

KEYHOLE MYSTERY

Magazine

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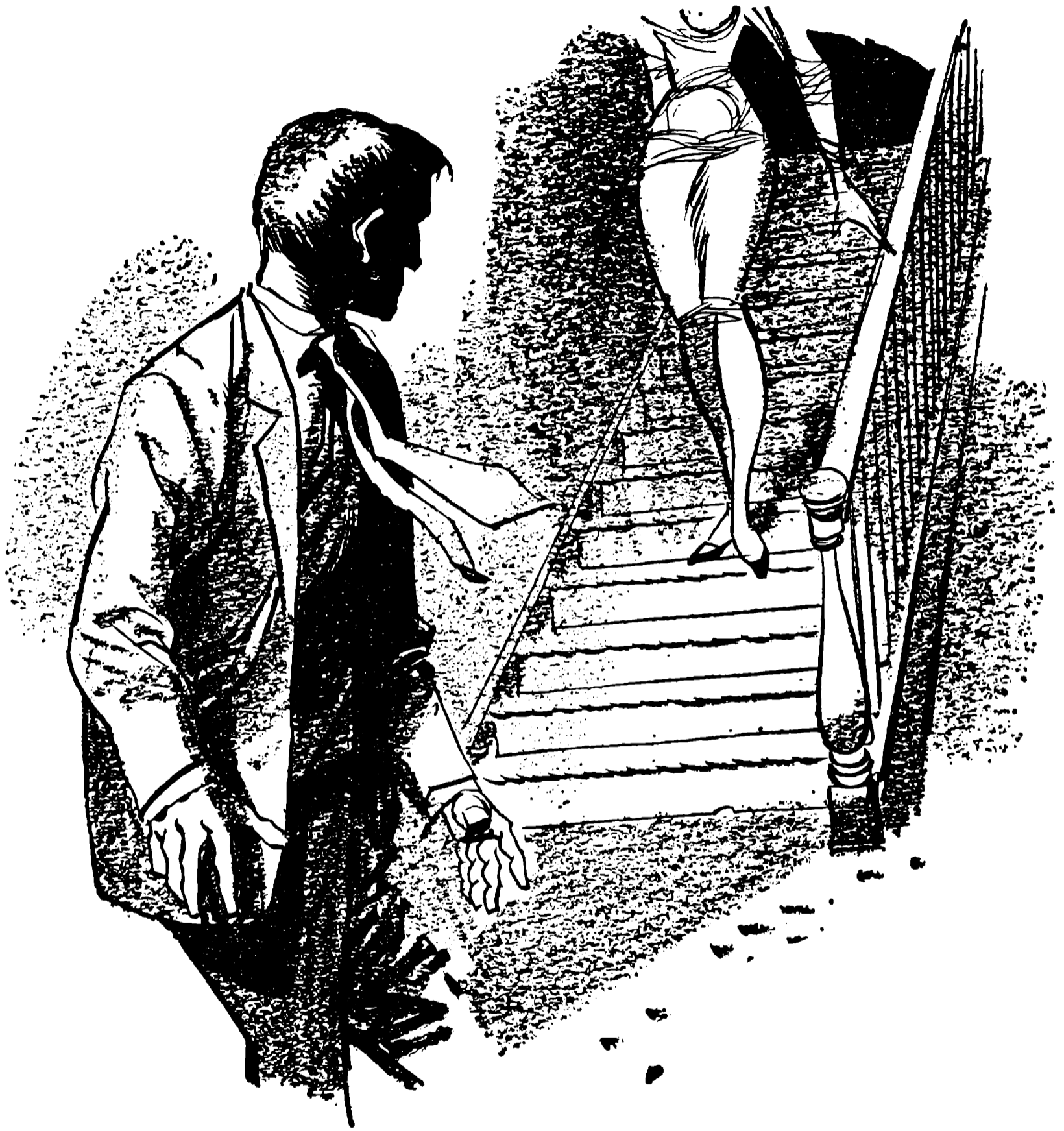
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Some people are more likely than others to become involved in accidents. Medical science calls them accident-prone. Now John Collier—one of the world's great mystery writers—comes up with an interesting new thesis: that some people are more likely to be murdered than others: in a word, they're murder-prone . . .

