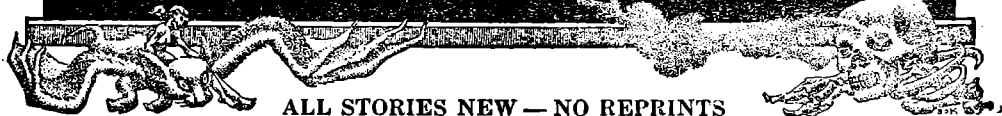


Weird Tales



JANUARY, 1950

Cover by Matt Fox

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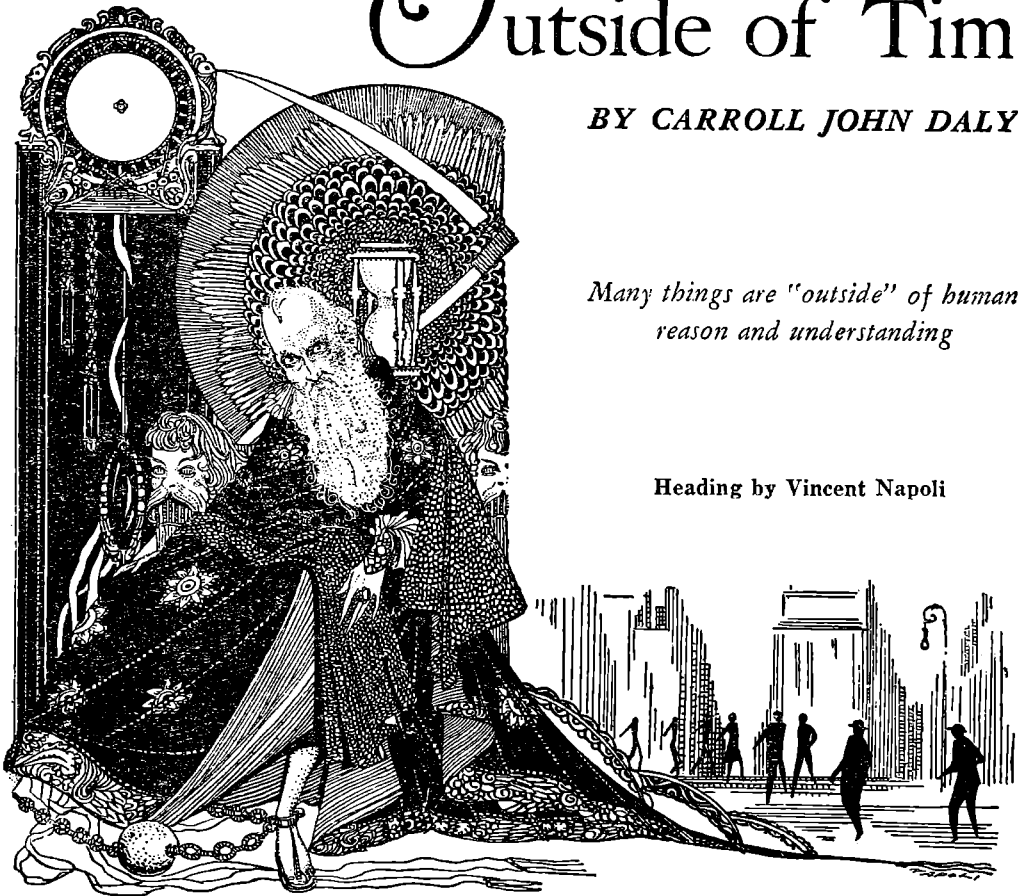
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Outside of Time

BY CARROLL JOHN DALY

*Many things are "outside" of human
reason and understanding*

Heading by Vincent Napoli



THEY call me simply L. D. or The Lazy Dean. I have come to accept it as a title both of esteem and affection. The boys at the university started it. The faculty took it up. They mean a lazy body and not a lazy mind. I am not so well informed on the happenings of the day. I use my reading time for the things that others do not read.

I am much more interested in what does not appear in the newspapers than what does appear. There are many better fitted to understand and explain the everyday happenings of life. I like to live by the side of the road—but the side of a side road.

