based on
ABC-TV's
DARK SHADOWS

Barnabas, Quentin
And The
Crystal Coffin

Barnabas and Quentin clash when a young heiress tries to solve the mystery of her twin sister's death

Marilyn Ross
IS THE SECRET OF HER SISTER’S DEATH BURIED WITH HER?

Betty Ward recovers from the tragic news of her twin sister’s death only to receive a far greater shock. She asks her sister’s husband, Jeremy Frene, if she may visit Georgette’s grave, and is horrified when she learns that Georgette was never properly buried. Instead, Jeremy had her body placed in a crystal coffin which he keeps in a locked attic. This way, he explains, Georgette’s ghost is free to return every night.

Betty is convinced that Jeremy is insane. She suspects foul play behind Georgette’s sudden death, and believes the secret may be locked in the strange glass coffin with her twin’s perfectly embalmed body.

Betty seeks out Barnabas Collins’ help, never guessing that in doing so, she has endangered her own life, too!
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Marilyn Ross

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New York
To the many readers who continue to write to me and share my pleasure in Barnabas and the people of Collinwood.
CHAPTER ONE

A strange hush had come over the spring evening. From far out on Collinsport Bay the slow mournful tolling of a marking buoy could be heard as it responded to the restless motion of the waves. And from the grounds of the sprawling old mansion of Collinwood, a dark fortress of a house set on the lonely cliffs above the bay, came the weirdly distinct though distant voices of some of the outside workers.

The odd stillness of the blue evening quickly fading into night was very apparent to Carolyn Stoddard as she strolled along the path through the forest of tall evergreens with Barnabas Collins at her side. For the moment her cousin was silent and absorbed by his thoughts.

She walked along with him without intruding on his sudden change of mood. Until they’d left the area of Widows’ Hill and entered this shadowed thicket he’d been talkative enough. But she was used to his ways and did not resent his silence. She knew the tall man in the dark caped coat was a highly sensitive person. And she enjoyed his company enough not to mind his slight eccentricities.

They went deeper amid the tall pines and firs. The brooding quiet was broken only by the crackling of twigs and dry ground under their feet. As it became darker she instinctively drew closer to Barnabas so their bodies almost brushed each other.

Then he ended the eerie silence between them by saying in his resonant voice with its clipped British accent, “It is going to rain before midnight. You can tell by the strange calm in the air.”

“I think so,” she agreed with a smile. “But then we need it badly. It’s been such a dry spring.”
“So I’ve heard,” he said, and halted as they came to a place where the path divided into two narrower ones going in different directions. After a moment’s consideration he announced, “We take the one to the right. I’m sure it leads to the ruins of the Frene house. We can’t be far from it now. So we should have time to get there and back to Collinwood before it’s completely dark.”

“I do want to see it,” Carolyn said as she moved on along the indicated path with him.

Her interest in the Frene house had begun when she’d arrived home at Collinwood following a day spent in Bangor. She’d taken the station wagon and driven there alone to have their color television set repaired. The set had gone dark a few evenings before. There were no repairmen in the village, or even in Ellsworth, that her Uncle Roger would trust with the rather expensive set.

“Have one of the gardeners load it in the station wagon for you and take it to Bangor and have it properly looked after,” her rather dour Uncle Roger had ordered her.

She’d done exactly that and spent some time doing personal shopping in the large Maine city that was the nearest one to Collinsport, until she could pick up the set again and drive back home. It was almost seven when she returned. Roger was pleased to have the television back and at once had it connected to be sure it was working well once more.

Meanwhile Carolyn had gone into the dining room for her evening meal and her mother had joined her at the table. Elizabeth Stoddard showed a knowing smile on her attractive matronly face as she informed her, “Barnabas is back.”

Carolyn paused over her soup dish. “Really?” She was at once pleasantly excited, for Barnabas always brought a sense of the glamorous outside world to the quiet Maine estate. And he was her favorite among her relatives.

“He and his manservant, Hare, have moved into the old house as usual,” her mother said. “And he’ll be coming over here after a little.”

Carolyn asked eagerly, “Will he be staying long?”
Her mother sighed. "He didn't say. You know what Barnabas is like. I'm sure he enjoys being mysterious."

"I call him interesting," Carolyn corrected her quietly as she returned to her soup.

"Well, 'mysterious' or 'interesting', he never tells me his plans. But he'll be here for a few days at least. I told him Amy and David were off to Vermont with Mrs. French and her children for a holiday, but he didn't seem disappointed. I think the only one he cares about is you. You always have been his favorite."

Carolyn blushed. "I'm older and better able to talk to him."

"He liked you even as a child," Elizabeth said. "And you always turned to him. I'm sure this has annoyed your Uncle Roger."

"But Uncle Roger is so stuffy. He has no true understanding of younger people. Barnabas talks to me as if I were his own age. Uncle Roger treats me like a child!"

Elizabeth smiled. "Well, you're certainly no longer that. And I'm sure Barnabas appreciates you for the grown-up young lady you've become. He was asking about your college plans."

"Did you tell him I hadn't decided on anything yet? That I might like to become a nurse?"

"I mentioned that," her mother said. "Barnabas seemed to think it would be a good career for you."

"I must talk to him about it," she said.

Later, when Barnabas had appeared out of the gathering shadows of dusk, they had spoken. She and the handsome man had strolled along the path that followed the cliffs and discussed things both new and old.

