances-glimpses no sooner granted than snatched

away, of a life half known, half foreign, like a stir of shadow shapes in the depths of the dark mirror of her unconscious mind.

She tried earnestly, with all her strength, not to dwell upon such thoughts, to discourage and cast them out. But they visited her without invitation and in spite of every effort to repulse them. So that slowly there formed in her understanding a visionary conception of that Eden in which, she felt sure, Leonora must be living with her husband: a wilderness Eden of tree-clad slopes and far flung crests, of mountain meadows and rolling valleys, of murmuring brooks, rushing torrents, crashing cascades, and placid little lakes nestling in the bosom of hills... all vague and indistinct, as if revealed through veils of dusky mist...

A world apart from the experience of this girl whose closest contact with the primitive had been in summers spent in the park-like Berkshires or in summer cities by the sea such as Bar Harbor and Newport. Yet she felt singularly on terms with this imaginary setting she had conjured up to frame the happiness of Leonora, singularly sure that, if she ever found it by any chance, she would know it and be at home therein.

But with all her heart she hoped that might never be. That land frightened her inexplicably. In its spreading panoramas of tangled wildwood that slept, walled in by silent, brooding hills, under a silent, brooding vault of blue, she divined instinctively something like a menace, something sinister and dread. The travelling shadows cast athwart that land by windswept clouds were to her like shadows of premonitions inexpressibly cruel.

She was afraid, and she was glad that no dreams came to make that land more real to her.

V. THE PORTRAIT AGAIN

That week saw infatuated Spring, abandoning every show of diffidence, hastening with footsteps daily more fleet to fling herself into the arms of Summer.

Those who had country places of their own hurriedly cancelled business and social engagements and straightway dropped out of the life of Town.

Others, deploring their infirmity in so long putting off the annual domestic wrangle over the question where to spend the Summer, staggered home with tons

of time-tables and resort literature in covers of lurid allure, and turned uncounted thousands of Manhattan flats into intimate theatres of war.

Citizens of humbler fortune tacked up calendars marked with wistful red ink crosses, and reckoned again and again the weary count of days that must elapse before their vacations could begin.

In the shops the Spring drive for silk sweaters, sports skirts and white buckskin shoes was prosecuted with unexampled ferocity.

Theatres that had sheltered weaker sisters of the season's dramatic spawn of a sudden doused their flaming signs and showed dark faces of disgruntlement to the swarming streets.

Mrs. Trowbridge, having arranged to take over the Southampton cottage of a friend who was going abroad, forthwith devoted herself to such pernicious activities as (1) quarrelling with the servants who balked at the idea of leaving the city, (2) discharging the ingrates and negotiating for others to replace them, (3) shopping for goods she didn't need, (4) packing, (5) unpacking, (6) repacking, and (7) shrouding the furniture in summer cerecloths until the Park avenue house took on the cheerless atmosphere of a tomb troubled by tenants who would not be decently dead.

Priscilla, preoccupied with personal interests, her unhappiness and the work that seemed its only antidote, was careless whither they went for the summer, or when, or how, so long as the change were not permitted to hinder her painting, and asked only to be let alone till she finished her two latest canvasses.

Twice she begged for postponements, which were grudgingly conceded, and ultimately, badgered beyond endurance by her aunt's insistence that she name a definite day when she would be willing to go, flatly declared she wouldn't budge a foot out of Town before she had at least completed the portrait of Ada Moyer.

Mrs. Trowbridge heard the accent of finality and gave in at discretion-but with pursed lips.

Her opinion of Art and all its works was low. True: it had always been low. But now it was lower.

Fosdick, observing Priscilla in a threefold capacity, conceded the conquest of his

admiration as a sportsman: the girl was putting up the gamest fight conceivable, against crushing odds.

The physician in him saw with satisfaction the seemingly successful working out of his prescribed regime. Even the sedative which, by his order, Priscilla took every night on going to bed, was doing its work without any apparent ill effect: to the contrary, indeed, since her dreams no longer distressed the girl. Still, it would be over-sanguine to consider the case already closed with a cure.

And the lover remained in suspense, hoping against hope with an uneasy heart...

The commonplace man Andrews pursued the commonplace tenor of his ways, without suspicion that a private detective was considered the most romantic figure in present-day civil life, or indeed that he was anything more than a simple man with a job and very much on it.

He turned up no trace of Leonora after her departure from the Walpole in company with Mario. If those two had married, they had managed the business with the utmost circumspection and secrecy.

He reported no progress in his search for traces of "Mother O'More"—assuming that such a person had ever existed.

And he complained, with something as nearly approaching expression of personal feeling as he ever betrayed, that to be refused permission to question Leonora's former associates cramped his style somethin' fierce.

But on this point Fosdick was firm-bound, indeed, by pledge to Priscilla. With ample reason to believe that one or two if not more of the Carnehan gang were police informers, potentially such if not actually in the pay of the police, Priscilla had extracted of Fosdick the promise that he would permit nothing to be done which might, in however roundabout a fashion, stimulate police interest in Leonora.

"She is happy," Priscilla had said. "At least, I think—Oh, I know she is! She must be... And for the first time in her life, Philip. If because of me anything should happen to spoil her happiness, I could never forgive myself, never!"

So Philip held fast to his word; and Andrews went stolidly about his work with the private and unvoiced opinion that any bird what would pay a fellow to do a

job and then tie his hands so's he couldn't do nothin' was a nut.

But pay was pay, and if this Fosdick guy was satisfied to keep on shellin' out good coin and gettin' nothin' back for it, Mr. Andrews guessed it wasn't no funeral of his....

There came at length a day of relaxing heat, when everything went wrong.

Ada Moyer showed up in the morning only to announce that, much as she adored her portrait, she hadn't the slightest intention of going on with the sittings or, for that matter, of stopping on in Town another day in suchweather. If Priscilla wanted to finish the portrait she would have to bring it down to the Moyer country home and work on it there. This being manifestly unreasonable-Ada knew quite well it would be impossible to duplicate the lighting of the studio-Priscilla felt constrained to point out candidly how selfish Ada was. And they bickered until they parted, each huffed to the verge of tears.

In the afternoon the little girl posing with her mother was restless and fretful. The mother was too listless to call her to order. Priscilla, divided between sympathy for the child and a perfectly human desire to smack her, at length threw down palette and brushes in despair and dismissed the models for the day.

Anyhow, she consoled herself, she had shopping to do....

The shops were crowded, the salespeople irritable and irritating. She found nothing that suited her. Between three and four she gave up trying and, thoroughly out of humour, started to walk home up the Avenue.

In spite of the lateness of the season the sidewalks were well thronged and the roadway so crowded with motor cars that the trite oldconundrum that has no answer-where does all the money come from? -presented itself with new force.

In front of the Harkness Gallery a little knot of people had collected, creating an eddy in the tides of foot traffic. Priscilla hesitated, then with quickening pulses added herself to the group before the show window, working her way into its heart, where she obtained an unobstructed view of her work.

For it was true, what she had surmised: Harkness had already put the portrait of Leonora on exhibition. And already it was attracting a conspicuous amount of attention.

When the first thrill of surprise passed, Priscilla realised something that was nearly actual happiness—that warming glow which the creative temperament alone can know when its work is shown and is liked and, best of all, in its own eyes seems worthy.

It is such rare moments that bring to the artist full meed of compensation, though life has been unkind in every other wise.

Enchanted, Priscilla stood before her painting with eyes that shone and cheeks aglow, an exquisite emotion welling in her bosom.

Nearby a man spoke in the language of the studios, praising the portrait to a companion. And Priscilla heard and was exalted.

When she dared trust herself to do so, she looked round cautiously, seeking to identify that kindly critic whose appreciation was so much the more acceptable because he spoke with the tongue of understanding.

A small chuckle was struggling in her throat. She could not help wondering what the man would think could he know how dangerously near he was to being publicly kissed by a strange woman....

But the chuckle expired in a strangled gasp. The dancing eyes steadied to a fixed stare. The colour in her cheeks ebbed more swiftly than it had come.

She began to wonder if her heart would ever beat again, if she would ever find strength to move from that spot where terror had transfixed her.

Her veering glance had been arrested almost as soon as detached from the portrait by the sardonic and insolent regard of one who stood at a slight distance, though in the same group: a man whose face she had never seen yet knew; the man whom she knew only by the style under which he passed among his criminal kind—"Harry the Nut."

And he knew her, as his meaning sneer witnessed.

Nor was this the worst: beyond his shoulder a second face showed, colourless and drawn with passionate malice: the face of the woman Inez.

RENDEZVOUS WITH DEATH

I. FOREBODINGS

ONLY with the four walls of her own room shutting out the world was Priscilla able to take up the task of rebuilding equanimity out of a chaos of shattered nerves and scattered wits.

By sheer force of will she made herself reconstruct and review that adventure which had loosed panic upon her in the crowded street and driven her, a hunted thing, to seek refuge in flight from the hostility of those who had walked bodily out of the phantasmagoria of her dreams, like ghosts by some black magic materialised in flesh and blood.

Nevertheless they had been curiously metamorphosed in process of materialisation. There could be no question as to their identity ; but they singularly were and at the sametime were not the Inez and Harry the Nut whom Priscilla had known in dreams.

It is surprising how painstakingly the attention will record immaterial minutiae in moments of shock. In all respects but one Priscilla's impressions of the rencontre on the Avenue, from the instant of recognition until the time when she found herself in a hansom cab, sedately jogging homeward, many blocks north of the Harkness Galleries, were confused and inconsecutive.

She remembered turning suddenly, spurred by a sharp impulse of unreasoning affright; she had hazy memories of madly elbowing her way to the curb, of the amazed faces of those she jostled, of the stupid red countenance of the cabby who reined in to her shrill call, of coining back to herself in the cab to realise, on the evidence of the narrow mirrors inset beside the doors, that she was (as Mrs. Trowbridge would have put it) a sight for all beholders, with her strained white face and dazed, set eyes...

But the look and attitude of Harry and Inez had been etched indelibly upon the tablets of her memory by acid fear.

She could see now, as clearly as she had then, the blazing hatred in the black eyes of Inez, the supercilious and derisive malevolence in Harry's.

As definitely she retained the details of their appearance; which was something vastly different in the case of both from the time of Leonora's knowledge of them.

The Nut, for one, had won his nickname as much for his weakness for flashy if expensive clothing as for the silly-ass manner which he commonly affected, finding it useful in his business. But today he was well, if perhaps too much, dressed. A black morning coat with striped grey trousers, white linen waistcoat and spats, radiant topper and varnished shoes, makes a perfectly correct costume for afternoon on the Avenue. For all that, on a day of summer heat it is undeniably conspicuous.

In the case of Inez the transformation had proved even more startling. The Inez whom Priscilla had seen with the eyes of Leonora was prone to shoddy finery and strident colour schemes, and displayed lofty contempt for trifles such as buttons missing or hanging by a thread, grease stains, shoes down at the heels, skirts that cleared the ground at the same elevation fore and aft. Whereas today she wastrimly turned out in the smartest of tailleurs, with a hat the last cry in popular impudence, and gloved and shod as well in a way that none could criticise.

Clearly the Nut had prospered since that night at Ristori's. As clearly the inconstant Inez, following the arrest of Leo the Blood, had been swift to forsake a sinking ship for passage on a more seaworthy craft with every promise of a prosperous voyage.

But (Priscilla argued firmly with herself) what of that? What was it to her whether Inez and Harry fared well or ill?

After all, why in the name of reason need she have been so easy a prey to consternation on unexpectedly coming face to face with the pair?

True, she had met and recognized at sight, and had been recognized as Leonora by those two creatures whom Leonora had most to dread: the envious and spiteful baggage who had always hated her; the man she had feared, loathed, and denounced to his face as a stool pigeon, a tool of the police, a common criminal countenanced by the authorities because of his value as an informer; who consequently might be counted on to stop at nothing to compass his revenge upon Leonora, to punish and to silence her.

But why need that so affect Priscilla? She was not Leonora: so what had she to fear?

What though Inez and Harry had mistaken her for Leonora? She was not, she was merely one who resembled Leonora strangely and still more strangely was sib to her in spiritual affinity. A woman of another world entirely, occupying an established position in an ordered and solid state of society, she was secure against any offence which wrong-headed malice might offer her.

Suppose they did believe her to be Leonora: their first essay at acting on that belief would inevitably be set at naught by the discovery that they were in error.

She had nothing, positively nothing, to fear from them.

And yet-she was afraid, fear crawled in the back of her mind, outside the bright arena of common-sense, like a snake in a shadowy thicket....

She pondered the riddle for a long time before it was revealed to her that her fear was not for herself but for Leonora.

Whatever that secret tie which linked their natures, it was so strong, so close, that she could not contemplate anything that threatened Leonora, however vaguely or remotely, without experiencing a distress so deep and true that it was hardly to be dissociated from an emotion purely selfish.

Imagination called up again those faces that had glared at her in the crowd, two masks of evil lighted from within by a hatred deadly and implacable.

As long as those two remained at large, Priscilla knew, so long would the happiness, if not the life, of Leonora be in jeopardy.

She tried to think of something she could do to confound them, frustrate them, reduce them to impotence.

But she knew so little, her life had been too well sheltered, she could not imagine how to deal with creatures of their sort-recourse to the police being out of the question since it must necessarily involve Leonora.

A chiming clock reminded her that it was half after four, while at five she was to take tea with some friends who were leaving town the next day. With every wish

and reason to disappoint them, she bestirred herself and made ready to go. It would never do to letherself be cowed and overcome by minor alarms. There was in her mind foreboding of greater trials to come...

II. MR. CHILVERS

With what she later chose to think unpardonable stupidity, she perceived, utterly without misgivings, that a maid was answering a ring at the front door; and she paused on the lower landing, a few steps above the entrance hall, fumbling with a stubborn glove button, waiting for whoever it was to state his business and get out of the way.

In some surprise she saw the maid approach the foot of the stairs with a silver tray on which lay a card.

Discovering her on the landing, the maid paused, looking up.

“A gentleman to see you, Miss.”

Wondering, still unsuspecting, Priscilla went on down.

A man standing near the front door, contentedly inspecting his image in a mirror, straightened up with a well-feigned start and came quickly toward her.

“Miss Maine!” he exclaimed in a rather high voice, clipping his words after a fashion which he believed to be English-and carrying it off fairly well—“I say, what rippin’ luck! Fancy findin’ you in!”

Completely nonplussed, she stared blankly into his eyes, ignoring the chamois-gloved hand he proffered.

“You don’t remember me?” He uttered a little giggle. “Why, of course you do! Harry Chilvers-met you at the Lathom’s a few weeks ago.” He slapped his leg lightly with a stick which he carried with his topper in his left hand, and giggled again with an accent of triumph. “Now you remember-don’t you? Saw you on the Avenue this afternoon, and thought I’d call on the off-chance of findin’ you in. Merely passin’ through Town, got in yesterday, off to Newport tomorrow, you know.... Awf’ly jolly to see you, really.”

She was able to say coolly: “How do you do?”—and with a nod aside dismissing

the maid, turned toward the door of the drawing-room. "Won't you come in?"

"Charmed!"

The soi-disant Mr. Chilvers ambled amiably into that place of morbid hospitality, with its drawn shades and its furniture that sulked

>*-‘ under dust-cloths with an air of bitterly resenting any intrusion upon their privacy.

Priscilla halted in the middle of the room, a table at her back. She commanded a view of the entrance hall; the maid had disappeared-she devoutly hoped was out of earshot.

"What can I do for you?" she asked quietly, looking down at the card to refresh her memory—"Mr. Chilvers?"

Tall, slender, carrying the art of his tailor admirably, the man paused before her in an attitude of raffish ease. With an ironic smirk, he jerked his head toward the doorway.

"Safe to talk here?"

"I cannot imagine," Priscilla uttered slowly, "why it should not be." She met his stare steadily, calmly. "Unfortunately I do not remember you, Mr. Chilvers. Nor am I acquainted with the Lathoms. I have an engagement for five o'clock..."

"Really?" Mr. Chilvers drawled. "Couldn't put it off, I presume-now could you?"

She lifted a wrist to consult her watch. "If you have anything to say to me, I can give you two minutes."

With unblushing effrontery Mr. Chilvers closed in, caught hold of her wrist and bent his head over the watch, an exceedingly handsome affair in platinum and small diamonds.

"Pretty thing," he approved with a nod, letting her wrist fall. "Where you catch him, Nora?"

She showed him a face like marble, cold, hard, expressionless. But inwardly resentment burned so hotly that fear of any sort was utterly consumed.

“My name is not Nora—”

“So I understand.” Mr. Chilvers carefully deposited his hat, crown down, upon the table, clipped his stick under his arm, and with a flourish whipped out a flat gold cigarette case. He repeated slowly in a voice of deep amusement: “So-I-understand. Mind me smokin’?”

“I’d rather you didn’t. I haven’t time—”

“Oh, but I have-I’ve got all the time there is.” He tucked a cigarette between his lips and lighted it, glancing appreciatively round the room. “Jolly little nest you’ve feathered for yourself, Nora. Pardon: Miss Priscilla Maine-anythin’ you like. I don’t mind what name you call yourself by, so long as you humour my whim for Chilvers. Rather fond of Chilvers, you know. Don’t remember ever wearin’ an alias I took such a fancy to.”

“I don’t understand you. Won’t you be kind enough to go?”

“Presently, me dear-all in good tune.” The Nut unceremoniously whisked away a dust-cloth and sat down in the chair it had hidden. “I’ve got to hand it to you, Nora-Priscilla, I mean,” he observed with a look of admiration; for the moment forgetting to be British. “You sure do get away with the grande dame stuff to the Queen’s taste. Not to mention this house, and that limousine at the door... I take it, that’s yours, too? Mind tellin’ me how you do it, and how long you’ve been doin’ it? Just between ourselves, both members of this club...”

