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KAIVALYA

by
Mrs. Edgar Saltus



THE police have had it for six weeks and they have done nothing."

Sanders emphasized his words with a rap on the table.

"The detectives are up a tree—and why? They follow conventional methods. They argue that Professor Paul Karruck was a man of unusual promise, handsome, wealthy, with everything to live for, and every apparent desire to live. He disappears like a flash of lightning, leaving no trace behind him. There seems to be an utter absence of motive. Love may be counted out. It has been shown that Karruck saw no woman but his brother's wife. His singularly solitary and unblemished life left nothing but his charities to conceal. He did not leave the house on the day he disappeared. He cannot be in hiding. Their theories but leave darkness darker. The facts alone remain. He sent his man on an errand at 4 o'clock, locking, as was his custom, the door of his study behind him. When the man returned at half after 4 the door was still locked. Supposing the professor was engaged in some important experiment, he went away and returned at 5. Still no response. Becoming worried after repeated knocking and

calling, he forced the lock with the help of the butler, only to find the room empty.

"The door was the sole exit, and it could be locked but from the inside. Two windows open into the street, but no man could jump three stories without being observed, to say nothing of being killed. A group of children were playing on the sidewalk in front of the house all the afternoon, and they were questioned closely. So were the neighbors opposite. No one had seen him, or had noticed anything peculiar about the house. They arrested the valet and butler, as you know. The former, whose life Karruck had saved, was all but a slave to his master. The utter absence of motive was too apparent to hold him. He is stunned by the loss and cares little what becomes of himself. The butler could easily prove an alibi. He had been under the eyes of the cook and housemaid all day, who, frightened by the valet's cry for help, had accompanied him upstairs where he helped to break in the door. The servants had nothing to gain and everything to lose by the calamity. Let the police attend to them—they know their trade no doubt," Sanders went on, "but we knew the man—we were

his nearest friends, and inasmuch as he differed from any one we ever knew, so does this mystery concerning him. We are the men to fathom it if such a thing is possible. We must go at it step by step, and by eliminating the impossible discover at last the possible, from which we must dig the truth."

"You are right, old man, we will."

It was Marix who spoke.

"The whole thing looks spooky to me, but I remember what Karruck once said in reference to such things: 'There is nothing mysterious or miraculous,' he said, 'but all these things are the effects of causes within natural laws. The supernatural of yesterday is the natural of today. When the laws that govern these things are understood, they will appear as simple and commonplace as does now the telephone or the telegraph.' We must, as you say, take the matter in hand. It is a duty to our friend—to ourselves—and I agree with you that we must eliminate all idea of murder and kidnaping and seek for a solution on another and far more difficult plane. We must piece together all the unusual trifles we can remember, no matter how absurd they may seem, and the whole may give us some foundation to build on."

Sanders put his glass down upon the table with a bang.

"I can think of nothing that has much bearing on the case, yet trifles may indicate the importance of some line of action. You remember, of course, the word: KAIVALYA. It stands in raised letters over the door of his study, and I have seen it also in the case of his watch and on the cover of a diary. I spoke to him about it one day. 'What escutcheon is that?' I asked. 'The word is very peculiar. What does it mean?'"

"'It is Sanskrit,' Karruck answered after a pause, 'and it means—well, I can hardly explain it in English, but literally it means isolation—"

supreme attainment. It is of the soul I speak.'"

"'Isolation!' I exclaimed. 'How unnatural! Are you a machine or a man? Have you no human feelings?'"

"Karruck smiled. 'You misunderstand me,' he said. 'You do not take the word in the sense I mean. One can only attain supreme isolation when reunited to the lost side of his soul. It is somewhere seeking expression and seeking him, and as the positive cannot exist without the negative, the objective without the subjective, so by the same law must the two which are one potentially reunite, a perfected entity.'

"I was silent for some moments. His words were wild and whimsical to me, and then I saw dimly what he meant. 'Are you speaking of a woman?' I stammered.

