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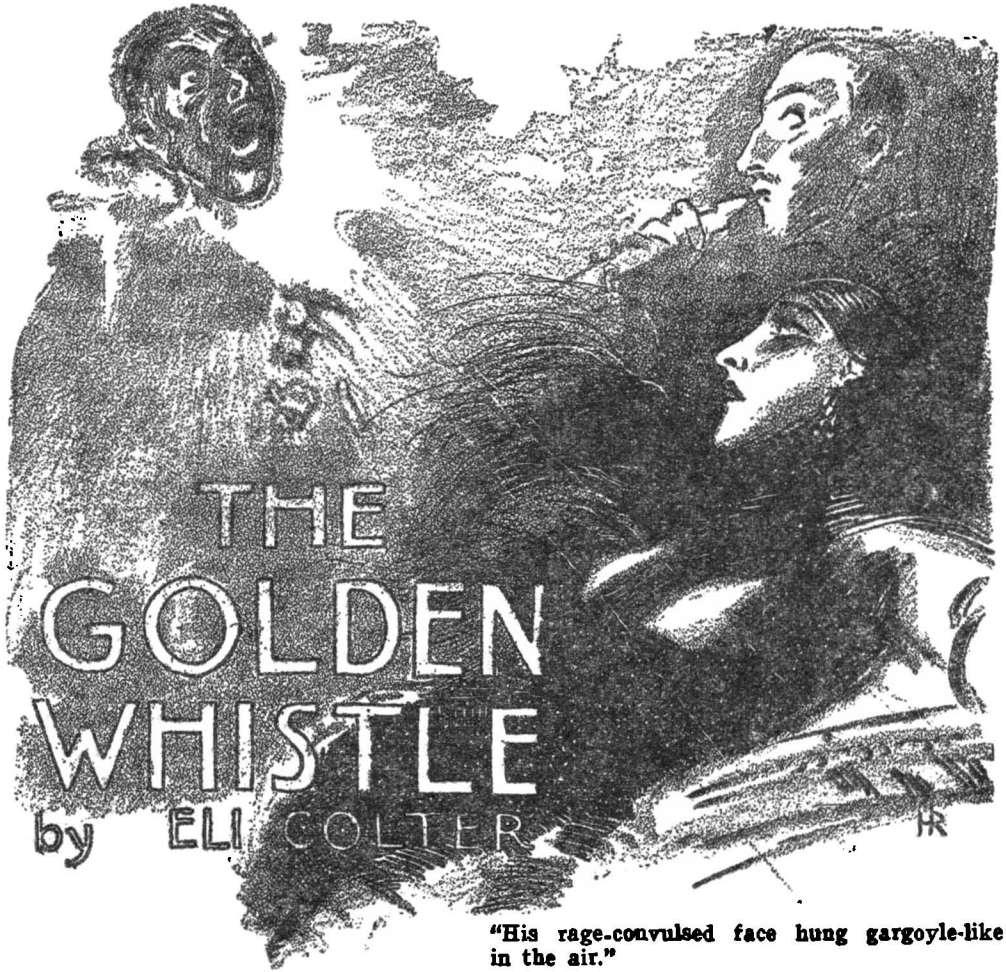
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"His rage-convulsed face hung gargoyle-like in the air."

THE picture on the wall? Yes, gentlemen—that is Suelivor. And the strange ornament hanging above it? Ah—that ornament has a strange history! I first saw Suelivor in Japan, a number of years ago. It was evening, and I stood idly absorbing the beauty of a full-blooming cherry tree. The tong-tong of a temple gong was in my ears, the blaze of the sunset sky was in my eyes. Aimless philosophic hypotheses were entertaining my thoughts. My heart was hushed by the atmosphere surrounding me, in tune with the fantastic and weirdly romantic. It was a fitting moment

in which to come into contact with Suelivor.

I heard footsteps behind me, but I did not turn. I was uninterested in human personalities just then, and I continued gazing dreamily at the cherry tree. I say I *heard* footsteps. Rather should I say I was conscious of them. They were so queerly light, so unlike a normal footfall that I felt an inner start when, in the next instant, their odd character communicated itself to my absorbed consciousness. Still, I did not turn. But I went unaccountably tense, listening, sensing that queer footfall. The steps paused behind

me, and I was conscious of someone's curious gaze boring into my back.

I knew from the weight of those strange footsteps that the intruder into my solitude was a man, but I ignored his pause and stare as I had ignored his approach. And though he received from me no invitation either of word or look, he abruptly advanced a pace or two until he stood beside me. Sharply conscious that I was in the presence of something alien, something as fantastic as my surroundings, I held myself tensed, waiting. Presently he spoke. I answered vaguely, in kind. His remark to me had been vague.

There ensued a persistent silence between us. Seeing that he was as stubbornly noncommittal as I, after a long moment I turned my head and scrutinized him deliberately. I was glad he was an Occidental. I was tired to death of the sight of slant-eyed miniature males. But there my pleasure in his presence ended. I did not like him. There was something sinister in him which repelled and chilled; something more sensed than caught by the eye.

He was broad and high, set up like a well-balanced ship. His soft hat raked the evening sky like a full-bellied sail. His eyes were as clear, deep and green-brown as the water of the open sea at early twilight. His mouth was firm and straight, without a curve. A queer mouth it was; sensuous, cruel, at once hard and tender, above a squared, determined jaw. I knew then that I should place him instantly if I ever saw him again, though it be ten thousand miles away in the crush of a moving restless crowd. And I did.

I first saw *her* in the State of Georgia. She was walking slowly along a flat country road on the outskirts of a town. A light rain had fallen but a few hours before, and as the dusk deepened, a cool damp veil spread over the bayous and

fields of young cotton. The fireflies had begun their nocturnal peregrinations, sailing over china trees and water oaks like vagrant sparks emitted from some unseen chimney. I had paused by a wide, fertile field, impressed by the weird beauty of the evening.

She approached along the way I had come, and having reached a position in the road directly opposite me, she paused also and stood looking into the cotton field where the fireflies were circling thickly. I glanced at her appraisingly from the corner of my eye. She blended so concordantly with the scene before her. She was a weirdly beautiful woman.

Her uncovered hair was black. Her face was without a vestige of color save for the heavily reddened lips. Her posture, the unconscious regal poise of her head, the grace of her movements, all gave eloquent evidence of an atmosphere and an environment of culture. She stood there with the grace of a tall and slender young tree on a hill crest at sunset. For a moment she gazed at the fireflies, then passed on. And I saw that her eyes (for she turned them full on me as she went by) were so black that one could not distinguish pupil from iris, and that they were blank with an odd emptiness, deep with an unspeakable pain. I knew then that I should recognize her again instantly, also through any space of time, in any place or circumstance. And I did.

I saw them together long afterward, at the parting of the ways. The slim young tree had been stripped of its leaves and branches, so that it poised on the hill crest a stark signpost of grief, poignant example of what life can do to a human being when the dreams go to smash. And the well-balanced ship had lost its rudder, to go sailing ruthlessly, doggedly on, terrible example of

what may happen to a firmly built vessel when the cargo has been looted from the hold, the sails unfurled to a high wind, and there is no hand to guide it from the rocks.