“Evidently,” said Priscilla, “you are mistaken about me, Mr. Chilvers. I don’t know you, and have no wish to.” She moved a step toward the door. “Good afternoon.”

Mr. Chilvers did not budge, but wagged a reproachful head.

“I say, Nora, don’t be so up-stage. What’s the use? I understand perfectly how annoyin’ it is and everythin’; but you know, the game’s up-it is as far as Inez and I are concerned, at any rate-so you might as well accept the situation gracefully, come down to earth and be sweetly reasonable.”

“I tell you,” Priscilla began, “I am not the person you—”

But Mr. Chilvers, talking steadily, cheerfully, and with persistence, talked her down.

“There’s no sense your bein’ afraid of my blowin’ on you, or Inez, either, you know, Nora. That wouldn’t be pally, would it? Wouldn’t be business, either. We admire your work, we admire it no end, so much so that we’re all in a sweat to know how you do it, and get in on the graft ourselves. With all the coin that this lay-out stands for, surely you can spare a little for old friends who are just makin’ a fresh start in life.... I’ve taken little Inez on as an apprentice, you know. We’re work-in’ the hotels. She’s a sweet child when you get to know her, and so bright, you’ve no idea, far too bright to be wasted on the life she was leadin’ before that little show of ours downtown busted up. Still, I must admit she hasn’t got your brains, and she’s a bit amateurish as yet. She shows promise of class when I’ve broken her in, but that’s goin’ to take time, and meanwhile the pickin’s ain’t as easy as you might think. So we’re terrible glad to find you so well fixed and anxious to lend us a helpin’ hand.”

“Please!” Priscilla insisted. “I don’t understand you in the least. I must ask you to excuse me—”

“Ah, cut it!” An ugly light glimmered in the rat-like eyes. “Chuck it, Nora. Don’t tempt me to pull any rough stuff; it ain’t the little thing I do best, somehow I haven’t got the polish you might expect. But I’ve got you where I want you and you’re goin’ to come through like a dear girl or I’ll...”

He paused, his cruel smile playing round thin, hard lips: “How would you like me to tip off Red Carnehan where to look for you?”

“You can’t!” the girl protested wildly. “He’s dead—”

“Really?” Mr. Chilvers puffed contentedly on his cigarette. “Sure about that?”

A baffling twinkle in his look, coupled with the innuendo, annoyed and confused her. “What do you mean?” she demanded, instinctively lowering her voice and taking a step toward him.

“Xothin’. I’m merely enquirin’, are you sure Red’s dead?”

“It was in the papers—”

“Oh, I know Leo identified *a* body as Red’s. But nobody’s proved to me that Leo didn’t tell an awful naughty fib for the sake of a friend.”

“You mean-you think-Red’s alive?”

“Well, if I were you, my dear, I wouldn’t take any chances except on a sure thing. You’d be frightfully cut up-if I may use the expression-if Red turned up one of these fine days, alive and kickin’ and lookin’ for his girl.”

She gave an uncontrollable gesture of dismay, which Mr. Chilvers noted with a grin.

“Sort of gives one to think-doesn’t it, Nora? And, anyway, I guess this crabs the mistaken identity stall for good. You won’t try to sling that bunk again with your dear old side-kick, Harry the Nut, will you?”

She gasped and was silent, discountenanced, appreciating how hopelessly she stood committed.

Impossible now to deny to this man that she was Leonora...

Of a sudden she felt herself uplifted by a vast sense of relief. In a twinkling doubts and fears and indecision were all swept away; all that misery of uncertainty, heartache and dread which had been her portion for many days abolished by the magic wand of a settled purpose which had been, as it were, thrust into her hand. Now she had something to do, something to live for, something to fill the emptiness that love denied had made in her life.

Now she desired no longer to undeceive the man who sat leering in mean exultation over her discomfiture. Let him continue to believe that she was Leonora, and make what profit he could of that belief. If she could not have that happiness of which Leonora unwittingly had despoiled her, she could at least protect Leonora’s happiness and conserve it by taking upon herself the punishment Leonora otherwise must suffer at the hands of her forsaken associates, by way of penalty for her defection.

Exalted by a sublime spirit of self-sacrifice, she faced Mr. Chilvers with a decision and confidence that would have made him uneasy had he been less

infatuate in the triumph of his low cunning.

As it was, not till long after he had left did he recall that look, try without avail to fathom it, and become suspicious.

The slamming of the outer vestibule door disturbed them. Priscilla turned hastily to peer out into the hall. On the filet lace that covered the glass of the front door the vague silhouette of Mrs. Trowbridge showed. She was unconsciously affording Priscilla a few moments of grace by fumbling for her keys.

“Please!” An imperative gesture brought Mr. Chilvers to his feet, somewhat to his own surprise. “You must go now-or you’ll spoil everything.”

“Papa comin’?” he enquired with a knowing look.

“My aunt. I daren’t present you to her. You must go.”

“Well-but how about our next little chat?”

“Anywhere you say, any time—”

“I say the Plaza. Four o’clock tomorrow afternoon. We’ll have tea. Mind my draggin’ Inez along?”

“No-surely not. But don’t delay now.”

Mrs. Trowbridge’s key grated in the lock. Mr. Chilvers deftly flicked the stub of his cigarette into the empty fireplace, took up his hat and stick, and moved gracefully out into the hall.

“Remember: the Plaza at four. And don’t stand me up-not unless you’re lookin’ for real trouble.”

“I’ll be there.” The front door swung open, admitting Mrs. Trowbridge. Priscilla gave the criminal her hand. “Then good afternoon, Mr. Chilvers-and thank you for calling. I’m so sorry I have to rush off to keep my appointment.”

“Don’t mention it. Charmed to have had the pleasure of seein’ you, even for a moment.”

Mr. Chilvers bowed with empressement and glided sleekly away, with a second bow acknowledging the frozen presence of Mrs. Trowbridge.

The door closed behind him. Aunt Esther bore down on Priscilla with supercilious brows.

“My dear child! *who* was that strange creature?”

“That?” Priscilla laughed with a note of hysteria. “Oh, nobody of any consequence—just an acquaintance—an artist of a sort.”

“An artist? I thought as much!” The good woman sighed. “I did hope you wouldn’t bring such people to the house, but I presume...”

The nose of defied convention sniffed suspiciously an atmosphere that was no doubt somehow tainted by an unholy presence.

Priscilla laughed, and for the first time in days with a genuine ring of mirth.

“Don’t worry, dear,” she offered vaguely; and added with more decision: “By the way, I’ve been thinking it’s selfish of me to keep you in Town in this heat. Besides, Ada Moyer won’t pose again till some time next autumn. We might as well go down to Southampton as soon as you can manage...”

III. THE THREAT OF THE WILD

In the morning she dreamed once more of Leonora...

But now the way of the dream with her was something new; perhaps in that it was more in true sense a dream, less an involuntary essay in telesthesia. For all that, it had its element of clairvoyance, as the outcome was to prove.

Now, however, and for the first and only time Priscilla seemed to figure solely in the role of an observer, physically uninvolved, spiritually independent; merely on the stage stood apart a little, looking on; as one may view the traffic on a stage, understanding the passions which rule the players without any sense of personal implication in their web....

What instinct had foreshadowed in the dream proved true: The scene was in a theatre of the hills, set high upon a wooded mountain flank, overlooking a deep

wide valley, the soft green velvet of whose forest carpeting was threaded by slender silver streams and dotted with little shining lakes.

The day was young. Long shadows like translucent smoke rested upon the drenched grass of a clearing hedged about by the fluted, columns of a forest dark and close and still, the dwelling place of ancient mysteries.

Sunlight, flashing level across the eastern ridges, struck squarely a bungalow set in the clearing, a rambling structure that hugged the earth, the primitive crudity of its undressed logs belied by every refinement civilisation could contribute: awnings to shield windows whose shadowy depths were framed in draperies of gay chintz; a spacious veranda whose floor was as neatly joined as a ship's deck, furnished with wicker rest chairs and tables; beds of old-fashioned flowers, a flaming border for the edges of the veranda; a gravelled walk that led through a breadth of well-groomed lawn to the mountain road; at the back of the bungalow and somewhat to one side, a log garage with a concrete floor, its wide doors disclosing an expensive motor-car: a lodge of sybaritic ease in that vast wilderness...

On the veranda, near the steps, Leonora stood waiting, looking back into the living room.

The girl was brilliant with a beauty new in Priscilla's knowledge of her, every shade of care and discontent disestablished from her countenance, its clear pallor enriched by a new-found glow of well-being. In her eyes peace had taken up its abode.

Dressed in a brief skirt of tan twilling and blouse of white silk simply fashioned, with high-laced boots sturdy enough for^ woods-walking, hatless, her hair dressed low upon her neck, she held herself with a confidence unrelated to her one-time arrogance. Of that truculent swagger which had been so becoming in the Street of Strange Faces today no trace survived. Here was a woman so utterly regenerate that the history of her beginnings seemed completely abolished and annulled and as if it had never been.

So much, in those few days, love had done for Leonora...

The clear radiance of her eyes was clouded only when, restless with waiting, she turned for a moment to look out over the valley that swept below, a rim with fluid blue shadow, in all its far sweep never one hint of another human

habitation.

Then her face sobered for an instant, she had almost a look of fear....

It was swiftly dissipated by a sound of footsteps. Mario came out of the bungalow.

Clothed far more formally than she, in a costume better suited to city streets, he carried a small, locked attache case, chamois gloves, a hat. Evidently he was bound upon a journey. As evidently Leonora was not to go with him.

Silently they embraced....

Piloted by a Japanese boy in a white jacket, the motor-car rolled out of the garage and to one side of the veranda, where it stopped. The Japanese jumped down and, leaving the door open, effaced himself. Mario and Leonora, he with an arm round her waist, moved across the lawn to the car, into which he tossed his attache case, lingering for a last caress.

She clung to him as if she could never bring herself to let him go. Touched, responsive, he made but the gentlest efforts to disengage. At length, however, he had to remind her:

“Dear, if I am to catch my train at Kingston, I must go.”

She trembled a little, held him closer for an instant, then quickly released him and stood aside, averting her eyes.

“It’s so hard,” she said with a quivering mouth. “How do I know I’ll ever get you back?”

“But it’s only for the day. I’ll be home before dinner time.”

“I know, but...”

He consulted his watch. “There’s a later train we can catch if you will hurry and change—”

“No!” She lifted her eyes with a forced smile of adorable bravado. “I *won’t* be silly! It’s only because it’s the first time... I’ve got to learn to do without you for

a while now and then, I might as well begin now-I must, I will!" She stamped a foot to assert her determination, and laughed a little rueful laugh. "Now go-kiss me once, just once more-and go!"

They kissed...

"You're sure, Leonora?"

She swallowed a sob and nodded bravely: "Sure!"

"You're not afraid?"

"What of it? There's nothing but these woods, and I'm only scared of them-a little-because I never saw anything like them before in all my life. I'll get over that-I've got to get over a lot of foolishness-just give me time... Now I won't have you miss that train!..."

She ran down to the road to watch the car till a turning took it out of sight.

She stood listening till the hum of its motor was blotted out by the abiding stillness.

For the day was very still, being windless. From the chimney of the kitchen at the back of the bungalow a shaft of fine blue vapor ascended almost without a tremor. In the weight of the sun's rays there was the threat of a day of heat, which Nature seemed to have resigned itself to suffer without complaint.

Now she could hear nothing but the far cawing of a community of crows, a sound infinitely desolate.

Then even that ceased, her straining ears were disconcerted by the silence of the forest.

She did not understand. Such silence frightened her. It surged in wave on wave upon her senses, like a sea seeking to stun and engulf them, to obliterate them altogether.

She cast hunted glances roundabout: at the sky that arched over her like a soundless bell; at the far blue hills that stood a mocking barrier between her and the world she knew; at the deep well of the lonely valley; at the surrounding

forest that seemed, like something animate, awaiting the signal for some sinister occasion, watching her meanwhile with the myriad cold and savage eyes hidden in its dusky fastnesses, threatening momentarily to rouse out of its portentous immobility and close in, overpower, grind her to pulp....

And of a sudden she could no more endure her isolation there in the sunlit open, and she turned and fled wildly to the friendly closeness of the house.

IV. TRANCE

Like a claptrap illusion of the cinema the shadows of her dream dissolved into the substance of her waking life. But that terror which had clutched at the heart of Leonora in the wholesome freedom of the hills lived on in the heart of Priscilla, coming awake in the in violable and confined security of her bedchamber.

It lay upon her soul like a cloud of darkness that no will of hers might lift. She appealed in vain to reason, to common sense. The inarticulate menace of the woods that had been so eloquent to the senses of Leonora continued to oppress Priscilla with a premonition of predestined evil, from whose imminent fall there could be no escape.

She rose, bathed, dressed, breakfasted, all mechanically; greeted her aunt, listened to her animated exposition of plans for getting out of Town on the second day following, responded, answered questions, all in a sort of daze; her abstraction becoming so marked that it at length registered even upon the perceptions of Mrs. Trowbridge.

“It’s a good thing Ada Moyer came to her senses when she did,” that lady observed with tart satisfaction. “The heat’s affecting your head already.”

Priscilla had not sufficient spirit to frame a rejoinder.

Prepossession with that feeling of impending disaster weighed more and more heavily upon her mind as the day aged. More and more strongly she felt herself incapable of coping with the routine duties of its course. She went to and fro like an automaton, aware of one thing only: that danger of some sort threatened Leonora, that she was powerless to avert it—who could not even name it.

What otherwise had held place of first importance in her consideration, her

encounter with Harry Chilvers of the day before and her appointment to meet him at the Plaza today for tea, was displaced, relegated to a status of least consequence, then forgotten altogether.

At four o'clock, indeed, she was pacing up and down the waiting room of Dr. Philip Fosdick, digging nails into her palms and teeth into her underlip in the endeavour to keep from giving away to hysteria.

In his sympathy, in the wisdom of his counsel that had never failed her, Priscilla thought to find at least temporary comfort, if not her sole hope of salvaging her reason. The tension of nameless dread was becoming more than she knew how to bear unaided.

She sought Fosdick on impulse, suddenly, abandoning every other interest. The voice that answered her telephone call said that Dr. Fosdick was "out on calls" but would be back at four. Priscilla arrived at his office at half after three. With a punctuality almost unexampled for him, Fosdick strolled in at twenty minutes to five, to find his waiting room tenanted by a semi-distracted woman, hagridden by fears she could by no means formulate in words, and so nerve racked that she was unable to control voice or gesture.

One glance at her face of suffering, one look into those eyes of pitiful appeal—Fosdick drew her into his consultation room. There she collapsed utterly, going with childlike trust into his arms, hiding her face in his shoulder, shaken by that tempest of emotion against which her last, slight guard had been beaten down upon his arrival.

He let her rest so, holding her lightly, gently patting her hands, murmuring words of reassurance, till the first and fiercest transports spent themselves, then set himself to rebuild her self-control with every resource at his command.

It was slow work. Not till she was seated, holding his hand with one that clung desperately, her other hand engaged in dabbing her eyes with a wet wisp of linen and lace, did he venture to question her.

It was soothing to be able to talk without reserve. At the same time the sense of terror was ever with her, like a spectral presence lurking just behind her shoulder, defeating with inexorable persistence every effort to consign it to forgetfulness. She told her story eagerly, but in fragments only; she was powerless long to follow any one train of thought because, invariably, when she

seemed on the very verge of losing herself in the interest of narration, a chill breath of fear would numb her confidence, her eyes would film with daze, her voice break in the middle of a sentence, her relaxing grasp on Fosdick's hand tighten convulsively, her thoughts falter into momentary incoherence.

Again and again he needed to exert himself to the utmost in order to restore the mean balance of her self-command. Only the tenderness and solicitude of the lover allied with the knowledge, the patience, the compassion of the physician served....

"But what am I to do?" she demanded in a calmer phase. "I tell you, Philip, I can't stand it; I can't go on like this knowing she's in deadly peril, not knowing what to do, knowing she needs me, not knowing how to get to her, to help her.... It isn't imagination, PhiKp—it's so. I know it's so, that she's in danger, threatened, afraid; something in me knows and shares her sufferings and won't-can't be still. If I only could get at that knowledge somehow, drag it out of me—because it's there—I feel it's there"—one hand touched her bosom—"struggling to find expression, wanting nothing better than a chance to explain itself.... Philip, won't you help me?"

His head described a slow sign of regret. "I'm doing my best, Priscilla—"

"I mean, hypnotism—"

"No—"

"You must, Philip, you must! You can't refuse me, you can't let me go on in this torment when it's so simple for you, who know how, to relieve my mind. I'm not afraid of being hypnotised by you. You've explained everything so clearly, I know it's nothing but the utilisation of a natural means to remove the barrier between the two states of consciousness, so that the imprisoned subconscious can find expression. Philip, you won't refuse me this once? You see what this thing is doing to me, you know I'll go mad if I don't find relief—"

He gave a gesture of surrender, and got up from his chair.

"As you will," he said. "Perhaps, after all, you know best."

He arranged pillows at the head of a couch. "Lie down here—rest—relax. Remember that, as you've just declared, you've got nothing to fear from the

hypnotic trance, something as natural as sleep-even more natural, if what I believe of it is true.”

“I am not in the least afraid.”

With a readiness and docility which he thought touching, she suffered Fosdick to make her comfortable upon the couch. He was insistent upon an attitude of complete relaxation, supine, the head barely elevated by a thin down pillow, the ankles together but not crossed, the hands open at either side. Further, he bade her loosen her locked teeth, so that they no longer touched. And drawing a chair close to the head of the couch, he sat down and with his own hands smoothed out the strained, contracted muscles round her eyes and mouth and brows.

