

THE DESTROYING ANGEL

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

There is reason to believe that Ember and the young woman, who helped Whitaker after his fight on the beach with the strange spy, have some sort of plan concerning Whitaker which they don't want him to understand. It is outlined and strong hints are given about it in this installment. You will be puzzled by developments.

Whitaker, you know, had married an innocent girl to save her honor five years previously—at a time when he expected soon to die—and left the country. He returns, healthy and wealthy, and finds the wife, now a famous actress known as Sara Law, engaged to marry Drummond, his old partner. She disappears. Drummond supposedly commits suicide. Whitaker is fiercely assaulted in the dark, and goes to the country home of his friend Martin Ember to recover. He surprises a mysterious spy at work, fights him, sprains an ankle and is helped by a handsome girl living near Ember's place.

CHAPTER X—Continued.

"What I wished to convey was simply my intention no longer to bear my masculine weight upon a woman—either you or any other woman."

A smile contended momentarily with the frown, and triumphed brilliantly. "I mean to ask you," he said deliberately, "to whom am I indebted?"

To his consternation the smile vanished, as though a cloud had sailed before the sun. Doubt and something strongly resembling incredulity informed her glance.

"Do you mean to say you don't know?" she demanded after a moment. "Surely Mr. Ember must have told you?"

"Ember seemed to be laboring under the misapprehension that the Fiske place was without a tenant."

"Oh!" Her tone was thoughtful. "Has he gone back to town?"

"Business called him. At least such was the plausible excuse he advanced for depriving himself of my exclusive society."

"I see," she nodded—"I see . . ."

"But aren't you going to tell me? Or ought I to prove my human intelligence by assuming on logical grounds that you're Miss Fiske?"

"If you please," she murmured, her intent gaze seeking the distances of the sea.

"Then that's settled," he pursued in accents of satisfaction. "You are Miss Fiske—Christian name at present unknown to deponent. And we are neighbors. Do you know, I think this a very decent sort of a world after all?"

"And still"—she returned to the charge—"you haven't told me what you mean to do, since you refuse my help."

"I mean," he asserted cheerfully, "to sit here until some kind-hearted person fetches me a stick to serve as emergency staff. Then I shall make shift to hobble to your motor boat and thank you very kindly for ferrying me home."

She shook her head in dainty annoyance, then, light-footed, darted from sight round the side of the bathhouse. Presently she reappeared, dragging an eight-foot pole. He rose on one foot and tested the staff with his weight. "Twill do," he decided. "And thank you very much."

But even with its aid, his progress toward the boat necessarily consumed a tedious time. It was impossible to favor the injured foot to any great extent. He made little or no attempt to converse while in motion, so she had plenty of opportunity to make up her mind about him.

If her eyes were a reliable index, she found him at least interesting. At times their expression was enigmatic beyond any reading. Again they seemed openly perplexed. At all times they were warily respectful. Once she sighed quietly with a passing look of sadness of which he was wholly unaware. . . .

"Odd—about that fellow," he observed during a halt. "I was sure he was Drummond—until I saw—"

"Drummond?"

"Friend of mine . . . You don't by any chance know Drummond, do you?"

"I've heard the name."

"You must have. Supposed to have committed suicide—jumped off Washington bridge a week before he was to marry Sara Law, the actress? . . . I may as well tell you—it's no secret, although only a few people know it—Ember saw Drummond, or thinks he did, alive, in the flesh, a good half-hour after the time of his reported suicide."

"How very curious!" There was nothing more than civil but perfunctory interest in the comment. "Are you ready to go on?"

And another time, when they were near the boat:

"When do you expect Mr. Ember?" asked the girl.

"Tonight, probably."

"I shall be glad to see him," said the girl in what Whitaker thought a curious tone. "Please tell him, will you? Don't forget."

"If that's the way you feel about him, I shall be tempted to wire him not to come."

"Absurd!" she laughed.

