

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

# Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 29

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Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 East Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. *Subscription rates:* One year in the United States and possessions, Cuba, Mexico, South America, Spain, \$2.50; Canada, \$2.75; elsewhere, \$3.00. English office: Otis A. Kline, c/o John Paradise, 86 Strand, W. C. 2, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH



"Reluctantly, gingerly, he leaned across the narrow body slumbering beneath him."

# At the Time Appointed

By LORETTA BURROUGH

*The father hated his son with a vindictive hatred, all because of a childhood accident—and his hatred culminated in a ghastly jest, there in the silent tomb*

**N**OW that Nick Carruthers had the letter in his hand, it seemed amazing to him that he could have gone about the shabby business of

his daily life—getting a scanty breakfast, poring for hours over thumb-ed racing-sheets while he made his desperate guesses—with it lying all the morning

outside his door. He had heard it thump down while he was still in bed, and the *concierge* shuffle away, list slippers flopping, and not stirred, thinking, "Another damn bill!"

Even when he had finally opened his door and picked the letter up, nothing had moved in him at the black lines of the return address in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope. He had forgotten that Stevens and Brewster were his father's attorneys; looking at the blue United States stamp, he had almost forgotten that he had ever been a citizen of that land. It had been forwarded three times, following him on his ever downward passage through meaner streets to meaner rooming-houses.

Sitting now on his rumpled bed, he lighted a cigarette with unsteady fingers and reread the letter. The green bank draft for a thousand dollars was folded into his pocket, sitting snugly next to his heart.

The letter ran:

Dear Mr. Carruthers,

We regret to inform you of the death of your father on September 12th last. According to the terms of his will, everything that he possesses has been left to you.

There is, however, a rather curious circumstance connected with this. At the time of his death, he had converted all his securities, real estate, etc., into cash with which he bought precious stones—you are no doubt aware of his great interest in gems. We have no knowledge as to the disposition of this large fortune in jewels, but we have in our possession a sealed letter for you, which the will states contains information of the whereabouts of your inheritance. We will appreciate it if you will let us know when we may expect you in our office.

According to your late father's instructions, we are forwarding a bank draft for one thousand dollars.

Cordially yours,  
EVAN W. STEVENS.

Nick was stunned by his good fortune—this magical draft that would set him free from his horrible life here, and beyond that the pouring torrent of his father's millions, glittering and winking

in emeralds and rubies and many-faceted gleaming diamonds. It was incredible, it was glorious! What had happened in the old devil's heart that had permitted his hated son to inherit?

He got up from the bed and crossed to the window. Flat gray clouds hung from the muggy October sky, close to those acres of bleak dirty roofs and chimney-pots; Parisian squalor, he thought, was filthier than any other kind. Automobiles chugged and hurried; grimy people scurried through the streets.

He threw up the window and leaned out into the fetid air. "Good-bye!" he shouted to the oblivious heads below, then came back into the room.

He must get some clothes first, so that he should not look too much like a tramp on the boat going over. And then pay his bills and buy his passage—he was dazed by remembering how brightly the sun shone on the Atlantic, and how clean and free was ocean air.

Whistling a little, he began to tidy up the room; his thousand-dollar draft had given him the respectable instincts of a clean man again, not a bum. So Father was paying him back at last for his horrible childhood and wretched youth! Roger Carruthers must have got religion on his death bed.

His face shadowed, Nick began to get into his one half-way decent suit. All that hate and savage cruelty because of a child's innocent terrible accident! He had been six years old when it happened, too young to know what he was doing. He had been playing alone in the library. A rainy day; he remembered clearly the rain slanting down the long windows, rushing with soft thundering sounds from the leaden gutters. There had been a gun, blue and heavy in his small hands, that Father had kept in the right-hand drawer of the library table; for

even in those days, he owned too many precious stones and feared robbers. Nick had been playing he was Father, protecting his jewels against burglars. Mother, smiling, had come in the door, and he had pointed the gun at her, said "Boo!" and pulled the trigger with all the strength of his small hands.

