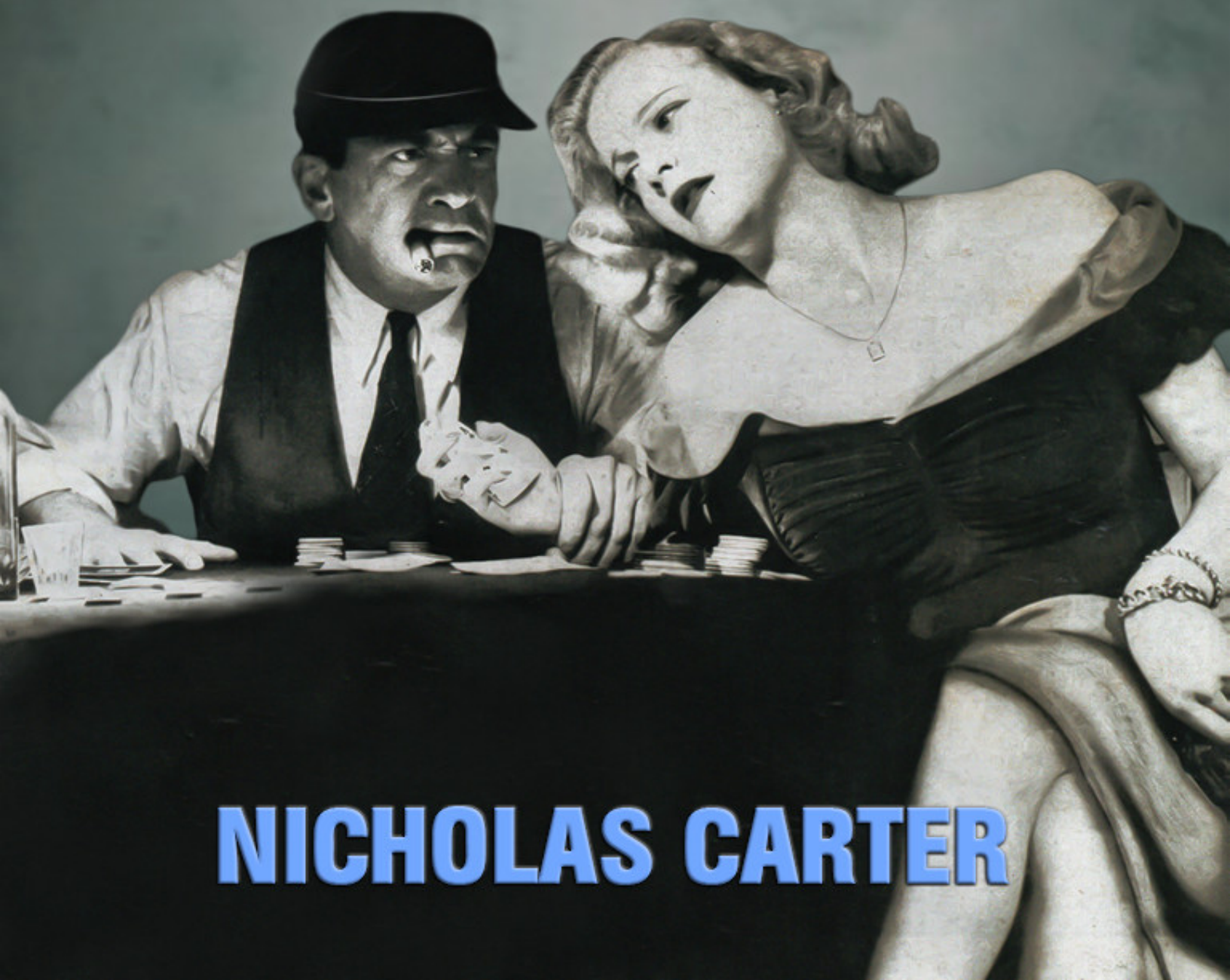


**CLASSICS TO GO**

**OUT OF DEATH'S  
SHADOW,  
OR, A CASE WITHOUT PRECEDENT**



**NICHOLAS CARTER**

**Out of Death's Shadow,  
Or, A Case Without  
Precedent**

**Nicholas Carter**

# CHAPTER I.

## A MAN WITHOUT A SECRET.

On the shady veranda of an old-fashioned Southern house, on the outskirts of St. Louis, two men in the prime of life were enjoying their cigars one fine morning.

