

The White Slave

Arthur Reeve

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Kennedy and I had just tossed a coin to decide whether it should be a comic opera or a good walk in the mellow spring night air and the opera had won, but we had scarcely begun to argue the vital point as to where to go, when the door buzzer sounded a sure sign that some box-office had lost four dollars.

It was a much agitated middle-aged couple who entered as Craig threw open the door. Of our two visitors, the woman attracted my attention first, for on her pale face the lines of sorrow were almost visibly deepening. Her nervous manner interested me greatly, though I took pains to conceal the fact that I noticed it. It was quickly accounted for, however, by the card which the man presented bearing the name "Mr. George Gilbert" and a short scribble from First Deputy O'Connor:

Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert desire to consult you with regard to the mysterious disappearance of their daughter, Georgette. I am sure I need say nothing further to interest you than that: the M. P. Squad is completely baffled.

O'Connor

"H m," remarked Kennedy; "not strange for the Missing Persons Squad to be baffled at least in this case."

"Then you know of our daughter's strange er departure?" asked Mr. Gilbert, eagerly scanning Kennedy's face and using a euphemism that would fall less harshly on his wife's ears than the truth.

"Indeed, yes," nodded Craig with marked sympathy: that is, I have read most of what the papers have said. Let me introduce my friend, Mr. Jameson. You will recall we were discussing the Gilbert case this morning, Walter?"

I did, and perhaps before I proceed further with the story, I should quote at least the important parts of the in the morning Star which had occasioned the discussion. The article had been headed "When Personalities Are Lost," and with the Gilbert case as a text many instances had been cited which had later been solved by the return of the memory to the sufferer. In part the article had said:

Mysterious disappearances, such as that of Georgette Gilbert have alarmed the public and baffled the police before this, disappearances that in their suddenness, apparent lack of purpose and inexplicability, have had much in common with the case of Miss Gilbert.

Leaving out of account the class of disappearances such as embezzlers, blackmailers, and other criminals, there is still a large number of recorded cases where the subjects have dropped out of sight without apparent cause or reason and have left behind them untarnished reputations. Of these a small percentage are found to have met with violence; others have been victims of a suicidal mania; and sooner or later a clue has come to light, for the dead are often easier to find than the living. Of the remaining small proportion there are on record a number of carefully authenticated cases where the subjects have been the victims of a sudden and complete loss of memory.

This dislocation of memory is a variety of aphasia known as amnesia, and when the memory is recurrently lost is and restored, it is an "alternating personality." The psychical researchers and psychologists have reported many

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cases of alternating personality. Studious efforts are being made to understand and to explain the strange type of mental phenomena exhibited in these cases, but no one has yet given a final, clear, and comprehensive explanation of them. Such cases are by no means always connected with disappearances, but the variety known as the ambulatory type, where the patient suddenly loses all knowledge of his own identity and of his past and takes himself off, leaving no trace or clue is the variety which the present case calls to popular attention.

There followed a list of a dozen or so interesting cases of persons who had vanished completely and had, some several days and some even years later "awakened" to their first personality, returned, and taken up the thread of that personality where it had been broken.

To Kennedy's inquiry I was about to reply that I recalled the conversation distinctly, when Mr. Gilbert shot an inquiring glance from beneath his bushy eyebrows, quickly shifting from my face to Kennedy's and asked, "And what was your conclusion what do you think of the case? Is it aphasia, or whatever the doctors call it, and do you think she is wandering about somewhere unable to recover her real personality?"

"I should like to have all the facts at first hand before venturing an opinion," Craig replied with precisely that shade of hesitancy that might reassure the anxious father and mother without raising a false hope.

Mr. And Mrs. Gilbert exchanged glances, the purport of which was that she desired him to tell the story.

"It was day before yesterday," began Mr. Gilbert, gently touching his wife's trembling hand sought his arm as he began rehearsing the tragedy that had cast its shadow across their lives, "Thursday that Georgette er since we have heard of Georgette." His voice faltered a bit, but he proceeded, "As you know, she was last seen walking on Fifth Avenue. The police have traced her since she left home that morning. It is known that she went first to the public library, then that she stopped at a department store on the avenue, where she made a small purchase which she had charged to our family account, and finally that she went to a large bookstore. Then that is the last."

Mrs. Gilbert sighed, and buried her face in a lace kerchief as her shoulders shook convulsively.

"Yes, I have read that," repeated Kennedy gently, though with manifest eagerness to get down to facts that might prove more illuminating. "I think I need hardly impress upon you the advantage of complete frankness, the fact that anything you tell me is of a much more confidential nature than if it were told to the police. Er r, had Miss Gilbert any love affair, any trouble of such a nature that it might have preyed on her mind?"

Kennedy's tactful manner seemed to reassure both the father and the mother, who exchanged another glance.

"Although we have said no to the reporters," Mrs. Gilbert replied bravely in answer to approval from her husband, and much as if she were making a confession for them both, "I fear that Georgette had had a love affair. No doubt you have heard hints of Dudley Lawson's name in connection with the case? I can't imagine how they could have leaked out, for I should have said that old affair had long since been forgotten even by the society gossips. The fact is that shortly after Georgette 'came out,' Dudley Lawson, who is quite on the road to becoming one of the rather notorious members of the younger set began to pay her marked attentions. He is a fascinating, romantic sort of fellow, one that, I imagine, possesses much attraction for a girl who has been brought up as simply as Georgette was, and who has absorbed a surreptitious diet of modern literature, such as we now know Georgette did. I suppose you have seen portraits of Georgette in the newspapers and know what a dreamy and artistic nature her face indicates?"