For years I have enjoyed a very unofficial position at the school. I am a good listener and a good believer. Will I believe in the impossible? I don't have to believe in the impossible, for I have eliminated the word impossible from my own lexicon. I find

things improbable but nothing more. Too many strange things happen.

It is a pleasant saying around the university when one relates anything that strains the credulity of the academic mind: "Tell it to the Lazy Dean."

So the boys often come to me with improbable happenings. Even the faculty, half-apologetically, with a pretense that it is all in good fun—but watching me furcively to see how I take it.

It is surprising how busy I am.

It is with a feeling of satisfaction and comfort that I sit down with my pipe and listen to one of our students confide to me things he would not even breathe to his closest friend.

So it was with that feeling that I opened the door of my rooms on the second floor of the museum building to Tommy Slater of the medical school. Tommy was a medium-

sized rather slim dark young man who if he avoided surgery and didn't specialize would make a remarkably fine family doctor. Easy going, pleasant of manner—mild, friendly bright blue eyes and a generous humorous mouth. He would never set the river on fire but then it was my opinion that a good doctor never would. Nature cures. A good doctor brings simply comfort and confidence to the sick.

There were lines under Tommy's eyes and the likable little twist to the corner of his mouth was more pronounced. Tommy was the school hero though he hadn't been near the university since it happened almost a week ago. He was New York City's hero. Indeed a national and international hero who had swept all other news from the press and the radio and no doubt from the minds of men and women.

He saw me look at the clock for although I kept late hours it was then five minutes before twelve.

"Come, come, L. D." His laugh was a forced one. "You never turn down your fellowman day or night. I know it is late and I expect it will be much later still before you get rid of me. I've come to smoke a pipe with you."

TOMMY assisted me in pushing the other easy chair close to the fire. Despite my gesture he waited until I was seated. Then he sat down opposite me—stretched his feet out toward the fire—placed a cigarette between his lips and lighted it. Though he always talked of smoking a pipe with me I had never seen him smoke one. I filled my pipe slowly, and lighted it, smiled over at him and waited.

"I hope," he said suddenly, "that you have read a paper lately—or if you haven't someone told you what was in it."

"Yes," I told him. "I have read all the papers; seen all the pictures—even went to the news-reel theatre twice. Surely you received my note of congratulation."

"If I did I never read it." He inhaled deeply. "I have had—literally thousands and thousands of letters. Hundreds of women want to marry me. Hundreds of people want to shower me with money—as many more want to deprive me of that money before

I even receive it. I've been offered fabulous amounts from the movies—and one night club offered me ten thousand dollars for a single appearance." He sat up a little straighter and leaned forward into the light. "Look at me," he said. "And don't say I've worn myself out—run myself down mentally and physically by overwork here at the school."

"No—Tommy," I told him. "I would never say that."

"Of course you wouldn't." He permitted himself a weak grin. "Do you know I've been to see Dean Stone—that august head of this whole institution. I saw him once before from a distance. I didn't think he would breathe the same air with me, and do you know he tripped all over the foot-high softness in his rug trying to shake hands with me."

"He should." I nodded. "No matter how lightly you take it. It was a very courageous act—a very noble one—the school is proud of you."

"Baloney." The blue eyes sparkled into life. "I did nothing but reach up and lift the girl out of the air."

"Yes—you told that to the reporters. It has been discussed here at the university. There is general agreement that you put it very modestly, Tommy—and they have been proud of the way you have conducted yourself. Modesty—"

"Was not my strong point," he cut in. "I'm ashamed not to be modest. I feel like a crook and a cheat. That is exactly what I did do. Simply reach up and lift her out of the air."

"But the girl fell from the penthouse terrace—and you caught her in your arms and held her. The papers may play it up a bit for they say there was not so much as a scratch on her."

"There wasn't." Tommy nodded vigorously. "Not so much as a pin prick." And very seriously, "Did you read the number of floors she fell?"

"Yes—fourteen. I don't think you have anything to be ashamed of, Tommy. It was a remarkable piece of daring and courage."

