

Miss Wayland as soon as the door had closed, "to tell me what you mean by 'certain peculiar features.'"

"Why," replied Kent slowly, "I should say that the time of the explosion was the most obvious."

AT this moment the door opened, and a short, fat, breezy, perspiring man with a face of ruddy good nature precipitated himself into the room and rushed upon Miss Wayland.

"My dear aunt!" he cried, seizing her by both hands. "What a happy escape! Heaven looks after the good, eh? The moment I heard, I hustled here at top speed."

"You might have saved yourself a wilted collar, Robert. I hate mussy men," returned the old lady coolly. "You find me quite intact. And now, if you have recovered your breath, let me introduce Professor Kent; my nephew, Mr. Robert Swart."

"Chester Kent? Why, we've met before," said Swart heartily. "It was when I was in the land office."

"Ah, yes, I recollect. It was in the Wapiti lands claim case," said Kent.

"Were you interested in that case, Professor Kent?" asked the old lady.

"He was the Government's pet expert," explained her nephew, with a smile. "For once on the losing side, eh, Professor? Well, life would fail of its savor if one could always win. But I didn't know you were a friend of my aunt's."

"Nor can I claim that honor," returned the scientist. "You see me wafted into an interesting acquaintance-ship, Mr. Swart, on the wings of a mysterious explosion."

"Not mysterious at all," confuted Miss Wayland, "except as Professor Kent may try to read mystery into a very commonplace attempt at murder. Denny Boyle has tried to blow me to bits."

"Not Denny!" exclaimed the nephew, with genuine emotion in his voice.

"Yes, Denny. When I discharged him, he scowled and growled and said I would never have a chance to do it again. He knew that he was down in my will for a good round sum, and I suppose he thought he'd have his revenge and get me out of the way before I had time to alter the bequest. Isn't that conclusive?" demanded the old lady, looking triumphantly round the little circle.

Chester Kent smiled.

"This gentleman pretends not to think so," added Miss Wayland.

"Why, Aunt, it doesn't seem to me conclusive," objected Swart. "Still," he added slowly, "what other possible solution is there, after all?"

"Pardon me. The question isn't, Is any other solution possible? but, Is not this solution impossible?" said Kent.

Miss Wayland sniffed.

"Just consider, Miss Wayland. You say that, every evening at a given hour, you make a tour of your place."

"Yes."

"The grounds are extensive. I suppose it takes you twenty minutes?"

"More. Since I have been suffering from headaches, I have usually stayed out an hour."

"How long has that been?"

"Two months or more."

"But before that for several years you have made your promenade with regularity?"

"Absolutely."

"And Boyle has been in your service for several years?"

"More than eight."

"So, in all probability, he would know your custom?"

"Yes, he often accompanied me when I made my evening rounds."

"Then, Miss Wayland, why should he try to blow you up in your bed, at an hour when he knew you would be out of your bed, particularly as, by setting his supposed infernal machine for a later hour, he would have been sure of killing you?"

"Infernal machines are proverbially uncertain," suggested Swart.

"Proverbially, but not actually. You might as well say that clockwork is proverbially uncertain, since infernal machines are usually set off by ordinary clockwork."

"Have it your own way, Professor, have it your own way!" granted the other. "I hate to think of Denny, drunk or sober. Just the same, to a common or garden mind like mine, the case against the common or garden gardener looks pretty black. But, Aunt, your nerves? Any bad effects from the shock?"

"Nonsense! Am I a hysterical schoolgirl? Good effects, rather. Here it is close upon midnight, and I've not had a hint of my usual headache."

"Good! Omit the dose tonight, then. How many left of that last lot of powders?"

"Eight or nine, I think."

"Where are they?"

"In the big drawer of this desk here, under lock. I remember your experience with that child when you were practising medicine, and never leave drugs about loose."

"Quite right, Aunt. If you'll get the key later I'll take the powders away and substitute some others. Since excitement seems to have had a palliative effect, I think we can lessen the drug dose. We doctors get some of our best suggestions by accident. Well, I think I'll join the Inspector and have a look at the scene of the carnage upstairs."

