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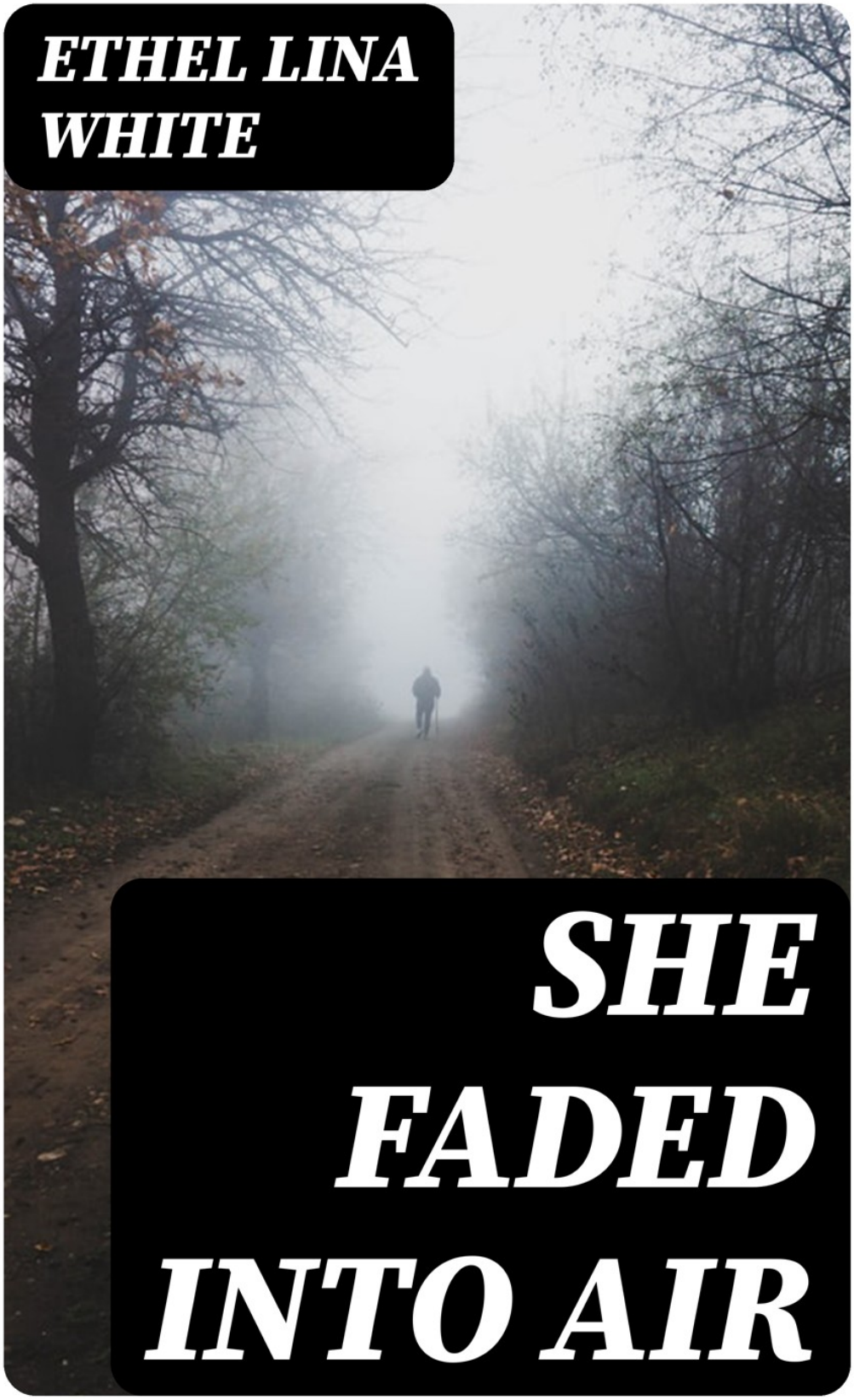

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DigiCat, 2022
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CHAPTER ONE--ACCORDING TO THE EVIDENCE

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The story of the alleged disappearance of Evelyn Cross was too fantastic for credence. According to the available evidence, she melted into thin air shortly after four o'clock on a foggy afternoon in late October. One minute, she was visible in the flesh--a fashionable blonde, nineteen years of age and weighing about eight and a half stone.