Kennedy nodded. It is, of course, one of the tenets of journalism that all women are beautiful, but even the coarse screen of the ordinary newspaper half-tone had not been able to conceal the exceptional beauty of Miss Georgette Gilbert. If it had, all the shortcomings photographic art would have been quickly glossed over by the almost ardent descriptions by those ladies of the press who come along about the second day after an event of this kind

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with signed articles analyzing the character and motives, the life and gowns of the latest actors in the front-page stories.

"Naturally both my husband and myself opposed attentions from the first. It was a hard struggle, for Georgette, of course, assumed the much injured air of some of the heroines of her favourite novels. But I, at least, believed that we had won and that Georgette finally was brought to respect, and I hoped, understand our wishes in the matter. I believe so yet. Mr. Gilbert in a roundabout way came to an understanding with old Mr. Dudley Lawson, who possesses a great influence over his son and well, Dudley Lawton seemed to have passed out of Georgette's life. I believed so then, at least, and I see no reason for not believing so yet. I feel that you ought to know this, but really I don't think it is right to say that Georgette had a love affair. I should rather say that she had had a love affair, but that it had been forgotten, perhaps a year ago."

Mrs. Gilbert paused again, and it was evident that though she was concealing nothing she was measuring her words carefully in order not to give a false impression.

"What does Dudley Lawton say about the newspapers bringing his name into the case?" asked Kennedy, addressing Mr. Gilbert.

"Nothing," replied he. "He denies that he has even spoken to her for nearly a year. And yet I cannot quite believe that Lawson is as uninterested as he seems. I know that he has often spoken about her to members of the Cosmos Club where he lives, and that he reads practically everything that the new newspapers print the case."

"But you have no reason to think that there has ever been any secret communication between them? Miss Georgette left no letters or anything that would indicate that her former infatuation survived?"

"None whatever," repeated Mr. Gilbert emphatically. "We have gone over her personal effects fully, and I can't say they furnish a clue. In fact, there were very few letters. She rarely kept a letter. Whether it was merely from habit or for some purpose, I can't say."

"Besides her liking for Dudley Lawton and her rather romantic nature, there are no other things in her life that would cause a desire for freedom?" asked Kennedy, much as a doctor might test the nerves of a patient. "She had no hobbies?"

"Beyond the reading of some books which her mother and I did not altogether approve of, I should say no no hobbies."

"So far, I suppose, it is true that neither you nor the police have received even a hint as to where she went after leaving the book-store? "

"Not a hint. She dropped out as completely as if the earth had swallowed her."

"Mrs. Gilbert," said Kennedy, as our visitors rose to go, "you may rest assured that if it is humanly possible to find your daughter I shall leave no stone unturned until I have probed to the bottom of this mystery. I have seldom had a case that hung on more slender threads, yet if I can weave other threads to support it I feel that we shall soon find that the mystery is not so baffling as the Missing Persons Squad has found it so far."

Scarcely had the Gilberts left when Kennedy put on his hat, remarking: "We'll at least get our walk, if not the show. Let's stroll around to the Cosmos club. Perhaps we may catch Lawton in."

Luckily we chanced to find him there in the reading-room. Lawton was, as Mrs. Gilbert had said, a type that is common enough in New York and is fascinating to many girls. In fact, he was one of those fellows whose sins are

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readily forgiven because they are always interesting. Not a few men secretly admire though publicly execrate the Lawton type.

I say that we chanced to find him in. That was about all we found. Our interview was most unsatisfactory. For my part, I could not determine whether he was merely anxious to avoid any notoriety in connection with the case or whether he was concealing something that might compromise himself.

"Really gentlemen," he drawled, puffing languidly on a cigarette and turning slowly toward the window to watch the passing throng under the lights of the avenue, "really I don't see how I can be of any assistance. You see, except for a mere passing acquaintance Miss Gilbert and I had drifted apart entirely apart owing to circumstances over which I, at least, had no control."

"I thought perhaps you might have heard from her or about her, through some mutual friend," remarked Kennedy, carefully concealing under his nonchalance what I knew was working in his mind a belief that, after all, the old attachment had not been not been so dead as the Gilbert's fancied.

"No, not a breath, either before this sad occurrence or, of course, after. Believe me, if I could add one fact that would simplify the search for Georgette ah, Miss Gilbert ah I would do so in a moment," replied Lawton quickly, as if desirous of getting rid of us as soon as possible. Then perhaps as if regretting the brusqueness with which he had tried to end the interview, he added, "Don't misunderstand me. The moment you have discovered anything that points to whereabouts, let me know immediately. You can count on me provided you don't get me into the papers. Goodnight, gentlemen. I wish you the best of success."

"Do you think he could have kept up the acquaintance secretly?" I asked as we walked up the avenue after this baffling interview. "Could he have cast her off when he found that in spite of her parents' protests she was still in his power?"

"It's impossible to say what a man of Dudley Lawton's type could do," mused Kennedy, "for the simple reason that he himself doesn't know until he has to do it. Until we have more facts, anything is both possible and probable."

There was nothing more that could be done that night, though after our walk we sat up for an hour discussing the possibilities. It did not take me long to reach the end of my imagination and give up the case, but Kennedy continued to revolve the matter in his mind, looking at it from every possible angle and calling upon all the vast store of information that he had treasured up in that marvellous brain of his, ready to be called on almost as if his mind were card-indexed.