She lay quietly, looking up into his face, interested, intent, a trifle diverted.

“You are more at ease already.”

It was less enquiry than statement of fact. Her drooping lids assented.

“When do you begin?”

“Presently. First you must rest.”

“How do you do it, Philip-with passes of the hands?”

He smiled: “I fancy that won’t be necessary, so long as I have your confidence.”

“Oh, you have!”

“I know. But don’t talk-don’t think any more than you can help. Keep your eyes fixed on mine, but don’t keep it up if it tires you. As soon as it’s an effort, shut your eyes. Now remember: avoid thinking”—the pressure on her forehead became more gently urgent- “simply rest.”

His touch, his tone, his presence, were all soothing. Already she was pleasantly aware of slackening nervous tension. In her eyes a vague smile formed.

“Drowsy?”

Her lips framed but did not utter the word “no.” She was not in the least sleepy,

but deliciously at ease. The weight of his hand on her forehead was like an imponderable force of obliterating influence. It needed no effort to refrain from thinking, it was the easiest, therefore the natural thing to do. Consciousness was slowly retreating into a boundless space of inertia. She had no desire to restrain it...

She did not know that her eyes had closed of their own accord, and spent a moment in idle speculation concerning the singular disappearance of Philip's face.

He had not moved, she knew; his hand still rested on her forehead. But his voice sounded far away:

"Sleep.. "

She wondered that he should bid her sleep or wish her to. Perhaps it was because he thought it would better prepare her for the ordeal of the hypnotic trance-if it were any ordeal. But it was odd that he should not understand she was now finding a rest more exquisite than one could possibly find in sleep...

"Sleep..."

Iteration of that monosyllable excited no more interest. She had become completely engrossed with the phenomenon of respiration, her own breathing, its tempered, constant ebb and flow, upon which her being swung like a leaf in a tideway...

"Sleep..."

She had no desire to sleep, felt no need of it. Never had she known such absolute command of all her faculties. The sensation of being acutely alive was extraordinary, without precedent.

Yet curiously assorted with this was a sort of exterior numbness, as if her body were altogether enfolded in an unknown element, like air but more ethereal, powerful but impalpable, whose unremitting pressure drove inward all physical sensibility, forcing it back and back until it came to rest, impassive but superpotent in perfect concentration, in some secret sanctum of her being.

With this there was like concentration of the attention, which, turning in upon

itself, became in a way magnified and marvellously luminous. Divorced from that complexity of cares and interests of daily life which ordinarily distracted and diverted the full stream of its powers into an hundred channels, the ego turned back to the ego and in that inversion achieved an isolation with a self-complete ness and containment and independence passing anything known in waking life.

In this Nirvana, an unawed initiate of the arcana of existence, the soul dwelt in exalted abstraction, in a phase of sublime self-sufficiency, freedom, and peace.... But not for long; how long, there could be no computing; consciousness of measured time had been abolished by contact with eternal verities. Nevertheless the period of that detachment was not unlimited, it had an end, there was at length a necessity imposed upon the soul, a summons, a calling to it from out the vast which it could by no means ignore.

And the I that was the essence of the girl bestirred itself and arose and, shedding without effort the trammels of its content, went forth, seeking.

In this there was no faltering, no reluctance, neither question nor doubt, there was indeed no choice: the call had sounded and response might not be delayed. The call was from Leonora; it was the soul of Leonora, voiceless and inarticulate, calling to its own, calling without rest through the void from a far and unknown bourne.

And the spirit to which its soundless call was tuned answered and fared forth, seeking, forever seeking...

There were no bounds to the sphere of that search, no barriers to hinder its free range, the earth and the sea and the air and the spaces between the stars were within its scope and the infinite marches beyond. Her soul fared far and far, seeking the source of that summons that, once sounded, was now never still, the call that led and eluded, that fled and pursued.

Time beyond reckoning was consumed, yet the search had no end, the soul adventured fruitlessly, its yearning was denied.

At last it returned, weary and frustrate and spent it came back to its own place, to the tenement of flesh that was its temple and the tower of its refuge, and there rested upon and within itself, demanding the consolation of its integrity yet knowing no comfort of it when found, tormented by knowledge of its failure,

haunted by the call...

Then that which it had sought and found not, sought it in turn, and it was found, the I that was Leonora was joined to the I that was Priscilla, and the twain were as one, and there was solace in this apprehension of oneness.

But there was likewise sorrow and dread that had neither of them any form, so that there was not any sort of rest. But as if the very fact of their reunion forbade them rest, the one that was two stirred and rose up again and once more committed itself to the toil and fatigue of search, whipped on and on by the lash of a necessity that had no name but was none the less inexorable and pitiless...

But this time the search found an end...

There was in a forest a pool, a dark, still pool in a forest dark and still. Huge boughs of ancient trees, weighed down with their burden of interwoven foliage, overhung the water, darkening its face to blackness with their shadows, shedding a twilight in between, a half-light of limpid green.

The air of this place was sluggish, dank and warm and without movement, it was heavy with the cloying sweet breath of mould. Neither was there any movement in the pool, though its still black plaque was broken by a white, cold, wet face upturned, the face of a drowned woman whose clothed body was vaguely revealed by the stained element in which it was suspended.

To the smitten spirit of Priscilla it was as if she gazed at her own face, still and calm in sleep, counterfeited in the depths of a wide dark mirror.

But the face, she knew, was the face of Leonora, who was dead.

THE DAY OF GRACE

I. TEMPTATION

DEAD... *she is dead... Leonora is dead...*” The words, barely audible, hardly more than moans, breathed from the lips of the woman lying in hypnosis. Fosdick, sitting by her side, on the edge of the couch, bending over her, conned her face intently. The long lashes were fluttering, tears welled from under lowered lids, the lips writhed with grief. She moaned again, an inarticulate pure note of woe passing speech, and shuddered in her trance.

He captured her two wrists as her hands twitched up, groping as one’s hands will who walks in darkness, and imprisoned them gently in the clasp of one of his own. The other he pressed again upon her forehead.

“Priscilla!” he called in an even but urgent voice—“come out of it! Forget your vision. See nothing... Do you hear me?”

The anguish of the face of the sleeper grew transiently more acute, then faded as he repeated the unanswered question: “Do you hear me?” This time the girl responded dully: “Yes.”

“You understand what I am saving?”

“Yes, Philip...”

“You are to see nothing more... Do you see anything now?”

There was a slight pause; then the sleeper stated without emotion: “I see nothing now.”

“Good. Now you will sleep, you will sleep quietly, without dreaming, for thirty minutes. Then you will wake up rested, refreshed, calm, rational. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Philip.”

“Repeat what you are going to do.”

In a toneless voice Priscilla recited: "I am going to sleep quietly, without dreaming, for thirty minutes. Then I am going to wake up rested, refreshed, calm, rational."

"Do so."

She made no response more than a profound sigh. The stamp of sorrow upon those exquisite features had already been modified; their expression now grew placid. The agitated, gusty breathing passed into the steady, slow and deep respiration of natural slumber.

Fosdick sighed in relief; but his countenance continued grave with care, the brows knotted, the lips compressed, the eyes harbouring a look of pain.

He moved over to his desk and dropped wearily into the chair, made as if to draw the telephone to him, hesitated. Resting an elbow on the desk, he bent his head upon his hand, covering his eyes, and for some moments sat in a state of sore perplexity and indecision.

What was his duty?

It was in his power to renew in Priscilla the condition of hypnotic susceptibility long enough to erase by suggestion, all waking memory of her vision. By so doing he might spare her much suffering, much distress; the pity and horror of that lonely death, and the mystery of it, would not prey upon her sensitive and susceptible nature. And, believing Leonora still to be living happily with the man Mario, her husband, Priscilla might in time grow reconciled, school herself to renunciation, forget, and ultimately rebuild her life upon the foundation of a saner, surer love.

On the other hand, Fosdick knew, no will of his, no wile, no power known could cast out memory of that vision from her unconscious mind. There it must live on, in repression but deathless and mutinous, demanding always that acknowledgment which was its right, always denied; and inevitably in some fashion for that neglect it would avenge itself upon the girl.

So may we all purchase forgetfulness of things that sadden us, things that hurt, memories of failure, omissions, blunders, losses, sins: but if we purchase we must pay the cost.

Nature has no mercy for those who would ignore her; such insolence goes never unrequited....

But if Priscilla were permitted to come back to herself with full knowledge of what she had seen in her trance: believing Leonora dead, what would the effect be upon her life?

She would be sad, she would mourn, it would be long before her days would be undarkened by shadows of dread and distrust.

But she would not dream, there would be no more journeys of the spirit through the hollowness of night and space in futile search for that affinity which had gone out of life.

Against this the consideration warred that, no longer needing to reckon with the claims of Leonora, Priscilla would less readily disembarass herself from the toils of an insane and impossible infatuation.

With Mario free, no reason existed why she should scruple to give him all her love....

Dared one risk perpetuation of that passion?

II. THE LINK

Fosdick pressed a call button on his desk and put the telephone receiver to his ear. His assistant responded promptly. Fosdick asked:

“Is there anybody waiting to see me?”

“Two patients with appointments, sir, and one without any-Mr. Andrews. I told him you couldn’t possibly see him today. He said he’d wait till the cows came home.”

“Get rid of the others,” Fosdick instructed; “tell them I’ll be indefinitely engaged. Then send Andrews in.”

He put the telephone aside and went back to the couch. Priscilla had not stirred since obeying his injunction to sleep naturally. She seemed to be resting easily; there was no indication of distress in her expression, more than the physical

signs imprinted by the emotional strain of the last several days: pale, bluish shadows beneath her eyes, a hint of weariness about her mouth, the mouth of a child punished for no fault that it understands, and a faintly perceptible contraction between her eyebrows.

Fosdick gave a gesture, infinitely unhappy, of renunciation.

He bent over and let his lips touch lightly her hair, the nearest approach to such a caress he had offered Priscilla since her childhood.

She never knew...

When Andrews came in, a folding screen shut *off* the couch and its occupant from the rest of the room; Fosdick was behind his desk, amiable, keen, composed.

"Well, Andrews?"

"G'daft'noon, doc." Mr. Andrews seated himself, balanced his hat on his knee, and reinserted in his mouth the unlighted cigar which had been removed in deference to an influential client. "Just blew in from up State-Dutchess County," he announced. "The party you're interested in—"

"Mother O'More?"

"Yeah: she's up there in a private inst'ution for the aged. Bought her way in 'bout ten years ago. Seems she gets an annuity from some insurance company, enough to pay for her board and keep. Must be a sick insurance company; the old dame's a hunnerdaneighty if she's a day and ain't much as thinkin' of kickin' out."

"Did you see her to talk to?"

Mr. Andrews corrected gravely: "I seen her to talk to her, but that's as far's I got."

"Is her mind clear? I mean, do you think she remembers?"

"Remembers? Say, that old lady remembers more'n you and me '11 ever forget. Her mind's as dear's consummy soup in a French table de hote."

“Won’t she talk? Why?”

“Cussedness,” Mr. Andrews opined—“or else she’s been paid to keep her trap shut. I got a hunch she bought that annuity with hush money.”

“Will anything make her talk, do you think?”

“Jack might.”

“Jack who?”

“No, not Jack anybody-just jack-coin, yunno-money.”

“Oh!” Fosdick’s smile swiftly faded into a look of thoughtfulness. “Presume I’d better see her myself.”

“Would, if I was you. She hasn’t got no use for me at all-spots me for a detective at’ sight and spits like a mad cat every time I opens me mouth.”

“Where do you say she is?”

“Place near Pawling-there’s the address.” Mr. Andrews gave Fosdick a slip of paper. “Visitors’ hours every afternoon, three to five.”

“I’ll see her tomorrow,” Fosdick said. “Meanwhile, you can be working on another lead. There’s reason to believe the girl I’m looking for-this Leonora-is or has been for several days living up in the Catskills, in a private camp, probably rented, somewhere back of Kingston. Her husband came down to New York today, according to my information and belief, and is returning tonight. He drove from the camp to Kingston in a car, which he probably left in a garage near the railroad station. That may help you to trace him.”

“I’ll run up there tonight, be on the job first thing tomorrow. If I have any luck I’ll give you a Long Distance buzz. But I dunno... If you’re goin’ to run up to Pawling in the aft’noon, you won’t be back till after dinner. I might be back myself by that time. Mebbe I’ll be waitin’ for you.”

III. AFTERMATH

Mr. Andrews presently took himself off. Fosdick glanced at his watch, turned to

the screen, folded and set it aside.

Priscilla had not yet moved, but by every sign the subconscious monitor was reminding her that the half hour had elapsed. Her breathing was less regular, the silken lashes were restless upon her cheeks. While Fosdick watched they lifted, disclosing confused eyes.

Recognising him, she smiled uncertainly. Fosdick uttered her name in a reassuring voice, took her hands, and helped her to a sitting position.

“How do you feel?”

“I don’t know,” she said in a low, puzzled tone. “All right, I guess, but... There’s something wrong... Have I been asleep?”

“Yes. Didn’t you know?”

She shook her head impatiently, staring at the floor, struggling to recollect loose ends of memories.

“You-you hypnotised me, Philip?”

“Yes, ‘Cilla.”

“Was it difficult?”

“On the contrary, you proved one of the most willing subjects I’ve ever had—went off like a shot, practically at the first suggestion.”

He filled a glass with water from the silver pitcher on his desk; but when he took it to her, she was on her feet, her eyes desperate.

“Philip!” she cried gustily—“she is dead—Leonora !”

“I know; that is, I know you think so; you told me.”

She did not answer, she was heedless of the meaning of his words; but as if instinctively feeling it intolerable that another’s eyes should pry into her grief, brushed aside the glass of water, and with a stricken face stumbled past him to a wide and deeply recessed window.

For several minutes she stood there, her back to Fosdick, looking out blindly, slender shoulders shaken with silent sobs, a hand with a handkerchief dabbing at her eyes.

A wise physician, Fosdick offered no phrases of false comfort, but was patient.

That the storm of her emotions spent itself swiftly, that it was not long before she was able to talk calmly, was no revelation of heartlessness, but largely the work of the suggestion implanted in her while she was in hypnosis.

“The pity of it,” she said after a little time: “O Philip! the pity of it! She was so happy -and now she is dead.”

“Perhaps.”

Priscilla swung sharply round. “Why do you say that? I know-I saw her-I saw her lying drowned in a pool—”

“I know, you told me.”

“But how could I?” She was startled out of her sorrow. “I haven’t had time, I’ve only just remembered—”

“You told me while in the hypnotic trance. I questioned you and you told me all you knew, everything you experienced. You were talking almost continuously until I threw you into normal sleep. So I heard about your vision.”

“Strange!” she said in a stare of wonder- “strange I should recall nothing of that.”

“Not so strange; your speech was something purely automatic; once started, it went on, just as your heart went on beating and your lungs inhaling and exhaling air, while your attention was absorbed in other matters. It’s like the automatic writing that people produce, believing themselves under the influence of disembodied spirits. Not necessarily even under the hypnotic influence; their attention is elsewhere, they may be talking or reading on utterly immaterial subjects, while their hand, without their knowledge, writes and goes on writing- just so you went on talking.”

“I don’t understand. It’s-it’s incomprehensible. Not that I doubt what you say. I

must have told you what I saw, there in the forest....” Her eyes filled again, tears ran down her cheeks. She averted her face. “Oh, the pity of it!” she repeated. “Just when life seemed about to compensate her for all she had never had...”

“Don’t let go like this, ‘Cilla. Remember, nothing is certain.”

“No-you are wrong. I saw her, I know.”

“You think so.”

“Why do you persist in saying that? Have my dreams ever proved groundless?”

“We don’t know, yet; perhaps some of them were. But this wasn’t one of what you call your dreams; it was a vision, possibly a hallucination, in hypnotic trance. It may have been a true phenomenon of teljesthetic communication; assuming that Leonora was really dead, your spirit may have found some means, by some extraordinary effort, to surmount the obstacles, whose very nature is unknown to us, that stand between the living and the dead, prohibiting communication.... If there is such a thing as communion with the spirits of the dead, if there remains after death a sentient individuality to communicate with... But we don’t know.”

He argued earnestly, with intention, seeing he had already engaged her interest to such extent that she was forgetting to grieve.

“On the other hand, we do know it’s easy to fool ourselves. Remember, you have gone about all day fretted by a feeling that something was wrong with Leonora, some danger threatened her happiness. Quite possibly that feeling had no more excuse than an element of nightmare in your dream, or vision, of this morning, that made you think Leonora had some unreasoning fear of the forest. Therefore, your subconsciousness reasoned, there must be something to fear. Therefore, Leonora is in danger. In danger of what? Of what but death? You passed into the hypnotic trance already prepared to see the worst. You saw it. But the question remains unanswered, and for the time being unanswerable: Did you see truly, or did you see a fantasy conjured up by your own imagination influenced by fear?”

“If I could only think that, Philip !”

“Why not try?”

But he was arguing against his own conviction, his argument lacked conviction. Her drooping head described a movement of rejection.

“No,” she said, “the trouble is-I *know*.”

Appreciating that in her present temper contradiction or contention would only serve to excite her, Fosdick dropped the subject temporarily, and used the telephone to order his car from the garage.

“I’m going to take you home now,” he told Priscilla. “Now about tonight: have you anything on?”

“Don’t ask me to do anything tonight, Philip!” she protested. “Night after night I’ve gone about with an aching heart, to please you, because you thought it would do me good. But tonight-I simply couldn’t.”

“I agree. I was merely going to advise cancellation of any engagements you might have. You must rest, get a long and sound night’s sleep.”

“If I can..”

