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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OUT OF THE AIR ***

OUT OF THE AIR

BY

INEZ HAYNES IRWIN

GROSSET & DUNLAP

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TO

BILLY AND PHYLLIS

OUT OF THE AIR

3

I

"... so I'll answer your questions in the order you ask them. No, I don't want ever to fly again. My last pay-hop was two Saturdays ago and I got my discharge papers yesterday. God willing, I'll never again ride anything more dangerous than a velocipede. I'm now a respectable American citizen, and for the future I'm going to confine my locomotion to the well-known earth. Get that, Spink Sparrel! The earth! In fact...."

David Lindsay suddenly looked up from his typewriting. Under his window, Washington Square simmered in the premature heat of an early June day. But he did not even glance in that

direction. Instead, his eyes sought the doorway leading from the front room to the back of the apartment. Apparently he was not seeking inspiration; it was as though he had been suddenly jerked out of himself. After an absent second, his eye sank to the page and the brisk clatter of his machine began again. 4

"... after the woman you recommended, Mrs. Whatever-her-name-is, shoveled off a few tons of dust. It's great! It's the key house of New York, isn't it? And when you look right through the Arch straight up Fifth Avenue, you feel as though you owned the whole town. And what an air all this chaste antique New England stuff gives it! Who'd ever thought you'd turn out—you big rough-neck you—to be a collector of antiques? Not that I haven't fallen myself for the sailor's chest and the butterfly table and the glass lamps. I actually salaam to that sampler. And these furnishings seem especially appropriate when I remember that Jeffrey Lewis lived here once. You don't know how much that adds to the connotation of this place."

Again—but absently—Lindsay looked up. And again, ignoring Washington Square, which offered an effect as of a formal garden to the long pink-red palace on its north side—plumy treetops, geometrical grass areas, weaving paths; elegant little summer-houses—his gaze went with a seeking look to the doorway. 5

"Question No. 2. I haven't any plans of my own at present and I am quite eligible to the thing you suggest. You say that no one wants to read anything about the war. I don't blame them. I wish I could fall asleep for a month and wake up with no recollection of it. I suppose it's that state of mind which prevents people from writing their recollections immediately. Of course we'll all do that ultimately, I suppose—even people who, like myself, aren't professional writers. Don't imagine that I'm going on with the writing game. I haven't the divine afflatus. I'm just letting myself drift along with these two jobs until I get that *guerre* out of my system; can look around to find what I really want to do. I'm willing to write my experiences within a reasonable interval; but not at once. Everything is as vivid in my mind of course as it's possible to be; but I don't want to have to think of it. That's why your suggestion in regard to Lutetia Murray strikes me so favorably. I should really like to do that biography. I'm in the mood for something gentle and pastoral. And then of course I have a sense of proprietorship in regard to Lutetia, not alone because she was my literary find or that it was my thesis on her which got me my A in English 12. But, in addition, I developed a sort of platonic, long-distance, with-the-eye-of-the-mind-only crush on her. And yet, I don't know...." 6

Again Lindsay's eyes came up from his paper. For the third time he ignored Washington Square swarming with lumbering green busses and dusky-haired Italian babies; puppies, perambulators, and pedestrians. Again his glance went mechanically to the door leading to the back of the apartment.

"You certainly have left an atmosphere in this joint, Spink. Somehow I feel always as if you were in the room. How it would be possible for such a pop-eyed, freckle-faced Piute as you to pack an astral body is more than I can understand. It's here though—that sense of your presence. The other day I caught myself saying, 'Oh, Spink!' to the empty air. But to return to Lutetia, I can't tell you how the prospect tempts. Once on a *permission* in the spring of '16, I finds myself in Lyons. There are to be gentle acrobatic doings in the best Gallic manner in the Park on Sunday. I gallops out to see the sports. One place, I comes across several scores of *poilus*—on their *permissions* similar—squatting on the ground and doing—what do you suppose? Picking violets. Yep—picking violets. I says to myself then, I says, 'These frogs sure are queer guys.' But now, Spink, I understand. I don't want to do anything more strenuous myself than picking violets, unless it's selling baby blankets, or holding yarn for old ladies. Perhaps by an enormous effort I might summon the energy to run a tea-room." 7

Lindsay stopped his typewriting again. This time he stared fixedly at Washington Square. His eyes followed a pink-smocked, bob-haired maiden hurrying across the Park; but apparently she did not register. He turned abruptly with a—"Hello, old top, what do you want?"

The doorway, being empty, made no answer.

Having apparently forgotten his remark the instant it was dropped, Lindsay went on writing.

"I admit I'm thinking over that proposition. Among my things in storage here, I have all Lutetia's works, including those unsuccessful and very rare pomes of hers; even that blooming thesis I wrote. The thesis would, of course, read rotten now, but it might provide data that would save research. When do you propose to bring out this new edition, and how do you account for that recent demand for her? Of course it establishes me as some swell prophet. I always said she'd bob up again, you know. Then it looked as though she was as dead as the dodo. It isn't the work alone that appeals to me; it's doing it in Lutetia's own town, which is apparently the exact kind of dead little burg I'm looking for—Quinanog, isn't it? Come to think of it, Spink, my favorite occupation at this moment would be making daisy-chains or oak-wreaths. I'll think it..." 8

He jumped spasmodically; jerked his head about; glanced over his shoulder at the doorway—

"What I'd really like to do, is the biography of Lutetia for about one month; then—for about three months—my experiences at the war which, I understand, are to be put away in the manuscript safe of the publishing firm of Dunbar, Cabot and Elsingham to be published when the demand for war stuff begins again. That, I reckon, is what I should do if I'm going to do it at all. Write it while it's fresh—as I'm not a professional. But I can't at this moment say yes, and I can't say no. I'd like to stay a little longer in New York. I'd like to renew acquaintance with the old burg. I can afford 9

to thrash round a bit, you know, if I like. There's ten thousand dollars that my uncle left me, in the bank waiting me. When that's spent, of course I'll have to go to work.

"You ask me for my impressions of America—as a returned sky-warrior. Of course I've only been here a week and I haven't talked with so very many people yet. But everybody is remarkably omniscient. I can't tell them anything about the late war. Sometimes they ask me a question, but they never listen to my answer. No, I listen to them. And they're very informing, believe me. Most of them think that the cavalry won the war and that we went over the top to the sound of fife and drum. For myself..."

10

Again he jumped; turned his head; stared into the doorway. After an instant of apparent expectancy, he sighed. He arose and, with an elaborate saunter, moved over to the mirror hanging above the mantel; looked at his reflection with the air of one longing to see something human. The mirror was old; narrow and dim; gold framed. A gay little picture of a ship, bellying to full sail, filled the space above the looking-glass. The face, which contemplated him with the same unseeing carelessness with which he contemplated it, was the face of twenty-five—handsome; dark. It was long and lean. The continuous flying of two years had dyed it a deep wine-red; had bronzed and burnished it. And apparently the experiences that went with that flying had cooled and hardened it. It was now but a smoothly handsome mask which blanked all expression of his emotions.

Even as his eye fixed itself on his own reflected eye, his head jerked sideways again; he stared expectantly at the open doorway. After an interval in which nothing appeared, he sauntered through that door; and—with almost an effect of premeditated carelessness—through the two little rooms, which so uselessly fill the central space of many New York houses, to the big sunny bedroom at the back.

11

The windows looked out on a paintable series of backyards: on a sketchable huddle of old, stained, leaning wooden houses. At the opposite window, a purple-haired, violet-eyed foreign girl in a faded yellow blouse was making artificial nasturtiums; flame-colored velvet petals, like a drift of burning snow, heaped the table in front of her. A black cat sunned itself on the window ledge. On a distant roof, a boy with a long pole was herding a flock of pigeons. They made glittering swirls of motion and quick V-wheelings, that flashed the gray of their wings like blades and the white of their breasts like glass. Their sudden turns filled the air with mirrors. Lindsay watched their flight with the critical air of a rival. Suddenly he turned as though someone had called him; glanced inquiringly back at the doorway....

When, a few minutes later, he sauntered into the Rochambeau, immaculate in the old gray suit he had put off when he donned the French uniform four years before, he was the pink of summer coolness and the quintessence of military calm. The little, low-ceilinged series of rooms, just below the level of the street, were crowded; filled with smoke, talk, and laughter. Lindsay at length found a table, looked about him, discovered himself to be among strangers. He ordered a cocktail, swearing at the price to the sympathetic French waiter, who made an excited response in French and assisted him to order an elaborate dinner. Lindsay propped his paper against his water-glass; concentrated on it as one prepared for lonely eating. With the little-necks, however, came diversion. From behind the waiter's crooked arm appeared the satiny dark head of a girl. Lindsay leaped to his feet, held out his hand.

12

"Good Lord, Gratia! Where in the world did you come from!"

The girl put both her pretty hands out. "I *can* shake hands with you, David, now that you're in civies. I don't like that green and yellow ribbon in your buttonhole though. I'm a pacifist, you know, and I've got to tell you where I stand before we can talk."

13

"All right," Lindsay accepted cheerfully. "You're a darn pretty pacifist, Gratia. Of course you don't know what you're talking about. But as long as you talk about anything, I'll listen."

Gratia had cut her hair short, but she had introduced a style of hair-dressing new even to Greenwich Village. She combed its sleek abundance straight back to her neck and left it. There, following its own devices, it turned up in the most delightful curls. Her large dark eyes were set in a skin of pale amber and in the midst of a piquant assortment of features. She had a way, just before speaking, of lifting her sleek head high on the top of her slim neck. And then she was like a beautiful young seal emerging from the water.

"Oh, I'm perfectly serious!" the pretty pacifist asserted. "You know I never have believed in war. Dora says you've come back loving the French. How you can admire a people who—" After a while she paused to take breath and then, with the characteristic lift of her head, "Belgians—the Congo—Algerias—Morocco— And as for England—Ireland—India—Egypt—" The glib, conventional patter dripped readily from her soft lips.

14

Lindsay listened, apparently entranced. "Gratia, you're too pretty for any use!" he asserted indulgently after the next pause in which she dove under the water and reappeared sleek-haired as ever. "I'm not going to argue with you. I'm going to tell you one thing that will be a shock to you, though. The French don't like war either. And the reason is—now prepare yourself—they know more about the horrors of war in *one* minute than you will in a thousand years. What are you doing with yourself, these days, Gratia?"

"Oh, running a shop; making smocks, working on batiks, painting, writing *vers libre*," Gratia admitted.

"I mean, what do you do with your leisure?" Lindsay demanded, after prolonged meditation.

Gratia ignored this persiflage. "I'm thinking of taking up psycho-analysis," she confided. "It interests me enormously. I think I ought to do rather well with it." 15

"I offer myself as your first victim. Why, you'll make millions! Every man in New York will want to be psyched. What's the news, Gratia? I'm dying for gossip."

Gratia did her best to feed this appetite. Declining dinner, she sipped the tall cool green drink which Lindsay ordered for her. She poured out a flood of talk; but all the time her eyes were flitting from table to table. And often she interrupted her comments on the absent with remarks about the present.

"Yes, Aussie was killed in Italy, flying. Will Arden was wounded in the Argonne. George Jennings died of the flu in Paris—see that big blonde over there, Dave? She's the Village dressmaker now—Dark Dale is in Russia—can't get out. Putty Doane was taken prisoner by the Germans at—Oh, see that gang of up-towners—aren't they snippy and patronizing and silly? But Molly Fearing is our best war sensation. You know what a tiny frightened mouse of a thing she was. She went into the 'Y.' She was in the trenches the day of the Armistice—*talked* with Germans; not prisoners, you understand—but the retreating Germans. Her letters are wonderful. She's crazy about it over there. I wouldn't be surprised if she never came back— Oh, Dave, don't look now; but as soon as you can, get that tall red-headed girl in the corner, Marie Maroo. She does the most marvelous drawings you ever saw. She belongs to that new Vortex School. And then Joel— Oh, there's Ernestine Phillips and her father. You want to meet her father. He's a riot. Octogenarian, too! He's just come from some remote hamlet in Vermont. Ernestine's showing him a properly expurgated edition of the Village. Hi, Ernestine! He's a Civil War veteran. Ernest's crazy to see you, Dave!" 16

The middle-aged, rather rough-featured woman standing in the doorway turned at Gratia's call. Her movement revealed the head and shoulders of a tall, gaunt, very old man, a little rough-featured like his daughter; white-haired and white-mustached. She hurried at once to Lindsay's table. 17

"Oh, Dave!" She took both Lindsay's hands. "I *am* glad to see you! How I have worried about you! My father, Dave. Father, this is David Lindsay, the young aviator I was telling you about, who had such extraordinary experiences in France. You remember the one I mean, father. He served for two years with the French Army before we declared war."

Mr. Phillips extended a long arm which dangled a long hand. "Pleased to meet you, sir! You're the first flier I've had a chance to talk with. I expect folks make life a perfect misery to you—but if you don't mind answering questions—"

"Shoot!" Lindsay permitted serenely. "I'm nearly bursting with suppressed information. How are you, Ernestine?"

"Pretty frazzled like the rest of us," Ernestine answered. Ernestine had one fine feature; a pair of large dark serene eyes. Now they flamed with a troubled fire. "The war did all kinds of things to my psychology, of course. I suppose I am the most despised woman in the Village at this moment because I don't seem to be either a militarist or a pacifist. I don't believe in war, but I don't see how we could have kept out of it; or how France could have prevented it." 18

"Ernestine!" Lindsay said warmly. "I just love *you*. Contrary to the generally accepted opinion of the pacifists, France did not deliberately bring this war on herself. Nor did she keep it up four years for her private amusement. She hasn't enjoyed one minute of it. I don't expect Gratia to believe me, but perhaps you will. These four years of death, destruction, and devastation haven't entertained France a particle."

"Well, of course—" Ernestine was beginning, "but what's the use?" Her eyes met Lindsay's in a perplexed, comprehending stare. Lindsay shook his handsome head gayly. "No use whatever," he said. "I'm rapidly growing taciturn."

"What I would like to ask you," Mr. Phillips broke in, "does war seem such a pretty thing to you, young man, after you've seen a little of it? I remember in '65 most of us came back thinking that Sherman hadn't used strong enough language."

"Mr. Phillips," Lindsay answered, "if there's ever another war, it will take fifteen thousand dollars to send me a postcard telling me about it." 19

The talk drifted away from the war: turned to prohibition; came back to it again. Lindsay answered Mr. Phillips's questions with enthusiastic thoroughness. They pertained mainly to his training at Pau and Avord, but Lindsay volunteered a detailed comparison of the American military method with the French. "I'll always be glad though," he concluded, "that I had that experience with the French Army. And of course when our troops got over, I was all ready to fly."

"Then the French uniform is so charming," Gratia put in, consciously sarcastic.

Lindsay slapped her slim wrist indulgently and continued to answer Mr. Phillips's questions. Ernestine listened, the look of trouble growing in her serene eyes. Gratia listened, diving under water after her shocked exclamations and reappearing glistening.

"Oh, there's Matty Packington!" Gratia broke in. "You haven't met Matty yet, Dave. Hi, Matty!" 20

You *must* know Matty. She's a sketch. She's one of those people who say the things other people only dare think. You won't believe her." She rattled one of her staccato explanations; "society girl—first a slumming tour through the Village—perfectly crazy about it—studio in McDougal Alley—yeowoman—becoming uniform—Rolls-Royce—salutes—"

Matty Packington approached the table with a composed flutter. The two men arose. Gratia met her halfway; performed the introductions. In a minute the conversation was out of everybody's hands and in Miss Packington's. As Gratia prophesied, Lindsay found it difficult to believe her. She started at an extraordinary speed and she maintained it without break.

"Oh, Mr. Lindsay, aren't you heartbroken now that it is all over? You must tell me all about your experiences sometime. It must have been too thrilling for words. But don't you think—*don't* you think—they stopped the war too soon? If I were Foch I wouldn't have been satisfied until I'd occupied all Germany, devastated just as much territory as those beasts devastated in France, and executed all those monsters who cut off the Belgian babies' hands. Don't you think so?"

21

Lindsay contemplated the lady who put this interesting question to him. She was fair and fairy-like; a little, light-shot golden blonde; all slim lines and opalescent colors. Her hair fluttered like whirled light from under her piquantly cocked military cap. The stress of her emotion added for the instant to the bigness and blueness of her eyes.

"Well, for myself," he remarked finally, "I can do with a little peace for a while. And then to carry out your wishes, Miss Packington, Foch would have had to sacrifice a quarter of a million more Allied soldiers. But I sometimes think the men at the front were a bit thoughtless of the entertainment of the civilians. Somehow we *did* get it into our heads that we ought to close this war up as soon as possible. Another time perhaps we'd know better."

Miss Packington received this characteristically; that is to say, she did not receive it at all. For by the time Lindsay had begun his last sentence, she had embarked on a monologue directed this time to Gratia. The talk flew back and forth, grew general; grew concrete; grew abstract; grew personal. It bubbled up into monologues from Gratia and Matty. It thinned down to questions from Ernestine and Mr. Phillips. Drinks came; were followed by other drinks. All about them, tables emptied and filled, uniforms predominating; and all to the accompaniment of chatter; gay mirth; drifting smoke-films and refilled glasses. Latecomers stopped to shake hands with Lindsay, to join the party for a drink; to smoke a cigarette; floated away to other parties. But the nucleus of their party remained the same.

22

David answered with patience all questions, stopped patiently halfway through his own answer to reply to other questions. At about midnight he rose abruptly. He had just brought to the end a careful and succinct statement in which he declared that he had seen no Belgian children with their hands cut off; no crucified Canadians.

"Folks," he addressed the company genially, "I'm going to admit to you I'm tired." Inwardly he added, "I won't indicate which ones of you make me the most tired; but almost all of you give me an awful pain." He added aloud, "It's the hay for me this instant. Good-night!"

23

Back once more in his rooms, he did not light up. Instead he sat at the window and gazed out. Straight ahead, two lines of golden beads curving up the Avenue seemed to connect the Arch with the distant horizon. The deep azure of the sky was faintly powdered with stars. But for its occasional lights, of a purplish silver, the Square would have been a mere mystery of trees. But those lights seemed to anchor what was half vision to earth. And they threw interlaced leaf shadows on the ceiling above Lindsay's head. It was as though he sat in some ghostly bower. Looking fixedly through the Arch, his face grew somber. Suddenly he jerked about and stared through the doorway which led into the back rooms.

Nothing appeared—

After a while he lighted one gas jet—after an instant's hesitation another—

In the middle of the night, Lindsay suddenly found himself sitting upright. His mouth was wide open, parched; his eyes were wide open, staring.... A chilly prickling tingled along his scalp.... But the strangest phenomenon was his heart, which, though swelled to an incredible bulk, nimbly leaped, heavily pounded....

24

Lindsay recognized the motion which inundated him to be fear; overpowering, shameless, abject fear. But of what? In the instant in which he gave way to self-analysis, memory supplied him with a vague impression. *Something* had come to his bed and, leaning over, had stared into his face—

That *something* was not human.

Lindsay fought for control. By an initial feat of courage, his fumbling fingers lighted a candle which stood on the tiny Sheraton table at his bedside. On a second impulse, but only after an interval in which consciously but desperately he grasped at his vanishing manhood, he leaped out of bed; lighted the gas. Then carrying the lighted candle, he went from one to another of the four rooms of the apartment. In each room he lighted every gas jet until the place blazed. He searched it thoroughly: dark corners and darker closets; jetty strata of shadow under couches.

25

He was alone.

After a while he went back to bed. But his courage was not equal to darkness again. Though

ultimately he fell asleep, the gas blazed all night.

Lindsay awoke rather jaded the next morning. He wandered from room to room submitting to one slash of his razor at this mirror and to another at that.

At one period of this process, "Rum nightmare I had last night!" he remarked casually to the unresponsive air.

He cooked his own breakfast; piled up the dishes and settled himself to his correspondence again. "This letter is getting to be a book, Spink," he began. "But I feel every moment as though I wanted to add more. I slept on your proposition last night, but I don't feel any nearer a decision. Quinanog and Lutetia tempt me; but then so does New York. By the way, have you any pictures of Lutetia? I had one in my rooms at Holworthy. Must be kicking around among my things. I cut it out of the annual catalogue of your book-house. Photograph as I remember. She was some pip. I'd like—"

26

He started suddenly, turned his head toward the doorway leading to the back rooms. The doorway was empty. Lindsay arose from his chair, sauntered in a leisurely manner through the rooms. He investigated closets again. "Damn it all!" he muttered.

He resumed his letter. "You're right about writing my experiences now. I had a long footless talk with some boobs last night, and it was curious how things came back under their questions. I had quite forgotten them temporarily, and of course I shall forget them for keeps if I don't begin to put them down. I have a few scattered notes here and there. I meant, of course, to keep a diary, but believe me, a man engaged in a war is too busy for the pursuit of letters. But just as soon as I make up my mind—"

Another interval. Absently Lindsay addressed an envelope. Spinney K. Sparrel, Esq., Park Street, Boston; attacked the list of other long-neglected correspondents. Suddenly his head jerked upward; pivoted again. After an instant's observation of the empty doorway, he pulled his face forward; resumed his work. Page after page slid onto the roller of his machine, submitted to the tattoo of its little lettered teeth, emerged neatly inscribed. Suddenly he leaped to his feet; swung about.

27

The doorway was empty.

"Who are you?" he interrogated the empty air, "and what do you want? If you can tell me, speak—and I'll do anything in my power to help you. But if you can't tell me, for God's sake go away!"

That night—it happened again. There came the same sudden start, stricken, panting, perspiring, out of deep sleep; the same frantic search of the apartment with all the lights burning; the same late, broken drowse; the same jaded awakening.

As before, he set himself doggedly to work. And, as before, somewhere in the middle of the morning, he wheeled about swiftly in his chair to glare through the open doorway. "I wonder if I'm going nutty!" he exclaimed aloud.

28

Three days went by. Lindsay's nights were so broken that he took long naps in the afternoon. His days had turned into periods of idle reverie. The letter to Spink Sparrel was still unfinished. He worked spasmodically at his typewriter; but he completed nothing. The third night he started toward the Rochambeau with the intention of getting a room. But halfway across the Park, he stopped and retraced his steps. "I can't let you beat me!" he muttered audibly, after he arrived in the empty apartment.

It did not beat him that night; for he stayed in the apartment until dawn broke. But from midnight on, he lay with every light in the place going. At sunrise, he dressed and went out for a walk. And the moment the sounds of everyday life began to humanize the neighborhood, he returned; sat down to his machine.

"Spink, old dear, my mind is made up. I accept! I'll do Lutetia for you; and, by God, I'll do her well! I'm starting for Boston tomorrow night on the midnight. I'll call at the office about noon and we'll go to luncheon together. I'll dig out my thesis and books from storage, and if you'll get all your dope and data together, I can go right to it. I'm going to Quinanog tomorrow afternoon. I need a change. Everybody here makes me tired. The pacifists make me wild and the militarists make me wilder. Civilians is nuts when it comes to a war. The only person I can talk about it with is somebody who's been there. And anybody who's been there has the good sense not to want to talk about it. I don't ever want to hear of that war again. Personally, I, David Lindsay, meaning me, want to swing in a hammock on a pleasant, cool, vine-hung piazza; read Lutetia at intervals and write some little pieces subsequent. Yours, David."

29

II

30

Susannah Ayer dragged herself out of her sleepless night and started to get up. But halfway through her first rising motion, something seemed to leave her—to leave her spirit rather than

her body. She collapsed in a droop-shouldered huddle onto the bed. Her red hair had come out of its thick braids; it streamed forward over her white face; streaked her nightgown with glowing strands. She pushed it out of her eyes and sat for a long interval with her face in her hands. Finally she rose and went to the dresser. Haggardly she stared into the glass at her reflection, and haggardly her reflection stared back at her. "I don't wonder you look different, Glorious Susie," she addressed herself wordlessly, "because you *are* different. I wonder if you can ever wash away that experience—"

She poured water into the basin until it almost brimmed; and dropped her face into it. After her sponge bath, she contemplated herself again in the glass. Some color had crept into the pearly whiteness of her cheek. Her dark-fringed eyes seemed a little less shadow-encircled. She turned their turquoise glance to the picture of a woman—a miniature painted on ivory—which hung beside the dresser. 31

"Glorious Lutie," she apostrophized it, "you don't know how I wish you were here. You don't know how much I need you now. I need you so much, Glorious Lutie—I'm frightened!"

The miniature, after the impersonal manner of pictures, made no response to this call for help. Susannah sighed deeply. And for a moment she stood a figure almost tragic, her eyes darkening as she looked into space, her young mouth setting its soft scarlet into hard lines. In another moment she pulled herself out of this daze and continued her dressing.

An hour and a half later, when, cool and lithe in her blue linen suit, she entered the uptown skyscraper which housed the Carbonado Mining Company, her spirits took a sudden leap. After all, here *was* help. It was not the help she most desired and needed—the confidence and advice of another woman—but at least she would get instant sympathy, ultimate understanding. 32

Anyone, however depressed his mood, must have felt his spirits rise as he stepped into the Admolian Building. It was so new that its terra-cotta walls without, its white-enameled tiling within, seemed always to have been freshly scrubbed and dusted. It was so high that, with a first acrobatic impulse, it leaped twenty stories above ground; and with a second, soared into a tower which touched the clouds. That had not exhausted its strength. It dug in below ground, and there spread out into rooms, eternally electric-lighted. From the eleventh story up, its wide windows surveyed every purlieu of Manhattan. Its spacious elevators seemed magically to defy gravitation. A touch started their swift flight heavenward; a touch started their soft drop earthward. Every floor housed offices where fortunes were being made—and lost—at any rate, changing hands. There was an element of buoyancy in the air, an atmosphere of success. People moved more quickly, talked more briskly, from the moment they entered the Admolian Building. As always, it raised the spirits of Susannah Ayer. The set look vanished from her eyes; some of their normal brilliancy flowed back into them. Her mouth relaxed— When the elevator came to a padded halt at the eighteenth floor, she had become almost herself again. 33

She stopped before the first in a series of offices. Black-printed letters on the ground glass of the door read:

46
Carbonado Mining Company
Private. Enter No. 47

An accommodating hand pointed in the direction of No. 47. Susannah unlocked the door and with a little sigh, as of relief, stepped in.

Other offices stretched along the line of the corridor, bearing the inscriptions, respectively, "No. 48, H. Withington Warner, President and General Manager; No. 49, Joseph Byan, Vice-President; No. 50, Michael O'Hearn, Secretary and Treasurer." Ultimately, Susannah's own door would flaunt the proud motto, "No. 51, Susannah Ayer, Manager Women's Department." 34

Susannah threaded the inner corridor to her own office. She hung up her hat and jacket; opened her mail; ran through it. Then she lifted the cover from her typewriter and began mechanically to brush and oil it. Her mind was not on her work; it had not been on the letters. It kept speeding back to last night. She did not want to think of last night again—at least not until she must. She pulled her thoughts into her control; made them flow back over the past months. And as they sped in those pleasant channels, involuntarily her mood went with them. Had any girl ever been so fortunate, she wondered. She put it to herself in simple declaratives—

Here she was, all alone in New York and in New York for the first time, settled—interestingly and pleasantly settled. Eight months before, she had stepped out of business college without a hundred dollars in the world; her course in stenography, typewriting, and secretarial work had taken the last of her inherited funds. Without kith or kin, she was a working-woman, now, on her own responsibility. Two months of apprenticeship, one stenographer among fifty, in the great offices of the Maxwell Mills, and Barty Joyce, almost the sole remaining friend who remembered the past glories of her family, had advised her to try New York. 35

"Susannah," he said, "now is the time to strike—now while the men are away and while the girls are still on war jobs. Get yourself entrenched before they come back. You've the makings of a wonderful office helper."

Susannah, with a glorious sense of adventure once she was started, took his advice and moved to New York. For a week, she answered advertisements, visited offices; and she found that Barty was right. She had the refusal of half a dozen jobs. From them she selected the offer of the

Carbonado Mining Company—partly because she liked Mr. Warner, and partly because it seemed to offer the best future. Mr. Warner said to her in their first interview:

“We are looking for a clever woman whom we can specially train in the methods of our somewhat peculiar business. If you qualify, we shall advance you to a superior position.”

