

Annie Haynes



British Murder Mysteries

Annie Haynes Collection

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**Inspector Furnival's Cases, The Bungalow
Mystery, The Blue Diamond, The Secret of
Greylands...**

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Chapter I

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St. Peter's was rapidly becoming the church for fashionable weddings; but even St. Peter's had seldom been the centre of a larger or more fashionable crowd than was assembling this warm April afternoon to see Lady Geraldine Summerhouse married to the man of her choice. There was the usual gathering of loiterers round the door and on the steps of the church; while the traffic in the street was impeded by the long line of private carriages and motors setting down guests.

Two men came round the corner of King's Street, walking quickly; the sightseers brought them to a standstill.

"Hullo, what is this?" one of them exclaimed. "Oh, I see, a wedding. Well I suppose we shall get through somehow."

Both men, though they wore the conventional frockcoat and silk hat, had the look of travellers, or colonials, with their thin bronzed faces. The foremost of the two had reached the last line of waiting spectators, and was just about to cross the red carpet that was laid up the steps of the church and under the awning. The policeman put up a warning hand, some guests were alighting, another car took its place before the kerb. A group of maidservants, with baskets of flowers, stood immediately before the two strangers. The man behind turned his head idly as a big dark man sprang from a car and handed out a tall exquisitely dressed woman. Together they came up the steps and passed close to the stranger, but the beautiful eyes did not glance at him, did not note the change that swept over his face.

He, looking after them, caught his breath sharply, incredulously. Then as they passed into the church he leaned forward and touched the arm of one of the maids.

"Can you tell me the name of the lady who has just gone in?"

The maid looked a little surprised at being spoken to, but the tone was unmistakably that of a gentleman; there was an obvious desire for information in his expression; she answered after a moment's hesitation:

"That was Lady Carew and Sir Anthony, sir!"

"Sir Anthony and Lady Carew," he repeated in a musing tone, a curious brooding look in his light eyes. "Not Carew, of Heron's Carew, surely—mad Carew as they used to call him?"

"Yes, sir. He is Sir Anthony Carew, of Heron's Carew."

"And she, who was she before her marriage?"

There was something compelling about his gaze. The girl answered unwillingly:

"She was his sister's—Miss Carew's—governess, sir."

"Ah!" He turned away abruptly.

His companion leaned forward:

"Are you going on, old man? Hang it all, if you stay here much longer we shall be late for our appointment, and then —"

"I am not going on." The first man's tone was decisive. "You can manage by yourself, Jermyn. Perhaps I may join you later."

His friend looked at him and shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

"Well, you always were a queer sort of fellow. We shall meet later at Orlin's, I suppose. So long, old man."

He disappeared in the crowd. The other scarcely seemed to hear him. He kept his place in the forefront of the

spectators, his eager eyes seeking amid the shadows and the dimness of the church, for one graceful figure. He did not notice that the other man had turned, and was now waiting behind him. At last the service—elaborately choral—was over, the organ pealed out the Wedding March, bride and bridegroom with their attendants came forth, and still those light eyes kept their watch on the interior of the church.

The guests followed, some of them found their carriages without difficulty; others stood waiting in the porch talking and laughing to one another. Sir Anthony and Lady Carew were among the first to come out. Their footman touched his hat:

"If you please, Sir Anthony, something has gone wrong with the car; it is just round King Street. Jenkins can't get it to move. Shall I call a taxi?"

"Yes, no. Wait a minute." Sir Anthony looked anxious. The big green Daimler was his latest toy. He turned to his wife: "I must see what is wrong myself, I won't be a moment, Judith, or would you rather go on at once?"

"Certainly not. I would much rather wait. I hope it is nothing serious, Anthony."

As Lady Carew smiled, it was noticeable that the whole character of her face altered. In repose it was cold, even a little melancholy, but the smile revealed unexpected possibilities, the big hazel eyes melted and deepened, the mouth softened into new curves. She stood back a little as Sir Anthony hurried off, a tall graceful-looking woman in her exquisite gown of palest grey chiffon velvet, with the magnificent sables that had been her husband's wedding gift thrown carelessly round her. Against the neutral tints of her background, against the deep tone of her furs, her clear delicate skin looked almost transparent. Her face was oval

in shape, with small perfectly formed features, the eyes were remarkable, big and haunting, of a curious grey blue in the shadows which yet held yellow specks that shone in the sunlight, that danced when she laughed. Set under broad level brows, they had long black lashes that contrasted oddly with the pale gold of her hair.