BORN FOR MURDER

by JOHN COLLIER

ALEC WEAVER'S FEATURES WERE not unpleasing and his expression was that of one who is anxious to please. In some people this may be a fortunate combination; in others it makes for a certain redundancy.

"I should like," said Alec, "to write a story about a murderess."

His friend was Jay Wisden, who had a face like his first name, a face with a pipe in it. He now removed this accessory and his mouth opened in surprise. At once he looked as blank and naked as the short-sighted do when they strip off their glasses. "Alec," said he, "are you telling me you want to be a writer?"

"I said nothing of the sort. I said I want to write this particu-

lar story. I want to get it out of me. I want to put it down. I want it to be there."

"But already you're walking up and down. You're talking like Gertrude Stein or somebody. *You want it to be there!* And I'd have sworn you had a one-track mind, and thought of nothing but the office and shipping." Here Jay reinstated his pipe, and recovered his look of sagacity. "Or at most a two-track mind, because of course you have your peculiar friends."

In Marseille one sometimes sees a raw yellow funnel towering up unexpectedly among the backstreet buildings. All the big shipping lines have offices there. One's heart is continually troubled by

the harsh songs the sirens sing. And the streets in some quarters seem positively to be cobbled with the hard faces of a people who may be peculiar but who are not easy to imagine as friends.

"I suppose you mean people like the Camattes," Alec replied. "To me Louis Camatte is a very ordinary businessman—black-market and bodyguards instead of stock market and lawyers, but that doesn't make him any different. All he really wants is that horrible wedding cake of a villa with its ridiculous little garden. He wants good schools and nice friends for his children. He wants to cover Marie with jewels and fur coats and things."

"Well, she probably helped a great deal in getting him started."

These words hung in the air as if they had nowhere to go. Unwilling to take them in, Alec turned and looked out of the window. In this large, bad, modernistic apartment house, the living room windows were set at an angle across the corner. There was a useless little balcony of coloured concrete, and beyond it one saw all the way down the Canabiere, down to where the water of the port was still as blue as a flag though it was already six o'clock in the evening.

Jay communed with his pipe, feeling he might have said the wrong thing. The right thing to say seemed sufficiently obvious.

"And what's going to happen in this story of yours about the murderee?"

"I don't know what happens. That's why I can't write it. I feel I know everything about the character but I haven't the faintest idea of the plot."

"Well, it's the character that counts, they say."

"Yes, they all say that. Once before in my life I had the same sort of urge. I read just about all the books there are on how to write a short story. They all say character is more important than plot."

"All the same, something has to happen." As the smoke of opium is transmuted into dreams, the smoke of pipe tobacco changes very easily into good advice. "The guy gets himself bumped off, presumably. Otherwise he'd hardly be a murderee."

"But is there a murderee? Is there such a person? Does he exist in real life?"

"I think the answer to that one is, 'Yes, but not for long'".

"Very good, Jay! Very funny! But is it a scientific term? Or is it just a word we use? Is it a word cooked up by the people who write books about famous murders? Have you ever seen it in a book by a psychologist? Or is there no such person at all as a murderee?"

Under this thick drizzle of questions Jay oozed smoke from

every orifice, for all the world like a railway engine on a siding; stationary, uncoupled, fulfilling no apparent function. "People get knocked off all the time," said he at last.

"Which proves there are murderers. It doesn't prove there are murderees."

"There are people who are accident-prone. That's more than proved; it's recognised by the insurance companies. They fall downstairs; they get their arms and legs broken; they get smashed up in their cars. They do it to punish themselves."

"Take that to its logical extreme," said Alec, "and you get suicide. You see the difference? The murderee wants someone else to do it to him."

"And no doubt he finds plenty willing to oblige!"

"He attracts the killer," continued Alec. "Perhaps he creates him. At the very least he seeks him and finds him among a million other people. He attracts him as the female does the male. Or rather, as the lamb attracts the wolf."

"Not rather as the lamb attracts the wolf. Because the lamb doesn't want to punish itself. It's the symbol of innocence. And it hasn't the slightest desire to be eaten. You were right when you said, as the female attracts the male."

"I don't believe there really is such a person as a murderee."

