

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the



BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XI

NUMBER 4

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. 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, \$2.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, 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.

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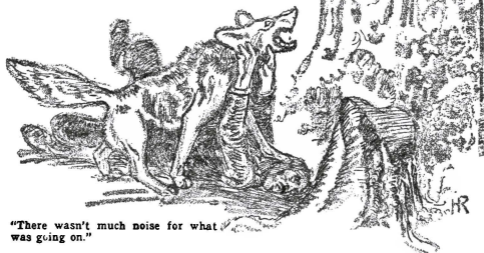
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FROM *by Everil Worrell* BEYOND



"There wasn't much noise for what was going on."

"**M**ARY Ellen," asked Kenneth suddenly, "do you think Sheila is happy?"

A fitful wind drove sleet against the windows. A log in the grate fell apart. The clock chimed slowly six. It had been dark for nearly an hour, the early bitter darkness of December.

Mary Ellen made concrete the misgivings he had not put into words.

"Of course, Kenneth, I think she would be happier if you didn't seem to partly disapprove of her."

"I disapprove of her imaginings. I want my girl to be just solid flesh and blood like me, with five senses like mine—that I can believe in. Don't you understand?"

"I see what you mean, but it's you who do not understand. Sometimes, I think that I'm the only person who does understand her. When—it—happened, she talked to me."

"She's talked to you more than

she ever has to me, Mary Ellen," Kenneth said unhappily. "Won't you tell me—everything there is to tell?"

Mary Ellen had been fidgeting before the fire. She sank into the depths of a large armchair, so that her face was in shadow.

"The first was the sinking of the *Lusitania*. I was only eight."

"I know about the *Lusitania*. I know that Sheila dreamed of drowning, the night it sank. I think she sees that that is only a coincidence. Hundreds of people probably dream of drowning every night."

If Kenneth's tone was not sarcastic, it suggested that to disagree with him would invite at least a desire to be sarcastic. Mary Ellen flushed; but she was eager now to prove her point, and began again with added energy.

"It wasn't a dream. Father and Mother have each a room, Sheila and I one together. Ours has a door into

Mother's. That night I waked because the covers had been thrown back, and I was chilled. That wasn't like Sheila, and she was gone. In a moment I heard her voice, in Mother's room. She was younger then, about the age I am now, and she had gone to Mother because she was frightened. She was afraid of death—and of deep water. And she was wide awake."

Mary Ellen paused, remembering.

"She said there were too many people dying in the night. And when Mother talked to her, thinking she meant the way people are always dying everywhere, and said she mustn't let the war excite her, and the stories of men in the trenches, she said—I remember the words she used—'I don't mean in the trenches, or in houses and hospitals. I mean under the stars, in the black, deep water. I can't get *them* out of my mind.' Then she said she couldn't get air, she was smothering. After a while she was quiet, and Mother led her back to bed. The next day we read about the *Lusitania*."

"Did she know anyone on board the *Lusitania*?"

"No. But I think her mind reached theirs—like a radio station taking an S. O. S. I think that now. Why, everyone believes in telepathy, Ken!"

"I believe more in coincidence."

"You still say that! Then listen. For I don't believe you ever heard all about—when Vincent died."

"I know she had—some sort of 'visitation.' I know she believes—used to believe—in such things."

Mary Ellen's voice fell almost to a whisper, although the dining-room still was dimly lit, and the kitchen door still closed.

"This was in the night, too. Sheila was twenty-one, and I was thirteen. We had gotten very close together then, and Sheila read me parts of Vincent's letters. He was coming from India to marry her at Christmas time, but this was in the summer before."

Kenneth moved uneasily. When Sheila had been engaged to Vincent, she had been happier than she was now.

"I waked. Sheila was sitting up in bed, hardly breathing. She was *listening*. I moved, and she spoke to me. Something was the matter with Vincent."

"She had had a letter?"

"Oh, no. Just that moment, *she knew*. She had waked from a nightmare. In her dream, her side hurt her badly, and she was laid out on a flat-topped, wooden kitchen table. It was all so clear that she saw a gash in the table top, where a cooking-knife had jabbed. The surgeon and his assistant with the anesthetic wore gauze masks, but the assistant was cross-eyed. He put a cone over her face, and she struggled and waked. But her first thought was not of her dream, but of Vincent. She knew that it had happened to Vincent, because of that."

