

UNKNOWN

JUNE • 1941

TWENTY CENTS

JUNE, '41

FANTASY FICTION



SHAPE OF DESIRE Cleve Cartmill

It was—something. It was an ancient, fabled gem, it was a pair of tailor's shears. It was a gun, a great emerald, or a hacksaw blade. It was—the shape of desire!



YESTERDAY WAS MONDAY . Theodore Sturgeon

Slight error somewhere! He got behind the scenes, and woke up Wednesday morning although Yesterday was Monday. The Builders hadn't finished making Wednesday yet—



NOT ACCORDING TO DANTE . Malcolm Jameson

Hell wasn't what it used to be, what with all the imps on relief, and a steady rain of broken shoelaces, inoperable gadgets, and broken-down cars. But there was a very special hell for him—

THE FOUNTAIN Nelson S. Bond

Ponce de Leon was right—the Fountain of Youth was there in Florida. But he was wrong—for it was the fountain of death, too!

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All stories in this magazine are fiction. No actual persons are designated either by name or character. Any similarity is coincidental.

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THE SHAPE OF DESIRE

● It was a—something. It was anything, and everything, it was what everyone most desired! And it was ruin!

Illustrated by F. Kramer

It was washed up out of the sea; that is certain. But only a blind man, perhaps, could have told its true size and shape, by taking it into his hands. Perhaps—

DEATH, thought John Lackland as he strode along the windy beach, was not exactly what Harris Wildin deserved. But, barring miracles, he would be forced to kill Wildin in six hours, as soon as darkness fell.

He pulled his topcoat tighter against the raw wind which flung sullen waves high on the sand, and concentrated his furious thoughts on ways and means to kill Wildin and escape detection. That was his only hope to wriggle from under that Damoclean sword of knowledge that suspended by the fraying thread of his ability to pay blackmail.

Another payment was due tonight. He could not meet it. He must kill, for Wildin, he knew, would brook no delay.



Pay off or fry in the Big House, Wildin had told him.

In better days, Lackland had owned jewels which would have bought back the documentary evidence of his one infraction of the law. Yes, Wildin would have sold his soul for a small fraction of that famed collection of gems odd and rare.

A glint of fire caught Lackland's eye, a glint of green fire near the scalloped edge of the water. John Lackland checked his long-legged stride. There it was again, a brilliant living flash. Probably a bit of glass, he thought as he approached the spot, but I'll have a look.

The look jackknifed his long frame as he snatched an object from the sand.

"The Seven Faces," he said in tones of reverent wonder. "The Seven Faces!"

He shot a quick dark glance along the curving strip of sand. He was alone, and the road was too far away for passing motorists to see his find. His burning eyes returned to the object.

They saw an emerald as large as a baby's fist. It was carved in the shape of a beautiful woman with seven faces. On each face was a living emotion—love, hatred, anger, fear, grief, joy, and lust. When revolved slowly, she became a succession of different women. She was all women; yet such was the genius who created her, she was the same *person* from each facial angle.

She was not a famous jewel, but her history, before she was lost in the first month of her creation, was bloody and swift. A single paragraph in an obscure volume told how the nameless artist who fashioned her in the time of Genghiz Khan was murdered by a common thief; who, in turn, was murdered by the bawd whose favor he bought with the jewel.

She was killed within the week by an unknown, and the Seven Faces vanished from public life.

That dry and factual paragraph had stirred John Lackland. He had read it again and again. His desire for the gem caused him fiercely to believe that it had survived seven hectic centuries of successive ownerships, and that he would see it some day before he died.

"Now," he thought exultantly, "I've got it in my hands and it's worth a fortune!"

Thoughts of money brought Wildin to mind, and John Lackland wondered for a moment how this could have happened so pat. This was the miracle that would end his payments of hush money, that would allow Wildin to live. Had Providence intervened? Lackland shrugged away his questions. It had happened. That was enough.

He shoved the jewel in his pocket and strode out to the road, where he hailed a bus to the city. He hurried into a drugstore and telephoned Wildin.

"With the right build-up," he told Wildin, "it's worth a hundred times more than I can ever pay you. In ten days I could—"

"Tonight," Harris Wildin's silky voice cut in. "Tonight is the deadline. Remember? If this rock is what you say it is, bring it along. Maybe we can make a deal."