Alec uttered these words in a harsh and fretful tone, turning away from his friend as he spoke.

Jay's pipe, portended like some sort of microphone in which all his finest perceptions were lodged, seemed to become clogged and choked by the contradiction. He was compelled to take out a special gadget, and unfold a spike from it, and pry out a quantity of sodden and unsmoked tobacco. This he eyed with some displeasure, regretting, perhaps, that it would never be transmuted into good advice. "Then you've got nothing to worry about," said he. "You said you have no plot, and now suddenly you say the character's all hooey. So there isn't a story and you haven't got to write it. Alec, thank you for the drink! It's always pleasant to stop in here on the way home from the office. I'd do it more often if you'd let me contribute a bottle now and then."

"Wait a minute," said Alec. "I should have said it *seems*, it *appears*, there's no such person. Jay, I'm no sort of a mystic, I don't believe in being psychic, but, as I told you, there was just one other time in my life when I had the same sort of urge to write a story. I was still in the New York office; I'd never been in France; I'd never even thought of transferring here. Very well, I began to

think day and night about a girl called Felice, and this girl was a slave."

"Southern?" asking Jay, who was busy refilling his pipe for the homeward journey.

"No. Nothing like that," said Alec "I mean a certain psychological type; a physical type, of course; certainly a sexual one. There are sexual slaves. And there are slaves who are like snakes. They're made to be trodden on. But tread on them, and you're done for! I don't know if I make myself clear?"

"Clear enough," said Jay, lighting up. Anything is clear enough to a man who is lighting up.

"The whole point is that this girl became very real. Her name was Felice. It wasn't as if I'd given her that name; she had it already. I felt that I'd seen her, I knew her. I couldn't change her. I couldn't make her do things. Maybe that's what they mean by creative imagination; they say that at a certain point the characters begin to have a life of their own."

"Pity she didn't do something interesting on her own," said Jay, puffing indulgently. "Then you'd have only had to write it down."

"She didn't. She just wouldn't fit in. Maybe that's doing something, in a negative way. I couldn't find any background, any way of living, any sort of set-up in life as I knew it where she

could possibly function. I couldn't find anyone like her. Other slaves, maybe, but not this sort. So in the end it seemed as if she didn't exist. Then I came over here, Jay, and I saw at once I'd been right all the time."

"Plenty of girls called Felice in this part of the world," said Jay, a little bored.

"The name means nothing," said Alec impatiently. "It doesn't mean a thing. I saw the girl herself; the genuine article, the real slave. You see them in some of the old quarters here—you know the type—with a great roll of dirty black hair, and a black dress like nothing on earth, and a white face, a sick face, but a beautiful face, a sort of marble face. It makes you realise that this city was started by the Phoenicians and the Greeks, and they've been here, underneath, ever since."

"Well, you found the girl and you found the background. But I gather you didn't write the story."

"By that time I'd lost the urge. I'd been side-tracked. I told you I had a short spell of analysis before I came over here; all I can say is, it wasn't short enough. I paid that guy over fifteen hundred bucks, Jay, and I wasted a whole summer, and I no more needed analysis than I need a hole in the head."

"We all need analysis," said Jay. "Very few of us need a hole

in the head."

"I told him about this girl Felice," said Alec, unheeding. "He hooked her up with a dream or two, and one or two things I told him, and he sold me on the idea that Felice was just the memory of a nursemaid I'd had when I was five years old. Her name was Phyllis, you see."

"Well, there's a resemblance. It's plausible."

"Now wait a minute! Let me tell you what he cooked up. When I was five we went in the summer to Atlantic City. That's a fact."

"Well, that alone could account for a very bad trauma."

"This girl was supposed to take me on the beach in the afternoons. Instead, on certain afternoons, she took me to some sort of a lodging house; to a back room, a walk-up, up about three flights of stairs, and she left me hanging about on the landing while she was in there with a man, a marine. Very well, one afternoon, being bored to tears, I pushed the door open. Hence the slave, crushed down, brutalized—everything documented and accounted for!"

"Well, I must say, Alec, it seems to make a certain amount of sense."