The next minute, she was gone.

The scene of this incredible fade-out was an eighteenth-century mansion in Mayfair. The Square was formerly a residential area of fashion and dignity. It had escaped a doom of complete reconstruction, but some of the houses were divided up into high-class offices and flats.

This particular residence had been renamed "Pomerania House" by its owner, Major Pomeroy. He speculated in building property and had his estate office, as well as his private flat, on the premises.

The ex-officer might be described as a business gentleman. Besides being correctly documented--Winchester, Oxford and the essential clubs--he had not blotted his financial or moral credit. In appearance he conformed to military type, being erect, spare and well dressed, with a small dark tooth-brush moustache. His voice was brisk and his eyes keen. He walked with a nonchalant manner. He had two affectations--a monocle and a fresh flower daily in his buttonhole.

Shortly after four o'clock on the afternoon of Evelyn Cross' alleged disappearance, he was in the hall of Pomerania House, leaning against the door of his flat, when a large car stopped in the road outside. The porter recognized it as belonging to a prospective client who had called previously at the estate office to inquire about office

accommodation. With the recollection of a generous tip, he hurried outside to open the door.

Before he could reach it, Raphael Cross had sprung out and was standing on the pavement. He was a striking figure, with the muscular development of a pugilist and a face expressive of a powerful personality. Its ruthless force--combined with very fair curling hair and ice-blue eyes--made him resemble a conception of some old Nordic god, although the comparison flattered him in view of his heavy chin and bull-neck.

He crashed an entrance into the hall, but his daughter, Evelyn, lingered to take a cigarette from her case. She was very young, with a streamlined figure, shoulder-length blonde hair and a round small-featured face. With a total lack of convention she chatted freely to the porter as he struck a match to light her cigarette.

"Confidentiality, we shouldn't have brought our dumb-bell of a chauffeur over from the States. He's put us on the spot with a traffic cop."

"Can't get used to our rule of the road," suggested the porter who instinctively sided with Labour.

"It is a cockeyed rule to keep to the left," admitted Evelyn. "We took a terrible bump in one jam. I'm sure I heard our number plate rattle. You might inspect the damage."

To humour her, the porter strolled to the rear of the car and made a pretence of examining the casualty before he beckoned the chauffeur to the rescue. When he returned to the hall, the major had already met his visitors and was escorting them up the stairs.

The porter gazed speculatively after them, watching the drifting smoke of the girl's cigarette and the silver-gold blur of her hair in the dusk. The skirt of her tight black suit was unusually short so that he had an unrestricted view of her shapely legs and of perilously high-heeled shoes.

As he stood there, he was joined by an attractive young lady with ginger hair and a discriminating eye. Her official title was "Miss Simpson," but she was generally known in the building by her adopted name of "Marlene." She was nominally private secretary to a company promoter who had his office on the second floor; but as the post was a sinecure she spent much of her time in the ladies' cloakroom on the ground floor, improving her appearance for conquest.

"Admiring the golden calf?" she asked, appraising the quality of the silken legs herself before they disappeared around the bend of the staircase.

"She's got nothing on you there, Marlene," declared the porter.

He had a daughter who was a student at a commercial school and was biased in favour of typists.

"Except her stockings, Daddy. Where's the boss taking them?"

"I was asking myself that. The gent's a party after an office. There's only a small let vacant, right at the top and that's not in his class."

"Maybe the girl's going to Goya to get her fortune told," suggested the ornamental typist, tapping her teeth to suppress a yawn.

For nearly ten minutes she lingered at the foot of the stairs, chatting to the porter and on the outlook to intercept any drifting male. The place, however, was practically deserted, so presently she mounted the flight on her way back to her office. She paused when she reached the landing of the first floor, where there were three mahogany doors in line, each embellished with a chromium numeral.

Just outside the middle door--No. 16--the major stood talking to Raphael Cross. Impressed by the striking appearance of the fair stranger, she patted the wave of her ginger hair and lingered in the hope of making a fresh contact.

Consequently she became a witness to the beginning of the amazing drama which was later entered in Alan Foam's case book as "Disappearance of Evelyn Cross."

Although she was friendly with the major, on this occasion he was neither responsive nor helpful. He merely returned her smile mechanically. Only a keen observer might have noticed a flicker of satisfaction in his hawk-like eye, as though he had been expecting her.

