



“WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS INTRUSION? WHAT DO YOU WANT?’ HE ASKED THE DETECTIVE.”

THE BLACK STATUE.

THE STORY OF A DOCTOR'S GRUESOME DISCOVERY.

BY HUAN MEE.

Illustrated by Max Cowper.

“I ALWAYS sed no good could come of it,” the woman cries with a choke, and then the little group edges back to the kerb, and gazes open-mouthed at the shuttered windows.

“And you ain’t seen your Jim since last Monday, eh?”

“No, I ain’t set eyes on ‘im. It’s just a week to-day. I sed as ‘e left in the mornin’, ‘It would be better for you, Jim, if you slung up your job at Doctor Hazard’s, ‘cos no good can come of it; and he gives me the creeps every time I looks at ‘im.’”

“Wot did Jim say?”

“He says, ‘Beggars can’t be choosers,’ and the doctor paid ‘im well.’”

“And you ain’t seen ‘im since?”

“No, I ain’t, and I b’leve he’s a bein’ ‘sperimented on.’”

“Well, why don’t you tell the pleece?”

“I ‘ave, and they’re comin’ round this mornin’.”

The group comes forward again as a man, accompanied by a couple of constables, enters the square and pauses before the gloomy house.

“Clear this gaping lot away, Jackson,”

he says; and the crowd, by dint of physical persuasion, and repeated injunctions to “pass along,” is hustled to the corner, where it awaits events. “Now, Smith, just knock a rat-tat.”

Neither the first, second, nor third knock has the slightest effect, except to bring back the crowd, strongly reinforced, until it hangs around the railings.

“Force it,” the man quietly remarks; and in a few minutes the door is open, and the excited idlers almost encroach on to the doorstep. “Jackson, clear this mob out of the square; Smith, follow me.”

The door is pulled to behind the men; the crowd again retreats in disorder to the corner, and the constable walks to and fro in front of the house.

The two who have entered glance into the front room; it is empty, while the back room and the upper part of the house are the same.

“Try the basement, Smith.”

They descend the stairs, and come to a sudden stop as they are met by an unexpected door.

“Sounds like iron,” the chief exclaims, as he raps his knuckles against it.

"That's what it is," the constable agrees.

"Knock on it with that bar, and see if anyone's alive in the house or not."

As soon as the first blow has fallen the door is thrown open, and a man clad in his shirt and trousers confronts them; a man tall and dark, with his face clean shaven, his hair cut closely to his head, and his shirt-sleeves rolled tightly to his shoulders.

"Well, what is it, eh?" he asks. "Come in"; and as they enter he closes the door behind them.

The whole place seems weird and uncanny. The further end is draped by a long curtain, hanging from the ceiling to the floor; the walls are covered with shelves and cases, filled with glass vessels and polished instruments that vividly suggest their own uses, while in a corner alcove stands a life-sized statue, a Greek god, in black marble.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion? What do you want? Am I in London, or is this some part of the world where men's homes can be broken into, their scientific researches disturbed by strangers?"

"This house has been without a sign of life for a week, and your servant, who entered then, has never left it."

"You mean the man who used to do odd jobs for me. I discharged him ten days ago, and have not seen him since."

"He came here on Monday."

"He did not. I see you don't believe me—maybe you go so far as to think I have murdered him, eh? Of course, you've searched the house. This is my laboratory, and there's only the room through the curtains, there."

The officers step forward; the man draws back the curtains.

"Now, then, look! You see there's no one there, and if you're quite satisfied, I prefer to be left alone. You found your way in, so now you can find it out."

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For three years the gloomy house in the square has been vacant—not to let, but simply vacant, for Dr. Hazard is touring on the Continent. The missing servant has

not been seen in London since the day he so suddenly and mysteriously disappeared, and the little gossiping group which once took such a morbid interest in his whereabouts has forgotten him in the excitement of other nine-day wonders, which have flourished and withered in their turn.

But now a change has suddenly come about; for the master is returning.

Brisk, business-like men measure floors and windows, energetic British workmen sit on planks and smoke, and all is ostentatious bustle and activity. At last the day comes when the final workman grudgingly and reluctantly takes his leave. Pantechnicons arrive and disgorge their contents, which shall transform the dismal dwelling into a habitation fit for a man and woman—for it is rumoured that Dr. Hazard is bringing home a wife.