“You still have some of those powders I prescribed? Take two tonight: one after dinner, one when you go to bed. And don’t stay up late on my account.” She assented listlessly. “Don’t hesitate to send for me if you need me. And in the morning, if I haven’t heard from you meantime, I’ll call up-about ten. I shall be out of Town in the afternoon, but at night I’d like to see you, if you’ll be at home.”

“I shall,” she sighed. “Of course. I shall’ be packing. We leave for Southampton day after tomorrow.”

“Glad of that. Once you get out of this memory-haunted atmosphere, and especially since you will have no more dreams—”

She looked round sharply: “You think that?”

“If you’re right, if Leonora’s dead”—he was doing his best to drive conviction home- “you need not hope to follow her life after death, in your dreams.”

“I don’t know,” she doubted. “I shan’t soon forget... But the mystery and the

horror of such an end... Philip: who could have killed her?"

"If she is dead, as you think-need we accuse anybody of murder? It might have been suicide—"

"Oh, no," she interrupted almost scornfully -"never ! Why should she do such a thing? She was so happy, she loved Mario, he loved her devotedly."

"Or an accident, perhaps..."

She seemed to try to adopt this theory, she pondered it at length, but in the end could not accept it.

"No," she declared; "it was neither suicide nor accident, it was what she had been afraid of all along, death by violence..."

IV. DEFIANCE

Late in the evening the telephone interrupted the supervision of her packing, with which Priscilla was endeavouring to divert her weary thoughts-and with no great success.

Her maid being busy at the moment, Priscilla answered in person, and suffered a slight shock when she heard the studied accent of Mr. Harry Chilvers-so completely had she forgotten the man.

"Hello: put me through to Miss Maine, will you?"

Priscilla countered with the stereotyped query: "Who is calling, please?"

But she was too indifferent to disguise her voice; and Mr. Chilvers chirped briskly:

"Oh, hello, Nora! This is Harry. What happened to you this afternoon? Forget our date for tea? Or did something get in your way?"

Quite evidently 'Mr. Chilvers was prepared to be a good fellow and overlook that slight. But Priscilla replied with an apathy nothing short of cynical:

"Miss Maine is not at home."

An oath of resentful incredulity was cut in two as she clicked the receiver into its hook; but the picture suggested, of the Nut raging at a mute and unemotional telephone, failed to excite even the ghost of her smile.

The death of Leonora had bereft the man of all claim upon her consideration, rendering him hopelessly incompetent for harm. He had > become nothing to her, less than nothing. The incident served merely to remind her that she ! had neglected to tell Fosdick about the fellow, (^ his effrontery, the insolence of his ill-veiled threats.

Not that it mattered: she could tell Philip at any time; tomorrow or whenever she happened to remember and be in the mood....

Now the bitterest melancholy oppressed her, a desolation indescribable: the vision of the pool was constant in her imagination, obscuring even material objects that passed under her regard; the sense of loss, a living anguish from which there was no escape...

A spirit numbed by misery accepted this suffering without protest, as something foreordained and ineluctable. She could not even attempt to reason herself out of it, to cast it forth from her and repudiate it as punishment unearned, therefore intolerable.

It was, she told herself, as if a part of her very soul had ruthlessly been lopped off by some malign power, leaving her incomplete, a cripple. She had read of soldiers who, having lost an arm or leg, were still unable to lose the sense of union with the missing member. So her spirit yearned without ceasing for that which had been taken away from it, and would not be comforted; and she was never without the frustrated feeling of groping sickly for that which was no more...

Only in sleep did she find surcease; then there was oblivion of a sort, the dubious boon of Fosdick's prescription, in a sleep heavy and hot and thick, in which she lay inert like something submerged in a tepid, black, viscous fluid, from which she emerged with throbbing head and sluggish pulses, unrested, enervated, despondent.

With sinking heart she contemplated the tedium of the day to come, its appointed round of tasks, packing, shopping, visiting the studio to close it up for the summer.

Fosdick called up about mid-morning and, hearing her report on the effect of the drug, told her to discontinue it, promising to bring a substitute when he called in the evening. He could get in from the country about half past eight, he said, and be at the house on Park avenue as soon after that hour as a taxi could fetch him.

She promised to be at home to him alone.

Later her maid summoned her to the telephone a second time: Mr. Chilvers was on the wire. "Tell him I've left town for the summer," Priscilla said, too depressed to feel annoyed by his persistence.

But when she was leaving Altaian's in the afternoon after an hour or two of perfunctory shopping, Mr. Chilvers waylaid her in the carriage entrance.

He saluted with a wide flourish of his beaming topper and a smirk of poisonous amiability.

"Saw your car up the street," he announced cheerfully—"thought perhaps you wouldn't mind givin' me a lift."

She stopped, reading darkly his shrewd, narrow, rat-like face, reading the threat and triumph in those small, black, close-set eyes, surmising that without a public scene there could be no escaping the interview he demanded.

"But really you ought to speak to that maid of yours," he proceeded, unabashed. "She had the impudence to tell me this morning you'd left town for the summer."

She shrugged, and in silence led on out to the sidewalk. Her car was waiting across the way. Seeing her, the chauffeur pulled round to the curb.

Mr. Chilvers slipped a gallant hand under her arm to help her in, but before he could follow Priscilla pulled the door to. Immediately his manner changed. Scarlet with anger, he laid a hand on the ledge of the window.

"What's the big idea?" he demanded. "You ought to know better than to think you can gyp me without a struggle."

"There will be no struggle," Priscilla replied quietly, talking from the window. "You see, for reasons of my own, day before yesterday, I chose to let you think

me somebody who I am not. These reasons no longer exist. Therefore I need no longer tolerate your impertinence.”

“Well,” Mr. Chilvers commented in a pained manner, after a brief pause, “I won’t say I wasn’t lookin’ for a stall of some kind, because I was. But I got to admit I didn’t think you’d try to get away with anything so kinder-gartenish.” He adopted a mincing accent: ” ‘Unhand me, sir! I am not the one you take me for.’ Say, where do you get that stuff anyway?”

“I let you believe I was Leonora,” Priscilla explained coldly, “because I wanted to shield her—”

“Oh, no doubt, no doubt!”

“But my motive doesn’t matter. Leonora died yesterday. So there’s no more need of my pretending. One moment, please!” She forestalled a threatened interruption. “Listen to me! I am *not* Leonora. My name is Priscilla Maine. I have lived all my life in New York, in the Park avenue house which belonged to my father. Should we ever meet again, don’t presume on the acquaintance I have permitted you to claim but which is now closed. And before you threaten me again, let me advise you to find out the truth about Priscilla Maine.”

She put her finger on the telephone button.

“Let go of the door, please,” she said, looking calmly into his infuriated eyes. “Will you oblige me? Or shall I send my chauffeur to ask the policeman over there to step this way for a moment?”

Mr. Chilvers opened his mouth, but shut it without speech. A second attempt was more successful.

“If you think you can put it over on me like

*!.: i” tms !

But Priscilla was already speaking into the telephone:

“All right, Arthur; to the studio, please.”

The car swept forward so suddenly that Mr. Chilvers was almost dragged off his

feet before he remembered to loose his hold.

Satisfied that she had seen the last of him-he would hardly find a second opportunity to annoy her that day, or neglect to make the enquiries she had advised; and tomorrow would see her well beyond his reach, in Southampton - she sank back in the seat and once more delivered up body and mind and soul to melancholy.

At the mouth of the Alley she dismissed the car. "Mrs. Trowbridge will use you for the rest of the afternoon," she told Arthur. "I'll call a taxi to take me home when I'm ready."

Her business in the studio proved more exacting and fatiguing than she had anticipated. It was a matter of several hours before she had finished sorting out and packing up tubes of paint, bottles of medium, brushes, palettes, unpainted canvases on stretchers, her sketching umbrella, easel and stool. And yet it was work no one could have done for her; no servant could have known what she needed to take down to the country with her, what to leave behind.

The afternoon was as unseasonably warm as any that spring had brewed. Weary to start with, she worked steadily, heedless of the passage of time. It was something past six, when pausing to survey the result of her labours, she discovered there was little more to do. At once she realized her weariness like a dragging weight, and felt that it would be utterly impossible to continue before she had rested for a little.

It required an effort of will to drag into the kitchenette, fill a teakettle, and place it on an electric stove. Then she returned to the studio to wait for the water to boil.

The invitation of the divan proved too tempting. She lay down, sighing.

Sleep possessed her without any warning, without an instant's grace...

THE CHANGELING

I. TRANSLATION

AS on that first occasion when sleep had stolen upon and overcome her unawares in the studio, her unclosing eyes comprehended only darkness absolute.

Unlike that time, when she had roused instantaneously, self-consciousness springing suddenly, full witted, full powered, clear, out of nightmare thralldom, now she awoke slowly and at expense of effort almost painful: senses and perceptions struggling long and arduously to break the embrace of a lethargy so deep and undisturbed that the self-sense had lain in it benumbed and stifled, like a seed that slumbers in the pent darkness of the earth against the coming of the spring.

And even as the seed, at a time secretly appointed, at the urge of an instinct inscrutable to man, quickens in its sleep and sends forth blind shoots to fumble for the light, so the being of the girl stirred in its stupor and sent forth its torpid senses. But there the figure fails: they found no light....

In the confusion of those first waking moments she believed herself to be at home, in bed.

But the darkness of her bedchamber had never been sheer; there was always a diffused glow from the lights in the street to temper it.

Then she remembered, dully, the studio and the weariness that had weighed upon her in the afternoon.

She must have slept several hours at the least reckoning, for it had been broad daylight when she lay down, the evenings were long, and it was now, judging by the blackness of it and the silence, dead of night.

But she looked in vain for the violet tinted rectangle of the north-light.

And mysteriously the windows were shut which had been open when she stretched out to rest while the kettle boiled. For there was not only an utter

absence of light but a smothering lack of fresh air. She could not remember a time when the atmosphere of the studio had been so close. Worse than merely close, indeed: it was foul, gravid with stagnant smells unfamiliar to her nostrils: a pungent odour of stale fermentation, a rank aroma of tobacco smoke, and with these a stealthy and subtle effluvium, cloying, insidious, insinuating, at once flattering and disgusting, sinister and seductive...

There were lesser odours, too, in multitude, and there was a grim pitch of heat, to help make the atmosphere suffocating.

Her lungs starving for clean air, she lay for some time stupidly contemplating the exertion that would be needed to rise and open one of the windows. Somehow she could not seem to nerve herself to it.

She was feeling actually ill, squeamish. Her limbs were stiff and heavy, her hands hot, her cheeks and forehead afire, a prickling sensation afflicted her body, she was athirst and the taste in her mouth was evil; and when she moved her head upon the pillow, pain like a brutal blow crashed from temple to temple and back again and again, forcing feeble groans past her lips.

Nevertheless conditions such as these were unendurable. At whatever cost, she must have water and fresh air....

She steeled herself and presently, by a supreme exertion of will power, forced herself to sit up. For the time being she could no more. The pain rocked and smashed about like a mad thing, till she wondered would it break her skull. And as by degrees those transports subsided, she was taken with qualms of nausea.

There was nothing to do but discipline herself to patience till pain and sickness wore themselves out. Despite the ache, her head was clearer now, she could think more connectedly, her perceptions were less like things buried alive in cotton wool: the physical circumstances of her surroundings began to register.

She must have kicked off her shoes in her sleep. At least, she could not remember removing them before lying down. At all events -whatever had become of them-they were gone. Beneath her stockinged feet the floor was bare and rough, of unfinished wood. Now there was a rug beside the divan in the studio. And even had it been spirited away like her shoes, the studio floor was of hardwood neatly joined and polished till its surface was like glass.

Then a hand that she dropped to the edge of her couch encountered the coarse ticking of an uncovered mattress, instead of the silken rug that clothed the divan.

Slowly it was borne in upon her that she was neither in her bedchamber nor in her studio.

This conviction struck home to her understanding with a shock that brought her to her feet. And for a long minute she stood swaying in the darkness while the agony thundered in her temples, flashes of weird light seared her eyeballs, and moans found a way through her clenched teeth...

What had happened? Where was she-and *who*?

Was she Priscilla Maine delirious?

Or was she Leonora-yet once again that puppet of her life in dreams, embarked upon some new and still more terrible adventure?

But Leonora was no more...

What then? Did people deranged by illness suffer such awful hallucinations and at the same time *know* that they were impossible, unreal, insane inventions of an unhinged mind?

She took a blind step into obscurity, and another, blundered into a chair and knocked it over with a clatter.

While she waited, dashed, hands clutching wildly at vacant blackness, a key turned in a reluctant lock, a door opened, closed, and was relocked.

Priscilla failed to elicit more than a harsh, inarticulate whisper from a swollen throat.

A match rasped and spluttered in the murk, a gas-jet hissed from a wall-bracket, spreading a fan-like flame with a body of ghastly blue and a border of tawny yellow.

It revealed a mean and ugly cubicle, perhaps six feet by eight, with dingy walls to whose crumbling plaster clung a few dismal rags of ancient paper. The single window was stoutly boarded on the inside. The begrimed floor was a stranger

alike to carpeting and soap and water, had apparently been so since time out of memory. For furnishing there was a small table of painted wood, the overturned chair, and a scorbutic iron bedstead with sway-backed springs, a lumpy mattress and one emaciated pillow.

Silent beneath the wheezing gaslight, the woman Inez bent upon Priscilla a louring regard.

II. INEZ

“well,” Inez drawled in overcoloured surprise—“would you look who’s here! As I live ‘tis none other than the Duplex Kid-Little Nora of the Double Life-and-Face!”

Arms akimbo, with fleering mouth and hostile eyes, she waited hopefully for her gibe to draw the spirited response which might have been expected of Leonora, and so provide excuse for further insolence.

She was disappointed. Her victim was too far gone in wretchedness to know or care whether she were the butt of ill-natured derision. Added to the misery of her body, she had now to cope with an intellectual confusion that seemed past ravelling. Every circumstance contributing to this latest phase of her ill-starred destiny was incomprehensible-other than as proof of either a mind disordered or a translation of identity more absolute than any she had as yet experienced.

She had fallen asleep in the tranquil spaciousness of her studio: she was awake in this confined place of unspeakable squalor. She had been free and alone: she was now in amanner jailed, at the mercy of this truculent vixen. No later than this afternoon she had been Priscilla Maine: tonight she was cast for the role of Leonora. Reconciliation of reason with propositions so paradoxical was impossible, the mental effort agony. Both hands clasping her tortured head, as if to prevent its splitting asunder, the girl stared at Inez with distraught eyes in a haggard countenance.

“Thought you’d pay the old place a visit, did you? Found Fift’ avenue and all too rich for your stummick, I presoom. How’s it feel to be back on the farm? Like Old Home Week, I guess.”

Again Priscilla tried to speak; but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. The sounds, when at length they came, were unrecognizable as her own voice.

“Water,” she croaked—“in pity’s name-water!”

Momentarily the other seemed of a mind to refuse her. A grin of gratification formed on the hard-lined mouth. Then, perhaps because she saw she would get no satisfaction from her prey otherwise, she decided to indulge her.

“All right, dearie; I’ll fetch you a nice longdrink. Back in a minute. Just make yourself perfectly at home.”

Deftly unfastening the door, Inez slipped out.

Priscilla swayed back to the bed and sat down, temporarily in total subjugation to her thirst and the promise of its assuagement; all other perceptions in abeyance, only the sense of hearing alert for sounds of returning footsteps, tinkling ice in a glass...

She was kept waiting a cruel time...

Whether prompted by need for stealth or by common hatefulness seeking to prolong her torments, Inez chose to return noiselessly. Priscilla, sitting with drooping head, had no warning till she heard the door close softly. Then, seeing Inez posed with her back to it, a large goblet of thick glass held high, the girl lurched to her feet and toward her.

“Please!” she begged huskily.

With a quick movement Inez placed the glass on the little table and met Priscilla with a straight-arm blow on the bosom that drove her reeling back to the bed, whose uprights she grasped to save herself a fall.

“Don’t be in such a sweat. You’ll get yourdrink, all right-when you’ve done what I want you to.”

“What-what do you want me to do?”

Inez tossed toward her a bundle of garments she had brought under an arm. “I want that suit you’ve got on-it’s too damn’ good for you -and your rings and that brooch and everythin’. Hand ‘em over and you can have your drink.”

“I don’t understand. You can’t-it can’t be possible you mean to rob me?”

“Say, lis’n!” With the stride of an infuriated animal, Inez crossed to her and stopped with her shrewish face thrust forward pugnaciously, not six inches from Priscilla’s. “I’m goin’ to have them swell duds and jools if I have to rip ‘em off your back with my own hands-and the skin off your face, too. Get me? I mean every word of it. You’re goin’ to come down to where you belong this minute, and you’re goin’ to look the part, too, or my name ain’t Inez. You’ve come the haughty over me for the last time. It’s my innin’s now, and when I’m finished with you everythin’ ‘11 be perfectly even between you and Inez, forever and ever-a-men!”

She read her answer in terrified eyes, and leered exultantly.

“Well, what about it? You goin’ to shuck them clothes, or do you want me to help you?”

With trembling, awkward fingers Priscilla began to pluck at the buttons of her blouse.

Inez retreated to the table, picked up the glass, and rattled the ice musically within it.

“Hurry, dear heart!”

Priscilla removed coat and blouse and stepped out of her skirt, then lifted her hands for the glass. Her tormentor warned her off.

“Wait-a-min-ute! You’re f orgettin’ them rings.”

Silently the girl stripped her fingers, dropping their jewels into the greedy palm. Nothing mattered, so that she earned that drink of water.

But yet once again was she put off.

“Don’t crowd me so! I might get nervous and spill somethin’.... Climb into them clothes I brought you first-and if I was you, I wouldn’t waste no time, neither. Can’t tell when Harry or someone ‘11 bump in here and catch you with nothin’ on but your pretties. And be thankful I let you keep them...”