"And have one of your thugs take it away from me?" Lackland scoffed. "Thanks, no. I'll come and talk about it with you, though, and tell you my price."

"Your price is whatever I'll pay."

"Wildin! I tell you this stone is worth a fortune. It weighs around two thousand carats. I could sell it today, but without a publicity campaign it won't bring one tenth its true value. I'll make a deal with you. I'll give it

to you and outline a campaign in return for certain papers you hold, in addition to a signed alibi for the period in question."

"Why the alibi?"

"So you can't use the photostatic copies you would undoubtedly have made."

"Bring it over at eleven, Lackland."

"I'll come at eleven. If you have a suitable alibi already signed, I'll get the stone within fifteen minutes."

"O. K. I'll be in my office."

Back on the sidewalk, John Lackland checked his habitual impulse to hail a taxi. With the market acting like a dive bomber, economies were necessary. He patted his pocket to check the safety of the emerald and boarded the next bus. He did not even see the dapper little man who followed him.

GILPIN BARDLEY sometimes thought of himself as the world's most accomplished pickpocket. If this were true, he believed it was because picking pockets was an activity secondary to his study of psychology.

He loved crowds: subway, bus, bargain day, baseball, political—all kinds of crowds. But he flattered himself that his unerring and polished fingers never touched a victim who might be dangerous. He never picked the pockets of a happy man, and he never snatched a purse.

The happy man, he reasoned, has nothing in particular on his mind and is all the quicker to notice any untoward act. Purses, of course, were evidence, no matter how quickly you dump them.

The frowners were Gilpin Bardley's meat. The pacers, on crowded train platforms or docks, who were afraid of whoever, or whatever, was arriving; the speakers at political rallies who pushed through the crowd memorizing their

speeches; the thin, pallid men who came furtively away from the \$2 window at racetracks—these owned the pockets where delved the supple digits of Gilpin Bardley.

Pickings, he agreed, were slimmer than more catholic foraging—if you got away with it. That, he often told Molly, his common-law wife, was the crux of the matter. Sure, the big boys who handed out dollar cigars and yards of toothy grins had fat rolls more often than not, but that jollity was only a veneer for a suspicious, cop-calling nature.

By sticking to the worriers, he had kept his name off police blotters. He had kept it off everything, in fact, and not even Molly knew him by any other than Gyp.

Gyp had not intended to take the bus with John Lackland until he saw the harried dullness of Lackland's eyes. Here was a man with something on his mind and, judging by the small bulge, something in his pocket.

As he followed Lackland from the drugstore, Gyp speculated idly on the nature of that object in the topcoat pocket. The coat had an expensive cut, and the man moved through the thin stream of shoppers with authority. The object, Gyp decided, was probably a cigar case. Then, as Lackland patted the pocket, Gyp concluded it might be something valuable, and swung on the bus.

Before Lackland had paid his fare, Gyp had transferred the object to his own pocket; and before Lackland was seated, Gyp had asked the conductor a silly question and was on the street again.

He did not take it out at once and examine it. He followed the bus with his eyes to the next stop and saw that



his victim did not get off. He was safe, then.

Gyp strolled toward his boarding-house, where he and Molly lived in a two-room apartment with both hot and cold water. Once there, he could examine his booty without fear of the curious eyes of prowling police.

Molly was out when Gyp arrived. He locked the door and took the object from his pocket.

As he had thought, a tooled leather case housed whatever of value—if anything—he had acquired. It was an expensive case with an intricate clasp, and Gyp felt that something more precious than cigars lay inside.

He finally worked it open and caught

his breath. There, on white velvet, was the largest star sapphire Gyp had ever seen!

He had dreamed of sapphires on lean and hungry afternoons in a whipping rain, but even his hungriest dreams had never aspired to such a stone as this.

It was a breathless blue against the snowy velvet bed, and the murky sunlight that filtered through the grimed window struck glittering stars from every facet. Gyp felt, for a second, that the blazing asters were not reflected light, but the living stuff that stars were made of.

He set the case on the table and frowned at it. That stone was

hotter than a basket of stolen crown jewels. It was an incredible rock, and certain to be famous. As soon as that guy missed it, he was sure to yell for a yard full of cops, and woe to the dip who tried to hock it! Every pawnshop in town would have a complete description and orders to hold the man who offered it.

The hall door rattled, and Molly called. Gyp unlocked it and Molly came in, her blond hair in fixed new waves.