One woman paused as she passed.

"How perfectly sweet Peggy looked, Lady Carew! Quite the prettiest bridesmaid of them all."

Lady Carew's smile lighted up her face; she was obviously pleased as she murmured some inaudible reply.

The pale-eyed man was just behind her now. As she turned aside again he stepped out of the crowd and touched her arm.

"Judy!"

An extraordinary change passed over Lady Carew's face as she heard the voice, as she turned and met the man's gaze. Every drop of blood seemed to recede from her cheeks, leaving her white as death; only her eyes looked alive as she stared at him, even her lips were blue.

"You!" she said slowly in a hoarse whisper. "You!"

"Yes, I." The man placed himself a little before her, so that in a measure he screened her. "At last I have found you, Judy!"

"But you—I thought you were dead." Her eyes were strained upon his face in an agony of appeal.

"So I should suppose," the man said roughly with a short, hard laugh, his pale eyes burning with an inward fire as they wandered over the lovely face, the graceful svelte form of the woman before him. "But I am not dead, Judy. On the contrary I am very much alive, and—I have come home for my own, Judy."

"Your own!" Judith Carew repeated, slowly. Her face was like a death-mask now, but the eyes—the big, luring eyes—were living as they focused on the man's bronzed face, as they drew forth some dreadful meaning. She gave a low hoarse sob. "Your own—my God!"

The pale eyes grew suddenly apprehensive, but the harsh tone did not soften.

"You know what I mean well enough. When shall I find my Lady Carew at home to me, Judy?"

"Never." She shot the word out quickly. "You shall never enter my husband's house. I will kill myself first."

Sir Anthony was coming back. They could see his tall figure towering over the heads of others, here and there he was stopped by a cheery word of greeting; they could hear his laugh. The pale-eyed man looked at the trembling woman.

"I must see you again and to-day—where?"

She shook her head. "I don't know," she said with difficulty. "I have told you you shall not come into his house."

Sir Anthony was on the top step now, only a few paces away. A tall woman in an outré costume of vieux rose had stopped him; the two were laughing and talking like old friends.

The echo of his light laugh, the sound of a careless word made Judith, waiting in her misery, catch her breath sharply.

"Go!" she cried. "Go! He must not hear. I forbid you to tell him now."

The sullen fire in the pale eyes of the man watching her leapt to sudden life, then died down swiftly.

"If I go now, you must see me—later. Look." He drew out his pocket-book and scribbled an address upon the first page: "42 Abbey Court, Leinster Avenue, 9.30 to-night."

There!" He tore out the leaf and thrust it into her hands. "If you fail me, Judy, you know the consequences."

She pushed the scrap of paper mechanically into her glove; he turned and disappeared in the crowd.

Sir Anthony caught a momentary glimpse of him as he came up, and looked after him curiously.

"Who was that, Judith? He looks rather an odd customer, as if he had seen life in some queer places. But what is it, child?"—his tone turning to one of apprehension—"You are ill—faint?"

Lady Carew forced a smile to her stiff lips. "It is nothing. It was so hot in the church," hesitatingly, "and the scent of the flowers is overpowering," she added as a passing waft of sweetness from the great sheaves of Madonna lilies that stood in the nave reached them. "I shall be all right directly. What was wrong with the car?"

"Nothing much," Sir Anthony said carelessly. "Jenkins soon put it right, but you can't wait here. Monk towers said he would send his brougham back for us. Ah, here it is!"

He helped her in carefully, and to her surprise gave their own address.

"I can't have you knocked up, and the reception is sure to be a crush," he said in answer to her look. "I am going to take you home, and make you rest, or certainly you will not be fit for the Denboroughs' to-night."

The Denboroughs'! Judith shivered in her corner; she was deadly cold beneath her furs. Lady Denboroughs' dinner parties were among the most select in London; her invitations were eagerly sought after; it had been a tribute to the furore that Lady Carew's beauty had excited that she, who but two years ago had been only Peggy Carew's governess, should have been included.

How far away it all seemed to her now, as she laid her head back on the cushions and tried to think, to realize this awful catastrophe that had befallen her. The dead had come to life! All that past, that she had believed buried beyond resurrection, had risen, was here at her very doors.