"I thought so too. I swallowed it, hook, line and sinker. I got the picture so clear that I can still see it; I can see that landing right

now. That smelly landing, the sun coming in through a dirty window, and the waiting, and the wondering, and then the inside of that room, and the belt and the cap, and Phyllis. But listen here, Jay! My father went broke and had his breakdown in the fall of thirty-two. From that day on, there was no money for any nursemaid, or any other sort of help either. In thirty-three we went to Atlantic City, as I said. We went there because it was cheap; my mother and I, and nobody else at all. So the whole thing was hatched up by that analyst, and sort of wished on to me, and it wasn't until after I'd said goodbye to him that I got out from under the influence and could put two and two together and see it all a myth. That's analysis!"

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Jay.

"Anyway all this is only to prove that if you feel a character strongly enough you can be sure that character exists, even if you can't find him in your immediate surroundings."

"Which happens to be the exact opposite of what you said before," said Jay. "So, one way or the other, I guess you must be right. There's one fellow we know—I don't know if he's a murderee in your sense of the word—but he's certainly asking for it." And Jay pointed with the mouthpiece

of his pipe, from which a little smoke oozed, as from the barrel of a pistol that has just been fired, to the ceiling of Alec's living room. He indicated a line which, if sufficiently projected, would have led to the row of comparatively cheap, one-room, studio apartments which ran along the back of the building at the top.

"You can't possibly mean Andre?" said Alec.

"That young man," said Jay, "is my choice for the most likely to succeed in ending up at the bottom of one of the Calanques, with a hole in his head and two or three metres of heavy chain wrapped around him, like those two guys they fished up last Easter."

"You don't really know him, or you wouldn't say such a thing," said Alec, quite distressed. "There couldn't be a person farther removed from the type I have in mind. He loves life; he loves his work."

"Do you mean picking out a few notes on the piano and making with the off-colour monologue in between?"

"Now that's not fair, Jay. That's what he does at the *Strip-tease*. Everybody's got to eat. In the day-time he's quite a different person. The music he's working on may not be anything great, but at any rate he believes in it. He's a composer, and he..."

Here Jay enveloped himself in

a smoke cloud so dense that Alec was forced to stop and look, and hence to listen.

"It's the music he makes with Marie Camatte that I'm referring to," said Jay, speaking out of the cloud.

"How do you know?" cried Alec in almost childish distress. "What have you ever seen, to make you say a thing like that? Jay, it's not true, and you ought not to go around saying such things."

Jay was not the man to press a point where he saw it was causing pain. "Well," said he, "They're your friends and not mine. I've only seen them the few times you've dragged me to that lousy night-club of Camatte's. All I've seen, if it comes to that, was the abstracted gaze of two people who are playing footsy, and—possibly—maybe—I couldn't swear to it—what might be called a smouldering glance or two in between."

"And on the strength of that you take the typical American view of the French! I don't wonder we're disliked over here."

Magnanimity, even in a pipe smoker, has its limits, and like all limits they are reached sooner than one expects. "Alec," said Jay, "I don't know what the hell's got into you. Certainly you're the world's champion at saying a thing, and forgetting it, or else shutting your eyes to its obvious implications. If I've jumped to

any sort of conclusion, it's less from anything I've seen than from what you told me yourself, quite casually, just two days ago, in this very room. You told me you'd met her several times coming down from Andre's place when you got home from the office."

"He's young, and he's hard-up, and she's interested in his music," said Alec at last. It was a small, weak thought, uttered in a small, weak voice, and it seemed to be anxious to slip away unnoticed.

Jay threw a very light, obvious joke after it; to do less would have been the more conspicuous. "I wish I could stay," said he, "and have a regular musical discussion. But it's after six, and the kids'll be in bed already."

With that he rose to go. Alec opened the door for his guest and walked with him as far as the elevator. Jay talked of the *SS City Of Springfield*, a ship which was coming in damaged and under tow in the morning, an event of some interest to those who work in the Marseille office of a well-known shipping line. Alec pressed the elevator button; He evoked only the considerable silence of a dead elevator, one of those silences for which Sousa demanded three massed bands. "The high-class functional doors in this dump," said Jay, peering down,

"have only one defect, and that is, they don't function. The damned things never close properly. It's stuck down there at the bottom. I can see it. I guess I'd better walk down."