I ENTERED the café because I was chilled to the bone, and the warmth of the glittering interior was irresistibly inviting. And because the proprietor was a friend of mine, after a fashion. And because I liked the service, the cuisine and the music. I had been wandering aimlessly about the streets for an hour, breasting the gusty blasts and cold fog of San Francisco. I was ready to rest. I went down the stairs slowly, wishing that something would happen. I think I was lonely.

I took a seat at my customary table and leaned back in my chair, looking idly about. I felt curiously empty. Not in the stomach, but in the heart. The waiter approached with his customary greeting. I gave him a light order. He grinned, bowed obsequiously and stalked with a deal of majesty to the rear of the café.

My thoughts went flowing aimlessly on. I had found nothing of sufficient interest to halt them or turn them into another direction. I focused my gaze, finally, on the raised stage, slightly to my right. It was, for the moment, bare. Hanging across the stock background drop were the dull gray curtains which habitually remained closed during the entertainers' intermissions. But as my order was set down before me, the gray curtains parted and slid to each side of the stage, disclosing not the garishly painted scene I was accustomed to viewing, but another curtain that delighted my senses. It was one solid wall of shimmering cloth of gold. The orchestra began a subdued throbbing of mellow chords. I sat up, at that, keenly in-

stinct with pleasure and surprize. I knew the chords.

Then from behind the gold curtains came another sound, a sound I shall always remember, shall always hear, as I heard it then. It was a whistle. High and clear, but never shrill. It was round and full, a liquid sound, a golden sound, like nothing else I have ever heard. There came to me the strange fancy that the gleaming sound added luster to the curtains through which it emanated. Sense-enthralled by the indescribable beauty of its vibration, I held my breath as I listened. Wailing and calling, it slid smoothly over the exquisite melody of Schubert's *Serenade*, like an unbelievably pure-toned ocarina. A hush had settled over the café, and it obtained until the threnodic tones had sobbed to the perfect close, ending on one long, round and shining note.

A storm of applause eddied to a mighty crescendo and shook the room. I waited, breathless. The applause persisted, demanding. The gold curtains swayed and parted to allow a woman to pass through them. She advanced only a step or two, and halted to stand motionless, facing us.

Her hair formed a sharply defined black triangle, framing her colorless face in startling contrast against the shimmering background. From breast to feet she was swathed in a single fold of jade-green silk. The silk was rendered stiff and heavy by a great black dragon embroidered down the front of it; cunningly embroidered, so that the reptile's head rested on her heart, its claws clasped her shoulders, and its sinuous tail wound around her feet and trailed on the floor. In her weird beauty and fantastic robing she looked like some old Chinese wood carving come to life.

But I, perversely, after the first astounded glance, saw her not at all. I saw only a cloud of fireflies in a

damp field of young cotton, and black eyes blank with emptiness, deep with pain.

She pursed her heavily reddened lips ever so slightly. The muted orchestral chords throbbed again, other chords now, and the uncarthy whistle rose again in the lilt of Rubinstein's *Melody in F*. As the last note died away the gray curtains closed over her, like gray waters covering some bright thing from the farthest reaches of light. And though the applause rose thunderously again, she did not return.

I sat in a spell as the applause died away and the hum of disjointed conversation once more claimed the atmosphere. Every nerve in my body was vibrating tumultuously to the call of that golden whistle. I sat like a man in a dream, staring at the senseless gray curtains, oblivious of my untouched luncheon, when a voice said suddenly, almost in my ear:

"I say—did you ever hear anything like that in your life? We come a long way to meet again. From Japan to San Francisco."

I turned abruptly, like a man stung, feeling an actual physical pain in all my nerves as his harsh voice broke the exquisite vibration of the harmony that held me.

I turned to see him standing there beside me, his sensual cruel mouth compressed into a vibrant line, his green-brown eyes burning with unleashed fire. And the forbidding atmosphere of the man, which I had felt so keenly upon our first chance meeting in Japan, was unexpectedly clear and unmistakable.

The brig was a pirate ship! The skull and crossbones flew from the masthead. Uncontrollably I shivered, before I could get a grip on my aversion to his presence. I greeted him rather curtly, with an unwelcome sense of uncanny premonition inhibiting any cordiality courtesy might have demanded. He ignored

my brusqueness. In fact, I knew that he was oblivious of it. He wasn't thinking of me at all. Save as how he might make use of me, perhaps. He seated himself across from me without waiting for an invitation to join me. No doubt he divined that none would be forthcoming.

"You know her?" he asked, gesturing toward the stage.

I shook my head, shaken with an utterly senseless rage that this sinister being should even have looked upon her. I said that I did not know her, but I certainly intended to. He looked at me queerly, as though he had heard the warning in my words, and said coolly, "I'll introduce you after a while."

Impudent, that! Yet, when I asked abruptly if he knew her, he also shook his head and answered with something of amused surprize: "No, never saw her before. But I know Jeremy Falleaux." I nodded understanding. Falleaux owned the café.

I TURNED to my neglected luncheon, wishing that he would take himself off. But he obviously had no such intention. Grudgingly I suggested an order for him. He declined anything to eat, remarking that he was not hungry. That was a lie. But he sat there watching me with his disconcerting, burning eyes, sharing my bottle readily enough, totally unconscious of what excellent liquor was going down his throat, absent-mindedly asking all manner of queer questions. Personal questions. He volunteered no information, and finally I spoke my thought rather impatiently:

"Well, that all may be interesting to you perhaps. Where I've been, what I've done, am doing or intend to do. But what of yourself? You're essentially of the sea, I should say.

What's your ship? And where do you go from here?"

"The sea?" He smiled, and I almost stared. I had not seen his smile before. It was cruel, sinister, evil, in accord with his cold exterior. He went on smoothly: "The sea! Good Lord, no! Whatever made you think that? I've crossed it enough, sailed it enough—but I'm not of it. I'm only—only an explorer."

I set aside my glass and looked him up and down. The lie was so apparent, so uncalled for. He might just as well have said, "I don't care to tell you." I let it pass. If he wasn't of the sea no man ever was. As cold, as immutable, as implacable, as cruel, harsh and devastating as the sea. I didn't intend letting him get totally away with evasion, though. I followed the line he threw out.

"Yes? What do you explore?"

"The universe," he said evenly, smiling again at my start of surprise. "Through the unfathomable law of vibration. It's a bit difficult for me to estimate time by Earth laws, I've been covering so much space. But I'd say I've been here about twenty years. Prior to that I spent a hundred years or so on Jupiter. I arrived there from Betelgeuse."

I gripped myself to control a shiver. Not for a moment was I insane enough to think him mad. I had known from the first time I saw him that he was not an ordinary human personality. He read the expression on my face.