For an instant, indeed, the woman seemed disposed to repent of that generosity, enviously eyeing Priscilla’s undergarments of lace and filmy silk. In fumbling

haste Priscilla covered them with the cheap and none too clean cotton blouse, the shoddy and ill-fashioned coat and skirt which Inez had brought her.

At long last she had her reward. At first in frantic gulps, then more slowly if with no less avidity, she drained the glass; while Inez at the bed snatched up and packed under her arm the spoils of this her first victory over her rival.

“Well, how about it, Nora? Feelin’ chirp-ier?” she enquired with magnanimity when Priscilla put down the empty glass.

“I don’t know.” Priscilla’s feet wove uncertainly toward the bed. Too late she was realising that the glass had held something more than mere water. She sat down suddenly and began again to nurse her head. “I’m ill,” she murmured faintly—“very ill.”

“Well, you got a perfect right to be, dearie, after that jolt of hop Charlie slipped you th’s evenin’. It must’ve been enough to kill a horse. I seen you when they brought you in, and believe me, I thought at first you was dead.”

“I wish I were,” Priscilla groaned. “Where am I?”

“Meanin’ to insinuate you don’t know? Ah, forget it!”

“How did I get here?”

“I guess maybe that’s somethin’ you don’t know.” Inez laughed spitefully. “And I don’t mind tellin’: Harry followed you down Fift’ avenue ‘safternoon and seen where you stopped, up in McDougall Alley. Then he got Charlie and left him to watch you while he ‘phoned for the rest of the bunch. When it got dark and everythin’ was quiet, they picked the lock, found you doin’ a Rip van Winkle that looked good for twenty year, give you a shot of the hop to make sure you wouldn’t wake up at the wrong time, and brought you down here in a taxi. That’s your history up to date. Cheer up: the worst is yet to come. And when it comes—grab this from me—innocent li’l Inez is goin’ to have a ringside seat.”

“I don’t understand...”

The words were barely audible; but the termagant heard. Her sneer darkened.

“Well, if you gotta know: the bunch’s outside makin’ up their minds what to do

with you. I haven't got no idear what they'll fine'ly settle on, but it'll be plenty, whatever it is. If it was anybody else I'd feel sorry for them; but you !”

Her laugh was harsh and jeering. For sole response the cringing figure on the bed suddenly sank in upon itself, then over upon one side, where it lay sprawling, inert, whites of eyes showing under half closed lids.

Startled, the woman bent over Priscilla. But her breathing went on monotonously. She had merely fainted.

HI. THE TRAP

The blinding prismatic glare that filled all space dwindled slowly to a hand's-breadth of particoloured flame, its thunderous roar to a sustained snore: overhead the stertorous gas-jet by fits and starts hissed and spat angrily.

She had no means of knowing how long it had been burning; that is to say, how long she had been insensible; but it was long enough, at all events, for the atmosphere of that stuffy hole to have grown sickening with heat and its aggravation of the native stench.

Her mouth and throat once more were parched. The drink brought her by Inez had served only to render her thirst more intense: a matter of spiteful calculation, in all likelihood : even though diluted, alcohol in any form is no quencher of thirst, rather the contrary. Inez had not, however, reckoned with its stimulating properties: Priscilla was no less unhappy in body and mind, on recovering from her swoon, but she felt stronger, better able to think and to work out thought in action.

At present, however, two considerations dominated all others: her need of water; the necessity somehow to escape from that place of terror and abomination.

She got up, unsteadily enough, padded to the door, and listened there with an ear to the joint between door and jamb.

Hearing what she believed to be a rumour of distant voices, nothing else, she laid hold of the knob and turned it cautiously. A thrill shot through her heart when the door opened: Whether by design or inadvertence, Inez had neglected to lock it!

A peering reconnaissance showed nothing but gloom immediately beyond the

door. Trembling, the girl opened it wide. The light from the gas-jet then revealed a length of malodorous hallway, broken by two more doors, both closed. At its far end it turned off at a right angle. What lay beyond was unguessable: there was no light.

The air of the hallway was heady with that subtle, sickly sweet smell, alluring and appalling... the breath of death.... She had smelt it before, somewhere, at some time indefinite.... At length she knew it: the reek of opium smoke in the den of Sing Ho, to which she-or Leonora-had gone that night (so long ago!) to meet Charlie the Coke.

So that was where they had brought her...

The quiet of the house seemed to gain sinister accent from a muted rumble of discussion that went on and endlessly on, evidently behind one of the two other doors.

She advanced one unshod, timid foot across the threshold, faltered, took another step and closed the door behind her, shutting herself out into untempered darkness, and stole fearfully on, feeling her way with hands that brushed the walls.

The attempt was hazardous. In her heart she believed it fated to fail. But perhaps she was wrong: she might succeed... If not, no penalty conceivable could be more awful than the lot that might be hers if she did nothing, but supinely waited...

Under her tread, light and furtive though it was, the flooring, poorly laid and sticky with the accumulated grime of years, creaked loud alarms. At almost every other step she was fain to halt and wait, listening, heart in mouth, her breathing stayed.

She drew near to the farther door. The voices became more definite. Seemingly several persons were closeted in that room, all talking at once, in discordant dissension. Now and again one voice or another would momentarily assert itself; but immediately the others would turn on it as one and cry it down; and once it was disciplined and taught its place, the controversy would proceed as before.

The notion came to her, was entertained and established as an idea fixed, that if she could only win past that door, the rest would be easy, an unhindered way of

escape would open out to her....

She was within two paces of success when an especially violent wrangle ended in the harsh rasping of chair-legs on a bare, rough floor; and in a sudden lull heavy heels thumped toward the door. The girl shrank back, instinctively flattening herself to the wall to one side of the door. This last was thrown open, letting¹ out a flood of gaslight and a choking gust of air heavy laden with tobacco smoke. A man came out, turning toward Priscilla's recent prison. Blinded by the transition from light to darkness, he stopped and, cursing, put out a hand toward the wall. It touched Priscilla's shoulder. She winced with a stifled cry of fright. Instantly the hand closed cruelly on, her shoulder; its owner uttered an exclamation of mingled wrath and satisfaction, and with one ruffianly swing sent her staggering into the room.

Somehow she escaped a tumble, righted herself, stood cringing, blinking, trembling.

The door closed with a bang. The accents of the Nut, destitute for the time of all pretensions to polish, announced:

"Here she is now! Caught her just in time -tryin' to do a sneak. Who left the door unlocked on her? You, Inez?"

Coolly the voice of Inez replied: "Maybe I did-don't remember."

"Damn' careless of you—"

"Ah, shut up. What difference does it make? She didn't get away, did she? She couldn't, not in a thousand years, without we let her."

Priscilla began to get her bearings, finding herself in that sordid room where she had witnessed the meeting of Leonora and Inez, beside the insentient body of the drug fiend, on the night of the storm. But its bunks now were tenantless, the meagre mattresses which had cluttered its floor were heaped in a corner, a large plain table occupied the middle of the room, beneath a sizzling gasolier of four jets. Upon the table were bottles and glasses, plates dedicated to fragments of sandwiches and cigarette butts, an open box or two of cigarettes, one of cheap cigars; round it a number of persons were grouped at random, sitting in common chairs.

Priscilla reviewed face after face known to her through the associations of her dreams: English Addie, heavy, florid and flashy; Charlie the Coke, ghastly of face, shifty-eyed, with his frail, racked body and spasmodic gestures; Inez with elbows planted on the table, a sullen face clamped between two fists; at her side, the Nut, to whose presence nothing of his uptown elegance adhered but the handiwork of his excellent tailor, labouring under the burden of anew part, self-assumed, his bottle-neck shoulders wearing with poor grace the mantle of Red Carnehan, master of gunmen; three or four others, remembered as lesser limbs of Red's gang....

The company sat in silence, staring at Nora with unfriendly, inquisitive eyes. Standing before them, like an accused facing a jury of peers in whose judgment her guilt was already established, her punishment already decreed, she was sensible of an oddly reminiscent feeling: all this, she felt, was but the playing of a scene already familiar through rehearsal; an effect directly tracing back to that night at Ristori's, when Leonora had come belatedly to the feast.

Precisely so had Leonora on that occasion faced a prejudiced jury of her kind. Only the setting was slightly different, the company decimated, its presiding spirit gone beyond recall....

The pause lasted longer than the patience of Inez. She sat up suddenly and waved an extravagant arm, mimicking the manner of ballyhoo before a circus sideshow.

"Ladeez *and* gempmun!" she proclaimed in a flat professional bawl: "I have the honour to present to you t'night the only certified Two-in-One in captivity: *Miss* Priscilla Maine, the latest fashion hint from Fift' avenoo, and *plain* Nora O'More of this Club. Take a good look, ladeez *and* gempmun, at this peerless freak, the only livin' Two of a Kind. A single price of admission pays for both-one dime, the tenth part of a dollar-and your money back if y'aint sat'sfied!"

IV. RESURRECTION

Somebody chuckled hoarsely. Chairs were shifted. Asides were exchanged in audible murmurs. A contemptuous voice declared loudly: "It's Nora, all right, all right!" The Nut bent his mouth to mumble into the ear of Inez something apparently in the nature of a remonstrance. She heard him with a surly face, growled a response which seemed to irritate him exceedingly, and turned

scornfully away. English Addie alone changed neither her pose nor the moderately dubious expression with which she was regarding Priscilla.

The latter, drawing upon an unexpected store of latent spirit, moved forward to the edge of the table.

“My name *is* Priscilla Maine,” she uttered with difficulty. “I-I—”

“My Gawd!” Inez commented dramatically—“she admits it!”

“Please!” Priscilla pleaded—“I can hardly speak-give me something to drink-water.”

English Addie sat forward sharply and squirted siphon water into a glass. “A drop of brandy, dearie?” she suggested in a tone not unkind. Priscilla shook her head. “You’d better,” the woman insisted; “you need it.” She tilted a bottle over the glass, colouring the water with the liquor. Despairing of getting what she wanted, too thirsty to permit of long hesitation, Priscilla put the glass to her lips and drank.

“Everybody sit tight,” Inez warned: “the big bunk act is about to commence.”

Priscilla lowered the glass, nodded her thanks to the Englishwoman, and with something remotely resembling defiance again confronted her captors.

“I am Priscilla Maine,” she stated for the second time. “What do you want with me?”

The Nut tipped his chair back and eyed her quizzically. “An even break,” he replied.

“And no more shenanigan,” Inez supplemented.

Priscilla looked blank. “I don’t understand...”

“Ah-cut out the stallin’!” Inez flared. “I’m gettin’ sick of your airs and everythin’!”

“I don’t understand,” Priscilla repeated patiently, ignoring the interruption. “I’m not the woman you believe me to be.” She addressed herself directly to Harry: “I

told you that this afternoon. If you had made the enquiries I asked you to, you could have satisfied yourself I was telling the truth. As it is, you have done this thing-kidnapped me-laid yourselves open to the law—”

“We’ll take our chances with the law,” Inez put in, sardonic. “But don’t mind me: you int’rust us strangely. Go on, go on.”

“But even if I were Leonora-assume that I am-what do you want with me?”

“An even break,” Harry iterated—“fair play and no more stalling.”

“Please explain what you mean-and let me go.”

“Fat chance,” Inez commented.

“I am ill, unfit to stand on my feet or talk to you-but if you will only let me go, I promise to keep this outrage to myself. The Police need never know if ”

“You can go, *maybe*,” Harry responded- “when we’ve come to an understanding and you’ve satisfied us you’ll act in good faith and not try any more foolishness.”

“Won’t you please explain?”

“Ah! you know perfectly well !” Inez began.

With a sharp explosion of temper Harry silenced her. “Be quiet! If you want us to get anywhere with this talk-keep quiet. If you go on like this, you’ll only make her stubborn.”

“That’s right,” English Addie advised. “Give Nora a chance, dearie.”

Inez meditated mutiny, thought better of it, subsided into a fit of sulks.

“I’m sure it’s simple enough,” Harry proceeded loftily, with something of the condescension of one humouring a wilful child- “I’m sure you understand what we want, Nora; but if you insist I’ll try to put it in words of one syllable.... We’re all old pals of yours, and we feel we’ve got a right to be let in on the ground floor when you’ve struck it rich like you have. We want a chance to work in with you and cop out something for ourselves. You’ve got the inside track

now-God knows how you worked it, but you did-you've got it, you can go where you want and do about as you please with the Ritz mob. And that makes it simple for you to open things up for us. You know what we can do, each one of us; you can easy slip us a tip now and then and leave the rest to us. You needn't be afraid of us givin' the show away as long as you keep us happy and all like that. All I ask for myself, for instance, is a few introductions: I'll take care of the rest."

"I think you must be mad!" Priscilla's head was swimming again; she was clutching the edge of the table with both hands in order to keep her feet. "Was it to tell me this that you-you?"

"Precisely," Harry assented with an amiable nod.

For an instant she was dumb perforce. Then the vertigo beginning to pass, and with it the fear of fainting again; she found fresh confidence and was visited by an inspiration of cunning.

"If I refuse?"

"You'll get twenty-four hours to think it over," the Nut replied. "If by that time you're still stubborn..."

"Yes?"

"It'll be very unpleasant for you, Nora, ve-ry unpleasant indeed."

"And if I agree? "

"We'll put our heads together and scheme out a working arrangement."

"But, I'm too ill tonight..."

A gleam dawned in the ugly little eyes of the Nut.

"That sounds like you mean to come down to earth."

Priscilla inclined her head: "I will do what you wish—"

"Sensible young woman!"

“But I’m unable to discuss details tonight.”

“You can go back and lie down till you feel stronger.”

“No. I can’t stay here. You must let me go home.”

Inez laughed aloud.

“Hardly, my dear,” Harry said. “You won’t get another chance to give me the slip until the cases are all framed, and I’m satisfied you won’t dare try it again.”

“You’ll have to take my word sometime-now or later.”

“Sorry-no can do.”

English Addie interposed: “But we all know Leonora never went back on her word.”

“Never,” Priscilla affirmed; and had wit enough to refrain from throwing a look of gratitude to this new-found ally.

“That’s right.” Charlie the Coke was speaking. “Nora’s always been on the square. ‘Sides, the way I look on it’s like this: It’s a deadlock; each of you’s got to trust the other j♦

“Ah, for Gawd’s sakel” Inez protested in disgust. “You make me weary. If you think you can trust that double-faced cat any further’n you can see her !”

“I don’t ask you to trust me,” Priscilla explained—“only to give me time to rest in quiet and comfort-not here-before we go into our plans. And you need not trust me: I’m willing that one of you shall come with me and see that I play fair. You can trust Addie...”

“That’s perfectly fair,” the Englishwoman insisted. “I’ll go with Nora, and you know me well enough to know she won’t lift ‘er ‘and without me seein’ it.”

“All right,” the Nut conceded. “Take Ad-die home with you and give me your word you’ll be ready to see me at eleven tomorrow—”

Inez flounced to her feet in a rage. “You pack of poor boobs!” she shrilled.

“Can’t you see she’s only framin’ to slip you the double cross-and you all helpin her!”

“One thing more,” Priscilla insisted, as if she had not heard: “I must have my things back-my suit, my blouse, my jewelry.”

“Hello!” Harry sat forward, eyeing her sharply. “Thought you looked different. What’s become of your clothes?”

Priscilla’s nod indicated Inez. “She stole them from me. Make her give them back.”

The Nut turned to Inez, scowling blackly. “If that’s true—”

“It’s true, right enough,” Inez challenged him pertly.

“Give them back—”

“Yes, I will-_not._ I got a bromide enlargement of me bein’ such a simp.”

“You’ll do as I say,” Harry insisted darkly. “I’m runnin’ this show—”

“You are-like hell!”

The girl’s defiance found an echo in a new voice at the back of the room.

“Like hell is right!”

There was a concerted turning of startled heads.

The door had opened noiselessly. It framed the figure of a man wearing a greasy red sweater hiked up at either hip to permit his hands to remain in the pockets of a pair of tattered, frayed and stained khaki trousers. His pose was rudely nonchalant. A cap of grey cloth pulled well forward shadowed his eyes; but the face stamped with an evil, mirthless grin, was unmistakable.

After a moment’s relish of the dramatic sensation effected by his unheralded resurrection, Red Carnehan slouched in, closed the door with a kick of his heel, and put his shoulders to it.

“It’ll take a smarter guy’n you are or ever will be, Harry,” he asserted in a

blurred voice of arrogance, “to boss this bunch as long’s I’m on top of the map.”

V. THE HAUNTED MAN

Stupefied silence held till shattered by a laugh of uncouth joy.

“Red!” Inez cried, jumping up and overturning her chair. “Red Carnehan! My Gawd, Red, you’ve come back!”

“I’ll say I have.”

Grinning, the gunman slouched toward the table.

Unanimous impulse brought his sycophants to their feet and made their astonishment extravagantly vocal-and largely profane. They crowded about Carnehan, shaking his hands, slapping his back, screaming and bellowing a hundred phrases of congratulation, delight, and amazement, together with questions innumerable. He suffered the ovation, laughing, greeting each by name, yielding his hands to one after another.

Elbowed and shouldered aside and forgotten, Priscilla had opportunity to remark evidences of an advanced stage of alcoholism in the man, in his uncertain feet and aimless exaggeration of gesture, in the thickness of his tongue and the abnormal glitter of his eyes, in his twitching features and the congestion of blood that darkened his face. He had been drinking not only heavily but long and steadily.

If further evidence of that were wanting, Carnehan supplied it with a sharp, unprovoked spasm of irritation. Without warning he began to strike down the fawning hands and thrust his way through the group toward the table.

“Lay off me!” he snarled. “Lay off-gimme air! I’ll bean the next guy what puts his hands onto me! Lay off!”