"That was a queer transition."

"Yes. You'd have thought she would wonder if she might be going to have appendicitis, or something like that, herself, wouldn't you?"

"Most people would."

"She still seemed to feel, or to 'almost feel,' a sensation of *cutting*; far away, like a sound just before you can't hear it at all. It didn't take long to tell me that, and when she finished, she was shaking all over. 'It's going on and on, a long way off. Out there in India. What I can't understand, is—*now, it isn't cutting, it's thudding. Heavy blows*. It is horrible. My God! Doctors don't pound a patient. . . .' There was more. About a man coming to with a deep, open wound in his side, and still the blows."

The low voice from the shadow of the big chair no longer sounded like Mary Ellen's.

"Vincent—afterward we heard—"

"I know the rest."

Vincent, in India, had photographed a sacred fountain. Very soon afterward he was taken with acute appendicitis. In the midst of a hurry-up operation, angry natives had dragged away the doctor and his helper, and had stoned the unconscious man to death.

"But did you ever check up on the scarred table and the cross-eyed anesthetist?"

"Oh, Ken! A Psychic Research Society would have done all that. We didn't. Sheila couldn't have stood any more."

The smell of savory cooked things filled the air. The swing door had been blocked open; dinner was being set on the table. Mary Ellen got out of her chair and slipped away. A moment later, Sheila came and led Kenneth in to dinner.

AT THE table, Mary Ellen looked like a younger reflection of Sheila.

"That kid will be having visions next. But if it were a gift of vision, it would be a great thing—a really wonderful thing. If it were freely accepted, it wouldn't be an unhappy thing. But I can't see it like that—to me it isn't a gift. It is only an abnormality. Hysteria at night; a coincidence, and the two edges of it fitted more closely together afterward; memories colored by a wild theory. Hysterical tendencies encouraged, and more 'visions' and more coincidences. It is no gift to me. It seems to me more like—insanity."

Yes, that was his feeling. That was the word he had hidden in the back of his mind. The ugliest word in the world.

Talk flowed around Kenneth. Mary Ellen brightened and began to resemble her mother instead of Sheila. Sheila herself was sensitive to Kenneth's mood. The shadow deepened in her eyes as she watched his face. Suddenly Kenneth knew that for months it had been deepening when she looked at him. Was he beginning

to do her harm? A courage born of something like despair rose in him, and his spirits rose with it. Sheila loved him. He would hold to his matter-of-factness like a life-line, and to Sheila. He would dominate her, and save her from the things he feared.

He dominated her now. After dinner, he put on a record and made her dance. He told her jokes and made her laugh. There was a suppressed sparkle about her that made him long to see more of it, to see it released and often in play.

The telephone rang. Mrs. Michaels turned from it to her elder daughter.

"It's your dress, Sheila. If you wear it tomorrow night, Mrs. Walton has to try it on this evening."

"I didn't know you had a new dress." Kenneth's eyes asked an interested question. "Flame chiffon?"

Sheila smiled, understanding him. "Flame!"

The word was a shout of triumph. The only evening dress he had seen Sheila wear was a misty, silver thing, like rain on a mountain top. All her clothes were somber-hued. Flame-colored chiffon was sunrise and victory. After all, perhaps nothing like what was past would ever enter into the future—his and Sheila's future. And, some day, all that was past would be forgotten, and he would be sure in his heart that Sheila was—just a girl like other girls.

Sheila had gone to the telephone. "I guess I'll have to waste an hour on it," she said.

"I'm sorry. I thought it was all finished."

Kenneth expected to go with her. "I'd rather you didn't," she persuaded him. "It's only 7:30, and I can take the car and be there in five minutes. It embarrasses Mrs. Walton to have a 'gentleman friend' hanging around while she's fitting. You did that once, and she made the hem crooked. The curtains between her two rooms don't fit, and she has them

on her mind. So if you want this to hang, let me go alone."