"Thanks," he said dryly. "Anyone else would have immediately judged me a lunatic. I knew you wouldn't. Otherwise I shouldn't have ventured to answer you truthfully. I travel by the law of vibration, as I told you. There are different vibratory systems. I follow the vibration of tone, melody. I don't know how old I am, nor how long

I've been going on, on, exploring—hunting for something. Needless to say, I haven't found it yet. At least, I'm not sure I have."

His eyes turned covertly to the curtained stage. I wanted to choke him to death where he sat. But I knew no human fingers of flesh could ever throttle the life from that columnar neck. Suddenly he went on speaking, deliberately forcing a change in my current of thought.

"Do you know a great deal about the theory of vibration, Dr. Johns?" I shook my head, staring at him. How the devil did he know who I was? He grinned impudently, as though he could see into my brain, and answered my mental query. "Oh, everyone knows you, Doctor. But we were discussing vibration. Or rather, I was talking about it. You indicate that you are not intimately conversant with the theory. Surely you are aware of the steps science has made in that direction on your planet Earth! Surely you know that the right vibration properly projected will put out a candle's light. And what man doesn't know that the perfect vibratory tone, sustained over a bridge, will cause that mighty structure to vibrate in answer, and sway? I assure you, were that tone sustained long enough it would cause the bridge to continue swaying in an ever wider arc until it toppled down. Think of it! A powerful massive thing of steel girders and riveted plates, razed by the thin tone of a violin string! And these are only the elemental stages, the A B C's of the great law of vibration."

"I suppose you'd say all our science is in the elementary stages," I cut in sarcastically.

"It certainly is," he agreed, with a slight smile. "I admit, though, that you've had some workers who accomplished quite a bit. Some of them reached the fringes of the real

laws themselves. You had a philosopher and psychologist who went after vibration pretty heavily. Yet, he didn't get so far, considering what there is to know. Vibration! Why, you live, work and have your being by vibration! The planets are held in space and the sun feeds the universe with fire—by vibration. And by that same law of vibration the planets could be blown to oblivion and the sun put out forever!"

"You seem to know a lot about it," I said, considering his statements slightly vehement, to say the least.

"Yes, I do—and I'm not exaggerating," he retorted shortly. "I'm not even scratching the surface of the subject. Your psychologist, he rather scratched the surface. He tried to get down to concrete facts. His physical theory was drawn from certain speculations as to the nervous action."

"You're speaking of Hartley?" I interrupted.

"Surely." He nodded, and his green-brown eyes played over me curiously. "The theory is that before sensation exists, the mind is a blank. By growth from simple sensations those states of consciousness which appear most remote from sensation come into being. Hartley held that sensation is the result of vibration of the most minute particles of the medullary substance of the nerves. To account for which he postulated a subtle elastic ether. Starting from a detailed account of the senses, or, I should say, from the phenomena of the senses, he tried to show how all the emotions might be explained by the law of vibration."

"Tried to show?" I queried, pointedly.

"Well, he didn't prove so much, concerning what there is to prove. It's a pity he didn't live longer, a pity for the Earth. I venture to say he could have accomplished enough

to turn a new leaf in history if he had been granted an extended period of time. However, he's working on, where he is. It doesn't matter a great deal."

"Well, he wasn't so far off, was he?" I leaned over the table toward him, fascinated in spite of my aversion to him, interested intensely as I always have been by any learned technical discussion of theory or hypothesis—or fact.

"Oh, he was right, of course," he answered vehemently. "All right—but he didn't go far enough. All voluntary action is the result of a firm connection between motion and sensation, and on the physical side between an idea and motor vibration. Pleasure is merely the result of moderate vibrations, pain the result of vibrations so violent as to break the continuity of the nerves. Even Hartley sounded that deep. But the law of vibration is illimitable. Why, man alive, your body's atoms are held together by vibration. By sounding the right tone or tones I could blow you into a million atoms that it would take ten million years to reassemble."

"And by the same token, a man sounding the right tones could blow you into atoms," I retorted, a trifle vindictively. I was astonished at his sudden pallor, the instant flash of terror in his green-brown eyes. He caught himself, and his color returned, his eyes went stone-hard and ice-cold, as he answered:

"Quite true. But no one ever will. My vibration is beyond the determining and comprehension of any Earth man. I've been over at least a thousand planets in the last million years or so, and I shall keep going till I find the thing I seek. But that is neither here nor there. I could blow this whole globe to atoms were I so minded. I am not so minded. It would take too long to find the right vibration. I have

something more important to do. More important to me, at least. To find the thing for which I search. I shall draw it to me by that same law of vibration—when I find it. You are finished with your luncheon?" he broke into his own discourse abruptly, observing me. "Let's get on."

Although I was eager to be rid of him, I was perversely just as eager to keep track of him, now that I had obtained a glimpse into what manner of thing he was. I threw off my feeling of repulsion as best I might, rose from the table and followed him out. At the entrance of the café he asked me to wait for him, and turned to disappear up the three steps leading into Jeremy Falleaux's private office. I waited impatiently, stung with depressing premonition of evil, yet grimly determined to see it through so long as he was within *her* vicinity.

Shortly he returned to say that she would receive us in her dressing-room. I nodded, finding nothing to reply, and we went around to a side door back of the stage. We entered the door, traversed a long, narrow hall and came to another door. Hers. It was closed, and he rapped lightly. At her answering "Come in" he threw open the door and motioned me to precede him.

SHE reclined on a long, green couch, facing us, propped on one elbow against a great black cushion. The ebon dragon twisted around her like some prehistoric monster in the throes of unendurable agony, as she rose to a sitting posture. My eyes plunged to her face hungrily. The black eyes were still empty, but the pain was gone. There was instead a peculiar quality of receptivity, as though she waited breathless for some monumental thing to happen.

She glanced at us, and spoke to

him: "Mr. Falleaux said you wished to see me?"

"Yes." He stood immobile, looking at her, devouring her with his blazing eyes. "Allow me to present my good friend, Dr. Emile Johns. Madame Falleaux, Doctor."

Madame Falleaux! Jeremy's wife? And—"his good friend." His insolent presumptuousness was almost admirable. He certainly knew who I was, all right.

The black dragon waved a protesting claw as she leaned forward and extended her hand. I stepped to the couch and took her fingers. They were quite cold. Nerves, I said to myself.

"Ah, Doctor! One is delighted!" Her words were manifestly sincere. And then, I saw her eyes. "There is only one Emile Johns! I need not ask if you are he. Perhaps I too may some day dare claim your friendship. It is well to have a great surgeon on one's list. *Non?*" I shook my head, smiling at her. "*Mais oui!*" she insisted, adding softly, "They sometimes sever the soul from the body without great inconvenience to either." I knew what she meant. I said no.

As for him, he stood there with his hands folded together behind him, looking hard at her with never a word. She obeyed his gaze, finally, saying, with a queer inflection in her throaty tone: "And you, *M'sieu?*"

"I?" I caught the driving power of that strange, sinister being in the one word. I had an uncomfortable sense of wishing I had killed him before he came into her presence. He'd hurt that woman. She knew it, too. Such hurts a surgeon might give his soul to heal, finding himself pitifully helpless, his skill utterly impotent when it was most needed. He proceeded with glib, swift speech. "I'm an explorer. My name—Henteli Suelivor. It—it's a wonderful thing you have in your throat."