That “superior position” had fallen into her hand like a ripe peach. Within a week, Mr. Warner had called her into the private office for a long business talk.

“Miss Ayer,” he said, “you seem to be making good. I am going to tell you frankly that if you continue to meet our requirements, we shall continue to advance you and pay you accordingly. You see, our business—” Mr. Warner’s voice always swelled a little when he said “our business”—“our business involves a great deal of letter-writing to women investors and some personal interviews. Now we believe—both Mr. Byan and I—that women investing money like to deal with one of their own sex. We have been looking for just the right woman. A candidate for the position must have tact, understanding, and clearness of written expression. We have been trying to find such a woman; and frankly, the search has been difficult. You know how war work—quite rightly, of course—has monopolized the able women of the country. We have tried out half a dozen girls; but the less said about them the better. For two weeks we will let you try your hand at correspondence with women investors. If your work is satisfactory, it means a permanent job at twice your present salary.”

Her work had pleased them! It had pleased them instantly. But oh, how she had worked to please them and to continue to please! Every letter she sent out—and after explaining the Carbonado Company and its attractions, Mr. Warner let her compose all the letters to women—was a study in condensed and graceful expression. At the end of the fortnight Mr. Warner engaged her permanently. He went even further. He said:

“Miss Ayer, we’re going to make you manager of our women’s department; and we’re going to put your name with ours on the letterhead of the new office stationery.” When the day came that she first signed herself “Susannah Ayer, Manager Women’s Department,” she felt as though all the fairy tales she ever read had come true.

Susannah, as she was assured again and again, continued to give satisfaction. No wonder; for she liked her job. The work interested her so much that she always longed to get to the office in the morning, almost hated to leave it at night. It was a pleasant office, bright and spacious. Everything was new, even to the capacious waste basket. Her big, shiny mahogany desk stood close to the window. And from that window she surveyed the colorful, brick-and-stone West Side of Manhattan, the Hudson, and the city-spotted, town-dotted stretches beyond. The clouds hung close; sometimes their white and silver argosies seemed to besiege her. Once, she almost thought the new moon would bounce through her window. Snow noiselessly, winds tumultuously, assailed her; but she sat as impervious as though in an enchanted tower. Gray days made only a suaver magic, thunderstorms a madder enchantment, about her eyrie.

The human surroundings were just as pleasant. Though the Carbonado Company worked only with selected clients, though they transacted most of their business by mail, there were many visitors—some customers; others, apparently, merely friends of Mr. Warner, Mr. Byan, and Mr. O’Hearn—who dropped in of afternoons to chat a while. Pleasant, jolly men most of these. Snatches of their talk, usually enigmatic, floated to her across the tops of the partitions; it gave the office an exciting atmosphere of something doing. And then—it happened that Susannah’s way of life had brought her into contact with but few men—everything was so *manny*.

She stood a little in awe of H. Withington Warner, president and general manager. Mr. Warner was middle-aged and iron-gray. That last adjective perfectly described him—iron-gray. Everything about him was gray; his straight, thick hair; his clear, incisive eyes; even his colorless skin. And his personality had a quality of iron. There was about him a fascinating element of duality. Sometimes he seemed to Susannah a little like a clergyman. And sometimes he made her think of an actor. This histrionic aspect, she decided, was due to his hair, a bit long; to his features, floridly classic; to his manner, frequently courtly; to his voice, occasionally oratorical. This, however, showed only in his lighter moments. Much of the time, of course, he was merely brisk and businesslike. Whatever his tone, it carried you along. To Susannah, he was always charming.

If she stood a little in awe of H. Withington Warner, she made up by feeling on terms of the utmost equality with Michael O’Hearn, secretary and treasurer of the Carbonado Mining Company. Mr. O’Hearn—the others called him “Mike”—was a little Irishman. He had a short stumpy figure and a short stumpy face. Moreover, he looked as though someone had delivered him a denting blow in the middle of his profile. From this indentation jutted in one direction his long, protuberant, rounded forehead; peaked in another his upturned nose. The rest of him was sandy hair and sandy complexion, and an agreeable pair of long-lashed Irish eyes. He was the wit of the office, keeping everyone in constant good temper. Susannah felt very friendly toward Mr. O’Hearn. This was strange, because he rarely spoke to her. But somehow, for all that, he had the gift of seeming friendly. Susannah trusted him as she trusted Mr. Warner, though in a different way.

In regard to Joseph Byan, the third member of the combination, Susannah had her unformulated reservations. Perhaps it was because Byan really interested her more than the other two. Byan was little and slender; perfectly formed and rather fine-featured; swift as a cat in his darting movements. In his blue eyes shone a look of vague pathos and on his lips floated—Susannah

decided that this was the only way to express it—a vague, a rather sweet smile. Susannah’s job had not at first brought her as much into contact with Mr. Byan as with Mr. Warner. His work, she learned, lay mostly outside of the office. But once, during her third week, he had come into her office and dictated a letter; had lingered, when he had finished with the business in hand, for a little talk. The conversation, in some curious turn, veered to the subject of firearms. He was speaking of the various patterns of revolvers. He stood before her, a slim, perfectly proportioned figure whose clothes, of an almost feminine nicety and cut, seemed to follow every line of the body beneath. Suddenly, one of his slight hands made a swift gesture. There appeared—from where, she could not guess—a little, ugly-looking black revolver. With it, he illustrated his point. Since, he had never passed through the office without Susannah’s glance playing over him like a flame. Nowhere along the smooth lines of his figure could she catch the bulge of that little toy of death. Despite his suave gentleness, there was a believable quality about Byan; his personality carried conviction, just as did that of the others. Susannah trusted him, too; but again in a different way.

42

On the very day when Mr. Byan showed her the revolver, she was passing the open door of Mr. Warner’s office; and she heard the full, round voice of the Chief saying:

“Remember, Joe, rule number one: no clients or employ—” Byan hastily closed the door on the tail of that sentence. Sometimes she wondered how it ended.

A cog in the machine, Susannah had never fully understood the business. That was not really necessary; Mr. Warner himself kept her informed on what she needed to know. He explained in the beginning the glorious opportunity for investors. From time to time, he added new details, as for example the glowing reports of their chief engineer or their special expert. Susannah knew that they were paying three per cent dividends a month—and in April there was a special dividend of two per cent. Besides, they were about to break into a “mother lode”—the reports of their experts proved that—and when that happened, no one could tell just how high the dividends might be. True, these dividend payments were often made a little irregularly. One of the things which Susannah did not understand, did not try to understand, was why a certain list of preferred stockholders was now and then given an extra dividend; nor why at times Mr. Warner would transfer a name from one list to another.

43

“I’m thinking of saving my money and investing myself in Carbonado stock!” said Susannah to Mr. Warner one day.

“Don’t,” said Mr. Warner; and then with a touch of his clerical manner: “We prefer to keep our office force and our investors entirely separate factors for the present. We are trying to avoid the reproach of letting our people in on the ground floor. When our ship comes in—when we open the mother lode—you shall be taken care of!”

44

So, for six months, everything went perfectly. Susannah had absorbed herself completely in her job. This was an easy thing to do when the business was so fascinating. She had gone for five months at this pace when she realized that she had not taken the leisure to make friends. Except the three partners—mere shadows to her—and the people at her boarding-house—also mere shadows to her—she knew only Eloise. Not that the friendship of Eloise was a thing to pass over lightly. Eloise was a host in herself.

They had met at the Dorothy Dorr, a semi-charitable home for young business women, at which Susannah stayed during her first week in New York. Eloise was an heiress, of that species known to the newspapers as a “society girl.” Pretty, piquant, gay, extravagant, she dabbled in picturesque charities, and the Dorothy Dorr was her pet. Sometimes in the summer, when she ran up to town, she even lodged there. By natural affinity, she had picked Susannah out of the crowd. By the time Susannah was established in her new job and had moved to a boarding-house, they had become friends. But the friendship of Eloise could not be very satisfactory. She was too busy; and, indeed, too often out of town. From her social fastnesses, she made sudden, dashing forays on Susannah; took her to luncheon, dinner, or the theater; then she would retreat to upper Fifth Avenue, and Susannah would not see her for a fortnight or a month.

45

Then, that terrible, perplexing yesterday. If she could only expunge yesterday from her life—or at least from her memory!

Of course, there were events leading up to yesterday. Chief among them was the appearance in the office, some weeks before, of Mr. Ozias Cowler, from Iowa. Mr. Cowler, Susannah gathered from the manner of the office, was a customer of importance. He was middle-aged. No, why mince matters—he was an old man who looked middle-aged. He was old, because his hair had gone quite white, and his face had fallen into areas broken by wrinkles. But he appeared to the first glance middle-aged, because the skin of those areas was ruddy and warm; because his eyes were as clear and blue as in youth. He looked—well, Susannah decided that he looked *fatherly*. He was quiet in his step and quiet in his manner. Though he appeared to her in the light of a customer rather than that of an acquaintance, Susannah was inclined to like him, as she liked everyone and everything about the Carbonado offices.

46

Susannah gathered in time that Mr. Cowler had a great deal of money, and that he had come to New York to invest it. Of course the Carbonado Mining Company—and this included Susannah herself—saw the best of reasons why it should be invested with them. But evidently, he was a hard, cautious customer. He came again and again. He sat closeted for long intervals with Mr. Warner. Sometimes Mr. Byan came into these conferences. Mr. Cowler was always going to luncheon with the one and to dinner with the other. He even went to a baseball game with Mr.

O'Hearn. But, although he visited the office more and more frequently, she gathered that the investment was not forthcoming. Susannah knew how frequently he was coming because, in spite of the little, admonitory black hand on the ground-glass door, he always entered, not by the reception room, but by her office. Usually, he preceded his long talk with Mr. Warner by a little chat with her. Evidently, he had not yet caught the quick gait of New York business; for as he left—again through Susannah's office—he would stop for a longer talk. Once or twice, Susannah had to excuse herself in order to go on with her work. She had been a little afraid that Mr. Warner would comment on these delays in office routine. But, although Mr. Warner once or twice glanced into her office during these intervals, he never interfered.

47

Then came—yesterday.

Early in the morning, Mr. Warner said:

"Miss Ayer, I wonder if you can do a favor for us?" He went on, without waiting for Susannah's answer: "Cowler—you know what a helpless person he is—wants to go to dinner and the theater tonight. It happens that none of us can accompany him. We've all made the kind of engagement which can't be broken—business. He feels a little self-conscious. You know, his money came to him late, and he has never been to a big city before. I suspect he is afraid to enter a fashionable restaurant alone. He wants to go to Sherry's and to the theater afterward—" Mr. Warner paused to smile genially. "He's something of a hick, you know, and especially in regard to this Sherry and midnight cabaret stuff." Mr. Warner rarely used slang; and when he did, his smile seemed to put it into quotation marks. "True to type, he has bought tickets in the front row. After the show, he wants to go to one of the midnight cabarets. Would you be willing to steer him through all this? The show is *Let's Beat It*."

48

Susannah expressed herself as delighted; and indeed she was. To herself she admitted that Mr. Cowler was no more of a "hick" in regard to Broadway, Sherry's, and midnight cabarets than she herself. But about admitting this, she had all the self-consciousness of the newly arrived New Yorker.

"That is very good of you, Miss Ayer," said Mr. Warner, appearing much relieved. "You may go home this afternoon an hour earlier." Again Mr. Warner passed from his incisive, gray-hued sobriety to an expansive geniality. "I know that in these circumstances, ladies like to take time over their toilettes." He smiled at Susannah, a smile more expansive than any she had ever seen on his face; it showed to the back molars his handsome, white, regular teeth.

49

Mr. Cowler called for her in a taxicab at seven and—

She heard Mr. Warner's door open and shut. Footsteps sounded in the corridor—that was Mr. O'Hearn's voice. She glanced at her wrist-watch. Half-past nine. The partners had arrived early this morning, of all mornings. They were night birds, all three, seldom appearing before half-past ten, and often working in the office late after she had gone. Susannah stopped mid-sentence a letter which she was tapping out to a widow in Iowa, rose, moved toward the door. At the threshold, she stopped, a deep blush suffusing her face. So she paused for a moment, irresolute. When finally she started down the corridor, Mr. Warner emerged from the door of his own office, met her face to face. And as his eyes rested on hers, she was puzzled by the expression on his smooth countenance. Was it anxiety? His expression seemed to question her—then it flowed into his cordial smile.

50

Susannah was first to speak:

"Good-morning, Mr. Warner. May I see you alone for a moment?"

"Certainly!" With his best courtliness of manner, he bowed her into his private office. "Won't you have a seat?"

Susannah sat down.

"It's about—about Mr. Cowler and last night." She paused.

"Oh," asked Mr. Warner, carelessly, casually, "did you have a pleasant evening?"

"It's about that I wanted to talk with you," Susannah faltered. Suddenly, her embarrassment broke, and she became perfectly composed. "Mr. Warner, I dislike to tell you all this, because I know how it will shock you to hear it. But you will understand that I have no choice in the matter. It is very hard to speak of, and I don't know exactly how to express it, but, Mr. Warner, Mr. Cowler insulted me grossly last evening ... so grossly that I left the table where we were eating after the theater and ... and ... well, perhaps you can guess my state of mind when I tell you that I was actually afraid to take a taxi. Of course, I see now how foolish that was. But I ... I ran all the way home."

51

For an instant, Mr. Warner's fine, incisive geniality did not change. Then suddenly it broke into a look of sympathetic understanding. "I am sorry, Miss Ayer," he declared gravely, "I am indeed sorry." His clergyman aspect was for the moment in the ascendent. He might have been talking from the pulpit. His voice took its oratorical tone. "It seems incredible that men should do such things—incredible. But one must, I suppose, make allowances. A rural type alone in a great city and surrounded by all the intoxicating aspects of that city. It undoubtedly unbalanced him. Moreover, Miss Ayer, I may say without flattery that you are more than attractive. And then, he is

unaccustomed to drinking—”

“Oh, he had not drunk anything to speak of,” Susannah interrupted. “A little claret at dinner. He had ordered champagne, but this ... this episode occurred before it came.”

52

“Incredible!” again murmured Mr. Warner. “Inexplicable!” he added. He paused for a moment. “You wish me to see that he apologizes?”

“I don’t ask that. I am only telling you so that you may understand why I can never speak to him again. For of course I don’t want to see him as long as I live. I thought perhaps ... that if he comes here again ... you might manage so that he doesn’t enter through my office.”

“We can probably manage that,” Mr. Warner agreed urbanely. “Of course we can manage that. He is, you see, a prospective client, and a very profitable one. We must continue to do business with him as usual.”

“Oh, of course!” gasped Susannah. “Please don’t think I’m trying to interfere with your business. I understand perfectly. It is only that I—but of course you understand. I don’t want to see him again.” She rose. Her lithe figure came up to the last inch of its height; the attitude gave her the effect of a column. Her head was like a glowing alabaster lamp set at the top of that column. All the trouble had faded out of her face. The set, scarlet lines in her mouth had melted to their normal scarlet curves. The light had come back in a brilliant flood to her turquoise eyes. In this uprush of spirit, her red hair seemed even to bristle and to glisten. She sparkled visibly. “And now, I guess I’ll get back to work,” she said. “Oh, by the way, I found in my mail this morning a letter addressed, not to the women’s department, but to the firm. I opened it, but of course by accident.”

53

Mr. Warner drew the letter from its envelope, began casually running through it. The conversation seemed now to be ended; Susannah moved toward the door. From his perusal of the letter, Mr. Warner stabbed at her back with one quick, alarmed glance, and:

“Oh, Miss Ayer, don’t go yet,” he said. His tone was a little tense and sharp. But he continued to peruse the letter. As he finished the last page, he looked up. Again, his tone seemed peculiar; and he hesitated before he spoke.

54

“Er—did you make out the signature on this?” he asked.

“No—it puzzled me,” replied Susannah.

“Sit down again, please,” said Mr. Warner. Now his manner had that accent of suavity, that velvety actor quality, which usually he reserved solely for women clients. “I’m awfully sorry, but I’m afraid I shall have to ask you to see Mr. Cowler again.”

“Mr. Warner, I ... I simply could not do that. I can never speak to him again. You don’t know.... You can’t guess.... Why, I could scarcely tell my own mother ... if I had one....”

“It seems quite shocking to you, of course, and—Wait a moment—” Mr. Warner rose and walked toward the door leading to Byan’s office. But he seemed suddenly to change his mind. “I know exactly how you must feel,” he said, returning. “Believe me, my dear young lady, I enter perfectly into your emotions. Shocked susceptibilities! Wounded pride! All perfectly natural, even exemplary. But, Miss Ayer, this is a strange world. And in some aspects a very unsatisfactory one. We have to put up with many things we don’t like. I, for instance. You could not guess the many disagreeable experiences to which I submit daily. I hate them as much as anyone, but business compels me to endure them. Now you, in your position as manager of the Women’s Department —”

55

“Nothing,” Susannah interrupted steadily, “could induce me knowingly to submit again to what happened last night. I would rather throw up my job. I would rather die.”

“But, my dear Miss Ayer, you are not the only young lady in this city who has been through such experiences. If women will invade industry, they must take the consequences. Actresses, shopgirls, woman-buyers accept these things as a matter of course—as all in the day’s work. Indeed, many stenographers complain of unpleasant experiences. You have been exceedingly fortunate. Have we not in this office paid you every possible respect?”

“Of course you have! It is because you have been so kind that I came to you at once, hoping ... believing ... that you would understand. It never occurred to me that you....”

56

“Of course I understand,” Mr. Warner insisted, in his most soothing tone. “It’s all very dreadful. What I am trying to point out to you is that whatever you do or wherever you go in a great city, the same thing is likely to happen. I am trying to prove to you that you are especially protected here. You like your work, don’t you?”

“I love it!” Susannah protested with fervor.

“Then I think you will do well to ignore the incident. Come, my child,”—Mr. Warner was now a combination of guiding pastor and admonishing parent,—“forget this deplorable incident. When Mr. Cowler comes in this afternoon, meet him as though nothing had happened. Undoubtedly he is now bitterly regretting his mistake. Unquestionably he will apologize. And the next time he asks you to go out with him, he will have learned how to treat a young lady so admirable and estimable, and you can accept his invitation with an untroubled spirit.”

“If I meet Mr. Cowler I will treat him exactly as though nothing had happened,” Susannah declared steadily. “I mean that upon meeting him I will bow. I will even—if you ask it—give him any information he may want about the business. But as to going anywhere with him again—I must decline absolutely.”

57

“But that is one of the services which we shall have to demand from time to time. Clients come to town. They want an attractive young lady, a lady who will be a credit to them—a description which, I may say, perfectly applies to you—to accompany them about the city. That will be a part of your duties in future. Had the occasion arisen before, it would have been a part of your duties in the past. If Mr. Cowler asks you again to accompany him for the evening, we shall expect you to go.”

“You never told me,” said Susannah after a perceptible interval, during which directly and piercingly she met Mr. Warner’s gentle gaze, “that you expected this sort of thing.”

“My dear young lady,” replied Mr. Warner with a kind of bland elegance, “I am very sorry if I did not make that clear.”

“Then,” said Susannah—so unexpectedly that it was unexpected even to herself—“I shall have to give up my position. Please look for another secretary. I shall consider it a favor if you get her as soon as possible.”

58

Another pause; and then Mr. Warner asked:

“Would you mind waiting here for just a few moments before you make that decision final?”

“I will wait,” agreed Susannah. “But I will not change my decision.”

Mr. Warner did not seem at all surprised or annoyed. He arose abruptly, started toward Byan’s office. This time he entered and closed the door behind him. A moment later, Susannah realized from the muffled sounds which filtered through the partition that the partners were in conference. She caught the velvety tones of Byan; O’Hearn’s soft lilt. And as she sat there, idly tapping the desk with a penholder, something among the memories of that confused morning crept into her mind; spread until it blotted out even the memory of Mr. Cowler. That letter—what did it mean? In her listless, inattentive state of mind, she had opened it carelessly, read it through before she realized that it was addressed not to the Women’s Department, but to the company. Had anyone asked her, a moment after she laid it down, just what it said, she could not have answered. Now, her perplexed loneliness brought it all out on the tablets of her mind as the chemical brings out the picture from the blankness of a photographic plate. She glanced at the desk. The letter was not there—Mr. Warner had taken it with him.

59

The man with the illegible signature wrote from Nevada. He had seen, during a visit to Kansas City, the circulars of the Carbonado Mining Company. After his return, he had passed through Carbonado. “I wondered, when I saw your literature, whether there had been a new strike in that busted camp,” he wrote. “There hadn’t. Carbonado now consists of one store-keeper and a few retired prospectors who are trying to scrape something from the corners of the old Buffalo Boy property. That camp was worked out in the eighties—and it was never much but promises at that.” As for the photographs which decorated the Carbonado Company’s circulars, this man recognized at least one of them as a picture of a property he knew in Utah. Finally, he asked sarcastically just how long they expected to keep up the graft. “It’s the old game, isn’t it?” he inquired, “pay three per cent for a while and then get out with the capital.” Three per cent a month—that was exactly what the Carbonado Company was paying. She wondered—

60

Conjecture for Susannah would have been certainty could she have heard the conversation just the other side of that closed door. At the moment when the contents of this letter flashed back into her mind, the letter itself lay on Mr. Byan’s polished mahogany table. Beside it lay a pile of penciled memoranda through which fluttered from time to time the nervous hand of H. Withington Warner. Susannah would scarcely have known her genial employer. The mask of actor and clergyman had slipped from his face. His cheeks seemed to fall flat and flabby. His eyes had lost their benevolence. His mouth was set as hard as a trap, the corners drooping. Across the table from him, too, sat a transformed Byan. His smooth, regular features had sharpened to the likeness of a rat’s. His voice, however, was still velvety; even though it had just flung at Warner a string of oaths.

61

“I told you we ought to’ve let go and skipped six weeks ago,” he said, “that was the time for the touch-off. Secret Service still chasin’ Heinies—everythin’ coming in and nothin’ going out. The suckers had already stopped biting and then you go and hand out two more monthly dividends and settle all the bills like you intended to stay in business forever. What did we want with this royal suite here, and ours a correspondence game? What do we split if we stop today? Twelve hundred dollars. Twelve hundred dollars! We land this Cowler—see!”

Warner, unperturbed, swept his glance to O’Hearn, who sat huddled up in his chair, searching with his glance now one of his partners, now the other.

“Mike,” he said, “you’re certain about your tip on the fly cops?”

“Dead sure!” responded O’Hearn. “The regular bulls ain’t touching mining operations just now. It’s up to the Secret Service. In two weeks more they’ll be all cleaned up on the war, and then they’ll be reorganizing their little committee on high finance. That there Inspector Laughlin will take charge. He knows you, Boss. Then”—O’Hearn spread his hands with a gesture of finality

62

—“about a week more and they’ll get round to us. Three weeks is all we’re safe to go. They stop our mail and then—the pinch maybe. The tip’s straight from you-know-who. The pinch—see!”

At the repetition of that word “pinch,” Byan’s countenance changed subtly. It was as though he had winced within. But he spoke in his usual velvety tone.

“Less than three weeks—h’m! How much is Cowler good for?”

“About a hundred thou’—big or nothing,” replied Warner. He was drawing stars and circles on the desk blotter. “He can’t be landed without the girl. If he’d tumbled for the Lizzies you shook at him—but he didn’t—it’s this red-headed doll in our office or nothing. And I’ve told you—”

Here O’Hearn threw himself abruptly into the conversation.

“Lave out th’ girrul,” he said. Usually O’Hearn’s Irish showed in his speech only by a slight twist at the turn of his tongue. Now it reverted to a thick brogue. “I’ll not have anythin’ to do—”

“We’ll leave in or take out exactly what I say,” put in Warner smoothly. “Exactly what I say,” he repeated. At this direct thrust, Byan lifted his somewhat dreamy eyes. He dropped them again. Then Warner, his gaze directly on O’Hearn’s face, made a swift, sinister gesture. He drew a forefinger round his own throat, and completed the motion by pointing directly upward. O’Hearn, his face suddenly going a little pale, subsided. Warner broke into the sweet, Christian smile of his office manner. Subtly, he seemed to take command. His personality filled the room as he leaned forward over the table and summed everything up.

“As for your noise about quitting six weeks ago,” he said, “how was I to know that the suckers were going to stop running? We looked good for three months then. We’ve got three weeks to go. All right. As for the pinch, they won’t get us unless the wad gives out. Every stage of this game has been submitted to a lawyer. We’re just a hair inside—but inside all the same. *But* if we can’t come through liberally to him when we’re really in trouble, we might as well measure ourselves for stripes. He’s that kind of lawyer. With a hundred thousand dollars—” he seemed to roll that phrase under his tongue—“we can stay and make snoots at the Secret Service or beat it elsewhere, just as we please. Ozias Cowler can furnish the hundred thou’. But he’ll take only one bait. I’ve tried ‘em all—flies, worms, beetles, and grasshoppers—and there’s only one. And that one is trying to wriggle off the hook. I thought last night when I sent her out with him that maybe she would fall for him. The rest would have been easy. But she only worked up a case of this here maidenly virtue. On top of that, she reads this letter. Of course, she has read it, though she don’t know I know. I squeezed that out of her.

“There,” concluded Warner, “that’s the layout, isn’t it?” He turned to Byan; and his smiling, office manner came over his expression. “What would you say, Joe? You’re by way of being an expert on this kind of bait.” In the Carbonado Mining Company, Warner ruled partly through his quality of personal force, but partly through fear, the cement of underworld society. Just as he shook at O’Hearn from time to time the threat conveyed by that sinister gesture, he held over Byan the knowledge of that trade and traffic, shameful even among criminals, from which Byan had risen to be a pander of low finance. At this thrust, however, Byan did not pale, as had O’Hearn. His expression became only the more inscrutable.

“You should have let me break her in when I wanted to, months ago,” he said. “I’d ‘a’ had her ready now. He won’t fall for anyone else. I’ve offered those other Molls to him, but he’s crushed on her and won’t look at anybody else. So we’ve got to put the screws on her. They’re all cowards inside—yellow every one.”

“Meaning?” inquired Warner.

“She’s in it up to her neck with us,” said Byan. “We saw to that. All right. If we should go up against it, she’d have a hell of a time proving to a jury that she didn’t know what her letters to customers were all about. Now wouldn’t she? Ask yourself. Looked like hard luck to me when she saw that letter just when she’d slapped the face of this Cowler. But maybe it’s a regular godsend. Put it to her straight that this business is a graft, that we’re due to go up against it in three weeks unless something nice happens, and that she’s in it as deep as any of us. When she’s so scared she can’t see, let her know that she has got one way out—fall for Cowler and help us touch him for his hundred thousand. Make her think that it’s the stir sure if she don’t, and a clean getaway if she does.”

“Suppose,” continued Warner in the manner of one weighing every chance, “she goes with her troubles to some wise guy?”

“She’s got no friends here,” said Byan. “I looked into that. Runs around with one fluff, but she don’t count. If she’s scared enough, I tell you, she’ll never dare peep—and she’ll come round.”

“Suppose she beats it?” suggested Warner.

“Well, Mike and I can shadow her, can’t we?” replied Byan. “If she tries to get out by rail, we can stop her and put on the screws right away. The screws!” repeated Byan, as one who liked the idea. “And if she does hold out a while, nothin’s lost. You’ve got the old dope worked up to the idea she’s interested in him, haven’t you? Well, if she don’t fall right away, you can take a little time explaining to him why she acted that way last night. Maybe best to dangle her a while, anyway—get him so anxious to see her that he’ll fall for anything when you bring her round. I’ll be tightening up the screws, and when he’s ripe I’ll deliver her.”

"The screws," repeated O'Hearn. "Meanin'—?"

"Leave that to me," said Byan. "I know how."

Warner smiled; but it was not the genial beam of his office manner. For when the corners of his drooping mouth lifted, they showed merely a gleam of canine teeth, which lay on his lip like fangs.

"I suppose, when it's over, she's your personal property," he concluded.

"Oh, sure!" responded Byan carelessly.