He at once set off, leaving Alec looking after him in a silence which would have required even more than three massed bands adequately to render it, a silence which, when time seemed to have been forgotten, was broken by the *tick, tick, tock*, not of a stately clock, but of high heels coming down from one of the upper floors.

This large building, made all of concrete, had four floors above that on which Alec lived, and on each there were several apartments. Many pairs of high heels descended that naked, echoing and always rather dirty staircase, so much like the stairs of a subway, whenever the elevator doors were not properly closed. Nevertheless Alec remained, as they say, rooted to the spot. His eyes were riveted, as they say, on the turn of the staircase immediately above. He *knew* that it was Marie Camatte who was coming down.

There are certain rendezvous' which seem to have been made so very long ago that it is surprising we should feel the opposite of surprise when they are punctually kept. Alec felt only a great sense of inevitability, like a giant hand on the back of his neck, as Marie

Camatte came down towards him.

Even the dress she was wearing contributed to the illusion that he had known her and awaited her from the very earliest days of his life. It was one of those chemise dresses which sometimes give us the disconcerting impression, in places where fashionable women are congregated, of being surrounded by oldtime movie stars. Marie, moreover, came from the back-streets of Marseille, and from one of those narrow quarters where the houses are eight storeys high and the streets not eight feet wide, and which are threaded by yet narrower alleys, and where the tallest houses are bridged and linked by rooms erupting from their sides, which run like lava over the roofs of the lesser houses. In this city, flooded by wave after wave of every nationality in every century, these rock pools have remained inviolate. Whether or not a strain of Phoenician or Greek persists, their inhabitants have all the look of an archaic people and a people apart.

The chemise dress, therefore, was only one of those accidents which always occur at the appropriate moment as if to render inescapable the realities we have tried to ignore. Marie had a great profusion of hair, such as we seldom see in these days, and she had heavily lidded, heavily shad-

owed eyes. Her cheeks had a soft plumpness utterly different from the apple roundness which has come in since Renoir became popular, and they had a thick, sweet pallor like that of those fleshy white flowers which release their perfume only at night. Her mouth was a perfect Cupid's bow, insistently accentuated, but possessing, when one came to look at it carefully, no resemblance whatsoever to the beak of an octopus. And which of us, for that matter, has ever seen the beak of an octopus?

This face was poised at an angle not measurably different from that at which most other faces are held. Nevertheless it seemed at all times to be on the verge of tilting unbearably far back under an insolent, ravishing kiss. It was the face of a somnambulist, because the mind in it was asleep; it was the face of a medium, because something was awake in it which was not the mind; it was the face of a beautiful psychotic, because its unsleeping purpose was one that we do not usually acknowledge; it was the face of a waxwork in a Chamber of Horrors, because, clearly, it would allow no one to interfere with that purpose. And yet this face, so coldly sensual, so stupidly cunning and so brutishly implacable, was, after all, closely akin to those we discover to our wonderment in the family photograph al-

bum, and over the names of the most high-minded of our great-aunts, or of the most radiant of the young brides who seemed like fairy princesses to us who were their train bearers. So much for the Phoenicians! Perhaps all faces are like this, and those we see around us every day are the only ones we cannot really see.

At all events it was quite fitting that Marie should have the look of an old-fashioned movie queen, for Alec was, at this very moment, in relation to her, finding himself in an old-fashioned movie situation. He was beginning to realise that he had been in love with her from time immemorial, and without knowing it. Apart from this characteristic, at once banal and unlikely, it was a love without any pleasure or prospect of pleasure attached to it. It was the sort of love which is born, not of the normal hunger, but of a sensation which the heart can mistake for that hunger; the dull, persistent ache of an unhealable wound. This is the ugly sister, the quite hideous sister, of the love family. People with unhealable wounds should carry a bell to announce their approach, so that we might back away, crying, "It was not I! It was not I!"

However, Marie was in no position to make a sweeping statement of that sort. When she saw Alec standing there on the land-

ing, she did not back away, but she looked at him as if he were intruding on her. It was the briefest of looks, and it was at once succeeded by a smile.

"But what are all the smiles and caresses in the world," thought Alec, "after such a look?"