"Murder, suicides, robberies, and burglaries are, after all, easily explained," he remarked, after a long period of silence on my part, "but the sudden disappearance of people out of the crowded city into nowhere is something that is much harder to explain. And it isn't so difficult to disappear as some people imagine, either. You remember the celebrated Arctic explorer whose picture had been published scores of times in every illustrated paper. He had no trouble in disappearing and then reappearing later, when he got ready.

"Yet experience has taught me that there is always a reason for disappearances. It is our next duty to discover that reason. Still, it won't do to say that disappearances are not mysterious. Disappearances except for money troubles are all mysterious. The first thing in such a case is to discover whether the person has any hobbies or habits or fads. That is what I tried to find out from the Gilberts. I can't tell yet whether I succeeded."

Kennedy took a pencil and hastily jotted down something on a piece of paper which he tossed over to me. It read:

1. Love, family trouble

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2. A romantic disposition
3. Temporary insanity, self-destruction
4. Criminal assault.
5. Aphasia.
6. Kidnapping.

"Those are the reasons why people disappear, eliminating criminals and those who have financial difficulties. Dream on that and see if you can work out the answer in your subliminal consciousness. Good-night."

Needless to say, I was no further advanced in the morning than at midnight, but Kennedy seemed to have evolved at least a tentative program. It started with a visit to the library, where he carefully went over the ground already gone over by the police. Finding nothing, he concluded that Miss Gilbert had not found what she wanted at the library and had continued the quest, even as he was continuing the quest himself.

His next step was to visit the department-store. The purchase had been an inconsequential affair of half a dozen handkerchiefs, to be sent home. This certainly did not look like a premeditated disappearance; but Craig was proceeding on the assumption that this purchase indicated nothing except that there had been a sale of handkerchiefs which caught her eye. Having stopped at the library first and a book-shop afterwards, he assumed that she had also visited the book-department of the store. But here again nobody seemed to recall her or that she had asked for anything in particular.

Our last hope was the book-shop. We paused for a moment to look at the display in the window, but only for a moment, for Craig quickly pulled me along inside. In the window was a display of books bearing the sign:

BOOKS ON NEW THOUGHT, OCCULTISM,
CLAIRVOYANCE, MESMERISM

Instead of attempting to go over the ground already traversed by the police, who had interrogated numerous clerk without discovering which one, if any, had waited on Miss Gilbert, Kennedy asked at once to see the record of sales of the morning on which she had disappeared. Running his eye quickly down the record, he picked out a work on clairvoyance and asked to see the young woman who had made the sale. The clerk was, however, unable to recall to whom she had sold the book, though she finally admitted that she thought it might have been a young woman who had some difficulty in making up her mind just which of the numerous volumes she wanted. She could not say whether the picture Kennedy showed her of Miss Gilbert was that of her customer, nor was she sure that the customer was not escorted by some one. Altogether it was nearly as hazy as our interview with Lawton.

"Still," remarked Kennedy cheerfully, "it may furnish a clue, after all. The clerk was at least not positive that it was not Miss Gilbert to whom she sold the book. Since we are down in this neighbourhood, let us drop in and see Mr. Gilbert again. Perhaps something may have happened since last night."

Mr. Gilbert was in the dry-goods business in a loft building in the new dry-goods section on Fourth Avenue. One could almost feel that a tragedy had invaded even his place of business. As we entered, we could see groups of clerks, evidently discussing the case. It was no wonder, I felt, for the head of the firm was almost frantic, and beside the loss of his only daughter the loss of his business would count as nothing, at least until the keen edge of his grief had worn off.

"Mr. Gilbert is out," replied his secretary in answer to our inquiry. "Haven't you heard? They have just discovered the body of his daughter in a lonely spot in the Croton Aqueduct. The report came in from the police just a few minutes ago. It is thought that she was murdered in the city and carried there in an automobile."

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The news came with a stinging shock. I felt that, after all, we were too late. In another hour the extras would be out, and the news would be spread broadcast. The affair would be in the hands of the amateur detectives, and there was no telling how many promising clues might be lost.

"Dead!" exclaimed Kennedy, as he jammed his hat on his head and bolted for the door. "Hurry, Walter, we must get there before the coroner makes his examination."

I don't know how we managed to do it, but by dint of subway, elevated, and taxicab we arrived on the scene of the tragedy not very long after the coroner. Mr. Gilbert was there, silent, and looking as if he had aged many years since the night before; his hand shook and he could merely nod recognition to us.

Already the body had been carried to a rough shanty in the neighbourhood, and the coroner was questioning those who had made the discovery, a party of Italian labourers on the water improvement near by. They were a vicious looking crew, but they could tell nothing beyond the fact that one of them had discovered the body in a thicket where it could not possibly have lain longer than overnight. There was no reason, as yet, to suspect any of them, and indeed, as a much travelled automobile road ran within a few feet of the thicket, there was every reason to believe that the murder, if murder it was, had been committed elsewhere and that the perpetrator had taken this means of getting rid of his unfortunate victim.

Drawn and contorted were the features of the poor girl, as if she had died in great physical agony or after a terrific struggle. Indeed, marks of violence on her delicate throat and neck showed only too plainly that she had been choked.