That she is beautiful, the few loungers



THE DOCTOR BRINGS HOME HIS WIFE, AND THE LOUNGERS SEE THAT SHE IS BEAUTIFUL.

who are privileged to see the couple descend from the carriage cannot but admit; but still there is something chilling and repellent in that beauty. There is so much of the doctor's cold, insolent sneer reflected in her face, that it seems to them that like has chosen like.

Dr. Hazard assists his wife to alight, and she passes up the steps, and then turns and glances back in icy astonishment, as a young woman darts across the road, and lays a detaining arm upon her husband's sleeve.

"Ave you found 'im, doctor?"

"Found whom?"

"My brother—Jim, you know—'im as used to work for you."

"No, no, my good woman. Go away. How should I have found him?"

The woman still retains her hold of his sleeve, as he tries to shake her off.

"You know where 'e is, Dr. Hazard," she cries, fiercely. "You know where 'e is."

"Tut, tut, my good woman. How should I know?"

"You do know, 'cos you knows as I knows 'e's in there," and she points to the house.

Without further parley, he thrusts her on one side and passes in.

His wife, moving from the window, turns towards him as he enters.

"Some of your friends seem to have good memories for you," she says.

"Yes. It's nonsense. Her brother disappeared three years ago, and she thinks I had something to do with it."

"And had you?"

"You're jesting."

"I never jest; I know life is nothing to you."

"On the contrary, life is a great deal to me. I have studied it; it interests me. I shall be able to show you some remarkable experiments, now we are home. I have everything to my hand in my laboratory—everything to aid me in my study of life and death."

"And I, to my horror, have found how little you think of either."

"You speak truly," the doctor answers. "I think nothing of either; but it is your home-coming. Forget these trifles, and let me show you the house."

"I wonder why I married you," she says, as she glares into his eyes.

"Out of gratitude for my service to your father."

"I wonder why I did not sooner kill myself."

"Tush! you talk like a child."

"The first time I saw you I shuddered, for you were as a blight in the very air; and then, slowly and viciously, you plotted in silence, until you had broken my heart and bought me from my father—until you held him bound hand and foot, and I was the price of your silence."

"You have said this so many times before," he mockingly interjects.

"And I say it for the last time now," she cried; "for in this house I see death written, and it is yours. A death worthy of such a devil."

"Loud applause from the gallery," the man cynically interjects; "now for the tour of inspection."

"My laboratory," Dr. Hazard exclaims, as they pause at length before the iron door, "or what you would perhaps call my torture chamber. Do you care to see it before science resumes her researches?"

She inclines her head, enters as he switches on the light, and gazes coldly round the room, aware that her husband's eye is upon her to catch a tremor of the lips that would show a spark of fear, and then with a gasp she falls back, and points with a trembling hand to the corner, where a curtain on a brass rod cuts off a portion of the room.

"Who is behind there?" she cries.

"Who is behind there?"

He crosses the room, pulls back the curtain, and faces her.

"You are frightened at nothing," he chuckles. "A statue in black marble is sufficient to set you trembling; come nearer and examine it. Come and see with what marvellous accuracy every vein, every muscle and tendon is carved upon the stone."

"Who did it?"

"I, from life. You did not know I excelled in sculpture as well as other arts."

"It's a wonderful piece of work," she whispers, attracted in spite of herself, struggling to regain her composure, and not knowing why an icy fear still seems to grip her heart. "Very true to life."

"Very true indeed. Give me your hand."

He takes her hand, and places it upon the arm of the statue.

"There," he says, quietly, "you can almost fancy you feel the muscles beneath the skin, almost fancy that arm once moved. It is, as you say, very true to life."

With a cry of terror she drags her hand away, and, clutching the table for support, leans back against it, utterly unnerved, a nameless horror in her eyes.

"Is he—it—like the missing man?" she gasps at last.

Dr. Hazard purses his lips, and eyes the statue critically.

"Hum! it is strange," he answers, after a moment of silence. "But now you mention it, there is a likeness."

He offers her his arm.

"Don't come near me."

"As you please."

"Do you experiment with that in the room?"

"Certainly; for that is the result of my greatest experiment. You heard of the missing man they're still worrying me about?" He jerked his head meaningly towards the statue.

"It is not true; you are trying to drive me mad."

"Nonsense! It's true enough. That's the man, and I defy the world to find it out!"

His face flushes with a dull blaze of passion, and he catches her by the wrist and twists her round until her eyes look into his.