She smiled. It was a wide smile that showed her exquisitely set teeth, but failed to touch her somber eyes. Already she was fighting him. I did not like that smile.

"You think so?" she answered him, almost insolently. "Some do. I do not know whether or not I care that you should have that opinion. Won't you be seated? And you, Doctor?"

Suelivor dropped his powerful frame lightly into a chair by the door. Deliberately I seated myself by her on the couch. I took one of her long, white hands in mine, and studied it a moment before I spoke. Jove! It was *cold*. Like a hand of one chilled—by fear. I wanted to let her know I would be standing by.

"The fireflies still play in the cotton fields of Georgia," I said. I did not raise my eyes, but I felt her gaze upon me. Her voice broke out with spontaneous delight that was patently unassumed.

"Oh ho! So it is you! I thought your face was familiar. Well indeed! After all these years. No—not so many. Only five. And you remembered!"

"And *you* remembered!" I retorted, gently laying the white hand on its mate. "That's the surprizing thing. I couldn't forget. No man could."

"You met her five years ago?" Suelivor abruptly cut into the conversation. "You didn't tell me that!"

"No." I wondered if he could read my thoughts now. "No. I didn't tell you. Why should I? Besides, there was nothing formal in the meeting. It was a thing of chance. I had no idea she would recall it."

"Dr. Johns," she interrupted smoothly, "it is always the privilege to meet men of professional eminence. Me, I am lucky. Very lucky this night. A world-renowned sur-

geon and a—an explorer." Her eyes darted at Suelivor, piercing, probing. "*Voilà!*" She rose to her feet, spreading her white hands in a deprecating gesture. "I fear I tire of this room. If you would be kind enough to wait outside till I have shed my dragon? *Non?* I shall then be pleased to entertain you in my home for this evening."

WORDLESSLY we got up and quitted the room to comply with her request. Silence lay between Suelivor and me as we waited outside her door. I tried to ignore him, but I felt his eyes on me in the shaded light, mocking, dissecting. In an incredibly short space of time she joined us, wrapped in a long velvet cloak as black and shadowy as her hair. Not a word was said till we were seated in the long, black car awaiting her at the curb.

"You know," she volunteered, as the car swung away to the hill facing the bay, "I'm an explorer, too. I've been seeking something for ten years. Me—I haven't found it yet." I sat still, hushed, startled. Almost Suelivor's exact words!

"Just what are you hunting?" he asked levelly.

"Oh, M'sieu Suelivor! That was so terribly obvious. But really, I wasn't baiting. I shan't tell you, you know. If you discover it for yourself, that is your business. If you can't—that is my business. My—my search, it answers for my being in the café tonight. I dare that Jeremy to let me whistle there for a week. He nearly had the apoplectic fit. But he finally gave in. That Jeremy, he knows Felice Falleaux. His brother who died a year ago was my husband."

Ah—not Jeremy's wife! I closed set teeth on a sigh of relief. Merely his brother's widow. Suelivor did not answer, and she did not speak again until we had reached her

house. While we discarded our wraps in the wide hall she gestured to the great, magnificently appointed rooms.

"Be it ever so humble there's no place like home," she said mockingly, and rang for a servant. She ordered something light to eat, and left us to ourselves temporarily.

Suelivor walked up to a huge bronze copy of Rodin's *Thinker* and stood staring at it in a peculiar attitude of waiting. I wanted him to know that I was fully sensible of the duel between us. I said to his back: "Just what are you exploring, Suelivor? If you didn't find it on a thousand other planets, how do you hope to find it here? What the devil are you trying to find?" He stiffened for a shocked second.

"Myself." His tone was as hard as lignum-vitæ.

"Why?" I probed. He stood perfectly still, but he didn't answer. He hadn't time. She came in the door at that moment. But then, he hadn't intended to anyway.

"You're not a thinker," she said at him, quite without sarcasm. "Come over here and sit down, and eat good cheese and drink good beer with two other explorers."

I shot her a surprised glance, and she smiled slightly. I don't think he ever deceived her for one moment, from the very first. But she was a fighter. She was ready to put up a battle for the thing she wanted, and she thought he had it. She merely didn't know *what* he was.

He turned to face her with a relieved sigh, and that queer, cruel smile of his. Things had been getting too tense in him for comfort. Somehow, in that instant, I felt an unexplainable sense of pity for him. He was going to be hurt, too. And she knew that, also—*while he did not*.

She had donned a loose robe, a black, unshining thing. A long chain

of carved jade was twisted through her black hair, and one great, five-petaled jade flower lay on her breast. The severity of her gowns would have sentenced another woman to downright ugliness, but for her they were the epitome of art.

Suelivor seated himself by the little table whereon the servant had laid out cheese sandwiches and beer. He plunged headlong into an aimless conversation, and again refused to eat. I never saw him eat. I am certain he never did eat. But how the man could drink!

She countered easily as he talked, ignoring his insatiable consumption of beer. I knew that he was fencing, warding off any intent of hers to probe his purpose or thought, and that she was doing precisely the same thing. Dumb, I listened silently, watching, sensing every slightest change in the charged atmosphere. He was not for her, that unholy fiend. He was something out of space, cold, sinister, devouring and inimical. She was gloriously of the Earth, warm, pulsing with the hot blood of life, fit only for the heights of love and ecstasy. He—even his blood was cold! She was not for him! In a mad chaos of grim determination I listened to them talk.

Desultory talk it was, about nothing and everything over which you would least expect those two to wage conversation. They did not dare express their thoughts. Neither did they succeed in concealing them any too well. Yet, I did not feel at all *de trop*. I knew too well they both wanted me there.

Finally that unfelicitous evening wore away, and we two men rose to take our leave. She said to us: "Well, gentlemen, I am nearly always home. This evening finished the engagement at the café."

Suelivor looked keenly into her face. "You desire that we call again?"

"I do." She smiled—at *me*.

"Do you like music?" he asked irrelevantly.

"I do. Very much indeed."

"You wish us to come together?" Suelivor pressed, indelicately. "Or—singly."

"Oh, it does not matter, so that you come." And though her smile was for me, her words were for him. I knew it quite well. So did he.

He answered, "We will do so—singly."

I ignored his rudeness, looking levelly into her eyes. There I saw the thing I wanted to know. "Yes," I said.

I WENT the next night. She received me with a cool gladness that delighted me and chilled me. There was not any thought behind it, thought for me. Her thought was with Suelivor.

"He comes later, this evening," she said, as I followed her into the room. "You would do something for me, and not ask the embarrassing question?" Her black eyes held mine intently, and I winced at that breathless hush in them. How frantically she was waiting—waiting. For *what?* I hadn't the least idea. I was a fool—but I hadn't.

"Of course," I returned quietly.