"You'll not—" began O'Hearn; but this time it was Warner who interrupted.

"Mickey," he said, "any arrangements between this lady and Byan are their own private affair—after the touch-off, which may stand you twenty-five thousand shiners. Besides—" He did not make his threatening gesture now, but merely flashed that smile of fangs and sinister suggestion. Then he rose.

"All right," he said. "Come on—all of you—and I'll give her that little business talk, before she's had time to think and work up another notion. Maybe she'll fall for it right away."

"Not right away, she won't," Byan promulgated from the depths of his experience, "but before I'm through, she will."

The three men came filing into the room where Susannah sat, her elbows on the desk, her chin on her hands. She rose abruptly and faced them, eyes wide, lips parted. Mr. Warner wore his office manner; his smile was now benevolent.

"I have been telling Mr. Byan and Mr. O'Hearn about your experience and your decision, Miss Ayer," began Mr. Warner.

Susannah blushed deeply; and for an instant her lashes swept over a sudden stern flame in her eyes. Then she lifted them and looked with a noncommittal openness from one face to the other. "I think I have nothing to add," she said.

"Yes, but perhaps we have," Mr. Warner informed her gently. "Sit down, Miss Ayer. Sit down, boys."

The three men seated themselves. "Thank you," said Susannah; but she continued to stand. Byan rose thereupon, and stood lolling in the corner, his vague smile floating on his lips. O'Hearn dropped his chin almost to that point on his chest where his folded arms rested. His lips drooped. Occasionally he studied the situation from under his protuberant forehead.

"Miss Ayer," Warner went on after a pause, "you read that letter—the one you handed to me this morning?"

Susannah hesitated for an almost imperceptible moment. "Yes," she admitted, "entirely by mistake."

"I am going to tell you something that it will surprise you to hear, Miss Ayer. What this fellow says is all true. Carbonado is merely a—a convenient name, let us say. In other words, we are engaged in selling fake stocks to suckers. To be still more explicit, we are conducting a criminal business. We could be arrested at any moment and sent to jail. To the Federal penitentiary, in fact. I suppose that is a great surprise to you?"

Though she had guessed something of this ever since she recalled the contents of the letter, the cold-blooded statement came indeed with all the force of a surprise. Susannah's figure stiffened as though she had touched a live wire. The crimson flush drained out of her face. And she heard herself saying, as though in another's voice and far away, the inadequate words: "How perfectly terrible!"

"Exactly so!" agreed Warner. "Only you haven't the remotest idea how terrible. Miss Ayer, this company—you as well as the rest of us—needs money and needs it right away. Ozias Cowler has money—a great deal of money. Somebody's bound to get it—and why not we? We use various means to get money out of suckers. There's only one way with Cowler. He's stuck on you. You can get it from him. We want you to do that—we expect you to do that."

Susannah stared at him. "Mr. Warner, I think you are crazy. I could no more do that ... I couldn't ... I wouldn't even know how ... my resignation goes into effect immediately. I couldn't possibly stay here another minute." She turned to leave the office.

"Just one moment!" Mr. Warner's words purred on. His tone was low, his accent bland—but his voice stopped her instantly. "Miss Ayer, you don't understand yet. Unless we get some money—a great deal of money—we shan't last another two weeks. The situation is—but I won't take the time to explain that. Unless we clean up that aforesaid money, we go to jail—for a good long term. If we get the money—we don't. Never mind the details. I assure you it's true."

"I'm sorry," said Susannah, her lips scarcely moving as she spoke, "but I fail to see what I have to do with that—"

"I was about to go on to say, Miss Ayer, that you have everything to do with it. You must be

aware, if you look back over your service with us, that you are as much involved as anyone. Your name is on our letterhead. You have signed hundreds and perhaps thousands of letters to woman investors. Putting a disagreeable fact rather baldly, what happens to us happens to you. If it's the stir—if it's jail—for us, it's jail for you."

Susannah stared at him. She grew rigid. But she roused herself to a trembling weak defense.

"I'll tell them, if they arrest me ... all that has gone on here ..." she began.

"If you do," put in Mr. Warner smoothly, "you only create for yourself an unfavorable impression. You put yourself in the position of going back on your pals, and it will not get you immunity. If Mr. Cowler comes through, you are entitled to a share of the proceeds. Whether you take it or no is a matter for your private feelings. But the main point is that with Cowler in, this thing will be fixed, and without him in, you are in jail or a fugitive from justice."

He paused now and looked at Susannah—paused not as one who pities but as one who asks himself if he has said enough. Susannah's face proved that he had.

"Now of course you won't feel like working this morning. And I don't blame you. Go home and think it over. Your first instinct, probably, will be to see a lawyer. For your own sake, I advise you not to do that. For ours, I hope you do. If he tells you the truth, he will show you how deeply involved you are in this thing. No lawyer whom you can command will handle your case. What you'd better do is lie down and take a nap. Then at about five o'clock this afternoon, send for hot coffee and doll yourself up—Mr. Cowler will call for you at seven."

Susannah took part of Mr. Warner's advice. She went home immediately. But she did not take a nap. Instead, she walked up and down her bedroom for an hour, thinking hard. She could think now; in her passage home on the Subway, her first wild panic had beaten its desperate black wings to quiet. What Warner had told her she now believed implicitly. She was as much caught in the trap as any one of the three crooks with whom she had been associated. The only difference was that she did not mean to stay in the trap. She meant to escape. Also she did not mean to let it drive her from the city in which she was challenging success. She meant to stay in New York. She meant to escape. But how?

If there were only somebody to whom she could go! She had in New York a few acquaintances—but no real friends. Besides, she didn't want anybody to know; all she wanted was to get away from—to vanish from their sight. But where could she go—when—how?

Fortunately she had plenty of money on hand, plenty at least for her immediate purposes. She owned a few pawnable things, though only a few. But at present what she needed, more even than money, was time. She must get away at once. But again where? For a moment resurgent panic tore her. Then common sense seemed to offer a solution. Here she was in the biggest city in the country; the biggest in the world. She had heard somewhere that a big city was the best place in the world to hide in. She would hide in New York. Then—

She had forgotten one terrifying fact. Byan boarded in the same house.

She realized why now. A fortnight before—shortly after Mr. Cowler appeared in the office—he had come to her for advice. He had given up one bachelor apartment, he said, and was taking another. Repairs had become inevitable in the new apartment. He did not want to go to a hotel. Did she know of a good boarding-house in which to spend a month? She did, of course—her own. Byan came there the next day; although, curiously enough, she saw but little of him. They had separate tables, and his meal-hours and hers were different.

Byan usually came in at about six o'clock. But today he might follow her. She must work quickly.

She pulled her trunk out from under the bed and began in frenzied haste to pack it. Down came all the pictures from her walls. Into the trunk went most of her clothes; some of her toilet articles; her half-dozen books; her stationery; all her slender Lares and Penates. When she had finished with her trunk, she packed her suitcase. As many thin dresses as she could crush in—inconsequent necessities—her storm boots; her tooth-brush—

Then she wrote a note to her landlady. It read: "Dear Mrs. Ray: I have been suddenly called away from the city. Will you keep my trunk until I send for it? Yours in great haste and some trouble, Susannah Ayer." She put it with her board money in an envelope, addressed to Mrs. Ray, and placed it on the trunk.

At three o'clock, her suitcase in one hand, her bag and her umbrella in the other, her long cape over her arm, she ventured into the hall.

It was vacant and silent.

She stole silently down the stairs. She met nobody. She noiselessly opened the front door. Apparently nobody noticed her. She walked briskly down the steps; turned toward the Avenue. At the corner something impelled her to look back.

Byan, his look directed downward, two fingers fumbling in his side pocket for his key, was briskly ascending the steps.

Lindsay drove directly from the Quinanog station to the Quinanog Arms. The Arms proved to be a tiny mid-Victorian hotel, not an inexact replica—and by no means a discreditable one—of many small rustic hotels that he had seen in England and France. Indeed Quinanog, as he caught it in glimpses, might have been one part of France or one part of England—that region which only the English Channel prevents from being the same country. The motor, which conducted him from the station to the Arms, drove on roads in which high wine-glass elms made Gothic arches; between wide meadowy stretches, brilliant with buttercups, daisies, iris; unassertive, well-proportioned houses with roomy vegetable plots and tiny patches here and there of flower garden. He arrived at so early an hour that the best of the long friendly day stretched before him. He felt disposed to spend it merely in reading and smoking. He had plenty to smoke; he had seen to that himself in New York. And he had plenty to read; Spink Sparrel had seen to that in Boston. The bottom of one of his trunks was covered with Lutetia Murray's works.

But although he smoked a great deal, he did not read at all. Until luncheon he merely followed his impulses. Those impulses took him a little way down the main street, which ran between comfortable, white colonial houses, set back from the road. He walked through the tiny triangular Common. He visited the little, poster-hung post-office; looked into the big neatly arranged general store; strolled back again. His impulses then led him to explore the grounds of the Arms and deposited him finally in the hammock on the side porch. After a simple and very well-cooked luncheon, his languor broke into a sudden restlessness. "Where is the Murray place?" he asked of the proprietor of the Arms, whose name, the letterhead of the Arms stationery stated, was Hyde.

"The Murray place!" Hyde repeated inquiringly. He was a long, noncommittal-looking person with big pale blue eyes illuminating a sandy baldness. "Oh, the *Murray* place! You mean the old Murray place."

"I mean the house, whichever and wherever it is, that Lutetia Murray, the author, used to live in."

"Oh, sure! I get you. You see it's been empty for such a long spell that we forget all about it. The old Murray place is on the road to West Quinanog."

"It isn't occupied, you say?"

"Lord, no! Hasn't been lived in since—well, since Lutetia Murray died. And that was—let me see—" Hyde cast a reflective eye upward. "Ten, eleven, twelve—oh, fifteen or twenty, I should say. Yes, all of fifteen years."

"Does it still belong in the Murray family?"

"Lord bless your soul, no. There hasn't been a Murray around these parts since—well, since Lutetia Murray died."

"Who owns it now?"

"The Turners. They bought it when it came up for sale after Miss Murray's death."

"Well, weren't there any heirs?"

"There was a niece—her brother's little girl. They had to sell the place and everything in it. There never *was* a sale in Quinanog like that. Why, folks say that the mahogany would bring fancy prices in New York nowadays."

"Didn't they get as much as they should have?" Lindsay asked idly.

"Oh Lord, no! And they found her estate was awful involved, and the debts et up about all the auction brought in."

"What became of the little girl?"

"Some cousins took her."

"Where is she now?"

"Never heard tell."

"Has anybody ever lived in the Murray place since the family left?"

"No, I believe not."

"Is it to let?"

"Yes, and for sale."

"Well, why hasn't it let or sold?"

"Oh, I dunno exactly. It's a great big barn of a place. Kinda ramshackle, and of course it's off the main-traveled road. You'd need a flivver, at least, to live there nowadays. And there ain't a single modern improvement in it. No bathroom, nor electric lights, not set tubs, nor any of the things that women like. No garage neither."

"Every disability you quote makes it sound all the better to me," Lindsay commented. He meditated a moment. "I'd like to go over and look at it this afternoon. Is there anyone here to

drive me?"

"Yes, Dick'll take you in the runabout." Hyde appeared to meditate in his turn, and he cocked an inquiring eye in Lindsay's direction. "You wasn't thinking of hiring the place, was you?"

Lindsay laughed. "I should say I wasn't. No, I just wanted to look at it."

"I was going to say," Hyde went on, "that it's a very pleasant location. City folks always think it's a lovely spot. If you was thinking of hiring it, my brother's the agent."

Lindsay laughed again. "Hiring a house is about as far from my plans at present as returning to France."

"Well," Hyde commented dryly, "judging from the way the Quinanog boys feel, I guess I know just about how much you want to do that."

"How soon can we go to the Murray place?" Lindsay inquired.

"Now—as far as Dick's concerned."

"By the way," Hyde dropped, as he turned toward the garage, "the Murrays called the place Blue Medders."

"Blue Meadows," Lindsay repeated aloud. And to himself, "Blue Meadows." And again, though wordlessly, "Blue Meadows." It was apparent that he liked the sound and the image the sound evoked.

The runabout chugged to Blue Meadows in less than ten minutes. The road branched off from the State highway at the least frequented place in its ample stretch; ran for a long way to West Quinanog. On this side road, houses were few and they grew fewer and fewer until they left Blue Meadows quite by itself. Its situation, though solitary, was not lonely. It sat near the road. Perhaps, Lindsay decided, it would have been too near if stately wine-glass elms, feathered with leaves all along their lissom trunks, in collaboration with a high lilac hedge now past its blooming, had not helped to sequester it. From the street, the house showed only a roof with two capacious chimneys, the upper story of its gray clapboarded façade.

Dick, a gangling freckled youth, slowed down the machine as if in preparation for a stop. "I've got the key," he volunteered, "if you want to go in."

Until that moment Lindsay had entertained no idea of going in. But Dick's words fired his imagination. "Thanks, I think I will."

Dick handed over the long, delicately wrought key. He made no move to follow Lindsay out of the car. "If you don't mind," he said, "I'll run down the road to see a cousin of mine. How soon before you'll want to start back?"

"Oh, give me half an hour or so," Lindsay decided carelessly.

The runabout chugged into the green arch which imprisoned the distance.

Alone, Lindsay strolled between lilac bushes and over the sunken flags which led to the front door. Then, changing his mind, he made an appraising tour about the outside of the place.

Blue Meadows was a big old house: big, so it seemed to his amateur judgment, by an incredible number of rooms; and old—and here his judgment, though swift, was more accurate—to the time of two hundred years. Outside, it had all the earmarks of Colonial architecture—plain lines, stark walls, the windows, with twenty-four lights, geometrically placed; but its lovely lines, its beautiful proportions, and the soft plushy nap which time had laid upon its front clapboardings mitigated all its severities. The shingles of the roof and sides were weather-beaten and gray, the blinds a deep old blue. At one side jutted an incongruous modern addition; into the second story of which was set a galleried piazza. At the other side stretched an endless series of additions, tapering in size to a tiny shed.

"This is Lutetia's house!" Lindsay stopped to muse. "Is it true that I spent two years with the French Army? Is it true that I served two more with the American Army? Oh, to think you didn't live to see all that, Lutetia!"

A lattice arched over the doorway and on it a big climbing rose was just coming into bud. The beautiful door showed the pointed architrave, the leaded side panels, the fanlight, the engaged columns, of Colonial times. It resisted the first attack of the key, but yielded finally to Lindsay's persuasion. He stepped into the hall.

It was a rectangular hall, running straight to the back of the house. Pairs of doors, opposite each other, gaped on both sides. At the left arose a slender straight stairway, mahogany-railed. Lindsay strolled from one room to the other, opening windows and blinds. They were big square rooms, finished in the conventional Colonial manner, with fireplaces and fireplace cupboards. The wallpaper, faded and stained, was of course quite bare of pictures and ornaments. He stopped to examine the carving on the white, painted panels above the fireplace—garlands of flowers caught with torches and masks.

Smiling to himself, Lindsay returned to the hall. "Oh, Lutetia, I should like to have seen you here!" he remarked wordlessly.

Behind the stairway, at the back, appeared another door. He opened it into darkness. Fumbling in his pocket, he produced a box of matches, lighted his way through the blackness; again opened windows and shutters. This proved to be the long back room so common in Colonial homes; running the entire width of the house. There were two fireplaces. One was small, with a Franklin stove. The other—Lindsay calculated that it would take six-foot logs. Four well-grown children, shoulder to shoulder, could have walked into it. This room was not entirely empty. In the center—by a miracle his stumbling progress had just avoided it—was a long table of the refectory type. Lindsay studied the position of the two fireplaces. He examined the ceiling. “You threw the whole lot of little rooms together to make this big room, Lutetia. You’re a lady quite of my own architectural taste. I, too, like a lot of space.”

He continued his explorations. From one side of the long living-room extended kitchen, laundry; servants’ rooms and servants’ dining-room; an endless maze of butteries, pantries, sheds. Lindsay gave them short shrift. At the other side, however, lay a little half-oval room, the first floor of that Victorian addition which he had marked from the outside.

“Oh, Lutetia, Lutetia, how could you, how could you?” he burst out at first glance. “To add this modern bit to that fine Colonial stateliness! Perhaps we’re not kindred souls after all.”

Hugging the wall of this room and leading to the second floor was a stairway so narrow that only one person could mount it at a time. Lindsay proved this to his own satisfaction by ascending it. It opened into a big back room of the main house, the one with the galleried piazza. Lindsay opened all the windows here; and then went rapidly from room to room, letting in the June sunshine.

They were all empty, of course—and yet, in a dozen plaintive ways—faded wall spaces, which showed the exact size of pictures, nails with carpet tufts still clinging to them, a forgotten window shade or two—they spoke eloquently of habitation. Indeed, the whole place had a friendly atmosphere, Lindsay reflected; there was none of the cold, dead connotation of most long-empty houses. This old place was spiritually warm, as though some reflection of a long-ago vivid life still hung among its shadows. From the dust, the stains, the cobwebs, it might have been vacant for a century. From the welcoming warmth of its quiet rooms, it might have been vacant but for a day.

Through the back windows, Lindsay looked down onto what must once have been a huge rectangle of lawn; and near the house, what must once have been an oval of flower garden. The lawn, stretching to a stone wall—beyond which towered a chaos of trees—was now knee-deep in timothy-grass; the garden had reverted to jungle. He studied the garden. Close to the house, an enormous syringa bush heaped into a mountain of fragrant snow. Near, a smoke-bush was just beginning to bubble into rounds of blood-scarlet gauze. Strangled rosebushes showed yellow or crimson. Afar an enormous patch of tiger lilies gave the effect of a bizarre, orchidous tropical group. The rest was an indiscriminate early-summer tangle of sumac; elderberry; bayberry; silver birches; wild roses; daisies; buttercups; and what would later be Queen Anne’s lace and goldenrod. From a back corner window, it seemed to him that he caught a glint of water; but he could not recapture it from any other point of view. However, he lost all memory of this in a more affording discovery. For the front windows gave him the reason of the name, Blue Meadows. Across the road stretched a series of meadows, all bluish purple with blooming iris.

Lindsay contemplated this charming prospect for a long interval.

“And now, Lutetia,” he suddenly turned and addressed the empty rooms, “I want to find *your* room. Which of these six was it?”

Retracing his steps, he went from room to room until, many times, he had made a complete survey of the second floor. He crossed and recrossed his own trail, as the excitement of the quest mounted in him.

“Ah!” he exclaimed aloud, “here it is! You can’t escape your soul-mate, Lutetia.”

It was not because the room was so much bigger than the rest that he made this decision; it was only because it was so much more quaint. At one side it merged, by means of a slender doorway, with the galleried piazza. From it, by means of that tiny flight of stairs, Lutetia could have descended to the first floor of that mid-Victorian addition. “I take it all back, Lutetia,” he approved. “Middle of the nineteenth century or not, it’s a wonder—this combination.” At the back of Lutetia’s room was a third door; as slender as the door leading to the gallery, but much lower; not four feet high. Lindsay pushed it open, crawled on hands and knees through it. He had of course, on his first exploration, entered the small room into which it led. But he had gone in and out without careful examination; it had seemed merely a four-walled room. Coming into it, however, from Lutetia’s bedroom, it suddenly acquired character.

The walls were papered in white. And on the mid-Victorian dado scarcely legible now, he suddenly discovered drawings. Drawings of a curious character and of a more curious technique. He followed their fluttery maze from wall to wall—a flight of little beings, winged at the shoulders and knees, with flying locks and strange finlike hands and feet; fanciful, comic, tender.

“Oh!” Lindsay emitted aloud. “Ah!” And in an instant: “I see! This room belonged to that child Hyde spoke of.”

He ascended to the garret. This was of course the big storeroom of the Colonial imagination. It too was quite empty. At one spot a post—obviously not a roof-support—ran from floor to ceiling. Lindsay gazed about a little unseeingly. “I wonder what that post was for?” he questioned himself absently. After a while, “What’s become of that child?” he demanded of circumambient space.

As though this offered food for reflection, he descended by means of the main stairway to the lower floor; sat on the doorsteps a while. He mused—gazing out into the green-colored, sweet-scented June afternoon. After an interval he arose and repeated his voyage of exploration.

Again he was struck with the friendly quality of the old place. That physical dampness, which long vacant houses hold in solution, seemed entirely to have disappeared before the flood of June sunshine. The spiritual chill, which always accompanies it—that sinister quality so connotative of congregations of evil spirits—he again observed was completely lacking. As he emerged from one room to enter another, it seemed to him that the one back of him filled with—*companionship*, he described it to himself. As he continued his explorations, it seemed to him that the room he was about to enter would offer him not ghostly but human welcome. That human welcome did not come, of course. Instead, there surged upon him the rich odors of the lilacs and syringas; the staccato greetings of the birds.

After a while he went downstairs again. Sitting in the front doorway, he fell into a rich reverie.

This was where Lutetia Murray wrote the books which had so intrigued his boyish fancy. Mentally he ran over the list: *The Sport of the Goddesses*, *The Weary Time*, *Mary Towle*, *Old Age*, *Intervals*, *With Pitfall and with Gin*, *Cynthia Ware*—Details came up before his mental vision which he had entirely forgotten and now only half remembered; dramatic moments; descriptive passages; conversational interludes; scenes; epigrams.... He tried to imagine Lutetia Murray at Blue Meadows. The picture which, in college, he had cut from a book-house catalogue, flashed before him; he had found it among his papers. The figure was standing.... He had looked at it only yesterday, but his masculine observation retained no details of the gown except that it left her neck and arms bare. The face was in profile. The curling hair rose to a high mass on her head. The delicate features were *mignonne*, except for the delicious, warm, lusciously cut mouth— Was she blonde or brunet he wondered. She died at forty-five. To David Lindsay at twenty-two, forty-five had seemed a respectable old age. To David Lindsay at twenty-eight, it seemed almost young. She was dead, of course, when he began to read her. Oh, if he could only have met her! It was a great pity that she had died so young. Her work—he had made a point of this in his thesis—had already swung from an erratic, highly colored first period into a more balanced, carefully characterized second period; was just emerging into a third period that was the union of these two; big and rounded and satisfying. But death had cut that development short. In the last four years Lindsay had seen a great deal of death and often in atrocious form. He had long ago concluded that he had thought on the end of man all the thoughts that were in him. But now, sitting in the scented warmth of Lutetia's trellised doorway, he found that there were still other thoughts which he could think.

The runabout chugged up the road presently. "Ben waiting long?" the freckled Dick asked with a cheery shamelessness.

"No, I've been looking the house over. Wonderful old place, isn't it?"

"Don't care much for it myself," Dick answered. "I don't like anything old—old houses or that old truck the summer folks are always buying. Things can't be too new or up-to-date for me."

Lindsay did not appear at first to hear this; he was still bemused from the experiences of the afternoon. But as they approached the Arms, he emerged from his daze with a belated reply. "Well, I suppose a lot of people feel the way you do," he remarked vaguely. "Mr. Hyde tells me that the Murray place hasn't been let for fifteen years. I expect the rest of the people around here don't like old houses."

"Oh, that ain't the reason the Murray house hasn't let," Dick explained with the scorn of rustic omniscience. "They say it's haunted."

"What rent do they ask for the Murray house?" Lindsay asked Hyde that evening.

Hyde scratched the back of his head. His face contracted with that mental agony which afflicts the Yankee when an exact statement is demanded of him. "Well, I shouldn't be surprised if you could get it for two hundred dollars the season," he finally brought out.

Lindsay considered, but apparently not Hyde's answer; for presently he came out with a different question. "Why do they say it's haunted?"

Hyde emitted a short contemptuous laugh. "Did you ever hear of any house in the country that's been empty for a number of years that worn't considered haunted?"

"No," Lindsay admitted. "I am disappointed, though. I had hoped you would be able to tell me about the ghost."

"Well, I can't," Hyde asserted scornfully, "nor nobody else neither."

The two men smoked in silence.

After a while Lindsay made the motions preliminary to rising. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe; put his pipe in his pocket; withdrew his feet from their comfortable elevation on the piazza rail. Finally he assembled his full height on the floor, but not without a prolonged stretching movement. "Well," he said, halfway through the yawn, "I guess you can tell that brother of yours

that I'm going to hire the Murray house for the season."

Hyde was equally if not more *dégagé*. He did not move; nor did he change his expression. "All right," he commented without enthusiasm, "I'll let him know. How soon would you like to go in, say?"

"As soon as I can buy a bed." Lindsay disappeared through the doorway.

Two days later Lindsay found himself comfortably settled at Blue Meadows. Upstairs—he had of course chosen Lutetia's room—was a cot and a bureau of soft wood. Downstairs was a limited assortment of cheap china; cheaper cutlery; the meagerest possible cooking equipment. 98

But there was an atmosphere given to Lindsay's room by Lutetia's own picture hanging above the bureau. And another to the living-room by Lutetia's own works—a miscellaneous collection of ugly-proportioned, ugly-colored, late-nineteenth-century volumes—ranged on the broad shelf above the fireplace; by Lindsay's writing materials scattered over the refectory table. Economical as he had been inside, he had exploded into extravagance outside. A Gloucester hammock swung at the back. A collection of garden materials which included a scythe, a spade, a sickle, a lawnmower, and a hose filled one corner of the barn. Already—his back still complained of the process—he had cut the spacious lawn.

He was at one and the same time sanely placid and wildly happy.

Every morning he awoke with the sun and the birds. Adapting himself with an instant spiritual content to the fact that he was no longer in France and would not have to fly, he turned over to take another nap. An hour or two later, he was up and eating his self-prepared breakfast. The rest of the day was reading Lutetia; musing on Lutetia; "scything" or "sickling," as he called it in his letters to Spink, in the garden; reflecting on Lutetia; exploring the neighborhood on foot; meditating on Lutetia; reading and rereading the mass of Spink's data on Lutetia; hosing the garden; making notes on Spink's data on Lutetia and thinking of his notes on Spink's data on Lutetia. He awoke in the morning with Lutetia on his mind. He fell asleep at night with Lutetia in his heart. He had come to realize that Lutetia, the author, was even better than he had supposed her. His college thesis had described her merely as the Mrs. Gaskell of New England. Now, mentally, he promoted her to its Jane Austen. His youth had risen to the lure of her color and fecundity, but his youngness had not realized how rich she was in humor; how wise; what a tenderness for people informed her careful, realistic detail. It was a triumph to find her even better than the flattering dictum of his boyish judgment. 99

Exploring Lutetia's domain gave results only second in satisfaction to exploring Lutetia's mind. It was obvious at his first inspection that the garden had once stretched contrasting glories of color and perfume. A careful study from the windows was even more productive than a close survey. There, definitely, he could trace the remains of flower-plots; pleached paths; low hedges and lichened rocks. Resurrecting that garden would be an integral part of the joy of resurrecting Lutetia. By this time also, he had explored the barn. There, a big roomy lower floor sustained only part of a broken stairway. The equally roomy upper floor seemed, from such glimpses as he could get below, to be piled with rubbish. Some day, he promised himself, he would clean it out. Beyond, and to the right of the barn, bounded by the stone wall, scrambled a miniature wilderness. That wilderness evaded every effort of exploration. Only an axe could clear a trail there. Another day he would tackle the wilderness. But in the meantime he would devote himself to garden and lawn; in the meantime also loaf and invite his soul. After all, that was his main reason for coming to Quinanog. Whenever he thought of this, he took immediately to the Gloucester hammock. 100

Every morning he walked briskly over the long mile of road, shaded with wine-glass elms, slashed with vistas of pasture, pond, and brook which lay between Blue Meadows and the Quinanog post-office. When he had inquired for his mail—usually he had none—he strolled over to the general store and made his few simple purchases. He had followed this routine for ten days before it occurred to him that he had not seen a newspaper since he settled himself at Blue Meadows. "I'll let it go that way, I guess," he said to himself. He noticed at first with a little embarrassment and then with amusement that the groups in the post-office waiting for mail, the customers at the general store, were all quietly watching him. And one morning this floated to him from behind a pile of cracker boxes: 101

"He's the nut that's taken the Murray place. Lives all alone—batching it. Some sort of highbrow."