"Fourteen stories," he said again. "I spread my legs apart—braced myself—my knees gave slightly and I stayed erect and

held her so. I'm quoting that from the newspaper accounts. Now—did you ever think what became of the force of gravity? Do you—do you think that possible?"

"Possible—well I would have thought it highly improbable—but it did happen. You did catch her. You didn't fall down. Countless people saw you. A news-reel camera—" He was looking intently at me. "What is it, Tommy?" I asked.

"Go over it for me please," he said. "Tell me what you read and what you saw in the news-reel. Tell it to me as you might to a stranger who hadn't heard the full account."

"Do you think there is such a stranger? All right, Tommy, if you want it that way. Wanda Lou Sherman, age eighteen, only daughter of Johnson H. Sherman, multimillionaire steel magnate, was playing table tennis on the terrace of their penthouse apartment in the upper fifties on Park Avenue. It used to be ping-pong when I played it. In her enthusiasm for the game—or was it one of the few remaining English balls that made her dash to the little wall. But she did dash—jumped upon it—grabbed at the ball and for some unaccountable reason—and such reasons, Tommy, are always unaccountable—the heavy sturdy steel fencing bent over and she pitched out toward the street—fourteen floors below. So far we are correct?"

"Quite correct." Tommy was very serious. "Go on."

"Very well. It was before the dinner hour—rather five o'clock. The street was crowded, for there was a wedding across the way. The girl screamed as she fell. People looked up. The camera man turned and so got the picture. Then, Tommy, you dashed out. Caught the falling body—staggered—nearly fell. But held steady and saved the girl's life. Am I to go on about the part you are going to marry her and learn the steel business and—"

"No. We can skip that. How many people do you suppose saw me dash out and catch the girl?"

"Everyone who was there I suppose. Even those who didn't see you. That is human nature, Tommy. They said you just dashed across the street—I don't think any of them

were questioned as to the direction you came from."

"Do you remember the old lady in the shawl—in the news-reel? What she said?" And when I seemed puzzled. "She said I just appeared as if from nowhere and had her in my arms."

"Is that important?"

"So important," said Tommy, "that it is the only true statement made. Besides mine that I simply reached up and lifted her out of the air."

TOMMY got up then and paced the room.

"Listen, L. D." He talked as he walked. "I am serious about gravity and the speed of the falling body. Common sense would tell anyone that a giant of a man, let alone a shrimp like me, could not have caught a girl—even though she was only five-feet-two and weighed little more than a hundred pounds—after she had fallen fourteen stories. We'd both have been dashed to the street, dozens of bones broken. Can you believe that?"

"I believe that nature can reach great heights at times. Let us say that nature suddenly gave you super-human strength. Or perhaps more simply that you arose to the occasion."

"Anything," he smiled at me now, the little wistful smile again, "is possible. But you see there is a simpler solution to the whole thing. The truth—that I just reached up and lifted her out of the air. I saw Dean Stone. I nearly blurted it out to him. I wanted to see how the truth would strike a cold-blooded, practical man. I actually threatened him with the truth. And do you know what he said? 'The truth can never hurt anyone.' Do you believe that?"

"Well—no, Tommy. It is simply a stock phrase of the good dean's. He couldn't very well advise you to lie about it." And after a long wait. "Are you going to tell me the truth, Tommy? I don't think it will hurt either of us."

"No," said Tommy. "It can't hurt you. You've talked to men who have seen so much—experienced—the—well other men would call them mad. And you didn't have them committed—or anything like that."

"No." I smiled. "Nothing like that."

"But it could be all an illusion, couldn't it?"

"If life is an illusion, yes."

"Could that be?"

"Anything could be—but I don't believe that probable. You see, Tommy, I hear a great many things from a great many people. Each one taken individually seems beyond belief—but when you take them altogether you have a great deal of evidence that makes you believe. We do not deny the stars because we cannot see them on a cloudy night."

"So you have heard about everything?"

"I hope not everything, Tommy." And I meant that. "Life would be very dull indeed if I did not expect—at least always hope—to hear something different, something new to me—new to man."