"Then—here. See, it is the closet of which no one knows. The story-book secret passage." She stepped to a great mural, depicting a cathedral with a mighty door under a rose window. She plunged some lever on the window and the door slid back to show a small room, perhaps eight by ten, beautifully appointed, containing a comfortable couch and a big easy chair. A table between the two was heaped with books and magazines. "There—I ask you to sit and wait every night when he comes. See—from this side the door opens, so." She beckoned me into the secret room and I followed.

From the wall depended a heavy silk cord. She gave it a slight jerk and the door slid into place. She jerked it again and the door opened. I nodded and looked at her inquiringly.

"See—the wall—it is sound-proof. No one can hear you even if you should shoot a gun in here. Nor can you hear anything said or done in the next room. But I will know you are here. I shall feel safe. Some day—I may need to have the friend close."

I did not think of anything to say. Anything I could have replied would have been so obvious to her. The knocker on the outside door rang, and her face set into oddly expressionless lines as she turned to me.

"There—M'sieu Suelivor. I go. You wait here. There is much to read. You will not be lonesome?"

I shook my head. I was dumb that night. She went out and left me alone in that room, closing the secret door after her. She was right. The room was sound-proof—to *all sounds of ordinary vibration*. I dropped into the big chair and picked up a book. I couldn't read. I sat there thinking unwholesome thoughts regarding the thing called Suelivor.

I must have been sitting there half an hour when I heard a sound in that sound-proof room. It came from the room where they were. Music. He had asked her if she liked music. But if that was music, then I am God, Christ and the Devil all rolled into one! I shrank back in my chair, listening to it. Its indescribable vibration cut through the sound-proof wall as easily as though that solid partition of matter were thin fog. I shivered at the power of that high, wailing sound. I had no idea of what manner of instrument made it. There is nothing on this Earth to which to liken it.

It was not of this Earth. It was, like him, out of space. Something

implacable, sinister, yet at the same time fascinating, luring, compelling. Were one touched by that vibration, he would break down the wall of China to follow it. But, strangely, it touched nothing in me. I heard it, I felt it playing over me like electric ice—but it did not touch me. I thought I knew why, instantly. He was seeking the thing that had driven his unhuman being through countless years and over measureless miles—but apparently nothing of it was in me. Frantically I crouched there and prayed that it was not in her.

I don't know for what an eternity I endured that wild music—well, I have to *call* it that, at least. We have no other word. That's what he called it. I held myself in a stoical numbness, inviolate to that torture. Then suddenly the sound ceased. There was silence. And I was back in the solid, reassuring atmosphere of the world we know, breathless as though I had been hurled through space and left utterly shaken by the rapidity of my transit.

The silence endured for another eternity. Then suddenly the door slid back and she appeared to face me. I sprang to my feet, toward her. Her face was bewildered, but it held no fear.

"That so strange man is gone," she announced casually. "He played for me. Such music I never heard. He did not talk much. He has so little talk. But he play. *Mon Dieu*, how he play!"

"What did he play?" I asked, striving to attain the same casual attitude she assumed. I knew she did not feel it. Something impelled me not to tell her I had heard that strange wild music through the sound-proof wall. She frowned, shrugged lightly, and smiled as she motioned me to enter the other room.

"A whistle. Strange conceit, *M'sieu* Doctor. A golden whistle. He tell me that is what I have in my

throat." She laughed aloud as she manipulated the door back into place. "A long pole of shining gold, it is. Like a flute. He—he play the weird music. I feel it inside of me. But it says nothing. You and I—let us talk, *M'sieu*."

I sat there and talked with her for better than an hour. We talked of sane, commonplace things. We avoided further mention of Suelivor. But neither of us was thinking of anything else. Yet how vastly different were our thoughts! I looked at her, and thought of him. Sacrilege! Blasphemy! But I couldn't help it. I had to find some way of protecting her. He would come again, many times. He would play for her again that unholy wild music. And not always might she say truly that it said nothing! I was cold to the heart when I bade her good-night and walked out.

THAT impossible situation went on for three weeks. Every night he came, and sat and played that wild, insistent music on that golden whistle. And slowly but surely that persistent vibration began to speak to Felice. But he was not so wise as he thought. It began to speak, but it did not say the thing he wanted it to say. It was to me it called, and I began to fear. Gradually I began to have a feeling of being drawn from my body toward him as he played there beyond that sound-proof wall. The night my senses swam and I was unconscious when she opened the door, I knew something must be done, and quickly. He was feeling some response to that vile music of his, and he thought it came from her.

It was then I thought of Ahmbodie, and cursed my stupidity for not thinking of him before. Ahmbodie was a mystic with wildly unbelievable powers, living across the bay in Oakland. He did not display his powers for the satisfaction of public curios-

ity. He was wealthy, independent to the point of rudeness, and lived a secluded, studious life in which he pursued his investigations into other worlds. To his friends he talked, and for his friends he employed every ounce of his capacities when he found those friends in trouble or distress. I was his friend. I went to Ahmbodie.

He received me with a polished courtesy and a warming welcome that froze into shocked dismay when he got a good look at my face. I knew I had changed. It was as though I had shrunken away, not by any such means as merely growing emaciated. Shrunken, as though numberless electrons of those composing my flesh had been by some hideous means extracted from my body.

"What has happened to you?" Ahmbodie demanded tersely, forcing me into a chair and bending to stare into my face. "I know! That damnable music from space! I have heard it. I am in tune."

"You have heard it—clear over here?" I sat up in my chair, staring at him incredulously. "Through the noise of traffic—clear across the bay—above the blare of the ferry-boats?"

"I am in tune," he repeated, fixing me with his fathomless black eyes. "Where is it? Who plays? Who brings that ungodly sound into a sane world? I suspect! Who?"

"A man named Suelivor," I answered wearily. "He——"

"Suelivor!" Ahmbodie interrupted sharply, and his dark face paled as he gripped my arm. "I thought it must be he. I have been watching him, sounding him for fifteen years. Sailing the sea, always on the sea. Last month I lost trace of him. And he is there! Only across the bay. Tell me what he does there, quickly."

Concisely and swiftly I gave him an account of the last three weeks. His face darkened with an exalted anger, the anger of a god blasphemed,

and when I finished my recital he exclaimed loudly:

"You must get for me that golden whistle! You must bring it to me. We must drive him from this Earth. We have no housing space for such as he! Go, Emile! You shall not say it can not be done! It must be done! You shall bring me that whistle!"

"I'll get it, somehow," I said grimly, thinking of Felice as I got to my feet. "But for God's sake, Ahm, what is it he seeks? What is it he goes from planet to planet trying to find?" Ahmbodie paled again slightly at my vehement cry, but he answered without hesitation.

"His soul."

"His *soul!*" I gasped, shrinking from the import of those two words.

"Exactly," Ahmbodie corroborated. "His soul. He hasn't any. Don't you understand, Emile? He is one of the soulless ones. One of those born in the outer darkness, denizens of space, knowing no laws and no God, spawn of the devil. He exists, feeds, drives on and devours by the terrible law of vibration. Few of them have the intelligence he has acquired through centuries of study and restless search. He knows no sensation but emptiness and pain. That wild music brings him the only relief he can find when it touches some soul even remotely in tune and draws something toward him. If he could draw another soul from another body into his, he would become mortal, know mortal joys and feel mortal delights. That is what he seeks. Another's soul to warm his cold blood. He has sought it in woman—knowing women's souls are finer, easier to bring in tune. He has found what he sought in you. And we must act quickly or that fine etherous thing will leave you and answer his call."