Gradually, however, he made acquaintance. Silas Turner, who owned the next farm to Blue Meadows, offered him a ride one morning on the road. Out of a vague conversation on the weather and real estate, Mr. Turner dropped one interesting fact. He had known Lutetia Murray. This revelation kept Lindsay chatting for half an hour while Mr. Turner spilled a mass of uncorrelated details. Such as Miss Murray's neighborliness; the time her cow ran away and Art Curtis brought it back; how Miss Murray admired Mis' Turner's beach plum jelly so much that Mis' Turner always made some extra just for her. As they parted he let fall dispassionately: "She was a mighty handsome woman. Fine figure!" He added, still dispassionately but with an effect somehow of enthusiastic conviction, "She kept her looks to the last day of her life." 102

Useless, all this, for a biography, Lindsay reflected; but it gave him an idea. He bought that day a second-hand bicycle at the Quinanog garage; and thereafter, when the devil of restlessness stirred in his young muscles, he trundled about the countryside in search of those families

mentioned in Lutetia's letters. Some were utterly gone from Quinanog, some were not affording, and some added useful detail; as when old Mrs. Apperson produced a dozen letters written from Europe during Lutetia's first trip abroad. "I'd have admired to go to Europe, but it never came so's I could," said Mrs. Apperson. "When Miss Murray went, she wrote me from every city, telling me all about it. I read 'em over a lot—makes me feel as though I'd been there too. And every Decoration Day," she added inconsequently, "I put a bunch of heliotrope on her grave. She just loved the smell of heliotrope."

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Somehow, Lindsay had never even thought of Lutetia's grave. The next day he made that pilgrimage. The graveyard lay near the town center, overtopped by the pine-covered hill which bore three austere white buildings—church, town-hall, and grange. The grave itself was in a patch of modern tombstones, surrounded by the flaking slabs of two centuries ago. The stone was featureless, ill-proportioned; the inscription recorded nothing but her name and the dates of her birth and death.

The note which most often came out of these wayside gossipings was a high one—of the gaiety and the brilliancy of the Blue Meadows hospitality. Apparently people were coming and going all the time; some distinguished; some undiscovered: but all with personality. When Lindsay returned from such a talk, the old house glowed like an opal—so full did it seem of the colors of those vivacious days.

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But he was not quite content to be long away from his own fireside. The friendly atmosphere of the Murray house continued to exercise its enchanting sway. He always felt that one room became occupied the instant he left it, that the one he was about to enter was already occupied—and this feeling grew day by day, augmented. It brought him back to the house always with a sense of expectancy. "Lutetia's house is my hotel-lobby, my movie, my theater, my grand opera, my cabaret," he wrote Spink. "There's a strange fascination about it—a fascination with an element of eternal promise."

At times, when he entered the trellised doorway, he found himself expecting someone to come forward to greet him. It kept occurring to him that a neighbor had stopped to call, was waiting inside for him. Sometimes in the middle of the night he would drift slowly out of a delicious sleep to a sense, equally delicious, of being most gently and lovingly companioned in the room; sometimes in the morning he would wake up with a snap, as though the house were full of company. For a moment the whole place would seem brilliant and gay, and then—it was as though a bubble burst in the air—he was alone. "It's almost as good," he wrote Spink, "as though you were here yourself, you goggle-eyed hick, you!" Once or twice he caught himself talking aloud; addressing the empty air. He stifled this impulse, however. "People always have a tendency to get bughouse," he explained to Spink, "when they live alone. I used to do that in your rooms. I'm going to try to keep sane as long as possible."

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Ten days increased rather than diminished this impression. By this time he had burned his thesis and was now making notes that were part the direct product of Spink's data and part the byproduct of Lutetia's own works. The syringas were beginning to run down; but the roses were coming out in great numbers. The hollyhocks had opened flares of color under the living-room window. The lawn was as close to plush as constant care could make it. The garden was not yet quite cleaned out. He was glad, for he liked working there. It was not a whit less friendly than the house. Indeed, he felt so companioned there that sometimes he looked up suddenly to see who was watching his efforts to resurrect a neglected rosebush; or to uproot a flourishing patch of poison ivy. The evenings were long, and as—consciously girlish and in quotation marks he wrote Spink—"lovely." His big lamp made a spot of golden color in the shadowy long room. One northeaster, which lasted three days, gave him dark and damp excuse for three days of roaring fire. Much of that time he sat opposite the blazing logs in the big, rush-bottomed piazza chair which he had purchased, smoking and reading Lutetia. Now and then, he looked up at Lutetia's picture, which he had finally brought down from his bedroom.

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Perhaps it was the picture which made him feel more companioned here than anywhere in the house or out. The living-room was peculiarly rich with presence, so rich that he left it reluctantly at night and returned to it as quickly as possible in the morning; so rich that often he smiled, though why he could not have said; so rich that in the evening he often looked up suddenly from his book and stared into its shadowy length for a long, moveless—and breathlessly expectant—interval.

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Indeed that sensation so concretely, so steadily, so persistently augmented that one evening—

He had been reading ever since dark; and it was getting late. Finally he arose; closed the door and windows. He came back to the table and stood leaning against it, idly whistling the *Sambre et Meuse* through his teeth, while he looked at Lutetia's portrait.

He took up *The Sport of the Goddesses* just to look it over ... turned a page or two ... became immersed.... Suddenly ... he realized that he was not alone....

He was not alone. That was conclusive. That he suddenly and absolutely knew; though how he knew it he could not guess. His eyes stopped, in the midst of Lutetia's single grim murder, fixed on the printed line. He could not move them along that line. He did not mind that. But he could not move them off the page. And he did mind that; for he wanted—most intensely wanted—to lift his gaze. After lifting it, he presently discovered, he would want to project it to the left. Whoever his visitor was, it sat at the left. That he knew, completely, absolutely, and conclusively; but again, how he knew it, he did not know.

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An immeasurable interval passed.

He tried to raise his eyes. He could not accomplish it. The air grew thick; his hands, still holding the book, turned cold and hard as clamps of iron. His eyes smarted from their unwinking immobility. This was absurd. Breaking this deathly ossification was just a matter of will. He made himself turn a page. Five lines down he decided; he would look up. But he did not look up. He could not. He wanted to see ... but something stronger than desire and will withheld him. He read; turned another page. Five lines down....

Ah ... the paralysing chill was moving off.... In a moment ... he was going to be able.... In a moment....

He lifted his eyes.... He gazed steadily to the left....

IV

Before night Susannah had found a room which exactly suited her purpose. This was as much a matter of design as of luck. She had heard of the place before. It was a large building in the West Twenties which had formerly been the imposing parsonage of an imposing and very important church. The church had long ago gone the way of all old Manhattan buildings. But the parsonage, divided into an infinite number of cubby-hole rooms, had become a lodging-house. A lodging-house with a difference, however. For whereas in the ordinary establishment of this kind, one paid rent to a landlady who lived on the spot, here one paid it to an agent who came from somewhere, promptly every Monday morning, for the purpose of collection. It was a perfect hiding-place. You did not know your neighbor. Your neighbor did not know you. With due care, one could plan his life so that he met nobody.

Susannah, except for a choice of rooms, did not for an interval plan her life at all. She made that choice instantly, however. Of two rooms situated exactly opposite each other at the back of the second floor, she chose one because it overlooked a yard containing a tree. It was a tiny room, whitewashed; meagerly and nondescriptly furnished. But the door-frame and window-frame offered decoration. Following the ecclesiastical design of the whole house, they peaked into triangles of carved wood.

Susannah gave scant observation to any of these things. Once alone in her room, she locked the door. Then she removed two things from her suitcase—a nightgown and the miniature of Glorious Lutie. The latter she suspended by a thumbtack beside the mirror of her bureau. Then she undressed and went to bed. She slept fitfully all the rest of that day and all that night. Early in the morning she crept out, bought herself, at a Seventh Avenue delicatessen shop, a jar of milk and a loaf of bread. She lunched and dined in her room. She breakfasted next morning on the remains.

Her sleep was deep and dreamless; but in her waking moments her thoughts pursued the same treadmill.

"Glorious Lutie," she began one of the wordless monologues which she was always addressing to the miniature, "I ought to have known long ago that they were a gang of crooks! Why don't we trust our intuitions? I suppose it's because our intuitions are not always right. I can't quite go with anything so magic, so irrational as intuition! And then again I'm afraid I'm too logical. But I'm always having the same thing happen to me. Perhaps I'm talking with somebody I have met for the first time. Suddenly that person makes a statement. Instantly—it's like a little hammer knocking on my mind—something inside me says: 'That is a lie. He is lying deliberately and he knows he lies.' Now you would think that I would trust that lead, that I would follow it implicitly. But do I? No! Never! I pay no more attention to it than as though it never happened. And generally my intuition is right. But always I find it out too late. Now that little hammer has been knocking its warnings about the Warner-Byan-O'Hearn bunch ever since I started to work for them. But I could not *make* myself pay any attention to it. I did not want to believe it, for one thing. And then of course the work was awfully interesting. I kept calling myself all kinds of names for thinking— And they *were* kind. I *wouldn't* believe it. But my intuition kept telling me that Warner was a hypocrite. And as for Byan—"

Perhaps Susannah could not voice, even to Glorious Lutie, the thoughts that flooded her mind when she conjured up the image of Byan. For in her heart Susannah knew that Byan admired her overmuch, that he would have liked to flirt with her, that he had started— But Warner had called him off. The enigmatic phrase, which had come to her from Warner's office and in Warner's voice, recurred. "Keep off clients and office employ—" Susannah knew the end of it now—"employees" of course. Warner's rule for his fellow crooks was that they must not flirt with clients or the office force. Again and again in her fitful wakefulness she saw Byan standing before her; slim, blade-like; his smartly cut suit adhering, as though pasted there, to the lithe lines of his active body. And then suddenly that revolver which came from—where? Byan was of course the most attractive of them all. That floating, pathetic smile revealed such white teeth! That deep look came from eyes so long-lashed! Warner with his pseudo-clergyman, pseudo-actor oratory, deep-voiced and vibrant, was the most obvious. O'Hearn, his lids perpetually down, except when they lifted swiftly to let his glance lick up detail, was the most mysterious. But Byan was the most attractive—

"Yes, Glorious Lutie, I was always receiving letters which started that little hammer of intuition

knocking. I was always overhearing bits of conversation which started it; although often I could not understand a word. I was always trying to piece things together—wondering— Well, the next time I'll know better. I've learned my lesson. But oh—think, think, *think* what I've helped to do. They robbed widows and orphans and all kinds of helpless people. Of course I didn't know I was doing it. But that's going to haunt me for a long, long time. I wish there were some way I could make up. I've come out of it safe. But they—oh, I mustn't think of this. I *mustn't*. I can't stand it if I do. Oh, Glorious Lutie, believe me, my guardian angel was certainly on *that* job. Otherwise I don't know what would have become of me. Are you my guardian angel, I wonder?"

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When Susannah finally arose for good, she discovered, naturally enough, that she was hungry. She went out immediately and, in the nearest Child's restaurant, ordered a dinner which she afterward described to Glorious Lutie as "magnanimously, munificently, magnificently masculine." It consisted mainly of sirloin steak and boiled potatoes, "and I certainly ate my fill of them both." Then she took a little aimless, circumscribed walk; returned to her room. She unpacked her tightly stratified suitcase; hung her clothes in her little closet; ranged her small articles in the bureau drawer. As though she were going to start clean in her new career, she bathed and washed her hair in the public bathroom on the second floor. Coming back into her room, she sat for a long time before the window while her dripping locks dried. She sat there through the dusk.

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"After all, Glorious Lutie," she reflected contentedly, "why do I ever live in anything bigger than a hall bedroom? All a girl needs is a bed, a bureau, one chair and a closet, and that is exactly what I've got. And for full measure they have thrown in all those ducky little backyards and a tree. I don't expect you to believe it, but I tell you true. A tree in Manhattan. How do you suppose it got by the censor! And just now, if you please, a tiny new moon all tangled up in its branches. It's trying its best to get out, but it can't make it. I never saw a new moon struggle so hard. Honest, I can hear it pant for breath. It looks like a silver fish that tried to leap out of this window and got caught in a green net. I suppose your Glorious Susie must be thinking of annexing a job sometime, Glorious Lutie. Or else we'll cease to eat. But for a few days I won't, if you don't mind; I'm fed up on jobs. And I've lost my taste for offices. No, I think I'll take those few days off and do a rubberneck trip around Manhattan. I feel like looking on innocent objects that can't speak or think. And for a time I don't want to go any place where I'd be likely to see my friends of the Carbonado Mining Company. After a while the thought of them won't bother me so. Probably by this time they have hired some other poor girl. Perhaps she won't mind Mr. Cowler though. Anyway, I'm free of them."

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When Susannah awoke the next morning, which was the third of her occupancy of the little room, some of her normal vitality had flowed back, her spirits began to mount. She sang—she even whistled—as she bathed and dressed; and she indulged in no more than the usual number of exasperated exclamations over the uncoilableness of her freshly shampooed, sparkling hair. "Why do we launder our tresses, I ask you, Glorious Lutie?" she questioned once. "And oh, why didn't I have regular gold hair like yours instead of this garnet mane? I look like—I look like—Azinnia! But oh, I ought never to complain when I reflect that I've escaped the curse of white eyelashes."

A consideration first of the shimmery day outside, and next of the clothes hanging in her closet, deflected her attention from this grievance. She chose from her closet a salmon-colored linen gown, slightly faded to a delicate golden rose. It was a long, slim dress and it made as much as possible of every inch of Susannah's long slimness. Moreover, it was notably successful in bringing out the blue of her brilliant eyes, the red of her brilliant hair, the contrasting white of her smooth warm skin. That face now so shone and smelled of soap that, the instant she caught sight of it in the glass, she pulled open the top drawer of her bureau and powdered it frantically.

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"I always shine, Glorious Lutie, as though I had washed with brass polish. I don't remember that you ever glistened. But I do remember that you always smelled as sweet as—roses, or new-mown hay, or heliotrope. I wonder what powder you did use? And it was a very foxy move on your part, to have yourself painted in just that soft swirl of blue tulle. You look as though you were rising from a cloud. I wonder what your dresses were like? I seem to remember pale blues and pinks; very delicate yellows and the most silvery grays. It seems to me that tulle and tarlatan and maline were your dope. Do you think, Glorious Lutie, when I reach your age, I shall be as good-looking as you?"

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Glorious Lutie, with that reticence which distinguishes the inhabitants of portraits, made no answer. But an observer might have said that the young face, staring alternately at the mirror and at the miniature, would some day mature to a face very like the one which stared back at it from the gold frame. Both were blonde. But where Glorious Lutie's eyes were a misty brown-lashed azure, Glorious Susie's were a spirited dark-lashed turquoise. Glorious Lutie's hair was like a golden crown, beautifully carved and burnished. Glorious Susie's turbulent mane was red, and it made a ruffled, coppery bunch in her neck. However, family resemblances peered from every angle of the two faces, although differences of temperament made sharp contrast of their expressions. Glorious Lutie was all soft, dreamy tenderness; Susannah, all spirit, active charm, resolution.

Susannah spent three days—almost carefree—of of what she described to the miniature as "touristing." She had very little time to converse with Glorious Lutie; for the little room saw her only at morning and night. But she gave her confidante a detailed account of the day's adventures. "It was the Bronx Zoo this morning, Glorious Lutie," she would say. "Have you ever noticed how satisfactory little beasties are? They don't lay traps for you and try to put you in a

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tortured position that you can't wriggle out of?" Though her question was humorous in spirit, Susannah's eyes grew black, as with a sudden terror. "No, *we* lay traps for *them*. I guess I've never before even tried to guess what it means to be trapped?" Or, "It was the Art Museum this afternoon, Glorious Lutie. I've looked at everything from a pretty nearly life-size replica of the Parthenon to a needle used by a little Egyptian girl ten million years ago. I'm so full of information and dope and facts that, if an autopsy were to be held over me at this moment, it would be found that my brain had turned into an Encyclopædia Britannica. In fact, I will modestly admit that I know everything." Or, "It was the Aquarium this morning, Glorious Lutie. Why didn't you tell me that fish were interesting? I've always hated a fish. They won't roll over or jump through for you and practically none of them bark or sing—or anything. I have always thought of them only as something you eat unwillingly on Fridays. But some of them are really beautiful; and interesting. I stayed there three hours; and I suppose if it hadn't been for the horrid stenchy smell I'd be there yet."

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But in spite of these vivacious, wordless monologues, her spirits were a long time rising to their normal height. The frightened look had not completely left her eyes; and often on her long, lonely walks, she would stop short suddenly, trembling like a spirited horse, as though some inner consideration harassed her. Then she would take up her walk at a frantic pace. Ultimately, however, she succeeded in leaving those terrifying considerations behind. And inevitably in the end, the resilience of youth conquered. The day came when Susannah leaped out of bed as lightly as though it were her first morning in New York.

"Glorious Lutie," began her ante-breakfast address, "we are not a millionairess; ergo, today we buy all the morning papers and read them at breakfast in order to hunt for a job via the ads. And perhaps the next time your Glorious Susie begins to earn money, you might advise her to save a little against an unexpected situation. Of course I shouldn't have squandered my money the way I did. But I never had had so much before in my life—and oh, the joy of having cut-steel buckles and a perfectly beautiful raincoat—and my first set of furs—and perfumery and everything."

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The advertising columns were not, she found (and attributed it to the return of so many men from France), very fecund. Each newspaper offered only from two to six chances worth considering. One, which appeared in all of them, seemed to afford the best opening. It read:

"*Wanted:* A stenographer, lady-like appearance and address, with some executive experience. Steady job and quick advancement to right woman. Apply between 9 and 11, room 1009, Carman Building."

"I am requested to apply for this spectacular job at the office itself, Glorious Lutie," she confided on her return to her room, "and I'm going out immediately after it. It's a romantic thing, getting a job through an advertisement. I hope I float up to the forty-sixth floor of a skyscraper, sail into a suite of offices which fill the entire top story; all Turkish rugs on the highly polished floor; all expensive paintings on the delicately tinted walls; all cut flowers with yard-long stems in the finely cut crystal vases. I should like to find there a new employer; tall, young, handsome, and dark. Dark he must be, Glorious Lutie. I cannot marry a blond; our children would be albinos. He would address me thus: 'Most Beauteous Blonde—you arrive at a moment when we are so much in need of a secretary that if you don't immediately seat yourself at yon machine, we shall go out of business. Your salary is one hundred dollars a week. This exquisite rose-lined boudoir is for your private use. You will find a bunch of fresh violets on your desk every morning. May I offer you my Rolls-Royce to bring you back and forth to work? And,' having fallen in love with me instantly, 'how soon may I ask you to marry me?'"

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Susannah took the Subway to Wall Street; walked through that busy city-cañon to the Carman Building. She strode into the elevator, almost empty in the hour which followed the morning rush; started to emerge, as directed by the elevator-man, at the tenth floor. But she did not emerge. Instead, her face as white as paper, she leaped back into the elevator; ascended with it to the top floor; descended with it; hurriedly left the building.

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That first casual glance down the corridor had given her a glimpse of H. Withington Warner sauntering slowly away from the elevator.

"Say, Eloise," she said late that afternoon over the telephone to the friend she had made at the Dorothy Dorr Home. "When can I see you?... Yes.... No.... Well, you see I'm out of a job at present.... No, I can't tell you about it. This is a rooming-house. There is no telephone in my room. I am telephoning from the hall. And so I'd rather wait until I see you. But in brief, I'm eating at Child's, soda-fountains and even peanut stands. I'm really getting back my girlish figure. Only I think I'm going to be a regular O. Henry story. Headlines as follows: *Beautiful Titian-haired* (mark that *Titian-haired*, Eloise) *Blonde Dead of Starvation. Drops Dead on Fifth Avenue. Too Proud to Beg.* I hope that none of those wicked reporters will guess that my new shoes with the cut-steel buckles cost thirty-five dollars. All right! All right.... The 'Attic' at seven. I'll be there promptly as usual and you'll get there late as usual.... Oh yes, you will! Thanks awfully, Eloise. I feel just like going out to dinner."

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Eloise, living up to her promise, made so noble an effort that she was only ten minutes late. Then, as usual, she came dashing and sparkling into the room; a slim brown girl, much browner than usual, for her coat of seashore tan; with narrow topaz eyes and deep dimples; very smart in embroidered linen and summer furs. The Attic restaurant occupied the whole top floor of a very high, downtown West Side skyscraper. Its main business came at luncheon, so the girls sat almost alone in its long, cool quiet. They found a table in a little stall whose window overhung the

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gray, fog-swathed river which seamlessly joined gray fog-misted sky. A moon, opaque as a scarlet wafer, seemed to be pasted at a spot that could be either river or sky. The girls ordered their inconsequent dinner. They talked their inconsequent girl chatter. They drank each a glass of May wine.

Susannah had quite recovered her poise and her spirit. She described her new room with great detail. She suggested that Eloise, whom she invariably addressed as, “you pampered minion of millions, you!” should call on her in that scrubby hall bedroom. In fact, her narrative went from joke to joke in a vein so steadily and so augmentingly gay that, when Eloise had paid the bill and they sat dawdling over their coffee, suddenly she found herself on the verge of breaking her vow of secrecy, of relating the horrors of the last week.

“Eloise,” she began, “I’m going to tell you something that I don’t want you ever to—”

And then the words dried on her lips. Her tongue seemed to turn to wood. She paled. She froze. Her eyes set on—

O’Hearn was walking into the Attic.

He did not perceive that instant terror of petrification; for it happened he did not even glance in their direction. He walked, self-absorbed apparently, to the other end of the room. But his face—Susannah got it clearly—was stony too. It had the look somehow of a man about to perform a deed repugnant to him.

“What’s the matter, Sue?” Eloise asked in alarm. “You look awfully ill all of a sudden.”

“The fact is,” Susannah answered with instant composure, “I feel a little faint, Eloise. Do you mind if we go now? I really should like to have a little air.”

“Not at all,” Eloise answered. “Any time you say. Come on!”

They made rapidly for the elevator. Susannah did not glance back. But inwardly she thanked her guardian-angel for the fortuitous miracle by which intervening waiters formed a screen. Not until they had walked block after block, turning and twisting at her own suggestion, did Susannah feel safe.

“Oh, what was it you were going to tell me, Susannah,” Eloise interrupted suddenly, “just before we left the Attic?”

“I don’t seem to remember at this moment,” Susannah evaded. “Perhaps it will come to me later.”

Susannah did not sleep very well that night. But by morning she had recovered her poise. “Glorious Lutie,” she said wordlessly from her bed, “I think I’ll go seriously to the business of getting a job. It’ll take my mind off—things. I’m going to ignore that little *rencontre* of yesterday. Don’t you despair. The handsome young employer with his romantic eyes and movie-star eyelashes awaits me somewhere. And just as soon as we’re married, you shall be hung in a manner befitting your birth and station in a drawing-room as big as Central Park. I wish it weren’t so darn hot. Somehow too, I don’t feel so strong about answering ads in *person* as I did two days ago.”

On her way to breakfast she bought all the newspapers. She spent her morning answering advertisements by letter. She received no replies to this first batch; but she pursued the same course for three days.

“Glorious Lutie,” she addressed the miniature a few days later, “this is beginning to get serious. I am now almost within sight of the end bill in my wad. In point of fact I will not conceal from you that today I pawned my one and only jewel—my jade ring. You don’t know how naked I feel without it. It will keep us for—perhaps it will last three weeks. And after that— However, I don’t think we’ll either of us starve. You don’t take any sustenance and I take very little these days. I wish this weather would change. You are so cool living in that blue cloud, Glorious Lutie, that you don’t appreciate what it’s like when it’s ninety in the shade and still going up. I’m getting pretty sick of it. I guess,” she concluded, smiling, “I’ll make out a list of the friends I can appeal to in case of need.”

The idea seemed to raise her spirits. She sat down and turned to the unused memorandum portion of her diary. Her list ran something like this:

New York—

No. 1—First and foremost—Eloise, who, being an heiress and the owner of a check-book, never has any real cash and always borrows from me.

Providence—

No. 2—Barty Joyce—Always has money because he’s prudent—and the salt of the earth—

P.S. Eloise never pays the money back that she borrows from me—

“Will you tell me, Glorious Lutie, why I don’t fall in love with Barty and why he doesn’t fall in love with me? There’s something awfully out about me. I don’t think I’ve been in love more than six times; and the only serious one was the policeman on the beat who had a wife and five children.”

Providence again—

No. 3—The Coburns—nice, comfy, middle-aged folks; not rich; the best friends a girl could possibly have.

No. 4—

But here she yawned loudly and relinquished the whole proceeding.

That afternoon Susannah visited several employment agencies which dealt with office help. She answered all the inquiries that their questionnaires put to her; omitting any reference to the Carbonado Mining Company. It was late in the afternoon when she finished. She walked slowly homeward down the Avenue. Outside of her own door, she tried to decide whether she would go immediately to dinner or lie down first. A sudden fatigue forced decision in favor of a nap. She walked wearily up the first flight of stairs. Ahead, someone was ascending the second flight—a man. He turned down the hall. She followed. He stopped at the room opposite hers; fumbled unsuccessfully with the key. As she approached, she glanced casually in his direction.

It was Byan.

V

DEAR SPINK:

This is the kind of letter one never writes. But if you knew my mental chaos.... And I've got to tell somebody about the thing that I can speak about to nobody. If I don't.... What do you suppose I've done? I've bought a house. Yep— I'm a property owner now. Of course you guess! Or do you guess? It's the Murray place. I could just make it and have enough left over for a year or two or three. But after that, Spink, I'm going to work because I'll have to.

I suppose you're wondering why I did it. You're not puzzled half as much as I am; although in one way I know exactly why I did it. Perhaps I didn't do it at all. Anyway, I didn't do it of my own volition. Somebody made me. I'm going to tell you about that presently.

Yes, it's all mine: beautiful old square-roomed house with its carved panelings and its generous Colonial fireplaces; its slender doors and amusing door-latches; an upstairs of ample bedrooms; an old garret with slave quarters; the downstairs with that little, charmingly incongruous, galleried, mid-Victorian addition; barn; lawn; flower-garden. And how beautiful I'm making that flower-garden you'll never suspect till you see it. But you won't see it for quite a while—I withdraw all my invitations to visit me. I don't want you now, Spink; although I never wanted you so much in my life. I'll want you later, I think. Of course it isn't from you personally—you beetle-eyed old scout—that I'm withdrawing my invitation; it's from any flesh-and-blood being. If you had an astral self— I don't want anybody. I never wanted to be alone so much in my life. In a moment I'm going to tell you why.

And the wine-glass elms are mine; and the lilacs and syringas and the smoke-bush and the hollyhocks; and all the things I've planted; my Canterbury bells (if they come up); my deep, rich dahlias and my flame-colored phlox (if ditto). All mine! Gee, Spink, I never felt so rich in my life, because what I've enumerated isn't twenty-five per cent of what I own. In a minute I'm going to tell you what the remaining seventy-five per cent is.

This place is full of birds and bees. I watch them from the house. Spink, we flying-men are boobs. Have you ever watched a bee fly? I spend hours, it seems to me, just studying them—trying to crab their act. And the other day there was an air-fight just over my roof. A chicken-hawk attacked by the whole bird population. It was a reproduction in miniature of a bombing-machine pursued by a dozen combat-planes. Spink, it was the best flying I've ever seen. You should have seen the sparrows keeping on his tail! The little birds relied on their quickness of attack, just as combat planes do. They attacked from all angles with such rapidity that the hawk could do nothing but run for his life. The little birds circled about, waiting for the moment to dive. A combat-plane dives; its machines go ta-ta-ta-ta-ta and it turns off before the gunner can swing his guns over. The birds dived, picked furiously at his eyes while the hawk turned bewildered from one attack to another. But the little birds did something that planes can't even attempt—they hovered over him almost motionless, waiting their moment to attack. Here I am talking of flying! Flying! Did I ever fly? When I got to New York, Greenwich Village seemed strange and unnatural, just a pasteboard dream. Pau—Avord—Verdun—were the only real things in my life. Now *they're* shadows like Greenwich Village. Quinanog—the Murray place—and Lutetia—seem the only real things.