“But Red!” Addie protested—“we thought you was dead!”

“You wasn’t far wrong, at that.” Carnehan seized the brandy bottle and chattered its neck against a glass into which he spilled the raw spirit lavishly. “I might’s well ‘ve been, where I was.”

“Where was you, then?” Inez demanded.

“Layin’ up in a garage run by a friend’r mine, over’n Jersey, up near the State line-deadest jay dump in the world, if y’ ask me.” Still holding the bottle by the neck, he raised the glass, half filled with undiluted brandy. “Well-happy days !”

The drink at his lips, his gaze, roving above the brim, discovered and was transfixed by the pale, set face of Priscilla. He started violently. As if an invisible but mighty hand had struck him a crashing blow, he staggered back, lost his footing, brought up heavily against the table. Bottle and glass, escaping his palsied grasp, crashed to the floor. In a fluttering breath the blood drained from his face, and left it livid, leaden and blue. His widened eyes were fixed in horror.

“What’s ‘at?” Broken words brushed his stiff lips. “What’s ‘at?” He lifted a shaking arm and singled out Priscilla. His voice became a scream: “Name of Gawd! somebody tell me-what’s ‘at there?”

The Nut dropped a soothing hand upon his shoulder.

“Why, Red-it’s Nora!”

“Nora?” the gunman chattered. “*I know* it’s Nora! But what’s it doin’ here?”

“But, Red!”—in alarm English Addie ranged up on his other side and laid hold of his arm—“why shouldn’t Nora be here?”

“Why?” He glared madly at the woman. “Why, ‘cause she’s dead.”

“But, Red !”

“Dead, I tell you! I guess I oughta know. Didn’t I croak her meself, up there in the woods, yest’day aft’noon!” He seemed to realise what he had said and tried to cover it with hysterical protest. “No: that’s a lie! Whosaid I croaked her? I never, she done it herself, it was all a accident! I tell you I didn’t have nothin’ to do with it-her foot slipped and she went over the edge before I could catch her, and I seen her drown! I couldn’t help her, I don’t know how to swim, I’d ‘ve pulled her out if I had! It wasn’t my fault-I swear to Gawd it was all a accident!”

“But, Red you’re off your nut!” Addie reasoned. “Nora couldn’t be dead and here at the same time—”

“She *is* dead! Didn’t I see her drown me-self? Gawd! I ain’t seen nothin’ since but her face when she went under, I ain’t heard nothin’ but her voice beggin’ me not to...”

He stammered into incoherence, his chin sank upon his breast, he glared at Priscilla with the look of a lunatic. Abruptly he roused, wild of eye, features working insanely, and threw off the hands of Addie and the Nut.

“Lemme loose!” he screamed. “Lemme loose! I croaked her once, but if once ain’t enough, I’ll croak her again and make it sure, the—”

Epithets unspeakably vile fell like toads from his slavering mouth. He tugged at a pocket of his trousers-and suddenly an automatic pistol was wavering in his hand. With a choking cry, Priscilla cowered, throwing both hands out to shield her face. The Nut and Addie fell upon Carnehan bodily. For a moment it seemed that they might be able to hold him. But he fought with the strength of a maniac. The hold of the Englishwoman was broken first, she was thrown off shrieking for help. The Nut clung desperately to Carnehan’s pistol hand, striving to wrest the weapon from him. Then others closed in, Carnehan. became the core of a swaying, writhing tangle of bodies.

It was, Priscilla thought, like looking through a peep-hole into hell. They fought like wild beasts in a pit, like beasts they growled, yelped, snarled, snapped, howled, roared. A haze of dust, beaten up from the unswept floor by scuffling, shifting, stamping feet, hung in the gaslight.

The pistol exploded with a detonation ear-splitting in that confined space.

Priscilla, witless with fright, felt herself seized and urged toward the door.

“Beat it, child-get out of this as quick’s you can! I seen from the very first you wasn’t; Nora!”

“He knelt and pressed his lips to Priscilla’s, to her forehead, her leaden eyes, her languid hands. ‘Dear heart of mine,’ he murmured-‘dear wife,’—”

She recognised the accent of English Addie.

In one lithe bound, a crouching shape of malice with a pale face of evil and blazing eyes planted itself before them and blocked the way. “Keep away from

that door!” Inez screeched. “She shan’t get away, she shan’t! I’ll rip her eyes out first!”

She darted clawing hands at Priscilla’s face. The bulk of the Englishwoman came between them. In panic Priscilla pawed frantically at the door, swung it wide, stumbled out, blundered blindly into the wall where the hallway turned, cannoned off, and somehow found herself before a second door.

An aged Chinaman was guarding it. Dully she remembered having seen him before and wondered would he seek to hinder her. But he seemed unaware of her. He was eyeing impassively the door, which, she discovered, was quivering under a rain of blows on the other side.

Grasping instinctively at the truth, she thrust the guardian unceremoniously aside and began to fumble with the bolts.

Without protest, the Chinaman turned and shuffled off.

The storm of blows continued. The bolts were reluctant to her shaking, uninstructed fingers. At length, however, the last slid back, she lifted the stout iron latch, the door slammed open.

Three uniformed policemen, armed with pistols and nightsticks, charged in. Seeing the girl, one seized and threw her roughly back against the wall. She gave a cry of pain. A voice she knew protested sharply:

“Let that lady go, officer. She is my wife.”

Priscilla turned. Mario was offering her the haven of his arms. She went into them sobbing his name aloud. Other police officers passed them, running.

As readily as though she had been a child, Mario gathered her up and strode down the stairs. Arms round his neck, she clung closely to him. His breath was on her cheek, she was aware of his strength and gentleness. Nestling against his bosom, she was sensible of the unhurried, powerful pulsations of his heart...

VI. EESCUE

The reminiscent feeling was now more than ever strong, more insistent. The old saw failed: for once history was retelling a familiar chapter. All that she was

apprehending, emotionally or through sensory perception, was mere repetition-all this she had known before.

Precisely as now had Mario carried her down the stairs of the burning tenement. The same raucous babbling had saluted their escape, the same surging rabble disputed their passage. Once more Mario lifted her into a waiting motor-car, shut the door and, as the driver jockeyed a way through the mob, gathered her tenderly into his arms.

Or was it Leonora to whom these things had one time happened and now were happening again?

Was this too a dream?

Reality was something as slippery and evasive as a greased tumbler, the effort to recapture and hold fast to it too fatiguing: if this were but a dream, in those arms, to dream was sweet.

Without one regret she resigned herself to the dominion of the dream; and ability to discriminate between illusion and actuality lapsed into unlamented abeyance. So with sense of personality; there was confusion, but it was of no consequence; whether Leonora or Priscilla, she was safe with her beloved, and at rest.

In such security instinct for self-preservation lost purpose and languished; the necessity for self-assertion was no more, which had sustained her powers against the drag upon them of narcotic poisoning added to sheer physical exhaustion; consciousness faded into a phase of half waking lethargy, in which she was by turns aware and unaware; and the fiction of a dream was maintained by impressions of changing scenes unrelated save through the constant progress of the car.

Streets mean and grim dissolved as by magic into a jewelled perspective of Fifth avenue, bare and still. Darkness closed down and lifted like a curtain to disclose vistas of black water veined with rippling lights. These in turn were blotted out.... Veils of shadow thinned, revealing the purple glimmer of an open starlight night and the white lance of the headlights shearing a lane through dim and silent fields.... Hours later (or perhaps years-or minutes) the car was roaring upgrade on a forest road like a tunnel, roofed and walled with leaves whose silhouettes in the swinging headlight glare had the look of patterns cut from cardboard and painted an earthly green.... Then in the ghostly erepuscle of early

dawn their way wound through wilderness hills that reared desolate heads to a wan, cold sky.... And the world was aflame with the red blaze of sunrise when she was lifted up, borne across a veranda, through a living room to a bedchamber, and there put down upon a bed.

Mario, standing over her, had a face worn and grey with weariness. Nearby a maid waited, a comely creature of middle age whose countenance of kindly cast was blurred with the stupidity of slumbers untimely broken.

The man instructed this one in a flat, dull voice:

“You will undress madame, please, and put her to bed. She will sleep late, I think; she has had a terrible adventure and is quite worn out; but should she awaken before I do, tell Hamanaka to call me instantly.”

He knelt and pressed his lips to Priscilla’s, to her forehead, her leaden eyelids, her languid hands.

“Dear heart of mine,” he murmured... “dear wife...”

He rose. Like one walking in sleep he left the room.

THE DAY OF RECKONING

I. THE BUNGALOW

ON entering the living room she heard a clock strike. Immediately she paused, counting.

Eight chimes died singing in the scented evening hush; but she did not stir, her pose remained that of one arrested sharply in some act of charming stealth, so delicately poised in apprehensiveness she seemed scarcely to touch the floor. The sensitive slender fingers of one hand brushed with their tips the polished top of a small mahogany console table. Half closed, the other rested upon a froth of lace covering a bosom whose agitation, together with the quick, curious glances of dark eyes, alone belied the pale composure of her countenance.

The room was quiet, dim with shadows, but for herself untenanted.

Neither could she see anybody on the veranda that was visible through a wide doorway and low, broad windows.

A slight sound drew her attention the other way. She discovered a dining room beyond the living room. Soft-footed, a Japanese boy in white linen appeared, carrying two candelabra of three branches each, and vanished after placing them upon the round dining table, where their rich light fell softly on lustrous napery, burnished silver, an iridescent bowl of cut glass filled with burning roses.

She remarked that there were places set for two.

Her regard reverted to the living room. She thought it delightful in every detail of its unpretentious luxury. Riches alone could never have created it. The wood fire ready laid in the fieldstone fireplace would presently be grateful: already there was a hint of chill in the aromatic, rare air of the hills.

She moved aimlessly to the middle of the room and paused again. A long breath sighed on her lips. As she turned uneasily toward the veranda a duplication of the gesture made her aware of a mirror on the wall opposite. She inspected herself gravely.

Vitality of youth had reacted normally during her long sleep. She carried never a sign of those ordeals which she had undergone in the last forty-eight hours. The simple frock which the maid had fetched her unbidden fitted and became her to admiration. Never, indeed, had she looked more lovely. This was not her thought, though her little nod betokened satisfaction. Nevertheless her eyes betrayed still a mind troubled and oppressed.

She had waked up without a shadow of doubt upon her understanding, she recalled without a break every link in the chain of events which had brought her to this place, she was acutely conscious of her anomalous position in this household, profoundly disturbed. But she had said nothing to the maid whom she had found watching by her bedside; and the latter, discreet, well-trained, and obviously unsuspecting, had not ventured a single question-had, indeed, betrayed the curiosity which must have been gnawing her very vitals by nothing more than a simple expression of her happiness to see “madame” safely “at home” again....

A remote droning noise crept into the stillness of the evening so gradually that she noted it without any astonishment; but when, gaining in volume, it became recognisable as the sustained growl of a motor-car rapidly climbing the mountain road, she began to tremble.

The car swept swiftly across the far side of the clearing, swung into the drive that led to the garage, and disappeared. The throbbing of its motor was stilled. Impatient footsteps sounded on the gravel walk.

Her body was vibrating now like a reed. Almost the impulse was more strong than her will, to fly back to her bedchamber, lock herself in, refuse to see or speak to him....

How could she face him and tell him the truth? How break his heart? And not his alone...

Running up the steps to the veranda, he saw her waiting in the shadows and cried out to her in the name of Leonora. She could not reply. Mental rehearsal of what her attitude at this meeting should be proved valueless. She had meant to guard against his arms with a decision, an authority, which must command respect and win her time enough to tell him; she was captive and powerless before she could lift a hand or articulate one syllable of protest. The passion of his kisses, the

murmuring of his voice, were overpowering. The quickened tumult of her pulses was like the storming of a strong surf. She loved him....

Stunned, breathless, quivering, humiliated, she found that she had somehow contrived to put him from her. The pained perplexity in his gaze cut like a knife. She turned aside, that she might not see...

He protested: "Leonora! What is it? What have I done? You are trembling-weeping! Have I hurt you-offended?"

"No," she sobbed—"no, *nol*"

"Then why?"

"Please-give me time, Mario—"

"Forgive me," he begged. "I have been inconsiderate, thoughtless, in the joy of having you restored to me! Forgive—"

"There is nothing to forgive," she interrupted. "You've done nothing that wasn't right and natural. Only... Oh! how can I make you understand?"

He gave a helpless gesture. "Tell me what you wish me to understand: I will try. I love you so..."

Touched, she sought to smile kindly through her tears. "Give me a moment," she pleaded, tremulous hands busy with the disarray of her hair—"give me a little time, Mario—"

The mellow booming of a tubular gong sounded. Mario turned impatiently. Bowing and smiling, the Japanese boy stood in the entrance to the dining room.

"Dinner is served."

By a resolute effort she succeeded in composing face and manner. Mario maintained an enquiring attitude, deferential, puzzled, hurt. Somehow she mustered a smile that only mystified him the more.

"Do something for me, Mario..."

“You know you need but ask.”

“Let us have dinner. I think-I’m sure I’m hungry. And let us not talk during dinner, let’s pretend nothing has happened. Afterwards, I promise you...”

“But it shall be as you wish-of course!”

II. THE IMPOSSIBLE

She thought: never was there a meal more difficult, consumed under stranger circumstances in an atmosphere of greater constraint, never had two people broken bread together having more to say to each other and leaving more unsaid.

For her own part, she approached the table choking with emotion, thoroughly persuaded she would be unable to eat a single mouthful. She was no sooner seated than aware that she was famished-and the romantic sentiments appropriate to the situation incontinently went by the board, she ate like the hungry and healthy young woman she was.

Nothing surprising about that: she had eaten little breakfast yesterday, no luncheon, whatever; so that the tray of fruit, toast and tea which the maid had brought to her room while Priscilla was in her bath broke an actual fast of thirty-six hours’ duration and served rather to whet than to blunt a lively appetite.

Furthermore the dinner, perfectly composed, cooked and served by the Japanese boy, was irresistible.

Opposite her, Mario barely tasted the dishes set before him. The careworn eyes in that dark, ascetic face watched her constantly if covertly. If she looked up from her plate, he dissembled studiously, his smile flashed eagerly. She was none the less conscious of his* anxious expression when she was not looking’ -aware and distressed.

Conversation under such conditions was a sort of stilted farce, fitful, inconsecutive, inconsequential. Mario did his best to seem at ease and be amusing, but his silences were abrupt, frequent, and long, and his observations, deriving from matters with which Leonora may have been acquainted, now fell on uninstructed ears. Priscilla’s undisguisable bewilderment at some of his references was to him bewildering. Naturally enough, he couldn’t understand...

Nor was it altogether possible to avoid the topic uppermost in both minds.

“You slept well?” he inquired.

She smiled: “Famously!”

“I am glad. You show the benefit. I think you are even more beautiful than you were, more pale, perhaps, but-how does one say it? -spirituelle. But it may be I am not a fair judge; tonight I am so happy, I see all things couleur de rose.”

His lean brown hand stole across the cloth to cover hers for a moment. “And you-are you not glad, dear, to be home with me once more?”

She said, with difficulty, in a low voice, looking down at her plate:

“I am glad to be with you, Mario.”

It was true: in spite of everything, she was strangely glad. But it was wrong of her to say so....

“I myself slept till noon,” he volunteered. “Then I waited and waited and waited for you to wake up, but you were sleeping like a child, you never stirred; one had not the heart to disturb you. Then, when it got so late, and I could no longer put off going down into the valley, I gave Martha instructions not to leave your bedside till I returned or you awakened.”

She wondered: “Why?”

“I was afraid, I dared not leave anything to chance. One could not foretell in what condition you would wake up. If anything had happened... I think another disappearance would have driven me insane!”

She avoided his eyes, and asked, rather mechanically, more to say something than out of desire to know:

“Why did you have to go down into the valley?”

“To telegraph New York and call off the detectives I had employed to look for you. Also to tell the villagers you were safely found, and thank them. They were most kind, those good people; fully half a hundred of them stayed up all night

with me, while we searched the woods; and though many had not had a wink of sleep, they were still searching yesterday afternoon when I despaired and determined to seek you in New York.”

Thus reminded of the sad futility of that search, she was too deeply disturbed to wonder why he could not have telephoned to the village....

The Japanese served their coffee in the living room. It was now quite dark, and the air though sweet was keen. The fire was burning but the windows and door were not closed; and the faintly acrid smell of wood smoke blended pleasantly with the pungent perfume of the pines.

Mario placed an easy chair for Priscilla, made it easier with cushions for her back and head, offered her cigarettes-and showed surprise when she refused them-lighted one for himself and threw it away half smoked, and knelt down beside her chair, resting his elbows on its arm and capturing one of her hands.

She tried to steel herself against the weakness of the flesh, the protests of her affections, the enervation of her sympathies, reminding herself she must be cruel to be kind. But it was terribly hard to hurt him as she must. It wasn't as if she didn't care... The mere contact of his hand thrilled her heart to a faster tempo, quickening breath and pulses, affected all her being with tremors of fear and gladness, made her infirm and weak of purpose. She had for him only a pathetic apology for a smile, a forlorn little shake of her head.

A deeper concern shadowed his face. He asked tenderly: “What is it, dear? You must tell me...”

“It's going to be so hard,” she said reluctantly, “to say what I must, I can't think how to begin, except in the bluntest way.”

“Is not that always the better way?”

“I don't want to hurt you...”

“Do not be afraid. Tell me frankly how I have failed you, in what respect I have fallen short—”

“But you haven't!”

“Then what it was I did to make you run away from me.”

“I’m sure you could have done nothing

“Still, you ran away!”

“No—I didn’t.”

He remonstrated sharply: “Leonora!”

“I’m not,” she declared desperately—“I’m not Leonora.”