Knotting his tie before the cracked, brown-spotted mirror, Nick drew a long sigh. Aimed by fate, by devils, by anything but his luckless clumsiness, the bullet had shot straight for his mother's heart, and almost before he had known that his world was ended, she had lain dead upon the floor, scarlet spreading out into the white muslin flounces beneath her breast.

His father had run into the room, his face white as the muslin gown. He had looked at Mother upon the floor and Nick crying because his hand hurt and the gun had made such a noise and he was frightened, and then Father's huge fist had smashed down upon him and Nick had remembered nothing more of that scene. Yes, his father had loved Mother as he had loved his beautiful jewels, with an insane idolatry. And Nick had killed her.

As he thought of the hell his childhood had been from that time on, Nick's face darkened. This bequest was a late reward for cruelty, for what he had endured. He was marked until he died by the things that had happened to him, the years that he had dragged out in wretched homes, more wretched schools, everywhere finding that the story he had killed his mother had preceded him. At eighteen, the bare grudging subsistence he had received from his father, whom he had never seen since the day of his mother's death, had ceased, and, ill prepared, he had been thrown into a bad world.

Nick closed his door behind him. The hall smelled of cabbage, peppery French dishes, and unwashed stairs. Well, the

amends were late but they had come; he was through with hell. His lips formed a whistle again; he smiled at the *conciierge's* bearded face, looking up at him suspiciously.

**B**YOND the windows of Stevens and Brewster's New York office, pigeons wheeled in the sun. Nick contemplated the sealed letter addressed to him, the neatly wrapped small box, lying in his hands. "So really," he said, tapping the letter, "unless I find in this the answer to what Father did with his fortune, I'm no better off than before?"

"It amounts to that," Mr. Stevens admitted. "As I told you, as soon as he knew he would not recover, he began to convert everything he possessed—real estate, securities—into jewels. A queer business—you must realize he took terrific losses doing it—without turning a hair."

Nick watched the gray-feathered pigeons turning in the sun an instant, and then he said bitterly, "It can't be any news to you, Mr. Stevens, that my father hated me. Perhaps this is his latest joke at my expense—I can hardly believe that he really meant me to be his heir." He pocketed the thick letter and the little box.

"It was too bad, terrible," Mr. Stevens said uncomfortably. "A childish accident, a pity!" He moved his dry white hands together on his desk. "You are his heir, however, right enough, if you can only locate your heirdom. Of course you have the house. You might sell it—although a place like that, a castle really, is a white elephant on this market."

"I dare say I shall go up and look it over," Nick said, picking up the keys from the desk. "Any servants there?"

"No—they were dismissed after Mr. Carruthers' death, by his instructions. It's clean, though—a woman goes in to sweep and air it every two weeks."

"I'll very likely go there then," Nick said, rising. "Many thanks, Mr. Stevens. I'll let you know what I find out." He tapped his pocket where the letter lay.

"Yes, do," Mr. Stevens said, as though he should very much like to know now. "Such a curious thing—to have no idea what my own client did with his vast personal fortune!"

Nick came out into the clean sharp October day, looked at the bustling streets, then hailed a yellow cab. "Will you take me up to Canobus?" he said. "It's a little way above Irvington."

"Kinda far," the driver said, "but I'll take you."

**S**ETTLED against the comfortable leather seat, Nick took out the letter and the small box. Well, in a few minutes he would know whether he was a tremendously rich man, or the duped victim of a practical joke. The cab swayed and dove through the crowded sunlit streets as he unfolded the double sheets of rich heavy paper.

"My dear Son——" Nick made a small snorting sound, his jaw muscles bunching angrily, then read on:

You must permit an old and sorrowing man to make amends to you. In the clear light of approaching death, mistakes shine out with a terrible brilliance. I realize now that my behavior toward you has been unspeakably cruel, punishing a youth, a young man, for what an innocent child did in his ignorance. I have been longing to make amends for years, always hoping that we would meet again at the time appointed, but I have been held back and hampered by the natural shame of a father who dares not approach the son he has so irreparably injured.