I'm going to tell you all about it in a moment. I sure am. The world seems to be full of landing-places, but for some reason I can't land. Every time, I seem to come short on the field; or overshoot it. Perhaps it's because I feel it ought not to be told— Perhaps it's because I feel you won't believe me—

But I've got to do it. So here goes!

Spink, the remaining seventy-five per cent that I own in this place is— This place is haunted. Not by a ghost, but by *ghosts*! There are not one of them, but four. Three I see occasionally. But one of the quartet—I see her all the time. She is Lutetia.

It began— Well, it all goes back to your rooms in New York. They're haunted too, but you don't know it, you wall-eyed old grave-digger, you. Not because you're inept or unsensitive or anything stupid— It's because there's something they want to say to *me*—a message they want to give to me alone. But I can't stop to go into that now. To return to your apartment, *something* ... used to come ... to my bed at night ... and bend over me ... I don't know who it was or what it was, except that it was masculine. And how I knew that, I dunno.

It bothered me. One reason why I came down here was that I thought I was going crazy. Perhaps I have gone crazy. Anyway, if I have I like it. But here I am again! It's as though the world slipped out from under me. I can fly on and on or climb, but it's the coming down that baffles me. When I cut the motor off and the noise dies away, I feel sick and afraid; the bus seems to take its own head. Now for a landing—even if I do smash.

From the moment I entered this house, I felt as though there were others here. Not specifically, you understand. At first, it was only a sensation of warmth in the atmosphere that grew to a feeling of friendliness that deepened to a sense of companionship until— Well, I found myself in a mood of eternal expectancy. Something was going to happen but I didn't know what or how or when.... Oh yes, in a *way* I knew what. I was going to see something. Some time—I felt dimly—when I should enter one of these rooms, so stark and yet so occupied, somebody would be there to greet me ... or some day turning a corner I should come suddenly on.... I did not dread that experience, Spink, I give you my word. I reveled in the expectancy of it. It was beautiful; it was rich. I wasn't anything of what you call *afraid*. I wanted it to happen.

And it did happen.

One evening, as usual, I was reading Lutetia. I was sitting in my big chair beside the refectory table. Outside, it was a perfect night I remember; dark and still, and the stars so big that they seemed to spill out of the heavens. Inside, the lamp was bright. My eyes were on my book. Suddenly.... I was not alone. Don't ask me how I knew it. Only take it from me that I did. I knew it all right. For—*oh, Spink*—(I've underlined that just like a girl) all in a flash I didn't want—to look up. I wanted to go away from this place and to go with considerable speed, not glancing back. It was the worst sensation that I have ever known—worse even than a night raid. After a while something came back; courage I suppose you'd call it; a kind of calm, a poise. Anyway, I found that I was going to be able to look up presently and not mind it....

Of course I knew whom I was going to see....

I did look up. And I did see— It was Lutetia. Spink, if you try to say those things that people always say—that it was imagination, that I was overwrought, that my mind, moving all the day among the facts and realities of Lutetia's life, suddenly projected a picture—I'll never speak to you again. There she sat, her elbow resting on the arm of her chair, her chin in her hand, looking at me. I can't tell you how long she stayed. But all the time she was there she looked at me. And all that time I looked at her. I don't think, Spink, I have ever guessed how much eyes can say. Her eyes said so much that I think I could write the whole rest of the night about them. Except that I'm not quite sure what they said. It was all entreaty; oh, blazing, blasting, blinding entreaty.... Of that I am sure. But what she asked of me I haven't the remotest idea. After a while ... something impelled me to look down at my book again. When I lifted my eyes Lutetia was gone.

That wasn't all, Spink; for that night, or the next day— But I'm going to try to keep to a consecutive story. I didn't go to bed immediately. I didn't feel like sleeping. You can understand it was considerable of a shock. And very thrilling. Literally thrilling! I shook. It didn't bother me an atom after it was over. I wasn't the least afraid. But I vibrated for hours. I walked four or five miles—where, I don't know. I must have passed the Fallows place, because I recall the scent of honeysuckle. But I assure you I seemed to be walking through the stars.... She is beautiful. I can't tell you how beautiful because I have no colors to give you; no flesh to go by. Perhaps she is not beautiful, but lovely. What queer things words are! I have called females *pretty* and *stunning* and even *fascinating* and *beautiful*. I think I never called any woman *lovely* before. I've been that young. But I'm not as young as I was yesterday. I'm a century, an age, an æon older. I was obsessed though. If you believe it, when I went to bed, I had only one idea in my mind—a hope that she would come back soon.

She didn't come back soon—at least not that night. But somebody else did....

In the middle of the night, I suddenly found myself, wide-eyed and clear-minded, sitting upright in bed and listening to something. I don't know what I had heard, but I remember with perfect clearness—Spink, you tell me this is a dream and I'll murder you—what I immediately did and what I subsequently saw. I got up quite calmly and lighted a candle. Then I opened the door.

Do you remember my writing you that the chamber, just back of the one I occupy, must have been the room of a child—Lutetia's little niece? The door of that room, of course, leads into the hall as mine does. As I stood there, shading my candle from the draft, that door opened and there emerged from the room—what do you suppose?

A little girl.

I say—a little girl. She wasn't, you understand, a real little girl. Nor was she a dead little girl. Instantly I knew that—just as instantly as I had known that Lutetia *was* dead. I mean, and I hope this phraseology is technically correct, that Lutetia, as I saw her, was the ghost of someone who had once lived. This little girl was an apparition; an appearance projected through space of some

one who now lives. That or—oh, how difficult this is, Spink—a sloughed-off, astral self left in this old place; or—but I won't go into that.

I stood there, as I said, shading my candle. The little girl closed her door with a meticulous care. Did I hear the ghost of a click? Perhaps my ear supplied that. By one hand she was dragging a big doll—one of those rag-dolls children have. I couldn't tell you anything about Lutetia—except that she was lovely—ineffably lovely. But I can tell you all about this little girl. She was pigtailed and freckled. The pigtails were short, very thick, so tight that their ends snapped upwards, like hundreds of little-girl pigtails that I have seen. There was a row of tangled little ringlets on her forehead. She didn't look at me. She didn't know that I was there. She proceeded straight across the hall, busily stub-toeing her way like any freckled, pigtailed little girl, the doll dragging on the floor behind her, until she reached the garret stairs. She opened the garret door, closed it with the same meticulous care. The last I got was a little white glimpse of her down-dropped face, as she pulled the rag-doll's leg away from the shutting door.

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I waited there a long time—until my candle guttered to nothing. She did not return. I did not see her or anybody else again that night.

I went back to bed and fell immediately into a perfectly quiet, dreamless sleep. The next morning early, I went over to Hyde's brother—his name is Corning—and bought this house. Perhaps you can tell me why I did it. I don't exactly know myself; for of course I couldn't afford it. I realized only that I could not—I simply and absolutely could *not*—let anybody else buy Lutetia.

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You think, of course, that I've finished now, Spink. But that isn't all. Not by a million Persian parasangs—all. She has come again. I mean Lutetia. For that matter, they both have come again. But I'll try to tell my story categorically.

It was a night or two later; another dewy, placid large-starred night— Strange how this beautiful weather keeps up! I had been reading as usual; but my mind was as vacant as a glass bell from which you have exhausted the air. I was rereading, I remember, Lutetia's *The Sport of the Goddesses*. Spink, how that woman could write! And.... Again I became aware that I wasn't alone. Just as definitely, I knew that it was not Lutetia this time; nor even Little Pigtails. This time, and perhaps it's because I'm getting used to this sort of thing, I had a sense of—not *fear*—but only of what I'll call a *spiritual diffidence*.

Yet instantly I looked up.

He—it was a *he* this time—was standing in the doorway, which leads from this big living-room into the front hall. We were vis-à-vis—tête-à-tête one might say. He was looking straight at me and I—I assure you, Spink—I looked straight at him.

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Spink, you have never heard of a jovial ghost, have you? I'm sure I haven't. But this was or could have been a jovial ghost. He was big—not fat but ample—middle-aged, more than middle-aged. He wore an enormous beard cut square like the men in Assyrian mural tablets. Hair a little long. I assure you he was the handsomest old beggar that I have ever seen. He looked like a portrait by Titian. I got—it's like holding a photographic negative up to the light and trying to get the figures on it—that he wore a sort of flowing gown; it made him stately. And one of those little round caps that conceal or protect baldness. I can't describe him. How the devil *can* you describe a ghost? I mean an apparition. For he isn't dead either—any more than the little girls is. He's alive somewhere.

Well, our steady exchange of looks went on and on and on. If I could have said anything it would have been: "What do you want of me, you handsome old beggar?" What he would have said to me I don't know; although he was trying with all his ghostly strength to put some message over. How he was trying! It was that effort that kept him from being what he was—*is*—jovial. God, how that gaze burned—tore—ate. It grew insupportable after a while—it was melting me to nothingness. I dropped my eyes. Suddenly I could lift them, for I knew he was gone. Somehow I had the feeling that a monstrous bomb had noiselessly exploded in the room. His going troubled me no more than his coming. I remember I said aloud: "I'm sorry I couldn't get you, old top! Better luck next time!"

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I got up from my chair after a few minutes to take my usual before-going-to-bed walk. I walked about the room; absent-mindedly putting things to rights—the way women do. My mind—and I suspect my eyes too—were still so full of him that when, on stepping outside, I came across another—I was conscious of some shock. Again not of fear, but of a terrific surprise.

Are you getting all this, Spink? Oh, of course you're not, because you don't believe it. But try to believe it. Put yourself in my place! Try to get the wonder, the magic, the terror, the touch now and then of horror, but above all the fierce thrill—of living with a family of ghosts?

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This one—the fourth—was a man too. About thirty, I should say. And awfully charming. Yes, you spaniel-eyed fish, you, one man is saying this of another man. He was awfully charming. Short, dark. He wore—again it is like holding a negative up to the light—he wore white ducks or flannels. He stood very easily, his weight—listen to me, his *weight*—mainly on one foot and one hand curved against his hip. In the other hand, he carried his pipe. He looked at me—God, how he looked at me! How, for that matter, they all look at me! They want something, Spink. Of me. They're trying to tell me. I can't get it, though. But, believe me, I'm trying. This was worse than the old fellow. For this one, like Lutetia, was dead. And he, like her, was trying to put his message across a world, whereas the old fellow had only to pierce a dimension. How he looked at

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me; held me; bored into me. It was like sustaining visual vitriol.... How he looked at me! It became horrible.... Pretty soon I realized I wasn't going to be able to stand it....

Yet I stayed with it as long as he did, and of course we continued to glare at each other. I don't exactly know what the etiquette of these meetings is; but I seem to feel vaguely that it's up to me to stay with them as long as they're here. This time, it must have been all of five minutes, although it seemed longer ... much longer ... and I, all the time, trying to hold on. Then suddenly something happened. I don't know what it was, but one instant he was there, and another he wasn't. Don't ask me how he went away. I don't know. He simply ceased to be; and yet so swifter-than-instantly, so exquisitely, so subtly that my only question was—even though my mind was still stinging from his gaze—had he been there at all. It was as though the tree back of him had instantaneously absorbed him. It was a shock too—that disappearance.

Well, again I went out for a hike. I walked anywhere—everywhere. How far I don't know. But half the night. Again it was as though I marched through the stars....

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I haven't seen the old painter again—I call him painter simply because he wore that long robe. And I haven't seen the young guy again. But I see Lutetia all the time. She comes and goes. Sometimes when I enter the living-room, I find her already there.... Sometimes when I leave it, I know she enters by another door.... We spend long evenings together.... I can't write when she's about; but curiously enough I can sometimes read; that is to say, I can read Lutetia. I try to read because moments come when I realize that she prefers me not to look at her. It's when she's exhausted from trying to give me her message. Or when she's girding herself up for another go. At those moments, the room is full of a frightful struggle; a gigantic spiritual concentration. It seems to me I could not look even if she wanted me. Oh, how she tries, Spink! It wrings my heart. She's so helpless, so hopeless—so gentle, so tender, so lovely! It's all my own stupidity. The iron-wall stupidity of flesh and blood. Perhaps, if I were to kill myself—and I think I could do that for her.... Only she doesn't want me to do that.... But what does she want me to do? If I could only....

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Lindsay had written steadily the whole evening; written at a violent speed and with a fierce intensity. Now his speed died down. His hands dropped from the typewriter. That mental intensity evaporated. He became aware....

He was not alone.

The long living-room was doubly cheerful that night. The inevitable tracks of living had begun to humanize it. A big old bean-pot full of purple iris sat on one end of the refectory table. Lindsay's books and notebooks; his paper and envelopes; his pens and pencils sprawled over the length of table between him and the iris. That the night was a little cool, Lindsay had seized as pretext to build a huge fire. The high, jagged flames conspired with the steady glow of the big lamp to rout the shadows from everywhere but the extreme corners.

No more than—after her coming—he was alone was Lutetia alone. It was, Lindsay reflected, a picture almost as posed as for a camera. Lutetia sat; and leaning against her, close to her knee, stood a pigtailed little girl. She might have been listening to a story; for her little ear was cocked in Lutetia's direction. That attitude brought to Lindsay's observation a delicious, snub-nosed child profile. She gazed unseeingly over her shoulder to a far corner. And Lutetia gazed straight over the child's head at Lindsay—

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They sat for a long time—a long long time—thus. The little girl's vague eyes still fixed themselves on the shadows as on magic realms that were being constantly unrolled to her. Lutetia's eyes still sought Lindsay's. And Lindsay's eyes remained on Lutetia's; held there by the agony of her effort and the exquisite torture of his own bewilderment.

After a while he arose. With slow, precise movements, he gathered up the pages of his letter to Spink. He arranged them carefully according to their numbers—twelve typewritten pages. He walked leisurely with them over to the fireplace and deposited them in the flames.

When he turned, the room was empty.

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The next day brought storm again.

The coolness of the night vanished finally before the sparkling sunshine of a wind-swept day. Lindsay wrote for an hour or two. Then he gave himself up to what he called the "chores." He washed his few dishes. He toiled on the lawn and in the garden. He finished the work of repairing the broken stairway in the barn. At the close of this last effort, he even cast a longing look in the direction of the rubbish collection in the second story of the barn. But his digestion apprised him that this voyage of discovery must be put off until after luncheon. He emerged from the back entrance of the barn, made his way, contrary to his usual custom, by a circuitous route to the front of the house. He stopped to tack up a trail of rosebush which had pulled loose from the trellis there. He felt unaccountably tired. When he entered the house he was conscious for the first time of a kind of loneliness....

He had not seen Lutetia, nor any of her companions, for three days. He admitted to himself that he missed the tremendous excitement of the last fortnight. But particularly he missed Lutetia. He paused absently to glance into the two front rooms, still as empty as on the day he had first seen them. He wandered upstairs into his bedroom. From there, he journeyed to the child's room

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beyond; examined again the dim drawings on the wall. It occurred to him that, by going over them with crayons, he could restore some of their lost vividness. The idea brought a little spurt of exhilaration to his jaded spirit. He returned to his own room, just for the sake of descending Lutetia's little private stairway to what must have been her private living-room below. He walked absently and a little slowly; still conscious of loneliness. He did not pause long in the living-room, although he made a tentative move in the direction of the kitchen. Still absently and quite mechanically he opened the back door; started to step out onto the broad flat stone which made the step....

Most unexpectedly—and shockingly, he was not alone. A tiny figure ... black ... sat on the doorstep; sat so close to the door that, as it rose, his curdling flesh warned him he had almost touched it. A curious thing happened. Lindsay swayed, pitched; fell backwards, white and moveless.

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VI

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"How did they find me, Glorious Lutie?" Susannah asked next morning. "How *did* they find me? If I could only teach myself to listen to the warning of those little hammers. Something told me when I saw Warner walking along the corridor of the Carman Building that he was not there by accident. Something told me when I ran into O'Hearn at the Attic the other night that *he* was not *there* by accident. They have been following me all the time. They've known what I've been doing every moment. Just as Byan knows where I am now. How did they do it? I've never suspected it for a moment. I've never seen anybody. I'm frightened, Glorious Lutie; I'm dreadfully frightened. I don't know where to turn. If I only had a real friend— But perhaps that wouldn't help as much as I think. For I'm afraid—I'm too afraid to tell *anybody*—"

All this, she said as usual, wordlessly. But she said it from her bed, her eyes fixed in a lackluster stare on the little oval gleam of the miniature.

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"I don't know what I'd do without you, Glorious Lutie, to tell my troubles to. You're a great deal more than a picture to me. You're a real presence— Oh, if you could only see for me now. I wonder if Byan is still in his room? I wonder what he's going to do. I mean—what is the next move? Oh, of course he's there! He wants to talk with me. But I won't let him talk with me. I'll stay in this room until I starve! And he can't telephone. How can he put over what he wants to say?"

That question answered itself automatically when she dragged herself up from bed. A white square glimmered beside her door. She pounced upon it.

"DEAR MISS AYER:

"Of course we have known where you were and what you were doing every instant since you left the office. We did not interfere with your quitting your boarding-house because we preferred to give you a few days to think things over. I hope you've been enjoying your little excursions to the Museum and the Aquarium. We knew you'd come to your senses after a while and be ready to talk business. That is why you've had those little, accidental meetings from time to time. That advertisement for a job in the Carman Building was a decoy ad. It is useless for you to try to get away from us.

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"And in the meantime the situation is getting more and more desperate. You know why. Now listen. We can clean up on that little business deal in three days. Do you know what that means? Maybe a hundred thousand dollars. We'll let you in. Your share would be twelve thousand five hundred. Don't that sound pretty good to you? You can avoid any trouble by going away with us. Or you can go alone and nobody will bother you. We'll give you the dope on that; for believe me, we know how. And you wouldn't have to do a thing you don't want to do. We've got grandpa tamed now in regard to you. We've told him that you're a lady, and won't stand for that rough stuff. He's wild about you, and crazy to see you, and make it all right again. Now why not use a little sense? Slip a note under my door across the way and tell me that you'll doll yourself up and be ready to go to dinner with him tonight at seven."

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A postscript added: "This is unsigned and typewritten on your own typewriter and so couldn't be used by anyone who didn't like our way of doing business. For your own safety though, I advise you to burn it."

This last was the one bit of advice in the letter which Susannah followed. She lighted a match and burned it over her water basin. Then she forced her protesting throat to swallow a glass of milk. She ate some crackers. After that she went to bed.

What to do and where to go! Over and over again, she turned the meager possibilities of her situation. Nothing offered escape. A hackneyed phrase floated into her mind—"woman's wit." From time immemorial it had been a bromidiom that any woman, however stupid, could outwit any man, however clever. Was it true? Perhaps not all the time, and perhaps sometimes. That was the only way though—she must pit her nimble, inexperienced woman's wit against their heavier but trained man's wit. Her problem was to get out of this house, unseen. But how? All kinds of fantastic schemes floated through her tired mind. If she could only disguise herself— But she would have to go out first to get the disguise. And Byan was across the hall, waiting for just

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that move. If there were only a convenient fire-escape! But of course he would anticipate that. If she could only summon a taxi, leap into it and drive for an hour! But she would have to telephone for the taxi in the outside hall, where Byan could hear her. On and on, she drove her tired mind; inventing schemes more and more impracticable. For a long time, that woman's wit spawned nothing—

Then suddenly a curious idea came to her. It was so ridiculous that she rejected it instantly. Ridiculous—and it stood ninety-nine per cent chance of failure; offered but one per cent chance of success. Nevertheless it recurred. It offered more and more suggestion, more and more temptation. True, it was a thing barely possible; true also, that it was the only thing possible. But could she put it through? Had she the nerve? Had she the strength?

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She must find both the nerve and the strength.

She bathed and dressed quickly and with a growing steadiness. She packed her belongings into her suitcase, put Glorious Lutie's miniature in her handbag.

She sat down at her bureau and wrote a note:

"If you will come to my room, after you have had your breakfast, I will talk the matter over with you. I will not leave the building before you return. I will be ready to see you at ten o'clock."

She opened her door, walked across the corridor; slipped the note under the door of Byan's room. Then she hurried back; locked her door; sat down and waited, her hands clasped. Her hands grew colder and colder until they seemed like marble, but all the time her mind seemed to steady and clarify.

After a long while she heard Byan's door open. She heard his steps retreating down the hall and over the stairs.

Ten minutes later, Susannah appeared, suitcase in hand, at the janitor's office on the first floor. "I'm Miss Ayer in No. 9, second floor," she said. "May I leave this suitcase here? I've just thought that I wanted to go to a friend's room on the fifth floor and I don't want to lug it up all those stairs."

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The janitor considered her for a puzzled second. Of course he was in Byan's pay, Susannah reflected.

"Sure," he answered uncertainly after a while.

"I'm expecting a gentleman to call on me," Susannah went on steadily. "Tell him I'll be on the fifth floor at No. 9. My friend is out," she ended in glib explanation, "but she's left her key with me. There's a little work that I wanted to do on her typewriter." The janitor—she had worked this out in advance—must know that Room 9, fifth floor—was occupied by a woman who owned a typewriter. Susannah established that when, a few days before, she had restored to its owner a letter shoved by mistake under her own door.

Susannah deposited her bag on the floor in the janitor's office. She walked steadily up the stairs to the second floor. She felt the janitor's gaze on the first flight of her progress. She stopped just before she reached her own room, glanced back. She was alone there. The janitor had not followed her. Perhaps Byan's instructions to him were only to watch the door. With a swift pounce, she ran to Byan's door, turned the knob.

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It opened.

She ran to the closet; opened that. As she suspected, it was empty. Indeed, her swift glance had discovered no signs of occupancy in the room. Even the bed was undisturbed. Byan had hired it, of course, just for the purpose of being there that one night. Susannah closed the closet door after her, so that the merest crack let in the air she should demand—and waited. In that desperate hour when she lay thinking, the idea had suddenly flashed into her mind that there was only one place in the house where Byan would not look for her. That place was his own room. But it would not have occurred to her to take refuge there if she had not noted, even in her taut terror of the night before, that when Byan entered his own room he had omitted to lock the door after him. As indeed, why should he? There was nothing to steal in it but Byan. Moreover, of course Byan had sat up all night—his door unlocked—ready to forestall any effort of hers to escape.

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An hour later Susannah heard a padded, rather brisk step ascending the stairs, coming along the hall. It was Byan, of course—no one could mistake his pace. He knocked on the door of her room; at first gently, then insistently. A pause. Then he tried the knob, again at first gently, then insistently. His steps retreated down the hall and the stairs. He must have got a pass-key from the janitor, for when, a long minute later, she heard his steps return, the scraping of a lock sounded from across the hall. She heard her somewhat rusty door-hinges creak. There followed a low whistle as of surprise, then an irregular succession of steps and creaks proving that he was looking under the bed, was inspecting the closet. She heard him retreat again down the stairs, and braced herself to endure a longer wait. At last, two pairs of feet sounded on the stairs. Had her ruse fully succeeded—would they mount at once to Room 9, fifth floor? No—they were coming again along the second-floor corridor. With a tingle of nerves in her temples and cheeks, she realized that she had reached the supreme moment of peril. They began knocking at every

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door on the second-floor corridors. Once she heard a muffled colloquy—the impatient tones of some strange man, the apologetic voice of the janitor. At other doors she heard, shortly after the knock, the scraping of the pass-key. Now they were in the room just beyond the wall of the closet where she was crouching. She heard them enter and emerge—the moment had come! But their footsteps passed her door; an instant later, she heard the pass-key grate in the door of the room on the other side. Then—one hand shaking convulsively on the knob of Byan’s closet door—she heard them go flying up the stairs to the third story—the fourth—

Before noon of that haunted, hunted morning, Susannah found a room in a curious way. When she escaped from the house in the West Twenties, she had walked westward almost to the river. In a little den of a restaurant just off the docks, she ordered breakfast and the morning newspapers. But when she tried to look over the advertising columns with a view to finding a room, she had a violent fit of trembling. The members of the Carbonado Mining Company, she recalled to herself, were studying those advertisements just as closely as she; and perhaps at that very moment.

Hiding in a great city! Why, she thought to herself, it’s the only place where you can’t hide!

Susannah dawdled over breakfast as long as she dared. She found herself wincing as she emerged onto the busy dingy street of docks. She stopped under the shade of an awning and controlled the abnormal fluttering of her heart while she thought out her situation. She dared no longer walk the streets. She dared not go to a real-estate agent. How, then, might she find a room and a hiding-place?

Then a Salvation Army girl came picking her way across the crowded, cluttered dock-pavement toward her awning. And Susannah had a sudden impulse which she afterwards described to Glorious Lutie as a stroke of genius. She came out to the edge of the pavement and accosted the Blue Bonnet.

“Do you know of any place where a girl who’s a stranger in New York may find a cheap and respectable lodging?” she asked.

The Salvation Army girl gave her a long, steady scrutiny from under the scoop of her bonnet.

“My sister keeps a rooming-house up on Eighth Avenue,” she said finally. “She always has an extra room, and she will take you in, I guess. Have you a bit of paper? I’ll write her a note.”

Susannah flew, swift as a homing dove, to the address. The landlady, a shapeless, featureless, middle-aged blonde, read the note; herself gave a long glance of scrutiny, and showed the room. Susannah’s examination was merely perfunctory. In fact, she looked with eyes which saw not. Probably never before did a shabby, battered bedchamber, stained as to ceiling, peeling as to wallpaper, carelessly patched as to carpet, indescribably broken-down and nondescript as to furniture, seem a very paradise to the eyes of twenty-five.

The bed was humpy, but it was a double bed; and clean. Susannah sank on to it. She did not rise for a long time. Then, true to her accepted etiquette on occasions of this kind, she drew the miniature from her handbag and pinned it on to the wall beside her bureau.

“Glorious Lutie,” her thoughts ran, “I’m as weak as a sick cat. If there was ever a girl more terrified, more friendless, more worn-out than I feel at this moment, I’d like to know how she got that way. I want to crawl into that bed and stay there for a week just reveling in the thought that I’m safe. Safe, Glorious Lutie. Safe! Alone with you. And nobody to be afraid of. Our funds are running low of course. I’ve nothing to pawn except you. But don’t be afraid—I’ll never pawn you. If we have to go down, we’ll go down together and with all sails set. I’ve got an awful hate and fear on this job-hunting business now. Heaven knows I don’t want much money; only enough to live on. I guess I won’t try to be a high-class queen of secretaries any longer—or at least for the present. My lay is to lie low for a month or two. I’ll rest for a few days. Then I’ll go into—what? What, Glorious Lutie, tell me what? I’ve got it! Domestic service. That’s my escape. I’ve certainly got brains enough to be a second girl and they never could find me tucked away in somebody’s house, especially if I never take my afternoons out. Which, believe me, Glorious Lutie, I won’t. I’ll spend them all with you. Oh, what an idea that is! I’ll wait around here for about a week and then I’ll tackle one of the domestic service agencies. If I know anything about after-the-war conditions, I’ll be snapped up like hot cakes.”

Keeping her promise to herself, Susannah stayed as much as possible indoors. The landlady consented to give her breakfast, but she would do no more—even that was an accommodation. In gratitude, Susannah took care of her own room. She kept it in spotless order; she even potted with repairs. With breakfast at home, she had no need to leave the house of mornings. She went without luncheon; and late in the afternoon, before the home-going flood from the offices, she had dinner in a Child’s restaurant round the corner. For the rest of the time, she read the landlady’s books—few, and mostly cheap. But they included a set of Dickens; and she renewed acquaintance with a novelist whom she loved for himself and who called up memories of her happiest times. But her mood with Dickens was curiously capricious. His deaths and persecutions and poignant tragedies she could no longer endure—they swept her into a gulf of black melancholy. On the second day of her voluntary imprisonment, she glanced through *Bleak House*; stumbled into the wanderings of Little Jo through the streets of London. Suddenly she surprised herself by a fit of hysterical, trembling tears. This explosion cleared her mental airs; but afterward she skipped through Dickens, picking and choosing his humors, his love-passages, his

gargantuan feasts in wayside inns.