As Kennedy bent over the form of the once lovely Georgette, he noted the clenched hands. Then he looked at them more closely. I was standing a little behind him, for though Craig and I had been through many thrilling adventures, the death of a human being, especially of a girl like Miss Gilbert, filled me with horror and revulsion. I could see, however, that he had noted something unusual. He pulled out a little pocket magnifying glass and made an even more minute examination of the hands. At last he rose and faced us, almost as if in triumph. I could not see what he had discovered at least it did not seem to be anything tangible, like a weapon.

Quickly he opened the pocketbook which she had carried. It seemed to be empty, and he was about to shut it when something white, sticking in one corner, caught his eye. Craig pulled out a clipping from a newspaper, and we crowded about him to look at it. It was a large clipping from the section of one of the metropolitan journals which carries a host of such advertisements as "spirit medium," "psychic palmist," "yogi mediator," "magnetic influences," "crystal gazer," "astrologer," "trance medium," and the like. At once I thought of the sallow, somewhat mystic countenance of Dudley and the idea flashed, half-formed, in my mind that somehow this clue, together with the purchase of the book on clairvoyance, might prove the final link necessary.

But the first problem in Kennedy's mind was to keep in touch with what the authorities were doing. They kept us busy for several hours, during which Craig was in close consultation with the coroner's physician. The physician was of the opinion that Miss Gilbert had been drugged as well as strangled, and for many hours, down in his laboratory, his chemist were engaged in trying to discover from tests of her blood whether the theory was true. One after another the ordinary poisons were eliminated until it began to look hopeless.

So far Kennedy had been only an interested spectator, but as the different tests failed, he had become more and more keenly alive. At last it seemed as if he could wait no longer.

"Might I try one or two reactions with that sample?" he asked of the physician who handed him the test tube in silence.

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For a moment or two Craig thoughtfully regarded it, while with one hand he fingered the bottles of ether, alcohol, distilled water, and the many reagents standing before him. He picked up and poured a little liquid into the test tube. Then, removing the precipitate that was formed, he tried to dissolve it in water. Not succeeding, he tried the ether and then the alcohol. Both were successful.

"What is it?" we asked as he held the tube up critically to the light.

"I can't be sure yet," he answered slowly. I thought at first that it was some alkaloid. I'll have to make further tests before I can be positive just what it is. If I may retain this sample I think that with other clues that I have discovered I may be able to tell you something definite soon."

The coroner's physician willingly assented, and Craig quickly dispatched the tube, carefully sealed, to his laboratory.

"That part of our investigation will keep," he remarked as we left the coroner's office. "To-night I think we had better resume the search which was so unexpectedly interrupted this morning. I suppose you have concluded, Walter, that we can be reasonably sure that the trail leads back through the fortune-tellers and soothsayers of New York, which one, it would be difficult to say. The obvious thing, therefore, is to consult them all. I think you will enjoy that part of it, with your newspaperman's liking for the bizarre."

The fact was that it did appeal to me, though at the moment I was endeavouring to formulate a theory in which Dudley Lawton and an accomplice would account for the facts.

It was early in the evening as we started out on our tour of the clairvoyants of New York. The first whom Kennedy selected from the advertisements in the clipping described himself as "Hata, the Veiled Prophet, born with a double veil, educated in the occult mysteries and Hindu philosophy in Egypt and India." Like all of them his advertisement dwelt much on love and money:

The great questions of life are quickly solved, failure turned to success, sorrow to joy, the separated are brought together, foes made friends. Truths are laid bare to his mysteries mind. He gives you power to attract and control those whom you may desire, tells you of living or dead, your secret troubles, the cause and remedy. Advice on all affairs of life, love, courtship, marriage, business, speculations, investments. Overcomes rivals, enemies, and all evil influences. Will tell you how to attract, control, and change the thought, intentions, actions, or character of anyone you desire.

Hata was as a modest adept who professed to be able to explain the whole ten stages of Yoga. He had established himself on a street near Time Square, just off Broadway, and there we found several automobiles standing at the curb, a mute testimony to the wealth of at least some of his clientele.

A solemn-faced coloured man ushered us into a front parlor and asked if we had come to see the professor. Kennedy answered that we had.

"Will you please write your names and addresses on the outside sheet of this pad, then tear it off and keep it?" asked the attendant. We ask all visitors to do that simply as a guarantee of good faith. Then if you will write under it what you wish to find out from the professor I think it will help you to concentrate. But don't write while I am in the room, and don't let me see the writing."

"A pretty cheap trick," exclaimed Craig, when the attendant had gone. "That's how he tells the gullible their names before they tell him. I've a good notion to tear off two sheets. The second is chemically prepared, with

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paraffin, I think. By dusting it over with powdered charcoal you can bring out what was written on the first sheet over it. Oh, well, let's let him get something across, anyway. Here goes, our names and addresses, and underneath I'll write, 'What has become of Georgette Gilbert?'"

Perhaps five minutes later the negro took the pad, the top sheet having been torn off and placed in Kennedy's pocket. He also took a small fee of two dollars. A few minutes later we were ushered into the awful presence of the "Veiled Prophet," a tall, ferret-eyed man in a robe that looked like a brocaded dressing-gown much too large for him.

Sure enough, he addressed us solemnly by name and proceeded directly to tell us why we had come.

"Let us look into the crystal of the past, present, and future and read what it has to reveal," he added solemnly, darkening the room, which was already only dimly lighted. Then Hata, the crystal gazer, solemnly seated himself in a chair. Before him, in his hands, reposing on a bag of satin, lay a huge oval piece of glass. He threw forward his head and riveted his eyes on the milky depths of the crystal. In a moment he began to talk, first ramblingly, then coherently.