"It has begun to leave me already?" I cried, shaken.

"The atoms are loosed and quivering around you, ready to follow that vibration that has shaken them," Ahmbodie confirmed, eyeing me steadily. "You must get me that golden whistle."

"What will you do with it?" I demanded. "He can make another."

"Ah—but it will take him a thousand years!" Ahmbodie smiled. "That vibration he produces is the result of centuries of tireless effort. Such as he knows no failure, no discouragement and no fatigue. But I—I have been working like mad to find his vibration, been working for fifteen years. Ever since I first located his unholy presence on the Earth. At night I leave my body in sleep, and go to him, standing over him. I never know where he is, but vibration takes me to him. And I have come near enough his vibration that six or seven hours over that evil whistle will change the course of his ways. Bring it!"

I LEFT Ahmbodie and hurried back to Felice. She had been for several evenings kindly concerned over my altered appearance. I had evaded any excuse for it, save that I was weary from overwork. Now I told her candidly that the music which had left her untouched, so far as reaching the thing he sought, had pierced to me through the sound-proof wall, had racked me and shaken my nerves. I dared not even intimate what vital part of me was menaced. Nerves! I had to speak to her in sane terms of this everyday world. She had no least idea of the thing Suelivor was. I told her I wanted her to get the whistle for me that I might take it home and examine it. She agreed with a lack of protest that surprized me. But it developed that she was curious to touch and examine the thing herself.

That evening she persuaded him to leave off playing and talk to her. He

complied ungraciously, she told me afterward, and I knew why. He was avid for the possession of the soul that had begun to answer him—impatient at the least delay. But, thinking that soul lay in her, he cannily considered it wisest not to pique her. She begged to keep the whistle till he came again. Secure in his knowledge of its invincibility to any puny meddling of hers, he finally capitulated, yielding to her pleading. And that night when she opened the door to me after he was gone, she laid in my hands that ungodly golden whistle. I thanked her with wild gratitude, and left her in almost indecent haste. I went straight to Ahmbodie.

He received the golden, flutelike thing with quivering eagerness, almost snatching it from my hands, turning it over and over in his fingers and gazing at me intently with his piercing black eyes. He handed it to me suddenly.

"Blow it," he commanded.

I shivered, but there was something so significant in his tone that I put it to my lips and expended my breath through it. It emitted no least sound. I gaped, but Ahmbodie gave me a meaning smile.

"You see? No one but Suelivor can play that devilish thing. You are prompt. When does he return to see Madame Felice again?"

"Tomorrow night." I stared at the whistle as I returned it to Ahmbodie. "I'll come for that thing along about 5 o'clock."

"Good!" Ahmbodie's eyes gleamed. "That gives me at least sixteen hours to work. I shall see no sleep this night. Come for it tomorrow, late afternoon. And I promise you, my friend, when it again comes into your hands you shall play it. But never let him touch it again! Now be off, and let me get to my task."

"But you will work yourself ill, into a frenzy!" I protested.

"What a human thing to say!" Ahmbodie smiled reprovingly. "Aye, I shall no doubt work in a very terrible frenzy, for hours that will bear a strain of which you can not even conceive. But—there is a human soul at stake! I have lived to protect and benefit human souls, Emile. And if I can bring to bear all my exhaustive research, all my tireless effort, all my capacity, understanding and power to save one human soul this night, to drive from the environs of the Earth so menacing a thing as that spirit of the outer darkness, then no moment of my life has been in vain. What though I give my life in that last stupendous culmination of achievement—sacrifice my little breath in the merciless driving of my utmost capacities? Man alive, where is your sense of values? If I succeed, a human soul has been saved from Satan's spawn to the God who gave it!"

"But that—that whistle," I groped. "How can any mighty power lie in that fragment of polished metal?"

"My dear Emile!" Ahmbodie spoke slowly, striving to impress me with what he was saying, smiling at me patiently. "The potencies of the law of vibration are beyond conception. There is no sounding the wonders that may be accomplished by a fine understanding, an expert and delicate wielding of that law by a master hand; and there is no grasping the hideous cataclysm that may be wreaked by that same law if it be manipulated by a malignant being who has attained understanding of it. I work with it beneficently, for the betterment of mankind and the glory of God. Suelivor juggles it with malevolent ruthlessness of the havoc he produces, caring only to achieve his selfish desires. Emile—there rises tonight a battle royal between the powers of light and the emissary of darkness, construction

against destruction! Go, and leave me to my labor. Go praying that God is all-powerful still!"

And I—I bowed my head and walked out of his door with my hat in my hands, praying that his gallant life might not be forfeit.

THERE was little sleep for me that night. I rolled and tossed restlessly in my bed, following Ahmbodie in spirit through his frenzied hours of striving. I rose with the dawn, and paced my room for hours more, unable to eat or contain myself in anything like tranquillity, wondering how valiant Ahmbodie was faring, hoping desperately that his power was equal to the great emergency. When I could endure my room no longer I went out and paced the streets. I lived in a fever of agonizing suspense until it was time to take the ferry-boat across the bay.

It was with a sense of unutterable relief that I looked into Ahmbodie's face when he himself opened his door to me. I stepped in eagerly, grasped his arms and gazed into his eyes.

The result of those long, terrible hours of straining application was written on every feature. His face was haggard, worn and furrowed with lines of weariness. His eyes were sunk into his head. His whole body drooped with utter exhaustion. But there was in the sunken eyes an exultant gleam of triumph. He had come to the supreme struggle of his mystical, weird activities. He had given something vital of himself in that task. Something had gone out of him—something *vibrant*. But I knew instinctively that it would renew itself. And I felt inarticulately that his exaltation over the fact that he had not failed, that he had accomplished whatever obscure thing he intended, was high reward for all it had cost him. But what was the thing he sought to do?

Ahmbodie read my puzzled thought and spoke quietly: "When you play it to Suelivor, you will know. I do not wish to tell you. I am not too certain myself. I set a high goal. I may have fallen short. But I at least accomplished something. Without doubt I refined that vibration to such an extent that it will drive him a million miles hence. I am eager to know just how great a thing I have achieved. I shall wait in impatience for your report. Here."

He slipped his hand into the pocket of his heavy velvet lounging-robe as I dropped my own hands to my sides. He extended toward me the object of his long interval of endeavor. I looked into his face, thinking of the night, as I felt that whistle again in my hands. It was in no whit changed in looks, but Ahmbodie placed it in my fingers with a solemn warning.

"Blow it not until you stand in his presence. But if you would save your soul from a fiend, blow it then! And blow it until he is gone from the surface of this Earth! He will writhe in torture, he will call to his comrades for help, but nothing can save him from banishment if you hurl that vibration at him till he is gone! I have come near enough sounding him for that. And I may in sixteen short hours have done the thing it would take him a thousand years to do. You see, my friend, I have a soul. Go, now. Go, to save yourself and others from the pestilence of his presence. And when it is over, come back and tell me how you fared."

