

**IN THE
DEAD OF NIGHT**

**BY
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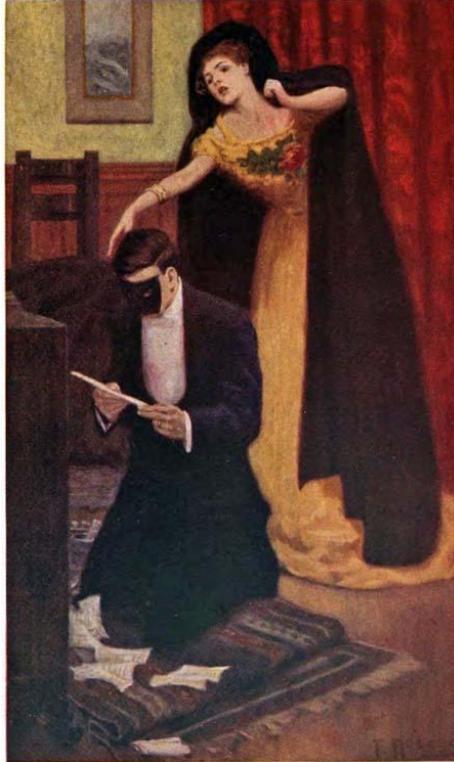
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IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT



A SMALL WHITE HAND DARTED OVER HIS SHOULDER

TO

ALICE MUMFORD ROBERTS

In the Dead of Night

I

THE GIRL IN THE HANSOM CAB

“Mysteries, my boy, are always things of the night.”

—*A Saying of Garry Webster.*

KENYON ate the good little German dinner which the Berlin always served, and looked amusedly out upon Broadway.

“Apparently it’s the same old town,” said he. “A little more light, a few more people; but the same cocksureness, the same air of being the goal of all human effort.”

With a smile, he lay back in his chair and watched the tide ebbing along. It was a November night and the pulse of Broadway beat heavily: the stream of life that flowed through the great artery was as flippant and as garish as a vaudeville. An orchestra was drooning behind some palms in the Berlin; it played one of those Indian things, filled with the throb of tom-toms and unusual combinations of tone.

But Kenyon listened inattentively. He ate the last morsel of his dessert with satisfaction, and drained the last drop of wine with appreciation; then he turned once more and watched the crowds. It was the first time he had been in New York in ten years; yet the

glare and effrontery of its big highway was waking the fever of the city in his blood.

“Will there be anything else, sir?” asked the precise German who had served him.

“Only the check,” answered Kenyon. He felt for his card-case, after the waiter had turned away; it held a single ten-dollar bill, and this he regarded ruefully.

“It is not much of a defence against the aggressions of the world,” said he. “And I fancy that this little dinner will put a rather large-sized breach in it.” He turned the check over gingerly. “Seven-fifty! Whew! Why, that would have kept me half a lifetime in Rio.”

Then he stood up to be helped on with his long top-coat. His dress clothes had been made in Montevideo, but a good English tailor had done the work, and they looked well even under the searching eyes and lights of the Berlin. But almost anything would have looked well on Kenyon; he was of the tall, wide-shouldered type that wear even shapeless things with distinction.

“*Danke schön,*” said the waiter as he slipped the coin handed him into his waistcoat pocket, and gravely bowed his patron out.

Drawing on his gloves Kenyon leisurely walked up Broadway. People turned and glanced after him with curious eyes, for there was always a sort of elegance in Kenyon’s manner of dress that commanded attention. But it was not alone the hang of a smoothly fitting coat over the shapely, powerful figure; there was the good-humored, good-looking face, also an air of quiet distinction and breeding; and then, stamped all over him, so to speak, was the resolution that makes victors of desperately circumstanced men.

No one, to look at him as he walked slowly along, would have dreamed that this immaculate creature had stood, only seven hours before, stripped to the waist in the stoke-hole of the British ship *Blenheim*. Yet it was so. He had boarded her at Rio when she touched there two weeks before; and though the fire-room was no inviting prospect, still it was better than Rio. A Latin-American city is never a place for a penniless Gringo.

The section called the "Great White Way" lay before Kenyon like a shimmering vortex.

"It screams like a phonograph," pronounced the young man, critically. "And it's just as ceaseless, as senseless, and as raucous. This is the spot, I think, that old Colonel Ainsleigh at West Point used to call a phosphorescent ulcer. And it looks it. It's the pride spot of the habitual New Yorker from the small town—the money dump—the place of cakes and ale."

Then he laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"I really think the Berlin's dinner does not set well on me," he told himself. "I once liked New York very well. But it may be that thirty is a great deal more than ten years older than twenty. My taste for many things has slackened in those ten years, and who knows but what the big town has suffered along with the other old likings."