When her eyes grew weary with reading, or when she ran into one of those passages which brought the black cloud, Susannah gazed vacantly out of the window.

Her lodging-house stood on a corner; she had a back, corner room on the third floor. The house next door, on the side street, finished to the rear in a two-story shed. Its roof lay almost under her window. The landlady, upon showing the room, had called her attention to this shed. "We've got no regular fire escapes, dearie," she said, "but in case of trouble, you're all right. You just step out here and if the skylight ain't open, somebody'll get you down with a ladder. A person can't be too careful about fires!" Across the skylight lay a few scanty backyards—treeless, grassless, uninteresting. This city area of yards and sheds seemed to be the club, the Rialto for all the stray cats of Eighth Avenue. Susannah named them, endowed them with personalities. Their squabbles, their amours, their melodramatic stalking, gave her a kind of apathetic interest.

The interest lessened as three days went by, and the apathy deepened. "It's my state of mind, Glorious Lutie," she apprised the miniature. "It's this weight that's on my spirit. It's fear. Just as soon as I can get my mind off—I mean just as soon as I become convinced that I'm never going to be bothered again, it will go, I'm sure. Of course I can't help feeling as I do. But I ought not to. I'm perfectly safe now. In a few days those crooks won't trouble about me any more. It will be too late. And I know it."

She reiterated those last two sentences as though Glorious Lutie were a difficult person to convince. The next morning, however, came diversion. Work—roofing—began on the shed just under her window. Susannah watched the workmen with an interest that held, at first, an element of determined concentration. The roofers, an elderly man and a younger one, incredibly dirty in their blackened overalls, which were soon matched by face and hands, were very conscious at first of the brilliant tawny head just above. Once, muffled by the window, she caught an allusion to white horses. But Susannah ignored this; continued to watch them disappearing and emerging through the open skylight, setting up their melting-pot, arranging their sheets of tin.

Before she was out of bed next morning they were making a metallic clatter with their hammers. In her normal state, Susannah was a creature almost without nerves. She even retained a little of the child's enjoyment of a racket for its own sake. But now—the din annoyed her, annoyed her unspeakably. She crept languidly out of bed, peeped through the edge of the curtain. They were just beginning work. It would keep up all day.

"I can't stand this!" said Susannah aloud; and then began one of her wordless addresses to the miniature.

"I guess the time has come, anyhow, to strike into pastures new. Behold, Glorious Lutie, your Glorious Susie descending from the high and mighty position of pampered secretary to that of driven slave. Tomorrow morn I apply for a job as second girl. If it weren't for this headache, I'd do it today."

However, the hammering only intensified her headache; she must get outside. So when the landlady arrived with her breakfast, Susannah inquired for the address of the nearest employment office. She dressed, and descended to the street. As always, of late, she had a shrinking as she stepped out into the open world of men and women. When she had controlled this, she moved with a curious apathy to the old, battered ground-floor office with yellow signs over its front windows, where girls found work at domestic service. Presently, she was registered, was sitting on a long bench with a row of women ranging from slatternly to cheaply smart. She scarcely observed them. That apathy was settling deeper about her spirits; her only sensation was her dull headache. Somehow, when she sat still it was not wholly an unpleasant headache. Then the voice of the sharp-faced woman at the desk in the corner called her name. It tore the veil, woke her as though from sleep. She rose, to face her first chance—a thin, severe woman with a mouth like a steel trap.

This first chance furnished no opening, however; neither, as the morning wore away, did several other chances. The process of getting a second maid's job was at the same time more difficult and less difficult than she had thought. Susannah had forgotten that people always ask servants for references. She had supposed her carefully worked out explanation would cover that situation—that she had been a stenographer in Providence; that she had come to New York soon after the Armistice was signed, hoping for a bigger outlook; that the returning soldiers were snapping up all the jobs; that she had tried again and again for a position; that her money was fast going; that she had been advised to enter domestic service. Housekeepers from rich establishments and the mistresses of small ones interviewed her; but the lack of references laid an impassable barrier. In the afternoon, however, luck changed. A suburbanite from Jamaica, a round, grizzled, middle-aged woman, desperately in need of a second girl, cut through all the red-tape that had held the others up. "You're perfectly honest," she said meditatively, "about admitting you've had no experience, and you *look* trustworthy."

"I assure you, madam,"—Susannah was eager, but wary; not too eager. She even laughed a little—"I am honest—so honest that it hurts."

"The only thing is," her interlocutor went on hesitatingly; "you must pardon me for putting it so bluntly; but we might as well be open with each other. I'm afraid you'll feel a little above your position."

"Well," Susannah responded honestly, "to be straightforward with *you*, I suppose I shall. But I give you my word, I'll never *show* it. And that's the only thing that counts, isn't it?"

The woman smiled.

"I must confess I like you," she burst out impulsively. "But how am I going to know that you're—all right?"

Susannah sighed. "I understand your situation perfectly. I don't know how you're to know I'm all right—morally or just in the matter of mere honesty. For there's nobody but me to tell you that I'm moral and honest. And of course I'm prejudiced."

"Well, anyway I'm going to risk it. I'm engaging you now. It is understood—ten dollars a week; and alternate Thursdays and Sundays out. I don't want you until tomorrow because I want my former maid out of the house before you come. Now will you promise me that you'll take the nine train tomorrow?"

"I promise," Susannah agreed.

"But that reminds me," the woman came on another difficulty, "what's to guarantee that you'll stay with me?"

"I guarantee," Susannah said steadily, "that if you keep to your end of the agreement, I'll stay with you at least three months."

The woman sparkled. "All right, I'll expect you tomorrow on the nine train. I'll be there with the Ford to meet you. Here are the directions." She scribbled busily on a card.

Susannah walked home as one who treads on air. The veil of apathy had broken. And in spite of her headache, which caught her by fits and starts, her mood broke into a joy so wild that it sent her pirouetting about the room. "Glorious Lutie, I never felt so happy in my life. So gayly, grandly, gorgeously, gor-gloriously happy! All my troubles are over. I'm safe." And on the strength of that security, she washed and ironed her lavender linen suit. Her headache was better again. Perhaps if she went out now to an early dinner, it might disappear altogether. But how languorous she felt, how indisposed to effort. She would sit and read a while. She opened *Pickwick Papers* on its last pages. She had almost finished the book.

"I suppose it will be a long time before I have a chance to do any more reading," she meditated. "So I think I'll finish this. You've helped me through a hard passage in my life, Charles Dickens, and I thank you with all my heart."

But she could not read. As soon as she sat down by the window and settled her eyes on the book, the headache returned. The men were still at work on the roof, hammering away at one corner. Every blow seemed to strike her skull. Midway of the roof, the skylight yawned open; their extra tools were laid out beside it. At five o'clock they would quit for the day. Usually she disliked to have them go. In spite of their noise, she felt that still. They gave her a kind of warm, human sense of companionship. And they had become accustomed to her appearances at the window. Their flirtatious first glances had ceased for want of encouragement. They scarcely seemed to see her when they looked up. But now—that hammering at her skull! Susannah suddenly rose and closed the window, hot though the day was, against this torrent of sound. As though its futile shield would give added protection, she drew the curtain. In the dimmed light she sat rocking, her head in her hands. Her face was fire-hot—why, she wondered— The hammering stopped. They were soldering now. They were always doing that; beating the tin sheets into place and stopping to solder them. There would be silence for a time. In a moment, she would open the window for a breath of air on her burning face....

She started at a knock on her door, low, quick, but abrupt. Before she could answer, it opened. His face shadowed in the three-quarters light, but his form perfectly outlined, instantly recognizable—stood Warner. Behind Warner was Byan, and behind Byan, O'Hearn.

All the blood of her heart seemed to strike in one wave on Susannah's aching head, and then to recede. She knew both the tingling of terror and the numbness of horror. Prickling, stinging darts volleyed her face, her hands, her feet; and yet she seemed to be freezing to stone.

They came into the room before anyone spoke—Warner first. Byan lolled to a place in the corner; the three-quarters light, filtering through the thin fabric of the flimsy, yellow curtain, revealed his clean profile, his mysterious half-smile. O'Hearn stood just at the entrance. He did not continue to look at her. His eyes sought the floor.

Warner was speaking now:

"Good-evening, Miss Ayer. We have come to finish up that little piece of business with you. It has been delayed as long as it can be. Pardon us for breaking in upon you like this. Your landlady tried to prevent us, but we assured her that you would want to see us. As I think you will when you come to your senses and hear what I have to say."

He stopped, as though awaiting her reply. But Susannah made no answer. She had dropped her eyes now; her hands lay limp in her lap. And in this pause, a curious piece of byplay passed between Warner and O'Hearn. The master of this trio caught the glance of his assistant and, with a swift motion of three fingers toward the lapel of his coat, gave him that "office" in the underworld sign manual—which means "look things over." O'Hearn, moving so lightly that

Susannah scarcely noted his passage, stepped to the window, lifted the edge of the curtain. He took a swift, intent look outside and returned to Warner. His back to Susannah, he spoke with his lips, scarcely vocalizing the words.

"No getaway there, Boss—straight drop—" he said.

Warner was speaking again.

"Your landlady says we may have her parlor for our conference. Wouldn't you prefer to make yourself presentable for the street and then join us there—in about ten minutes, say?"

Ten minutes—this gave her a chance to play for time—the only chance she had. She looked up. Nothing on the clean-cut, pearl-white exterior of her face gave a clue to the anarchy within; nothing, even, in her black-fringed, blue gaze the tautly-held scarlet lips. Her fire-bright head lifted a little higher and she gazed steadily into Warner's eyes, as she spoke in a voice which seemed to her to belong to someone else:

"I can give you a few minutes, but I have not changed my determination."

"But I think you will," said Warner. "I really think you will. Before we go, I might remind you that we have been extremely gentle and patient with you, Miss Ayer. I might also remind you that you have never succeeded in giving us the slip. You were very clever when you escaped from your last lodging. We don't know yet exactly how you did it. Perhaps you will tell us in the course of our little talk this afternoon. But you were not quite clever enough. You did not figure that with such important matters pending, we would have the outside of the house watched as well as the inside. So that you may not think our meeting this afternoon is accidental, let me remind you that you have an engagement for tomorrow afternoon in Jamaica—to take a job as second maid. What we have to offer you this afternoon will probably be so attractive that you will overlook that engagement."

He paused.

"I will be with you in ten minutes," said Susannah. She was conscious of no emotion now—only that her head ached, and that the faded roses in the old carpet were entwined with forget-me-nots—a thing she had never noticed before.

"Thank you." Warner made her a gallant little bow. "Mr. Byan and I will wait in the parlor. Until we come to an understanding, we shall have to continue the old arrangement. It will therefore be necessary for Mr. O'Hearn to watch in the hall. If you do not arrive in ten minutes—this room will probably do as well as the parlor. Until then, Miss Ayer!"

He opened the door, passed out. Byan retreated after him, flashing one of his pathetically sweet, floating smiles. Susannah looked up now, followed their movements as the felon must follow the movements of the man with the rope. O'Hearn had been standing close to Susannah, his veiling lashes down. He fell in behind the other two. But before he joined the file, those lashes came up in a quick glance which stabbed Susannah. His hand came up too. He was pointing to the window. And then he spoke two words in a whisper so low that they carried only to the ears of Susannah, scarce three feet away—so low that she could not have made them out but for the exaggerated, expressive movement of his lips.

"Skylight—quick—" he said. He made for the door in the wake of the other two.

For the fraction of an instant Susannah did not comprehend. And then suddenly one of those little intuitive blows which she was always receiving and ignoring gave, on the hard surface of her mind, a faint tap. This time, she was conscious of it. This time, she trusted it instantly. This time, it told her what to do.

"I'll be with you as soon as I get dolled up," she called.

"That's right," came the suave voice of Warner from the hall.

She closed the door. She listened while two sets of footsteps descended the stairs. She heard a third set, which must be O'Hearn's, retreat for a few paces and then stop. She fell swiftly to work. She put on her hat and cape. She took the miniature, thumbtack and all, from the wall, and put it in her wrist bag. "Help me, Glorious Lutie," she called from the depths of her soul. "Help me! Help me! Help me! I'm lost if you don't help me! I can't do it any more alone."

VII

When Lindsay pulled back from the quiet gray void which had enshrouded him, he was lying on the grass. Far, far away, as though pasted against the brilliant blue sky, was a face. Gradually the sky receded. The face came nearer. It topped, he gradually gathered, the tiny slender black-silk figure of a little old lady. "Do you feel all right now?" it asked.

Lindsay wished that she would not question him. He was immensely preoccupied with what seemed essentially private matters. But the instinct of courtesy prodded him. "Very much, thank you," he answered weakly. He closed his eyes again. He became conscious of a wet cloth sopping his forehead and cheeks. A breeze tingled on the bare flesh of his neck and chest. He opened his eyes again; sat up. "Do you mean to tell me I fainted?" he demanded with his customary vigor.

"That's exactly what you did, young man," the old lady answered. "The instant you looked at me! I was setting with my back to the door. You could have knocked me down with a feather, when you fell over backwards."

"Have I been out long?"

"Not more'n a moment. I flaxed around and got some water and brought you to in a jiffy. You ain't an invalid, are you?"

"Far from it," Lindsay reassured her. "I'm afraid, though, I've been working too long in the hot sun this morning."

"Like as not!" the little old lady agreed briskly. "I guess you're hungry too," she hazarded. "Now you just get up and lay in the hammock and I'm going to make you some lunch. I see there was some eggs there and milk and tea. I'll have you some scrambled eggs fixed in no time. My name is Spash—Mrs. Spash."

"My name is Lindsay—David Lindsay."

Lindsay found himself submitting without a murmur to the little old lady's program. He lay quiescent in the hammock and let the tides of vitality flow back.... Mrs. Spash's prophecy, if anything, underestimated her energy. In an incredibly short time she had produced, in collaboration with the oil stove, eggs scrambled on bread deliciously toasted, tea of a revivifying heat and strength.

"Gee, that tastes good!" Lindsay applauded. He sighed. "It certainly takes a woman!"

"What are you doing here?" Mrs. Spash inquired. "Batching it?"

"Yes, I think that describes the process," Lindsay admitted. After an instant, "How did you happen to be on the doorstep?"

"Well, I don't wonder you ask," Mrs. Spash declared. "I didn't know the Murray place was let and—well, I was making one of my regular visits. You see, I come here often. I'm pretty fond of this old house. I lived here once for years."

Lindsay sat upright. "Did you by chance live here when Lutetia Murray was alive?"

"Well, I should say I did!" Mrs. Spash answered. "I lived here the last twenty years of Lutetia Murray's life. I was her housekeeper, as you might say."

Lindsay stared at her. He started to speak. It was obvious that conflicting comments fought for expression, but all he managed to say—and ineptly enough—was: "Oh, you knew her, then?"

"Knew her!" Mrs. Spash seemed to search among her vocabulary for words. Or perhaps it was her soul for emotions. "Yes, I knew her," she concluded with a feeble breathlessness.

"You've lived in this house, then, for twenty years," Lindsay repeated, musing.

"Yes, all of that." Mrs. Spash appeared to muse also. For an instant the two followed their own preoccupations. Then as though they led them to the same *impasse*, their eyes lifted simultaneously; met. They smiled.

"I've bought this house, Mrs. Spash," Lindsay confided. "And you never can guess why."

Mrs. Spash started what appeared to be a comment. It deteriorated into a little inarticulate murmur.

"I bought it," Lindsay went on, "because when I was in college, I fell in love with Lutetia Murray." And then, at Mrs. Spash's wide-eyed, faded stare, "Not with Miss Murray herself—I never saw her—but with her books. I read everything she wrote and I wrote in college what we call a thesis on her."

"Sort of essay or composition," Mrs. Spash defined thesis to herself.

"Exactly," Lindsay permitted.

"She was—she was—" Mrs. Spash began in a dispassionate sort of way. She concluded in a kind of frenzy. "She was an angel."

"Oh yes, she's that all right. I have never seen anybody so lovely."

Mrs. Spash made a swift conversational pounce. "I thought you said you'd never seen her."

Lindsay flushed abjectly. "No," he admitted. "But you see I have a picture of her." He pointed to the mantel.

"Yes, I noticed that when I came in to get some water." Strangely enough Mrs. Spash did not, for a moment, look at the picture. Instead she stared at Lindsay. Lindsay submitted easily enough to this examination. After a while Mrs. Spash appeared to abandon her scrutiny of him. She trotted over to the fireplace; studied Lutetia's likeness.

"I don't know as I ever see that one—it don't half do her justice—I hate a profile picture—" She pronounced "profile" to rhyme with "wood-pile." "None of her pictures ever did do her justice. Her beauty was mostly in her hair and her eyes. She had a beautiful skin too, though she never

took no care of it. Never wore a hat—no matter how hot the sun was. And then her expression—Well, it was just beautiful—changing all the time.”

Lindsay was only half listening. He was, with an amused glint in his eyes, studying Mrs. Spash’s spare, erect black-silk figure. She was a relic perfectly preserved, he reflected, of mid-Victorianism. Her black was of the kind that is accurately described by the word decent. And she wore fittingly a little black, beaded cape with a black shade-hat that tilted forward over her face at a decided slant. Her straight, white, abundant hair was apparently parted in the middle under her hat. At any rate, the neat white parting continued over the crown of her head to her very neck, where it concealed itself under a flat black-silk bow. Her gnarled, blue-veined hands had been covered with the lace mitts that now lay on the table. Her little wrinkled face was neat-featured. The irises of her eyes were a faded blue and the whites were blue also; and this put a note of youthful color among her wrinkles.

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But Lindsay lost interest in these details; for, obviously, a new idea caught him in its instant clutch. “Oh, Mrs. Spash,” he suggested, “would you be so good as to take me through this house? I want you to tell me who occupied the rooms. This is not mere idle curiosity on my part. You see Miss Murray’s publishers have decided to bring out a new edition of her works. They want me to write a life of Miss Murray. I’m asking everybody who knows anything about her all kinds of questions.”

Mrs. Spash received all this with that unstirred composure which indicates non-comprehension of the main issue.

“Of course I’m interested on my own account too,” Lindsay went on. “She’s such a wonderful creature, so charming and so beautiful, so sweet, so unbearably poignant and sad. I can’t understand,” he concluded absently, “why she is so sad.”

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Mrs. Spash seemed to comprehend instantly. “It’s the way she died,” she explained vaguely, “and how everything was left!” She walked in little swift pattering steps, and with the accustomed air of one who knows her way, through the side door into the addition. “This was Miss Murray’s own living-room,” she told Lindsay. “She had that little bit of a stairway made, she *said*, so’s too many folks couldn’t come up to her room at once. Not that that made any difference. Wherever she was, the whole household went.”

With little nipping steps Mrs. Spash ascended the stairway. Lindsay followed.

“Did Miss Murray die in her room?” Lindsay asked.

“How did you know this was her room?” Mrs. Spash demanded.

“I don’t know exactly. I just guessed it,” Lindsay answered. “I sleep here myself,” he hurriedly threw off.

“Yes. She died here. She was all alone when she died. You see—” Mrs. Spash sat down on the one chair and, instantly sensing her mood, Lindsay sat down on the bed.

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“You see, things hadn’t gone very well for Miss Murray the last years of her life. Her books didn’t sell— And she spent money like water. She was allus the most open-hearted, open-handed creature you can imagine. She allus had the house full of company! And then there was the little girl—Cherry—who lived with her. At the end, things were bad. No money coming in. And Miss Murray sick all the time.”

“You say she was alone when she died,” Lindsay gently brought her back to the track.

“Yes—except for little Cherry, who slept right through everything—childlike. Cherry had that room.” Mrs. Spash jerked an angular thumb back.

Lindsay nodded. “Yes, I guessed that—with all the drawings—”

“The Weejubs! Mr. Gale drew them pictures for Cherry. He was an artist. He used to paint pictures out in the backyard there. I didn’t fancy them very much myself—too dauby. You had to stand way off from them ‘fore they’d look like anything *a-tall*. But he used to get as high as five hundred dollars for them. Oh, what excitement there was in this house while he was decorating Cherry’s room! And little Cherry chattering like a magpie! Mr. Gale made up a whole long story about the Weejubs on her walls. Lord, I’ve forgotten half of it; but Cherry could rattle it all off as *fast*. Miss Murray had that door between her room and Cherry’s made small on purpose. She said Cherry could come into her room whenever she wanted to, as long as she was a little girl. But when Cherry grew up, she was going to make it hard for her. But she promised when Cherry was sixteen years old she shouldn’t have to call her auntie any more—she could call her jess Lutetia. Queer idea, worn’t it?”

193

Mrs. Spash’s old eyes so narrowed before an oncoming flood of reminiscence that they seemed to retreat to the back of her head, where they diminished to blue sparks. For a moment the room was silent. Then “Let me show you something! You’d oughter know it, seein’ it’s your house. There’s some, though, I wouldn’t show it to.”

194

She pattered with her surprising quickness to the back wall. She pressed a spot in the paneling and a small square of the wood moved slowly back.

“You see, Miss Murray’s bed ran along that wall, just as Cherry’s did in the other room. Mornings and evenings they used to open this panel and talk to each other.”

Lindsay's eyes filmed even as Mrs. Spash's had. Mentally he saw the two faces bending toward the opening....

"But you was asking about Miss Murray's death— As I say, things didn't go well with her. I didn't understand how it all happened. Folks stopped buying her books, I guess. Anyway, when she died, there was nothing left. And there was debts. The house and everything in it was sold—at auction. It was awful to see Miss Murray's things all out on the lawn. And a great crowd of gawks—riff-raff from everywhere—looking at 'em and making fun of 'em— She had beautiful things, but they went for nothing a-tall. They jess about paid her debts."

195

Lindsay groaned. "But her death—"

"Oh yes, as I was sayin'. You see, Miss Murray worn't ever the same after Mr. Lewis died. You know about that?"

Lindsay nodded. "He was drowned."

Mrs. Spash nodded confirmatively. "Yes, in Spy Pond—over South Quinanog way. He was swimming all alone. He was taken with cramps way out in the middle of the Pond. Finally somebody saw him struggling and they put out in a boat, but they were too late. Miss Murray was in the garden when they brought him back on a shutter. I was with her. I can see the way her face looked now. She didn't say anything. Not a word! She turned to stone. And it didn't seem to me that she ever came back to flesh again. They was to be married in October. He was a splendid man. He came from New York."

"Yes. Curiously enough I spent a few days in what used to be his rooms," Lindsay informed her.

"That so?" But it was quite apparent that nothing outside the radius of Quinanog interested Mrs. Spash deeply. She made no further comment.

196

"Was she very much in love with Lewis?" Lindsay ventured.

"In love! I wish you could see their eyes when they looked at each other. They'd met late. Miss Murray had always had lots of attention. But she never seemed to care for anybody—though she'd flirt a little—until she met Mr. Lewis. It was love at first sight with them."

She proceeded.

"Well, Miss Murray died five years after Mr. Lewis. She died—well, I don't know exactly what it was. But she had *attacks*. She was a terrible sufferer. And she was worried—money matters worried her. You see, little Cherry's mother died when she was born and her father soon after. Miss Murray'd always had Cherry and felt responsible for her. I know, because she told me. 'It ain't myself, Eunice Spash,' she said to me more'n once. 'It's little Cherry.' Anyway, she was alone when her last attack came. She'd sent for a cousin—I forget the name—to be with her, and she was up in Boston getting a nurse, and I was in the other side of the house. I never heard a sound. We found her dead in the middle of the floor—there." Her crooked forefinger indicated the spot. "Seemed she'd got up and tried to get to the door to call. But she dropped and died halfway. She was all contorted. Her face looked—Not so much suffering of the body as— Well, you could see it in her face that it come to her that she was going, and Cherry was left with nothing."

197

"What became of that cousin?" Lindsay inquired. "I have asked everybody in the neighborhood, but nobody seems to know."

"And I don't know. She went to Boston, taking Cherry with her. For a time we heard from Cherry now and then—she'd write letters to the children. Then we lost sight of her. I don't know whether Miss Murray's cousin's living or dead; Cherry either."

Lindsay felt that he could have assured her that Cherry was alive; but his conclusion rested on premises too gauzy for him to hazard the statement.

Mrs. Spash sighed. She arose, led the way into the hall. "This was Mr. Monroe's room; and Mr. Gale's room was back of his. He liked the room that overlooked the garden. Mr. Monroe—"

198

"That's the big man, the sculptor," Lindsay hazarded.

"How'd you know?" Mrs. Spash pounced on him again.

"Oh, I've talked with a lot of people in the neighborhood," Lindsay returned evasively.

"That Mr. Monroe," Mrs. Spash glided on easily, "was a case and a half. Nothing but talk and laugh every moment he was in the house. I used to admire to have him come."

"Where is he?" Lindsay asked easily. He hoped Mrs. Spash did not guess how, mentally, he hung upon her answer.

"He went to Italy—to Florence—after Miss Murray died." Mrs. Spash stopped. "He was in love with Miss Murray. Had been for years. She wouldn't have him though. He was an awful nice man. Sometimes I thought she would have him. But after Mr. Lewis came— Queer, worn't it? I don't know whether Mr. Monroe's alive or dead."

199

Again Lindsay felt that he could have assured her that he was alive, but again gauzy premises inhibited exact conclusions.

"The last I heard of him he was in Rome. 'Tain't likely he's alive now. *Land*, no! He'd be well over

seventy—close onto seventy-five. Mr. Gale was in love with her too. He was younger. I don't think he ever told Miss Murray, I never *did* know if she knew. You couldn't fool me though. Well, I started out to show you this house. I must be getting on. You've seen the slave quarters and the whipping-post upstairs?"

"Yes. *Everybody* could tell me about the whipping-post and the slave quarters. But the things I wanted to know—"

"Well, it's natural enough that folks shouldn't know much about her. Miss Murray was a lady that didn't talk about her own affairs and she kept sort of to herself, as you might say. She wasn't the kind that ran in on folks. She wrote by fits and starts. Sometimes she'd stay up late at night. She *allus* wrote new-moon time. She said the light of the crescent moon inspired her. How they used to make fun of her about that! But she'd write with all of them about, laughing and talking and playing the piano or singing—and dancing even. The house was so lively those days—they was all great trainers. And yet she could fall asleep right in the midst of all that confusion. Well—so you see she wasn't given to making calls. And then there was always so much to do and so many folks around at home. Have you been upstairs in the barn?"

200

"No—not yet. The stairs were all broken away. I had just finished mending them when I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance."

They both smiled reminiscently.

"Let's go up there now—there must be a lot of things—" She ended her sentence a little vaguely as the old sometimes do. But the movement with which she arose from her chair and trotted toward the stairs was full of an anticipation almost youthful.

"The garden used to be so pretty," she sighed as they started on the well-worn trail to the barn. "Miss Murray worn't what you might call practical, but she could make flowers grow. She never cooked, nor sewed, nor anything sensible, but she'd work in that garden till— There was certain combinations of flowers that she used to like; hollyhocks, especially the garnet ones so dark they was almost black, surrounded by them blue Canterbury bells; and then phlox in all colors, white and pink and magenta and lavender and purple. I think there was some things put out here," she interrupted herself vaguely, "that nobody wanted at the auction. There wasn't even a bid on them."

201

She trotted up the stairs like a pony that has suddenly become aged. Lindsay followed, two steps at a time. The upper story of the barn was the confused mass of objects that the lumber room of any large household inevitably collects. Broken chairs; tables, bureaux; rejected pieces of china; kitchen furnishings; a rusty stove, old boxes; bandboxes; broken trunks; torn bags.

"There! That's the table Miss Murray used to do her writing at. She said there never had been a table built big enough for her. I expect that's why nobody bought it at the auction. 'Twas too big for mortal use, you might say. The same reason I expect is why the dining-room table didn't sell either."

202

"Where did she write?" Lindsay asked, measuring the table with his eye.

"All summer in the south living-room. But when it come winter, she'd often take her things and set right in front of the fire in the living-room. Then she'd write at that long table you're writing on."

"This table goes back to the south living-room tomorrow," Lindsay decided almost inaudibly. "Can you tell me the exact spot?"