"Any luck?" she asked. Her eyes fell on the open case and she stared, crimson lips parted in wonder. "Oh, Gyp!" she exclaimed tenderly. "You needn't 've!"

To Gyp's astonishment, she appar-

ently picked up this fabulous star sapphire and slipped it over her ring finger!

She turned it this way and that under moist blue eyes. "Gee, honey," she said. "'Course I been wantin' one just exactly like this, but I didn't care, really." She came over to Gyp, laid her cheek against his and gave him a huge squeeze. "This makes it kind of legal now, don't it?"

Gyp, his eyes still frozen on the phenomenon, rubbed moist brow with sweating palm.

"How did you do it?" he asked faintly.

"Do what?"

"Give it to me a minute." He held out his hand.

Puzzled, she laid the object in his palm. Gyp tried to push his ring finger through it and failed.

"It's too little for you," Molly said.

"Is it?" He put his hand beside hers for comparison. "Is it?"

"No," she said softly. "Your fingers are slimmer than mine. What what's the matter, Gyp? What are you lookin' like that for?"

Gyp laid the stone back in the case and turned to Molly. "Do you know you just pushed a finger through a star sapphire? What I want to know is, how did you do it?"

"What's this star-sapphire talk?" Molly asked. "All I done was to put on that wedding ring. Wasn't I supposed to? You didn't mean it for somebody else, didja, Gyp? I'm the one, ain't I?"

A KNOCK on the door sent Gyp into a tense crouch, lips snarling. He looked at the case, at Molly, then straightened and said casually:

"Who is it?"

"Me, Abrams," said a voice. "I'm bringing back the pants."

Gyp opened the door and the little aproned tailor stepped inside.

"As good as new," he said proudly, handing Gyp a pair of light trousers. "Their own loom couldn't be telling they been mended. For only a quarter, you're getting a bargain."

Gyp examined the mended spot negligently and reached into his pocket. The little tailor's sharp eyes fell on the object on the table.

"Oy!" he said. "Such a beautiful shears! Four dollars thirty-two cents they're costing, wholesale. My Sammy is saying he'll buy me some, which I'm needing just like these, but Sammy he ain't working now. Maybe we could make a trade, Mr. Gyp? Maybe I can be giving you some work for the shears?"

"I'll let you know," Gyp said thickly. He handed the old man a twenty-five-cent piece and ushered him out. He faced Molly, dark wonder in his eyes, a creeping fear in his heart.

"To me," he said, half to himself, "it's a star sapphire. To you it's a wedding ring, and Abrams sees a pair of shears. I wonder what the guy I took it from thought it was?"

"What—I don't understand, Gyp!"

"Me, either," Gyp said. He sank into the room's single chair and stared at the object on the table top. "You only see one thing on there, don't you, Molly?"

"Yeah, just the wedding ring, Gyp."

"Hm-m-m. Is anybody else home in the house?"

"That young Mrs. Williams, upstairs, Gyp. Her baby's awful sick. I think it's gonna die. I keep askin' her why don't she get in touch with her husband

and get some money."

"Maybe she hasn't got a husband. Ask her to come down a minute, will you?"

Molly went out and returned presently with a young and once-pretty dark-haired girl with lusterless black eyes. She smiled wanly at Gyp as Molly closed the door.

"What do you see on that table, Mrs. Williams?" Gyp asked gently.

The dark eyes flickered to the table top and back to Gyp. "This is a poor time to joke with me," she said.

"I'm not joking," Gyp said earnestly.

"Then it's for me?" she asked, the dull eyes taking on a gleam.

"We-e-ell," Gyp said, "not exactly."

"How can you do this to me!" she said passionately. "Baby is dying, I'm willing to give my soul for a bottle of fresh milk and you flaunt one in my face. You're inhuman!" She turned blindly toward the door.

"Wait a minute," Gyp said. "Here." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a crumpled dollar bill. "That bottle wouldn't do your baby any good, I'm afraid."

She took the bill, stammered embarrassed thanks, and went out. Gyp and Molly once more stared into each other's bewildered eyes.

"It's got the devil in it, Gyp!" Molly whispered. "Throw it away, out the window! Now, Gyp!" She extended a hand toward the case, but Gyp halted her.

"Wait, Molly. Let me figure." He got to his feet and paced the floor, muttering a monologue.

