

# The DESTROYING ANGEL

By Louis Joseph Vance

## HAVE YOU ANY "SAND?"

If you should be mysteriously beaten up when you stepped into your home some night, and the following day should be warned that you would be killed next trip, do you think you'd hurry to hiding—or would you take defense steps and defy the Mystery to do its worst?

Supposed to be dead, Hugh Whitaker turns up in New York after five years and hunts for the girl he married there to protect her good name. During the midst of a brilliant theatrical performance, he and she recognize one another across the footlights. (She is known as Sara Law, a noted actress.) The play stops abruptly. She refuses to see him. Drummond, his former law partner, engaged to marry the supposed widow, is reported a suicide. Whitaker's friend, Martin Ember, former detective, doubts the report and warns Whitaker to beware of violence from a mysterious source. The warning is ignored. Whitaker is murderously assaulted and goes to Ember's country place to recover. Strange things happen there as told in this installment. Queer goes on!

### CHAPTER IX.

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#### The Window.

Though they left New York not long after three in the afternoon, twilight was fast ebbing into night when Ember gave the motor its head. Its headlights clove a path through darkness, like a splendid sword; on either hand woodlands and desolate clearings blurred into dark and rushing walls; only the wonderful wilderness of stars remained imperturbable.

Whitaker, braced against the jolting, snatched begrudging mouthfuls of air strong of the sea. He had no very definite idea of their whereabouts, having neglected through sheer indifference to question Ember, but he knew that they were drawing minute by minute closer to the Atlantic.

After some time the car slowed to a palpitant pause. Ember jumped out to open a barred gate, then, returning, swung the car into a clear but narrow woodland road. "Mine own domain," he informed Whitaker with a laugh. "Now we're shut of the world entirely."

Whitaker bent forward, inquiring: "Where are we?"

"Almost there. Patience."

Whitaker reckoned idly that they must have threaded a good two miles of woodland, when at length the car emerged upon a clearing and immediately turned aside to the open doorway of a miniature garage.

The forest hemmed the clearing on three sides; on the fourth lay water. A hundred yards distant the lighted windows of a one-story structure shone pleasantly through a scattering plantation of pine.

Linking arms the better to guide his guest, Ember drew him toward the lights.

"Bungalow," he explained, sententious, flourishing his free hand; "hermitage—retreat."

"Paradise," Whitaker summed up, in the same manner. "No neighbors?"

"Oh"—Ember motioned to his left as they faced the water—"there's a married establishment over there somewhere, but we don't bother one another. Follow by the name of Fliske. I understand the place is shut up—Fliske not coming down this year."

"So much the better. I've been wanting just this all summer, without realizing it."

"Welcome, then, to Half-a-Loaf lodge!"

They entered a long and deep living room with walls of peeled logs and, at one end, a stone fireplace wherein a wood fire blazed heartily. At a comfortable distance from the hearth stood a table bright with linen, silver and crystal—covers for two. The rear wall was broken by three doors, in one of which a rotund Chinaman beamed obligingly. Ember hailed him by the title of Sum Fat, explaining that it wasn't his name, but clinging for it the virtue of exquisite felicity.

"My servant in town, here man-of-all-work; I've had him for years; faithful and indispensable."

Toward the end of an excellent dinner, Whitaker caught himself nodding and blinking with drowsiness. Ember took laughing compassion upon him and led him forthwith to a bedroom furnished with the rigid simplicity of a summer camp. Then he slept round the clock. The shrill, imperative rattle of a telephone bell roused him. As he dressed he could hear the voice of Ember in the living room talking over the telephone. Presently there came a tap at his door, and his host entered.

"Up, eh?" he said cheerfully. "I was afraid I'd have to wake you." His smile vanished beneath the clouds of an impatient frown. "This is the devil of a note: I've got to leave you."

"What's the trouble?"

"That's what I'm called upon to find out. A friend of mine's in a tight place, and I've got to go and help pull him through. He just called me up—and I can't refuse. D'you mind being left alone for a day or so?"

"Certainly not—only I'm sorry."

"No more than I. But I'll try to get back tomorrow. If I don't, the next day—or as soon as I possibly can. Meanwhile, please consider yourself lord and master here. Sum Fat will take good care of you. Anything you want, just ask him. Now I've got to get into waterproofs—it's raining like all get-out, but I can't wait for a let-up."

By the time Whitaker was ready for breakfast his host had splashed off to his motor car.