For no one had the history of the two centuries old estate of Collinwood more at his command than Barnabas. It was well known that he had been working on a history of the family for years. Many times he had fascinated Carolyn with his exciting tales of the early days of the Collins forebears. Who better than he was familiar with the dark secrets of the shadowed, silent rooms of Collinwood? The strange events that had happened there over the years had all been recorded in his notebooks.
He had thrilled her with his account of Jeremiah Collins, who had long ago built the sprawling mansion with its tall dark chimneys streaking like ghostly arms to the sky. His account of Jeremiah’s marriage and the deep sorrow he’d known when his French wife, Josette, died when she’d plunged from Widows’ Hill, had always touched her. Through the centuries others had plunged to their death from that same spot as if directed to the lonely cliff above the angry breakers by a phantom hand.

Another story that had grimly held her attention was the account of the first Barnabas Collins, ancestor to this present holder of the name, who had been driven from the estate under a dark shadow. It was with that long ago Barnabas that the first whisperings of the many ghostly legends concerning Collinwood had begun. And over the years the belief that Collinwood was an eerie setting for phantoms of the night had gained credence—especially among the people of the village of Collinport.

It was these villagers of an early day who had first accused the first Barnabas Collins of being a vampire, one of the living dead who appeared only in the dark hours and attacked pretty young girls to feast on their blood. This need for a regular supply of human blood made the vampire emerge from his daytime coffin-sleep and stalk the night shadows. The ire of the villagers became great after a number of their daughters were found wandering in a dazed state with weird red marks on their throats—the mark of the vampire’s fangs. Because that first Barnabas was rumored to have been cursed by a dark beauty from the West Indies whose affections he’d spurned, they thought he was a vampire. The villagers believed the jealous young woman had invoked a voodoo curse on the unfortunate man and turned him into a zombie. In any event, suspicion of him had grown to the point where he’d been forced to leave the isolated Maine coastal village and journey across the sea to England.

That was the story this modern day Barnabas had told Carolyn. He claimed it was from the exiled Barnabas that his line of the family had sprung. She enjoyed hearing of all these events. She felt herself very much a Collins since she had always lived in the old mansion.
And because she’d known only her mother in her years of growing up, she’d been entirely under the influence of the maternal branch of her family tree.

Both she and Barnabas had become aware of the odd stillness of the night. They paused part way along the cliff path and he had gazed ahead at a clump of trees not far beyond Widows’ Hill.

“I hadn’t realized before how much the forest has grown up here,” he observed with a frown. He almost never wore a hat and so Carolyn was familiar with his strong profile surmounted by a thick head of brownish hair, a few strands brushed down across the high forehead.

She stared at the patch of woods. “The trees have always been that tall as long as I can remember,” she said.

“I have seen photographs taken long ago. There were only a few trees there. In the midst of them there stood a big stone castle owned by the Frene family. They were related to the Collinses of that day through marriage, and they had been given permission to build this fine home on the estate.”

Carolyn registered surprise. “I’ve never heard anything about it.”

He smiled at her in his melancholy way. “You wouldn’t have. The house was destroyed by fire many, many years ago—beyond the memory of any living now.”

“But you know about it?”

He was leaning on his black cane with its ornate silver wolf’s head. His deep-set eyes were fixed on the trees as if he were seeing beyond them to those other days when a stately mansion dominated the site. Dusk was rapidly settling and gave their surroundings an air of mystery.

He said, “Yes. I have come across all the facts concerning Frene Castle in my research. And more than once I’ve gone and visited the ruins of the mansion.”

Her eyes were bright with interest. “I’d like to see them for myself.”

Barnabas smiled at her. “Do you want to go now?”

“If we have time. It’s getting dark.”
"I think we can manage it," he said quietly. "Just as long as we don't loiter on the way."

Carolyn rarely felt afraid when she was in Barnabas's company, but now her nerves were just slightly on edge. She stayed close to him as he pushed forward purposefully through the somewhat sinister forest.

At last he halted in a place that looked little different from the path at first glance. "Here it is," he told her, and indicating with his cane he said, "Can't you see the gaping ruins where the cellar once was?"

She strained her eyes and eventually did make out the dark depths of what had once been the cellar of the mansion. It was so grown over and filled with bushes, vines and weeds that it was difficult to see clearly. But as she stared into the shadows she saw there was one remaining wall of the fine stone house that had not collapsed. The remnant of the burned-out skeleton had several windows in it and their black outlines seemed to gape at her like blind eyes.

"I can make out part of it now," she said. "How sad that it came to this end."

"It was once as proud as Collinwood," he agreed. "But then certain things ordained that it would come to this."

At once she sensed a story. She gazed at him. "What things?"

"Events of a tragic nature," Barnabas said in his mysterious fashion.

"Tell me about them."

"Later," he said. "First, we must get back to the cliffs. This is no place to be caught in the darkness."

"I'm not afraid when I'm with you."

He took her firmly by the arm and began to guide her along the path they'd used to get to this deserted place. As they retraced their steps in almost complete blackness he warned her, "Don't ever try coming here alone at dusk."

"You think it would be dangerous? Why? Surely you don't believe in ghosts, Barnabas?"

"I believe it is not safe for a young girl to be out alone in deserted places at night, not even here on the estate."
"I guess I know what you mean," she said reluctantly. "There have been some bad things happening lately. You never can tell who may be lurking in the night watching you and perhaps waiting to attack you."

"Exactly," Barnabas agreed, guiding her expertly through the dark shadowed area.

At last they emerged from the forest and some of the tension seemed to leave them. They strolled on to Widows' Hill and there sat down on a bench together. The night was hushed, but every now and then there came the various distant sounds that spoke of approaching storm.