"I've been wanting a star sapphire for years, an' that's what this turns out to be. You wanted a ring, an' that's what it is, and the same with Abrams an' Mrs. Williams. It was what they

wanted it to be. What would it be to a fence?"

Gyp thought this over for a moment, then whirled on Molly, his eyes shining.

"Molly, we're rich!" He gave her no time to reply. "Harris Wildin, by golly!"

"But I thought he was mad at you," Molly said.

"Yeah, but he wants a big ruby for that dame he took out of the 'Teasy Revue.' All I got to do is tell him I got one worth twenty grand. He'll think I'm boostin' the value, so maybe he'll see a ten-grand pigeon's blood and pay me at least two for it!"

"But not Harris Wildin, Gyp! I'm scared of him. You know how mad he was over that paste ring."

"Oh, I got that straightened out with him. Besides, before he tumbles to what this is, we'll be on our way to the coast. They got premiers out there, an' people with dough."

"But not Harris, Gyp! Why not Uncle Joseph?"

"Because Uncle Joseph won't pay over twenty dollars for anything. If you walked into his joint with a deed for the Island of Manhattan and asked a hundred dollars for it, Uncle Joseph would scream his lungs out. An' I can't take it to a jewelry store or a hock shop, even if it's not hot like I thought it was. Suppose I showed it to some guy with a backache. He'd give me an appraisal on a mustard plaster. No, it's gotta be Harris Wildin."

JOHN LACKLAND discovered his loss after he had walked the two blocks from the bus line to his home. As he entered the gate he shoved a hand into his coat pocket. Its emptiness was instantly duplicated by a sick feeling in his stomach. He stood motionless, one clenched hand

on the iron gatepost, his long face set in grim lines.

Harris Wildin must die, then.

He went into the house with a dead, expressionless face, mounted the wide stairs to his own room and took a .38 revolver from a dresser drawer. He swung out the cylinder, saw that it was loaded, stuck the gun in his pocket and hung his coat in a closet. Then he sat down on the side of his bed to think.

He knew the interior of Wildin's luxurious office. Big chair facing the ebony desk, second-story window opening on an alley. He could shoot Wildin from the chair, grab the papers Wildin would have ready, drop out the window and escape—maybe.

If he could get close enough to club Wildin to death with the gun there would be no sound of a shot. Such procedure, however, was fraught with a certain risk, for there was a silken, deadly quality, like a strangler's cord, about Harris Wildin.

One plan or the other Lackland felt he must use. Circumstances would dictate his choice.

He heard a chatter of arriving voices downstairs and stifled a groan. Carla had brought home dinner guests. The prospect of dressing and donning a mask of politeness filled him with aversion.

She came into his room in a few moments, slim and polished and bronze. She was, he thought, like a cluster of precious stones: emerald eyes set in topaz between ruby hat and mouth.

"Hello, you," she said. "We have the Hartfords for dinner."

"Send me up a crust," he replied. "I don't feel up to company."

"Oh, sorry. What's the matter?"

"Nothing in particular. Hard day at the office."

She gave him a long, level stare.

"John, you've never seen fit to tell me, but something has been wrong for

about a year. I know. I'd like to help."

He forced a laugh. "If I had your imagination, I'd become an editorial writer."

"All right, all right. If you're not ready yet to tell me, I'll wait. If you need me, though, I'll be right in there, pushing—up. Now, what say I run the Hartfords home and you and I have dinner alone for once?"

"Don't disappoint them," he answered. "I've got to go out on business late, anyway. Thanks, though, for both offers."

"I just wanted to remind you," she said over her shoulder as she went out, "that you're still my favorite husband."

With a feeling of self-disgust, John Lackland thought of the secret in Harris Wildin's possession and what its revelation would do to Carla. What would she do if she learned that he brought an alien into the country, bearing forged papers as Mrs. John Lackland? More important, how would she feel?

If he had loaned his name to a refugee fleeing from some honest-to-God menace, Carla would approve. John Lackland knew that. But he had imagined himself in love with the woman, and had been ready to throw Carla over. This same Carla, who would make any sacrifice for him, and make it with a green-eyed grin.

When the voluptuous foreigner had gone gayly off with Harris Wildin, Lackland had tried to find her and kill her. Someone, Wildin perhaps, had beaten him to it, for her unidentified body turned up one day under a wharf.

Wildin had not been slow to begin collecting from John Lackland on the strength of documentary evidence of Lackland's complicity.

