

★ *Famous*
FANTASTIC
Mysteries ★

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THIS magazine is the answer to thousands of requests that we have received over a period of years, demanding a second look at famous fantasies which, since their original publication, have become accepted classics. Our choice has been dictated by your requests and our firm belief that these are the aces of imaginative fiction.

—The Editors.



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The Man With the Glass Heart

By GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

Author of "Darkness and Dawn," "The Flying Legion," etc.

The one man who could mend that heart, wouldn't believe in it

WE HAD just lost our routine bridge game in the smoking room of the *Ferrania*—my traveling companion, Maynard, and I—and had set up the nightly beers for Harrison and Dr. Carmichael, our victors. Tobacco thereafter appeared.

The bright electric lighting, the leather divans and nicotin-scented warmth, contrasting cheerfully with the January bluster of mid-Atlantic, inclined our hearts to narration. All four of us settled down for a good "gam." Men never talk so well, I think, as when the gale is picking at the harp of the rig, the woodwork straining, and the surges slewing thunderously 'long-side in the dark.

Thus we spoke of many subjects, and the talk veered at last to the power of mind over matter. Dr. Carmichael was most interesting, and as I recall it, his tale ran somewhat like this:

HARDLY had the intruder opened the door and quietly stepped into the laboratory when Ackroyd glanced round with surprised vexation. For the master mind of electrical science hated interruption above all things. He failed to understand how this tall, stern-featured man, so ominously intense, had managed to slip past the laboratory guard.

So, standing up quickly beside the littered experiment bench that ran along the whole north wall of the room, the wizard crossed his shirt-sleeved arms, clamped his teeth still tighter on the old cob which was his constant solace, and from beneath frowning brows peered with hostility at the newcomer.

For a moment neither spoke. By the light which glowed greenly from the vacuum-tubes about the ceiling of this windowless den, each studied the other. Then the stranger closed the door and came forward.

"Please excuse this rudeness," said he in a deep, courteous voice, which, nevertheless, trembled a bit. "I know how very unwelcome I must be. Still, I am here. I had to come!"

"How the deuce did *you* get in?" snapped the scientist.

"Oh, just a little strategy. Nothing simpler. But let's waste no time on that. I've something far more vital to discuss. And every moment's precious. Now I—I—"

He stammered with sudden emotion. Ackroyd perceived that he was holding unto himself only by a strong effort. Removing the pipe from between his teeth, the scientist stared in wonder, trying to determine what sort of fellow this might be. A professional man, to be sure. Maybe a writer. Ah! Perhaps he wanted an interview.

"Sorry," blurted Ackroyd; "but if you want to write me up, or anything of that sort, I can't see you. Nothing to say. Positively nothing." And he moved to sit down at his work-bench.

The stranger raised an imploring hand. Ackroyd noted how long and fine the fingers were—white, supple, and adorned by a single plain gold ring.

"Pardon me again," said the intruder. "You mistake my errand. It isn't an interview I want. Why, I never wrote a line for publication in my life. I want just

a few minutes of your time, at your own price. My errand concerns something far more vital than mere curiosity. It's life or death to me. For Heaven's sake, will you hear me?"

Ackroyd, startled, yet intensely annoyed, thrust out his lower lip and began pulling at it—a way he had when particularly irritated. Time, for him, had no price that could be counted in money.

Just now he was three-quarters through an abstruse calculation. This interruption of his mental process was an outrage, from his point of view—more, a crime. Any appeal to his emotions must be fruitless, for emotions he had none. The cry of sentiment curdled his soul. He hated it. So with raised palm he motioned dismissal.

"Can't see you," he decided. "Good day."

The stranger, paling, clenched both fists.

"You must!" cried he.

"So?" sneered the wizard. "That's a new word to me."

He reached quickly for a push-button close beside his chair.

But the stranger, with a sudden gesture, tore open coat and waistcoat, ripped his shirt apart, and on his naked breast exposed a singular object.

Ackroyd, his eyes narrowing slightly, stood still. His finger did not press the little ivory knob.

Thus, for a second, the two men confronted each other.

"Well," cried the scientist at length, "what is it?"

"Listen. If you send me away without hearing me," replied the intruder in eager haste, "you'll miss the greatest—"

"Oh, so you're another crank, eh?" sneered Ackroyd, with a cynical grimace. "Greatest scientific marvel of the age, and all that sort of stuff, eh? That's what they all say—such of 'em as I can't dodge! Why, we turn away, on the average, five or six greatest marvels a day. So I tell you, to begin with—"

"I've got a glass heart!" cried the stranger. "Will you listen to me now?"