You are aware by now that I have converted all my fortune into gems, ignorance of the whereabouts of which must have confused and annoyed Stevens greatly!

I hope you will forgive the gruesome and perhaps repugnant enterprise you will have to embark upon in order to enter into your inheritance. It will seem to you so much simpler if I had merely put the stones into a bank where you could have obtained them at the slight cost of your signature upon a slip of paper.

But as death crept closer, I found myself in-

creasingly reluctant to part with my beautiful glittering baubles. You don't know the fascination that gems can have for a man, bewitching him with the play of their glorious fire so much more brilliant than anything upon this earth!

Nick raised his eyes, puzzled. Where was all this leading? He returned again to the letter:

To shorten the story, buried with me in my coffin in the mausoleum on the estate are three million dollars in jewels. Forgive me the queer quirk that made me keep them with me as long as I could—I felt that I could not die were it otherwise.

No one is aware of this except you. The coffin was specially made; the workmen were ignorant of the purpose for which they prepared a wooden case and fitted it into the hollow lid. To the eye, then, nothing but a surface of quilted satin—but underneath, the glories of heaven await you! Access to it is easy—pressure upon the third and fourth buttons from the bottom of the lid on the left hand side will release the catch.

I am apologetic that I have put this disagreeable and oppressive task upon you—but you will find it in your heart to forgive an old man's folly. The gems are all I say they are—you may do with them as you will—convert them into stocks and bonds and houses—or simply fall in love with them as I did.

The small box which Stevens will give you contains the keys to the mausoleum. Do not tell anyone of your errand in the tomb, and remove the gems alone—I do not desire to have any but my son look upon me in death. I trust that enjoyment of your possessions will compensate you for the unhappiness and misery of your early life. I am sorry that our first greeting in thirty years must take place in my tomb. God be with you, my son; I shall meet you there.

Your loving father,  
ROGER CARRUTHERS.

Nick lighted a cigarette, his fingers slow, eyes unaware of the fantasmagoria of red and green lights, dashing cars, that flashed past the windows. Living alone at Green Oaks with his beautiful gems and wretched memories, Father must have turned slowly crazed. What a gruesome, singular thing to do! What a horrible task he had inherited, along with three million dollars in jewels! Grave robbery—it was no better than that.

Nick reread the letter, a little puzzled. He still could not believe that that wicked and vengeful old man could have forgiven him at last—yet there it was, speak-

ing from the crabbed rambling handwriting.

With a sinking sensation in the pit of his stomach, he contemplated what he must do. Either he went through with it, or he stayed penniless. He had been poor too long to have any illusions about it. Robbing a dead man's coffin would be a task disagreeable enough, but not half so disagreeable as a life without money, battered from pillar to post by creditors.

He opened the small box; it contained two keys, labeled *Inside, Outside*. He could barely remember the old mausoleum, erected hundreds of years ago when it was not forbidden by law to inter bodies on private grounds. Made of marble once white, no doubt, but then stained dark by time and the weeping branches of the willow trees planted about it. A gloomy spot—a young child, he had not gone near that part of the estate often. The tomb, he recalled with difficulty, had beautiful colored glass windows, heavy bronze doors.

Nick was untroubled by superstitious fancies about darkness; he thought that tonight would be as good a time as any. What would he need for this unpleasant foray? He listed in his mind the necessities: a lantern, a chisel or two, a screw-driver, a suitcase for the gems. This bag at his feet, emptied out, would do well. As soon as he had the stones, he would leave for New York and register at one of the big hotels; he did not care to stay the night in the lonely house, three million dollars in gems in his possession. Then, early tomorrow, they could go into a bank—from Mr. Stevens he could obtain advice on converting them into sources of income. He did not intend to keep them as they were. Jewels were nothing to him; you could not eat jewels, nor drink them—you could fill the hunger of your eyes with more beautiful things.