Then he started the show, like the White Rabbit in Alice in Wonderland, by pulling out his watch.

"Your daughter's keeping you a dickens of a time," he remarked to Cross. "I thought she said she'd be only a minute. You're a patient man."

"Used to it." Cross grimaced in continental fashion. "I'll give her a ring."

He prodded the electric bell of No. 16 with a powerful forefinger. After a short interval it was opened by the tenant of the apartment--Madame Goya.

She was stout, shortish and middle-aged. Her blued-white permanently waved hair did not harmonize with an incongruous dusky make-up and orange lipstick. Her eyes were dark, treacly and protruding, in spite of being set in deep pouches. She wore an expensive black gown which flattered her figure and a beautiful emerald ring.

"Will you tell my daughter I'm ready to go,' said Cross.

"Pardon?" asked the woman aggressively. "Your daughter?"

When Cross amplified his request, she shook her head.

"Miss Cross was here only to make an appointment. She left some time ago."

"Left?" echoed Cross. "Which way?"

"Through this door, of course."

He stared at her as though bewildered.

"But the major and I have been standing outside," he said, "and I'll swear she never came out."

"Definitely not," agreed Major Pomeroy. "Are you sure she's not still inside, madame?"

"If you don't believe me, come in and see for yourself," invited Madame Goya.

Throbbing with curiosity, the ornamental typist crept to the closed door of No. 16, after the men had gone inside. She heard voices raised in angry excitement and the sound of furniture being bumped about. Presently the major came out alone. His face wore a dazed expression as he took hold of her elbow.

"You've just come upstairs. Beautiful, haven't you?" he asked. "I suppose you did not notice a blonde in black coming down?"

"No," she replied. "I didn't meet a pink elephant either. It's not my day for seeing things. What's all the blinking mystery?"

"Hanged if I know," said the major helplessly. "Boss out, isn't he? Be a good girl and nip round to every office and flat in the place. Ask if anyone's seen her. They haven't. I know that. But I've got to satisfy her father."

The ornamental typist made no objection to being useful, for a change. She spun out her inquiries to a series of social calls throughout Pomerania House. True to the major's forecast, no one had seen a loose blonde, so presently she returned to the first floor.

Raphael Cross, the fair stranger who had attracted her fancy, had come out of No. 16 and was pacing the landing as though on the verge of distraction. Her first glance at him told her that it was no time for overtures. His features were locked in rigid lines and his eyes looked both fierce and baffled. He glared after the figure of the porter as the man returned to his station in the hall. The major spoke to him in a low voice.

"You heard what the fellow said. I've known him for years before I employed him. He's definitely reliable."

"The hell he is," growled Cross. "Someone's lying. Where's my girl?"

"Oh, we'll find her. I admit it's an extraordinary affair. Almost uncanny. I'm at a loss to account for it, myself. But you may be sure there's some simple explanation."

"I know that. This is a put-up job. There's someone behind all of this. It's an infernal conspiracy."

Major Pomeroy stiffened perceptibly, while the sympathy died from his eyes.

"Who do you suspect?' he asked coldly.

"I'll tell you when I've got my girl back. I don't leave this ruddy place without her. Order that porter to see to it that no one goes out of this building until there's been a systematic search through."

"Certainly...Shall I ring up the police?"

The question checked Cross' hysteria like a snowball thrown in his face. He hesitated and gnawed his lip for some seconds before he made his decision.

"No, Pomeroy." His voice was low. "This may be kidnapping. If it is, the police are best kept out."

The major's hostility melted instantly.

"I understand," he said in a feeling voice. "Come down to my office and I'll ring up a reliable private detective agency."

Halfway down the stairs, he returned to caution Marlene.

"Keep your eyes open and your mouth shut--there's a good girl."

"Cross my heart."

Within two minutes after the men had entered the major's office, she was telling the whole story to the tenant of the flatlet, No, 15. This lady--according to her visiting card inserted in the slot of the door--was named "Viola Green," while her occupation was supposed to be that of a mannequin.

She limped out onto the landing, her hands in her pockets and a cigarette between her lips; yet, in spite of her pose of nonchalance, there was no hint of stereotyped

boredom in her face. Her expression in its vivid expectancy was a challenge to the future, as though she claimed the maximum from life and refused to admit to compromise.