One, the younger, with a fair, full face and honest, gray eyes, after a long period of silence, said:

"To-morrow will decide her fate, Nick. You have worked up a strong case against her, but I am afraid of the jury."

"The jury is all right. We have seen to that, John. Conviction is certain. It has been an easy case for me."

The woman to whose trial reference had been made had killed her husband, but the deed had not been witnessed, and it was due to Nick Carter's efforts that a complete case for the prosecution had been made out.

"Murder is a secret of such awful weight," said Nick, "that there are few men, to say nothing of women, who are able successfully to carry it."

"It will out some time or other, eh?"

"In the majority of cases, yes. Of course, there are instances where the crime of taking human life has remained an unsolved and seemingly insoluble mystery, but such instances have, in my opinion, resulted either through a chain of accidents, impossible to foresee, or through the negligence or inefficiency of the officers of the law, whose duty it was to use all possible skill and diligence in arriving at the facts. In this woman's case we have, I think, exercised all necessary skill and diligence. To-morrow the end will come, and the next day I shall be on my way to New York."

"You have been here but a week, Nick, and yet I feel as if I had known you a lifetime. When you introduced yourself as an old friend of my mother, I knew in a moment that I had myself found a friend, and one after my own heart."

The young fellow's earnestness and feeling warmed the cockles of the great detective's heart. He liked John Dashwood and he took no pains to conceal the fact. A portly, well-groomed man of sixty, with a self-satisfied smile on his keen, smoothly shaven face, who had come out of the house and approached unperceived, now broke in with the remark:

"I'll bet it's a secret you are discussing."

"What makes you think so?" asked John Dashwood quickly.

"The expression of your face. There is certainly something about the position of your lips, your eyes are slightly narrowed, your head is bowed in a suspicious manner, your —"

"Might we not have been exchanging simple confidences?" put in Nick, with a smile.

"Possibly. But confidences are secrets, you know."

The speaker leaned against the railing in front of the two friends and regarded them benignly.

"We were not discussing secrets," said Dashwood, as he threw back his head, though his manner was pleasant enough.

"No? Then you should have been, for all of us have our secrets."

Dashwood shook his head. "You must except me, Mr. Leonard," he said.

"What? A man without a secret? Come, now, Dashwood, you must be joking. I don't assume, of course, that any secret you may have hidden in your breast is of a shady nature, but to say that your mind is an open book, that during your twenty-six years of life—twenty-six or twenty-seven, which is it?"

"Twenty-six."

"That during your twenty-six years of life you have never had any experience which, for honorable reasons, you have thought best to keep to yourself, or have never been the recipient of another's secret, equally honorable, but not proper for publication, is to stamp you as an exceptional man."

Dashwood laughed.

"I am an exceptional man, then, for really I haven't any secrets. But as for Mr. Carter, here," turning and nodding in his friend's direction, "he is nothing less than a walking mystery. He has to be, you know, for he is a detective."

Mr. Leonard looked keenly at Nick Carter.

"How is it?" he asked, in a bantering tone. "Are you as Dashwood says, or is he mistaken, and are you to be placed with him in the category of unfledged innocents? Come now, out with the truth. Are you a man with a corroding secret, or are you not?"

"There are some matters of no concern to the general public," replied Nick, rather coldly, "which I have found advisable to keep to myself. But"—with a smile—"they are honest ones, I assure you."

"Would your enemies think so if they knew them?" queried Leonard provokingly.

"My enemies give me little concern."

"Neither do mine, for I have none," said John Dashwood proudly.

Gabriel Leonard lifted his eyebrows. Then he spoke rather cynically. "You are both to be congratulated. Dashwood, especially. A man without a secret and with not an enemy in the world! Your condition, I suppose, must be attributed to the very lucky circumstances that have hitherto surrounded your existence."

Dashwood nodded. "I have been lucky, I know, and the greatest piece of luck that ever came in my way, Mr. Leonard, was when I made your daughter my wife."