Barnabas was studying the bay and the ocean beyond. Faint dots of red and yellow lights marked the buoys and some sort of moving craft close by. She stared up at her cousin's sallow, somewhat stern face.

"Tell me about Frene Castle, Barnabas," she asked him.

For a moment he appeared not to hear her, but then he glanced at her in the shadows with a faint smile. "Are you so much interested?"

"You know I am," she insisted. "I think your stories of the past are always thrilling."

"This one may be a bit scary," he warned.

"I'll risk that."

"Well, if you insist. Although this is not actually a story of the Collins family, two of our ancestors played a part in the happenings that led up to the destruction of Frene Castle. I told you that some years before a Frene had married a Collins."

"Yes."

"And that was how the castle came to have been built here on the estate," Barnabas said. "Though the Frenes were never given any deed to the land. And because the place had unpleasant memories, the Frenes left here forever after the house burned."

Carolyn was listening intently. "I know there are no Frenes living in the village today."

"That is true," Barnabas agreed. "As I said, two of our ancestors played an important part in the events that led up to the destruction of the castle. This happened in the late 1890's and so my great-grandfather, Barnabas,
took an active part in the drama as did a certain Quentin Collins, who I'm sure you must remember."

She at once felt a tiny chill of apprehension. "Yes, of course I do," she said. "Wasn't he the handsome young man who had strange spells? And whom many claimed was tainted with the curse of the werewolf?"

"Yes."

She frowned. "They talk about him in the village even today. When I was a little girl another youngster told me about Quentin, the werewolf. I thought she was making it up. Later I learned that it was a kind of legend. I find it beyond my imagination."

Barnabas gave her a strange side glance. "You mustn't come to that decision too quickly," he advised in his pleasant, baritone voice. "There are many happenings we don't understand which may have a basis in fact."

Her eyes widened. "You're saying that Quentin was a werewolf?"

"I'm reporting what I have learned over the years in my research. Quentin was an unhappy young man. He appeared at various times in different guises. Rejected by the family because of his bad behavior, he took his dissolute self to other climes, but every so often he returned here in some disguise."

"And he knew the Frenes?"

"Indeed, he did," Barnabas said. "From all the accounts I've read he was quick to see an advantage in lining up with an evil member of that family. In spite of being a fine-looking man with talent and charm Quentin always preferred to let his dark nature rule him. And inevitably he was involved in a great many criminal ventures."

"Was this true in his relations with the Frenes?"

"Yes," Barnabas said with a sigh. "So consistent a character as Quentin never changes much. If he were to return to Collinwood tomorrow I'm positive he'd play the same sort of crooked game."

"Uncle Roger refuses to discuss him," Carolyn said. "But then he dislikes any scandal about the family. He even resents any mention of the first Barnabas Collins, though I'm sure that poor man was more sinned against than sinning."
Barnabas smiled ruefully. "I'm aware of that. Plus the fact that Roger also detests my coming back here for visits since I remind him of all that."

"You mustn't pay any attention to Uncle Roger," she said. "Mother and I are always delighted when you come."

He laughed softly. "I'll keep that in mind."

"And you have always been my particular hero."

"Thank you, my dear," he said, and took one of her hands in his.

She'd almost forgotten how cold his touch could be. She involuntarily flinched from the icy feel of his slim fingers. Embarrassed, she said quickly, "Your hand is so cold."

He let go. "I'm sorry," he said. "I forget."

"What makes them so cold?" She gazed earnestly at him.

His eyes studied her with melancholy. "A plague that torments my branch of the family. It is a fault of the circulation."

"Can't anything be done for it?"

"I have had temporary cures," he said. "None of them have lasted."

Carolyn felt deep sympathy for him. "I hope I didn't offend you. It was just that I hadn't remembered. I recall now that when you were here before your hands were always cold. And so were your lips when you kissed me goodbye."

"True."

"I didn't mind. I was only unhappy because you were going. It was rude of me to mention it now. Please forgive me!"

"Nothing to forgive," Barnabas said. "It is an annoying condition. I am the one who should apologize."

She leaned close to him. "Don't waste time doing that," she said. "Tell me about Frene Castle and the Frenes."

"Are you warm enough sitting here? I have this heavy cape and coat on."

"I'm quite warm," she said. "My trench coat does nicely at this time of year. But hurry because we will have
have to go inside if it begins to rain and I think out here by the ocean is the ideal place to hear the story."

"Very well," Barnabas said in his sonorous voice. "It really begins in the room of a small hotel in Paris almost a hundred years ago. A young Englishwoman named Betty Ward had gone to the French city to find out what had happened to her twin sister, Georgette."

* * * * *

There was a wistful expression on the pale but pretty face of Betty Ward as she studied herself in the small mirror with a crack in the corner of it that hung above the plain dresser of her hotel room. The distinctly shabby little hotel with its peeling gray wallpaper had turned out to be something of a disappointment as had everything else on this trip.

From the moment she’d boarded the boat-train at Dover to make the night crossing of the English Channel, the journey seemed to be doomed to letdown and failure. She’d arrived at Calais grateful for the solid French soil after the rough channel. Her stomach still churned a little on the train journey to Paris. And once arrived at what her elderly, ponderous guardian, the Reverend Thaddeus Prit, termed "that splendid but evil city with its Notre Dame and Montmartre," she had been frightened and confused.