Lackland had never been afraid for

himself. The immigration department would take care of his future. But he shrank from exposing Carla to sordid truths that certain letters, held by Wildin, would reveal, and had paid out nearly all of his considerable fortune.

Tonight it must end, must end without involving Carla.

A servant brought him food which he ate automatically, not tasting or knowing its nature. He chain-smoked until it was time to start for Wildin's Club Zero.

AFTER GYP had gone, Harris Wildin held the huge ruby up to the light, turned it this way and that, feasted his gaze on its scarlet fire. Then he set it on his desk blotter and looked at it for a long time, a blob of flame against the green blotter. He clasped his manicured hands and thought of Dixie. The ruby, suspended on a green gold chain, would be like a great drop of blood against her slender white throat.

He snapped the ruby in its case, pushed it to one side, took fountain pen and a sheet of paper and began to write a letter to John Lackland. He dated the letter back eighteen months and began a fictitious tale of a woman who boasted of obtaining illegal entry into the United States with forged papers identifying her as Mrs. John Lackland. The woman had later disappeared, he went on to say, but Lackland could count on his, Wildin's, testimony if trouble ever arose concerning the matter.

He did not sign the letter. He rose and glided silently across the room to a tall filing case. He unlocked one of its drawers, took out the Lackland papers, relocked it and put the papers in his desk. He looked at his wrist watch and folded his hands again. Lackland was due any minute.

When Lackland came in, Wildin did not rise or change expression. He waved a slim hand at the big chair and said, "What is this talk of an emerald statue?"

John Lackland looked at the object on Wildin's desk and, for the third time that day, murmured reverently, "The Seven Faces!" Then his eyes slitted, turned on Wildin. "You dirty, double-crossing rat!"

Harris Wildin said softly: "That sort of talk will get you killed."

Lackland's gun was in his hand, pointed steadily at Wildin's stomach. "I'm going to give you a chance. Give me that passport and the letters and you can have the damned jewel. Where are they?"

"In that filing cabinet."

"Where's the key?"

"Here." Wildin cautiously fished a key ring from his vest pocket and tossed it across the desk.

Lackland took the keys, backed across the office to the filing cabinet, keeping his gun trained on Wildin, and fumbled for the lock. His eyes shifted for an instant, and Wildin leaped with desperate speed. Lackland twisted away and smashed Wildin above the ear with the gun barrel. Wildin crumpled, and Lackland smashed again and again, until the skull was pulp—

He straightened finally, and sanity came back to him slowly, pulling lips back over his teeth.

He searched the office then until he found the documents he wanted. He put these and the great jewel in his pocket, lowered himself out the window and dropped into the alley.

At home he burned the papers in the library fireplace. He went quietly up to his room and hid the Seven Faces in the drawer with his shirts. He took a

sedative, hoping that sleep would prevent his thinking of what he had done.

Two hours later police came, charged him with murder, and took him away.

JOHN LACKLAND'S sole defense was a flat denial of the charge. The prosecutor introduced witnesses who had seen him enter Wildin's office and a small boy who, foraging in the alley garbage cans, had seen him drop from the window sill. The prosecutor also produced many enlarged photographs of John Lackland's fingerprints, picked off the filing case, the desk, and the window ledge.

There was also the bloodstained gun, still in his topcoat pocket—

The jury was out only a few minutes. Guilty of murder in the first degree was the verdict, and the sentence was death.

John and Carla had a short half-hour together before he was taken to the State penitentiary, where his execution would be effected thirty days later.

"I'm not sorry, Carla," he told her, haggard from the strain of the perfunctory trial. "I'm not sorry, except for the fact that I won't see you any more."

"Oh, why," she wailed. "why didn't you plead self-defense? They couldn't have disproved it! Your attorneys pointed it out to you time after time."

His smile was one of tired triumph. "Maybe I'm a little bit crazy," he said, "but I feel that I should pay this debt. Not to the society which demands a human life for the life of a rat, but to—"

He caught himself, was abruptly silent.

"To what?" she prodded.

"Never mind," he evaded. "I'm satisfied with the verdict. Please forget it. You must readjust your life."

"But *you* are my life, you big fool! And I won't forget it! I'll get you free if it's humanly possible." She blinked

away tears and grinned. "They're not going to snatch a man of mine away from me if I can stop it!"