As he spoke, pride and satisfaction, strong and deep, were expressed in his honest countenance.

"Letty ought to have heard that pretty speech," said Leonard lightly, though in his heart he was vastly pleased with his son-in-law's appreciation of the treasure he had won.

Nick accompanied his friend up-town that morning and left him at a large building on Market Street, a few blocks from the Union Depot, with the understanding that they should dine together in the afternoon. John Dashwood was the manager of a manufacturing company of which Gabriel Leonard was the president. His parents were dead and he lived with his father-in-law, who was a widower.

The friends took dinner in an Olive Street restaurant. Dashwood's brow was clouded throughout the meal.

"What's the matter, John?" Nick asked. "Anything wrong in the office?"

"I hope not; but a good bit of money has come in lately, and the books do not show what they ought to show."

"Did you find any pronounced irregularities?"

"I have found something that excites my suspicions, but I can't make sure that there has been crooked work until I have gone over the books thoroughly and compared vouchers, and so forth. I shall work at them to-night, for I know I sha'n't sleep a wink until I have matters straightened out. It's lucky Letty is away on a visit to Chicago, or she would be terribly worried over the muddle."

Nick looked grave.

"John," he said earnestly, "there may be more in this than you have any idea of. What do you say? May I come round to-night and give you the benefit of my experience?"

"Yes. I shall be glad to have you. Come at, say, nine o'clock."

"All right."

It was six o'clock when they parted. At nine Nick went up the elevator to the floor upon which was located the office of the manufacturing company. He knocked at the door, but there was no answer. He waited a moment and knocked again. Still no answer. By means of the keyhole he saw that there was no light in the office. Dashwood, then, was not there. Something must have happened, something out of the ordinary, to cause this punctiliously honorable young man to slight an appointment with a friend. The detective instantly attributed Dashwood's absence to an alarming discovery made while examining the books and accounts of the firm. Perhaps he had gone home. In a saloon below, next door to the entrance, was a phone. Nick used it to call up Gabriel Leonard's residence. The housekeeper answered. Neither Mr. Dashwood nor Mr. Leonard was at home. Didn't know where either might be found. Had Mr. Carter gone out to the fair-grounds?

Nick left the phone troubled in mind. Leonard's absence from home was indication that business of pressing

importance had demanded his attention, for his rule, so the detective had been informed by Dashwood, was to remain at home every evening. He cared nothing for theaters or social diversions, belonged to no club or secret order. The business of each day over, he betook himself to his suburban residence, there to find comfort and rest in his pipe and newspapers.

Nick went up to the counter and engaged in conversation with the barkeeper.

"How's business this evening?"

"Rotten. Everybody is at the fair."

"Gives you opportunity to get a breath of fresh air as compensation, though."

"Yes, that's so. I stood at the door from eight until eight-forty-five without a break."

"Studying the people who passed?"

"In a way."

"All sorts and conditions in town during the fair. Good chance for a novelist to make copy."

"That's right. Now, I saw something to-night that might give one of these fiction fellows a cue. A fact here and there is all they want. Imagination does the rest."

"What did you see, if it is a fair question?"

"I saw a woman act in two scenes."

"Monologue?"

"No, she had company, but she was the star. Great woman that. I know her name, but I've never spoken to her. Wish I did know her. I'd ask her what her little play to-night might mean."



"Say," said Nick, with an eagerness that was not assumed, but which was purposely allowed vent, "you are exciting my curiosity. What was her play? But first let's smoke, unless you prefer liquid refreshment."

"No, a cigar suits me."

After each man had lighted his weed, the barkeeper began his story:

"I had been at the door not more than five minutes when my lady comes up and starts for the elevator. Her lips were shut tight, and she looked as if she had it in for some one and was going to call for a settlement. She was gone about three minutes, and then reappeared, in company with Luke Filbon, the bookkeeper and cashier of the manufacturing company. Filbon, who is a young geezer with not enough sense to last him overnight, appeared to be dippy with fright. They did not see me, for I was standing off the sidewalk, and so I got the full benefit of the scene without putting up a bean. The way that woman's tongue lashed young Filbon was a caution to sinners. 'You shouldn't have waited so long,' she said. 'You should have taken it out when you left the office this afternoon. You are a poor, weak, pitiful fool. I want nothing more to do with you. If I had not more spunk than you have I'd cut my throat. Go. You've ruined everything. You have destroyed my chance, and you have destroyed your own. You're fit for nothing but to wear stripes. Get out of my sight.'