"I see a man, a dark man," he began. "He is talking earnestly to a young girl. She is trying to avoid him. Ah he seizes her by both arms. He has his hand at her throat. He is choking her."

I was thinking of the newspaper descriptions of Lawton, which the fakir had undoubtedly read, but Kennedy was leaning forward over the crystal-gazer, not watching the crystal at all, nor with his on the clairvoyant's face.

"Her tongue is protruding from her mouth, her eyes are bulging."

"Yes, yes," urged Kennedy. "Go on."

"She falls. He strikes her. He flees. He goes to "

Kennedy laid his hand ever so lightly on the arm of the clairvoyant, then quickly withdrew it.

"I cannot see where he goes. It is dark, dark. You will have to come back to-morrow when the vision is stronger."

The thing stung me by its crudity. Kennedy, however, seemed elated by our experience as we gained the street.

"Craig," I remonstrated, "you don't mean to say you attach any importance to vapourings like that? Why, there wasn't a thing the fellow couldn't have imagined from the newspapers, even the description of Dudley Lawton."

"We'll see," he replied cheerfully, as we stopped under a light to read the address of the next seer, who happened to be in the same block.

It proved to be the psychic palmist who called himself "the Pandit." He also was "born with a strange and remarkable power not meant to gratify the idle curious, but to direct, advise, and men and women" at the usual low fee. He said in print that he gave instant relief to those in trouble in love, and also positively guaranteed to tell you your name and the object of your visit. He added:

Love courtship, marriage. What is more beautiful than the unblemished love of one person for another? What is sweeter, better, or more to be desired than perfect than perfect harmony and happiness? If you want to win the esteem, love, and everlasting affection of another, see the Pandit, the greatest living master of the occult science.

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In as much as this seer fell into a passion at the other incompetent soothsayers in the next column (and almost next door) it seemed as if we must surely get something for our money from the Pandit.

Like Hata, the Pandit lived in a large brownstone house. The man who admitted us led us into a parlor where several people were seated about as if waiting for some one. The pad and writing process were repeated with little variation. Since we were the latest comers we had to wait some time before we were ushered into the presence of Pandit, who was clad in a green silk robe.

The room was large and had very small windows of stained glass. At one end of the room was an altar which burned several candles which gave out an incense. The atmosphere of the room was heavy with a fragrance that seemed to combine cologne with chloroform.

The Pandit waved a wand, muttering strange sounds as he did so, for in addition to his palmistry, which he seemed not disposed to exhibit that night, he dealt in mysteries beyond human ken. A voice, quite evidently from a phonograph buried in the depths of the altar, answered in an unknown language which sounded much like "Al-ya wa-aa haal-ya waa-aa." Across the dim room flashed a pale blue light with a crackling noise, the visible rays from a Crookes tube, I verily believe. The Pandit, however, said it was the soul of a saint passing through. Then he produced two silken robes, one red, which he placed on Kennedy's shoulders, and one violet, which he threw over me.

From the air proceeded strange sounds of weird music and words. The Pandit seemed to fall asleep, muttering. Apparently, however, Kennedy and I were bad subjects, for after some minutes of this he gave it up, saying that the spirits had no revelations to make to-night in the matter in which we had called. Inasmuch as we had not written on the pad just what that matter was, I was not surprised. Nor was I surprised when the Pandit laid off his robe and said unctuously, "But if you will call to-morrow and concentrate, I am sure that I can secure a message that will be helpful about your little matter."

Kennedy promised to call, but still he lingered. The Pandit, anxious to get rid of us, moved toward the door. Kennedy sidled over toward the green robe which the Pandit had laid on a chair.

"Might I have some of your writings to look over in the meantime?" asked Craig as if to gain time.

"Yes, but they will cost you three dollars a copy the price I charge all my students," answer the Pandit with just a trace of a gleam of satisfaction at having at last made an impression.

He turned and entered a cabinet to secure the mystic literature. The moment he had disappeared Kennedy seized the opportunity he had been waiting for. He picked up the green robe and examined the collar and neck very carefully under the least dim of the lights in the room. He seemed to find what he wished, yet he continued to examine the robe until the sound of returning footsteps warned him to lay it down again. He had not been quite quick enough. The Pandit eyed us suspiciously, then he rang a bell. The attendant appeared instantly, noiselessly.

"Show these men into the library," he command with just the faintest shade of trepidation. "My servant will give you the book," he said to Craig. "Pay him."

It seemed that we had suddenly been looked upon with disfavour, and I half suspected he thought we were spies of the police, who had recently received numerous complaints of the financial activities of the fortune tellers, who worked in close harmony with certain bucket-shop operator in fleecing the credulous out of their money by inspired investment advice. At any rate, the attendant quickly opened a door into the darkness. Treading cautiously I followed Craig. The door closed behind us. I clenched my fists, not knowing what to expect.

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"The deuce!" exclaimed Kennedy. "He passed us out into an alley. There is the street not twenty feet away. The Pandit is a clever one, all right."

It was now too late to see any of the other clairvoyants on our list, so that with this unceremonious dismissal we decided to conclude our investigations for the night.

The next morning we wend our way up into the Bronx, where one of the mystics had ensconced himself rather out of the beaten track of police protection, or persecution, one could not say which. I was wondering what sort of vagary would come next. It proved to be "Swami, the greatest clairvoyant, psychic palmist, and Yogi meditator of them all."