Through the shadow of the carriage, she glanced at Anthony, at the dark rugged profile, at the crisp dark hair with its faint powdering of grey near the temples, at all that only an hour ago had been so intimately dear, that was now, as it were, set on the other side of a great gulf. Her heart sank, she felt sick as she thought of the other face with its bold good looks. It was impossible, she tried to tell herself despairingly, that this thing should really have befallen her, that there should be no way of escape. Sir Anthony watched her anxiously.

As the carriage neared their house in Grosvenor Square, she sat up, and drew her furs around her with a pitiful attempt to pull herself together.

Sir Anthony helped her out solicitously. As she paused for a moment on the step, a man passed, gazing up at the front of the house.

Lady Carew caught a momentary glimpse of the big familiar figure, a mist rose before her eyes, her fingers closed more tightly over that piece of paper in her glove as she swayed and reached out a trembling hand to her husband's arm.

With a quick exclamation of alarm, Sir Anthony caught her, carried her over the threshold of their home.

"Judith, Judith, what is it, my darling?" he said, bending over her.

Chapter II

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"You must go to the Denboroughs' alone, Anthony." Judith was looking frail and wan as she came into the study in her white tea-gown, her hair gathered together loosely in a great knot behind.

Sir Anthony was sitting at his writing-table, a pile of unopened letters lay beside him, he was apparently oblivious of them as he studied the card in his hand. He sprang up now.

"Judith, is this wise? I hoped you were asleep."

"I couldn't sleep," Judith said truthfully, as she steadied herself by the table, "and I went up to the boy. Anthony, you must not give up the Denboroughs'. I shall go to bed at once. Célestine is going to give me a sleeping draught, so you see you will be no use here"—with a pitiful attempt at a smile.—"And we shall put the Denboroughs' table out altogether if neither of us goes. It won't matter so much about me, people can always get another woman, but you, you must not disappoint them."

Sir Anthony hesitated, some quality in her insistence impressed him disagreeably. Why was she so anxious to get rid of him? The next moment he was chiding himself for his folly. Judith was evidently unwell, she was overwrought, feverish.

"Yes, yes," he answered soothingly. "Of course I will go. That will be all right, Judith."

She drew a little soft breath as she laid her head against his arm.

"And now that is settled I am going to take you back to your room," he went on. "You ought not to have come down, you ought to have sent for me."

But Judith's hands clung to his arm. "No, no. There is an hour yet before you need dress. I want to sit here like this. Don't send me away, Anthony!"

Sir Anthony felt a quick throb of anxiety as he looked down at her ruffled golden head; this attack of nerves was something outside his experience of Judith; he began to ask himself whether it was not possibly the forerunner of some serious illness?

"My darling, do I ever want to send you away?" he questioned, a reproachful reflection in his pleasant voice. "It is because I know that you ought to be in bed. For myself could I ask anything better than that you should be here with me?"

Judith sank down in one of the big saddleback chairs near the fire-place, and drew Sir Anthony on to the arm with weak, insistent fingers. As his arm closed round her she nestled up to him with a deep sigh of content, but she did not speak.

To herself she was saying that this might be the last time that she would see the love-light in Anthony's eyes, feel the warmth of his tenderness.

For this one hour she would forget everything outside. She remember only that she was with the man she loved, the man who loved her. Then everything would be over, she would be no longer Anthony Carew's honoured wife. Her life at Heron's Carew would be as if it had never been. There would be nothing for Anthony to do but forget her. But first there was this one hour—this golden hour that she would have to remember afterwards!

Sir Anthony held her closely for a time in silence, once or twice his lips touched a loosened strand of golden hair that lay across his shoulder. But at last he laid her back very gently in her chair, and straightening himself turned to his writing-table.

Judith clung to his arm. They were running out so fast, the minutes that were the souls of her one golden hour.

"You—you are not going to leave me?" she gasped.

"Leave you, my sweetheart, no!" Sir Anthony said drawing his blotting-book towards him. "But I must just finish this letter that I was writing when you came in, I shall not be a minute. It is to poor Sybil Palmer. Her husband met with a bad accident yesterday. He always will act his own chauffeur, and he is reckless at hills. It seems there was a terrible smash-up, and there isn't much hope for Palmer, I fancy."

Judith stirred quickly, she drew a little away.

"Do you mean that he is not going to get better—that he will die?"

Sir Anthony nodded gravely. "I am afraid so."