FOR a moment, Ackroyd stood dumb. Then: "A—*what?*" he exclaimed. As he spoke, the idea "Madman" crossed his brain. But even so, in spite of himself, he was startled. "You mean to say—"

"I do. I repeat it. My heart's made of glass. An artificial heart, mechanical, automatic. Made by Kohler, of Vienna. Put in by Klugermann, of Bonn. And operated by this." He tapped the boxlike affair strapped to his chest. "Do you want proofs? I've got them. Only listen, I tell you. You can at least do that. As a man of science, you're willing at least to hear what other men have done, aren't you?"

Ackroyd replied nothing, but stood studying this singular individual. He noted the high, somewhat wrinkled forehead, the stiff black hair already retreating before the attack of baldness, the aquiline nose, and sharp, intelligent eyes. Then, with a smile, he jibed:

"Not dangerous or violent, are you? Merely harmless, I take it. Because, you see, that's important. I may as well tell you, right now, that I've got a gun in the table drawer, and I can hit a dime, nine shots out of ten, at a hundred feet. Also, there are—well, other devices in this laboratory which might embarrass you in case you tried to start anything. So go slow."

With an expression of intense chagrin the stranger drew from his pocket a neatly folded journal.

"You read German, of course?" asked he, ignoring the insult.

Ackroyd nodded.

"Very well. Look at this."

The scientist, bitterly scornful, accepted the paper. He glanced over a page or two. A one-column article was blue-penciled. As he read the headlines his face became a study.

NEW TRIUMPH OF MODERN SURGERY
Radical Cure of Valvular Degeneration
by Klugermann's New Method
LARGER ASPECTS OF THE
RUSSELL CASE

For almost the first time in his career wholly at a loss, Ackroyd dropped the

medical journal on his table, sat down heavily, and leaning forward with a hard, stern look at this astonishing visitor, demanded:

"Well? For Heaven's sake, man, what is it all about? What do you want of me?"

"I'm Russell, to begin with," answered the other. "Francis H. Russell, of Toledo. And, as I said at first, I want just a few minutes of your time."

"All right! All right! Go ahead!" the scientist exclaimed, his voice betraying more emotion than in years. "Let's have it!"

"At your own price?"

"Price? What do I want of money?"

"It's useful, at times. Allow me." And Russell, taking from an inner pocket of his disordered clothing a morocco wallet, extracted therefrom a flat stack of bills.

He laid the money on the table. Ackroyd, glancing involuntarily at it, saw that it must total several thousand dollars. He started to sweep it into the wastebasket, but with a sudden change of mind dropped it into the drawer.

"New laboratories," he remarked. "Well?"

The client drew up a plain wooden chair and sat down. Ackroyd noted that he seemed in pain, rather short of breath, and rather pale. But to this he gave no heed. His whole thought now was of the incomprehensible problem before him.

What to think, he knew not. Whether to believe or doubt, he could not tell. He waited. His eyes fixed themselves upon that curious flat box which partly showed through the man's torn clothing. Russell noted the look.

"This," said he more calmly, "is what I came to consult you about—this apparatus here." He tapped the box. "I've got to consult you about it. Knowing the futility of trying to make any appointment by letter, I did the next best thing—waited my chance and forced myself on you. Forgive me! A man will do anything almost, even the most distasteful things, to save his life."

"You mean—"

"I'm in great danger. Deadly peril. And only you can save me."

"How so?"

"I'll tell you presently. Just a few words first. Who I am doesn't matter. An American, rich, with children and big business interests. Only fifty-two. Much to live for. Years and years of usefulness still ahead of me, if you help me."

"Yes, yes! Go on!" And Ackroyd, whom not even the keenest interest could long divorce from his tobacco, reached once more for the old pipe.

"Four years ago this spring I developed heart-disease. Had the best specialists—oh, a dozen of them. No results. The dishonest ones exploited me. The others told me the truth—no hope. The most optimistic gave me perhaps three years or so to live.

"Well, I took my death sentence, and tried to bear it as best I could. And for a while things went on, getting worse and worse all the time. No matter about details. I was slowly dying; that's enough to know."

Without comment, the scientist listened. His pipe was going now. Already the air about his head was beginning to grow blue.

"What was it, Providence or mere coincidence, that put Crawford's 'Witch of Prague' into my hands about eighteen months ago? I can't say. At any rate, I read the book. Remember *Keyork Arabian's* experiments? One was the keynote of my inspiration. When I read that—"

"Go on, tell me about it!"

"He describes, you recall, substituting a glass heart for the real one in a rabbit. The words branded themselves instantly into my brain. They're all there, still. 'I made,' says he, '*an artificial heart which worked on a narcotized rabbit, and the rabbit died instantly when I stopped the machine. . . . If one applied it to a man, he might live on indefinitely, grow fat, and flourish so long as the glass heart worked. Where would his soul be then? In the glass heart, which would have become the seat of life?*'"

Russell paused, unduly excited. For a moment Ackroyd peered at him. Then said he:

"So you went to work on that idea, did you, and at great expense of travel, pain, and money had this thing actually done to you? Is that, omitting all minor points, what you're coming at?"