"'Yes,' he said, ignoring my surprise. 'The soul is sexless. As men and women we represent the duality of all atomic life, but at best we are only one end of the pole. Every positive must have a negative, and the reverse. It is a law of nature, and sometime, somewhere, we will find the other end of the pole, and then the electricity so generated will make all things possible, even the Kaivalya of which I told you.'

"'Are you speaking of an affinity?' I asked in astonishment. 'Do you believe in such an absurd idea?'"

"'I do not believe; I know,' he said shortly and with such emphasis that I let the subject drop. The incident itself is trivial but it shows that Karruck was not the scientific esthete we thought. We have known him some years, but none of us knew him in his youth. Perhaps he may have suffered for a woman—who knows?'"

Marix shook his head.

"'It's all very poetic,' he said, 'but Karruck must have spoken in the abstract. He was scientific or nothing. I, too, will tell you of an incident which I have always remembered. We were

sitting in his study one day looking over some old parchments. One of them was especially interesting to Karruck. It alluded, he said, to a fourth dimension for which he had been seeking in vain. 'Have you thought,' he said, 'of that which might be revealed could the fourth dimension be found? Realize for a moment the vast undiscovered realm which exists between the slow vibrations which produce heat, and the rapid vibrations which produce light. Creations unseen and unknown can exist in the infinite interval. Could we discover the fourth dimension, a new universe might stand revealed. The possibilities are limitless. There is no space: by vibration all things are united, to the farthest star of the uttermost universe. Might we not find that vast realm peopled as well by those invisible to mortal eyes and impalpable to mortal touch?'

"Karruck was more enthusiastic than usual. The subject fascinated him, and he spoke of it again and again. We were walking up Cheap-side one day when he pointed to an advertisement painted on a sign.

"'Look there!' he said. I did, and as we drew nearer the letters vanished. 'Look again,' he said. This time I saw the letters re-appear, but the sign read differently.

"'It is the principle of the thing,' he explained, 'the possibilities it contains. Those signs are painted on narrow strips of wood placed at a certain angle. You can read it—presto, you can't. The sign is still there, but the angle has changed. Again—presto, and you read another sign unnoticed before, though both signs were there all the time.'

"We walked on in silence for some moments. Karruck seemed lost in thought. Then he spoke again. 'Marix,' he said, 'that sign has suggested possibilities of a far-reaching character. Could we discover the fourth dimension, perspective would

not exist: in other words we could see all sides of an object at once—see through it as it were, or we would be unable to see it at all. The thing is possible. I am here beside you—I go into the fourth dimension and presto, I am still with you, but you can see me no more. Yet might I not be visible to a universe distinct yet interconnected with our own?'

"I listened and let him talk on. You know how he used to sit here in the club beside us and talk on some subject equally abstract and abstruse. He could theorize, as we all knew, yet Paul Karruck was a man to put his theories to the test. His disappearance is so unusual in its way, that I believe the devil himself could hardly find him."

Marix paused and then I spoke up.

"I CAN," I said, "give you something more tangible to build on," and as I spoke I drew a glove from my pocket.

"It has been in my mind to speak for some time," I continued, "but you will understand better when you hear my story. I live, you know, but a few squares from Karruck's, and although I was in no sense more intimate than you are, I saw more of him because I was always within reach. I dropped in frequently during his experiments and he used to go on as if I was a chair or a table. Occasionally he left word to admit no one, but as a usual thing he was pleased to chat over his work and explain his latest experiments. I was called in, as you know, on the day of his disappearance. I was his nearest friend, and it was quite natural that Andrus should send for me first. I made an examination of the room before any one else was admitted: the servants were too frightened to do more than weep, and you know that I found everything as it had been, and nothing missing. It has been gone over since by Dr. Karruck and his wife, who were absent

on that day, and by detectives and police as well. What I told was true, but I omitted something: I found this glove on the floor. The thing itself is trivial," I continued, "but I put the glove in my pocket and said nothing. As he saw no woman I felt that it must be some souvenir of the past. Why was it there on the floor on that day? I felt at first that I must keep it sacred for his sake, but now I begin to wonder if a woman could possibly have been there. Yet, how did she get in, or how did she go out? The incident is more than peculiar. If you examine the glove carefully you will notice a small 'K' marked with ink on the inside. Does it, too, stand for Kaivalya? It is the only evidence we have, and yet, does it not leave us less to build on?"