With all her power Judith thrust away from her that hideous thought that would obtrude itself. Lord Palmer was going to die and Sybil—Lady Palmer—the beautiful cousin who had been engaged to Anthony in his youth, and whose loss had embittered all his young manhood, would be free.

But then—then Judith's golden hour would be over—nothing would matter to her, she told herself, nothing would hurt her then.

She looked at Sir Anthony as he sat at the table; she could catch a glimpse of his profile; she could hear his pen moving quickly over his paper; evidently it was a long letter he was writing. At last, however, it was finished, and he came back to her.

"Now I am at your service, sweetheart."

Judith's lips trembled.

"When next month comes, we shall have been married two years, Anthony."

"Shall we?" Sir Anthony's deep-set eyes smiled down at her. "You have become so absolutely a part of my life, that I don't like to think of the time when you didn't belong to me, Judith."

Judith lay back among her cool, chintz cushions, and looked at him.

"Don't you," she said, and then, "It—it has been a happy time since we were married?" she questioned wistfully.

"A happy—a blessed time," he said with sudden passion, as he knelt down beside her and gathered her into his arms. "It was my good angel that brought you to Heron's Carew, Judith."

"Thank God for two perfect years," she whispered. "Two happy years together; whatever happens we have had that. You wouldn't quite forget those two years—if—if I died to-night; if you married some one else, Anthony?"

"Don't!" the word broke from the man almost like a sob of pain. "Don't talk of it even in jest. One can't forget what is graven on one's heart. Dead or alive, you are the one woman in the world for me." His arms tightened round her, held her close to his heart. With a little sobbing sigh Judith crept closer to him.

Carew's eyes were passionately tender as he glanced at the waves of golden hair resting on his coat. The pale curved lips were touching his sleeve again now; they were murmuring one word over and over again. "Good-bye, good-bye!" At last the golden hour was over.

She got up unsteadily. "You will go to the Denboroughs', Anthony?"

"And you will go to sleep?" He drew her arm through his. "Come, I am going to give Célestine her directions myself. No more going to the boy to-night, mind!"

She let him help her upstairs, it was so sweet, so very sweet to have him wait upon her.

But upstairs she refused utterly to go to bed; she would sleep better on the large roomy couch, she protested. Célestine would bring her some black coffee, and leave the sedative within reach, and then no one must disturb her; she would have a long rest. Sir Anthony bent down and kissed her tenderly.

"I shall not be late. Sleep well, my dearest."

Somewhat to his surprise, as he lifted his head, Judith drew it down again, and kissed him on the lips with sudden passion. "Good-bye, good-bye," she whispered. Then, as her arms fell back from his neck, she closed her eyes and turned her face into the side of the couch.

Sir Anthony stole softly away.

As he closed the door, she looked round again with wide eyes.

"Célestine!"

"Yes, miladi." The French maid came forward, a demure, provocative little figure.

"You can go now. If I want anything I will ring."

"Yes, miladi! But Sir Anthony, he said—" Evidently Célestine was unwilling to depart.

"That will do." Lady Carew interrupted her with a touch of hauteur. "I cannot sleep unless I am alone. And do not come until I ring, Célestine."

"But, certainly, miladi." The maid shrugged her shoulders as she withdrew.

Left alone, Lady Carew raised herself on her elbow, and looked all round the room. On the other side of the room

was the door leading into Sir Anthony's apartments. Judith bit her lips despairingly as she looked at it; presently he would be coming up to dress, she would hear him moving about. A long shivering sigh shook her from head to foot as she buried her face in the cushions again.

Meanwhile Sir Anthony went back to his study. There was plenty of time to dress, he had another letter to write that required some thinking over. As he walked over to the writing-table his eye was caught by a piece of paper on the chair where Judith had been sitting. Naturally, a tidy man, he glanced at it as he picked it up, wondering idly whether his wife had dropped it.

"42 Abbey Court, Leinster Avenue, 9.30 to-night,"

he read, written in a bold unmistakably masculine hand.

"What does it mean?" he asked himself as he twisted it about. There seemed to him something sinister in the curtly worded command. It was not meant for Judith of course, the very notion of that was absurd. But, as he sat down and opened his blotting-book, the look of that piece of paper haunted him; another thought—one he had believed laid for ever—the thought of the long years that lay behind his knowledge of his wife, rose and mocked him.

He would not have been Carew of Heron's Carew if his nature had not held infinite capabilities of self-torture, of fierce burning jealousy that ran like fire through his blood, and maddened him.