He waved aside my efforts at expressing my gratitude, and I hurried down to take the ferry across the bay. I felt as though I carried in my pocket enough dynamite to blast the Earth. I knew no peace till I stood in the big room beside Felice, and told her that I wished to keep the whistle, to take it with me into that sound-proof room. She stared, puzzled, but she assented finally out of trust

in, and concern for me. When we heard Suelivor knock at the door I hastily entered the secret room, and she went to admit him.

I GAVE them time to get into that room and be seated and enter in conversation. Then I pulled the silk cord that operated the door and took the golden whistle from my pocket. Noiselessly the door slid back, and I saw them. He sat with his back toward me, and she stood facing him.

"Where is the whistle?" he was asking.

"Oh, I shall get it for you presently," she answered, watching him, some unfathomable emotion burning in her black eyes. "Always you play, never you talk. It is that I want you to talk to me, to tell me of these great country that you so much explore."

He sprang to his feet and took a step toward her. She moved back, instinctively, paling.

"I shall not tell you!" His voice was harsh, and he leaned toward her menacingly. "Have you forgotten the things I have told you already? You know what I seek! And you can give it to me, and you will not!"

"Very dramatic and romantic!" Felice drew herself up proudly, and her black eyes smoldered. Her voice barely escaped a sneer. "You know nothing about me after all! Go on, *M'sieu*, and explore! You'll never find the thing you seek. Because you are going away from it every mile you travel! As for me—oh, me—*je suis—la femme—a huis clos! Comprenez vous?*"* She didn't mean the thing he really sought; she didn't know. Yet how merciless a truth she spoke.

"No!" Suelivor's voice rose in a bitter cry. "Neither do you. You *think* you do. But you don't understand at all. You don't know any—

* Loosely translated: "I am the woman who walks alone. Do you understand?"

thing about me. And I only know I'm in hell!"

Almost there was something human in that cry. Swiftly I lifted the whistle to my lips. Felice's black eyes caught sight of me, attracted by the motion of my hand, and leaped to my face. I stared back at her. I decided the rest of my existence in that look. And even as I drew my breath to blow that unholy whistle, Suelivor saw her gaze and wheeled to face me. He saw the whistle at my mouth, and he screamed, a hideous, terrible sound like nothing human. I never saw such hideous pain on any man's face as flashed into his then. I never want to see it again. Frantically I hurled my breath into that dumb tube of gold.

There rose from it a melody so sweet, so delicate, so holy and heaven-born that I shook in the flood of peace that descended to fill to throbbing ecstasy that great room. Felice's black eyes widened, and her face went still in a kind of awe. Suelivor writhed and twisted, and his scream went out in a diminishing moan that died in a futile whimper. Felice turned her gaze to him, but I blew steadily on. I knew nothing of manipulating the keys of that instrument, I could only blow into it. And I knew the unearthly achievement of Ahmbodie as that unutterably sweet melody rose ever more clearly and claimed the air.

But Suelivor! He twisted and squirmed like a man under torture, striving to spring toward me. He could not move from there. That holy melody held him bound to that spot. Then wild things began to happen. He began to glow and burst into atoms by fragments. That was the most ungodly sight ever witnessed by any man. First his feet went, glowing as though a fire were lit in the flesh, bursting into minute particles that shimmered like pulverized glass shot through with prismatic

light. The particles quivered for an instant, gyrating as though in the path of a whirlwind, then disappeared like sparks extinguished in a cold blast. Next his legs went, his thighs, the lower part of his trunk.

It was Felice who screamed then. She sprang back with her hands held out before her as though she would shield her eyes from some unbearable horror. But I played steadily on, grimly, inexorably, knowing that the God of Justice stood at my elbow and would not let me cease.

I played. And even though my hand was unshaken as it held that avenging tube of gold, the soul I was fighting to save shook at the awful power of that thin, sweet vibration. A delicate, dulcet sound so mighty in its cosmic force that it disintegrated and drove apart the atoms that thing in the shape of a man had accrued and welded together: drove them back shattered and blown to the five black winds of the outer darkness from which they had come. With a pæan of gratitude flooring me for the stupendous achievement of Ahmbodie, I played.

SUELIVOR'S trunk was gone, his arms. Only his distorted, rage-convulsed face hung gargoyle-like in the air, like some fantastically lighted, grotesque lantern. Then it, too, shattered in a thousand gleaming atoms, glowed for a moment a malignant red, and went out. And I knew what Ahmbodie had done, what he had hoped he had done. He had found Suelivor's exact vibration in those years he had worked, and prayed for this to come to pass when I played the whistle he had transformed—played it in the presence of that unspeakable being from the outer darkness.

And yet for a moment I played on, feeling the music of the spheres about my head, loth to hear that holy melody die away. Felice stood staring at the spot where Suelivor

had been, soothed by that melody in spite of her shock, quieted to something resembling coherency. Then I dropped my hand and slipped the whistle into my pocket. There was silence. Silence profound, not of the Earth.

"Oh, Emile!" Felice broke the hush with a cry, not looking at me, still staring at the oddly luminous void in the air where Suelivor had stood. "*Mon Dieu!* What have you done? What is this? Am I mad? Do my eyes see? What was he? Emile—Emile! *Mon coeur—tout est flétri—pour toujours!*"*

"No!" I denied. "Such hurts a surgeon might give his soul to heal! No—not forever. Time—you know time. And Henteli Suelivor was nothing human. Don't ask me what he was!"

I dragged myself to the window-ledge and dropped wearily to a seat, but she remained standing, motionless, her face dead-white, her eyes still averted from me.

"Time! Time!" she mocked. "The great doctor speaks of time! But what of *love*? Do you not know that it is love I have been seeking, Emile? Do you not know love? *Have* you not known it?" And now she turned toward me, with a swift, angry little gesture of rebellion, her eyes flaming. "Me—I thought to know it, Emile. And now he is gone. When I saw you there in Georgia I was searching for it. Always I have searched. It has been a gorgeous hunt. Big game, eh, Emile?"

Her bitter smile cut me. Hysterics and tears I should have been able to hold in control. But there were no tears, no frantic cries. She did not even seem to consider the fact that I was responsible for his going. Neither as man nor surgeon did I like that smile. No. Even now, even after what she had witnessed, she had no least idea of what manner of thing

had been Suelivor. She did not contemplate that. She was racked, crushed with her false sense of loss. But how to persuade her that it *was* false?

"Emile!" I started at the repressed vehemence in her voice. "I tell you. *Oui*. I tell you all. Only, my friend—I need you now. Don't go away from me. Don't ever go away from me!"

"I won't." That was a promise. She knew I was incapable of breaking it, too. She looked at me sharply, as a man dying of thirst might stare at a water-flask—which he feared was empty.