Marix held the glove to his nose.

"Have you noticed," he said, "a peculiar perfume about it? It smells like a mixture of amber and chypre. Not a scent a man would use, and it seems fresh. I am certainly no detective, but it appears to me that the glove has recently been worn, and that, too, by a lady who was more than ordinarily excited. The palm of the glove is torn, and the tip of one finger is still slightly inside out as if it had been removed in great haste. Let us find the woman who wore it. and—"

"Just a word," Sanders interrupted as he touched me on the arm. "You told me last week that Dr. Karruck asked you to occupy the house pending some solution, as it could not be left vacant, and his own practise would prevent a change of address. The servants are still there. Why not accept with the proviso that you take us with you? I believe we could work more intelligently on the premises, and Paul himself would have said that the room impregnated with his emanations of thought would in itself be conducive to success. Let us move in tomorrow and work on along our

lines. A week hence we can compare facts and theories."

We did as he said, and the following evening we were duly installed in the house—an old-fashioned one in Highbury. Karruck's study was our sanctum and we sat there evening after evening thinking and planning.

AT THE end of the week we began to compare notes.

"I have nothing, absolutely nothing, to build on," Marix began first. "I hardly know whether to speak of it or not—it is so absurd—but I have imagined a very peculiar thing. From time to time I have sat in Karruck's chair—the large one by the desk. In one position my condition seems perfectly normal, but when I move the chair in a parallel line to the desk I have the impression of sitting in a circle of cool air, and at such times your voices seem muffled, and as if they came from a far distance. It is ridiculous of course—an hallucination—but since we agreed to speak of every trifle I mention this."

I looked at Sanders, and he looked at me. Words were unnecessary, and Marix understood.

"Have you both felt it? It's extraordinary," he exclaimed, "and altogether beyond me. I was beginning to fear the thing had turned my brain, but how could it possibly affect us all alike? I tell you frankly I think the whole matter is too deep for us to fathom. Some alchemist or metaphysician might solve it, but it unfits me for business. It is well enough in the abstract, but phenomena of this kind are very unwholesome for everyday diet."

Sanders got up and walked to and fro with his hands in his pockets, and we waited for him to speak.

"I give it up," he said at length. "It is as Marix says—beyond us. We thought we had stumbled upon a clue in the glove, but I have discovered the owner and our theories are

knocked from under us. It was left there, accidentally no doubt, by Mrs. Kasimer Karruck, which explains the 'K' we thought meant Kaivalya. She may not know that she lost it, but I will explain how I know it is hers. I called there on Thursday last. It seemed to me that the doctor better than any one else could throw some light on our darkness. He is a physician, but a scientist as well, and I remember that Karruck regarded his brother as a genius whose discoveries in his peculiar line of work were so unusual, and of such a nature, that he could but imperfectly be understood or appreciated. I found him at home and told him plainly why I had come. I explained our anxiety to probe the matter and find a solution within causes comprehensible to us. The doctor listened attentively.

"From your standpoint," he said, "you are right, but your premises are erroneous. I miss my brother far more than his most intimate friend can dream of. We were necessary to each other. His evenings were usually spent with me or mine with him, as we were both engaged in scientific researches. Our gardens join in the rear, as you know, and we could go through the gate in the fence and avoid the bother of going around the square. He came over on the night preceding his disappearance, and I noted that he was unusually excited. "Kasimer," he said, "you know how I have been searching for the fourth dimension, how it has haunted me from childhood. Today I found it. I will not give my secret even to you until I put its possibilities to practise. Of one thing, however, I am sure. I can go into the fourth dimension and disappear entirely from your sight. I exist, but you cannot see me. What puzzles me is this: can I as readily return to three dimensions and to visible expression?" My theory,' the doctor went on, 'is this. Paul has put his discovery to the test. He has found

his way into the fourth dimension and from sight. He is visiting an undiscovered country. Whether he remains from choice or because he is unable to return I cannot say, but this I know: a man who is clever enough to find his way into the fourth dimension will ultimately be able to find his way out. We can but wait. I appreciate your anxiety, but I have no fears. It would be unwise to speak of this openly. We would run a decided risk of being locked up. I, too, have been experimenting in another field, and have met with remarkable success, but of its nature I cannot speak now.'