Carla Lackland laid siege to officialdom during the next two weeks. She conferred with attorneys, checking the record for possibilities of claiming a mistrial. She haunted prominent politicians, promising anything for pressure on the governor to grant a reprieve.

The wording varied, but the answers all added up to: "Something's fishy. I don't want to touch it."

She prostrated herself before the governor in the final fortnight, a suppliant for her husband's life, and came away empty-handed and empty-hearted.

Then, on the fifth day before his scheduled execution, a letter arrived from John—

DEAREST:

In the press of circumstances, I had almost forgotten to mention something very important. I have succeeded in smuggling this letter out to you, so I can be as specific as necessary. Look in my top dresser drawer. Under a stack of shirts you will find a valuable object. Then, in the library, on the bottom shelf, third book from the north window, Page 38, Paragraph 2, you will find its history. Guard coming—no more time.

JOHN.

Abandoned hope sprang up anew in her heart. Perhaps he had remembered something that would get him free. She ran into his room and rummaged under his shirts. Her fingers encountered flat metal, and she pulled out a hacksaw blade.

She stared, a puzzled frown tugging at her brows. Her eyes lighted as a word formed in her mind: *escape*.

Escape! Of course! John's carefully worded message was simply a request for this conqueror of steel window bars. But the book—why the book?

She raced downstairs and found the

large old volume whose title, if ever it had a title, had been smudged away in forgotten years. She turned to Page 38, Paragraph 2—

Emerald—seven faces—1184 A. D.—

She could see no connection between the hacksaw blade and this description of a long-vanished jewel. Yet a connection must exist. The note was definite on that point.

She gave a little cry as the solution struck her. Phrases from John's letter—smuggle—book—a valuable object. What simpler way to smuggle it to him than to place it between the leaves of the book, glue those two leaves together, and send it to him?

Suiting action to the thought, she soon had the book ready for mailing, with an innocent note accompanying it:

JOHN:

Once you recommended a certain paragraph. I believe that it will bring you solace in this time of great trial. My everlasting adoration.

CARLA.

She dispatched the package and began preparations to sell all the Lackland possessions. She would scrape together all available cash, and she and John would flee the country—

JOHN LACKLAND found that, as the hour drew nearer to execution, his horror of death in the electric chair increased. All the stories he had heard came back in fearful vividness; the charred victims, not yet dead, who had waited with smoking flesh while a blown-out fuse was repaired and the final shock made possible; the man who had cried out after doctors had pronounced him dead; of other scenes which had sent hardened newsmen retching from the death chamber.

He had faced the thought of death

many times without fear. He had been, as most men have, close to the edge of death on several occasions, and had been prepared to meet it with a certain equanimity not unmixed, it is true, with fear.

But never had he experienced this slow waiting that dissolves the sinew of bravery, this agonizing crawl of time toward the inexorable hour of unimaginable terror. This he knew, if anything could be, was worse than death itself.

The changing of the guard, the bringing and taking away of untasted meals, these were the formal routine and nerve-racking details of official killing. He could understand how many men went mad under this slow pressure and wondered if he would do so.

The arrival of Carla's note and the book brought a return to sanity, for the event and the note were puzzling. He read the message, and the paragraph to which it referred leaped into his mind verbatim. He derived no solace from the well-remembered passage except for the knowledge that Carla would be kept in comfort.

He opened the book and found Pages 38 and 39 glued together. Vagrant excitement stirred his fingers to pry them apart, and hope and gladness burned as he saw—a razor blade!

A flat piece of metal, worth less than a penny, but escape from the writhing horror of death in the chair.

He computed the time before a guard would visit his cell again and decided there was plenty.

Once more he read the paragraph, and the remembered beauty of the Seven Faces brought him a certain peace. From a lost treasure it had become a symbol of Carla's future safety.

He sent out a silent prayer of thanks, that he had been able to avert a terrible damage to her life and substitute for himself a concrete security.

Then he went to the basin in the corner of his cell. Extending his hands over the white porcelain, he slit the veins of first one wrist and then the other, and dropped the blade.

As he leaned against the wall and drowsily watched his life splotch and streak the porcelain bowl, he contemplated the phenomenon of a razor blade that apparently dissolved and joined his blood on its long journey through drains, rivers, and, finally, to the sea.

It was washed up out of the sea; that is certain. But only a blind man, perhaps, could have told its true size and shape, by taking it into his hands. Perhaps—

THE END.