He also stood alone in his power, for he asserted:

Names, friends, enemies, rivals, tells whom and whom you will marry, advises you upon love, courtship, marriage, business, speculation, transactions of every nature. If you are worried, perplexed, or in trouble come to this wonderful man. He reads your life like an open book; he overcomes evil influences, reunites the separated, causes speedy and happy marriage with the one of your choice, tells how to influence any one you desire, tells whether wife or sweetheart is true or false. Love, friendship, and influence of others obtained and a greater share of happiness in life secured. The key to success is that marvellous, subtle, unseen power that opens to your vision the greatest secrets of life. It gives you power which enables you to control the minds of men and women.

The Swami engaged to explain the "wonderful Karmic law," and by his method one could develop a magnetic personality by which he could win anything the human heart desired. It was therefore with great anticipation that we sought out the wonderful Swami and, falling into the spirit of his advertisement, posed as "come-ons" and pleaded to obtain this wonderful magnetism and a knowledge of the Karmic law at a ridiculously low figure, considering its inestimable advantages to one engaged in the pursuit of criminal science. Naturally the Swami was pleased at two such early callers, and his narrow, half-bald head, long slim nose, and sallow, unwholesome complexion showed his pleasure in every line and feature.

Rubbing his hands together as he motioned us into the next room, the Swami seated us on a circular divan with piles of cushions upon it. There were clusters of flowers in vases about the room, which gave it the odour of the renewed vitality of the year.

A lackey entered with a silver tray of cups of coffee and a silver jar in the centre. Talking slowly and earnestly about the "great Karmic law," the Swami bade us drink the coffee, which was a vile, muddy, Turkish variety. Then from the jar he took a box of rock crystal containing a sort of greenish compound which he kneaded into a little gum gum tragacanth, I afterwards learned and bade us taste. It was not at all unpleasant to the taste, and as nothing happened, except the suave droning of the mystic before us, we ate several of the gum pellets.

I am at a loss to describe adequately just the sensations that I soon experienced. It was as if puffs of hot and cold air were alternately blown on my spine, and I felt a twitching of my neck, legs, and arms. Then came a subtle warmth. The whole thing seemed droll; the noise of the Swami's voice was most harmonious. His and Kennedy's faces seemed transformed. They were human faces, but each had a sort of animal likeness back of it, as Lavater has said. The Swami seemed the fox, Kennedy the owl. I looked in the glass, and I was the eagle. I laughed outright.

It was sensuous in the extreme. The beautiful paintings on the walls at once became clothed in flesh and blood. A picture of a lady hanging near me caught my eye. The countenance really smiled and laughed and varied from moment to moment. Her figure became rounded and living and seemed to stir in the frame. The face was beautiful but ghastly. I seemed to be borne along on by currents of voluptuous happiness.

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Swami was affected by a profound politeness. As he rose and walked about the room, still talking, he salaamed and bowed. When I spoke it sounded like a gun, with an echo long afterward rumbling in my brain. Thoughts came to me like fury, bewildering, sometimes as points of light in the most exquisite fireworks. Objects were clothed in most fantastic garbs. I looked at my two animal companions. I seemed to read their thoughts. I felt strange affinities with them, even with the Swami. Yet it was all by the psychological law of the association of ideas, though I was no longer master but the servant of those ideas.

As for Kennedy, the stuff seemed to affect him much differently than it did myself. Indeed, it seemed to rouse in him something vicious. The more I smiled and the more the Swami salaamed, the more violent I could see Craig getting, whereas I was lost in a maze of dreams that I would not have stopped if I could. Seconds seemed to be minutes, minutes ages. Things at only a short distance looked much as they do when looked at through the inverted end of a telescope. Yet it all carried with it an agreeable exhilaration which I can only describe as the heightened sense one feels on the first spring day of the year.

At last the continued plying of the drug seem to be too much for Kennedy. The Swami had made a profound salaam. In an instant Kennedy had seized with both hands the long flowing hair of the Swami's bald forehead, and he tugged until the mystic yelled with pain and the tears stood in his eyes.

With a leap I roused myself from the train of dreams and flung myself between them. At the sound of my voice and the pressure of my grasp, Craig sullenly and slowly relaxed his grip. A vacant look seemed to steal into his face, and seizing his hat, which lay on a near-by stool, he stalked out in silence, and I followed.

Neither of us spoke for a moment after we had reached the street, but out of the corner of my eye I could see that Kennedy's body was convulsed as if with suppressed emotion.

"Do you feel better in the air?" I asked anxiously, yet somewhat vexed and feeling a sort of lassitude and half regret at the real of life and not of the dreams.

He seemed as if he could restrain himself no longer. He burst out into a hearty laugh. "I was just watching the look of disgust on your face," he said as he opened his hand and showed me the gum lozenges that he had palmed instead of swallowing. "Ha, ha! I wonder what the Swami thinks of his earnest effort to expound the Karmic law."

It was beyond me. With the Swami's concoction still shooting thoughts like sky rockets through my brain I gave it up and allowed Kennedy to engineer the next excursion into the occult.

One more seer remained to be visited. This one professed to "hold your life mirror" and by his "magnetic monochrome," whatever that might be, he would "impart to you an attractive personality, mastery of being, for creation and control of life conditions."