FOR some moments after Swart's departure Chester Kent sat pulling at the lobe of his left ear and humming softly to himself. He was brought out of his reverie by the old lady's remarking sharply:

"I don't care much for confidential music."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Wayland," said the offender. "Is your general health pretty good?"

"Yes. Do you think we'll have rain?" retorted his hostess with obvious sarcasm.

"Don't assume that I'm asking to pass the time. I really wish to know."

"Very well, then. It will perhaps relieve your mind to be informed that I haven't been ill for twenty years, except for these silly headaches which have come on recently."

"You don't know the nature of the powders you are taking?"

"No. The druggist on the corner makes them up for me."

"Do the headaches consist in a very sharp pain beginning just above the eyes, and sometimes accompanied by nausea?"

"Precisely." The old lady cocked her head at him like a suspicious bird. "What are you aiming at, Professor Chester Kent?"

"And do they invariably begin after you have gone to bed?"

"They do. Anything else?"

"H-m. Merely a little idea of my own. I too have studied medicine a bit, among other matters. I don't suppose that Denny Boyle has."

"Are you arguing back to Denny again?"

"Quite the reverse. I'm arguing away from him."

"Spare your breath. Once my mind is made up, it is immovable."

The merest tremor of a smile appeared at the corners of Kent's gravely set mouth. "Nevertheless, indulge me a little further," he pleaded. "You referred to the rooms above as your usual sleeping rooms. You occasionally sleep elsewhere?"

"Not very much escapes you, does it, young man? Yes, sometimes I change for a week or so to the oak room on the third story."

"Any relief from the headaches when you change?"

"No."

"Ever try any other change: sleeping out of doors, for example?"

"Yes."

"With what result?"

"Why, I thought it helped me; but my nephew advised against it, so I stopped."

Chester Kent's fingers pulled at the lobe of his ear, his eyes lighted up almost imperceptibly; but Miss Celia Wayland possessed a sharp vision of her own.

"That interests you, does it?" she inquired. "Would you like to see this other room?"

"By all means."

MISS WAYLAND sent for a candle and herself conducted him to the third floor. As they picked their way through the wreckage of the second floor hallway, Swart's round and smiling face suddenly appeared in a door.

"Better not come in here yet, Aunt," he said. "The rafters may be weakened."

"We are not coming in."

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Miss Wayland wants to show me the records of payments made to Boyle," said Kent.

"Why did you lie to my nephew?" asked the old lady when they had reached the oak room.

"Let the Boyle theory ferment in his mind," rejoined Chester Kent evasively. "I have a fancy for following my chosen trails alone. One is less likely to disturb the game." Taking the candle, he examined the wall at the head of the bed. "This is an old house, isn't it?" he remarked.

"Eighteen hundred and thirty-five."

"I see that the paneling is rather wormholed."

"Yes, the whole house is that way. I rather like the effect."

"Your regular sleeping room too?"

"Yes."

Kent studied the woodwork for a moment, then put his face close to it, with his head a little on one side.

"You're listening for clockwork," declared the hostess. "Is there an infernal machine in this room too?"

"No more than in the other. But I think you would do well to sleep away from home tonight."

"Nothing of the sort!" said she with spirit. "Here is my home. Here I stay!"

"Miss Wayland," said Professor Kent, "will you have the goodness to believe that I am doing my poor best to save you from grave peril?"

"But you said there was no other infernal machine."

"There are other and subtler dangers than infernal machines."

"I don't like to leave my home," she persisted.

LOVE'S LONGING

By ETHEL COLSON

O Lord, wherever they may be,
The dear ones I no longer see,
I leave them trustfully with Thee.

O Lord, whatever be their lot,
The missing friends but not forgot,
I know Thy goodness faileth not.

But this, O Lord, my human plea:
Whate'er betide, where'er they be,
May they not sometimes think of me?



"Better on your feet than behind them," returned Kent significantly.

"For how long?"

"Let us say until we can find Denny Boyle. Hark! What's that?"

THERE was a loud exclamation from the floor below, followed by quick, excited talk. Then Miss Wayland's name was called by the police Inspector. She and Kent descended.

"Miss Wayland," said the officer, "can you stand a shock?"