"And remember this, Beatrice: let there be no more of this childish folly and foolish threats, or as sure as you stand before me I'll kill you, and you shall be the companion statue on the opposite pedestal."

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"What do you think of the port, Hertz?"

"Splendid wine; '47, eh?" the man replies, holding his glass to the light.

"No, quite a modern vintage. Treated by my own process."

"What a wonderful chap you are, Hazard—always doing something to astound people; always inventing something."

"Pooh? You can't call an artificial maturing of wine an invention; but I have one or two inventions with which I mean to surprise the world. The illumination of this room is one of my secrets; those electric lights will burn for years without renewal or attention. Electricity as men understand it now is nothing. As I know it, it is a power that can control the world, that can prolong man's life beyond his wildest dreams, and then preserve his body unalterable for all time. The height of the ambition of the ancients was embalming.

"What progress! They embalmed their departed dead, that they might keep them even at their feasts. Death at their feasts," repeats Dr. Hazard, frowning under his eyebrows at his wife, who sits opposite to him at the table.

Throughout the dinner, the doctor's scorn of his wife has been so obvious that his guests gladly seize upon the new tenour of the conversation for relief.

"Then you have invented a process to arrest decay?"

Dr. Hertz asks.

"Yes."

The doctor's wife rests



"THE DOCTOR PULLED BACK THE CURTAIN AND SHOWED A STATUE IN BLACK MARBLE."

her arms upon the table and leans towards her husband.

"You own you have invented a process to arrest decay in a body?" she says, coldly. "You own it, before your friends?"

"Certainly," he exclaims, carelessly flicking the ash from his cigar.

"It is wonderful!" Dr. Hertz remarks.

"Mrs. Hazard, your husband is a

remarkable man. You must be proud of him."

"Proud of him!" she exclaims, twisting her fingers in the tablecloth, and bending towards the visitor. "Proud of him! I hate him. I loathe him. He is right; he speaks truly; he has invented such a process—a process that permits him to slay men with impunity, and change them into black and shining marble. He is, as you say, a remarkable man."

The two guests gaze in astonishment at the woman who has risen from her seat, and with dilated eyes points at her husband, who sits back in his chair smoking his cigar.

"My dear Beatrice," he coldly exclaims at last, "you have another of your hysterical fits coming on. I am afraid I have erred in allowing you to hear so much of my discoveries. You are overwrought and excited. If you would rather retire, we will excuse you."

"I denounce you," she cries, "denounce you before your guests as a murderer—the murderer of the man who was in your employ three years ago. They searched London for him, and he was never found, and why? Because he never left this house; because he is here now. I dare you, I defy you, to take your friends, scientists like yourself, to your laboratory and show them the black statue—the body of the man you murdered, as you would murder me—if you dared."

The doctor frowns and looks perplexedly at his guests.

"I am sorry, my dear friends," he exclaims, rising and laying a hand on the shoulder of each. "It is very unfortunate, poor girl. You understand, of course. Would you mind humouring her? Will you come and see the statue that frightens her? It's a magnificent piece of work, a Greek god I bought in Florence."

The doctor and his colleagues descend to the laboratory, and his wife follows.

With eyes that keenly appreciate, the two men glance around the room at the various appliances and delicate instruments that fill the cases lining the walls, at the strange-looking coils and other apparatus that even they cannot give names to.

"Here," cries the doctor, walking to the alcove screened by the curtain, "is the statue. Life-like I confess, startlingly life-like; but that is all. Behold!"

With a flourish almost melodramatic,

he flings back the curtain, and the lights gleam upon the polished figure—the Greek god with his arms folded upon his breast. The men stand rooted to the spot in admiration.

"Well, what do you think of my statue?"

"Your victim!"

"Hush, Beatrice. You alarm my friends."

"It is magnificent!"

"Yes," the doctor continues, "it is life itself. Look how the muscles stand out upon the arms, the veins in the hands and temples. Observe the folds of the girdle. Is it not superb?"

"Perfection!"

"And yet it is marble. Only marble, Beatrice," he continues, picking up a tiny pestle from the table. "Test it, Hertz."

"My dear Hazard—"

"To gratify her. Perhaps it will soothe her."

Dr. Hertz places his hand upon the smooth, cold surface of the statue, and then lightly taps it.

"It's a body," the woman cries. "Can't you see it is a body, or are you fools?"

"My dear Mrs. Hazard, no. You must forget all about that; it's only a beautiful piece of work in marble."

"You fool!"

"Beatrice, how dare you?"