She was distinctly attractive, although both face and figure were somewhat too thin. Her short black hair had bright brown gleams and her eyes were hazel-green. She wore black slacks, a purple-blue pullover and rubbed silver sandals.

Although the majority of males in Pomerania House were on friendly terms with Marlene Simpson, the women avoided speaking to her. Viola Green was the exception. She was not only unhampered by snobbery or moral criticism, but she was responsive to a psychic bond between them.

Both girls were held in allegiance to the lure of the profession. Viola had studied at an academy of dramatic art, while Marlene had toured the provinces as a glamour girl in a cheap revue. Total lack of success had forced them into uncongenial jobs, but their thwarted instincts drew them together to discuss the stars of stage and screen with passionate interest.

On this occasion, Viola only wanted to hear the scenario of the drama on the first-floor landing.

"So what?" she asked, with an economy of language familiar to Marlene.

She listened to the story with wide-eyed open-mouthed interest, but at its end she made the requisite ribald comment.

"Well, I've heard of people wanting to reduce quickly, but that's overdoing it...Was she kidnapped?"

"That's what it looks like to me," replied the ornamental typist. "I saw her go up and I was mucking about in the hall all the time afterwards. But she never came down, unless she's the Invisible Man."

"What's your guess?" asked Viola.

"I believe Goya stunned and gagged her. She'd about ten minutes to play with. Then she hid her in a cubby-hole

behind the panelling. There might be one behind the mirror or at the back of the clothes closet. But the blonde's father swears he won't go until she is found, so he'll soon scoop her out...Oh boy, you should see father--hundred per cent Aryan and like an earthquake. He's got that look in his eye that tells you he knows all the answers."

Viola, who was growing bored, distracted her attention.

"Your telephone's been ringing for ages," she said.

"Yes, I heard it," commented Marlene. "Sounds quite profane. I seem to recognize my master's voice. Perhaps I'd better listen to his little trouble. See you later. Bye-bye."

She mounted the stairs in a leisurely fashion while Viola stood and gazed down into the hall. About this time, when dusk blurred its modern improvements, the old mansion had power to fascinate her. She did not recall the patched and powdered ghosts of Berkeley Square but only the lately receded tide of the last century, as she thought of the families who had lived private lives within those walls.

In those spacious days, the offices had been double drawing rooms where parties were held. Girls in white tulle frocks had sat on the stairs and flirted with their partners behind feather fans. Children had peeped down enviously from between the banisters.

But now the clocks were stopped and the music stilled. Sighing at the thought, she limped across to the tall windows at the end of the landing. Outside, the Square Garden was spectral with misted shadows and tremulous with tattered leaves shaking from the plane trees. In the distance a sports car hooted through the darkness.

It was driven by Alan Foam, who was on his way to investigate the alleged disappearance of Evelyn Cross.

Viola was still gripped by the story, although her common sense rejected it as nonsense. At that time she was yearning after her old gods and suffering from histrionic starvation. Unable to resist the chance of dramatizing

herself, she stretched out her hands and groped in the air. "Lost girl," she whispered. "Where are you?"

As she waited, the lights were turned on throughout the building. She heard the faint tapping of typewriters and the distant ringing of telephone bells. The atmosphere of Pomerania House was entirely normal--commercial and financial.

There was no warning wave from the future to tell her that this was a prelude to a moment charged with horror, when she would cry out in anguish to someone who was not there and get no answer from the empty air.

CHAPTER TWO--NUMBER SIXTEEN

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When Alan Foam was asked why he had become a private detective he explained that he liked solving riddles and wanted an occupation which would take him out-of-doors. His original ambition had been the secret service, but circumstances forced him to accept his father's compromise of a share in the firm of Girdlestone & Gribble.

On the whole he was disappointed with the work. Instead of adventures, his main activities were protecting people from blackmail and aiding them to procure divorce. In the course of a few years he became tough and cynical, with no illusions as to the fragrance of hotel bedrooms and with a conviction that the human species had evolved the most deadly type of blood-sucking parasite.

At times when his mind rebelled against its storage of gross details, he considered the antidote suggested by his mother.

"Why don't you marry, Alan?"

"Waiting for the right girl," he told her. 'I've checked too many hotel registers."