He suddenly felt very tired, as if he had been waiting on that landing, not for a few minutes, but for many years. "Marie," said he, "come into my place for a moment. I have something to say to you."

Marie, within a certain narrow range, was the most sensitive creature imaginable. Alec's words were of no particular weight, and he uttered them as if he had no breath in his lungs, but Marie knew that when a man speaks like that, almost automatically, as if someone else was whispering through him, he means business.

"For only a moment," said she, letting him draw her through the door of his apartment. He noticed that her arm, on which his fingers seemed likely to leave marks, was as weak as water. "I'm late already," she said. "Louis will be wondering what has happened to me."

Alec, with his free hand, slammed the door behind them, and at the same time pulled Marie round to face him. "Do you mean with Andre?"

"Andre? What has Andre to do with it?" And Marie drew her-

self away, and put on a look of lofty offendedness, absurd and pathetic. "Is it possible you suggest I was visiting Andre?" continued Marie. "Perhaps I have other friends in this building."

"And perhaps the door was not as completely closed as you thought it was."

There is something to be said for the feeling of inevitability, even though its hard grasp is like that of a big man's hand on the back of one's neck. It can dictate very effective speeches; speeches to which one listens as one utters them, not only with consternation, but also with an illusion of being, at last, absolutely right.

"I have always felt you looking at me," said Marie. "So you are jealous! I knew it. So you watch me! So you peep, or you listen!"

"Never," said Alec. "Never in my life." He was speaking French, and the language more or less presented him with this last expression. "But now I know you were with Andre."

Marie was shaken, but she suddenly remembered an old excuse she had about her, and she pulled it out as she might have pulled out a powder-puff to hold up in front of her face. "You have tried to trap me. But you have done it because you suffer. Because you suffer, I shall explain to you. Today Louis told me that some men

are coming, some business friends of his, from Nice. And we are to entertain them tonight at the Club. So I thought I would come here and tell Andre one or two little things about each of them, so he could put them in as jokes, into what he says at the piano."

"And on Monday?" said Alec.

"On Monday?" The excuse, already thin, could not be stretched far back enough to cover Monday. The dignity became attenuated and flimsy. "I don't know what you mean by Monday?"

"And Friday? Shall I ask Louis if you had people to entertain on Monday and Friday? And the other days?"

"Oh, Alec, my friend! I beg of you . . .!" When she had first come out of her back street, Marie had had only two dresses; the inevitable black, and a red one. Now, when faced by an angry or a lustful man, and she recognised no others, she had only two attitudes; the dignified one she had already paraded, and the cowering, palpitating submissiveness of a woman beaten down, whether by blows or caresses is immaterial.

Alec's words having stripped her of the first pose, an impulse of something quite like modesty caused her instantly to assume the second. Had she been, in the matter of attitudes, the best dressed woman in the world, she could not have selected one more calculated to inflame Alec's deepest

feelings. He discovered that this was what he had always wanted, all to himself, for better or for worse, till death did them part.

Her hands were stroking at the lapels of his jacket in a manner which most of us would have found very embarrassing. Alec, however, wished it to continue. To this end, he began to abuse Andre, using terms so extremely crude as to give him another satisfying sensation, the sensation which mud yields to the fingers of a child. At the same time, and also with the fingers of a child—they were so angry and pinching and ineffectual—he took Marie by the arms and shook her.

Marie may not have been clearly aware of the weakness of those jealous, though not little, fingers, but she flowed in that direction. At the same time she was afraid for herself and afraid for Andre, and, with the instinct which moves certain birds when their nests are threatened, she flutteringly took the line that led most blatantly away from the truth. Drawn thus and driven thus, she was soon clinging to Alec, pouring a froth of confessions and reproaches and endearments all over him, plastering his mouth with kisses as red and sweet and sticky as stolen jam, telling him that Andre was a boy, a toy, a mistake, a nothing.

“It was because of you. Because I loved you! Because I hated you! Because you despised me! Because you looked at me as if I were dirt!” A bystander would have thought it as well that the motion pictures of which she reminded him had been silent pictures.