"I'll take you and come back, and then go back again. Or wait in the car. Or, better—I need exercise. I'd rather walk it once, each way."

"That's silly, Ken. It's a bad night to walk the streets. Let me drive over alone; you stay here, and I'll 'phone you in time to walk over, if you really want to walk it once, and ride back with me."

It was settled. Sheila's matter-of-factness delighted Kenneth as much as the flame-colored dress. She had a competent, efficient way that was always a source of delight to him.

And in a moment, suddenly, like the blowing of an unwholesome wind across the shining surface of a pool, everything was different.

"Ken—Ken—I'm not going . . . I can't go. I'm afraid."

Only seconds had elapsed since her last words, but her voice was changed. Her eyes were wide, unhappy, and—yes—terrified. Kenneth had been in the act of helping her with her coat. She leaned slightly against him, her eyes, with that strange look in them, near his own. They held his, desperately, appealingly. Kenneth tried to hide his recoil from her manner.

"I'll go with you."

He had not concealed his feeling. Moreover, it was deepening. He was conscious of something like irritation also, an irritation that was growing. Everything had been all right. There was no reason for Sheila suddenly to alter, to look at him like a stricken animal, bound and helpless and waiting for an expected blow to fall. Whatever the cause of this attack, Sheila had not tried to control herself. She had yielded to a fantastic mood, and had expected Kenneth to yield.

Sheila's eyes became more stricken as she watched him.

"You needn't look like that, Ken. I'm going."

Kenneth weighed his words careful-

ly. "I don't think the road is too slippery. Both you and I have driven hundreds of miles in the rain, at night, too. The sleet turned to rain an hour ago. But if you're afraid to drive—"

"I'm never afraid to drive. It wasn't that. It was—it is—oh, never mind, now. I am ready."

"Moods are to be reckoned with," said Kenneth gently. "Of course, it's better not to give in to them unless you have to. But—are your nerves steady enough to drive?"

"I'm not nervous. I wasn't nervous. You'd never understand. Forget it, Ken. I'm going. Only, don't ever look at me as you did a minute ago. I—didn't like it."

They walked to the unlighted garage in silence. Sheila climbed into the front seat of the touring-car. The motor started quickly, and Kenneth leaned over and kissed the girl lightly on the cheek.

"I'll be ready when you 'phone," he said. He slammed the door.

The big car moved out backward, closely shrouded in its black curtains, a shining black monster trailing glaring, parallel beams. It took the road, swung round and shot away, the bright lights leaping before it, its driver invisible in the gloomy cavern of the interior. Sheila was an expert driver, and misted glass and blurry celluloid never annoyed her seriously. But Kenneth's straining eyes resented their inability to catch a last glimpse of her, and his over-strained nerves made of the trifle a grievance. For the first time in his life it seemed to him that there was something sinister about the appearance of a closely curtained car; something suggestive of a hearse, or of something hateful which he could not name. He turned toward the house with a shiver of disgust at the idea.

IN THE big chair by the fire Mary Ellen rocked silently. She would not look at Kenneth.

Mr. and Mrs. Michaels were ill at ease. They had taken no hand in the incident, but they had been talking it over while Kenneth was out. After a little hesitation, Mrs. Michaels spoke to him.

"I think you did right, Kenneth. She'll have to overcome those spells. It's been a long time since I've seen her——"

The mother's voice trailed into silence. The last time had been the time of Mary Ellen's story. They were all thinking of that.

"If I had been you, Kenneth, she wouldn't have gone without me," said Sheila's father flatly.

"Please——" said Kenneth.

The clock ticked. The wind blew a branch outside the window so that it tapped against the glass. Again, Mary Ellen's story lived in Kenneth's ears. The tapping branch was like a signal, attracting his attention to some uneasy fact.

Sheila should have reached the Walton house. Just this side of it, vacant lots the size of a city block lay along each side of the road. Kenneth pictured the shut-in car passing this point with a recurrence of the shudder of distaste he had felt as he looked after the car. It was early, and the road would not be empty. Cars would be meeting each other and rushing by, each a cavern of darkness carrying its unseen occupants, its bright lights glaring ahead, twin meteors blazing a lonely trail.