Though she knew enough French to make herself understood she was unable to adapt to the confusion and clamor around her. The new surroundings and the flood of conversation in a foreign tongue left her dazed and alarmed. Somehow she’d gotten herself and her luggage installed in a dark cab that smelled of horse sweat and mold. She’d reclined against the rough horsehair seats and closed her eyes to the sights of the city as the cab clattered over the cobblestone streets to the accompaniment of the horse’s hooves. It was all she could do to sit there limply and maintain a tiny control of her still uneasy stomach.

At last they arrived at the small, red brick hotel with its forlorn signs and grim lobby. She was received by Madame, the proprietor, in a bleak area of shabby chairs and dusty potted palms. Madame had a slight moustache
on her upper lip and a booming mannish voice. She admitted having received the letter from the clergyman, the Reverend Thaddeus Prit, in which he'd engaged a room for the young woman. And it was true that the good man had been her guest there during a visit to Paris years earlier, so she would do her best to see the young Englishwoman had a comfortable room. But it was difficult these days. Times had changed since her husband had died. There was a shortage of reasonable help, and it was almost impossible to maintain the previous high standards of the hotel.

"Mais, non," the big woman sighed. "Things are not as they used to be."

This had proven all too true. Betty was shocked at the run-down state of the place. But as she only planned to be in Paris for a few days she decided it would do. Her reason for crossing the channel had been to find out where her twin sister, Georgette, had gone.

About a year previous to her own arrival in Paris, Georgette had come here with an elderly woman companion to pursue her art studies. Georgette was a talented artist who felt the need of further training. And since she and Betty were orphaned and wealthy it required the permission of their aging guardian, the Reverend Thaddeus Prit.

Betty now wondered why her late parents had chosen so unworldly and elderly a person as the stout, balding clergyman to be their daughters' guardian. He had looked shocked when he'd first heard Georgette's request to go to Paris on her own and pursue her art studies.

"Most indiscreet," he'd claimed, with a wave of a chubby hand. "I can't think of such a thing."

Georgette, who was as dark-haired and pretty as her twin sister, had a much firmer manner. She had sat very upright in their elegant Mayfair living room and told the unhappy Reverend Prit, "I intend to go, whatever you say. And in any case I'm taking Mrs. Middlebroom with me." Mrs. Middlebroom had been hired as their nurse when they were of a tender age, and she was now a woman in her late middle years. They had retained her as a sort of housekeeper even though she was getting elderly.

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Mentioning Mrs. Middlebroom served to change the Reverend Prit's attitude. He quickly said, "Well, if you take a mature woman as a companion I see no objection to the scheme."

So Georgette had set out across the channel to Paris with the bewildered and aged Mrs. Middlebroom as her chaperon. For a time it seemed to work out well. Georgette found suitable lodgings near her art teacher and wrote at least once a week to Betty, who remained in London. She told of her experiences and of the great improvement in her painting. Betty was pleased and willing to remain alone, except for the servants, in the great London house. She hoped that her sister would eventually tire of Paris and return.

"Only a matter of time," the stout Reverend Prit had predicted. "It is not a city to attract a young Englishwoman."

But, as on so many occasions before, he'd proven himself to be a false prophet. The months went by and Georgette gave no hint of any plans to return. Her letters took on a romantic tone when she began writing Betty about a young sculptor from the United States by the name of Jeremy Frene. It seemed he had studied in Paris and was on a visit there with his aunt by marriage, a Mrs. Vivian Frene. The elderly woman was a widow now and kept house for the sculptor back in America.

As Georgette's letters about Jeremy Frene continued it became clear that she was falling in love with the young man. It seemed that he was also in love with her. Georgette was inclined to like the aunt less as she got to know her. She confided in her letter that she believed the older woman was jealous of her nephew's falling in love with her. Later she wrote that Jeremy had asked her to marry him.

Betty quickly sent a letter back, warning her sister against any hasty decisions especially since the young man's aunt was not friendly toward her. Betty pictured a troubled marriage, expecting the aunt to be constantly bickering and interfering. Georgette wrote back that there was no fear of this since she'd had a confrontation with Mrs. Frene about the matter and the older woman had been quite humble and friendly.
Still Betty worried. She knew her twin sister wasn’t too good a judge of character, and she feared that she might be involving herself in an unhappy situation. Georgette wrote no more of Jeremy for a week or two. Then came a new crisis. A letter from Georgette came, announcing the death of Mrs. Middlebroom and her burial in Paris.

“In spite of this,” Georgette wrote, “I intend to remain in Paris. At least until Jeremy and his aunt return from a trip to Rome.”

There was something about this letter that sent Betty into a state of panic. She hated to think of Georgette alone in that strange city. And now there would be no one to offer a cautioning word to her. She at once sent for Reverend Prit for a consultation and found he was spending a week with a country vicar in the North. She left word for him to come to the mansion in Mayfair the moment he returned.

But it was more than a week before the bumbling Reverend Prit introduced his shabby clerical black to the elegant living room. By this time so many things had happened that Betty was thoroughly upset. She paced up and down before his startled presence with an angry expression on her pert oval face.

“Of course you had to be away on holiday when I most needed you,” she said.

Reverend Prit’s moon face showed crimson. “It was not exactly a holiday, my dear. I was visiting a good friend and assisting him in his services.”

Betty stopped to study him grimly with her large green eyes. “I fear your services were in more urgent need here.”

“Indeed?” He raised his thin, almost invisible eyebrows.

“Indeed,” she said with irony. “You may be interested to know that Mrs. Middlebroom is dead and my sister alone in Paris.”

“Dear me!” he gasped.