"I can stand anything but suspense," replied the old lady hardly.

"You could identify Dennis Boyle's hair?"

"Yes, among a thousand."

"Then look at this." He held up to the light of the candle he carried a tiny square of flesh, covered with fine, thick gray hair, clotted with blood.

Miss Wayland glanced quickly at it and then away. "That is Denny's," she said. "Poor fellow!"

"So Mr. Swart assures me," said the officer. "Then our case is ended."

"He has met the death he deserved," said Swart sternly. "Poetic justice! His dynamite exploded prematurely, as he was setting it, and blew him to pieces."

"And this is the only piece?" queried Chester Kent mildly.

"The only one we've been able to find, so far," said the Inspector.

"Seems a trifle inadequate, doesn't it?"

"Undoubtedly the body was torn to fragments and scattered far and wide," said Swart. "You perhaps don't appreciate the power of dynamite, Professor Kent."

"Oh, I think I do—more than one power," replied Kent enigmatically. "Now, possibly we might collect a body by diligent search; but I am quite convinced," he glanced at the grisly relic which lay on a spread handkerchief, "that it would not be the body of Dennis Boyle."

"I suppose you still maintain that Denny had nothing to do with the explosion," said Robert Swart. "All, Professor, Professor! The scientific mind! The—if you will pardon me—pedantic adherence to pure theory!"

"Theory is the cream that rises to the surface of well stirred fact," retorted the scientist good humoredly. "For example," he continued, "we have wholly overlooked one theory. The windows of your room were open this evening, Miss Wayland?"

"Wide, all of them."

"From the tree platform in yonder sycamore a bomb could be almost dropped into this side window."

"Who'd do it?" demanded the Inspector.

"Theoretically," answered Kent with slight emphasis on the word, "it might be a vengeful Italian; one of those Miss Wayland expelled yesterday."

"They were stealing my flowers, or getting ready to steal them," said the old lady.

"Possibly that wasn't the reason for their presence, either," said Swart thoughtfully. "After the recent strike at the quarries, we let out several trouble making Italians. They might have been prowling here, looking for me, to get even with me."

"That doesn't explain Boyle's hair," objected the Inspector.

"While we're theorizing over the whole ground," put in Kent, "it's a perfectly reasonable hypothesis that Boyle was here at the same time, on his own account."

"Well, I'm satisfied that Boyle's our man," declared the officer. "At the same time I don't want to miss any tricks; so I'll just take a look around that tree. Mr. Swart, could you get me a lantern?"

"Come downstairs," said Swart. "I'll be with you at once."

"I'm going along too," announced his aunt.

AS they all descended to the ground floor Kent said quietly to Miss Wayland, "Could I have a sheet of paper and a pen for a minute? At times I like to get my ideas down in writing while they're red-hot. It helps to crystallize thought."

"Sit right at my desk," said Miss Wayland, leading the way into the library, where they had first discussed the case. "You'll find paper in the wide drawer. No; I forgot. That is locked. There is a pad at your elbow, if that will do. You'll excuse me while I join the others in looking over the tree platform. Not," she added with conviction, "that I've any doubt that it was Denny who did it."

Her nephew and the officer were awaiting her outside the door. As they reached the foot of the tree, a startled cry from the house whirled all three of them about as if on pivots. Chester Kent stood in the light of the open doorway. The knee of his trousers gaped open in a long rent.

"What's the matter?" cried the Inspector, running to him. "Someone stab you?"

"No," answered the usually calm scientist, panting a little. "I did it myself, against the bottom of Miss Wayland's lock drawer. It's been half cut, half split, out, and I rammed my knee against a splinter when I drew my chair in to write. Somebody has been at the desk."

"Then it's been done since we went upstairs," cried Miss Wayland; "for I sat at the desk myself while we were talking after we first came in. I'll go get the key."

Under the stress of excitement she ran upstairs as lightly as a girl, was back immediately, and threw open the invaded drawer. Within it showed devastation. A few papers were left in one corner. The jagged hole in the rather flimsy bottom was easily large enough to admit a hand.

"What was in here, Miss Wayland?" asked the officer. "Some accounts, my medicine, letters, stamps, my

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