"Well I've got it." Tommy stood looking down at me. "If it weren't for the girl, and the newspapers and newsreels, I'd question my own sanity. But odd and impossible as it sounds it is the only thing that explains the truth about Wanda Lou Sherman . . . and my lifting her out of the air. It doesn't make a hero out of me—but it explains how I happened to take the girl in my arms—with such ease."

"Does it, Tommy?" I waited. And then, "Are you going to tell me?"

"I don't know," he said. And almost at once he sat down and told it to me. It was new to me. I think it will be to you.

"THIS is real," he started. "No dream about it. I was never more awake in my life. And never more sober. She saw to that."

"Who saw to it, Tommy?"

"The girl—Ruth. You know I met her in the Astor Library. Some research for Dr. Cluseman. I thought at the time I was rather clever about it—but later I knew she had arranged it. She told me that. I had hours and hours of copying to do. She did it for me—in no time. One hundred and twenty pages of typewritten material—in no time."

"Just how long is—no time, Tommy?"

"Well." His smile was certainly wistful. "I handed her the paper—the blank

paper. She took it in her left hand and handed it back to me in her right—all neatly typed. In no time."

"That," I said, "was very remarkable." But I listened more intently.

"It was that much more remarkable when you consider that she didn't have any typewriter and they wouldn't have allowed one there in that room of the library."

"I suppose," I tried to help him along, "that you might have fallen asleep—or you didn't look at the clock. Or that she was a very beautiful girl."

"I did look at the clock. She asked me to. No time at all elapsed. Yes, L. D. She was a very beautiful girl. Ruth or no Ruth she's an Arabian. The sort of Arabian the movies would conjure up from their idea of a story from the Arabian Nights."

"I suppose there was some simple explanation."

"Oh, yes, L. D." He laughed nervously. "There was an explanation—simple enough at least from the girl's point of view. That was the beginning. I saw Ruth often after that. She looked about twenty but she was—we'll come to her age later. I don't want to give you more than you can swallow at one time."

"I've swallowed a lot in my day. I expect to swallow a lot more."

"You will." For a moment his smile was boyish. "I'll feed it to you in small doses. Anyway—as it was fed to me. Twice after that the same thing happened. Her doing my work in no time. You see we were going together steadily. Dining at little out of the way restaurants—foreign ones. By the way she spoke at least a dozen languages like a native—if that surprises you."

"It interests me. Go on."

"Well we had finals coming up you know and there was a lot for me to do—and I was complaining about not having enough time. Ruth laughed at me about that. She said—I remember distinctly what she said and how she put it. She said, 'You don't need more time, Tommy. You need less time. In fact what you need is the absence of time.'"

"Did she explain that?"

"No—not then. Later it was explained to me. But she did the hocus-pocus of receiving the blank paper and handing it

back to me with my rough notes and stuff I had to copy neatly and accurately all typed out for me. In no time, understand."

"I understand, Tommy."

"Do you?" The corners of his mouth twisted up again. "That is more than I did, L. D. Ruth was very wise and very clever—and we liked each other very much. I knew about myself—and peculiarly I seemed to know how she felt. She was not like her friend. Very serious of course—but lots of fun too."

"Her friend, Tommy?"

"Her friend was older. Still not over twenty-five. Calendar years I better put it. I felt as though I were on exhibition. This woman looked at me with eyes that seemed to peer from back through the ages. I thought of that when I first saw her. She was a very beautiful woman—but too serious—as if the burdens of the world rested on her shoulders."

"She had a name?" I asked.

"Yes—she had a name. Shall we let it go at that? Anyway I was with Ruth constantly. Then she gave me the first real jar. Do you know what she did, L. D.? She took me by both hands—looked long and steadily at me—and disappeared. Just like that."

"Just like what?"

"Well—she was there and then she was not there. I didn't know then—but I know now what happened. Exactly what happened."

He fastened his clear blue eyes on me as if to see ahead. Not how I was taking it so far. But how I was going to take it. If he would go on maybe. But he did go on.