"'I'll go home, get my revolver, and blow out my brains, that's what I'll do,' Filbon said. 'I thought you loved me, but it was the money you wanted, not me.'

"'I wanted both, you fool,' she retorted. 'But go. I don't care to talk further with you. I have no use for such timid cattle.'

"'You will be sorry when you read the papers to-morrow morning,' he said, and then away he went, leaving her standing on the sidewalk just outside the entrance to the elevator. For a few minutes she stood there. Then I heard her say: 'It's risky, but it has got to be done, for that old fool may, after all, fail to come to time.' Bad habit that, talking to oneself, but I reckon she was so worked up that she didn't realize what she was saying. I don't know, of course, what she had made up her mind to do, and maybe she had no chance to carry it out, for just at that moment the elevator descended—it seemed the cage was at one of the upper floors all this time—and John Dashwood came out. The woman spoke to him first. I heard her plainly. 'You had better look after Luke Filbon,' she said, 'for he's liable to make a fool of himself to-night.'

"'Where is he?' Dashwood asked sharply.

"'Gone home,' she said.

"Dashwood thanked her, and then went down the street aways and took a car, the car that goes to Broadway. The woman watched him get on the car, and then hurried around the corner."

The barkeeper paused.

"Is that all?" Nick asked.

"Not quite. Ten minutes passed, and a Laclede Avenue car stops at the corner and off gets Gabriel Leonard. He comes to the elevator entrance and goes up in the cage. Five minutes goes by, and down he comes, muttering something about there being the devil to pay. Off he goes on a car bound for Broadway. Gone to see Filbon."

"What makes you think so?"

"I am a deducer," answered the barkeeper, with a knowing air. "Luke Filbon lives on one of the little streets

west of Broadway, near the southern limits of the city. The Broadway car lands within a couple of blocks of his home. That's where Dashwood went to-night, and it's ten to one that Leonard followed him."

There was a city directory in the saloon, and when Nick had found Filbon's address, he said quickly: "Your story has interested me. I think I will go out there myself. I know both Dashwood and Leonard, and I am curious to learn what is at the bottom of to-night's business. Now, as to the woman. You said you know her name. What is it?"

"Madam Ree. She is a palmist, who has recently opened a joint on Chestnut Street."

Madam Ree! Nick drew a deep breath. Madam Ree was the assumed name of Cora Reese, who, as the accomplice of James Dorrant, had figured so conspicuously in a San Francisco case which, a short while before, had occupied the attention and had exhibited the wonderful skill of the great detective.

This woman, handsome, fascinating, unscrupulous, with wits sharpened by the contest with Nick Carter, whose bitter enemy she had announced herself to be, because she had been thwarted in her attempt to win a fortune in diamonds, was now in St. Louis and mixed up in a mysterious affair in which Nick's friend, John Dashwood, was in some way connected. What did it all mean?

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FATE OF THE TRANSGRESSOR.

At the time of Nick Carter's meeting with Cora Reese she was but a novice in crime, but the detective was convinced by a study of her character that she needed only experience to make her a dangerous foe. Foiled in her scheme to enrich herself at the expense of Roland Garrett, a fortunate member of San Francisco's society, she had turned upon Nick Carter, the author of her defeat, and had venomously announced her intention to get even. Perhaps it had been her plan to try conclusions with the great detective in the city of New York, his headquarters, and, perhaps, the stay in St. Louis was meant to be but temporary and for the purpose of putting her in funds.

After arranging a disguise which completely concealed his identity, Nick boarded a car bound for Broadway, transferred to that long thoroughfare which runs parallel with and through the river district, and near the hour of eleven found himself in front of the door of Luke Filbon's house. It was a small, one-story, brick structure, located but a short distance from the river and near a large grain-elevator. The house was in darkness, and all was silent within. Nick pressed the button by the side of the door, and soon was heard a weak, querulous voice from within.