When finally they came to the end of the dock, he paused, considering the three-foot drop to the deck of the motor boat. "If it weren't low tide . . ."

he explained, crestfallen.

"But, since it is low tide, you'll have to let me help you again," the girl retorted, jumping lightly but surely to the cockpit.

She turned and offered him a hand, eyes dancing with gay malice.

"Like all men, you must turn to a woman in the end—however brave your strut."

"Oh, it's that way, is it? Thank you, but I fancy I can manage."

And with the aid of the clothes-prop he did manage to make the descent without her hand and without disaster.

The girl started the engine and took the wheel as the boat swung droning away from the dock. Not until she had once or twice advanced the spark and made other minor adjustments did she return attention to her passenger.

Then, in a casual voice, she inquired: "You've been out of the country for some time, I think you said?"

"Almost six years on the other side of the world—got back only this spring."

"What," she asked, eyes averted, spying out the channel—"what does one do on the other side of the world?"

"This one knocked about, mostly, for his health's sake. I did drift into a sort of business, after a bit—gold mining in a haphazard, happy-go-lucky fashion—did pretty well at it and came home to astonish the natives."

"You find things—New York—disappointing?" she analyzed his tone.

"I find it overpowering—and lonely. Nobody sent a brass band to greet me at the dock; and all the people I used to know are either married and devoted to brats, or divorced and devoted to bridge; and my game has gone off so badly in six years that I don't belong any more."

She smiled, shaping her scarlet lips deliciously. The soft, warm wind whipped stray strands of hair, like cords of gold, about her face. Her eyelids were half lowered against the intolerable splendor of the day. The waters of the bay, wind-blurred and dark, seemed a shield of sapphire fashioned by nature solely to set off in clear relief her ardent loveliness.

Whitaker, noting how swiftly the mainland shores were disclosing the finer details of their beauty, could have wished the bay ten times as wide.

CHAPTER XI.

The Mousetraps.

Late in the afternoon of the same day, Ember, appearing suddenly in front of the bungalow, discovered Whitaker sitting up in state; a comfortable wicker chair supported his body and a canvas-seated camp stool one of his feet; which last was discreetly veiled in a dripping bath towel. Otherwise he was fastidiously arrayed in white flannels and, by his seraphic smile and guileless expression, seemed abnormally at peace with his circumstances.

Halting, Ember surveyed the spectacle with mocking disfavor.

"Hel-lo!" he observed, beginning to draw off his gaiters as he ascended the veranda steps and dropped into another wicker chair. "What the deuce's the matter with you?"

"Game leg, thanks. Twisted my ankle again, this morning. Sum Fat has been doctoring it with intense enthusiasm, horse liniment and chopped ice. By tomorrow morning I'll be skipping like the silly old hills in the Scriptures."

"Hope so. Well, you must've had a pretty rotten stupid time of it, with that storm."

"Oh, not at all. I really enjoyed it," Whitaker protested.

"Oh, if you forgive me for leaving you alone so much, we'll call it square." Ember lifted his voice: "Sum Fat, ahoy!"

The Chinaman appeared in the doorway, as suddenly and silently as if magically materialized by the sound of his name.

"You're a sulphur-colored wizard with pigeon-toed eyes," said Ember so-

verely. "Go away from here instantly and prepare me all the dinner in the establishment, lest an evil fate overtake you."

"It is written," returned Sum Fat, "that I die after eight-seven years of honorable life, from heart failure on receiving long-deferred raise in wages."

He shuffled off, chuckling.

"I fancied I saw the flutter of a petticoat through the trees, as I came up to the house."

"Acquaintance of yours, I believe—Miss Fiske?"

"Miss Fiske!" There was unfeigned amazement in the echo.

"Anything wonderful about that?" inquired Whitaker, sharply. "I fancied from what she said that you two were rather good friends."

"Just surprised—that's all," said Ember, recovering. "You see, I didn't think the Fiske place was open this year."