"She came back." Tommy Slater threw himself down in the chair again. "She was holding my hands—and looking at me. Appearing out of thin air as the magician might say. I know I said something particularly inane like 'You should go on the stage' or something quite as silly. And adding something about it being rather embarrassing to be married to her."

"I remember her answer to that—and the soft ring of her laugh. She said, 'Oh, but it couldn't happen if we were married. We'd simply disappear from other people together.' Don't ask me to explain that now. I'll come to it soon enough. It's clear enough

to understand if you accept it all—as a whole. I mean the whole thing when I tell it to you.

"CERTAINLY I was in love with her. Why not? Certainly I had tried to kiss her. And that frightened her. I don't mean that she was coy—or that she seemed to find me repulsive. I mean simply that it frightened her. She warned me against it very seriously—and very solemnly—held both my hands when she did." He seemed to think for a moment then. "It must have been along about that time that she put the question to me.

"'Tommy,' she asked me, 'would you like to live forever?'

"'I wouldn't mind if it was with you,' I told her, never being slow on the up-take. She looked at me a long time before she laughed. As if—well as if she wanted to believe it—but thought it came out too pat like a line. And it did come out like that—without much thought. But it wasn't a lie after it was said. I meant it and I told her so—and I asked her to marry me. Anyway I made her believe it. I held her in my arms—and heaven help me, L. D. She was and is the only woman in the world for me. She made me say over and over that I would want to live forever—with her understand—and did I mean it.

"And there was the big love scene, L. D." He seemed in a hurry to run through it. "The most beautiful woman in the world in my arms and her lips very close. She said she had waited for me—two thousand years. Yes, two thousand years. It sounded natural and real and wonderful beyond words—and—and she lay there in my arms—not limp and lifeless understand—supple and unresisting—and whispered something about—the kiss of life everlasting." And almost in a certain hardness for I knew that Tommy hated a display of sentiment; "I doubt if that has ever been said about a kiss before—has it?"

"I don't know, Tommy. I am not of a romantic turn. My work—a long work—" I smiled. "When I find time for it—takes me among the Egyptian mummies—and their past."

"How far back?" he started to ask me then switched quickly. "That was the kiss.

I had no doubt then and I have no doubt now—about Ruth. I love her and she loves me.” And with a laugh. “It seems a long time to wait for a man, doesn’t it—two thousand years or more? You see, she does not know exactly—but one forgets in such a length of time. I suppose I should understand that and—” As if in sudden surprise. “Look at me, L. D. Do I seem any different?” He looked at the clock on the mantle. “It ticks on, doesn’t it. And time passes when the hands move. I don’t exactly feel the passing of time though.” He looked a little perplexed. “Do you feel it?”

“One never feels the passing of time—one knows that it is gone—but one doesn’t feel it, Tommy.”

“Doesn’t one?” Tommy didn’t seem quite sure. “I never thought of it one way or the other. Now I can’t seem to tell. But there should be a feeling—a sensation of some sort—something different. Or shouldn’t there. But I forget. I’m ahead of my story maybe.”

“Maybe—” I agreed with him. “Take your time, Tommy. It seems to bother you.”

“Well,” he said, “it does. I have not seen Ruth since—my leap into notoriety and the steel heiress’ leap into space. And I don’t know if it’s an ordinary life or a life everlasting. And I have no way of finding out until I see her or—” He looked up at the big grandfather clock. “It stops ticking.”

“It won’t stop ticking,” I said. “You can be sure of that.”

“Can I? I have my doubts about that.” He leaned forward then. “If there was no time, L. D., there would be no reason for the clock to keep ticking, would there? As a matter of fact if there was no time there would not be time for the clock to tick would there? That is sensible—isn’t it?”

“If I accept your hypothesis about the time.” I smiled at him.

“WE’LL come to that.” He nodded vigorously. “Ruth talked a bit wildly then I thought. Her friend, this older girl, nameless for the moment—was all for having her tell me the truth first. Before it happened. But Ruth was against that. She said it should happen to me suddenly—out of a clear sky. That I was the sort of person who could take it. She didn’t say ‘take it’.