W. T.—7

A lantern, he thought; yes, chisels, a screw-driver, perhaps a hammer or wrench, that's what I'll need.

OLD Mrs. Briggs, who had just finished her job of cleaning the house, looked out the window, hands on her hips.

"Oh, you couldn't *make* me stay here at night," she said. "I tell Bob—that's my son—'Now you be sure and show up before sun-down, or I'll give you what for.' He calls for me in his car, you know."

She turned back to Nick, smiling at him. "I want my five dollars every two weeks for cleaning up here, right enough, but you couldn't make me stay on a regular over-night job. Sleep in, I mean, not me!"

"Why not?" Nick said absently. The crimson sun was setting in an October sky; the fire Mrs. Briggs had built on the hearth for him felt very fine. "It's a big lonely house, of course. And I suppose any house that's seen death recently seems haunted to other people, doesn't it?"

"Not exactly haunted. What bothers me"—Mrs. Briggs pointed out the window—"is *that* out there. Who wants to see a tomb right out his front window, I don't know. Your pa did. Loved to look at it. Oh, he *was* a queer old bird." In sudden confusion, Mrs. Briggs chewed her lip.

"That's all right, Mrs. Briggs," Nick said amiably. "I guess he was. But just how do you mean, queer? I haven't seen him in years."

"Oh——" Mrs. Briggs seemed to be casting about for words. "Well, *queer*. Funny about that do-fangle out there, for one thing. You know when he heard he was going to die, he got a gang of workmen at it, fixing it up, doing Lord knows what. Anybody who went near it got chased right away. They worked at it for

weeks—a bunch of foreigners—they couldn't speak no language we all could, anyway."

With both forefingers punched into her round dimpled cheeks, she contemplated Nick.

"Your pa wasn't liked in the village. He was a vengeful unforgiving man, never let up on anybody he hated. And he himself had built a coffin, grand thing that it was! All silver, too big for *him*, I always said, withering away as he was—cancer, you know." Her tongue clucked pityingly. "But keeping that coffin in his bedroom with him, right beside his bed! Don't you think *that's* queer?"

"Slightly," Nick said, looking out at the tomb.

The setting sun hit the coppery cross on its top, sparkling above the dull time-blackened walls, with a gloomy light of its own. There was nothing cheerful about the mausoleum or this house. Well, he would not be here much longer. He would put the place on the market; anyone who wanted it could buy it, tomb and all.

A car had just rattled up the drive. "I think that must be your son, Mrs. Briggs," Nick said. "Big black Buick?"

"That's Bob."

Mrs. Briggs put on her coat quickly.

"If I were you, Mr. Carruthers," she said, looking back at him, "I'd trot right into town with Bob and me. To my mind, this here place ain't healthy in the dark."

"Oh, thanks," he said. "I shan't stay more than an hour or so longer. Good-night."

When the car had sputtered away again down the drive, silence descended on the house, the creaking silence of a place of many shut-up rooms, long dark passages, great empty attics—the silence seemed to spread away from about Nick and the small study, lighted by the leaping fire.

Frowning, he looked out at the darkening tomb. The sooner this disagreeable job was over, the better.

He lifted the receiver of the telephone on the desk, wondering if it were still connected; he would need a taxi later. Yes, a quiet humming buzz like the noise of a hive of bees came from it. Now where would he find the needed things? The house was a wealthy house, beautifully equipped. But it was not his, it was a stranger's—he didn't know where anything was. Tools would be somewhere about the working part of the house, the kitchens, the garage, the potting-sheds. The list of things he wanted began going through his head: chisels, lantern. . . .

HE TURNED and looked back. The lighted study windows showed warm and homely. Moving his coat collar up about his ears, Nick shivered a little. The light of the bobbing lantern shone on silvery frost like jewels on the grass, the dark trees upon whose bare branches a few late-October leaves of scarlet and yellow lingered still. The air was very cold and crisp, with the odor of wood smoke from the chimney behind him tingling in it.