The wind, freshening and driving very respectable if miniature rollers against the beach, came in heavy gusts, alternating with periods of steady, strong blowing. At times the shining lances of the rain seemed to drive almost horizontally. Whitaker poked his head into the kitchen. In that immaculate place, from which every hint of breakfast had disappeared as if by magic, Sum Fat was religiously cleaning his teeth—for the third time that morning, to Whitaker's certain knowledge.

When he had finished, Whitaker put a question:

"Sum Fat, which way does the wind blow, do you know?"

Sum Fat flashed him a dazzling smile.

"East'ly," he said in a cheerful, clucking voice. "I think vely fine three-day blow."

"At least," said Whitaker, "you're a high-spirited prophet of evil. I thank you."

He selected a book from several shelves stocked with a discriminating taste, and settled himself before the fire.

The day wore out before his patience did, and with every indication of fulfilling the prognosis of Sum Fat; by nightfall the wind had developed into an enthusiastic gale, driving before it sheeted rain and great ragged wastes of mist.

And the second day was like unto the first. The third day broke full of the spirit of the second; and toward noon the rain ceased. In the evening, weary of the sedulous attentions of a cloud of famished mosquitoes, Whitaker sat in darkness, not tired enough to go to bed, too tired to bestir himself and seek distraction from a tormenting train of thought.

A pool of limpid moonlight lay like milk upon the floor beneath a window and held his dreaming gaze while memory marshaled for his delectation a pageant of wasted years, infinitely desolate and dreary in his vision.

How long he sat unstirring, preoccupied with fruitless inquiry, he did not guess. But later he reckoned it could not have been long after ten o'clock when he was disturbed. The sound of a footfall, hushed and stealthy on the veranda, roused him with a start, and almost at the same instant he became aware of a shadow that troubled the pool of moonlight, the foreshortened shadow of a man's head and shoulders. He sat up, tense, rigid with surprise and wonder, and stared at the silhouetted body at pause just outside the window. The fellow was stooping to peer in. Had Drummond hunted him down to this isolate hiding place? On the thought he leaped up, in two strides slammed out through the door.

"I say!" he cried loudly. But he cried, apparently, to empty air. The man was gone—vanished as strangely and as quietly as he had appeared.

Pausing and glaring round the clearing in complete bewilderment, he detected or else fancied a slight movement in the shadows on the edge of the encompassing woodland. Instantly, heedless of the risk he ran if the man were indeed Drummond and if Drummond were indeed guilty of the assault now four nights old, Whitaker broke for the spot. It proved to be the entrance to one of the woodland paths, and naturally—whether or no his imagination were in fault—there was nobody waiting there to be caught.

But if anyone had been there, he had unquestionably fled along the trail. Whitaker in a rage set himself to follow. Before he realized he could have covered half the distance, he emerged

abruptly into the clearing of the Fliske place.

Here he pulled up, for the first time alive to the intrinsic idiocy of his conduct, and diverted besides by the discovery that his impression of the early evening, that the cottage was tenanted, had been well founded.

The ground floor windows shone with a dim but warm illumination. He could see distinctly part of a living room rather charmingly furnished in a summery way. At its farther end a dark-haired woman in a plain black dress with a short apron and lace cap, sat reading by lamplight—evidently a maid. Her mistress—judging by appearances—was outside on the lawn below the veranda, strolling to and fro in company with a somewhat short and heavy man who wore an automobile duster and visored cap. By contrast, her white-clad figure, invested with the illusion of moonlight, seemed unusually tall. Her hair was fair, shining like a headdress of palest gold as she bent her head, attentive to her companion. And Whitaker thought to discern an unusual quality in her movements, a quality of charm and a graciousness of mien rarely to be noticed even in the most beautiful of the women he had known.

Of a sudden the man paused, produced a watch from beneath his duster, consulted it briefly and shut the case with a snap. He said something in a brusque tone, and was answered by what sounded like a pleasant negative. Promptly, as if annoyed, he turned and strode hastily away, disappearing round the house.

Alone, the woman watched him as long as he was in sight, her head to one side with an effect of critical amusement. Then, with a low laugh, she crossed the veranda and entered the lighted room. At the same time Whitaker, lingering and watching without in the least understanding or even questioning why he was doing this thing so contrary to his instincts, heard the heavy rumble of a motor car on the far side of the house and saw the machine swing off across the clearing into the woods.

In the living room the woman was saying: "You may go now, Elise. I'll be ready for bed before long."