I think it was ‘adjust yourself.’ Don’t look so puzzled, L. D. I’m giving you the gist of it as I heard it—and if it puzzles you in my telling it think how it puzzled me listening to it there first hand. Yet I don’t think I sported any such a quizzical look as you—keenly and intelligently quizzical I mean. I imagine I simply looked blank. Not thrown, you understand. It didn’t matter. I was very much in love—and—well she looked at the watch on her wrist and said—and I remember these words.

“We’ll go out on the street, Tommy. Down to Times Square I think would be best. I want you to experience it first in all its force and grandeur.’ That was five o’clock of a lovely spring afternoon, L. D. Crowds in Times Square—I want you to make a mental note of that. Times Square at the very height of the rush hours. I couldn’t understand it. Not for two people who for the first time were in each others arms and sworn to each other for life—life everlasting.

“I’ve been avoiding the showdown I suppose. I won’t any longer. It’s with us now. Remember, right in the heart of New York City. Right in Times Square in the middle of the rush hour. Good humored people brushing against you. Ill tempered people thrusting you aside for fear they might lose a precious minute getting into the hole in the ground. One moment the roar and rush and tooting of horns and the clanging of bells and the loud harsh voices of people and then—a silence—a dead silence. As if a mighty hand had suddenly struck a great city—struck it dumb if not dead.

“Not a sound understand but the gentle breathing of the girl Ruth who held my arm. Gone were the horns of the traffic—the rumble of the subway below—the voices of the people. And gone too was the pushing, milling throng. The people were there all right. I felt myself push against them. But they didn’t push back. That is it, L. D.”

“EVERY LIVING THING WAS FROZEN TO IMMOBILITY

“Cars stalled and silent upon the street. People—frozen stiff in their tracks like so many waxworks in a museum or dummies in a store window. Still and silent there in

all sorts of grotesque positions—grotesque only because of the oddity of it I suppose. A man here with his foot raised in the air to take a step when the thing—whatever it was—struck and held him so. A woman climbing into a taxi—half in and half out. Frozen there.

"I don't think I could have described it but for a newsreel I had seen once. It was of the Grand Central Station. The moving picture projection had suddenly broken down and the figures on the screen had stopped in their tracks—a moving picture turned into a still one. That was what happened now. A living moving city—turned into a still one. Nothing moved. No living thing breathed as far as I could see or hear but Ruth and me.

"It was awe inspiring and terrible and over-powering all at once. It was as if we moved in a city of the dead—people rendered lifeless in whatever position they were in when the THING struck.

"What is it, Ruth?" I gasped.

"Time.' She gripped my arm and held it tightly. 'Time has stopped, Tommy.' And as I stared vacantly at her I guess, 'Maybe I should have told you before—maybe it is too much for you. Time has stopped—and those who live within Time have stopped with it. I—and a few of my kind live outside time. And now you. I have lived outside of it for over two thousand years. That is why I am still not quite twenty. Time never touches me.'

"Do you understand, L. D. what I'm telling you? Time had stopped—and Ruth and I were living outside of it—outside of Time. Do you believe it?"

"Go on," I said. "How long did this phenomenon last?"

"How long?" Tommy laughed. "That is what I asked Ruth. What do you mean how long? There was no time: It didn't last at all—and yet it lasted forever. Ask me how I felt. Perhaps I can tell you that. I didn't feel any different than I feel now—than I ever felt—except for being over-powered by the magnitude—the impossibility—of the impossible. The impossible that was happening right before my eyes.

"Above us a great transport plane hung in the air. I asked Ruth if it wouldn't fall.

She simply clutched my arm tightly and pulled me along the crowded street between wax-like frozen figures of men and women. 'It can't fall,' she said. 'There isn't time. Time has stopped, Tommy—and every living thing you see apparently frozen in their tracks has stopped with it.'

"And—will Time come again—and what will these people think?"

"Since I was over the first shock Ruth was enjoying my confusion now. She laughed and explained.