“There’s more than that,” Betty promised him. “Just this morning I have had another letter. My sister has eloped with a young sculptor from America named Jere-
my Frene. She plans to sail to America with him and live in some place in Maine called Collinsport. And she warns me not to try to interfere! What do you say to that?"

CHAPTER TWO

There was a brief silence following her question, and then the rotund clergyman took a handkerchief from his coat pocket and mopped his bald pate with it.

“What a dreadful situation!” he exclaimed.

“I can at least agree with you on that,” she said sharply. “I can’t help but feel that if you’d been in London when I received the letter with word of Mrs. Middlebroom’s death this dubious elopement might have been prevented.”

“I’m most unhappy about all this,” he said in a worried tone.

“Not nearly as unhappy as I am,” Betty said. “I waited day after day for your return, counting on you to journey to Paris with me and attempt to convince Georgette she should come back to London.”

“I would gladly have done so,” he said.

“Unfortunately you didn’t arrive in time.”

“What now?”

“It would seem Georgette has left Paris for America,” she said. “I intend to go there at once and find out. I also wish to make some inquiries, and even at this late date discover the sort of person my sister has married.”

“Of course,” the perspiring Reverend Prit agreed.

“I may be able to learn from her art teacher whether this young man is a desirable person or not. Then, I shall probably book passage on the first ship sailing for America and follow them. I must see Georgette and this new husband and convince myself that all is well.”

The stout man showed concern. “I can’t allow you to
take that long journey to the other side of the Atlantic on your own!"

Her green eyes were strong with resolution. “I don’t think you have any way of preventing me,” she said. “I consider you have fallen down on your duties. If you wish to make a legal battle of it I shall engage a lawyer.”

Reverend Prit looked abashed. “We must have nothing of that sort. No hard feelings.”

“Then I must be allowed to do as I see fit,” she said.

He looked troubled. “Isn’t that precisely how your dear sister got in this present difficulty?”

“It’s too late to argue about that,” she said. “It may be that Georgette has made a fine marriage. But I don’t like the circumstances of it. She has vanished in a mysterious fashion. How do I know but that this young man and his supposed aunt are criminals of some sort . . . that they have harmed or kidnapped poor Georgette?”

Reverend Prit looked shocked. “Don’t mention such a thing.”

“Crimes of this nature happen every day,” she reminded him.

“All the more reason you should take me or someone else responsible with you when you go in search of information concerning Georgette,” he said. “The same dire fate could happen to you if these criminals found themselves in danger of exposure.”

“I feel angry with you for what I consider your neglect,” she told him honestly. “For that reason I’d rather embark on this alone. But I will take every precaution.”

“You must,” he insisted. “I will help you in any way you’ll allow.”

The booking at the hotel had been arranged by him. And unsuitable as it turned out to be she had to admit that he’d done it with the best of intentions. Unfortunately his efforts seemed doomed to end in sheer disaster.

Her own plans had not gone much better. She took a cab to the lodging house where Georgette had stayed. The elderly landlady was pleasant enough but her English was poor. She did manage to convey that she believed Georgette had sailed on a vessel about a week before and that Monsieur Duprez, the art teacher, would be able to offer Betty more information. Betty got the address
of the art studio and set out through narrow, ugly streets in search of it. The stares of the men and women she encountered along the way did not reassure her. She found that the studio was an ancient three-story building on a dead-end street with a tavern and a restaurant, both dingy, nearby. The door of the building was padlocked. She stood on the worn stone steps of the sinister place looking distressed.

"Who are you looking for?" The question from the street below would have come as a surprise in any case. But the fact it was put to her in flawless English intensified her shock.

She swung around to find herself looking down at a pleasant young man with heavy, dark side whiskers. He wore a neat gray suit, a fawn cravat with a diamond stickpin glittering from its center, fawn vest and matching spats and a light gray bowler hat.

She gasped, "You're English!"

"American," he corrected her with a smile as he removed the bowler hat. He bowed to her. "My name is Quentin Collins."

"I see," she said. "I'm looking for Monsieur Duprez."

The young man smiled and returning his hat to his head said, "Ah, yes, the artist. He is never here in the afternoons. He works mostly at night. He finds it suits his talents."

This surprised her. Uneasily she said, "I wonder if this could be the right Monsieur Duprez. This is such a strange section of the city and from what you say I can hardly imagine him to be the artist with whom my sister studied."

The eyes of the young man fixed on her with a twinkle in them. "Your name is Betty Ward," he said.

She came down the steps and gave him a frightened look. "How do you know that?"

"You have to be Betty or her twin sister Georgette," he said. "I happen to be a friend of Georgette's and know that she sailed for America last week as the bride of a friend of mine."

She continued to stare at him. "You know Jeremy Frene?"

"I surely do."
“And my sister did marry him?”

“Without a question,” Quentin said with another of those teasing smiles. “It so happened that I was best man at the wedding.”

The news gave her some relief. Finding the art studio in such a bad district had upset her. She felt anything might have happened to Georgette. But here was this seemingly pleasant young man with personal knowledge of her marriage. At least it had been a bona fide marriage.

She said, “Is this Jeremy Frene a nice young man?”

“I would consider him one. And he’s extremely talented as a sculptor. Like your sister he studied under Monsieur Duprez. For all the old man’s strangeness he is a greatly gifted artist and teacher.”

“Is Jeremy Frene well off?”

“Yes. He lives in a fine mansion in a coastal village in Maine. Aside from his aunt, related to him only through marriage, there is no one.”

“What about her?”