"I guess I *can*. Lord knows I've got down on my hands and knees and dusted the legs often enough. Miss Murray said, though it was soft wood, it was the oldest piece in the house. She bought it at some old tavern where they was having a sale. She said it dated back—long before Revolutionary times—to Colonial days."

"Could you tell me, I wonder, about the rest of Miss Murray's furniture?" Lindsay came suddenly from out a deep revery. "Do you remember who bought it? I would like to buy back all that I can get. I'd like to make the old place look, as much as possible, as it used to look."

203

Mrs. Spash flashed him a quick intent look. Then she meditated. "I think I could probably tell you where most every piece went. The Drakes got the Field bed and the ivory-keyhole bureau and the ivory-keyhole desk; and Miss Garnet got the elephant and Mis' Manson got the gazelles—"

"Elephant! Gazelles!" Lindsay interrupted.

"The gazelles," Mrs. Spash smiled indulgently. "Well, it does sound queer, but Miss Murray used to call those little thin-legged candle tables that folks use, *gazelles*. The elephant was a great high chest of drawers. Mis' Manson got the maple gazelles—" She proceeded in what promised to be an indefinite category.

"Do you think I could buy any of those things back?" Lindsay asked after listening patiently to the end.

"Some of them, I guess. I have a few things in my attic I'll sell you—and some I'll give you. I'd admire to see them in the old place once more."

204

"You must let me buy them all," Lindsay protested.

"Well, we'll see about that," Mrs. Spash disposed of this disagreement easily. "Have you seen the Dew Pond yet?"

"The Dew Pond!" Lindsay echoed.

"The little pond beyond the barn," Mrs. Spash explained. Then, as though a great light dawned, "Oh, of course it's all so growed up round it you'd never notice it. Come and I'll show it to you."

Lindsay followed her out of the barn. This was all like a dream, he reflected—but then everything was like a dream nowadays. He had lived in a dream for two months now. Mrs. Spash struck into a path which led beyond the barn.

The trail grew narrower and narrower; threatened after a while to disappear. Lindsay finally took the lead, broke a path. They came presently on a pond so tiny that it was not a pond at all; it was a pool. Water-lilies choked it; forget-me-nots bordered it; high wild roses screened it.

205

Lindsay stood looking for a long time into it. "It's the Merry Mere of *Mary Towle*," he meditated aloud. Mrs. Spash received this in the uninterrogative silence with which she had received other of his confidences. She apparently fell back easily into the ways of literary folk.

"I remember now I got a glint of water from one of the upstairs bedrooms," Lindsay went on, "the first time I came into the house. But I forgot it instantly; and I've never noticed it since."

"Wait a moment!" Mrs. Spash seemed afraid that he would leave. "There's something else." She attempted to push her way through the jungle in the direction of the house. For an instant her progress was easy, then bushes and vines caught her. Lindsay sprang to her assistance.

"There's something here—that was left," she panted. "Folks have forgotten all about—" She dropped explanatory phrases.

Heedless of tearing thorns and piercing prickles, Lindsay crashed on. Mrs. Spash watched expectantly.

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"There!" she called with satisfaction.

On a cairn of rocks, filmed over by years of exposure to the weather, stood what Lindsay immediately recognized to be a large old rum-jar. The sun found exposed spots on its surface, brought out its rich olive color.

"After Mr. Lewis died," Mrs. Spash explained, "Miss Murray went abroad for a year. She went to Egypt. She put this here when she came home. Then you could see it from the house. The sun shone on it something handsome. She told me once she went into a temple on the Nile cut out of the living-rock, where there was room after room, one right back of the other. In the last one, there was an altar; and once a year, the first ray of the rising sun would strike through all the rooms and lay on that altar. Worn't that cute? I allus thought she had that in mind when she put this here."

Lindsay contemplated the old rum-jar. Mrs. Spash contemplated him. And suddenly it was as though she were looking at Lindsay from a new point of view.

207

Lindsay's face had changed subtly in the last two months. The sun of Quinanog had added but little to the tan and burn with which three years of flying had crusted it. He was still very handsome. It was not, however, this comeliness that Mrs. Spash seemed to be examining. The experiences at Quinanog had softened the deliberate stoicism of his look. Rather they had fed some inner softness; had fired it. His air was now one of perpetual question. Yet dreams often invaded his eyes; blurred them; drooped his lips.

"It's all unbelievable," Lindsay suddenly commented, "I don't believe it. I don't believe you. I don't believe myself."

Mrs. Spash still kept her eyes fixed on the young man's face. Her look had grown piercing.

"Have you a shovel handy?" she surprisingly asked.

"Yes, why?"

Mrs. Spash did not answer immediately. He turned and looked at her. She was still gazing at him hard; but the light from some long-harbored emotion of her dulled old soul was shining bluely in her dulled old eyes.

208

"I want you should get it," she ordered briefly. "There's something right here," she pointed, "that I want you to dig up."

VIII

209

Susannah let herself lightly down on the tin roof; it was scarcely a step from her window. With deliberate caution, she turned and drew the shade. Then she tiptoed toward the skylight. The workmen were still soldering; the older man, with the air of one performing a delicate operation, lay stretched out flat, holding some kind of receptacle; the younger was pouring molten lead from a ladle. Try as she might, she could not prevent her feet from making a slight tapping on the tin. The older man glanced sharply up. "Look out!" called the younger, and he bent again to his work.

Almost running now, she stepped into the gaping hole of the skylight. The stairs were very steep—practically a ladder. As she disappeared from view, she heard a quick “What the hell!” from the roof above her.

Susannah hurried forward along a dark passage, looking for stairs. The passage jutted, became lighter, went forward again. This must be the point where the shed-addition joined the main building. She was in the hallway of a dingy, conventional flat-house, with doors to right and left. One of these doors opened; a woman in a faded calico dress looked her over, the glance including the traveling-bag; then picked up a letter from the hall-floor, and closed it again. Susannah found herself controlling an impulse to run. But no steps sounded behind her—she was not as yet pursued. And there was the stairway—at the very front of the house! She descended the two flights to the entrance. There, for a moment, she paused. As soon as Warner discovered her flight, they would be after her. The workmen would point the way. The street—and quick—was the only chance. Noiselessly she opened the door. At the head of the steps leading to the street, she stopped long enough for a look to right and left. Only a scattered afternoon crowd—no Warner, no Byan. An Eighth Avenue tram-car was ringing its gong violently. On a sudden impulse of safety, she shot down the steps, ran past her own door to the corner. An open southbound car had drawn up, was taking on passengers. She reached it just as the conductor was about to give the forward signal, and was almost jerked off her feet as she stepped onto the platform. Steadying herself, she looked, in the brief moment afforded by the bumpy crossing of the car, down the side street.

The entrances of her own house at the corner, the entrances to the house she had just left, were blank and undisturbed; no one was following her. She paid her fare, and settled down on the end of a cross-seat.

And now she was aware not of relief or reaction or fear, but solely of her headache. It had changed in character. It had become a furious internal bombardment of her brows. If she turned her eyes to right or left, she seemed to be dragging weights across the front of her brain. Yet this headache did not seem quite a part of herself. It was as though she knew, by a supernormal sensitiveness, the symptoms of someone else. It was as though suddenly she had become two people. Anyway, it had ceased to be personal. And somewhere else within her head was growing a delicious feeling of freedom, of lightness, of escape from a wheel. Her evasion of the Carbonado Mining Company did not account for all that; she felt free from everything. “I’m not going to take any more rooms,” she said to herself. “I’m going to sleep out of doors now, like the birds. People find you when you take rooms. Where shall I begin?” She considered; and then one of those little hammers of intuition seemed to tap on her brain. Again, she did not resist. “Why, Washington Square of course!” she said to herself.

The car was threading now the narrow ways of Greenwich Village. It stopped; Susannah stepped off. The rest seemed for a long time to be just wandering. But that curious sense of duality had vanished. She was one person again. She did not find Washington Square easily; but then, it made no difference whether she ever found it. For New York and the world were so amusing when once you were free! You could laugh at everything—the passing crowds, surging as though business really mattered; the Carbonado Mining Company; the grisly old fool in their toils, and Susannah Ayer. You could laugh even at the climate—for sometimes it seemed very hot, which was right in summer, and sometimes cold, which wasn’t right at all. You could laugh at the headache, when it tied ridiculous knots in your forehead. There was the Arch—Washington Square at last.

But it wasn’t time to sleep in Washington Square yet. The birds hadn’t gone to bed. Sparrows were still pecking and squabbling along the borders of the flower-beds. Besides, New York was still flowing, on its homeward surge from office and workshop, down the paths. Susannah sat down on a bench and considered. She had a disposition to stay there—why was she so weak? Oh, of course she hadn’t eaten. People always had dinner before going to bed. She must eat—and she had money. She shook out her pocketbook into her lap. A ten-dollar bill, a one-dollar bill, and some small change. She must dine gloriously—free creatures always did that when they had money. Besides, she was never going to pay any more room rent. Susannah rose, strolled up Fifth Avenue. The crowd was thinning out. That was pleasant, too. She disliked to get out of the way of people. She was crossing Twenty-third Street now; and now she was before the correct, white façade of the Hague House. A proper and expensive place for dinner.

Susannah found it very hard to speak to the waiter. It was like talking to someone through a partition. It seemed difficult even to move her lips; they felt wooden.

“A petite marmite, please; then I’ll see what more I want,” she heard herself saying at last.

But when the petite marmite came, steaming in its big, red casserole, she found herself quite disinclined to eat—almost unable to eat. She managed only two or three mouthfuls of the broth; then dallied with the beef. Perhaps it was because instantly—and for no reason whatever—she had become two people again. Perhaps it was because she had been drinking so much ice-water. It couldn’t be because H. Withington Warner was sitting at the next table to the right. It couldn’t be that—because she had told him, when first she saw him sitting there, that she was no longer afraid of the Carbonado Company. And indeed, when she turned to the left and saw him sitting there also—when by degrees she discovered that there was one of him at every table in the room, she thought of Alice in the Trial Scene in Wonderland, and became as contemptuous as Alice. “After all,” she said, “you’re only a pack of cards.”

With a flourish, the waiter set the dinner-card before her, asking: "What will you have next, Madame?" Oh yes, she was dining!

"I think I can't eat any more—the bill, please," she heard one of her selves saying. That self, she discovered, took calm cognizance of everything about her; listened to conversation. As the waiter turned his back, that half of her saw that Mr. Warner wasn't there any more; neither at the table on her right, nor anywhere. But when she had paid the bill, tipped, and risen to go, the other self discovered that he was back again at every table; and that with every Warner was a Byan and an O'Hearn. "I am snapping my fingers at them, though nobody sees it," she said to both her selves. "I can't imagine how they ever troubled me so much. They don't know what I'm doing! I'm sleeping out of doors; they can find me only in rooms!" As though staggered by her complete composure, not one of this triplicate multitude of enemies followed her outside.

216

"Now I'll go to Washington Square," she said, realizing that her personalities had merged again. "The birds must be in bed." She took a bus; and sank into languor and that curious, impersonal headache until the conductor, calling "All out," at the south terminus, recalled to her that she was going somewhere. "I must have been asleep," she thought. "Isn't this a wonderful world?"

The long, early summer twilight was just beginning to draw about the world. The day lingered though—in an exquisite luminousness. All around her the city was grappling tentatively with oncoming dusk. On a few of the passing limousines, the front lamps struck a garish note. Near, the Fifth Avenue lights were like slowly burning bonfires in the trees; in the distance, seemingly suspended by chains so delicate that they were invisible, they diminished to pots of gold. The six-o'clock rush had long ago ceased. Now everyone sauntered; for everyone was freshly caparisoned for the wonderful night glories of midsummer Manhattan.

217

Susannah sat down on a bench in Washington Square and surveyed this free world. Though her eyes burned, they saw crystal-clear. All about her Italian-town mixed democratically with Greenwich Village; made contrasting color and noise. Fat Italian mothers, snatching the post-sunset breezes, chattered from bench to bench while they nursed babies. On other benches, lovers clasped hands. Children played over the grass. The birds twittered and the trees murmured. Every color darted pricklingly distinct to Susannah's avid eyes, burning and heavy though it was. Every sound came distinct to her avid ears, though it sounded through a ringing.

The Fifth Avenue busses were clumping and lumbering in swift succession to their stopping-places. How much, Susannah thought, they looked like prehistoric beetles; colossally big; armored to an incredible hardness and polish. And, already, roped-off crowds of people were patiently waiting upstairs seats. As each bus stopped, there came momentary scramble and confusion until inside and out they filled up. She watched this process for a long, long time.

218

"I can't go to sleep yet," she said to herself finally, "the people won't let me. One can't sleep in this wonderful world. Where does one go after dinner? Oh, to the theater, of course! On Broadway!" She found herself drifting, happily though languorously, through the arch and northward.

Twilight had settled down; had become dusk; had become night. New York was so brilliant that it almost hurt. It was deep dusk and yet the atmosphere was like a purple river flowing between stiff cañon-like buildings. Everywhere in that purple river glittered golden lights. And, floating through it, were mermaids and mermen of an extreme beauty. Susannah passed from Fifth Avenue to Broadway. She stopped under one of the most brilliant palace-fronts of light, and bought a ticket in the front row. The curtain was just rising on the second act of a musical comedy. Susannah would have been hazy about the plot anyway, for the simple reason that there was no plot. But tonight she was peculiarly hazy, because she enjoyed the dancing so much that she became oblivious to everything else. Indeed, at times she seemed to be dancing with the dancers. The illusion was so complete that she grew dizzy; and clung to the arm of her seat. She did not want to divide into two people again.

219

After a while, though, this sensation disappeared in a more intriguing one. For suddenly she discovered that the audience consisted entirely of her and the Carbonado Mining Company. H. Withington Warners, by the hundred, filled the orchestra seats. Byans, by the score, filled the balcony. O'Hearns, by the dozen, filled the gallery. But this did not perturb her. "You're only a pack of cards," she accused them mentally. And she stayed to the very end.

"I thought so," she remarked contemptuously as she turned to go out. For the Carbonado Mining Company had vanished into thin air. She was the only real person who left the theater.

When she came out on the street again, her headache had stopped and the languor was over. There was a beautiful lightness to her whole body. That lightness impelled her to walk with the crowd. But—she suddenly discovered—she was not walking. She was *floating*. She even flew—only she did not rise very high. She kept an even level, about a foot above the pavement; but at that height she was like a feather. And in a wink—how this extraordinary division happened, she could not guess—she was two people once more.

220

New York was again blooming; but this time with its transient, vivacious after-the-theater vividness. Crowds were pouring up; pouring down, deflecting into side streets; emerging from side streets. Everywhere was light. Taxicabs and motors raced and spun and backed and turned; they churned, sizzled, spluttered, and foamed—scattering light. Tram-cars, the low-set, armored cruisers of Broadway, flashed smoothly past, overbrimming with light. The tops of the buildings held great congregations of dancing stars. Light poured down their sides.

Susannah floated with the strong main current of the crowd up Broadway and then, with a side current, a little down Broadway. Eddies took her into Forty-second Street, and whirled her back. And all the time she was in the crowd, but not of it—she was above it. She was looking down on people—she could see the tops of their heads. Susannah kept chuckling over an extraordinary truth she discovered.

“I must remember to tell Glorious Lutie,” she said to herself, “how few people ever brush their hats.”

While one self was noting this amusing fact, however, the other was listening to conversations; the snatches of talk that drifted up to her.

“Let’s go to a midnight show somewhere,” a peevish wife-voice suggested.

“No, *sir!*” a gruff husband-voice answered. “Li’l ole beddo looks pretty good to muh. I can’t hit the hay too soon.”

“What’s Broadway got on Market Street?” a blithe boy’s voice demanded. “Take the view from Twin Peaks at night. Why, it has Broadway beat forty ways from the jack.”

“I’ll say so!” a girl’s voice agreed.

Theaters were empty now, but restaurants were filling. In an incredibly short time, this phantasmagoria of movement, this kaleidoscope of color, this hurly-burly of sound had shattered, melted, fallen to silence. People disappeared as though by magic from the street; now there were great gaps of sidewalk where nobody appeared. Susannah—both of her, because now she seemed to have become two people permanently—felt lonely. She quickened her pace, her floating rather, to catch up with a figure ahead. It was a girl, just an everyday girl, in a white linen suit and a white sailor hat topping a mass of black hair. She carried a handbag. Susannah found herself following, step by step, behind this girl whose face she had as yet not seen. She was floating; yet every time she tried to see the top of that sailor hat her vision became blurred. It was annoying; but this stealthy pursuit was pleasant, somehow—satisfying.

“They’ve been shadowing me,” said Susannah to herself. “Now I’m shadowing. I’ve helped the Carbonado Company to rob orphans. I’m going to break my promise to go to Jamaica tomorrow. Isn’t it glorious to float and be a criminal!”

So she followed westward on Forty-second Street and reached the Public Library corner of Fifth Avenue, which stretched now deserted except where knots of people awaited the omnibusses. Such a knot had gathered on that corner. Suddenly the girl in white raised her hand, waved; a woman in a light-blue summer evening gown answered her signal from the crowd; they ran toward each other. They were going to have a talk. Susannah floated toward them. The air-currents made her a little wobbly—but wasn’t it fun, eavesdropping and caring not the least bit about manners!

“My train doesn’t start until one,” said the white linen suit. “It’s no use going back to my room—the night is so hot. I’ve been to the Summer Garden, and I’m killing time.”

“Oh,” asked blue dress, “did you sublet your room?”

“No,” said the white linen suit, “I’ll be gone for only a month, and I decided it wasn’t worth while. I’ll have it all ready when I get back. I’ve even left the key under the rug in the hall.”

“I wouldn’t ever do that!” came the voice of the blue dress.

“Well,” said the linen suit, “you know *me!* I always lose keys. I’m convinced that when I get to Boston, I shan’t have my trunk key! And there isn’t much to steal.”

“Still, I’d feel nervous if I were you.”

“I don’t see why. Nobody stays up on the top floor, where I am—that is, in the summer. All the other rooms are in one apartment, and the young man who lives there has been away for ages. The people on the ground floor own the house. I get the room for almost nothing by taking care of it and the hall. I haven’t seen anyone else on the floor since the man in the apartment went away. That’s why I love the place—you feel so independent!”

“I think I know the house,” said blue dress. “The old house with the fanlight entrance, isn’t it? Mary Merle used to have a ducky little flat on the second floor, didn’t she?”

“Yes—Number Fifty-seven and a Half—”

Susannah was floating down the Avenue now. But floating with more difficulty. Why was there effort about floating? And why did she keep repeating, “Number Fifty-seven and a Half, Washington Square, top floor, key under the rug?”

She met few people. A policeman stared at her for a moment, then turned indifferently away. How surprising that her floating made no impression upon him! But then, there was no law against floating! Once she drifted past H. Withington Warner, who was staring into a shop window. He did not see her. Susannah had to inhibit her chuckles when, floating a foot above his head, she realized for the first time that he dyed his hair. Why could she see that? He should have his hat on—or was she seeing through his hat?

She was passing under the arch into Washington Square. But she wasn’t floating any longer. She

was dragging weights; she was wading through something like tar, which clung to her feet. She was coughing violently. She had been coughing for a long time. Night in New York was no longer beautiful; glorious. Tragic horrors were rasping in her head. There was Warner. And there was Byan. She could not snap her fingers at them now.... But she knew how to get away from them ... she must rest....

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She cut off a segment of Washington Square, looking for a number. There was a fanlight; and, plain in the street lamps, seeming for a moment the only object in the world, the number "Fifty-seven and a Half." The outer door gave to her touch. A dim point of gaslight burned in the hall. She floated again for a minute as she mounted the stairs.... She was before a door.... She was on her hands and knees fumbling under the rug.... She was dragging herself up by the door-knob....

The key opened the door.

Light, streaming from somewhere in the backyard areas, illuminated a wide white bed.

"I am sick, Glorious Lutie—I think I am very sick," said Susannah. "Watch me, won't you? Keep Warner out!" Fumbling in the bag, she drew out the miniature, set it up against the mirror on the bureau beside the bed—just where she could see it plainly in the shaft of light.

She locked the door. She lay down.

IX

227

Lindsay sat in the big living-room beside the refectory table. Mrs. Spash moved about the room dusting; setting its scanty furnishings to rights. On the long table before him was set out a series of tiny villages, some Chinese, some Japanese: little pink or green-edged houses in white porcelain; little thatched-roofed houses in brown adobe; pagodas; bridges; pavilions. Dozens of tiny figures, some on mules, others on foot, and many loaded with burdens walked the streets. A bit of looking-glass, here and there, made ponds. Ducks floated on them, and boats; queer Oriental-looking skiffs, manned by tiny, half-clad sailors; Chinese junks. In neighboring pastures, domestic animals grazed. Roosters, hens, chickens grouped in back areas.

"That's just what Miss Murray used to do," Mrs. Spash observed. "She'd play with them toys for hours at a time. And of course Cherry loved them more than anything in the house. That's the reason I stole them and buried them."

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"How did you manage that exactly?" Lindsay asked.

"Oh, that was easy enough," Mrs. Spash confessed cheerfully. "Between Miss Murray's death and the auction, I was here a lot, fixing up. They all trusted me, of course. Those toys was all set out in little villages by the Dew Pond. Nobody knew that they were there. So I just did them up in tissue paper and put them in that big tin box and hid them in the bushes. One night late I came back and buried them. Folks didn't think of them for a long time after the auction. You see, nobody had touched them during Miss Murray's illness. And when they did remember them, they thought they had disappeared during the sale." Mrs. Spash paused a moment. Her face assumed an expression of extreme disapproval. "Other things disappeared during the sale," she accused, lowering her voice.

"Who took them?" Lindsay asked.

All the caution of the Yankee appeared in Mrs. Spash's voice. "I don't know as I'd like to say, because it isn't a thing anybody can prove. I have my suspicions though."

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Lindsay did not continue these inquiries.

"Where did Miss Murray get all these toys?"

"Well, a lot of 'em came from China. Miss Murray had a great-uncle who was a sea-captain. He used to go on them long whaling voyages. He brought them to her different times. Miss Murray had played with them when she was a child, and so she liked to have little Cherry play with them. Sometimes they'd all go out to the Dew Pond—Miss Murray, Mr. Monroe, Mr. Gale, Mr. Lewis, and spend a whole afternoon laying them out in little towns—jess about as you've got 'em there. There was two little places on the shore that Miss Murray had all cut down, so's the bushes wouldn't be too tall. They useter call the pond the Pacific Ocean. One of them cleared places was the China coast and the other the Japanese coast. They'd stay there for hours, floating little boats back and forth from China to Japan. And how they'd laugh! I useter listen to their voices coming through the window. But then, the house was always full of laughter. It began at seven o'clock in the morning, when they got up, and it never stopped until—after midnight sometimes—when they went to bed. Oh, it was such a gay place in those days."

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Lindsay arose and stretched. But the stretching did not seem so much an expression of fatigue or drowsiness as the demand of his spirit for immediate activity of some sort. He sat down again instantly. Under his downcast lids, his eyes were bright. "These walls are soaked with laughter," he remarked.

"Yes," Mrs. Spash seemed to understand. "But there was tears too and plenty of them—in the last years."

"I suppose there were," Lindsay agreed. He did not speak for a moment; nor did Mrs. Spash. There came a silence so concentrated that the sunlight poured into it tangible gold. Then, outside a thick white cloud caught the sun in its woolly net. The world gloomed again.

"She's sad still," Lindsay dropped in absent comment.

"Yes," Mrs. Spash agreed.

"I wonder what she wants?" Lindsay addressed this to himself. His voice was so low that perhaps Mrs. Spash did not hear it. At any rate she made no answer.

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Another silence came.

Mrs. Spash finished her dusting. But she lingered. Lindsay still sat at the table; but his eyes had left the little villages arranged there. They went through the door and gazed out into the brilliant patch of sunlight on the grass. There spread under his eyes a narrow stretch of lawn, all sun-touched velvet; beyond a big crescent of garden. Low-growing zinnias in futuristic colors, high phlox in pastel colors; higher, Canterbury bells, deep blue; highest of all, hollyhocks, wine red. Beyond stretched further expanses of lawn. One tall, wide wine-glass elm spread a perfect circle of emerald shade. One low, thick copper-beech dropped an irregular splotch of luminous shadow. Beyond all this ran the gray, lichened stone wall. And beyond the stone wall came unredeemed jungle. Mrs. Spash began, all over again, to dust and to arrange the scanty furniture. After a while she spoke.

"Mr. Lindsay—"

Lindsay started abruptly.

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"Mr. Lindsay—that time you fainted when you first saw me, setting out there on the door-stone, you remember—?"

Lindsay nodded.

"Well, who was you expecting to see?"

Lindsay, alert now as a wire spring, turned on her, not his eyes alone, nor his head; but his whole body. Mrs. Spash was looking straight at him. Their glances met midway. The old eyes pierced the young eyes with an intent scrutiny. The young eyes stabbed the old eyes with an intense interrogation. Lindsay did not answer her question directly. Instead he laughed.

"I guess I don't have to answer you," he declared. "I had seen her often then.... I had seen the others too.... I don't know why *you* should have frightened me when *they* didn't.... I think it was that I wasn't expecting anything human.... I've seen them since.... They never frighten me."

Mrs. Spash's reply was simple enough. "I see them all the time." She added, with a delicate lilt of triumph, "I've seen them for years—"

Lindsay continued to look at her—and now his gaze was somber; even a little despairing. "What do they want? What does *she* want?"

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Mrs. Spash's reply came instantly, although there were pauses in her words. "I don't know. I've tried.... I can't make out." She accompanied these simple statements with a reinforcing decisive nod of her little head.

"I can't guess either—I can't conjecture— There's something she wants me to do. She can't tell me. And they're trying to help her tell me. All except the little girl—"

"Do you see the little girl?" Mrs. Spash demanded. "Well, I declare! That's very queer, I must say. I never see Cherry."

"I wish I saw her oftener," Lindsay laughed ruefully. "*She* doesn't ask anything of me. She's just herself. But the others—Gale—Monroe— My God! It's killing me!" He laughed again, and this time with a real amusement.

Mrs. Spash interrupted his laughter. "Do you see Mr. Monroe?" she asked in a pleased tone. "Well, I declare! Aren't you the fortunate creature. I never see *him!*"

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"All the time," Lindsay answered shortly. "If I could only get it. I feel so stupid, so incredibly gross and lumbering and heavy. I'd do anything—"

He arose and walked over to the picture of Lutetia Murray which still hung above the fireplace. He stared at her hard. "I'd do anything for her, if I could only find out what it was."

"Yes," Mrs. Spash admitted dispassionately, "that's the thing everybody felt about her, they'd do anything for her. Not that she ever asked them to do anything—"

Lindsay began to pace the length of the long room. "What is happening? Has the old ramshackle time-machine finally broken a spring so that, in this last revolution, it hauls, out of the past, these pictures of two decades ago? Or is it that there are superimposed one on the other two revolving worlds—theirs and ours—and *theirs* or *ours* has stopped an instant, so that I can glance into *theirs*? I feel as though I were in the dark of a camera obscura gazing into their brightness. Or have those two years in the air permanently broken my psychology; so that through that rift I shall always have the power to look into strange worlds? Or am I just piercing another dimension?"

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Mrs. Spash had been following him with her faded, calm old eyes. Apparently she guessed these questions were not addressed to her. She kept silence.

"I've racked my brain. I lie awake nights and tear the universe to pieces. I outguess guessing and outconjecture conjecture. My thoughts fly to the end of space. My wonder invades the very citadel of fancy. My surmises storm the last outpost of reality. But it beats me. I can't get it." Lindsay stopped. Mrs. Spash made no comment. Apparently her twenty years' training among artists had prepared her for monologues of this sort. She listened; but it was obvious that she did not understand; did not expect to understand.

"Does she want me to stay *here* or go *there*?" Lindsay demanded of the air. "If *here*, what does she want me to do? If *there*—where is *there*? If *there*, what does she want me to do *there*? Is her errand concerned with the living or the dead? If the living, who? If the dead, who? Where to find them? How to find them?" He turned his glowing eyes on Mrs. Spash. "I only know two things. She wants me to do something. She wants me to do it soon. Oh, I suppose I know another thing—If I don't do it soon, it will be too late."