Hard-worked hansom and goblin-eyed motor-cars spun along the smooth asphalt; jeweled women and carefully attired men streamed in at the light-flooded lobbies of the theatres. Electric cars loaded with pleasure seekers flashed clanging up and down.

At Herald Square Kenyon paused. The miraculous presses, turning out the pink-tinted *Telegram*, held him fascinated. As he stood there, the sharp staccato of a newsboy began to reach him. At first he paid no attention to the high-pitched, complaining cry; but above the grind of cab wheels and the thousand sounds of Broadway, it gradually began to take shape in his mind.

“Extree! Eight o’clock!”

The thin voice pierced the air like a thing with a point; and without actually being aware of the burden of the cry, Kenyon began to be annoyed by its abrupt dissonances.

“Full account! Great fortune! Extree!”

A great fortune! Kenyon was irritated by the idea. One does not contemplate another’s calm possession of a vast sum of money with any great degree of equanimity when one has but a few dingy dollars in the world.

“And suppose this gold-fat fool has his millions,” muttered the young man, as he turned away from the windows. “That is no reason why he should shatter the eardrums of people as they pass about their business.”

“Extree! Eight o’clock! Great fortune!”

Kenyon beckoned the boy, and in a moment he had a paper. Somehow, as he turned and walked toward Thirty-sixth Street, the realization suddenly came to him of how badly off he was; and he scowled at the shadowy future, a sudden, sobering fear at his heart. But this was only for a moment. The man who had stood at the side of Nunez on that last dreadful night in Montevideo was not

one to allow a little ill-luck to cast him down; so with chin up and shoulders squared, Kenyon threw the thing from him with a laugh.

At the corner of Thirty-sixth Street he paused and opened the paper. In great, black type the following stared at him:

WHO IS THE HEIR?

\$200,000,000!

COLOSSAL FORTUNE OF STEPHEN AUSTIN
HANGS IN THE BALANCE.

Kenyon did not read farther, but folded the paper and stood tapping it thoughtfully in his open palm.

“The human mind,” he muttered, “can scarcely grasp the meaning of such a sum. And for one man to possess it all makes me suspect that something is out of kelter with our system of doing things. Here I am broke, and with the prospect of a succession of dinnerless days before me; and then here is another fellow with tons of money and no one to give it to. If I had the running of things I’d take down the bars on some of the fat pasture-land and let the lean cattle do a little private grazing.”

Upon the opposite side of Broadway a hansom was drawn up at the curb. Kenyon’s eyes rested absently upon the veiled woman who sat within it. He saw her speak a few hasty words to the driver; then he noted the man’s quick glance in his direction, and the smart swish of the long whip over the roof of the vehicle. The hansom rattled across the street and drew up beside him; the woman leaned forward.

“I was beginning to think that you had failed us,” she said.

A whimsical look came into Kenyon’s eyes; then he smiled good-naturedly.

“I beg your pardon,” he began; but she interrupted him.

“It is quite unnecessary,” she said. He noted that the tone and the gesture that accompanied the words were rather cold and imperious. “I suppose,” she continued, “that you did not know that he was ill; but, even so, you should not have delayed. However, it is not yet too late. The physicians have assured us that he will live until morning—that he may even get well.”

The whimsical look left Kenyon’s eyes and with it went the smile.

“Has there not been a mistake?” he asked, gravely. But she gestured impatiently.

“The physicians are the best in New York.”

Notwithstanding the coldness of the tone, there was a certain sweetness in the voice that attracted Kenyon; that she was a woman of gentle breeding was very evident. And then she was young!

Regretfully, he was about to inform her that he was not the person she thought him to be—that he was a stranger in New York—that he did not know a soul among its four millions. But she stopped him once more.

“The others are already there.” She made room for him beside her, as she spoke. “Will you get in? The matter must be adjusted quickly if at all.”

He noticed a quick flash of something like indignation in this last sentence, and smiled. She caught this and instantly her head went up like that of an offended queen.

“I will take this occasion to say,” she said, freezingly, “that I have considered his safety, alone, from the beginning. My own feelings do not enter into the matter.”

“I ask your pardon, again,” began the young man. “But the fact is—”

The small white hand went up once more and waved back the words.

“I repeat,” she said, “that you are still in time. However, it would have been much better if you had come earlier. The ship reached port some seven or eight hours ago; and there could have been nothing to detain you.”

Kenyon bent his brows, and looked puzzled.

“What ship do you refer to?” he asked.

“The *Blenheim*,” came the prompt answer. Her eyes were searching his face intently; even the thick veil could not hide the fact that they were big, dark, and lustrous. “That was the ship, was it not?”

“It was,” answered Kenyon, and the puzzled look grew deeper.