Wolf, the collie, went to the door and whined—a long, heart-breaking whine that was almost a howl. Kenneth opened the door for him, forcing himself to speak lightly.

"Sheila got us all nervous, and we've affected the dog."

Fifteen minutes passed, slowly. If the telephone did not ring, he would have to call the Waltons' house himself. He gave it five more minutes. One—two——

It was still sounding in his ear when he caught the voice on the wire:

W. T.—3

"Is this the Michaels' residence? Is Miss Sheila there? I thought she was coming here to have a fitting."

Visions of accident, of collision and side-swipes rushed through Kenneth's mind. Yet these things did not wear the aspect of his fear. It had to do—he was sure—with the closed-in, prisoned look of the car as it had vanished in the night.

The lamp-lit room seemed changed. He thought swiftly. These people did not know that something had happened to Sheila. Kenneth's shoulders squared. He was responsible for whatever had happened. He would be responsible for more. He would not share his knowledge now, not until he had tried to make it more definite. Before he terrified Sheila's father and mother, he would go over the road she should have gone. A stalled motor might have held her somewhere all this time. . . .

But his fear—his horror—why should he detest the idea of Sheila's being alone in the close-curtained car? Was he subconsciously entertaining a fantastic suspicion that she, in this evening's mood, ought not be alone, shut from the eyes of others? That she needed protection from herself, perhaps? Not that—it could not be that! But what nameless, shapeless dread was it that was assailing him in terms he could not define? His doubts colored his fears.

Instinctively he had compressed his reply over the telephone. "In about twenty minutes," had meant to Mrs. Walton that he was bringing Sheila. "You'll find me in bed if you come much later," had meant to him that Mrs. Walton would not bother to call again.

He snatched his hat and overcoat, but dropped the overcoat at once in the darkness outside, and began to run, jamming his hat down to keep the stinging drizzle out of his eyes. He spared breath to call twice to Wolf, but if the dog heard him he made no sign. He thought as he ran

that Mary Ellen and Wolf had both turned against him, and he did not blame them. He had turned against himself. He should have gone with her. In his uncertainty, he knew only that.

He ran until his breath came hard and the perspiration streamed down his body with the rain soaking through his clothes. He did not know how many minutes it was before he came to the lonely stretch of road he had been hurrying to reach. But there was nothing there to see. The road lay straight ahead, a shining canal reflecting the lights of two on-rushing cars. Their headlights flared on him and vanished, and the darkness closed down like a falling curtain of wet, black velvet. The light in Mrs. Walton's house was ahead, dim in the rain and mist. This outskirts of the city was as lonely as many spots ten miles from town.

Kenneth walked now, scanning the shadows to left and right. He passed the Walton house, although he knew that the reasonable thing was to go in there and telephone the Michaels the truth. He had passed no wrecked or stalled car. No car was parked here. Sheila would not have come and gone away without him. It was a case, now, for notifying the police.

And yet he walked on indecisively in the rain like a man possessed by an impulse stronger than himself, unable to face the facts, unable to give up and admit that there was no longer a chance that suddenly he would find Sheila and everything would be all right. Also, he could not go in out of the night and put things into other, less eager hands. The idea was like the idea of a desertion. He was not through yet with the black, streaming road that led on past the house toward which Sheila had started.

He never before had gone past Mrs. Walton's house. Beyond were lights in other houses, sparsely scattered. But before the first of these, a lane-like cinder road led off to the right.

And far away somewhere to the right, a dog, with a voice that reminded him of Wolf, gave a single distressed bark as he hesitated.

To get the general direction of this road and the lay of the land, or because an impulse stronger than his uncertain will turned his footsteps, Kenneth splashed into the narrow channel of deeper darkness. The rain began to fall more heavily.

IT HAD poured for hours. The windows of the Michaels' house shone like squares of yellow topaz under water. At 11 o'clock their brightness faded to a dusky play of firelight and shadow, slanted over by the pallid gleam from the nearest street lamp.