"They won't know. They never have known. Why, Tommy, it has happened thousands and thousands of times over the years. It happened when I first did your work for you in the library. Time stopped—and I typed your papers. It happened in my apartment—when I held your hands and disappeared.'"

"Are there many like—like you—like us?" I asked Ruth.

"A few who live outside time yes. My friend whom you met lived outside time even before I was born. Come, let us go over to Eighth Avenue—and watch for a possible accident that we can avoid.'

"I can't tell you too much. What I saw and what I did explain some of the things we see in the paper that are called miracles. We found a child within inches of being crushed to death by a huge truck. Time had stopped—a second more and that child would have met a horrible death beneath a giant wheel. There were people there—people who saw sure death for that child. A mother no doubt running wildly toward that doomed child. The expression on her face—one of great agony. She was frozen in her tracks when Time stopped. I simply picked up the child and put her gently down on the curb. There was a stick in the papers about that. A miraculous escape and the naive statement that the wheel must have brushed her aside without even a mark.

"THERE were other things too." The wistful smile was there now. "An enraged jealous woman firing point-blank at her husband in a crowded restaurant. We could tell by looking through the window. That was on Broadway. This is a tough one for you to swallow, L. D., but you might as

well take the hardest part of it. I lifted the bullet out of the air and have it here with me." Tommy put his hand in his pocket and a moment later placed a slug in my hand. "I unloaded the gun and put it back in the woman's hands. No, the fingers weren't stiff and rigid—but pliable like living hands—" And with a nervous little laugh. "And of course they were living hands."

"We met others, L. D.—like ourselves. Not many. One here and there. They seemed to have work to do. There was a middle-aged man who told us of a fire in a downtown tenement and a woman slipping back into the flames from a fireman's grasp. 'I straightened her up and pushed her over the fireman's shoulder,' he said. 'Another miracle for the papers—if the fireman isn't afraid of telling the story—for she was pretty well down in the flames.'

"'Didn't it burn you?' I asked.

"'No,' he said, 'there wasn't time.'"

Tommy Slater paused for a long time then and looked straight at me. He pinched out his cigarette and tossed it into the fire. Started to speak—paused and lit another cigarette. I didn't say anything. He went on.

"You must see now where we are heading, L. D." He inhaled deeply. "I haven't told it well. Indeed I'm surprised that I could tell it at all. You are a remarkable man, L. D." And very abruptly. "We went across town, dodging in and out among those still figures—not expressionless by any means. It is odd when you stop to examine a face—stare directly at it and see—but no matter. We walked up Park Avenue and into the Fifties. The wedding—the camera man—the crowds of people. I guess there

had been screams but I didn't hear them of course. Time had stopped. Time had stopped just as the body of that young and beautiful heiress was hurtling toward the hard pavement below—a sure and a violent—and a horrible death.

"I didn't see her at first. It was the expressions on the faces of the people who had heard her scream and were looking up or over their shoulders. Those expressions were a study in themselves. The camera man had already turned the camera and continued to grind. What did they see—or what would they see again when Time started up. They had seen a falling body. They would see the body start to fall again. Do you get the point there?"

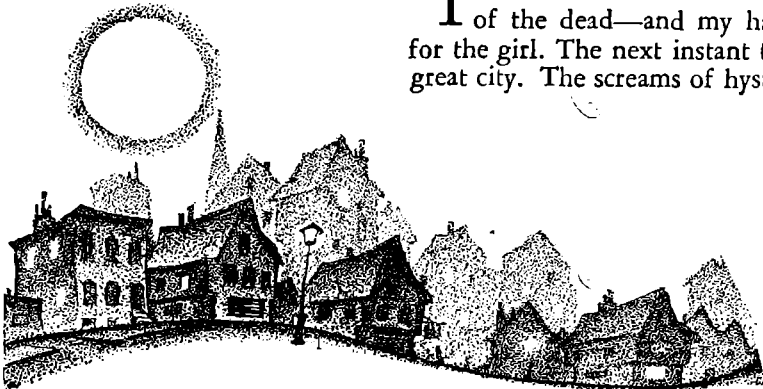
"Not—entirely," I told him.