"Well, hurry up and find her." She added inconsequently, "You used to be such a dear little boy." There were times, however, when he was keenly interested in his work, especially when his enterprise had been recognized by his superiors. It was after one of these rare occasions that he leaped to the telephone and tried to disentangle the statement from Major Pomeroy's secretary.

It appeared so unlike the routine case of disappearance that he was afraid it was too good to be true.

"You say she's gone--but she never left the building?" he queried.

"Well, it sounded like that when they were both shouting at me," replied the girl doubtfully. "But it doesn't make sense. I suppose I got it wrong."

"Never mind. I'm on my way."

As Foam scorched through the dun shadows of the Square, he was struck by its derelict appearance. It seemed darkened by a pall of antiquity and decay. The old houses might have been barnacled hulks of vessels stranded in a dry-dock by the receded tide of fashion.

When he approached Pomerania House, it suddenly glowed with lighted windows. A large and powerful car was parked outside, while the porter stood on the pavement, fraternally scanning the stop press in the chauffeur's paper.

Following his custom, Foam looked keenly at both men. The chauffeur was a clumsy Hercules, showing a section of standardized glum face below his goggles. The porter appealed more to Foam as a type of labour. He was elderly, with a square, sensible face and steady blue eyes.

He did not return Foam's approval, for he looked at him sourly. The detective understood the reason for his instinctive antipathy. He knew that he was regarded as a by-product of the police force and consequently to be avoided like a mild form of plague.

The porter stiffened as he spoke to the chauffeur in his official voice.

"Your guv'nor says not to wait for him. He may be kept here till midnight."

"Am I to come back and fetch Miss Evelyn?" asked the chauffeur.

His voice was tinctured with curiosity, but the porter was not to be drawn.

"I've given you the message," he said. After the car had driven on, he spoke to Foam. "From the agency? You're expected. This way." Foam followed him through the lobby and into the hall of Pomerania House. As he looked around him he had partly the sensation of being in a museum. Its

proportions were fine, although some of its space had been encroached on by offices. Most of the panelling on the walls had been preserved and also a large oval portrait in a tarnished gilt frame, which hung over the original carved mantelpiece. This was a painting of a former owner of the house by Sir Joshua Reynolds and depicted a Georgian buck with full ripe cheeks and a powdered wig.

The old crystal chandelier--long disused--was still suspended from the ceiling. The statue of a nymph, posed on a pedestal, gazed reproachfully at all who used the telephone booth, as though it were the bathing hut where she had left her clothes and to which they denied her re-entry.

He with these relics of the eighteenth century, the flagged marble floor, as well as the shallow treads of the curving mahogany staircase, was covered with the thick rubber flooring of commerce. The radiators were not concealed and the panel lighting was modern, to correspond with the low painted doors leading to the reconstructed portions. The porter jerked his thumb towards the staircase.

"Up there," he said. "First floor. I can't take you up. My orders are not to leave this door."

"No lift?" asked Foam.

"No. The boss did as little conversion as possible...One never knows."

Foam nodded to show he understood the threat--the shadowy pick of the house breaker swinging over the old mansion. He hurried across the hall and ran up the stairs, covering three steps in each stride.

Three persons--two men and a stout woman--stood on the first landing, while a ginger-haired girl loitered on the flight of stairs leading up to the next floor. Foam recognized Major Pomeroy, whom he knew by sight, but in any case it would have been easy to pick out the father of the missing girl. Cross was plainly gripped by violent emotion, for his

large hands were clenched and his jaws set in an effort to control his facial muscles.

The major came forward to meet him and introduce him to his client; but Foam cut out the preliminaries. Ignoring the others, he telescoped the incoherent explanations he had received over the telephone into a concise statement as he spoke to Cross.

"Your daughter has disappeared and there is no time to lose. Give me the facts."

Braced by the curt voice, Cross recovered his self-control.

"We came here together just about four," he said. "My daughter went into that room." He nodded towards No. 16. "She never came out."

"Then she must be inside still," said Foam.

"No. She has disappeared."

Foam stared at him, wondering whether he were knave or fool. He might be the instigator of some cunning trick--as yet unidentified--or himself the victim of a confidence trick.

"Who is the tenant of No, 16?" he asked.