"Yes, madam." The maid rose and moved briskly out of sight.

Her mistress, casting aside a scarf of embroidered Chinese brocade, stood for a moment in deep thought, her head bowed, the knuckle of a slender forefinger tapping her chin—charmingly posed. Whitaker abruptly understood why it was he loitered, peeping—she was absolutely beautiful, a creature both exquisite and superb, a matchless portrait for the galleries of his memory.

## MANY BIRDS UNABLE TO FLY

Having No Necessity to Use Wings to Escape Enemies, Those Members Ceased to Develop.

Of the 70 kinds of birds existing in New Zealand, 39 are found nowhere else, and of this number by far the larger portion is flightless; this, no doubt, owing to the fact that for ages, ever since the sea swallowed up a continent, leaving only the islands comprising the present Dominion of New Zealand, there have been no destructive carnivora in the land, except those small ones imported recently to aid in abating the rabbit pest, and, having no enemies, the birds also had no use for wings, which ceased to develop, and as years rolled by left many species with only little nubbins for wings and absolutely without power of flight.

Centuries ago there were in existence at least three varieties of gigantic birds, two of which were as large in body as the fabled roc, the rescuer of Sinbad the sailor. These included the Hapagornis, the Dinornis or Moa and the Cnemidornis, which was a gigantic goose. The Moa became extinct some 500 years ago. It was a flightless bird, said by tradition to have been a hunter of humans, a man eater, was of varying size and extremely plentiful.

### In National Forests.

Increasing use of the National forests for municipal camp sites and summer school locations is reported by the forest service. Permits have already been issued to several cities and educational institutions and other applications are expected. Officials say that far more people use the forests for public playgrounds than for any other purpose, and that this use promises to be one of the most important to which they can be put.

### Just the Idea.

Barber—I want a motto from Shakespeare to hang up in my shop. Can you give me one?

Patron—Of course. How will this do: "Then saw you not his face."

Something—a movement or perhaps a slight sound—had drawn his attention from the woman. He saw the other man standing boldly in full moonlight, all his attention concentrated on the brilliant picture framed by the window. He was unquestionably without knowledge of the nearness of the other—of Whitaker in the shadows. And though his back was to the moon and his face further shadowed by a peaked cap, Whitaker was absolutely sure of the man—he was certainly Drummond.

Without pause for thought, he sprang toward him, in a guarded voice uttering his name—"Drummond!" But the fellow proved too alert and quick for him. Whitaker's hands closed on nothing more substantial than thin air; at the same time he received a blow upon his bruised shoulder smart and forcible enough to stagger him and evoke an in-



He Sat Up Tense, Rigid With Surprise

voluntary grunt of pain. And before he could regain his balance the fellow was thrashing noisily away through the woodland underbrush.

Forthwith he struck off and blundered senselessly through the forest, misled by its elusive phantasmagoria, until, realizing at length he did but duplicate an earlier folly, he gave up the chase in disgust and slowly made his way back to the bungalow.

What is the connection between Whitaker, Drummond and the mysterious girl? Is more than one person eager to see Whitaker dead?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Fish Couldn't Submerge.

Sitting on his porch the other morning, J. W. Stewart noticed a good-sized catfish floating downstream, a Statesville (N. C.) correspondent of the New York Sun writes. The fish was very much alive and was in much commotion, apparently trying to go under water and for some reason unable to.

Mr. Stewart was interested and he got his boat, went out on the river and captured the fish. He put it in a tub of water and found that it wouldn't sink. This led to further examination and Mr. Stewart says he found the fish had swallowed a large quantity of wheat—having access to the wheat as a result of the recent floods—the wheat grains had swelled so the fish couldn't digest them and altogether that gorge of wheat had put that fish in a bad fix. He not only could not go under the water, but he was doubtless suffering much "misery" on his insides.

In all his long experience on the river Mr. Stewart says he had never come across a case like that.

### On Eugenics.

Prof. Herbert L. Flower said in an address on eugenics in Boston:

"Youth's point of view is better than age's when it comes to questions of eugenics.

"Here, for example, is a dialogue to prove my claim:

"A beautiful girl said on a white bench to her fashionable mother:

"Yes, mother, dear, I like Mr. Gobsn Golde, but isn't he too old to be considered eligible?"

"The fashionable mother compressed her rouged lips.

"On the contrary, my love," she said; "he is too eligible to be considered old."

### Making It Easier.

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