"He might have said more, but at that moment a woman entered the room. Never have I seen a more beautiful or pathetic face. Her large dark eyes were infinitely sad, but her expression brightened when she saw me. 'My wife,' Doctor Karruck explained, and she held out her hand with a smile. I was dumb for a moment, and then I took her hand in mine. The gloves she wore were identical with the one we have. Unconscious of my confusion, she removed them after a time to pour tea. It was then I had a chance to inspect them while the doctor was busy for a moment at the telephone. I held them to my nose, and my breath came quickly as I recognized the peculiar scent. On the wrist inside they were marked with the letter 'K'. The incident explains itself. She must have forgotten or mislaid it in the studio. It is clear as crystal. I said nothing to the lady. I did not wish to expose myself to ridicule. One thing is certain: we can do nothing. If it is as the doctor explains it, it would take a legion of angels to find him and bring him back. We must yield to superior force or end by going into gibbering idiocy."

"Stop! Didn't you hear a noise? It seemed outside in the hall."

Marix started as he spoke, and Sanders, too, looked rather uncomfortable.

I was about to add, "Hush—listen," when we heard the knob of the door rattle, and then the door itself opened very slowly and we heard a step. There was no one in sight, not even a stray cat. We looked at each other in silence. Our overwrought nerves were susceptible to trifles. I was about to go into the hall to see if some open window had created sufficient draft to open it, when slowly, but none the less surely, it closed as softly as it had opened. The situation was not one for words.

I LOOKED at Sanders and Marix and saw in their faces the reflection of my bewilderment. The silence seemed to harden, and then cracked like a nut with a wild mirthless laugh. I felt my knees tremble and my heart seemed to stop beating. Then the laugh died away, and from out of the emptiness Doctor Kasimer Karruck emerged.

"Did I frighten you or did you think I was Paul returning from the fourth dimension?" he asked. "You didn't seem prepared to give him a warm welcome."

The doctor dropped into a seat and lighted a cigar. Too flabbergasted for speech, we sat down, too.

"It is a joke on you all," the doctor laughed again, and his laughter jarred upon me as a discord. "You refuse to believe in certain natural laws because they are beyond your comprehension, and yet you are all frightened into fits at the simple opening and closing of a door, and are one and all ready to proclaim it supernatural."

It's one thing to know you're a fool, and another to have some one discern it—and I felt far from friendly.

"You must admit it was rather sudden," I stammered at length. Sanders and Marix were as mute as owls.

"It was, yet I must be off as quickly," said the doctor. "But first I will tell you how I came unobserved. I am a physician, as you know, but my specialty is hypnotism. I never give anodynes—I prefer the aid of the former and my success has encouraged me to continue. Years of practise have given me force and control. You heard me turn the knob of the door. I was there as I am now, I was with you in the flesh all the time, but the instant I opened the door and you came within my range of vision, I hypnotized you into the belief that you saw nothing. This is accomplished by three factors: the pineal gland, in which concentration is generated; the optic nerve; and the will, which is fluidic. My positive thought telegraphed the suggestion, and your more negative minds accepted it. *Voila! Me voici!*"

We had gradually regained our balance during the explanation, and we stormed the doctor with questions.

"You are a wizard!" exclaimed Marix wildly. "I never saw anything like it in my life. Do you use this power in every-day life? Could you, for instance, go out for a walk, and make yourself invisible to those about you?"

The doctor threw away his cigar and arose.