"I am," declared the stout woman, surging forward. "I am Goya. Madame came to see me about placing an order for hand-made gloves."

Although he was repulsed by her huge painted frog-mouth, her meretricious appearance, Foam spoke pleasantly.

"Let me have your story, please."

"It's a pleasure," said Goya grandly. "Madame stood just inside the door. I looked up and asked, 'Appointment?' You must understand my time is too valuable to waste on chance callers. She shook her head, so I said, 'Kindly write for one. Good afternoon.' She left at once. In fact, she was in and out again without opening and shutting the door a second time."

Foam turned to Cross.

"While you were waiting, I suppose you and the major were talking? Can you remember what it was about?"

Cross looked blankly at the major who answered for him. "We started by discussing business--I was trying to interest Mr. Cross in some office accommodation, but he was unable to make an immediate decision. So we began to argue about Danzig."

"Then I suggest that you were too engrossed to notice when your daughter slipped past you--especially as you were not expecting her to come out so soon."

"No, it's a pack of lies," declared Cross. "The major and I stood here, facing the door. It was shut. We can both of us swear she never came out."

"I'm afraid it's not so simple as that," agreed the major. "The porter was in the hall and he states positively that she never came downstairs or left the building. One of the typists was there with him--and her story is the same as his...Miss Simpson. Would you mind coming down for a minute?"

The ginger-haired girl came down the stairs with the assurance of an ex-"Lovely". Rolling her eyes at Cross, she smiled at Foam.

"The major's got one of his facts wrong," she said. "I'm a private secretary--not a typist. But I'll sign on the dotted line for the rest."

"That brings us back to No. 16," admitted Foam. "Is there any other way out of it? No door of communication between it and one of the adjoining rooms?"

"Definitely not," declared the major.

Foam glanced at the doors to the right and left of No. 16. "Who rent these?" he asked.

"Two girls on their own," replied Major Pomeroy. "Miss Power is in No. 57 and Miss Green in No. 15. Neither of them saw Miss Cross. We have also inquired at all the flats and offices in the building. Every effort has been made to find her."

Foam continued to gaze reflectively at the doors. "I suppose you have the customary references with your

tenants?" he asked, as he considered the dubious personality of Madame Goya.

"I do not," replied the major. "To my mind, that rule penalizes strangers. I prefer a gentleman's agreement. I can trust to my judgment to size up anyone. Besides an unsatisfactory tenant gets spot-notice."

He laughed as he added, "I've discovered that references are not infallible. For instance, I don't know a thing about Miss Power except that she is a student. But she's an ideal tenant--quiet and regular with her payments. On the other hand, Miss Green is a bishop's granddaughter and she's a little scamp."

"Quite. I'll have a look at No. 16. But I want a word with the porter first."

Feeling a need to clarify the situation, Foam hurried downstairs. He was not satisfied by what he had already heard. Although three persons had given him the same facts, he could not ignore the factor of mass suggestion. But he instinctively trusted the porter, who reminded him of a gardener he had known in boyhood.

When he reached the hall, the man was at his post, watching the door.

"What's your name?' asked Foam.

"Higgins," replied the porter.

"Well, Higgins, can you be sure that it was Mr. Cross' daughter that you saw go upstairs? The lights were not turned on."

"I saw her face when I lit her fag," replied the porter positively. "She came here once before with her father, so I knew her by sight."

"Did you actually see her go into No. 16?"

"No. You can't see the landing from the hall because of the bend of the stairs. But I saw the three of them go up, and so did Marlene Simpson."

"Is there a back entrance to Pomerania House?"

"Yes, the door's over there. But she'd have to come down the stairs and cross the hall to reach it--and she didn't. It's a blinking mystery to me."

Foam was on the point of turning away when he asked another question on impulse.

"Higgins, you see a good many people. In confidence, can you place Mr. Cross?"

"I'd say he was a gentleman," replied the porter. "Not Haw-haw, like the boss, but a bit colonial."

"And Miss Cross?"

"Ah, there you have me. I know a lady and I know a tart; but when they try to behave like each other, I get flummoxed."

"You mean--Miss Cross was lively?"

"That's right."

"Thanks, Higgins. That's all."

Foam was on the point of going upstairs when he stopped to peep through the open door of an office which had Major Pomeroy's name painted on the frosted glass panels. A little girl with a pale, intelligent face and large horn-rimmed glasses stopped typing and looked up at him expectantly.