He chuckled. “If we’re to discuss this at such length I suggest we go over to the cafe across the street. It is not fancy and the old woman who operates it with her husband is deaf and a little mad, but she will give us a table and some acceptable coffee.”

So a few minutes later she found herself seated at a plain wooden table in the small one-room cafe. Quentin Collins sat across from her. Soon steaming cups of coffee in plain earthenware mugs were put before them.

She said, “I must go back to my hotel soon. When will Monsieur Duprez open the studio?”

“Not before eight or nine in the evening,” Quentin replied. “He works through the night and goes back home around six in the morning.”

“How unusual!”

“He’s an unusual man.”

“But you claim him to be a fine teacher?”

“He is that. As I told you he made a fine sculptor of Jeremy, and I saw some of the paintings your sister did under his guidance. They were first-rate.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” she said with a faint smile. “You must forgive me for asking so many questions.” She glanced across the street with a slight frown. “I couldn’t
help being upset by the thought of my sister coming alone to this rough district for her art lessons, especially since you claim the old man is only here at night."

"You needn't worry," he said. "The district is a rough one. But the people are not criminals as in some parts of the city. Here it is more the working class. And invariably some of Monsieur Duprez's friends or students would see your sister safely home. I did this service for her on more than one occasion myself."

She managed a smile for him. "It seems you knew Georgette well."

His eyes met hers. "And I also feel that I know you. You so much resemble her."

Betty turned crimson and glanced down at the still steaming coffee. "You didn't reply to my question about this Jeremy Frene's Aunt Vivian? What sort of person is she?"

Quentin hesitated and then spread his hands. "An elderly female whom Jeremy has been most kind to. She is really no relative of his, though she is devoted. And he treats her as an actual aunt. Bringing her over here for a holiday is an example of his kindness."

"I see." Looking at him directly, she asked, "Do you think she'll resent her nephew's marriage to Georgette?"

Quentin looked coolly amused. "Yes, I think she will for a time. But she'll become accustomed to the idea."

"You don't think there'll be continual friction? That Jeremy will allow his aunt to make Georgette unhappy?"

"I doubt that," Quentin said.

"Are you familiar with where he lives? The house and the town?"

"I am. I have close relatives living at Collinwood, the same estate on which Frene Castle stands. And I can assure you, though the village is isolated, it is a spot of great scenic beauty. And Frene Castle is magnificent. Your sister is bound to be happy there."

Betty sipped her coffee. "After I have talked with Monsieur Duprez I intend to book passage to America and find that out for myself."

He showed surprise. "You're following the bride and groom to Collinsport?"

"Yes."
“Do you think that wise?”
“I must see my sister again and find out what sort of person Jeremy is. When I’m satisfied that all is well, I’ll return to my home in London.”

Quentin eyed her shrewdly. “You are an extremely thorough young woman, it appears.”
“I have to be in this,” she said. “My sister’s happiness is at stake.”

He shrugged. “I could warn you against intruding on a newly married couple.”
“They will hardly be that by the time I get there,” she reminded him. “Even if I manage to get a fast ship, there will be more travel on the other side of the ocean from whatever port I arrive in until I reach Maine.”
“That is true,” he agreed. “But why are you so set on going there?”

Betty sighed. “It’s hard to explain. Perhaps it’s because all this happened when I wasn’t here to be part of it. But I have the feeling there is a kind of mystery to this sudden marriage and Georgette’s running off to America in this fashion. I want to satisfy myself that there’s nothing wrong.”

“What could be wrong?”
“I can’t tell you that. I can only explain my feelings.”

He smiled bleakly. “You’re allowing your feelings to send you on a long mission.”

“I know. But I think it will be worth it to me if I come home with a contented mind.”

“Possibly.”
“You don’t agree?”

He had lost some of his friendliness but now he became his old charming self once more. “I’m afraid it’s impossible for me to see it from the feminine viewpoint,” he said.

“Naturally,” she agreed. And then she got up. “I really must leave for my hotel now. I want to get some rest before I return here this evening.”

He rose as well and picking up his hat, joined her. “I’ll see you safely back there,” he offered.

“That’s kind of you,” she said. “If you’ll escort me as far as a cab.”

“I’ll do better than that,” he promised.
They went down the dead-end street to the main thoroughfare and he stood with her until he was able to hail a carriage. He got the name of her hotel from her and gave the driver directions. Then he helped her into the carriage and sat beside her.

She said, "You're being much too kind."

"We aren't exactly strangers," he reminded her. "I knew Geogette, and we are here together in a foreign city."

"I'm so glad we met."

"So am I," he agreed. "I wish I could meet you and take you back to see Monsieur Duprez, but it happens that I have an important matter to attend to early this evening. It is possible I may be free later on. If so I'll come along to the studio."

"Please don't on my account," she begged. "I'm sure Monsieur Duprez will see me safely to my hotel and I can take a carriage to the studio."

"Be sure and do that," Quentin advised her. "Though I consider the district a respectable working-class one, after dark there are all kinds of strangers loitering on the streets and in the alleys."

"I know," she said.

Quentin Collins looked solemn. "There is also another matter which I only mention as a warning. There has been a werewolf scare in this part of Paris in the last few weeks."

She stared at him in stunned silence as the carriage continued its jolting passage through the Paris streets. "A werewolf scare?" she finally managed.

His eyes were serious. "Do you know what that means?"

Betty offered him a nervous smile. "I've not heard werewolves mentioned since my childhood. Geogette and I read of them in fairy tales."