He described himself as the "Guru," and, among other things, he professed to be a sun-worshipper. At any rate, the room into which we were admitted was decorated with the four-spoked wheel, or wheel and cross, the winged circle, and the winged orb. The Guru himself was a swarthy individual with a purple turban wound around his head. In his inner room were many statuettes, photographs of other Gurus of the faith, and on each of the four walls were mysterious symbols in plaster representing a snake curved in a circle, swallowing his tail, a five-pointed star, and in the centre another winged sphere.

Craig asked the Guru to explain the symbols, to which he replied with a smile: "The snake represents eternity, the star involution and evolution of the soul, while the winged sphere eh, well that represents something else. Do you come to learn of the faith?"

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At this gentle hint Craig replied that he did and the utmost amicability was restored by the purchase of the Green Book of the Guru, which seemed to deal with everything under the sun, and particularly with the revival of ancient Asiatic fire-worship with many forms and ceremonies, together with posturing and breathing that rivalled the "turkey trot," the "bunny hug," and the "grizzly bear." The book, as we turned over its pages, gave directions for preparing everything from food to love-philtres and the elixir of life. One very interesting chapter was devoted to "electric marriage," which seemed to come to those only who, after searching patiently, at least found perfect mates. Another of Guru's tenets seemed to be purification by eliminating all false modesty, bathing in the sun, and while bathing engaging in any occupation which kept the mind agreeably occupied. On the first page was the legend, "There is nothing in the world that a disciple can give to pay the debt to the Guru who has taught him one truth."

As we talked, it seemed quite possible to me that the Guru might exert a very powerful hypnotic influence over his disciples or those who came to seek his advice. Besides this indefinable hypnotic influence, I also noted the more material lock on the door to the inner sanctuary.

"Yes," the Guru was saying to Kennedy, "I can secure you one of the love-pills from India, but it will cost you er ten dollars." I think he hesitated to see how much the traffic would bear, from one to one hundred, and compromised with only one zero after the unit. Kennedy appeared satisfied, and the Guru departed with alacrity to secure the imported pellet.

In a corner was a sort of dressing-table on which lay a comb and brush. Kennedy seemed much interested in the table and was examining it when the Guru returned. Just as the door opened, he managed to slip the brush into his pocket and appear interested in the mystic symbols on the wall opposite.

"If that doesn't work," remarked the Guru in remarkably good English, "let me know, and you must try one of my charm-bottles. But the love-pills are fine. Good-day."

Outside Craig looked at me quizzically. "You wouldn't believe it, Walter, would you?" he said. "Here in this twentieth century in New York, and in fact in every large city of the world love-philtres, love-pills, and all the rest of it. And it is not among the ignorant that these things are found, either. You remember we saw automobiles waiting before some of the places."

"I suspect that all who visit the fakirs are not so gullible, after all," I replied sententiously.

"Perhaps not. I think I shall have something to say to-night as a result of our visits, at least."

During the remainder of the day Kennedy was closely confined in his laboratory with his microscopes, chemicals, test-tubes, and other apparatus. As for myself, I put in the time speculating which of the fakirs had been in some mysterious way connected with the case and in what manner. Many were the theories which I had formed, and the situations I conjured up, and in nearly all I had one central figure, the young man whose escapades had been the talk of even the fast set of a fast society.

That night Kennedy with the assistance of First Deputy O'Connor, who was not averse to taking any action within the law toward the soothsayers, assembled a curiously cosmopolitan crowd in his laboratory. Besides the Gilberts were Dudley Lawton and his father, Hata, the Pandit, the Swami, and the Guru the latter four persons in high dudgeon at being deprived of the lucrative profits of a Sunday night.

Kennedy began slowly, leading gradually up to his point: "A new means of bringing criminals to justice has been lately studied by one the greatest scientific detectives of crime in the world, the man to whom we are indebted for our most complete systems of identification and apprehension." Craig paused and fingered the microscope before him thoughtfully. "Human hair," he resumed, "has recently been the study of that untiring criminal scientist, M.

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Bertillon. He has drawn up a full classified, and graduated table of all the known colours of the human hair, a complete palette, so to speak, of samples gathered in every quarter of the globe. Henceforth burglars, who already wear gloves or paint their fingers with a rubber composition for fear of leaving finger-prints, will have to wear close-fitting caps or keep their heads shaved. Thus he has hit upon a new method of identification of those sought by the police. For instance, from time to time the question arises whether hair is human or animal. In such cases the microscope tells the answer truthfully.

"For a long time I have been studying hair, taking advantage of those excellent researches by M. Bertillon. Human hair is fairly uniform, tapering gradually. Under the microscope it is possible to distinguish human hair from animal. I shall not go into the distinctions, but I may add that it is also possible to determine very quickly the difference between all hair, human or animal, and cotton with its corkscrew-like twists, linen with its jointed structure, and silk, which is long, smooth, and cylindrical."

Again Kennedy paused as if to emphasise this preface. "I have here," he continued, "a sample of hair." He had picked up a microscope slide that was lying on the table. It certainly did not look very thrilling a mere piece of glass, that was all. But on the glass was what appeared to be merely a faint line. "This slide," he said, holding it up, "has what must prove an unescapable clue to the identity of the man responsible for the disappearance of Miss Gilbert. I shall not tell you yet who he is, for the simple reason that, though I could make a shrewd guess, I do not yet know what the verdict of science is, and in science we do not guess where we can prove."

"You will undoubtedly remember that when Miss Gilbert's body was discovered, it bore no evidence of suicide, but on the contrary the marks of violence. Her fists were clenched, as if she had struggled with all her power against a force that had been too much for her. I examined her hands, expecting to find some evidence of a weapon she had used to defend herself. Instead, I found what was more valuable. Here on this slide are several hairs that I found tightly grasped in her rigid hands."