Mrs. Spash was still following him with her placid, blue, old gaze. "There, there!" she said soothingly. "Now don't you get too excited, Mr. Lindsay. It'll all come to you."

"But how—" Lindsay objected. "And when—"

"I don't know—but she'll tell you somehow. She's cute— She's awful cute. You mark my words, she'll find a way."

"That's the reason I don't have you in the house yet, Mrs. Spash," Lindsay explained.

"Oh, you don't have to tell me that," Mrs. Spash announced, triumphant because of her own perspicuity.

"It's only that I have a feeling that she can do it more easily if we're alone. That's why I send you home at night. She comes oftenest in the evening when I'm alone. They all do. Oh, it's quite a procession some nights. They come one after another, all trying—" He paused. "Sometimes this room is so full of their torture that I— You know, it all began before I came here. It began in an apartment in New York. It was in Jeffrey Lewis' old rooms. He tried to tell me first, you see."

"Did you see Mr. Lewis there?" Mrs. Spash asked this as casually as though she had said, "Has the postman been here this morning?" She added, "I see him here."

"No, I didn't see him," Lindsay explained grimly, "but I felt him. And, believe me, I knew he was there. He was the only one of the lot that frightened me. I wouldn't have been frightened if I had seen him. It was he, really, who sent me here. I work it out that he couldn't get it over and he sent me to Lutetia because he thought she could. I wonder—" he stopped short. This explanation came as though something had flashed electrically through his mind. But he did not pursue that wonder.

"Well, don't you get discouraged," Mrs. Spash reiterated. "You mark my words, she'll manage to say what she's got to say."

"Well, it's time I went to work," Lindsay remarked a little listlessly. "After all, the life of Lutetia Murray must get finished. Oh, by the way, Mrs. Spash," Lindsay veered as though remembering suddenly something he had forgotten, "do other people see them?"

"No—at least I never heard tell that they did."

"How did the rumor get about that the place was haunted, then?"

"I spread it," Mrs. Spash explained. "I didn't want folks breaking in to see if there was anything to steal. And I didn't want them poking about the place."

"How did you spread it?"

"I told children," Mrs. Spash said simply. "Less than a month, folks were seeing all kinds of ridic'ous ghosts here. Nobody likes to go by alone at night."

"It's a curious thing," Lindsay reverted to his main theme, "that I know her message has nothing to do with this biography. I don't know how I know it; but I do. Of course, that would be the first thing a man would think of. It is something more instant, more acute. It beats me altogether. All I can do is wait."

"Now don't you think any more about it, Mr. Lindsay," Mrs. Spash advised. "You go upstairs and set to work. I'm going to get you up the best lunch today you've had yet."

"That's the dope," Lindsay agreed. "The only way to take a man's mind off his troubles is to give him a good dinner. You'll have to work hard, though, Eunice Spash, to beat your own record."

Lindsay arose and sauntered into the front hall and up the stairs. He turned into the room at the right which he had reserved for work, now that Mrs. Spash was on the premises. At this moment, it was flooded with sunlight.... A faint odor of the honeysuckle vine at the corner seemed to emanate from the light itself....

Instantly ... he realized ... that the room was not empty.

Lindsay became feverishly active. Eyes down, he mechanically shuffled his papers. He collected

yesterday's written manuscript, brought the edges down on the table in successive clicks, until they made an even, rectangular pile. He laid his pencils out in a row. He changed the point in his penholder. He moved the ink-bottle. But this availed his spirit nothing. "I am incredibly stupid," he said aloud. His voice was low, but it rang as hollowly as though he were from another world. "If you could only speak to me. Can't you speak to me?"

He did not raise his eyes. But he waited for a long interval, during which the silence in the room became so heavy and cold that it almost blotted out the sunlight.

"But have patience with me. I want to serve you. Oh, you don't know how I want to serve you. I give you my word, I'll get it sometime and I think not too late. I'll kill myself if I don't. I'm putting all I am and all I have into trying to understand. Don't give me up. It's only because I'm flesh and blood."

He stopped and raised his eyes.

The room was empty.

That afternoon Lindsay took a walk so long, so devil-driven that he came back streaming perspiration from every pore. Mrs. Spash regarded him with a glance in which disapproval struggled with sympathy. "I don't know as you'd ought to wear yourself out like that, Mr. Lindsay. Later, perhaps you'll need all your strength—"

"Very likely you're right, Mrs. Spash," Lindsay agreed. "But I've been trying to work it out."

Mrs. Spash left as usual at about seven. By nine, the last remnant of the long twilight, a collaboration of midsummer with daylight-saving, had disappeared. Lindsay lighted his lamp and sat down with Lutetia's poems. The room was peculiarly cheerful. The beautiful Murray sideboard, recently discovered and recovered, held its accustomed place between the two windows. The old Murray clock, a little ship swinging back and forth above its brass face, ticked in the corner. The old whale-oil lamps had resumed their stand, one at either end of the mantel. Old pieces, old though not Lutetia's—they were gone irretrievably—bits picked up here and there, made the deep sea-shell corner cabinet brilliant with the color of old china, glimmery with the shine of old pewter, sparkly with the glitter of old glass. Many chairs—windsors, comb-backs, a Boston rocker—filled the empty spaces with an old-time flavor. In traditional places, high old glasses held flowers. The single anachronism was the big, nickel, green-shaded student lamp.

Lindsay needed rest, but he could not go to bed. He knew perfectly well that he was exhausted, but he knew equally well that he was not drowsy. His state of mind was abnormal. Perhaps the three large cups of jet-black coffee that he had drunk at dinner helped in this matter. But whatever the cause, he was conscious of every atom of this exaggerated spiritual alertness; of the speed with which his thoughts drove; of the almost insupportable mental clarity through which they shot.

"If this keeps up," he meditated, "it's no use my going to bed at all tonight. I could not possibly sleep."

He found Lutetia's poems agreeable solace at this moment. They contained no anodyne for his restlessness; but at least they did not increase it. Her poetry had not been considered successful, but Lindsay liked it. It was erratic in meter; irregular in rhythm. But at times it astounded him with a delicate precision of expression; at moments it surprised him with an opulence of fancy. He read on and on—

Suddenly that mental indicator—was it a flutter of his spirit or merely a lowering of the spiritual temperature?—apprised him that he was not alone.... But as usual, after he realized that his privacy had been invaded, he continued to read; his gaze caught, as though actually tied, by the print.... After a while he shut the book.... But he still sat with his hand clutching it, one finger marking the place.... He did not lift his eyes when he spoke....

"Tell the others to go," he demanded.

After a while he arose. He did not move to the other end of the room nor did he glance once in that direction. But on his side, he paced up and down with a stern, long-strided prowl. He spoke aloud.

"Listen to me!" His tone was peremptory. "We've got to understand each other tonight. I can't endure it any longer; for I know as well as you that the time is getting short. You can't speak to me. But I can speak to you. Lutetia, you've got to outdo yourself tonight. You must give me a sign. Do you understand? You *must* show me. Now summon all that you have of strength, whatever it is, to give me that sign—do you understand, *all you have*. Listen! Whatever it is that you want me to do, it isn't here. I know that now. I know it because I've been here two months— Whatever it is, it must be put through somewhere else. An idea came to me this morning. I spent all the afternoon thinking it out. Maybe I've got a clue. It all started in New York. *He* tried to get it to me there. Listen! Tell me! Quick! Quick! Quick! Do you want me to go to New York?"

The answer was instantaneous. As though some giant hand had seized the house in its grip, it shook. Shook for an infinitesimal fraction of an instant. Almost, it seemed to Lindsay, walls quivered; panes rattled; shutters banged, doors slammed. And yet in the next infinitesimal fraction of that instant he knew that he had heard no tangible sound. Something more exquisite

than sound had filled that unmeasurable interval with shattering, deafening confusion.

Lindsay turned with a sharp wheel; glared into the dark of the other side of the room.

Lindsay dashed upstairs to his desk. There he found a time-table. The ten-fifteen from Quinanog would give him ample time to catch the midnight to New York. He might not be able to get a sleeping berth; but the thing he needed least, at that moment, was sleep. In fact, he would rather sit up all night. He flung a few things into his suitcase; dashed off a note to Mrs. Spash. In an incredibly short time, he was striding over the two miles of road which led to the station.

There happened to be an unreserved upper berth. It was a superfluous luxury as far as Lindsay was concerned. He lay in it during what remained of the night, his eyes shut but his spirit more wakeful than he had ever known it. "Every revolution of these wheels," he said once to himself, "brings me nearer to it, whatever it is." He arose early; was the first to invade the washroom; the first to step off the train; the first to leap into a taxicab. He gave the address of Spink's apartments to the driver. "Get there faster than you can!" he ordered briefly. The man looked at him—and then proceeded to break the speed law.

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Washington Square was hardly awake when they churned up to the sidewalk. Lindsay let himself in the door; bounded lightly up the two flights of stairs; unlocked the door of Spink's apartment. Everything was silent there. The dust of two months of vacancy lay on the furnishings. Lindsay stood in the center of the room, contemplating the door which led backward into the rest of the apartment.

"Well, old top, *you're* not going to trouble me any longer. I get that with my first breath. I've done what *she* wanted and what *you* wanted so far. Now what in the name of heaven is the next move?"

He stood in the center of the room waiting, listening.

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And then into his hearing, stretched to its final capacity, came sound. Just *sound* at first; then a dull murmur. Lindsay's hair rose with a prickling progress from his scalp. But that murmur was human. It continued.

Lindsay went to the door, opened it, and stepped out into the hall. The murmur grew louder. It was a woman's voice; a girl's voice; unmistakably the voice of youth. It came from the little room next to Spink's apartment.

Again Lindsay listened. The monotone broke; grew jagged; grew shrill; became monotonous again. Suddenly the truth dawned on him. It was the voice of madness or of delirium.

He advanced to the door and knocked. Nobody answered. The monotone continued. He knocked again. Nobody answered. The monotone continued. He tried the knob. The door was locked. With his hand still on the knob, he put his shoulder to the door; gave it a slow resistless pressure. It burst open.

It was a small room and furnished with the conventional furnishings of a bedroom. Lindsay saw but two things in it. One was a girl, sitting up in the bed in the corner; a beautiful slim creature with streaming loose red hair; her cheeks vivid with fever spots; her eyes brilliant with fever-light. It was she who emitted the monotone.

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The other thing was a miniature, standing against the glass on the bureau. A miniature of a beautiful woman in the full lusciousness of a golden blonde maturity.

The woman of the miniature was Lutetia Murray.

The girl—

X

249

She felt that the room was full of sunshine. Even through her glued-down lids she caught the darting dazzle of it. She knew that the air was full of bird voices. Even through her drowse-filmed ears, she caught the singing sound of them. She would like to lift her lids. She would like to wake up. But after all it was a little too easy to sleep. The impulse with which she sank back to slumber was so soft that it was scarcely impulse. It dropped her slowly into an enormous dark, a colossal quiet.

Presently she drifted to the top of that dark quiet. Again the sunlight flowed into the channels of seeing. Again the birds picked on the strings of hearing. By an enormous effort she opened her eyes.

She stared from her bed straight at a window. A big vine stretched films of green leaf across it. It seemed to color the sunshine that poured onto the floor—green. She looked at the window for a long time. Presently she discovered among the leaves a crimson, vase-like flower.

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"Why, how thick the trumpet-vine has grown!" she said aloud.

It seemed to her that there was a movement at her side. But that movement did not interest her. She did not fall into a well this time. She drifted off on a tide of sleep. Presently—perhaps it was

an hour later, perhaps five minutes—she opened her eyes. Again she stared at the window. Again the wonder of growth absorbed her thought; passed out of it. She looked about the room. Her little bedroom set, painted a soft creamy yellow with long tendrils of golden vine, stood out softly against the faded green cartridge paper.

“Why! Why have they put the bureau over there?” she demanded aloud of the miniature of Glorious Lutie which hung beside the bureau. With a vague alarm, her eyes sped from point to point. The dado of Weejubs stood out as though freshly restored. But all her pictures were gone; the four colored prints, Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter—each the head of a little girl, decked with buds or flowers, fruit or furs, had vanished. The faded squares where they had hung showed on the walls. Oh, woe, her favorite of all, “My Little White Kittens,” had disappeared too. On the other hand—on table, on bureau, and on commode-top—crowded the little Chinese toys.

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“Why, when did they bring them in from the Dew Pond?” she asked herself, again aloud.

With a sudden stab of memory, she reached her hand up on the wall. How curious! Only yesterday she could scarcely touch the spring; now her hand went far beyond it. She pressed. The little panel opened slowly. She raised herself in bed and looked through the aperture.

Glorious Lutie’s room was stark—bare, save for a bed and her long wooden writing-table.

Her thoughts flew madly ... suddenly her whole acceptance of things crumbled. Why! She wasn’t Cherie and eight. She was Susannah and twenty-five; and the last time she had been anywhere she had been in New York.... Lightnings of memory tore at her ... the Carbonado Mining Company ... Eloise ... a Salvation Army woman on the street ... roofers. Yet this was Blue Meadows. She did not have to pinch herself or press on her sleepy eyelids. It was Blue Meadows. The trumpet-vine, though as gigantic as Jack’s beanstalk, proved it. The painted furniture proved it. The Chinese toys proved it. Yes, and if she wanted the final touch that clinched all argument, there beside the head of the bed was the maple gazelle. This really was not the final proof. The final proof was human and it entered the room at that moment in the person of Mrs. Spash. And Mrs. Spash—in her old, quaint inaccurate way—was calling her as Cherry.

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Susannah burst into tears.

“Oh, I feel so much better now,” Susannah said after a little talk; more sleep; then talk again. “I’m going to be perfectly well in a little while. I want to get up. And oh, dear Mrs. Spash—do you remember how sometimes I used to call you Mrs. Splash? I do want as soon as possible to see Mr. Lindsay and his cousin—Miss Stockbridge, did you say? I want to thank them, of course. How can I ever thank them enough? And I want to talk to him about the biography. Oh, I’m sure I can give him so much. And I can make out a list of people who can tell him all the things you and I don’t remember; or never knew. And then, in my trunk in New York, is a package of all Glorious Lutie’s letters to me. I think he will want to publish some of them; they are so lovely, so full of our games—and jingles, and even drawings. Couldn’t I sit up now?”

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“I don’t see why not,” Mrs. Spash said. “You’ve slept for nearly twenty-six hours, Cherry. You waked up once—or half-waked up. We gave you some hot milk and you went right to sleep again.”

“It’s going to make me well—just being at Blue Meadows,” Susannah prophesied. “If I could only stay— But I’m grateful for a day, an hour.”

Later, she came slowly down the stairs—one hand on the rail, the other holding Mrs. Spash’s arm. She wore her faded creamy-pink, creamy-yellow Japanese kimono, held in prim plaits by the broad sash, a big obi bow at the back. Her red hair lay forward in two long glittering braids. Her face was still pale, but her eyes overran with a lucent blue excitement. It caught on her eyelashes and made stars there.

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A slim young man in flannels; tall with a muscular litness; dark with a burnished tan; handsome; arose from his work at the long refectory table. He came forward smiling—his hand outstretched. “My cousin, Miss Stockbridge, has run in to Boston to do some shopping,” he explained. “I can’t tell you how glad I am to see you up, or how glad she will be.” He took her disengaged arm and reinforced Mrs. Spash’s efforts. They guided her into a big wing chair. The young man found a footstool for her.

“I suppose I’m not dreaming, Mr. Lindsay,” Susannah apprised him tremulously. “And yet how can it be anything but a dream? I left this place fifteen years ago and I have never seen it since. How did I get back here? How did you find me? How did you know who I was? And what made you so heavenly good as to bring me here? I remember fragments here and there— Mrs. Spash tells me I’ve had the flu.”

Lindsay laughed. “That’s all easily explained,” he said with a smoothness almost meretricious. “I happened to go to New York on business. As usual I went to my friend Sparrel’s apartment. You were ill and delirious in the next room. I heard you; forced the door open and sent at once for a doctor. He pronounced it a belated case of flu. So I telephoned for Miss Stockbridge; we moved you into my apartment and after you passed the crisis—thank God, you escaped pneumonia!—I asked the doctor if I could bring you over here. He agreed that the country air would be the very best thing for you, and yet would not advise me to do it. He thought it was taking too great a risk.

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But I felt—I can't tell you how strongly I felt it—that it would be the best thing for you. My cousin stood by me, and I took the chance. Sometimes now, though, I shudder at my own foolhardiness. You don't remember—or do you?—that I went through the formality of asking your consent."

"I do remember now—vaguely," Susannah laughed. "Isn't it lucky I didn't—in my weakness—say no?"

Lindsay laughed again. "I shouldn't have paid any attention to it, if you had. I knew that this was what you needed. You were sleeping then about twenty-five hours out of the twenty-four. So one night we brought you in a taxi to the boat and took the night trip to Boston. The boat was making its return trip that night, but I bribed them to let you stay on it all day until it was almost ready to sail. Late in the afternoon, we brought you in an automobile to Quinanog. You slept all the way. That was yesterday afternoon. It was dark when we got here. You didn't even open your eyes when I carried you into the house. In the meantime I had wired Mrs. Spash—and she fixed up your room, as much like the way it used to be when you were a child, as she could remember."

"It's all too marvelous," Susannah murmured. New brilliancies were welling up into her turquoise eyes, the deep dark fringes of lash could not hold them; the stars kept dropping off their tips. Fresh spurts of color invaded her face. Nervously her long white hands pulled at her coppery braids.

"There are so many questions I shall ask you," she went on, "when I'm strong enough. But some I must ask you now. How did you happen to come here? And when did the idea of writing Glorious Lutie's—my aunt's—biography occur to you? And how did you come to know Mrs. Spash? Where did you find the little Chinese toys? And my painted bedroom set? And the sideboard there? And the six-legged highboy? Oh dear, a hundred, thousand, million things. But first of all, how did you know that, now being Susannah Ayer, I was formerly Susannah Delano?"

"There was the miniature of Miss Murray hanging on your wall. That made me sure—in—in some inexplicable way—that you were the little lost Cherry. And of course we went through your handbag to make sure. We found some letters addressed to Susannah Delano Ayer. But will you tell me how you *do* happen to be Susannah Ayer, when you were formerly Susannah Delano, alias Cherry—or Cherie?"

"I went from here to Providence to live with a large family of cousins. Their name was Ayer, and I was so often called Ayer that finally I took the name." Susannah paused, and then with a sudden impulse toward confidence, she went on. "I grew up with my cousins. I was the youngest of them all. The two oldest girls married, one a Californian, the other a Canadian. I haven't seen them for years. The three boys are scattered all over everywhere, by the war. My uncle died first; then my aunt. She left me the five hundred dollars with which I got my business training."

The look of one who is absorbing passionately all that is being said to him was on Lindsay's face. But a little perplexity troubled it. "Glorious Lutie?" he repeated interrogatively.

"Oh, of course," Susannah murmured. "I always called her Glorious Lutie. She always called me Glorious Susie—that is when she didn't call me *Cherie*. And we had a game—the Abracadabra game. When she was telling me a story—her stories were *marvels*; they went on for days and days—and she got tired, she could always stop it by saying, Abracadabra! If I didn't reply instantly with Abracadabra, the story stopped. Of course she always caught my little wits napping—I was so absorbed in the story that I could only stutter and pant, trying to remember that long word."

"That's a Peter Ibbetson trick," Lindsay commented.

The talk, thus begun, lasted for the three hours which elapsed before Miss Stockbridge's return. Two narratives ran through their talk; Lindsay's, which dealt with superficial matters, began with his return to America from France; Susannah's, which began with that sad day, fifteen years ago, when she saw Blue Meadows for the last time. But neither narrative went straight. They zig-zagged; they curved, they circled. Those deviations were the result of racing up squirrel tracks of opinion and theory; of little excursions into the allied experiences of youth; even of talks on books. Once it was interrupted by the noiseless entry of Mrs. Spash, who deposited a tray which contained a glass of milk, a pair of dropped eggs, a little mound of buttered toast. Susannah suddenly found herself hungry. She drained her glass, ate both eggs, devoured the last crumb of toast.

After this, she felt so vigorous that she fell in with Lindsay's suggestion that she walk to the door. There she stood on the door-stone for a preoccupied, half-joyful, half-melancholy interval studying the garden. Then, leaning on his arm, she ventured as far as the seat under the copper-beech. Later, even, she went to the barn and the Dew Pond. Before she could get tired, Lindsay brought her back, reestablishing her in the chair. Then—and not till then—and following another impulse to confide in Lindsay, Susannah told him the whole story of the Carbonado Mining Company. Perhaps his point of view on that matter gave her her second accession of vitality. He paced up and down the room during her narrative; his hands, fists. But he laughed their threats to scorn. "Now don't give another thought to that gang of crooks!" he adjured her. "I know a man in New York—a lawyer. I'll have him look up that crowd and put the fear of God into them. They'll probably be flown by that time, however. Undoubtedly they were making ready for their getaway. Don't think of it again. They can't hurt you half as much as that bee that's trying to get in the door." He was silent for a moment, staring fixedly down at his own manuscript on the table. "By

God!" he burst out suddenly, "I've half a mind to beat it on to New York. I'd like to be present. I'd have some things to say—and do."

Somewhere toward the end of this long talk, "I've not said a word yet, Mr. Lindsay," Susannah interpolated timidly, "of how grateful I am to you—and your cousin. But it's mainly because I've not had the strength yet. I don't know how I'm going to repay you. I don't know how I'm even going to tell you. What I owe you—just in money—let alone eternal gratitude."

"Now, that's all arranged," Lindsay said smoothly. "You don't know what a find you were. You're an angel from heaven. You're a Christmas present in July. For a long time I've realized that I needed a secretary. Somebody's got to help me on Lutetia's life or I'll never get it done. Who better qualified than Lutetia's own niece? In fact you will not only be secretary but collaborator. As soon as you're well enough, we'll go to work every morning and we'll work together until it's done."

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Susannah leaned back, snuggled into the soft recess of the comfortable chair. She dropped her lids over the dazzling brilliancy of her eyes. "I suppose I ought to say no. I suppose I ought to have some proper pride about accepting so much kindness. I suppose I ought to show some firmness of mind, pawn all my possessions and get back to work in New York or Boston. Girls in novels always do those things. But I know I shall do none of them. I shall say yes. For I haven't been so happy since Glorious Lutie died."

"Oh," Lindsay exclaimed quickly as though glad to reduce this dangerous emotional excitement. "There comes the lost Anna Sophia Stockbridge. She's a dandy. I think you'll like her. It's awfully hard not to."

The instant Susannah had disappeared with Miss Stockbridge up the stairs, Mrs. Spash appeared in the Long Room. Apparently, she came with a definite object—an object in no way connected with the futile dusting movements she began to emit.

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Lindsay watched her.

Suddenly Mrs. Spash's eyes came up; met his. They gazed at each other a long moment; a gaze that was luminous with question and answer.

"She's gone," Lindsay announced after a while.

Mrs. Spash nodded briskly.

"She'll never come back," Lindsay added.

Again Mrs. Spash nodded briskly.

"They've all gone," Lindsay stated.

For the third time Mrs. Spash briskly nodded.

"When Cherie came, *they* left," Lindsay concluded.

"They'd done what they wanted to do," Mrs. Spash vouchsafed. "Brought you and Cherry together. So there was no need. She took them away. She'd admire to stay. That's like her. But she don't want to make the place seem—well, *queer*. So, as she allus did, she gives up her wish."

"Mrs. Spash," Lindsay exploded suddenly after a long pause, "we've *never* seen them. You understand we've never seen them; either of us. They never were here."

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Mrs. Spash nodded for the fourth time.

That night after his cousin and his guest had gone to bed, Lindsay wandered about the place. The moon was big enough to turn his paths into streams of light. He walked through the flower garden; into the barn; about the Dew Pond. The tallest hollyhocks scarcely moved, so quiet was the night. The little pond showed no ripple except a flash of the moonlight. The barn was a cavern of gloom. Lindsay gazed at everything as though from a new point of view.

An immeasurable content filled him.

After a while he returned to the house. His picture of Lutetia Murray still hung over the mantel in the living-room. He gazed at it for a long while. Then he turned away. As he looked down the length of the living-room, there was in his face a whimsical expression, half of an achieved happiness, half of a lurking regret. "This house has never been so full of people since I've been here," he mused, "and yet never was it so empty. My beloved ghosts, I miss you. But you've not all gone after all. You've left one little ghost behind. Lutetia, I thank you for her. How I wish you could come again to see.... But you're right. Don't come! Not that I'm afraid. You're too lovely—"

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His thoughts broke halfway. They took another turn. "I wonder if it ever happened to any other man before in the history of the world to see the little-girl ghost of the woman—"

Blue Meadows had for several weeks now been projecting pictures from its storied past into the light of everyday. Could it have projected into that everyday one picture from the future, it would

have been something like this.

Susannah came into the south living-room. Her husband was standing between the two windows.

"Davy," she exclaimed joyfully, "I've located the lowboy. A Mrs. Norton in West Hassetts owns it. Of course she's asking a perfectly prohibitive price, but of course we've got to have it."

"Yes," Lindsay answered absently, "we've got to have it."

"I'm glad we found things so slowly," Susannah dreamily. "It adds to the wonder and magic of it all. It makes the dream last longer. It keeps our romance always at the boiling point."

She put one arm about her husband's neck and kissed him. Lindsay turned; kissed her.

"At least we have the major pieces back," Susannah said contentedly. "And little Lutetia Murray Lindsay will grow up in almost the same surroundings that Susannah Ayer enjoyed. Oh—today—when I carried her over to the wall of the nursery, she noticed the Weejubs; she actually put her hand out to touch them."

"Oh, there's something here for you—from Rome—just came in the mail," Lindsay exclaimed. "It's addressed to Susannah Delano too."

"From Rome!" Susannah ejaculated. "Susannah Delano!" She cut the strings of the package. Under the wrappings appeared—swathed in tissue paper—a picture. A letter dropped from the envelope. Susannah seized it; turned to the signature.

"Garrison Monroe!" she ejaculated. "Oh, dear dear Uncle Garry, he's alive after all!" She read the letter aloud, the tears welling in her eyes.

"How wonderful!" she commented when she finished. "You see, he's apparently specialized in tomb-sculpture."

She pulled the tissue paper from the picture. Their heads met, examining it.

"Oh, how lovely!" Susannah exclaimed in a hushed voice. And "It's beautiful!" Lindsay agreed in a low tone.

It was the photograph of a bit of sculptured marble; a woman swathed in rippling draperies lying, at ease, on her side. One hand, palm upward, fingers a little curled, lay by her cheek; the other fell across her breast. A veil partially obscured the delicate profile. But from every veiled feature, from every line of the figure, from every fold in the drapery, exuded rest.

"It's perfect!" Susannah said, still in a low tone. "Perfect. Many a time she's fallen asleep just like that when we've all been talking and laughing. When she slept, her hand always lay close to her face as it is here. She always wore long floating scarves. You see he had to do her face from photographs ... and memory.... He's used that scarf device to conceal.... How beautiful! How beautiful!"

There came silence.

"Mrs. Spash says he was in love with her," Susannah went on. "Of course I was too young. I didn't realize it. But it's all here, I think. Did you notice that part of the letter where he says that for the last year or two his mind has been full of her? And of all his life here? That's very pathetic, isn't it? Now there will be a fitting monument over her.... He says it will be here in a few months. We must send him pictures when it's put on her grave. How happy it makes me! He says he's nearly eighty.... How beautiful.... You're not listening to me," she accused her husband with sudden indignation. But her indignation tempered itself by a flurry of little kisses when, following the direction of his piercing gaze, she saw it ended on the miniature which hung beside the secretary. "Looking at Glorious Lutie!" she mocked tenderly. "How that miniature fascinates you! Sometimes," she added, obviously inventing whimsical cause for grievance, "sometimes I think you're as much in love with her as you are with me."

"If I am," Lindsay agreed, "it's because there's so much of you in her."

THE END

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