To Alec, on the other hand, these ridiculous histrionics had all the authority of that solemn double-talk, uttered by our deepest desires, through the mouths of figures of our own creation, in our dreams. He drank in every word; he believed that he had his love and his slave, a repentance sufficiently abject and a rival belittled to nothing at all. Nothing, it would seem, was wanting to complete his pleasure, except perhaps the pleasure itself. The fact is that the realisation of a fantasy, like the attainment of a life-long ambition, or the end of the rainbow or the site of the mirage, all too frequently turns out to be rather colourless and dry. It can look like just another piece of the same old desert. Our real goal, our hearts then sinking-ly admit, must be somewhere farther on.

For a minute Alec was so deeply involved in this admission that all his outward force left him, and Marie, concluding that he was quieted for the time being, patted her hair into place, and began to taper the situation towards an ad-

jourment. "I must go," said she at last, "or Louis will be home before I get there. You know what Louis is!"

And indeed, for the briefest moment, Alec really knew what Louis Camatte was. Andre, belittled to nothing at all, no longer stood between them. It is the owner who makes the slave, and Alec saw Marie's real owner face to face, and he knew with whom his rendezvous had long ago been made. Such flashes of insight, like lightning flashes, are very justly called blinding, either because we instinctively close our eyes, or because after them the night seems darker than before.

"It is Louis who is the problem," said Alec. He uttered this rather obvious remark in a quiet, business-like tone. He had suddenly become admirably calm, as certain hypochondriacs do, when, after endless fusses over imaginary ills, they at last hear the doctor pronounce the dreaded word. He even smiled. There are all sorts of smiles; this one might have been imagined as fixed upon the lips of an unhealable wound. Marie was not imaginative, but when she saw Alec smile she stopped edging towards the door, and she gave him her serious attention.

"He must never, never suspect," said she.

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Alec. "Perhaps we will let him suspect Andre."

"Oh, no!" said Marie. She had no wish to annoy Alec by a contradiction; the words just slipped out.

"He knows already," said Alec, speaking like a good friend as well as a lover, willing to share all his little amusements with her.

"He knows nothing," said Marie.

"Everyone always knows everything," said Alec. He uttered this important but rather depressing truth in a manner that was positively playful. "They don't always know that they know, but they do. Let me explain! Other people have noticed you and Andre, right there in the Club, and they've seen at once what's going on. Louis was present. He saw the same things. They're there in his head. He just hasn't put them together yet. But the minute he suspects..."

"You know what he'd do?" cried Marie.

"Wipe him out," said Alec, nodding pleasantly. He illustrated the words with a gesture that gave him considerable pleasure. "After all, as you say, he was a mistake. He'll be better wiped out. And then, my dear, you and I will be in a position to wipe out Louis. Because we shall know what has happened. We can say a word in the right quarter. Or I can. You will have to be somewhere safe, but you'll have set the ball rolling, and after that things will move by

themselves. Louis wipes out Andre. Andre, in effect, wipes out Louis. And you will have wiped yourself clean. You see the beauty of it?" The word *wipe* passed to and fro over everything he said, as over a rather dirty windshield.

Marie, from her now concentrated gaze, might have been staring through that same windshield, along a dangerous road which, with all this wiping, was gradually becoming clear to her.

"It's so just," continued Alec with increasing enthusiasm. "Andre, a mistake! And Louis, worse than a mistake! In spite of the clever old epigram there are crimes that are worse than mistakes. A crime, a disease, a pollution—he makes you hateful and repulsive to me! And now you'll be clean and free and happy and" He was going to add, "with the man you love," but he was deterred by considerations of taste, and by a slight feeling of vertigo, such as arises from certain giddy fantasies.

Marie, however, seemed to sense the unuttered phrase. A quite lovely smile irradiated her face, and she raised her eyes as if to heaven, or at the very least to the row of comparatively cheap, one-room, studio apartments which ran along the back of the building at the top. Alec, who had con-

fessed to a weakness in the manufacture of plots, would have been flattered had he known how well she liked this one. On the other hand, he might have resented the one little reservation she made; she felt the characters in the plot were not quite perfectly cast; she felt it would be better if two of them exchanged their respective roles. Alec meanwhile was talking of getting a transfer, of taking her out to the gorgeous East, or to Rio or back to the States or somewhere.