"Now, my dear Hazard, don't excite her. It's very unfortunate."

"It's marble, Beatrice, don't you understand? Marble! marble! marble!" and the doctor strikes the figure with his fist as he shouts and glares at his wife. "I'm expecting a companion to it, Beatrice—a Venus. I've waited too long for it. I've been too lenient, but I will have it within a week."

There are hidden meanings, for his wife alone, in all that Dr. Hazard says during the remainder of the evening, and she answers back, scorn for scorn, hate for hate, and contempt for his contempt.

He has received the half-suggested, half-expressed commiserations of his friends with the quiet dignity suitable to the circumstances, and now he bolts the door and descends direct to the laboratory.

"It's a good thing for me that some scientists are fools, or I should have been in a bad way to-night," he mutters. "Curse the spitfire, she's too dangerous."

He passes into the inner room, there is a sound of basket work creaking as a big jar

is dragged across the room, and then a running and splashing as liquid pours into the bath. The furnace throws out a ruddy glow, and the doctor takes off his coat and vest, and works in a red light as the heat of the room increases.

Then wires are attached to one of the strange instruments at which his guests had marvelled, the opposite ends to plates of metal which are cast into the bath, and, lighting a cigar, he starts the battery and waits.

In a quarter of an hour he dips a rod into the liquid, and, withdrawing it, gazes

task will be easier. And then, in the blackness of the staircase, he becomes conscious of another person, hears the faint suppressed breathing of someone hiding, lurking in the darkest corner and fearful of discovery.

He takes a phial from his pocket, and holding it well away from his face, pours the contents upon a handkerchief and listens again. Yes, there is someone. It is Beatrice. Perhaps creeping down to him as he is creeping up to her; coming by stealth to kill him as he works.

Suddenly he springs forward, and grips



"I DENOUNCE YOU BEFORE YOUR GUESTS
AS A MURDERER!" SHE CRIED

with a sigh of satisfaction at the black, shining glaze with which it has become coated. Then, placing it on one side, he re-enters the outer room.

For a moment he stands listening at the door of the laboratory, and then stealthily moves up the stairs. The house is silent. Through the long oval fanlight over the hall door a struggling moonbeam throws a narrow ribbon of light upon the polished floor. Outside, a distant footstep approaches, passes, and fades away. The clock strikes two.

Slowly he ascends towards his wife's room. No doubt she is sleeping, and the

her by the throat. There is an instant's struggle as he holds the handkerchief over her mouth—a moan, stifled in its birth, and she drops limply to the floor—dead.

Half carrying, half dragging the body, he descends to the laboratory. The light has gone out.

"Curse it," he mutters; "at this time, above all others—and I boasted it was infallible."

He passes into the inner room, where the crimson glow from the furnace gives just sufficient light to enable him to discern the outline of the bath, and then gradually and carefully he lowers his burden, until it

lies full length upon the bottom and the liquid rises almost to the edge.

He returns to the outer chamber, and by the flare of a spirit-lamp sets himself to remedy the defect in the light. As he works in the shadow, a woman glides round the half-open door, glances at him, then at the knife she carries; but, as he slightly shifts his position, passes swiftly across the room and conceals herself behind the curtain of the empty alcove.

The doctor holds the lamp above his head, and looks anxiously around. The curtains sway as though someone moved behind them, and he holds his breath and takes a step backwards; then the half-open door catches his eye, and with a sneer at his own nerves he pushes it to and turns again to his work.

A little longer, and the rooms blaze with light once more, and he walks into the inner chamber and gazes into the bath.

At the bottom there lies a figure seem-

ingly cut from black polished marble. There is a long-drawn sigh behind him, and he turns with an involuntary cry of terror.

"Beatrice!"

He must be mad, haunted; he grips the side of the bath and stares down into it.

Yes, there lies the woman—not Beatrice, but the sister of the man standing behind that curtain—the two now turned to everlasting stone.

He knows that his wife is walking towards him, and yet he cannot move; his limbs seem paralysed. In a moment she will clutch him, and force him down beside his victim.

He must break the spell of horror that roots him to the spot, and with a supreme effort he takes a step towards her; but the gleam of frenzy in her eyes unnerves him. He blindly retreats, then stumbles against the bath, and, falling backwards, meets the doom he had prepared for her.



HE SUDDENLY SPRANG FORWARD AND GRIPPED HER BY THE THROAT, AND IN AN INSTANT SHE WAS DEAD.

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