"Since Geogette was here in the past few months I can assure you she heard somewhat more of them," Quentin said. "There have been a series of brutal murders at the midnight hour and after. The victims, mostly young women of your own age, left stretched in the street with their throats ripped open as if attacked by an animal."

"How horrible!" she gasped.
“Yes, horrible,” he said dryly. “We suppose that it is a madman who has chosen this method of killing to instill terror in the populace. But there have been some other strange rumors.”

“What kind of rumors?” She studied his pale, intense features in the semi-darkness of the carriage.

“An old woman who barely escaped being attacked insisted that the creature that came after her was a giant greenish-gray wolf—that it came springing out of the shadows of an alley at her with its eyes burning yellow!”

Betty frowned. “That must have been her imagination. No such animal could be roaming the streets of a city.”

“It is possible one might have escaped from a circus. There are a half-dozen indoor ones in the city and each boasts a menagerie.”

“Do you think that likely?”

“No wolves have been reported missing,” he admitted. “But then the circus owner might be afraid to make such an admission fearing a reprimand for negligence.”

She suggested, “Would it not be more likely a roving hungry dog who assumed fantastic, frightening proportions in the terrified old woman’s eyes?”

“You can think what you like,” he said. “There have been several of these eyewitnesses of the phantom wolf skulking along dark streets. That is how the legend of a werewolf being at large in Paris got started.”

“The actual murderer is probably very pleased at the furor,” she said. “Since it helps conceal his identity.”

“It’s possible,” Quentin said with a sigh. “I’m not going to offer any final opinion. I’ve merely told you the story to make it clear that it is dangerous for you to be alone on the streets at night.”

“I’m convinced,” she said as the carriage halted before her hotel.

Quentin helped her to the sidewalk and squinted at the drab building. “Who sent you to this flea trap?” he asked.

She smiled ruefully. “My guardian. He considers himself somewhat of a Paris expert. I’m afraid I don’t agree. But I can manage here for the short stay I plan.”

“Let me know if you wish to move,” he said. “I can take you to several excellent places, all superior to this.”
“You’ve already done too much for me.”

“Not at all,” he smiled. “And when you return to the studio see that it isn’t before eight. And don’t let Duprez scare you. He’s an odd little man but has great talent.”

“I’ll remember that,” she said. “And thanks again.”

“We’ll meet soon,” he promised. “I’ll come by the studio if I’m able to get away from my other business earlier than I expect.”

Again she told him there was no need and they parted. He went on in the carriage while she entered the hotel. She went straight up to her room and sat on the iron-frame bed with its thin mattress and worn covering. She was trying to consider all that had gone on. The frustrations of her first hours in Paris were beginning to diminish. It seemed her luck had changed with the appearance of the good-looking Quentin Collins.

She sat pensively staring at the drab gray wallpaper and trying to decide exactly what impression the young man had left on her. In the beginning she’d been wary of him, then she’d started to feel confidence in him and what he said, yet as they parted she’d known a peculiar uncertainty again. And for no reason that she understood she found herself asking if he was really what he seemed? Was he the genial, uncomplicated young man he gave the appearance of being? Or was there a hidden streak of evil hidden behind his pleasing exterior?

Doubting him after all the kindness he’d shown her and the good advice he’d been so ready to offer her was surely not charitable on her part. She felt guilty at having such suspicions. Yet she was unable to control them just as she was unable to decide why she had them in the first place. Could it be his talk of the werewolf had disturbed her? He’d been mysterious and almost mystical in his conjectures about the existence of such a phantom creature. That was likely what had made her wary of him. But often very rational people held strong views about the supernatural. She was doing wrong to condemn him for this.

His comments about Jeremy Frene and his aunt had been reassuring. If what he had told her was correct, she needn’t fear for Georgette’s welfare and future happiness.
And being a native of the same village and a friend of
the man Georgette had married it seemed likely he knew
all the facts. Yet there had been an odd hesitation in his
manner before he’d delivered an opinion on Jeremy’s
aunt. Almost as if he’d been debating whether to tell her
the full truth or not. She could only hope that he had.

It was possible she would learn more about the Frenes
from Monsieur Duprez, and perhaps something about
Quentin as well. She was becoming anxious for her meet-
ing with the art teacher. He had been described to her
as odd but then that could almost be said to be true of
most of the people she’d encountered since arriving in
Paris. It had all been a little like a confused nightmare!

The hours until evening passed slowly. She spent most
of the time in her room. It was spring and warm in Paris.
She was fortunate in this because there was no visible
means of heat in the room. The only light came from a
small gas lamp, and when darkness came she lit it and
paced restlessly in its orange glow, her shadow moving
back and forth on the dreary wallpaper.

With dinner and a further half-hour’s waiting behind
her it was at last time to leave. She had the elderly porter
and man-of-all-work at the hotel go out and locate her a
cab. Then she tipped him and gave the driver directions
to the studio.

The drive through the dark streets with their scattered
glowing beacons of gas lamps was interesting enough. It
didn’t seem too long before the carriage was heading into
the dead-end street where the studio building was located.
Before she alighted from the carriage she saw a dull
yellow glow from behind the blinds of a downstairs win-
dow of the building so knew the old artist must be inside.
She paid the driver and then mounted the stairs. The
padlock was gone but the door was closed. She tried
the doorknob and it wouldn’t turn. So she knocked on
it as hard as she could.

In the meantime the carriage had rolled off into the
darkness and she was left standing on the shadowed steps
alone. Not quite alone as she discovered on looking
around and straining her eyes to peer at the sidewalk
and alley beyond the old house. There was a dimly out-
lined figure standing there watching her. A man with an ugly face and a cap pulled down with its peak close to his eyebrows, a sinister-looking character if she’d ever seen one.