"No, indeed," he said. "I might render myself invisible to a few, but the vast majority would see me as I am. It is hypnotism, as I told you before, but I can affect only those within my range of vision, and only then when I can send the suggestion with sufficient force. You were but three, you were nervous, and negative to my direct suggestion."

"It's all very well in the abstract," Sanders ventured to say, "but I'll admit I would not relish it as a steady diet. Does your wife enjoy these manifestations?"

The doctor paused for a moment, and his lips curled in an ugly sneer.

I had thought that he resembled Paul, but in that glance I saw a demon soul.

"My wife is mine," he spoke with unusual emphasis, "and she enjoys my pleasure. My will is her duty, or—"

He paused and put out his hand.

"I must bid you good-night and be off. I am going down to Brighton to assist at an important operation, and came in only to see how you were getting on. Next time I'll knock at the door."

Again I noticed the sneer on his lips. We went down and saw him out of the house, and then we breathed freely.

"I've reached the limit!" exclaimed Sanders. "Out of this place I go this very hour. It's all very well to be practical, but I'll be blessed if I can see everything upside-down and not doubt my own existence."

"Since you feel so shaken up, old man, I think I had better go with you."

Marix tried to conceal the anxiety he felt.

"You are not fit, and I tell you frankly that I didn't like the doctor's manner at all—or the doctor either."

I argued, but they stood firm. Leave they would, even if the house burned to the ground in consequence. I was never considered a coward, but I felt a positive uneasiness at the thought of spending the night there alone. We talked it over as calmly as we could, but half an hour later I saw them both off and told the servants that we would be absent for some days.

THEN I thought of the doctor. He must be informed as well, but I remembered, too, that he had gone out of London that night.

I thought it over again and again. One thing was clear. The doctor, in spite of his apparent desire to have us near him in our investigations, was really most anxious to be rid of us, and had accomplished it most effec-

tually. We were powerless to drag Paul back from the fourth dimension. Nervous prostration and insanity would follow did we not abandon the idea at once. Five minutes later I opened the vestibule door and paused a moment to light my cigar. Some one stumbled up against me in the darkness.

"I want Mr. Haddon at once. Mrs. Karruck wishes to see him."

I recalled the voice of their butler.

"I am Mr. Haddon," I told him, and before I had time to wonder why he had called me we made our way around the corner to the doctor's.

"You may go right up to the library; Madam is expecting you," said the maid who admitted us, and I noticed a glimmer of light at the top of the stairs where a woman stood watching. In a moment I was by her side.

"Hush! This way," she said, and I followed her into a sumptuously furnished study.

Heavy draperies hung from the doors and windows, and the floor was covered with rich oriental rugs, which formed a harmonious background for the massive furniture of carved olive wood. Within the room the woman gained confidence.

"I am Mrs. Karruck, and you—you are Wilber Haddon. I sent for you because you were Paul's friend. You must help me. I am a woman. My fragile hands cannot force the lock, but you can do it for me. You will—you *must*. It is there . . . there! But I will tell you first—I will explain. It happened so long ago. We were children together, Paul and I. He was all, everything to me—a part of my very soul. The future stretched as paradise before us. I could not imagine myself apart from him. I felt that we had been indivisible since the sunrise of creation. He went away for a time, and then Kasimer came. I feared and hated him as one does a snake, but he was not discouraged. He is, as you know, a hyp-

notist, but of such things I knew nothing then, and I became the victim of his spells. Under his influence my hate melted away. Paul's letters were infrequent, and—my God! how did it happen?—he persuaded me to become his wife. Better that I had died! Life became a remittent death. Too late I saw him as he was. Paul returned, but we were separated forever. Kasimer's demon work was accomplished. He had divided our bodies, but he was powerless to separate our souls. The knowledge maddened him, and he forced me to live here within the sound of Paul's voice that he might torture me the more. Freedom is a lost word. I am never free from his influence. When he leaves this house, he leaves me a prisoner. He drags me into this den and hypnotizes me into the belief that I am turned to stone. When his mind is focused upon me he can keep me in that condition for any length of time. This he did tonight, but he must have expended a greater amount of positive force elsewhere after he left me, which detracted proportionately, and as he is unable to focus his powers at two places simultaneously he lost his control over me."