I could not help recalling Kennedy's remark earlier in the case that it hung on slender threads. Yet how strong might not those threads prove!

"There was also in her pocketbook a newspaper clipping bearing the advertisements of several clairvoyants," he went on. "Mr. Jameson and myself had already discovered what the police had failed to find, that on the morning of the day on which she disappeared Miss Gilbert had made three distinct efforts, probably, to secure books on clairvoyance. Accordingly, Mr. Jameson and myself have visited several of the fortune-tellers and practitioners of the occult sciences in which we had reason to believe Miss Gilbert was interested. They all, by the way, make a specialty of giving advice in money matters and solving the problems of lovers. I suspected that at times Mr. Jameson has thought that I was demented, but I had to resort to many and various expedients to collect the specimens of hair which I wanted. From the police, who used Mr. Lawson's valet, I received some hair from his head. Here is another specimen from each of the advertisers, Hata, the Swami, the Pandit, and the Guru. There is just one of these specimens which corresponds in every particular of colour, thickness, and texture with the hair found so tightly grasped in Miss Gilbert's hand."

"Lest I should be prejudiced," he pursued evenly, "by my own rather strong convictions, and in order that I might examine the samples without fear or favour, I had one of my students at the laboratory take the marked hairs, mount them, number them, and put in numbered envelopes the names of the persons furnished them. But before open the envelope numbered the same as the slide which contains the hair which corresponds precisely with that hair found in Miss Gilbert's hand and it is slide No. 2 " said Kennedy, picking out the slide with his finger and moving it on the table with as much coolness as if he were moving a chessman on a board instead of playing in the terrible game of human life, "before I read the name I have still one more damning fact to disclose."

Craig now had us on edge with excitement, a situation which I sometimes thought he enjoyed more keenly than any other in his relentless tracing down of a criminal.

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"What was it that caused Miss Gilbert's death," asked Kennedy. "The coroner's physician did not seem to be thoroughly satisfied with the theory of physical violence alone. Nor did I. Some one, I believe, exerted a peculiar force in order to get her into his power. What was that force? At first I thought it might have been the hackneyed knockout drops, but test by the coroner's physician eliminated that. Then I thought it might be one of the alkaloids, such as morphine, cocaine, and others. But it was not any of the usual things that was used to entice her away from her family and friends. From tests I have made I have discovered the one fact necessary to complete my case, the drug used to lure her and against which she fought in deadly struggle."

He placed a test tube in a rack before us. "This tube," he continued, "contains one of the most singular and, among us, least known of five common narcotics of the world—tobacco, opium, coca betel nut, and hemp. It can be smoked, chewed, used as a drink, or taken as a confection. In the form of a powder it is used by the narghile smoker. As a liquid it can be taken as an oily fluid or in alcohol. Taken in any of these forms, it makes the nerves walk, dance, and run. It heightens the feelings and sensibilities to distraction, producing what is really hysteria. If the weather is clear, this drug will make life gorgeous; if it rain, tragic. Slight vexation becomes deadly revenge; courage becomes rashness; fear, abject terror; and gentle affection or even a passing liking is transformed into passionate love. It is the drug derived from the Indian hemp, scientifically named *Cannabis Indica*, better known as hashish, or bhang, or a dozen other names in the East. Its chief characteristic is that it has a profound effect on the passions. Thus, under its influence, natives of the East become greatly exhilarated, then debased, and finally violent, rushing forth on the streets with the cry, 'Amok, amok,' 'Kill, kill' as we say, 'running amuck.' An overdose of this drug often causes insanity, while in small quantities our doctors use it as a medicine. Any one who has read the brilliant Theophile Gautier's 'Club des Hachichens' or Bayard Taylor's experience at Damascus knows something of the effect of hashish, however.

"In reconstructing the story of Georgette Gilbert, as best I can, I believe that she was lured to the den of one of the numerous cults practised in New York, lured by advertisements offering advice in hidden love affairs. Led on by her love for a man whom she could not and would not put out of her life, and by her affection for her parents, she was frantic. This place offered hope, and to it she went in all innocence, not knowing that it was only the open door to a life such as the most lurid resorted of the disorderly resorts of the metropolis could scarcely match. There her credulity was preyed upon, and she was tricked into taking this drug, which itself has such marked and perverting effect. But, though she must have been given a great deal of the drug, she did not yield, as many of the sophisticated do. She struggled frantically, futilely. Will and reason were not conquered, though they sat unsteadily on their thrones. The wisp of hair so tightly clasped in her dead hand show that she fought bitterly to the end."

Kennedy was leaning forward earnestly, glaring at each of us in turn. Lawton was twisting uneasily in his chair, and I could see that his fists were doubled up and that he was holding himself in leash, as if waiting for something, eyeing us all keenly. The Swami was seized with a violent fit of trembling, and the other fakirs were staring in amazement.

Quickly I stepped between Dudley Lawton and Kennedy, but as I did so, he leaped behind me, and before I could turn he was grappling wildly with some one on the floor.

"It's all right, Walter," cried Kennedy, tearing open the envelope on the table. "Lawton has guessed right. The hair was the Swami's. Georgette Gilbert was one victim who fought and rescued herself from a slavery worse than death. And there is one mystic who could not foresee arrest and the death house at Sing Sing in his horoscope."

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