Mr. and Mrs. Michaels had talked over again the events of the evening in the last hour since Mary Ellen had gone to bed. Sheila must learn to control her moods. Yet Kenneth's policy was questionable. And while no slightest uneasiness over their daughter's whereabouts had touched her parents since the telephone call they thought was from her, they had accused both her and Kenneth of thoughtlessness.

"They must have driven downtown. They wouldn't stay at Mrs. Walton's very long."

"They probably got tickets and went to a show, and maybe they didn't have much time to 'phone. They're usually good about that. Sheila usually lets us know what she's doing."

"There's no reason why she shouldn't *always* let us know. It isn't asking much, to want to know when to expect the children home."

The curtained lights upstairs were darkened too, and blinds and windows raised. With the unsatisfied feeling that follows a spoiled evening, Sheila's father and mother fell asleep.

THE persistent, soaking rain diminished at last. A dense white mist crept slowly out of lower-lying places,

along sheltered slopes and behind hedges. It lay deep and heavy on the road.

In the silent house the clock struck twelve. As if at a signal, soft footsteps crept down the stairs. Mary Ellen could stand her motionless vigil no longer. And in that moment a car glided up the hill.

Mary Ellen had pressed her face against the glass in the door. She would not have heard the car, for the motor made no sound. The wheels were shrouded in the creeping mist, so that the black car seemed floating upward on a cloudy stream. Drifting wisps of vapor undulated, snakelike, before the dimmed lights. Mary Ellen bit her lip and shivered as the car turned slowly into the drive and stopped.

"Dead?"

She repeated the word softly, over and over, shivering more and more.

For Kenneth had gotten awkwardly out, holding in his arms a limp thing dressed in Sheila's clothes. He was coming up the drive. His head was bent, but although his face was hidden, despair spoke in every line of his body. Hair matted, tail, head and ears drooping, the collie slunk behind him. As they reached the porch, Mary Ellen heard a smothered whine.

"Dead!"

She did not realize that she had been repeating the word, that she spoke it now with a different intonation. But Kenneth's voice answered her, low-toned and harsh.

"There's death in the air tonight—but I haven't given up. She was breathing when I started with her; afterward, I wasn't sure. But I haven't given up."

There was no sound from above stairs. With one accord, Kenneth and Mary Ellen moved soundlessly. Kenneth laid Sheila gently on the rug before the fire and knelt beside her. An ugly bruise darkened her temple; all the rest of her face was the color of marble. Her wrists were bruised.

"Kenneth—I'll bring some water."

When Mary Ellen returned, Kenneth was rhythmically chafing Sheila's hands. He took the water and wet her forehead, brushing the fine hair straight back in unaccustomed lines, so that the strangeness which illness or death brings to a familiar face became more marked. Mary Ellen sobbed. Kenneth was holding one wrist now, with a look of listening. He had done this at first. Mary Ellen knew that he was feeling for the pulse, and that he had not found it. A very faint pulse was hard to find, unless you were a doctor or a nurse. It might be only very hard to find—very hard to find.

"I'll tell you what happened, Mary Ellen. And then—if she hasn't come around—we'll have to wake your father and mother, and—tell them. I've already phoned for a doctor. I did that on the way. He ought to be here very soon, but we'll have to tell them first. I hoped—she would come to before we had to tell them.

"Anyhow, you knew there was something wrong. We all knew it. But I was too big a fool to admit—until that telephone call. Sheila didn't call; Mrs. Walton called, because Sheila hadn't come. Then I went wild. I felt that I must find her, that I must go directly to her, that no one else could find her in time. So when I went out, I ran over the road she should have gone.

"I had called Wolf, but he didn't answer. So I went alone.

"I passed Mrs. Walton's house, because—I had to. There was a cinder road to the right. I went down it, because—I had to. When I hesitated, I heard a dog bark down that road—a dog with a voice like Wolf's. But—I don't think that decided me. I just had to go.

"I found the car half a mile down that road, where it was woody on both sides—tall trees, growing close. There wasn't much noise for what was going on. Wolf and a man were

rolling in the road, and the man had Wolf by the throat—that was why there wasn't more barking: Wolf was too busy trying to get loose, and to slash the man's throat, for any barking. I don't know how it would have come out. It was very dark. But when I came up, the man let go and got to his feet and ran—Wolf after him. I called Wolf off; I didn't know. . . .