“What!”

“I am not your wife, Mario.”

“One moment...” Clouded with doubt, his eyes challenged the candour of hers but found it flawless. At a loss—“What are you saying?” he muttered.

“The truth,” she affirmed. “Oh, I’m sorry, Mario, so sorry—”

“But I don’t understand...”

She sat up, closing his hand within her own.

“I’m so sorry,” she iterated—“but I must tell you, I can’t avoid telling you: Leonora is dead.”

He disengaged his hand and stood up sharply.

“Leonora!”

“Is dead. She was killed day before yesterday—”

“Are you out of your mind? Or am I?”

“Please listen-don’t make it any harder than it is. Carnehan murdered Leonora while you were away, in Town. You see, he wasn’t killed in the fire, after all-he’s alive. The identification of the body as his was a mistake-or a ruse to further his escape. I saw him last night. He was in that place—”

“I know Carnehan is not dead. But what is this nonsense you are trying to tell me?”

She repeated: “He killed Leonora. He met her—”

The man gave a gesture of exasperation.

“But one of us is mad!”

“No, Mario,” she said gently—“neither of us—”

“But I see you—with my own eyes I see you sitting there, telling me this atrocious thing, that you are dead!”

“Not I, but Leonora—”

“But *you* are Leonora!”

“I tried, to begin with, to tell you I wasn’t.”

“But I see you—I tell you, I see you—”

“It’s true, I believe, I look like Leonora ❖❖

“Look like her?” He laughed shortly. “You *are* her!”

“But I am not,” she persisted patiently. “Please, Mario, please listen to me before you question my sanity.”

He was briefly silent, in a dazed stare, then made a sign of impatient deference to her wish. “Go on,” he bade her thickly.

With what calm she could, but with resolution, she sought to win credulity from him by dint of repetition: “Leonora is dead. While you were away, day before yesterday, Carnehan found her here and killed her.”

“How could that be, and the servants not know?”

“I only tell you what I know. I don’t imagine Carnehan came to the house, I think he must have waylaid her, or met her by some accident, in the woods. I think Leonora was restless and lonely, unhappy without you, and wandered away

during the afternoon, perhaps walked down the road toward evening, to meet you. If you remember, you promised to be home before dinner. And that gave Carnehan his opportunity for revenge. He trapped her and killed her-I don't know how-threw her body into a lake—”

“Enough!” Mario silenced her savagely. “It is not your sanity I question, but your good faith. How can you lie to me so abominably?”

“Ah, Mario!” she uttered sadly—“if I could only make you believe !”

“But why should you wish to? My God! what have I done, how injured you, that you should wish to break my heart!”

“I would rather mine broke, if it would save you this suffering!”

He rounded on her in a fury which subsided as he perceived anew the unimpeachable honesty of her countenance.

“Your voice is sincere,” he protested in amazement, “your look is kind... But how can I accept the testimony of my senses when I hear you lie?”

“I don't!” She got up to face him squarely, on equal terms. “I would give anything-everything!-to be spared the necessity of saying things that hurt you so —”

“Another lie,” he commented sombrely. “You do not love me.”

She was mute in fear lest she betray herself if she attempted to answer that.

“You no longer love me,” he insisted, nodding morosely. “You thought you did for a time, no doubt; but it was not so, you had deceived yourself, you wearied of my love.... Then, at the first opportunity, you ran away from me, ran back to lose yourself from me in that life from which-in my vanity, I thought -my love had saved you.”

Melancholy yielded to a ‘surge of indignation. “And when I find you there, in that vileden, in peril of your life, and rescue you and bring you back, you thank me by making up this preposterous tale, with your own tongue you tell me to my face you are dead, you attempt to deny the fact of your own existence! What am I to believe, then? That my eyes do not see you, my ears do not hear your voice,

my hands within these last few minutes have not touched your hands, of warm flesh and blood? That you are a vision, a creature of my imagination, a ghost? Ah, have done! A child would not attempt a deception so transparent.”

He turned and moved away. “No, Leonora: you ask too much of my generosity!”

“Oh, I am sorry, so sorry, Mario!”

The artlessness of that reiterated cry brought him back.

“If that is so, if you wish me to believe you are sorry-then let us have an end to this madness : admit you are my wife.”

She could only shake her head....

He brooded with a fixed and sullen gaze.

“Why,” he broke out furiously—“if you do not know me, how is it you know me so well? When, suspecting the truth-hut never how hideous it was-I followed you back to NewYork yesterday; when I tramped for hours the streets where I had met and loved and wooed you and, as I thought, won your love; when at length I caught sight of Carnehan and dogged him from bar to bar, without his knowledge, until finally he reeled into that infamous place, and I, suspecting he might have had you imprisoned there, got a detail of police from the station round the corner; when we broke in, and I found you half demented with fear, and you saw me and came running to my arms: when that happened-if you were and are not Leonora-how did you know who I was, how came you at sight to cry out my name, Mario?”

She begged his charity with clasped hands.

“If you will only listen, I can explain.”

With a curt nod he consented, turned his back to the fire, folded his arms. His eyes held a sardonic gleam.

“I am listening.”

She made impulsively to speak, but uttered never a sound. Her heart misgave her. The story she must tell, if she were to explain, was even more preposterous

than that which he was refusing to credit. It would only earn his deeper scorn. Her eyes turned blank, her face expressionless.

“I am waiting,” he prompted.

She looked away, and drooped, discouraged, despondent.

“Forgive me,” she said in a weak voice. “After all, I hardly know how to explain. I can only ask you to be kind-believe me when I tell you I’m not your wife, not Leonora.”

His eyebrows climbed. “Who, then, am I to believe you are?”

“My name is Priscilla Maine, I—”

“I know no person of that name.”

“No; we never met—”

“Still, you are well enough acquainted with me to use my Christian name at first sight of me-without even the formality of an introduction !”

She confessed sullenly: “I can’t explain. It’s impossible. But what I have told you is true: I am Priscilla Maine.”

“And you, whom I have never met-you tell me-you knew so much about me that you knew I had gone to New York, promising to return in time for dinner, leaving my wife alone with the servants; you knew she had disappeared. Perhaps you knew even her?”

Overlooking the sarcasm, she declared: “As well as I know myself.”

“At last!”—he offered her an ironic bow- “something I can believe!”

“You can convince yourself,” she suggested, “if you will get New York on Long Distance, call Murray Hill two-three-six-one, and ask for Mrs. Trowbridge.”

“Well, what then?”

“She will tell you her niece, Priscilla Maine, has been missing since last night.”

“And what, pray, will that prove?”

“You may listen while I talk with her. Her replies will prove I am Priscilla Maine.” %

He shrugged. “But you know very well there is no telephone within ten miles of this camp.”

In consternation she dropped back into her chair and sat trying to think. Would it do any good to tell him the history of her dreams? Could she herself be convinced against her will by such a story?

The answer came from Mario.

“It is useless,” he said wearily. “No: do not interrupt me. Say nothing more—”

“But I must make you understand, I must!”

“No, Leonora: I already understand too well. You do not love me; and since you have found it difficult to escape me, you invent thiscock-and-bull yarn to spare my feelings. A mistaken kindness. No matter: you make your wish clear. I am to believe you think you are not my wife. So be it: I will believe that, but I can do so only at a price.”

“Tell me what you mean.”

“If I am to believe that you believe you are not Leonora, I must believe that you are mentally deranged.” He pondered gravely: “It is possible terror and suffering have so worked upon you—”

“Mario!” she pleaded—“you can find out the truth if you’ll take me to the nearest telephone -whether it’s ten miles or fifty-now, tonight, in your motor car.”

“It is too late. These good people hereabouts go early to their beds. Shall I disturb them for no purpose other than to humour a mad freak?”

“Then let me go—”

“Alone?”

“I’m not afraid.”

“But I am afraid for you. Remember how I found you last night, in peril of your life. Shall I trust you again to run yourself into God knows what danger? You need not ask that of me, Leonora.”

“What am I to do?” she cried, wringing her hands.

“Compose yourself. Go to your room, rest quietly for tonight. In the morning, possibly, you will feel better, or possibly you will see how futile it is to try to deceive me: you will want, perhaps, to tell me the truth.”

“I have told you nothing else!”

“Then confess to the whole truth: You do not love me.”

She was dumb.

A gust of rage shook him violently. Standing over her with hot eyes in a blazing face he raised quivering arms as if tempted to strike her.

“Confess!”

“I can’t,” she said sadly.

The statement was like a slap to him, its sheer simplicity rendering it the more stupefying. He started, gaped, his arms fell then rose to seize her shoulders.

“What did you say?” he demanded, his voice breaking. “You love me?”

She nodded with swimming eyes and the quivering mouth of a child. He tried to draw her to him, but she held back.

“No, Mario-please!”

“But you have just admitted that you still love me!”

She endured his gaze with an adorable bravery.

“I have always loved you-ever since Leonora loved you-and as well.”

“Then you still insist?”

“I am not your wife, I have never seen you before tonight except—”

She stammered into silence. If it were humanly possible to render the situation more impossible than it was, she could achieve that by rounding out the phrase that had died on her lips: “except in dreams.”

“Except?”

“Please don’t ask me. I can’t tell you-not tonight. Tomorrow, perhaps. Mario: please be kind to me now, let me go.”

His hands fell away from her shoulders. “Perhaps you are right,” he said heavily. “If this goes on, I myself must go mad!”

“Then be pitiful to me, be still more kind. Take me to New York tonight, take me to my aunt, Mrs. Trowbridge—”

“What?” His tone changed again, becoming thick with resentment and suspicion. “You are at that again? Undeceive yourself: it is useless. I cannot comprehend your motive... But I forget, you are not yourself. You have not yet recovered, you need more rest. Go to your room, please. In the morning we will both be better able to continue this discussion-or you may have forgotten it, please God!”

She could not blame him, and yet...

“Do you mean this, Mario? You refuse to give me a chance to prove to you?”

“Absolutely.”

“If not tonight, won’t you promise to take me to New York tomorrow?”

“You will stay here until you come to your senses. I have a right to know the truth-and I will have it out of you if it takes a year-or a life time!”

He turned his back. She moved toward her door.

“Good night,” she said. He made no answer. She went on.

Of a sudden, with a choking cry, he overtook and crushed her to him. “Oh, my

dear one!” he cried in agony—“to think what you have suffered to bring you to this pass!”

She was able to withhold response, to rest passive in his hold.

“You love me?”

She made no answer. With a hand beneath her chin, he lifted her face to his, but her look discountenanced him, he hesitated.

“Please, Mario, not my lips-not again tonight-not till we understand each other better.”

He let her go. She found herself on the threshold of the bedchamber. She looked back. To see him standing where she had left him, his arms slack, his head fallen forward, chin to chest, crushed by his vast disconsolation-that wrung her heart.

But what must be, must...

HI. THE CAPTIVE

The key was on her side of the door: she was none the less a prisoner.

No illusions obscured her insight into Mario’s mind toward the woman whom he mistook for his wife and believed to be temporarily unbalanced through hysteria-and with such ample excuse that Priscilla would be the last to quarrel with him on the score of either misconception.

In his understanding she was his wife and his love, his whole duty was to her. And so he meant to keep her with him, a prisoner of that immense isolation, until her mind was healed and restored, until time and devotion, care, kindness and unremitting attention should give back to him, whole and sane, the wife whom he had married, the love that was his life. Toward that consummation-because his love for Leonora was something stronger, deeper, and more abiding than the facile sentiment which commonly passes current by that name-he was prepared if need be to devote all his days.

As for yielding in the matter of telephoning or taking Priscilla to Town for confirmation of the identity she claimed, for the present at least nothing was more alien to his intention. He thought her story a preposterous invention, her

demand that she be given a chance to prove it a whim whose indulgence would serve no end other than to confirm her in her morbid error and sap the ascendancy which he must maintain over her wrong-minded will if he were to help her right her reason.

Possibly, in course of time, he might be worked upon, shaken in his stand, won over; ultimately he might consent. But that would be an affair of days, possibly of weeks; whereas Priscilla had not hours to spare.

She knew, even as the door closed behind her, what she must do, and when. Her mind was made up to make good her escape before morning.

The mere suggestion was appalling. She dared not dwell long upon the difficulties it presented lest resolution weaken. To her own knowledge of her whereabouts, she was lost completely-going on Mario's information ten miles from nowhere. But there was a road: a road must lead somewhere. She was young and strong enough to walk ten miles if she must, farther at a pinch. And the occasion was extreme: she dared not let herself be deterred by any obstacle or any danger, real or fanciful.

She was too desperately in love...

She could hear Mario in the living room, pacing to and fro; she could picture to herself the man in the torment of his solicitude for her, fretted by mystification and the feeling of frustration. She imagined that her pulses throbbed in time with those unceasing, unceasing footfalls. The temptation to go out to him and comfort him was all but stronger than her instinct for self-preservation.

What did it matter whether Priscilla Maine survived or perished, so that he were not made unhappy?

After all, what did she care whether he loved her by this name or by that, so that he loved her?

Leonora was no more. Carnehan's confession had confirmed Priscilla's clairvoyant knowledge of her death. No harm would be done to any living soul if she took his love for Leonora and made it her own; Mario himself would not be wronged; for the dead could have loved him no better than the living did and would, and all his sadness would become gladness and his sufferings be assuaged.

Aware-though she denied it-of the abyss that yawned for her, she was constrained by sheer might of will to put away thoughts such as these.

She had need to remind herself there could be no enduring happiness in a love that was won by fraud....

With determination she attacked the problem: How to escape?

Her bedchamber had three windows and,aside from that which opened on the living room, two doors, of which one gave access to the bathroom, the other to Mario's room, which in turn opened on the living room again.

With infinite stealth she closed and locked that door.

Two of the windows looked out on the front of the bungalow, the third on the side. All were fitted with wire screens to be raised and lowered like ordinary glazed sashes. But the wood had swollen since their installation: she could not budge any one of them. And when she thought of cutting the wire out of the frame, she found no tool better suited to her needs than a pair of curved manicure scissors.

Her only way out, then, was through the living room. And Mario was there. She would have to be patient. If he felt as little disposed for bed as she, after her day-long sleep, she would have long to wait.

She ransacked Leonora's slender wardrobe without finding any clothing more suitable for her flight than the dress she had on. Apparently Leonora had found time to do but little shopping for herself. She had not needed many things to wear, so far from civilisation.Presumably she had meant to wait till their return to Town....

In the end Priscilla selected a long motoring coat of darkish stuff, rather heavy, but not too heavy for night in the hills. She found it not uncomfortable, indeed, when she sat down to wait beside one of the windows.

She had extinguished the candles which seemed to be the only means of illumination the bungalow boasted. The room was black, blacker far than the night that glimmered beyond the screens. A few stars were visible, not many, only enough-as the phrase runs-to make the darkness visible. In the beginning Priscilla could distinguish nothing but the stars. After some time she was able to

make out the profile of the surrounding forest, dense against the sky. It was hours before she could see more....

She sat quite still, in the lassitude of melancholy, lonely in the company of her thoughts.

There was wind astir, the night was loud with the souging of the forest. Somewhere an owl lamented at rare intervals in long-drawn, eerie ululations. Responses came from a distance, like faltering echoes. All other sounds were in the bungalow: the chiming clock tolled the laggard hours; less regularly Mario might be heard moving about, measuring the floor with restless strides, replenishing the fire, knocking out a pipe.

Once he came to the door and tapped softly, calling on Leonora by her name.

Priscilla made no sound. He was soon discouraged, and did not repeat the overture.

Toward midnight a belated moon bleached the sky and made visible the range of hills on the far side of the valley, then rose, grotesquely misshapen, remote and bleak, and climbed slowly up through racks of drifting cloud, like a hunch-backed dwarf painfully mounting a gigantic trellis. In the shifting, spectral sheen the valley was revealed in the likeness of a vast chasm steeped in shadow.

Shortly after one o'clock Mario went to his room, and for several minutes candlelight shone at the bottom of the communicating door like the minted rim of a golden coin. When it went out she heard him close the door to the living-room. Whether he had returned to the latter or had gone to bed, she could not guess. Though she crouched, listening, first at one door, then at the other, till her limbs were cramped, she heard no more sounds beyond either.

The night grew bitterly cold.

Discomfort as much as impatience at length overruled timidity and caution. Warily opening the living-room door, she found Mario seated in a chair, facing her.

IV. FLIGHT

He had placed the chair within a yard of the door. His feet, as he sat with legs

extended, ankles crossed, were almost on the threshold. She could hardly pass without stepping over them. He made no offer to move.

Indeed, he did not stir a finger. His hands were clasped before him, his head rested on the high back of the chair, his face was masked in deep shadow, the deeper for the fire directly behind him, across the room, whose ruddy dying glow furnished the only light.

It was a long minute before his measured breathing revived her courage. She sidled out noiselessly in her stockinged feet, watching him suspiciously. But the sleep that follows an emotional crisis, always profound, annulled the precautions he had taken to prevent precisely what was happening.

At the edge of the veranda she delayed long enough to take her slippers from the pockets of the motoring wrap and put them on. Then she stepped down to the soft turf and sped swiftly round the bungalow to the garage.

Its doors were open-as she already knew, for a view of the garage was commanded by the side window of Leonora's bedchamber. Cold moonlight, slanting in, picked out the blind lamps of the car and the bright work of bonnet and windshield.

With a thumping heart she slipped into the driver's seat and groped for the lighting and ignition controls on the dash. The luck seemed to be with her now; the switchboard had not been locked. The first button her fingers found loosed a slashing white beam upon the purple and tarnished silver of the night. She switched the headlights off hastily, that they might not betray her before she had acquainted herself with the starting mechanism. Mario might wake up at any moment to find himself watching an open door; she must make sure of every move in advance. Once she had started the motor, concealment would no longer be possible, everything would depend upon speed and precision.