It was so little that he knew, that Judith had told him of her past.

It had been the usual uneventful past of an ordinary English girl, she had given him to understand. But the great hazel eyes had held hints of tragedy at times that gave the lie to that placid story.

Sir Anthony groaned aloud as he thrust the letter from him. He sat silent, his eyes fixed on that mysterious paper: "9.30 to-night." For whom had that appointment been meant?

Chapter III

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Nine o'clock! Judith Carew stood up. The time had come! Once more she looked round the familiar room, her eyes lingering on the big photograph of Anthony, in its oxydized silver frame on the mantelpiece.

She crossed to the pretty inlaid escritoire, and unlocked one of the top drawers. A piece of paper lay inside; she started as she looked at it with a frown. This was not what she wanted—this was merely a pencilled note that Peggy had sent her in the church that afternoon. A note, moreover, that she had thought she had burnt when she came in.

A moment's reflection and her face cleared; she must have tossed the address the man gave her, at the church door, into the fire, while she locked this little innocent note of Peggy's carefully away. It was strange that she should have made such a curious mistake, but it did not matter, the address was written on her brain in letters of fire. She could not forget it if she would.

She went to her wardrobe, and took out a long dark cloak, that would cover her altogether, pinned a toque on her hair, and tied a thick motor veil over it.

Then she opened the door and listened. At this hour the servants should be at their supper; it would be possible for her to get out unobserved. She calculated that she might be back—if she came back—soon after eleven. Célestine would hardly expect her to ring before then, and her absence would pass unnoticed.

No one was about apparently. Her lips moved silently as she came out into the corridor, as she looked wistfully up

the short flight of stairs that led to the nursery. Her husband's door stood open; in passing a sudden thought struck her. She went in and opened one of the drawers, inside was a leather case. She looked at it for a moment, then slowly touched the spring, and disclosed a couple of revolvers.

Anthony had been giving her lessons in shooting of late; with that small murderous looking instrument she would at least be able to protect herself. She saw that it was loaded, and held it firmly clutched in her hand under her cloak, as she made her way down the stairs. She had calculated her time well, there was no one in the hall when she let herself out and closed the door behind her softly.

It was a damp night, typical April weather. To Judith, after fevered tossing to and fro on the couch, its very moisture seemed refreshing.

Leinster Avenue was fairly familiar ground to her; in her governess days she had often brought her pupil to see some friends who lived near. Insensibly her feet turned towards the Tube; she had reverted to the mode of conveyance most familiar to her in early days. From Bond Street to Holland Park was but an affair of a few minutes, and from there she knew her way to Leinster Avenue. Abbey Court must be, she felt sure, one of the great blocks of flats standing at the near end of the Avenue. She found that she was right. Abbey Court, Nos. 1—50, faced her as she turned the well-known corner.

Looking up at the big new building she shivered. She thought of the coming interview. Just then some neighbouring clock chimed the half-hour.

She started nervously, she must not keep the man waiting, and she walked up the steps. In the hall the porter touched his cap.

"Lift, ma'am?"

She stepped in and gave the number mechanically.

They stopped at the fifth floor, the man got out and rang the bell for her.

Judith gave him half a crown, and was conscious that he stood and looked at her doubtfully.

The door opened immediately. Instinctively her hand closed more firmly over the revolver.

"Is that you, Judy? Come in!"

She was drawn through the door quickly. She recognized that there was an indefinable change in the voice since the afternoon.

Inside on the other side of a narrow passage was a door opening into a small room, evidently used as a dining-room, velvet curtains hung over the archway beyond; parted they disclosed a room fairly large for a flat. It looked like a man's den—papers and pipes were littered about. In the outer room beneath the electric light she paused and threw back her veil.

"What do you want with me?" she said curtly.

"Want with you?" The man laughed harshly. "I want you—you yourself, Judy, don't you understand? I meant to find you, I was going to put the search for you in the hands of the best detectives in London, when, just by chance, I saw you this afternoon, saw you another man's wife!"

Judith drew her breath in sharply. "I thought you were dead. I saw it in the papers, I never dreamed that there was any mistake."

"Sometimes it is convenient to die," he said sullenly. "And you—and you were always too much inclined to take things on trust, Judy!"

The woman looked at him, her breath quickening, the first dawning of a horrible suspicion turning her white and

cold.

"What do you mean?"

He laughed, though a curious indrawing of breath mingled with his laughter.