"There was Sheila, doubled up on the floor of the tonneau with that bruise in her temple, with her hands tied together with rope—oh, I can't tell you! But there were little things fallen on the floor—things out of a man's pockets, out of a dope-fiend's pockets, Mary Ellen. And I knew the devil had been hiding there, crouched in the tonneau, when she started. When I made her go alone!

"Not that I would have been much protection. He had an iron bar—I think he used it on her. He could have laid me out, just as cold—who ever looks in the back of a car, at night?

"Oh, Sheila! Sheila!"

AS THOUGH his cry of despair had reached her, Sheila moved. Her eyelids fluttered, and her lips trembled, as at a grievous memory. Her eyes opened suddenly, wide, with a lost look in them. They found Kenneth's, and clung to them. A faint trace of color came back into the white face, as though in that long look she were drawing strength from him—from the steadiness of his eyes, and the love in them. And still she stared, unsatisfied, asking something without a word.

And Kenneth's face slowly whitened until she had the more color of the two, and the relief went out of it, until it was set in anguish—more set and more hopeless than it had been when he brought her in and laid her down, and could not find her pulse.

He had thought that, if only she would open her eyes, the terrors of

the night would turn to blessed relief. And now he knew that the questionings which had lain for so long between them must be faced and answered. He had been overwhelmed with pity for Sheila, driven out by him to a horrible experience that might have ended for her in death—or worse.

But, did he believe that her fears of the early evening were in the nature of a presentiment? That, in her danger, she—or *something* from that other world she believed in, veiled thinly from the world of the senses—had drawn him to her, and guided his feet down the narrow road?

Did he believe that she knew things from some source of knowledge that was closed to him, and to others? Did he believe that she had known of the sinking of the *Zusitania* when it happened? Did he believe that her first sweetheart, Vincent, had been anesthetized by a cross-eyed assistant on a wooden kitchen table, before the natives burst in and made an end?

He did not believe any of those things. And he knew that Sheila believed them, that she would always believe them, that things would always be happening to her to confirm her in her belief—things that to him would be coincidences; strange, but nothing more than coincidences, because they could not be proved anything else. Proof, *proof!* He could not believe things for which there was no proof, and, although he would never try again to bully Sheila into believing as he believed, she would see the doubts in his mind, and shrink from them. Only this evening he had feared that her mind—well, in the future, what might he fear, what might he think? And—Sheila would fear his thoughts.

Things of which they dared not speak, because they had no common language of shared experience, would invade their house of life, as tonight's storm and darkness had forced their way into this sheltered room. And

because they had no common language in which they might cry out to each other in their need, the walls of their house would fall.

All the philosophy of his life Kenneth would now have given gladly for one moment in which he and Sheila might see eye to eye. But he had no hope of such a moment, however fleeting. Reality to him was not a thing of feeling, but of fact.

Down the road there sounded an automobile horn.

"The doctor—at last!"

But Sheila, holding on by his arm, raised herself suddenly to a sitting position.

"Then, I want to tell you something before he comes, Kenneth—you must understand. There must be peace and understanding between us."

The excitement in her voice alarmed Kenneth. Now, of all times, this subject must not be taken up. There was enough in it to hurt deeply, at any time. Now Sheila could not stand it.

"My darling—wait," he murmured.

"No! I am going to tell you—quick, before he comes, and the others come. That blow on my head—I was farther away than you think. I have been with Vincent."

Mute with agony, Kenneth raised his eyes from Sheila's face and looked at Mary Ellen. And even in Mary Ellen's trusting face he read a doubt. Would the others come in, the doctor and her parents, and hear such things as this? Would other people, some day—?

It was best to let her talk now, after all, before the doctor's car reached the drive. But his decision did not matter, in any case. There was no stopping Sheila now.

"I was almost dead. Perhaps I was dead. And at once, Vincent came to me. I don't remember what he said, or how he said it. But I knew that he understood. He has known that I learned to love you, Kenneth, and

that you loved me, and that you—did not believe in me. That you thought I was fanciful, hysterical, maybe a little out of my mind. He has seen this for a long time, and has grieved over it and tried to help. He has seen that awful suffering would grow out of your doubt of me—unless it could be stopped. He saw that long before we felt it, you and I. And he could never reach your mind, and reaching mine would have done no good; it would only have revived old memories.