"Exactly. How splendidly you grasp conclusions!"

"I have to, in this business, or quit. Well, then, what do you ask me to believe? That you've actually got a mechanical heart inside there, in place of the old one? And that that's all you keep alive on?"

Russell smiled—an odd, bitter smile.

"I'm not asking you to believe anything," he returned. "I'm merely asking you to examine the evidence and judge it, as you would in any other problem. After that, when you're quite convinced, I want your help."

"How so? What's wrong?"

"The mechanism! Nobody on this side of the Atlantic can set it right except you. There's no time for a journey back to Vienna. You're the only man that can save me. If you refuse—"

"You die?"

"Like *Keyork Araban's* rabbit," assented Russell with quivering lips.

ACKROYD sat frowning for a moment. Keen thinker and clever analyst though he was, this case for a little while seemed to baffle him. How explain

it? If the man were only a deluded crank, how account for the article in the German magazine?

The story he told, after all, was not impossible. Though no surgeon, Ackroyd knew something of the marvels of modern medical science—the ingrafting of organs and of bones upon the living body, the stitching up of the wounded yet still pulsing heart, the seeming restoration of life by various processes.

Might it not be true? And if so, how strangely curious a thing to know about! A flash of keen interest passed through his mind. He must have proofs—then he would undertake whatever work this stranger wanted done. But, first of all, proof positive that the thing was as the man declared.

As though reading his thoughts, Russell tapped the flat, boxlike thing upon his breast.

"Here," said he more calmly, "is the apparatus I want you to examine and repair. Put your ear over this way—so—now hear it? Something wrong, you perceive? And you're the only man in America I dare even show it to!"

Ackroyd, all attention, listened hard. From within the box, which was shallow and curved to fit the contour of the man's chest, came a slow, rhythmic sound, dull and almost inaudible, but broken now and then by a slight hitch, as though some delicate cog or gear had stuck, then gone free again. The wizard frowned.

"If what you're telling me is true,"

judged he, "you'd better go to a watch-maker. I'm not the man you want to consult at all!"

"Pardon me," returned the other, "but it isn't a matter of mere clockwork. Here, let me explain."

Taking up a pencil from the work-bench, he hastily, and with considerable skill, drew out a sketch of the apparatus. A strap round the body and two over the shoulders seemed to hold it in place. Within the space which represented the box itself he quickly limned two induction coils, a "U" magnet, and a variety of delicate levers and springs which served to make and break a circuit from six flat storage-batteries inside his coat.

These batteries he showed to Ackroyd.

"Now you readily understand," he elucidated, "my heart can't be operated by direct transmission of power from outside. Magnetism is the only force that can do it, through the body itself.

"The valves of this artificial organ are fitted with disks of steel, capable of being attracted and released by the coils here at 'X' and 'Y.' My batteries, according to directions, I have renewed at regular intervals of one week—two batteries each time, thus always insuring a steady, uniform current.

"But in spite of all this, for ten days past something's been wrong. The mechanism's been out of order. It skipped a few times. Once I thought it was going to stop altogether. You can imagine my state of mind!"

"Well?" interrogated the scientist, reaching for another match. "So, then, you made up your mind to consult me?"

"Just that. And made a record run of it, too, from Toledo! Fancy your own life utterly dependent on—"

"Yes, yes, I know. But what am I to do? Open that box, study out the apparatus, see what's wrong, and make it right! Is that your program?"

"To a 'T'!" replied the client, now visibly excited.

A little color had crept into his face; his hands were working nervously.

"Precisely. And the quicker, the better." He glanced toward the door. "Suppose we should be interrupted! I might lose my—"

"COME, now, calm yourself!" Ackroyd exclaimed. "All I ask is to be quite convinced of the reality of this thing. Then I'll go ahead to the best of my ability."

Turning toward the work-bench, he opened the drawer and began pawing over the disorder to find a small screw-driver such as he would need in opening the long, flat box.

"Convinced?" queried Russell in a strange tone. "How?"

"Well, just show me the scar of the operation, for one thing. Then let me listen to your cardiac sounds. If they turn out to be, as you claim, purely mechanical, I'll accept that evidence and go ahead. Isn't that fair?" And, still looking for the screw-driver, he bent over the open drawer.

"Isn't that reasonable?" repeated Ackroyd. But his question was never answered. For voices sounded, all at once, outside the laboratory. Then footsteps crunched the gravel.

Russell stood up suddenly, clutching at the box upon his breast. Ackroyd, sensing rather than getting vision of the man's quick rage and terror, whirled round just in time to see him whip an automatic revolver from his pocket.

Outside, a trilling whistle sounded. Steps clumped on the broad wooden piazza.