"I told you a lie when we parted, Judith. You made me mad, and I meant to bring your pride down somehow, but if I had known how you would take it—"

"A lie," Judith repeated. "A lie!" She drew farther from him, back against the wall, her face absolutely colourless save for the dark rings round her eyes, her lips stiff and cold. "What lie did you tell me?"

The man looked at her, his face was flushed, his eyes were bloodshot; with a throb of disgust Judith realized he had been drinking.

"You know," he said hoarsely. "You haven't forgotten, for all your disdainful ways! I told you a lie when I said you were not my wife—that our marriage was not legal!"

"You did not!" The words caught in a strangled sob in Judith's throat. She put up her hands, and wrenched the fastenings of her cloak apart, tore like a wild thing at the chiffon round her neck. "It was *not* a lie!" she panted. "It was the truth you told me—God's truth. I was not your wife—I was never your wife for a single minute, thank Heaven."

"You were!" A very ugly light burned in the man's pale, prominent eyes—a light that might have warned her to be careful. "You are," he amended. "You are my wife, Judy; you are not Mad Carew's, and I mean to have my own. Come," putting out his hand, "you loved me once, you will not find it impossible to love me again."

"Never!" Judith backed near the archway. For the moment she did not heed the danger of rousing the man, of kindling the fire that smouldered in his eyes. "Love you!" she

repeated, "I never loved you, never, never—not for a single moment! I"—with a sob—"know that now!"

"Do you really?" The man sprang forward and caught her arm roughly. "And who has made you so wise?" he questioned with a harsh laugh. "Mad Carew? Never mind, Judy, I can afford to laugh! For, do as you will, you are mine, mine only."

Judith stood still in his clasp. She would not struggle with him, she would not try to match her puny strength against his, but her ungloved hand tightened round the shining toy she held. It might be—it might be that only that way would freedom come!

"Judith," the man went on pleading thickly, "I was mad that night—mad with drink, or I wouldn't have laid a hand on you, I wouldn't have lied to you. Our marriage was legal enough; the woman I had married before had been dead for years, but luck was against me. You would be better without me, that was what I thought, Judy, indeed!" his voice growing maudlin.

Still Judith did not speak. She was standing against the velvet portière now, silhouetted against the dark background; her delicate features, the ghastly pallor of her face had a cameo-like effect, her big changeful eyes followed his every movement.

His hand dropped from her arm. "But now, Judy, good luck has come to me at last. For every pound of Mad Carew's I will give you ten. I will give you a title too. Ay, you shall be my lady, still, and hold up your head with the best of them. You come back to me, Judy. I tell you I have loved you always—you only!"

"I think not!" Judith laughed scornfully. "You—what do you—what do such as you know of love?" She went on recklessly. "Nothing, less than nothing! I will never come

back to you, never. You may be speaking the truth now, as you may have told me a lie before—I may be your wife—your most unhappy miserable wife—I may never have been—his! But at least I will never willingly see you again. Do you dream that I will take one penny of your boasted wealth? Rather than touch it I would starve."

"Would you?" the man said very quietly, his pale eyes watching her every movement. "Would you really?" His look might have told her that the maudlin mood was passing, that he was becoming quarrelsome. With a sudden movement he jerked up her arm. "What is this?" with a contemptuous laugh. "Ah, I see; well, a revolver is a dangerous toy in inexperienced hands. I think we will dispense with it." He twisted her hand, and catching the revolver from her threw it carelessly on the table, knocking over the glass inkstand that stood in the centre. The tablecloth was red, the ink poured across it in a black stream.

She glanced at the man who stood very near her now, his tanned face flushed, his light eyes reddened and angry. A shiver of terror shook her; she mentally measured the distance to the door, if only she could get away!

He caught her look and laughed mockingly. "Oh, no! You are not going, Judy! I haven't done with you yet. Think of all we have to discuss after our long parting."

There was a slight sound that might have come from the passage behind—she started with the faint hope that rescue might be at hand. The man heard the noise too; he turned his head and listened.

Judy saw her momentary advantage; she sprang forward. Before he had realized her intention she had reached the other room, caught at the door that must lead into the passage, and was tugging at it with insistent, impotent fingers.

There was a loud laugh behind her. "Ah, I thought of that beforehand! No use crying, Judy; the door is locked and the key is outside. Now—now don't you understand that you are in my power? That you are mine—mine!"

Judith set her teeth as she faced him, standing back against the door. He caught her in his arms.

