

***MAY
SINCLAIR***



***THE FLAW
IN THE CRYSTAL***

May Sinclair

The Flaw in the Crystal

EAN 8596547223115

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

NEW YORK

E·P·DUTTON & COMPANY

31 West Twenty-Third Street



NEW YORK

[Table of Contents](#)

E·P·DUTTON & COMPANY

[Table of Contents](#)

31 West Twenty-Third Street

[Table of Contents](#)

CHAPTER ONE



IT was Friday, the day he always came, if (so she safeguarded it) he was to come at all. They had left it that way in the beginning, that it should be open to him to come or not to come. They had not even settled that it should be Fridays, but it always was, the week-end being the only time when he could get away; the only time, he had explained to Agatha Verrall, when getting away excited no remark. He had to, or he would have broken down. Agatha called it getting away "from things"; but she knew that there was only one thing, his wife Bella.

To be wedded to a mass of furious and malignant nerves (which was all that poor Bella was now) simply meant destruction to a man like Rodney Lanyon. Rodney's own nerves were not as strong as they had been, after ten years of Bella's. It had been understood for long enough (understood even by Bella) that if he couldn't have his weekends he was done for; he couldn't possibly have stood the torment and the strain of her.

Of course, she didn't know he spent the greater part of them with Agatha Verrall. It was not to be desired that she

should know. Her obtuseness helped them. Even in her younger and saner days she had failed, persistently, to realise any profound and poignant thing that touched him; so by the mercy of heaven she had never realised Agatha Verrall. She used to say that she had never seen anything *in* Agatha, which amounted, as he once told her, to not seeing Agatha at all. Still less could she have compassed any vision of the tie—the extraordinary, intangible, immaterial tie that held them.

Sometimes, at the last moment, his escape to Agatha would prove impossible; so they had left it further that he was to send her no forewarning; he was to come when and as he could. He could always get a room in the village inn or at the Farm near by, and in Agatha's house he would find his place ready for him, the place which had become his refuge, his place of peace.

There was no need to prepare her. She was never not prepared. It was as if by her preparedness, by the absence of preliminaries, of adjustments and arrangements, he was always there, lodged in the innermost chamber. She had set herself apart; she had swept herself bare and scoured herself clean for him. Clean she had to be; clean from the desire that he should come; clean, above all, from the thought, the knowledge she now had, that she could make him come.

For if she had given herself up to *that*—

But she never had; never since the knowledge came to her; since she discovered, wonderfully, by a divine accident, that at any moment she could make him—that she had

whatever it was, the power, the uncanny, unaccountable Gift.

She was beginning to see more and more how it worked; how inevitably, how infallibly it worked. She was even a little afraid of it, of what it might come to mean. It *did* mean that without his knowledge, separated as they were and had to be, she could always get at him.

And supposing it came to mean that she could get at him to make him do things? Why, the bare idea of it was horrible.

Nothing could well have been *more* horrible to Agatha. It was the secret and the essence of their remarkable relation that she had never tried to get at him; whereas Bella *had*, calamitously; and still more calamitously, because of the peculiar magic that there was (there must have been) in her, Bella had succeeded. To have tried to get at him would have been, for Agatha, the last treachery, the last indecency; while for Rodney it would have been the destruction of her charm. She was the way of escape for him from Bella; but she had always left her door, even the innermost door, wide open; so that where shelter and protection faced him there faced him also the way of departure, the way of escape from *her*.

And if her thought could get at him and fasten on him and shut him in there——

It could, she knew; but it need not. She was really all right. Restraint had been the essence and the secret of the charm she had, and it was also the secret and the essence of her gift. Why, she had brought it to so fine a point that she could shut out, and by shutting out destroy any feeling,

any thought that did violence to any other. She could shut them all out, if it came to that, and make the whole place empty. So that, if this knowledge of her power did violence, she had only to close her door on it.

She closed it now on the bare thought of his coming; on the little innocent hope she had that he would come. By an ultimate refinement and subtlety of honour she refused to let even expectation cling to him.

But though it was dreadful to "work" her gift that way, to make him do things, there was another way in which she did work it, lawfully, sacredly, incorruptibly—the way it first came to her. She had worked it twenty times (without his knowledge, for how he would have scoffed at her!) to make him well.

Before it had come to her, he had been, ever since she knew him, more or less ill, more or less tormented by the nerves that were wedded so indissolubly to Bella's. He was always, it seemed to her terror, on the verge. And she could say to herself, "Look at him *now!*"

His abrupt, incredible recovery had been the first open manifestation of the way it worked. Not that she had tried it on him first. Before she dared do that once she had proved it on herself twenty times. She had proved it up to the hilt.

But to ensure continuous results it had to be a continuous process; and in order to give herself up to it, to him (to his pitiful case), she had lately, as her friends said, "cut herself completely off." She had gone down into Buckinghamshire and taken a small solitary house at Sarratt End in the valley of the Chess, three miles from the nearest station. She had shut herself up in a world half a mile long,

one straight hill to the north, one to the south, two strips of flat pasture, the river and the white farm-road between. A world closed east and west by the turn the valley takes there between the hills, and barred by a gate at each end of the farm-road. A land of pure curves, of delicate colours, delicate shadows; all winter through a land of grey woods and fallow fields, of ploughed hillsides pale with the white strain of the chalk. In April (it was April now) a land shining with silver and with green. And the ways out of it led into lanes; it had neither sight nor hearing of the high roads beyond.

There were only two houses in that half-mile of valley, Agatha's house and Woodman's Farm.

Agatha's house, white as a cutting in the chalk downs, looked southwest, up the valley and across it, to where a slender beech wood went lightly up the hill and then stretched out in a straight line along the top, with the bare fawn-coloured flank of the ploughed land below. The farmhouse looked east towards Agatha's house across a field; a red-brick house—dull, dark red with the grey bloom of weather on it—flat-faced and flat-eyed, two windows on each side of the door and a row of five above, all nine staring at the small white house across the field. The narrow, flat farm-road linked the two.

Except Rodney when his inn was full, nobody ever came to Woodman's Farm; and Agatha's house, set down inside its east gate, shared its isolation, its immunity. Two villages, unseen, unheard, served her, not a mile away. It was impossible to be more sheltered, more protected and more utterly cut off. And only fifteen miles, as the crow flies,