"Who's there?"

"Some one to see Mr. Filbon on important business. Is he at home?"

"No, and he won't come to-night, I'm thinking. He said he had work to do at the office that would likely keep him until after midnight. I am his mother. I suppose you know."

"I took it for granted that you were. Has any one been here to see him this evening?"

"Yes. John Dashwood was here about an hour ago."

"No one else?"

"No. What's the matter? Luke isn't in any trouble, is he?"

There was maternal anxiety in the tone of the voice. Nick believed that evasion would be charity.

"I hope not," he said. "Good night," and he walked quickly away from the door before further and probably embarrassing questions could be asked.

The patrolman on the beat was found. He had seen two men go from Broadway toward the Filbon house between nine and ten o'clock. They were not together, but were fifteen minutes apart. He had not been near enough to observe them closely, but was satisfied from their build—they were both large men—that neither was Filbon, who was small and thin.

Perplexed and dissatisfied, the detective went to the river end of the street. There was a rotten wharf extending toward the big grain-elevator. It was short, and for a portion of its length the planking had been torn out.

The night was clear, with a half-moon, and Nick picked his way about the wharf, in the hope that he might find a clue to the night's mysterious proceedings. There was a possibility that Luke Filbon, determined on suicide, had given up the idea of going home to secure the revolver—to take which action he would have to tell a story that would deceive his mother, and that would be no easy task—and instead had thrown himself into the Mississippi.

Nick, with his bull's-eye, investigated the water space under the wharf without much hope of making a discovery. If death by drowning had been Filbon's purpose, he would, in

all probability, have jumped from the edge of the wharf into the river, and the swift current would have carried him far down-stream.

The water, muddy and but slightly disturbed, carried nothing upon its surface that was out of the ordinary. Nick moved to a point where he could get an outlook on the short section of bank beyond the water. He was rewarded by the sight of a human figure huddled up on the sloping bank of the levee a few feet from the water's edge. The figure was that of a man, with head bowed, elbows on knees, and face in hands. As the light of the bull's-eye was flashed upon him the man lifted his head with a start, but made no effort to arise. Nick believed that a way to get under the wharf would be found at the street abutment. Hastening over the planks, he soon discovered an opening, and quickly descended. The man was still there. He had not moved. Walking over to him, the detective saw a small, thin man of about twenty-five, with a haggard face and bloodshot eyes.

"What do you want?" he asked, in a surly tone. "I am minding my own business here."

"I want your confidence," said Nick kindly. "I am not your enemy. I may prove to be the best friend you ever had."

The young man gazed stupidly at the detective, then lowered his head and said, in a voice broken with emotion: "No; I have no friends."

"That remains to be seen, Mr. Luke Filbon."

"My God! Do you know me?"

There was the ring of abject despair in the utterance.

"Yes, I know you now, if I did not know you before."

For a few moments there was silence. Then Nick asked: "What do you fear?"

"If I ever see daylight, I fear the anger and vengeance of one man."

"Gabriel Leonard?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"By putting two and two together."

"Who are you?"

There was both fear and curiosity in the expression of Filbon's face.

"I am a friend of John Dashwood, and he is one man among a thousand. That ought to satisfy you."

Filbon groaned.

"Yes, yes," he huskily replied. "I can guess who you are. You are Nick Carter, and that means——"

"It means," was the detective's quick interruption, "that you must tell the truth and that you need not fear me. I have talked with your mother, and I pity her son. Come, confide in me, for I believe you have been hounded into your present position."

"I—I can't tell you."

Great drops of perspiration showed themselves on Filbon's brow. Nick lighted a cigar.

"Let me help you a little," he said easily. "You have been led into crime by a woman, and you are afraid that if you betray her your life will be attempted. Am I right?"

"You are not far wrong," said the young man wearily.

"Now, if you can aid me in tightening the cords about this woman, will not that furnish protection for yourself? For how can you be harmed if the person you fear is in prison?"