"Well—" he said. "They would have thought they saw the girl fall the entire fourteen stories. But they wouldn't have. They would have seen her fall only about six feet—perhaps cut her arm—maybe even—twist an ankle. But certainly a six foot fall for a strong healthy young girl would not be—anything very awful. It would have been considered one of those miracles that we often read about. Time stopped when she was but a few feet from the ground. Naturally then when time started again she would drop simply that few feet.

"I guess I forgot about time. I guess I forgot those hundreds of people frozen there. I don't know what I thought. I only know what I did. I ran across the street—reached up to lift the girl out of the air—when it happened."

"What happened?" I asked.

"**T**IME returned. One minute the silence of the dead—and my hands reaching for the girl. The next instant the noise of a great city. The screams of hysterical women



—yes and men too. The cry of agony from that young girl's lips. And that is all, L. D. She dropped gently into my arms and I held her so. A boy of twelve could easily have done the same thing. And that—well that is it. That is the truth. That is why I say—I simply lifted her out of the air."

He waited for me to speak then. I said simply:

"What became of Ruth?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen her since."

I didn't take my eyes from his as I emptied my pipe into the fire—slowly and carefully refilled it. Then I asked Tommy.

"And the other girl—this older one?" And when he didn't answer me right away. "You heard from her, didn't you?"

"Yes." He nodded his head. "I heard from her."

I got up. Took plenty of time to light my pipe. Then I went to my little wall safe and taking the key from my pocket opened it, put in my hand and pulled out hundreds of pages of notes.

"An interesting story, Tommy," I said when I had returned to my chair, placed the pile of papers on my knees. "These notes have been gathered after an exhaustive study and research over a period of nearly twenty years. My book will have to do with Egypt, Tommy. I doubted if I would ever have time to finish it."

"Perhaps," the wistful smile was strong now, "you don't need time—but the absence of time."

"Perhaps." I was very serious. "I have a little story of my own. Not so dramatic as yours. Not so exciting as yours. But it has puzzled me a great deal. Within a period of a few hours while I slept someone got possession of these notes—made corrections and additions to them. Added material that I only dreamed about. Verified facts that I have not been able to substantiate in all those years. There is other data that I thought was beyond the knowledge of man."

"Something like my experience with my medical research, eh?"

"Very similar," I agreed. "There was, however, one clue. A scribbled pencil name on one of the pages. Almost undecipher-

able but I made it out. Is the name of Ruth's friend—Naomi?"

"Then you do believe." Tommy came out of his chair. "Yes—it was Naomi. I wasn't to tell you. You were to tell me. You—" He stopped.

"She told you to come and see me?"

HE LOOKED around the room, peered hard into the shadowed corners as if he half expected to see someone lurking there.

"Yes—she did, L. D." And then he blurted it out. "It's Naomi. I'm afraid of her. I don't think she has any interest in me—or even in Ruth. It's you. She questioned me about you for hours—and now—well I'm not to see Ruth again unless—unless—Lord, L. D., Naomi. She—she's interested in you."

"In me or my work." I smiled at him. "But she's right, Tommy. There won't be enough time in life for me to finish it." And I hope without immodesty. "It's an important work—a great work—a very great work."

"I'm to call her up." Tommy was all excited as he looked toward the phone. "If I am to see Ruth again I must call Naomi at once. She sent me to you—and—and—" He paused then and swallowed his swallow. "I'm not so sure it's simply your work, L. D. Not the way she speaks of you. And I am sure—she's dangerous—a very dangerous woman. She wants you to step outside of time with—with her. Can you—will you—do it? She's hundreds of years older than Ruth. Dare you do it?"

An honest boy, Tommy. A romantic one too I thought then. And I who had listened to so much—and experienced so little. Perhaps I smiled as I thought of talking with a woman—well—say well over twenty-five hundred years old. And my work—my unfinished work.

I looked over at Tommy. He seemed so excited. It has been a great many years since I was excited—like that. I said, I think gently:

"Call up Naomi, Tommy. And tell her—I'll be very pleased to step outside of time with her."