"I'm from the agency," he explained. "Do you happen to know Mr. Cross' private telephone number?"

He blessed her for her instant grasp of his meaning.

"That's been attended to," she said. "The major told me to ring up the apartment hotel where Mr. Cross is staying before I got on to you. They had no news of her, but the major said it was too soon."

"Nice work," approved Foam. "Keep ringing the number."

Running upstairs to the landing where Cross and the major were still waiting, he opened the door of No. 16.

It was a typical example of the architecture of its period--large and lofty, with an ornate ceiling and cornice decorated with plaster mouldings of birds, flowers and fruit. The walls were panelled with cream-painted-wood, much of which was

hidden by fixtures--a cupboard wardrobe, a tall erection of book shelves and a full-length mirror in a tarnished gilt frame. A huge oil painting of a classical subject--a goddess supported by super-clouds and surrounded by a covey of cupids--took up much space.

It was furnished in modern style, with a conventional suite of a divan and two large easy chairs which might have come from any window of a furnishing store. The colouring of the upholstery was neutral and toned with the buff Axminster carpet. Madame Goya's personal taste was indicated by cushions of scarlet and peacock blue and by a couple of sheepskin rugs dyed in distinctive tints of jade and orange. The open grate had also been modernised with built-in tiles and an electric fire.

Such was No. 16--the room in which, according to the inference of the evidence, a girl had faded into air.

CHAPTER THREE--PROTECTION OF PROPERTY

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Foam did not need the aid of Euclid to reject the vanishing theory as absurd. If the girl were actually lost inside Pomerania House, it stood to reason that she must be still there--in the flesh. It seemed to him that the mystery admitted one of two explanations.

The first was that Evelyn Cross had slipped away voluntarily out of the house. Unfortunately, the chances of this were remote, since it involved choosing the identical blind moment of four witnesses, all endowed with normal senses.

The second was that she had been kidnapped--in which case Goya must be the agent. This, too, was not a watertight theory. Apart from the necessity of co-operation with another person--or persons--in Pomerania House, Goya would have to devise as ingenious and foolproof hiding place for her victim, in view of the inevitable search of her premises.

Foam considered that such a crime would be highly hazardous, but he had no choice in the matter he had either to find the girl--dead or alive--or to disprove her father's suspicions. Cross was in no mental state to wait patiently for proof that Evelyn had merely slipped away. Besides, delay was dangerous because, in the worst case, the girl would be gagged and trussed-up in a restricted space, with a shortage of air.

At the far end of her room, Madame Goya sat at a small table near the radiator, stitching gloves. An adjustable lamp threw a cone of light upon her work, but left her face in shadow. Behind her were closely drawn window curtains of lined brown velvet.

Foam looked around for the evidence of a bed other than the inadequate divan, before he asked a question.

"Do you sleep here, madame?"

"I?" repeated the lady incredulously. "What a grim idea. I have a flat in St. John's Wood--This is merely a lock-up place of business."

It did not suggest a workshop to Foam's suspicious eye. It was so tidy and free from snippets or threads that he suspected the glove-making to be a blind to some dingier profession. At the same time he remembered the major's statement about objectionable tenants, so concluded that the line could not be too obvious.

He turned to the major.

"You searched the room thoroughly, of course?" he asked, "What about the window?"

"It was closed and the shutters bolted," replied Major Pomeroy. "This room is nearly hermetically sealed--Madame prefers to work by artificial light."

Foam's nose confirmed the statement. The temperature was that of a forcing frame, while the air smelt of burnt pastilles, rotten apples and fog. He glanced at the open door of the cupboard wardrobe which revealed a fur coat on a stretcher, and then crossed to the long mirror.

"Sure there is no door hidden behind this?" he asked as he tried to shake the frame.

"Look for yourself," invited the major. "The rawl-plugs are fixed as tight as a vice and there are no signs of tampering. You can take it from me that I've examined and tested every fixture personally."

"Not enough," declared Foam. "They must all come down."

He was surprised by the relief in Cross' eyes.

"I'll say this for you. Major," he said. "You know how to pick them. This young man seems to understand." Holding Foam's arm in a powerful clutch, as though to enforce his sympathy, he went on speaking. "You understand, don't