"And so he tried to touch our lives through another. It is hard to explain, Kenneth; but he made me see again the cross-eyed assistant—the man who was anesthetizing him when—you know.

"I saw him. I knew that Vincent had tried hard to send him to me, to tell his story, to verify my 'dream' to you, so that you would feel differently toward me, so that there would be a *fact* on my side. But something terrible came in, there, and I was afraid—as I was afraid just before I was struck on the head, when I realized that someone was hiding behind me.

"Only, I am sure of this, Kenneth. I came back—I waked—with this in my mind. My fear was like an awful discord breaking in. But, in spite of it, Vincent made me understand this.

"You must go, yourself, at once, and look on the floor of the car, in the tonneau. There are things there that you must see. Perhaps you have seen them, but you must look again. You must go, now, Kenneth, before anyone else can disturb them, before anything can stop you—it means everything—you must go—"

A new note in the hurrying voice warned Kenneth. Sheila must be humored, she must not be allowed to excite herself.

"If you'll quiet down, dear—I hear the doctor coming. I'll leave you with Mary Ellen—and I think I heard your mother speak, upstairs. When they come down they'll be less fright-

ened if you seem calm and like yourself. Yes, I'm going straight out to the car. I'll look at everything."

KENNETH met the doctor at the door, and motioned him inside. He heard Mary Ellen's voice. As he went out, he saw light streaming from the upstairs windows. Mary Ellen would explain. For Sheila's sake, he must know exactly what was on the floor of that car. He had noticed a hypodermic needle, and a "file" of white pills. Besides these, there had been other smallish things, or such was his impression.

Groping on the floor of the car, his fingers closed on a narrow, leather-bound book. He drew it out and climbed into the front seat. He could inspect it briefly by the dash-light. A memorandum book, a dope-fiend's dosage record—he would see just what it was, for he was going to enumerate every object in the car. When he had looked at this, he would feel again, and strike a match. . . .

His thoughts ran on, while he fumbled with a little clasp that closed the book; a surface current of planning, an undercurrent of despair. Here was he, unable to hear what went on in the house, what the doctor said, because he must go through the belongings of a criminal—not in the interest of revenge or justice, which could have waited until his mind was at rest about Sheila's immediate condition, but because he was looking for a message from Vincent—from beyond the grave. And, having found nothing, how would he meet Sheila? What would pass between them when he came to her again, and afterward? His fingers moved slowly, for he did not want to go in too soon.

And suddenly his thoughts stopped. The little book fell open in the

circle of yellow light. Something was slipping out—an old picture of Sheila! In this tramp's pocketbook!

Bending forward eagerly now, all but holding his breath, he fingered the pages. They were soiled, some of them stuck together, but all closely written over with ink, nearly to the end of the book. He turned over to the last written page, and held it close to the light:

"She is more beautiful than the picture. I shall hide in the back seat of the car at night, until I get my chance. If too many come, I can slip out. The garage is always dark.

"I look back over the years, and I can see that I have been moving toward this for a long time. First, after the thing happened that started me on the dope, I used to feel as though *he* were sending me to her. I would remember—the kitchen table with the gash in it, *him* lying on it, unconscious, after I had given him the anesthetic; the beginning of the operation, the cut in his side, and then the brown devils pouring in at the doors and windows—I can feel myself running away again, and afterward, the horrors, and then the morphine. It was while thinking of that at first that I used to feel as though he were sending me to the girl. I took her picture from some of his things that I found, and I used to look at it, and wonder what he wanted me to tell her. And that was strange, for I never saw him before the day he died, and his affairs were nothing to me.

"Then the dope got me altogether. And all I knew was, that *I* must take her—any way I could. What chance would there be for me in any decent way? A down-and-out anesthetist without a job; a dope-fiend, who'll never have another chance; a tramp; a homely brute—ugly as hell, and *cross-eyed!*"