Filbon shook his head, and then compressed his lips. He was now sorry that he had admitted anything, and he cursed his want of backbone. And he thought, bitterly: "If I hadn't been a mean, spiritless wretch, I would never have got into this mess."

Nick knew the nature he had to deal with. He said quietly: "Listen to me a moment, and maybe you will find it advisable to change your mind. You are the bookkeeper and cashier of the manufacturing company of which Gabriel Leonard is president and John Dashwood is manager. You have been stealing from the company. The crime would never have been committed but for the evil prompting of a wicked woman, who, protesting love for you, would have cast you aside the moment she received the money she urged you to steal. To-night John Dashwood surprised your guilty secret. You had hidden the stolen money in the office, and you went there to get it, in pursuance of this woman's order. You did not get it, or, if you did, it was taken from you. Dashwood allowed you to go. His heart overflows with charity and—and I presume he knows your mother. As you left the elevator you saw the woman. You told her that the scheme had failed. She reproached you, cast you off. You then announced your intention to go home, get a revolver, and blow out your brains. What induced you to reconsider that determination?"

Luke Filbon had listened to this clear exposition of his case in sheer amazement. "No need to keep silent longer," he said, in a husky voice. "I'll tell you all."

But he did not at once begin his story.

For some time he sat without speaking, his eyes on the water. What thoughts passed through his mind the detective never guessed until his account with Filbon had been closed.



"This woman," he began, in a steady voice, "came to St. Louis a short time ago. I met her on the evening following her arrival here. It was at a Parisian beauty show, which has since been interdicted by the police. She was the star of the outfit, and my admiration seemed to please her. We had opportunity for a quiet confab, and she invited me to call upon her next day. I was fool enough to do so; and before I had been with her an hour she knew all about my affairs. I have never associated much with women of her class, and she exercised her powers of fascination so well that the next visit I promised to do all she wished me to do. I was infatuated, and when she painted in glowing colors a life abroad without work, a life that should be one long round of pleasure, I stood ready to furnish the means if such a thing were possible. She said we would require twenty thousand dollars, and proposed that I should steal that amount from the company. I could not see my way to the performance of such a thing. I told her that, though I was the cashier, there was never more than a few thousands in the safe on any one day, and that every afternoon, before the banks closed, the money in the safe was banked.

"She had thought of that, she said, and could suggest a way out of the difficulty. I could every day hold out something, say a few hundred dollars, as a rule, and more when the receipts should be unusually large, and cover up the shortage by falsifying the books. In this way the twenty thousand dollars could be withdrawn within thirty days. The plan seemed feasible, for I was fully trusted by Dashwood, and before the expiration of thirty days I had drawn out of the safe and secreted in the office twenty thousand dollars in bank-notes."

"Of course, you did not take the numbers?"

"But I did. There was no reason for it. Force of habit, I suppose, made me put them down."

"Did you keep the list?"

"Yes, and I have it with me. But it is of no importance, as you must see before I have finished my story. Yesterday afternoon I saw Madam Ree—that's her name, and she took up the palmist business when the beauty show shut up shop—and told her the twenty thousand would be ready to-night. Her eyes sparkled with pleasure, and she was never more gracious. All the details of our contemplated trip to Europe were gone over, and when I left her she promised to meet me across the street from the office at seven-thirty o'clock to-night.

"At seven-fifteen I went to the office, and was surprised to see John Dashwood there, and at work on the books. This was suspicious, and I was all of a tremble lest he should discover one or more of my false entries. His first words told me that the game was up.

"'Sit down,' he said sternly. 'I shall have something to say to you before long.'

"I waited in an agony of dread for nearly half an hour. Then Dashwood turned and faced me. 'You have been taking the firm's money, Filson,' he said sorrowfully. 'Why have you done so? And what has become of it?' I was so taken aback, so overwhelmed by the gravity of my position, that I could only stammer a few inarticulate words.

"'Come,' he said, 'where is the money?'

"In an instant my brain cleared up.

"I knew what I must do.

"I would give him the money, then go home, get my pistol, and blow out my brains. Taking the notes from their hiding-place, I handed them to Dashwood, without a word.

"'Very well,' he said kindly. 'Now, go home, get a good sleep, and come around in the morning and we'll talk over