Five minutes more of brisk walking brought him after a turn in the path face to face with the dark bulking shadows of the mausoleum. The heavy outer bronze doors, greenish and corroded by time, were twice as high as his head, although he was a tall man; the glass of the colored windows gave back the winking lantern-light. There was not much oil in the lantern, but it should be sufficient for the half-hour he would spend here.

A depressing spot, he thought, listening to a light breath of wind go softly through the almost leafless trees as he fumbled with the key marked *Outside*. He had no stomach for the job. Who would? Entering the tomb that held the

mother you had killed, the father who had hated you.

The key slipped in the oiled wards of the heavy lock and turned. The ponderous door swung toward him in his hand. He stood in the little vestibule of the tomb, facing the inner doors, of glass with a bronze tracery over them. Looking in, he held his lantern high.

The first rays of the wintry early-rising moon sent gules of red, lozenges of pale blue, through the stained glass windows to the marble floor. Marble everywhere, gray-white and cold—a tall black altar at one end with a crucifix above it. Below the altar, and on each side, were inscribed slabs that covered the niches which held the coffins.

Nicholas hesitated, his hand upon the key in the lock. There was something forbidding about that desolate interior, a silent, unspoken *Hands off!*—as though the dead men and women in there were aware of him, an intruder from the living, and wished him ill.

Nonsense! he thought, reassuring himself deliberately, banishing that shadow across his mind that perhaps his father had not really forgiven him, and some grim jest, some final terrible treachery waited him should he open this door. A phrase from the letter floated unpleasantly in his brain as he turned the key: *I shall meet you there.*

A wave of damp freezing air, biting through his thin coat, stabbing disagreeably into his lungs, came forth to meet him. With a deliberate caution, he removed the key from the outside and replaced it in the inside of the door—he did not intend to be shut in here by any accident of the wind that might close the door and snap the spring lock upon him.

Picking up his suitcase of tools and the lantern, he moved into the center of the tomb, frowning. How still it was here, shut in by tons and tons of marble! His

footfalls sounded like thunder, the oil sliding in the lantern like a waterfall. Shadows billowed away from him into the dark dusty corners, as the lantern-light flickered over names of long-forgotten men and women, Esmond Carruthers, John Carruthers, Amable Carruthers. And under the altar, his father and mother, Enid and Roger.

He set the lantern on a prie-dieu whose brown wooden top was beaded with a pale dew of damp, and wiped his hands in whose cold palms sweat had started. He liked his task less and less with every silent moment; he should have waited until morning. Wholesome sun would have chased this atmosphere. But since he was here—

He strode quickly to the tomb beneath the altar, wishing that he could rid his shoulder-blades of the curious feeling they seemed to have of many eyes upon them, and seized the bronze handles that protruded from the slab which said *Roger Carruthers, Born 1860, Died 1935. A long life.*

A quick strong tug, with all his strength behind it, and the great drawer that held the casket moved out toward him; it was like a large silvery fish, sliding from the darkness. A man's last house, he thought, and bent above it. The silence, the shadows, made him curiously uncomfortable; he wished himself away, and yet was too stubborn to go.

Had it been screwed down? He had brought a heavy screw-driver. No, it was secured by great bronze catches in several places. He raised them one by one; the metal was very cold and nipped at his fingers like icy claws. He drew back for an instant in a sudden quivering disgust; a fat black spider had slid over the side, retreating into the shadows of a far corner. Then he snapped open the last catch, and raised the heavy lid of the casket, straining upward with his shoulder, sud-



denly retreating as it opened and came to rest.

But the embalmer had done his work well; there was no rush of foul air. The withered body of the old man that lay inside, dressed in fine morning coat, dark trousers, wing collar, black bow tie, looked almost as though it slept, like a long doll with closed waxen eyes. But after a moment, Nick, standing there not too close, his legs unwilling, saw that death had been at work. His father's face bore green-yellow streaks; there was a spot of pale blue mold upon the white collar. The narrow sunken smile upon the mouth held a puzzling meaning that eluded Nick, looking at it.