"There would be plenty of money," said Marie. "You wouldn't have to work unless you felt inspired to do so. All the same, my dear friend, this is not going to be easy. To prove anything of that sort . . ."

"When you know what's been done," said Alec, "and who's done it, you can always dig up the proof. Or the police can, when they're put on the right track. They have their methods."

"The police?" cried Marie with a shudder of distaste. "Be careful! Be very careful, my love, my little one. You go to the police. You may speak to the wrong man. Louis has friends in the police. You don't need to speak to them; they'd all see the dossier, and then, my dear, it would be you, and me, too, who'd be wiped out." In fact, she was thinking, one word to a certain man named Gremaux was as effective a meth-

od of murder as Madame Guillotine.

"Listen to me," said she with all the authority that a virtuous woman assumes on such occasions. "Your idea will not work, because to Louis Andre is nothing. Men like Louis know who counts, and who is nothing at all. He'd dismiss him, of course; he'd arrange to have his face spoiled a little, but he'd never actually kill him. After all, we are not in Chicago."

Alec opened his mouth in such wide dismay that he looked for all the world like a little boy who is about to let out a desolate howl.

"But wait," said Marie, caressing him, "and I will tell you something very much better. You said a clever thing a little while ago; it is because you are so clever that I adore you. It was wise, it was profound. You said people know all about everything, always, only they don't always put it together. Very well, there were two men, a man named Orozco and his partner, long ago. They were wiped out, as you say, very suddenly, in an emergency, when Louis was scared, when he had no time to take the proper precautions. And these were men of some importance, it is an affair not to be passed over. And the

police have most of it, because it was hastily done, but they haven't yet been able to put it together.

"Give me that paper. I write down two names and the name of a place. With this, the police will have their witnesses, and they will find what is left of Orozco and his partner.

"And you, my love, call the police this evening. You must be careful to whom you sing your little song—there are people there who would warn Louis about you almost before you had finished talking. So ask for a man called Gremaux. Don't forget that name. I'm writing it down for you. Talk to no one else. Just say it's the Orozco business. Say that you have what they need. Say that you insist on a private appointment with the head of the division, and not at the Commissariat, but alone with him, at his own house. He will arrange for someone to pick you up; tell him they can call for you here but only after dark. Go with them; take this paper, and everything will go just as you want it to.

"And I shall have helped you! And then, my love," said she, raising her eyes heavenward again, "we shall be free, and rich, and we can go far, far away and live in Monte Carlo." ■ ■

anyway. Let's sit down. Got it here, in—"

"Isn't it customary to wait till after the funeral?" Henry asked. But the old man didn't seem to hear him.

"—in my portfolio," he mumbled, and took it out. With a mental shrug Henry fell silent, settled down to hear. The list of properties was longer than he had expected. A warm glow filled him, he scarcely heard the latter part of the will as the lawyer's cracked voice sing-songed about the library, the house, the scholarship funds...

Finally the voice stopped. Henry snapped out of his golden glow as Old Calhoon folded up the will. Time to think of travel later on.

"Yes, yes," Henry sighed. "Poor Uncle Jacob. More than generous... Now, about the funeral—"

Calhoon shook his head. "Can't say for sure about that, Henry. Have to consult the Dean, I suppose."

Henry was honestly puzzled. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"What do you mean, 'What do I mean'? Didn't you hear what I was reading?" He clicked his

tongue, opened the will again, testily. "'—and all the rest and residue of my estate—' No, not there. Mmm. Hmm. *Here*: 'And it is my further desire and I do so stipulate, that my body be turned over immediately after death to the College of Medicine of the said University, for purposes of medical research.'"

"No!" said Henry.

"Yes," the old lawyer said, while Henry's mind picked at the possibility that the medical men might not find evidence of strangulation, though logic told him they couldn't possibly miss. "Not my idea, but—Jacob wanted it that way. They took him early this morning. Said they'd not be too long with him, but just when the funeral— Who is that at the door? Ringing and knocking so— Don't they know there's been a death in the— Oh. My word. The police. Wonder what *they* want?"

Henry had a rather good idea about why the police were here, and, as it happened, he was absolutely right.

It was an hour's journey to the State Prison, and, after that, only a short walk to the small room, which was all the traveling poor Henry got to do. ■ ■