"Do you know that you haven't given me one kiss yet, Judy? I haven't had the welcome I had looked forward to from my wife."

Judith struggled desperately to get away from him, striking blindly at the handsome face, the broad chest.

In vain, her strength was as nothing against his; she was drawn more closely to him; she could feel his hot breath upon her cheek. With one last mad effort at resistance she threw herself backwards. There was a click, then sudden darkness.

In one instant Judy realized what had happened. She had knocked against the electric switch; and it had given her the opportunity for which she had been longing. The arms that had been holding her so tightly momentarily relaxed; with a quickness born of her terrible plight she slipped out of them into the darkness.

There was the sound of an oath as the man felt blindly for the switch—failed to find it. Then as Judith tried to grope her way to the door by which she had entered, she heard that he was coming after her, swearing, knocking over the furniture. She gained the wall; surely—surely it was the outer room! Where was the door? There was not the smallest glint of light to show its whereabouts, and she had thought so certainly that it had been partly opened. It was horrible, horrible, feeling round the room, trying frantically to find the door, hearing the while the heavy breathing of the man who was pursuing her.

Once they were so near that she actually touched him. At last she felt wood—the door, the blessed door; another second and her fingers caught against a blind. It was the window—great tears came into her eyes. But the door was opposite; surely she could make her way across. Putting out her hands before her, she tried to walk softly. Yes: here was the centre table, where the revolver had been thrown, the ink upset. She felt about, there was the ink certainly, her hands were wet, but where was the revolver?

There came a cry.

"Ah! I have you now!" It seemed a long way away in the other room. "No use struggling now, Judy!"

Then across the darkness there rang out the sharp staccato sound of a revolver shot. There was a groan; a heavy fall.

Chapter IV

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Judith stood as one petrified. What had happened? What was happening? She became conscious of a new sound—an odd gurgling sound. The darkness was peopled with horrible images, the gurgling died away into silence. What was it? she asked herself, her limbs trembling under her, a sweat of deadly terror breaking out upon her forehead. What had that ping, ping sounded like? Could it have been a revolver shot? If—if it were, who had fired it? And who had fallen on the floor?

Was it possible that the man who said he was her husband had shot himself by accident? He had not guessed that the revolver was loaded, and he had used it to frighten her.

As she stood there she told herself that she was a coward and a fool. He was hurt, perhaps dying. Summoning up all her courage, she managed to raise her voice.

"What is it? Where are you? Are you hurt, Cyril?" the old name seemed to come naturally to her lips.

There was no answer. But as she waited, her head bent forward to catch the least sound, she became aware that she was not alone in the room, that some one else was breathing softly close to her. It was not the man who had been pursuing her, she knew that instinctively. An agony of terror shook her, what did that veil of darkness cover? Who—what was stealthily passing her? It was very near her now—that thing with the horribly soft breath, very, very near her; putting out her hand, she would surely touch it. If it came one step nearer, assuredly it would knock against her.

Her overstrained nerves would bear no more. With a shriek of horror, she fled across the room, hitting herself against the chairs, finally running with outstretched hands against the locked door. It was locked still, but as she dashed herself helplessly against it, one hand touched the switch-board. With a cry she pulled the button down and glanced fearfully over her shoulder into the room. As she turned slowly further round, she caught sight of something protruding beyond the easy chair.

She moved round stealthily, fearfully. A man lay on the floor in a curious doubled-up heap, a man whose fair head and broad shoulders were very familiar. "Cyril! Cyril!" she said hoarsely, beneath her breath. There was no answer; she tottered across feebly. She felt no fear now of the thing on the carpet—only a great pity as she sank on her knees beside it.

A ghastly dark line had trickled down on the carpet, the florid face was white, the eyes sightless and staring. With a cry Judith tried to raise the heavy inert head, she took the nerveless hands in hers. "Cyril! Cyril!" she sobbed, as she felt the dead weight, as a dense mist gathered before her eyes.

Judith never knew how long she crouched there, on the floor beside the dead man. Strange thoughts buzzed through her brain, memories of the past, trifles that had no bearing on the present. But at last she awoke to a consciousness of her surroundings, of the danger in which she stood. People might come in at any moment. How could she explain her presence in the flat? How tell them of the dead man's insults, of the sudden darkness, and the unknown hand that had fired the fatal shot? They would not believe her. They might say it was she—she who had killed the man who lay there stark on the carpet before her.