**R**ELUCTANTLY, gingerly, he leaned across the narrow body slumbering beneath him and sought with his fingers the third and fourth buttons in the quilted satin lid of the casket, his hand slipping across the beautiful satin until he found them and pressed, holding his breath. A section of the satin dropped toward him gently, revealing a long, hollowed space behind it, and a shining case of red mahogany standing upright there, bronze springs securing it to the back of the lid.

God! he thought, his hands suddenly itching as he eagerly pried it out and carried it away to the prie-dieu. He forgot about the dead man lying behind him, the swooping shadows, the bone-searching cold. There was a key tied to one of the handles. Fascinated, oblivious to his surroundings, he opened the box, his fingers vibrating with eagerness, the breath fleeing from his lungs in a gasp as the lid went up.

Glorious, impossible! The magical beauty of wonderful gems flowed before him in the lantern-light. In waves like tides, their flaunting colors came at him as the light flickered, tides of green and

gold and blood-red, milky hues like a dawn sea. Then the colors steadied and he hung above them breathlessly, hardly daring to finger them, absorbed, enchanted.

It was many minutes before a thought stirred in his mind, like the faint feathered wing-edge of anxiety, What's happened to the lantern-light? What makes it so steady? Why isn't it shifting any more in the wind? And that sound—that faint, clicking, ticking sound like the wheels of well-oiled mechanism running together—what is that? He became suddenly aware that the sound had commenced when he released the bronze catches that had held the jewel-case to the back of the coffin lid; in his excitement over the gems, he had noticed the noise and yet not noticed it.

He wheeled and stared at the inner door of the mausoleum. Instead of an oblong of trees and moonlight, he saw dully reflecting glass; the door was shut. That was why the lantern cast rays of solid motionless yellow all about him—there was no wind to shake it any more. He hurried to the closed door, reassuring himself a little uneasily: I prepared for that, I left the key inside, I'm all right. But how had the gentle soft-blowing night wind pushed to that ponderous casing of bronze and glass? Queer!

He turned the key quickly, listening to it clicking in the spring lock. Then he put his shoulder to the door and shoved. It leaped an inch and stopped, with a thundering metal clang.

Bewildered, the first sharp stirrings of alarm stepping up the beat of his heart to a regular thud-thud-thud against his ribs, he peered through the heavy plate glass. Just outside the door, two gleaming steel bars held it fast; the bronze, striking them, had made that mournful clang like the sound of a brazen gong. They had not been there when he

entered. Of course they had not been there; if they had been, he could not have got in. Someone outside was playing a joke that was not funny.

"Hey!" he shouted, suddenly beating with his fist against the glass in a fury, half of alarm for the safety of his jewels, half for his own. A tramp, seeing him in there, might have thought it an excellent opportunity, once Nick was safely locked up, to burgle the house. "Let me out of here, you fool!"

His hands up against the glass, cupping his eyes from the lantern-light behind him, he stared into the moonlight. There was no one there; nothing moved but a few dark leaves, spiraling softly in the light wind.

"Hey——" he said again, his voice lowering, growing puzzled and uncertain.

And then he saw suddenly that there was something queer about the line of trees and sky outside the door; they were gliding out of view as if they were being gobbled up—as if a knife cut into it, the pattern of pale icy moonlight on the marble floor of the vestibule was with every moment sliced smaller and smaller. He looked upward, his hands still against the glass.

Between the inner door and the outer, with a faint velvety racket of oiled wheels, a steel wall was sliding down. Even as he watched its relentless, almost noiseless passage, his throat growing dry, a vein beating heavily in his head, the bottom of the steel curtain reached the floor and came to rest against the marble with a dull ringing sound. Where the friendly outdoors had been, of moonlight and trees and the moving wind, there was now a barrier of seamless gray steel.