"*Merci*, Emile! See, I have lived for love, Emile. Lived to find it. Oh, not this light, light thing so many call love. But that thing which goes so deep we can not find its roots: that thing which goes so high we can not find its topmost branches: that thing which is so wide it possesses us utterly, makes of us both the king and the slave. You know such love, Emile? He—Henteli Suelivor, he could have given it! But he would not! There was something missing, Emile. Such a mind he had! Brains enough to run a world. Such a huge thing he was, powerful, like a fighter. One loves big men, Emile!"

I smiled to myself, wryly. Suelivor had been two inches shorter and ten pounds lighter than I! And I was no imbecile. Was I not acknowledged the greatest surgeon of the world? Love! Love from that cold, bloodless being? God—what I could have given her! I clamped my teeth grimly. Her voice went on, pinched with pain.

"And the fire he had. It was enough for ten men. But he turned it all to his furious music. He—you know he said he was an explorer. You know what he explored? The realms of harmony! You know for what he sought? A cool companion to play with him that so violent

* "My heart is scarred forever."

music! *Sacré!* What did I care for his wild music! I wanted him!"

I put my two hands together and held on to myself. So *that* was what he had told her! Anything, any flimsy excuse to retain access to her presence till he had drawn the soul from her body and left her cold and still in death. But it was not *her* soul he had touched with his satanic vibration. He had not reached her *soul* at all. Had he irrevocably claimed her *heart*? The heart he did not want. The heart I would have given my life to make my own! I sat in dumb silence. I did not yet dare trust my tongue.

"Love!" She laughed, a laugh that made me wince. "Love was not for him, Emile. You knew that, didn't you? I did not. I thought he had it. He shook me so. When he came into this room he brought light with him. The very air was alight with glory and desire. I felt as though a sharp electric glow were playing over me. When he spoke, a thousand little bells went ringing in my heart. And he knew it, Emile! He knew I loved him, and he traded on that love to come here and play his wild music. What—what did he hope to gain? Oh, I don't understand—but I hate him! Do you hear? I hate him!"

I hated only the pain in her face; the pain that choked me to silence and rendered me furious at my own impotency. Neither surgeon's brains nor surgeon's knives—but what of a surgeon's love? If in the zenith of her shock and misery her violent nature swung to hate him, if that heart wheeled on the rebound—was there hope for me?

Her voice sank to a weary, patient resignation: "I am glad that I will never see him again, Emile. Such a wild, terrible thing—such a horrible way to go. Me—I do not understand what you did to that whistle. I do not understand how it could blast

him and touch us not at all. But I care not how he went—I am glad he is gone. I hate him, I tell you! Love! I laugh! All my life I wait, I live, I hope for love. It come—like a blinding star in a black cave—and it go, leaving only hate. I live for love—and I get this! I laugh at him. At me. At love. He didn't know what the word meant. No man does!"

"Some do!" I bit in, hard-gripped. "Some do!"

"I wonder!" She stared at the vehemence of my cry, her eyes wide upon me. "If he could not know—how could any man know?"

"Don't!" I cried, almost at the limit of my endurance. "He was not human. He was evil—evil that can not exist in struggle against the vibration of a holy melody. Even you may have followed false gods!"

"False gods! What do you mean, Emile?" She leaned toward me where she stood, and I saw that more and more her mind, her thought, her being was turning to me. "Oh—Emile!" Suddenly all the fury died out of her. Her shoulders drooped. She spread her hands toward me in a gesture of appeal. "Emile—did you ever know what it means to love anyone so much that if that one touch you you hurt with happiness? Did you ever love anyone so much that wanting them made you faint-hearted and weak-kneed? Did you ever love anyone so much that that one was like a scorching fever in your veins, that when that one was absent your life was gone, that you would sell your soul and body to the devil just to have that one to hold and love till love was satisfied—forever? Oh, Emile—did you?"

"Yes!" I cried out, under torture. "Good God, yes! That's how I love you!"

"Emile!" The hands that had been clasped across her breast dropped limply. Her black eyes

stared wider, wider, and she leaned nearer me in stunned silence. And after a little she whispered tensely, "Oh—my friend, not so! My Emile—not so!"

"It is so! It is so!" I gripped the edge of the window-seat and stared back into her eyes. Was it possible he had not claimed her heart at all? Merely shaken it with his unearthly vibration, confused her and turned her senses? I rushed on. "False gods, Felice! You have been following false gods. That was not love! That was only the glittering mirage of an archfiend in human trappings. This is love—here. Here! You have been so blinded by the nearness of a sputtering star of hell that you could not see the great sun itself just beyond!"

"Emile!" She stepped close to me, and I went down on the knees that refused to bear me up, burying my face in her gown and clasping her with my arms. She was very still and I knew that she felt me shaking—shaking.

"Have you been that blind?" I raised my face. "So blind that you did not know? From the first time I saw you down there by the cotton field in Georgia my own dream has been of finding you again and making you mine forever!"

"Have I found it?" She leaned down and placed her hands on my shoulders with a grip that astonished me by its intensity. A high light broke into the empty depths of her black eyes. "Emile—have I found it? Here—waiting patiently under my own roof while I was misled by—false gods?"

Emotion flooded me, dizzying with promise. I knew then that the heart had not gone astray after all. Shaken, dazzled by a mirage, but mine. Mine all the while—even now coming home to me. Her hands drew at me, but I had hard work getting to my feet.

My silly knees had no will to bear me up. I succeeded by great effort, and she held me off, staring at me.

My blood leaped exultantly. No longer were the black eyes empty. They were glowing with a blinding light. She stared at me as a man dying of thirst might stare at an empty water-flask, suddenly, miraculously brimming with clear, cool water. I stood motionless, searching her eyes for the thing I must see. And suddenly it was there. Home! The dazzled, wounded, bewildered heart had come home.

"Oh, Emile! Have I found it?" And her arms went around my neck in surrender.

I broke, then. I'd held in too long. I think I kissed her. I can't be sure. I only know my arms went around her, possessing her utterly. This was Earth! Cool, sane, warm, beloved Earth. Green Earth, pulsant with spring, swept clean of the last vestige of that sinister denizen from the outer darkness. And in the flood of mad desire that overwhelmed me, shaking me to the depths, there ran the steady current of an unflinching, abiding love. She knew very well she had found it!

SOMETIMES even yet I pause in my happiness to think of Suelivor. And almost I pity him. I keep that picture to remind me how near we are to unseen, unhallowed things. I wonder if somewhere he has reassembled by the aid of his kind the atoms that were his body, and gone on to yet another planet, seeking. I see him standing broad and high on the deck of a ship, his longing insatiate, consuming, his cruel mouth drawn into a bitter line, his green-brown eyes searching the empty sea as he flies recklessly into the weather. Or is he shattered forever?

The whistle? Ah, yes, there it hangs. To remind me that Light must ever triumph over Darkness.

No one will ever play it again. Ahmbodie has seen to that. That holy melody is not yet for this Earth. But—there is another whistle. Hush—listen, do you hear it? My wife,

gentlemen. Is there another sound like that anywhere? So round—so golden! You will pardon me, *non?* Every night she whistles me from my office to the garden. I go.