“He is very low,” the girl continued, “and he is very anxious to see you.”

A number of people stood about. Those who overheard were beginning to stare; and as this could not be endured, Kenyon

entered the hansom. Instantly the driver called to his horse; the vehicle went rattling along Thirty-sixth Street, heading east, and Kenyon settled back by the girl's side, smiling his astonishment into the darkness.

II

THE DARK HOUSE IN SELDEN'S SQUARE

“When strange eyes peer through the veiling dark,
Take care, my friend, take care!”

—*From the Doggerels of Balmacenso.*

IT was Kenyon's idea, upon entering the cab, to afford himself an opportunity, out of earshot of the idlers, of bringing this bizarre situation to an end. But as before the girl gave him no chance.

“When you left Rio,” she began, in a rather hesitating way, “you had but little money, I understand.”

“That,” smiled Kenyon, “is very true.” And, for all the smile, he gazed at her searchingly. For it was a very odd thing that she should know so much about him. Within fifteen minutes she had told him that he had arrived on the *Blenheim*, that he had sailed from Rio, and that he had been hard put for money when he left there. But the thick veil hid her face from him, and he turned his gaze away, baffled.

In a few moments she spoke again; and once more he detected the slight note of hesitancy in her voice.

“Have you seen Moritze & Co.?”

“Moritze & Co.?” he repeated wonderingly.

“Oh!” suddenly. “I had forgotten. Of course you have not yet heard of them in connection with this matter.”

Kenyon laughed.

“Why, no,” he admitted; “I must confess that I have not heard of them in connection with this matter; nor of anyone or anything else having to do with it. It’s all a mystery to me.”

“Could you expect anything more, under the circumstances?” She was fumbling in a small handbag as she spoke. He watched her, amazed at how the thing drifted on.

“It does not do to speak freely of some things before all is ready,” she continued, with a return of the cold manner of a few moments before. “You should have learned that while you were with Nunez.”

He caught his breath.

Nunez! She knew about that! And he had not thought that any person north of Panama knew of the part that he had played in that ill-fated expedition in Uruguay. He was still confusedly groping amid the mental haze which her words had produced, when she spoke again.

“I was entrusted with this and asked to give it to you.”

She placed a slip of crackling paper in his hand; the cab lamps were too dim for him to discern the figures, but a glance showed the young man that it was a check.

“No, no,” he cried, hastily. “I cannot accept this!”

“Why not? It is the exact sum that you demanded.”

If there had been scorn in her voice before, it now seemed to have increased a hundredfold; and the undisguised contempt in her

manner showed her disbelief in him. This was very evident to Kenyon; he was too young to be indifferent to a woman's scorn, and a hot flush arose to his face. When he spoke his voice was sharp and had a ring that she had not heard before.

"The reason why I cannot take this is very plain to myself, at least," said he. "There has been some mistake made. I am not the man you take me to be!"

He saw her start at this, and peer at him through the changing light. The veil seemed to obstruct her vision and she flung it aside; for the first time he saw her face.

"Dark," he muttered, "and beautiful. And her eyes! Heavens! I never saw anything like them before."

And her head had a proud, youthful lift to it that caught his attention instantly. It was the sort of thing that he had always admired, but had never seen so completely possessed before.

"I am afraid," she said, coldly, "that I do not quite understand. There can be no mistake. You are the person for whom I was sent."

"I think not."

"Yet you admit that you are just from Rio?"

"Yes."

"And that you came in the *Blenheim*?"

"I did."

"And you served with General Nunez in Uruguay, did you not?"

"Yes."

“Then there is nothing wanting. You are the man. But,” and the dark eyes flashed as she spoke, “I hardly think, were the choice of my making, that I should have fixed upon you.”

The continued scorn of her manner piqued him. He was not accustomed to it.

“No?” he questioned.

“No. You resort to odd and useless evasions. You do not speak straightforwardly. You dodge the point at issue. You seem uncertain as to whether you shall go on, or go back. I expected, at least, to find a man of firmness and decision.”

This aroused Kenyon. Youth, as a rule, desires to show to good advantage before a pretty woman. And to this he was no exception.

“You do me an injustice,” he said. He spoke calmly, slowly, and evenly enough, but there was heat behind the words. “If I have shown any lack of decision it is because of my natural reluctance to proceed farther in this, to me, incomprehensible affair. I desire to be honest, and have no wish to penetrate deeper into a matter which cannot in the least concern me.” He leaned toward her and continued. “Once again I tell you that I am not the man you take me to be.”

She drew back from him as far as the limited space of the cab would permit, but said nothing. He crackled the check paper in his fingers, as he held it up and proceeded.

“This money is not for me. I cannot accept it. I think you had better assure yourself that all is right before going any farther.”

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