He stumbled back from the door, his hands for a moment wild, fluttering. And then he thought quickly, I must not lose my head! There were the windows; the heavy prie-dieu, swung with deter-

mination, would smash them into bits of colored glass, would make an exit for him.

He grabbed up the prie-dieu, unaware of its weight swinging at his arms, and stumbled to the nearest window. Almost as he reached it, there came a soft dull echo of metal clanging against stone. Beyond the stained glass shone no comforting moon; the pale window was opaque now, flat-looking, like a diseased eye. Between him and the living world another barrier of steel had slid down swiftly, almost noiselessly. And even as he stood there, panting, from about him came soft gentle clangs, like the beating of gongs, as curtain after metal curtain behind the other windows slid shut and locked him in.

He remained there a moment, standing stupidly, staring at the scroll beneath the figure of the drooping woman on the glass that said *Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted*. And then, with a gasp, he swung the prie-dieu. Glass crashed about him, flying past his ears, tinkling to the floor like a shower of bells. The heavy prayer-bench shattered and splintered against the closed steel shutter, and dropped to the floor. The steel had not moved; the only signs of his assault upon it were a few long bright scratches.

**H**IS heart began to thunder in his breast; a rivulet of sweat ran down across his quivering ribs. With his hands pressed against his temples, he tried to think, his eyes roving desperately into dark corners, retiring baffled from the walls of marble and steel that hemmed him in. He understood now that it was no outside hand that had rolled these curtains down between him and life. Oh, he should have listened to the old woman and her gabble of foreign workmen and the tomb! He should have believed the

instinctive knowledge of his heart, that his father had never ceased to hate him, and never would.

Now, he thought, I must be calm, and figure a way out! His trembling fingers locked together, he stood in the center of the tomb; dark in a corner of his brain, like a beast that would slay him, waited panic. Unaware that he was gnawing his knuckles, panting like a dog, he faced what it was he had to face—no one except Mrs. Briggs knew he was at the estate, and he had told her he was not staying. No matter what happened, it would be two weeks before she would be back. And by that time—

With a gasp, he snatched up the broken prie-dieu, and one by one, battered at the windows until the floor was littered with shattered glass and the prayer-bench nothing but a few sticks of splintered wood in his hands. The steel shutters, hardly marred, had not yielded an inch. Reduced to his bare hands, he smashed at the steel foolishly with his fists, stopping at last only when his knuckles were bloodied and pain shot up his arms.

For a long while then, he stumbled blindly about the mausoleum, seeking like a trapped and terrified animal, a way out, stopping now and then to cry for help, his voice thrown back at him torn and distorted by the hollow echoing dome, until at last he returned to the center of the mausoleum and stood there, trembling. His underclothing was soaked with sweat. Just beyond waited the panic

he had feared; he was very thirsty and the pain in his injured hands was almost intolerable.

And then, with a nip of terror about his heart, he saw that it was growing darker in the small rounded room; the oil in the lantern had almost run out. In the silence above his hoarse gasping breath, he could hear the mild sputtering of the drying wick as it sought for oil in the empty reservoir. How softly and gently the light faded, how softly and patiently the shadows advanced from the dark corners, an inch at a time! He had knocked into and upset the case of jewels a moment ago. Spilled everywhere upon the floor, the fire of them was diminishing and fading too, as though they had no life away from light, and now lay dying.

Awaiting the terror of darkness, his legs gave way beneath him, and he sank to the littered floor, his breath coming and going weakly at his lips. Did that small sound of sobbing come from his lips too? His eyes, turning desperately, yet once more, before the last moment when he could see nothing, came to rest upon the still face of the body in the casket.

The meaning of the smile upon those sunken waxen lips was plain to him now. The very last light in the darkening room seemed to linger upon that bitterly mocking grin of triumph.

The blue bubble dancing upon the wick faded, faded—and the dark came down.