Her explanation was evident. In appearing to us as he had done, he had relinquished his hold over her. Tears streamed down her face and I could see that she was profoundly agitated.

"Let me help you," I said softly. "I was Paul's friend."

"Paul's friend!" she gasped. "God knows he needed one! When I went to him for the last time, he said . . . dear heaven! what am I thinking of? You know my husband, but I have been drilled to fear and obey his shadow. He is a genius, but primarily a scoundrel. You will help me to undo his work."

A despair too great for words transcended the beauty of her face, and her eyes were wild and burning. I

thought she might be going mad, but, fearing to increase her excitement, I followed her to a cabinet at the end of the room.

"Here—it is here! Break open the door and I will show you," she cried.

Her emotion communicated itself to me. I did not stop to reason why, but, taking a steel poker from the fireplace, I put it into the lock and twisted. At another time I doubt if I could have more than bruised my hands, but her anxiety gave me unlooked-for strength, and I broke the lock as a boy could crack a nut. In a moment the door swung open, and Mrs. Karruck put in her hand and drew out a bottle of amber-colored liquid.

"At last, my Paul—at last!" she gasped.

A sense of nameless crime crept over me as a chill.

"Look!"

Mrs. Karruck raised the bottle at arm's length, and I gazed at her in fascination.

"You do not know the demon's work, but I will tell you. He has discovered a process whereby he can reduce anything living to a few ounces of liquid in five minutes. Look—this—is—Paul—Paul!"

"By the hypnotic power which he alone used he went to Paul's room, passed all the servants unseen and there—O God! how can I say it!—he did his demon work and returned as well unseen. 'Look,' he said to me, 'look at your lover! See to what I reduce all those who oppose my will' I have begged him to let me follow Paul—to put an end to my misery—but he will not. If I will not live for him, I must live to suffer."

"Madam," I said slowly, the horror of it gradually permeating me. "what you tell me transcends the limit of human reason, yet I believe you. It is a nameless horror—a thing to make the bravest shudder. Tell

me what I can do for you. Speak as you would to a brother."

"Avenge us. The world will not believe your story. It is too wild, too fantastic; but you must make them know it. I—I shall escape his power. He has divided our bodies for a time—not our souls—our souls are forever one. Promise, promise to avenge us!"

The pathos in her voice was heart-breaking, and she looked me full in the face as might a wounded doe. I gave her the promise she asked for, and my sincerity must have assured her, for she answered quickly, "Then my work is done," and I read a prayer in her eyes.

"Paul! Paul!" she continued, her voice trembling. "At last, my beloved, at last we both escape! My soul is one with you now, and my body soon shall be also. The broken at last shall be mended, and the divided made whole."

Something in her eyes filled me with fear and stiffened my tongue and my arm. Too late I saw her purpose, and before I could move or cry out, she had raised the vial to her lips and swallowed the contents. As one in a dream, I carried her over to the sofa, and felt for the heart that had already ceased to beat.

And then—how can I explain it? My brain seemed to reel, for as I stood looking down upon her beautiful chiseled face, it seemed curiously to change, and Paul—our lost Paul—appeared to look up at me. As one entranced, I continued to gaze and gaze. Sometimes I could see her features and again they were those of Paul. It was not Paul, nor yet the woman, but an absorption, a merging of the two into a perfect whole. The mystery of the horror stunned me, and I covered my face with my hands and groaned aloud. It may have been three minutes (not more), but when I looked again at the sofa it was empty. With a cry I fell down upon it, every nerve in my body trembling, while my hand was almost unconsciously attracted to a tiny spot of sticky yellowish moisture. Then I fainted.

WHEN did this happen? How can I count time here? They tell me that I am crazy, and they laughed at my tale of torture and crime. People always laugh at what they cannot understand. Must I, a sworn avenger, remain in this vile place? Will no one listen? I can at least send out this appeal for help.