Russell, livid and trembling with sudden passion, thrust his head forward. With bowed shoulders and disordered dress, revolver balanced in his hand, he crept with stealthy tread toward the door. The grotesque quality of his figure contrasted horribly with its bestial, tigerish, murderous alertness.

Horrified, Ackroyd stood inert. The very suddenness of the transformation numbed him for a second. At the table he remained, staring with wide eyes, his jaw gaping, not yet able to understand, but foreseeing violence.

Came a decisive voice: "I guess he's in there, all right enough."

Another answered: "We'll have him in a minute, now. But be careful. Here, Bray, you keep back. Now, all right?"

But before the door swung open, Russell whirled on Ackroyd as the wizard sprang.

"You hound!" he shrieked, jerking the revolver to position. "You did this! You warned those fiends! You're in this infernal conspiracy, too, to break my glass heart and destroy my soul! But I won't die alone!" The man's face was black with rage, and foam had gathered at the corners of his mouth.

"Die!" he yelled. But as the revolver barked, Ackroyd ducked and, swinging his chair aloft, hurled it full at Russell.

It struck him squarely on the breast and shoulder. His revolver spat again as he fell; the bullet shattered the vacuum-tube overhead. Glass jangled. The light faded. Darkness fell. Ackroyd flung himself upon the man.

In burst the door, and by the glare of day through the opening the rescuers saw Ackroyd slowly getting up, with a dazed, half frightened air. Puzzled for a moment, they held back.

"What's—what's up?" cried a voice. Ackroyd heard the snick of a revolver hammer.

"Wait!" he panted. He found and pressed a button. Instantly a flood of yellow light inundated the laboratory from the reserve incandescents.

By this light they saw Russell lying, distorted, motionless upon the floor. His eyes were open and staring—the hideous eyes of a man who has died in the grip of stark, mad terror.

"He—did he tell you—" began one of the men. They wore blue uniforms and caps. "Tell you he had a glass heart? Want you to repair it for him?"

Ackroyd did not answer. He merely snatched up the big sheet he used to cover his models with and spread it over the corpse.

"Come, get busy!" he commanded. "Take him out. This is no morgue. I'm busy. Too busy for any questions until

the inquest. Then you'll find me on hand, to make an accounting for everything he said and did and gave me. Now, out you all go!"

Thus he dismissed them. Ten minutes later, with the old cob once more cheerfully erupting, he got back to his interrupted calculation, unmindful of the baffled reporters who had already begun to pry about outside.

IN THE smoke-room our little group sat silent for a moment as Dr. Carmichael finished. Then Harrison spoke.

"Just an escaped lunatic? With religious mania, too?"

"Hardly that. If so, extremely high grade. A man of his education, able to write and print a German paper like that just to substantiate his own hallucination can hardly be classed as a mere lunatic. Rather call it a case of acute monomania. Perfectly sane in every other respect. Perfectly hopeless in *that* respect. So firmly convinced of it, in fact, that the shock of the chair against his apparatus dropped him stone-dead. Mind over matter? Well, rather!"

Another pause.

Then, in a satirical tone, up spoke Maynard, my traveling companion and cabin-mate.

"Well," judged he, "it was no more than he deserved for being a plain, infernal fool. Why, if he'd known anything about the subject of glass hearts, or artificial hearts of any kind, for that matter, he'd have been aware that there's only one bona-fide case on record of such a thing actually working. So he stood, a self-convicted faker!"

"One—one case?" hesitated the bewildered doctor.

"Only one. But it's got nothing to do with all that rot about the soul residing in it and so on. Furthermore, it's not all glass, but partly glass and partly aluminum. And it's operated, not by simple magnetism, but—"

"How do you know such a lot of things that aren't so?" snapped the doctor.

Maynard's face grew hard and his eyes narrowed.

"Why oughtn't a man to know about his own heart?" he replied at length.

A dense stillness enveloped our group. Then the doctor coughed nervously, got up, and with a banal word of excuse withdrew down the stairway to the bar below. Harrison also departed. The gale whipped into the room as he shoved out to the heaving deck. Behind him the door banged.

I found myself alone with Maynard.

"The fools!" he laughed. Then he suddenly grew serious, with a strange eager look upon his face.

He drew out pencil and note-book.

"See here!" he whispered, as his nervous fingers began with rapid strokes to form a diagram. "My heart is like this—see? I've never explained it yet to a living soul, but—this conversation tonight has decided me. If I should die, the mystery would be lost. I make you my confidant. But remember, if you so much as lisp a syllable of this while I still live, I'll shoot you like a dog."

Then he laughed again, a high-pitched, cackling laugh in which lay no merriment. And while with sudden dread I watched, he began expounding to me, his chosen victim, the secret of the only successful artificial heart now operating in the world.