And when all was ready she had to wait a little while before she could still the nervous agitation of her hands.

Her foot depressed the starting pedal, and in the great hush the willing drum of the motor reverberated like a long roll heralding the Trump of Doom. Simultaneously meshing the gears in first speed, Priscilla let the clutch in somewhat too suddenly. The car jumped like a startled animal and leaped out of the garage. She heard, or thought she heard, a shout from within the bungalow,

and in her haste bungled the shift to second speed, so that the gears ground and screeched infernally. Nevertheless, the car moved down to the road at a swifter, smoother pace.

In passing she saw, out of the corner of her eye, Mario run out onto the veranda, pause, then dash madly toward the car. She bore heavily on the accelerator and made the third shift smoothly enough, an instant later rounding into the road on not more than two wheels. Angry shouts in the rear told her that Mario had failed to overtake her. She had momentarily imagined him making a flying leap and climbing into the car over the folded top. But either he had miscalculated or he was an inapt student of the cinema.

The moonlight failed as the car shot out of the clearing, narrowly scraping disaster before Priscilla remembered to unleash the headlights. Then she found herself plunging down a startling grade on what was really nothing more than two parallel wheel tracks, on either side of a strip of grass, between forest walls that crowded the car so closely it could by no chance have passed another.

To a moderate store of amateurish driving ability alone she owed not one but a dozen breath-taking escapes. The road twisted and turned in a way to test the ability of a skilled hand at the wheel, in the first few miles seldom running straight for as much as two hundred yards. The grade grew by degrees less dangerous, however, the road less serpentine; there were presently stretches of almost level running. But the unbroken ranks of trees told her nothing, and she could only surmise that she had gained the valley, or was near it, from the fact that she encountered occasional up grades, some so steep as to necessitate *shifting* to a lower speed.

After a time the road forked, and perhaps two miles farther on it forked again. Being utterly ignorant of the lay of the land, but guessing that the valley was on her right, Priscilla in both instances took the right-hand track. Well beyond the second fork the car dropped swiftly down a short but steep declivity, and, before she could see her danger and apply the brakes, plunged into mud above the rims. Labouring heavily, it stopped dead. After a few convulsive heaves the engine sighed and stalled.

With the cessation of its rumble, came a noise of rushing water. Mischance had led her to a spot where the road had been half washed out by the overflow from a mountain stream. The headlights showed an unrelieved stretch of mire which

forbade the thought of trying to go on. The only thing to do was to back out -if she could-and, since it would be impossible to turn on the narrow trail, keep on backing till she regained the last fork: on the face of it no easy task, but feasible with care and patience.

Hopefully she restarted the engine and threw the reverse gears. The wheels moved with a sucking noise, at first sluggishly, then worked free and spun briskly. The car held fast where it had stopped. She shut off the ignition and got down to investigate, stepping into mud above her ankles. The sole result of her attempt to back out had been to bog down the wheels nearly to the hubs. When she herself tried to move, the mud retained her slippers. She had to climb upon the running board and fish for them with her hands.

When she had strained the motor for a few more minutes without encouragement, she gave up the hopeless struggle and cried a little into her muddied hands.

She had run at least twenty minutes at a very tolerable pace before this mishap halted her. It would take Mario, travelling afoot, at least an hour to cover the same distance. She reckoned the chances three to one against his finding her; she couldn't count on his intuition advising him that she had twice taken the wrong turning.

The unhappy alternative was hers, to remain in the car till she was found-if she ever was -or to pick her way back through the pitch-dark forest to the first fork in the road, either to wait there to be recaptured by Mario, or else to push on into the valley, or wherever the road might lead, till she came to human habitation.

Either course was dismaying in anticipation. The forest frightened her indescribably. To stop where she was meant perhaps hours of waiting-daylight was still a long time off-in the solitude and silence of the woods, encompassed by she dared not guess what perils from prowling beasts of prey.

And on this reflection, she switched the headlights off, lest their shine attract attention.

But the darkness that fell was no less dreadful. The moonlight was a mockery, a pale glimmer in the high roof of leaves. The silence was no longer silence, but teemed with strange and stealthy noises, ominous in her hearing. And on whatever hand she looked she imagined fading flashes of phosphorescent eyes,

watching, waiting.

She recalled with painful vividness the fear of the forest that had haunted Leonora on the morning of the day of her death.

Of a sudden, in blind, witless panic, she tumbled out of the car and ploughed back through the mire to the trail, only to become still more blindly a prey to imaginary terrors when she felt firm ground underfoot, and to blunder insanely on, clawed at by savage, withered hands, tripped and buffeted by malicious limbs, hounded by horrors of the imagination unspeakable....

Within two minutes she was off the trail, thrashing wildly through the undergrowth that choked the woods, hopelessly lost.

V. VALEDICTION

It was less a woman than an animated scarecrow that broke from a dense thicket and stumbled into the mountain trail in the hot blaze of mid-morning.

Her cloak was gone and her slippers as well; bare and bleeding feet and ankles showed through the remnants of what had been silk stockings. Her frock, dripping water from every fold, thanks to a recent misadventure with a brook, was an affair of shreds and tatters caked with splashes of mud and stained with green slime; one sleeve was missing entirely. The bared white arm had been cruelly scratched by thorns. The hair falling round her shoulders was a net of tangles and knots in which leaves and twigs had become entwined. Her face was disfigured with smear of mud in which tears had washed pale channels. Her eyes were red and swollen, her lips puffed, her look was stupid to the point of witlessness.

She panted and at times moaned feebly as she walked-if she could be said to walk, whose progress was a *zig-zag* thing of yaws and veers like that of a yacht under full sail in a stiff breeze with no hand at the helm.

Signs of intelligent apprehension of her surroundings were wanting. She seemed to keep to the trail-it was not a road, but a mere footway through the woods-mainly through instinct; like some automaton that must go on and on till its mechanism runs down.

In a shallow clearing to one side of the trail stood a small shanty of the crudest

kind, a crazy structure of undressed logs and rough planks weather-beaten to the shade of slatey grey. It had a door, however, and the door was closed. The girl opened it simply by falling against it. It banged against the wall and swung back into place after admitting her.

The room inside-there was but one-showed evidence of more or less recent occupation: a half-loaf of stale bread on the table, some open tins holding samples of food from which an unpleasant odour exhaled, several empty whiskey bottles and one half full, empty cigarette cartons and a vast litter of cigarette stumps. A frying pan on the sheet-iron stove held a rasher of bacon in a pool of coagulated grease. There were tumbled blankets on a rickety cot in the corner.

The girl saw none of these things; or if she saw them, they meant nothing to her. As if her strength had only sufficed to sustain her to the shelter of a roof, she dropped to the floor and lay there, panting and sobbing and quaking like a child that has been brutally punished.

Within three minutes a man came running up the trail. He was young, slender and wiry of stature, and wore an aged red sweater with a pair of khaki trousers. His face was of a glowing scarlet shade and dripped with sweat which ran down into his eyes and was at least in part the cause of the monologue of profanity which clogged his laboured breathing.

He lumbered on wearily, like one who has run a long distance, ever and anon looking back over shoulder as if he feared pursuit. His right hand held an automatic pistol of heavy calibre, ready for instant use.

At the door of the shanty he paused, shut his lips tight to still the noise of his own breathing, and listened with head bent to one side. Apparently he heard nothing. A look of fear that had clouded his eyes passed, and he grinned an evil, snarling grin as he kicked open the door and went in.

The girl had fallen on the far side of the table, where she was not immediately visible. Unsuspicious of her presence, the man closed the door and lurched to the one unglazed window, where he stopped to spy out anxiously, peering down the trail he had just travelled and listening intently.

But the girl had been roused by his entrance, and first pushing her shoulders up from the floor with her arms, presently laid hold of the edge of the table and pulled herself into a standing position. The table rocked slightly and scraped the

floor. A whiskey bottle fell on its side.

The man turned like a hunted animal, snarling, saw the woman standing there, in her torn frock, water dripping from her hair and clothing, and screamed with terror like a trapped wolf.

His arm flew up and his pistol spat five shots in less than as many seconds. He fired point blank, at a distance of not more than five feet. Yet when the fifth shot had been fired the girl was still standing, unharmed, staring blankly at him.

Then he went utterly insane with fear. One word-_"Leonora!"_-was his shrieked valediction to the world. His pistol held a sixth cartridge. He thrust the muzzle between his teeth and pulled the trigger.

As Carnehan fell, Fosdick with the detective Andrews and the man Mario broke into the shanty.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WHEN IT CAME TRUE

THE tranquillity of that late autumn afternoon was sweet with the suave sunlight whose secret Indian summer knows alone, sunlight that resembles the lingering caresses of lovers who part tenderly, reluctantly, knowing they will not meet again. Where it shone there was warmth; in the shadows the air had a tang of frosts to come.

The day was very still, so still that Priscilla could hear no sound but the unending mutter of surf breaking on the Southampton shore.

A window of her room in the rented villa looked out over the sea, that stretched away from the pale golden beach to a horizon veiled in mists of mauve: like a vast sheet of sapphi-rine silk so slightly undulant that the muted grumble of its surf seemed strange. Yet without that note of melancholy the sad loveliness of the day would have seemed incomplete, the burden of Priscilla's mood would have lacked response.

She lay on a chaise-longue, indolently watching the sea, just as she had watched it daily from her window, for hours on end, through weeks that ran into months without her heed. Upon her lap rested an open book, upon the book a hand as white as the fair margins of its pages. But it was not more colourless than her face. In her look there was a hint of resignation, of patient weariness....

She had been a long time ill, with an illness which Aunt Esther persisted in calling brain fever, though Dr. Philip Fosdick had for it a name less picturesque.

And for a longer time she had been in a state that was by courtesy termed convalescence; though if she were making any real progress toward complete recovery it was imperceptible to solicitous eyes. On the other hand, there were no signs of retrogression. She remained, in short, quite simply in suspense, as one might hold life not worth the trouble either of living or of relinquishing. The vitality of her body could not yield; neither could it prevail against the inertia of her spirit. She existed-nothing more.

In those days she was too languid to be up and about, she tired easily; reading

had lost its power to hold her interest, she did not seem to care to talk, she had not the strength if she had ever the inclination to go back to her painting. The repressed resentment that prayed on her mind she suffered without complaint. But Fosdick knew....

He knew, too, this lassitude could not endure forever, the day must dawn that would see her cure complete. Meanwhile he was assiduous in his attention, unflinching in sympathetic understanding, and so frequently a guest of the villa that seldom two days passed without seeing his car at its door. His practice must have suffered, but he would not hear of Priscilla's returning to Town, combatting the insistence of Mrs. Trowbridge (who quite reasonably held the autumn the one season of the year when New York is humanly habitable) with the reiterated, dogmatic statement that Priscilla was better off where she was. The time was not yet...

Today he was tapping at her door before Priscilla knew he was in the house. She recognised his knock and had a wan smile of welcome ready for him. Nothing in his manners suggested that the visit was to prove extraordinary as he sat down beside the chaise-longue, laid fingertips upon her pulse, and amiably recited the ritual of enquiries concerning her condition. ,

"A little weary, Philip," she told him in answer to one stereotyped question. "I began to wonder if one ever does recover from some things."

"Such as?" he smiled.

"Things you've forbidden me to talk about."

Fosdick looked thoughtful. "I don't know," he said in a speculative tone. "Perhaps I've been wrong about that; or perhaps the time has come when we may talk. In fact, I rather think it has-if you feel strong enough."

She lay regarding him for a moment through narrowed lashes, with eyes in which a light affectionate and indulgent began to glimmer.

"Meaning, I presume," she said with a quiet smile, "you've something to tell me."

"Meaning," he laughed, "just that. It was no good our talking till I had. But now..." He drew from a pocket a handful of old letters: "The solution of the

mystery,” he announced—“at last!”

“Don’t tease me, Philip.”

“I won’t, but first I must explain. Has it ever occurred to you to wonder how Andrews and I happened to be with Mario that morning, when we found you in the cabin with Carnehan?”

“I’ve wondered-yes-wondered whether it were true or not. All that time seems so unreal as I recall it, I’ve wondered often if perhaps it were nothing but another kind of dream, something I thought I lived through while I was actually in bed, delirious.”

“No; it was all true enough. But let me tell you... The afternoon you disappeared, I had spent out of Town, trying to interview an inmate of a home for the aged, up near Pawling-an old, old woman, registered on the records of the institution as Mrs. Leonora O’More.”

“Mother O’More !”

“The same. On the clue you gave me of that name Andrews traced her to the home. She refused to talk to him. She refused to talk to me. I tried bribery, but money wouldn’t tempt her. She had enough for her small needs, and took a malicious pleasure, I fancy, in watching me struggle with my temper when she wouldn’t talk. However, her very taciturnity told me she must have something to tell, and I hoped that you, posing to her as Leonora on the strength of the resemblance, might worm the secret out of her. At all events, we were on the right trail. So I hurried back to Town-and found you missing, Mrs. Trowbridge in hysterics, the lock broken on the studio door, the devil to pay all round....

“Meanwhile Andrews had run up to Kingston to hunt for Mario-on the strength of your dream in which you heard him tell Leonora he must hurry to catch his train there. When I got home, between three and four in the morning, after a night of fruitless searching for you, I found a Long Distance call from Kingston waiting for me. Andrews reported that he had located the camp which Mario had rented for his honeymoon. On the off-chance that he might have been concerned in your disappearance-I couldn’t rest, of course, and it was something to do-I jumped into my car, and arrived in Kingston about nine o’clock in the morning. Andrews had a road map, with the location of the bungalow clearly marked. We struck immediately back through the hills.

“About five miles from our destination we met Mario afoot. You know what he had to tell us. While we were talking-it took some time to make him understand you weren’t Leonora and that we had any right to butt in -Carnehan boiled up the road in a high-powered roadster, making about forty miles an hour on a stiff grade-didn’t see us, because we’d stopped just round a bend in the road, until he was almost on top of us. He got his brakes on in time to stop just short of my car, which of course was blocking the road. Andrews and Mario recognised him instantly, and he knew Mario. After as interesting a three-cornered pistol fight as I ever care to see again in the role of innocent bystander, Carnehan took cover in the woods. We pursued...

“Unquestionably Carnehan took you for the ghost of Leonora, and was convinced when he failed to hit you once in five shots at close range.”

“Yes,” Priscilla said, “the last thing before he killed himself, he shrieked her name.”

“Well,” Fosdick resumed, “you were a physical and mental wreck. I had to wait till you were strong enough to confront Mother O’More and cheat the truth out of her. Before you were out of bed, she had a paralytic stroke that put her vocal cords out of commission. She couldn’t have talked if she’d wanted to. I did everything that could be done for her, and she clung to life with amazing tenacity in one so aged; but the second stroke came yesterday, and finished her. I had made the manager of the home a personal friend. He telephoned at once, and I ran out to Pawling this morning. Among the old woman’s few effects we found these letters.”

Fosdick didn’t offer to give them to Priscilla. “I’d rather you didn’t read them yet,” he said. “They’re rather affecting letters, I’m afraid they’d upset you. Later, when you’re quite strong, sometime...”

“They were written by your father to your mother. She was Mother O’More’s niece. She met your father through posing for him. Their marriage was an affair of sudden impulse. They loved each other devotedly, but they were never, after the first few months, happy. Your mother had a strongly independent spirit. She was out of place in the society of your father’s friends, knew it, saw how she was handicapping him, and resented it bitterly. She refused absolutely to try to mould herself to his ways of life. They quarrelled hideously, I fancy. She wanted to leave him, and he wouldn’t listen to it. Remember: they were desperately in

love.

“Eventually they left New York on a forlorn hope, planning to establish themselves in some part of the country where they were not known and try to build up a life together. That was a foreordained failure. Your father was miserable away from his home and his friends. At last your mother took her fate in her hands and ran away. She took with her Leonora, leaving you to your father.”

“Leonora was my sister!”

“You were born twins, in California, several months before your mother ran away.... Your father used every possible means to try to find your mother and induce her to return to him, but she eluded him till the end; she died, it would seem, a year or so later, leaving Leonora in the care of her aunt-Mother O’More. These letters were addressed to your mother in her care. It would appear they were never answered.”

But Priscilla was no longer listening; and perceiving this, Fosdick paused.

“My sister!” the girl exclaimed after many minutes of thought—“Leonora!”

“That is the explanation of the mystery,” Fosdick affirmed. “That a strong psychic affinity exists between twins has long been a scientifically accepted fact. The records of psychic research contain many instances of telepathic and telaesthetic communication between twins. No record exists of a case so extraordinary as yours, to my knowledge; still, that is the true explanation.”

“But, Leonora... Did she know about me? I mean, did she dream of me as I dreamed of her? I wonder...”

“She did, to some extent at least. She told Mario about it. Of course, she had the advantage of you, because she knew she had a sister. But she had glimpses of your life in her dreams, now and then, and envied you, and resented your happier fortunes. So Mario says.”

“Mario-? Then you have seen him?”

“Today,” Fosdick said, smiling. “In fact, I took him with me to Pawling. We’ve grown to be great friends this summer. He’s an extraordinarily fine fellow. He

wants to see you, if you think you're strong enough for the interview today."

Priscilla got up suddenly.

"Where is he?"

"Downstairs, waiting, in the library-alone."

The girl took two impulsive steps toward the door, turned back with a radiant face, and flung out her hands to Fosdick.

"Oh, Philip, Philip!" she cried, tears of happiness in her eyes, contrition quavering in her voice.

He bowed above her hands, pressing them to his lips.

"There, dear girl!" he said, releasing them. "It's happiness enough for me to think... But you're keeping Mario waiting. Do go!"

Fosdick stood with a bended head, watching her cross the threshold to that world where dreams come true.

THE END