He stared suspiciously at Whitaker, but the latter was transparently ingenuous.

"She expressed an unaccountable desire to see you—told me to tell you."

"Oh? Such being the case, one would think she might've waited."

"She had just started home when you drove in," Whitaker explained with elaborate ease. "She'd merely run over for a moment to inquire after my ankle, and couldn't wait. I say, who are the Fiskes, anyway?"

"Well . . . the Fiskes are the people who own the next cottage."

"I know, but—"

"Oh, I never troubled to inquire; have a hazy notion Fiske does something in Wall street." Ember passed smoothly over this flaw in his professional omniscience. "How did you happen to meet her?"

"Oh, mere accident. Over on the beach this morning. I slipped and hurt my ankle. She—ah—happened along and brought me home in her motor boat."

"You haven't seen Drummond—or any signs of him, have you?"

"Eh—what?" Whitaker sat up, startled. "No, I . . . er . . . how should I?"

"I merely wondered. You see, I . . . Well, to tell the truth, I took the lib-

recommend to your distinguished consideration."

He was out of earshot, within the bungalow, before Whitaker could think up an adequately insolent retort. He could, however, do no less than smile incredulously at the beautiful world—so much, at least, he owed to his self-respect.

In the deepening twilight a mental shadow came to cloud the brightness of Whitaker's confident contentment. Neither good food nor good company seemed able to mitigate his sudden seizure of despondency. He sat glooming over his plate and glass, the burden of his conversation yea, yea and nay, nay. His host diagnosed his complaint from beneath shrewd eyebrows.

"Whitaker," he said at length, "a pessimist has been defined as a dog that won't scratch."

"Well?" said the other sourly.

"Come on. Be a sport. Have a good scratch on me."

Whitaker grinned reluctantly and briefly.

"Where's my wife?" he demanded abruptly.

"How in blazes—!"

"There you are!" Whitaker complained. "You make great pretensions, and yet you fall down flat on your foolish face three times in less than many hours. You don't know who the Fiskes are, you've lost track of your pet myth, Drummond, and you don't know where I can find my wife."

"My dear man, I myself am beginning to doubt her existence."

"I don't see why the dickens she doesn't go ahead with those divorce proceedings!" Whitaker remarked morosely.

"I've met few men so eager for full membership in the Alifony club. What's your hurry?"

"Oh, I don't know." Which was largely truth unvarnished. "I'd like to get it over and done with."

Do you think that Ember is surprised and puzzled to learn that Miss Fiske lives next door? Does he know where Sara Law now is?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

NO MORE ART IN THE HOME

Bungalows and Apartments of Today Have No Place for Great Pictures of Past.

"The future of art will be in museums, as the future of the dead is in cemeteries," John L. Balderston quotes George Moore in *The Atlantic*. "As I have said, after the art of the temple, the cathedral, and the palace, came the art of the house, which was the last phase; for now the art of the house is dead, since people no longer live in houses. They are all moving into bungalows, or, which is the same thing, into apartments—and in a bungalow there is no room for art. We have futile attempts at art for the bungalow, as we shall have pretended art for the Pullman car, for the motor, for the aeroplane. The great pictures of the past, having hung in houses for centuries, are passing into museums, not only because people are moving out of houses, but because new social ideas are destroying the great estates and making it impossible to keep valuable art works from one generation to another. In England now three death duties will break up the greatest estate in the kingdom. You say you still have houses in America and millionaires with money enough to buy pictures! Ah, but think of what they buy! It takes a lifetime to learn to recognize a good picture, and how can a man who has spent his best years making a fortune expect to know a masterpiece when he sees it? When I was in Paris forty years ago your rich Americans were buying trash!"

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Advance by Retrogression. The rookle was being taken to the guard house. "Quick promotion," he muttered to himself. "I am already in charge of a squad of men."—Boston Transcript.

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