Her heart began to pound as she rapped on the door again. She saw that the cafe across the street was closed with no lights showing. The tavern at the very end of the short street gave off a muted glow from its front but seemed a terribly long way off. What would she do if the figure loitering in the shadows should suddenly come towards her?

She didn’t have to find an answer to this problem for at that moment the heavy plank door creaked open and standing in the doorway she saw one of the most incredible human beings she’d ever encountered. A white-haired man who looked more like a gnome with his gnarled, sallow features and bright, glittering eyes. His head was oversized for his small, wasted body and seemed to loll to one side as he smiled at her. His body was normal to the hips but then ended in tiny, grotesquely bowed, short legs.

“Good evening, mademoiselle,” the strange little man said in slow, accented English. “Of course you are the sister of Georgette.”

“That is so,” she said with a wan smile as she recovered from the initial shock of his appearance. “And, you are Monsieur Duprez?”

“Your most obedient servant,” he said with a slight bow and stood back for her to enter. “I have been expecting you.”

She went inside. “Oh? Did Quentin Collins tell you I was coming?”

The gnome-like man closed the door and the gnarled face under the thatch showed a sardonic expression. “So you have met Quentin?”

“Yes,” she explained, “when I came here this afternoon looking for you. He was in the street and introduced himself.”

The gnome waddled along the dark hall with her at his side. “That Quentin is quite a man with the ladies!” he chuckled. “No, I did not hear of you from him.”

“Then how did you know I was coming?”

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“I guessed that you would when you heard of your sister’s marriage,” the artist said. “And I recognized you because you are an exact double of her.”

“Is the likeness really that striking?” she asked, as they came to a room at the end of the hall. It was a huge shadowy room lit only by candles. Paintings hung on the walls and were stacked on the floor, leaning against the walls in lots of a dozen or more. An easel stood in the middle of the room with an unfinished canvas on it.

The grotesque Duprez stood before her and smiled, revealing yellowish teeth separated by gaping black spaces. He nodded his huge head. “I would know you as Georgette’s sister anywhere.”

The air in the old house was stale and damp. “I have come to ask you about her and the man she married,” Betty said.

Duprez continued to grin at her. “It was a love match,” he said. “I have a wealthy client who wanted Georgette to join him at his chateau in Normandy. But she would have none of him though he protested his love for her. A famous man in his day, you have probably heard his name mentioned as an art collector, Count Pierre Lissay.”

She shook her head. “I have never heard of him.”

“Well, perhaps he is known only in France,” the gnome admitted. “But he is my most important client. And he has the same eye for youthful charm as he has for fine paintings. If your sister had shown interest in him it might have paid us both very well.”

Betty was feeling a growing revulsion for the little man. She could not understand how Georgette had managed to endure him for so long. He would indeed have to have wonderful talent as a teacher to justify such an experience. And she was disgusted at his notion that Georgette would have been well advised to have sacrificed herself to some ancient old roué who bribed himself into the artist’s favor by purchasing many of his paintings.

She said, “I understand you instructed both my sister and her husband in art and sculpture.”

“Ah, yes,” the gnome said, with his head on one side again as he slyly studied her. “I am also active in the
fields of painting and sculpture myself. I take on only promising talent as students. It drains too much time from my own work to do otherwise. When I am not teaching I work on my own creations, and I may say there is a great demand for them.”

She glanced at the paintings hung and stacked about the almost dark room. “Is this all your work?”

“Old things,” he said in a disgusted tone. “You can see they are covered with dust—not worth examining. I don’t paint that sort of thing these days. I have gone on to a more unusual endeavor.”

“Oh?”

“Yes, indeed,” he said with satisfaction. “If you will come upstairs with me I’ll show you a sample of some of my latest efforts.”

“I really shouldn’t stay,” she hedged. “I’ve only come to ask you about Jeremy Frene?”

The little artist peered up at her. “He is a fair sculptor.”

“I’m interested in him more as a person than as an artist,” she told Duprez. “I’m concerned about my sister’s sudden marriage to him. And her going to America so soon after.”

He nodded as if he understood. At the same time he was lighting a tall white candle which he held in a pewter candlestick. When he had completed this task he waddled to the foot of a narrow stairway and waited for her there.

“I can understand your feelings,” he said. “But you should not be unduly concerned about Georgette. I have a surprise for you if you will but follow me up the stairs.”

Reluctantly she did as he asked. The stairs were old and worn and creaked under them. The little man waited for her on the landing above with the flickering flame of the candle making his gnarled features seem to take on a series of different bizarre expressions.

She joined him on the landing. “Is this where you keep your latest art creations?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said gleefully and darted ahead to a black curtain which covered a doorway. With a sharp gesture he yanked the curtain back dramatically to reveal Georgette standing there in the shadows with a tiny smile on her lips.
“Georgette!” Betty exclaimed in shocked surprise and was about to step forward to join her sister when the little man blocked her way with a maniacal expression. “One minute!” he exclaimed.

CHAPTER THREE

Betty’s first feeling was that the deformed artist had gone completely insane. Her sister was standing there in the darkness and she wanted to join her and ask her all the questions which had been troubling her. Find out why she hadn’t gone on the vessel with her new husband as she’d intended. But this mad little man was restraining her and laughing oddly.

With anger, she told him, “Let me go to my sister!”

“It is not your sister,” he shouted at her. “Merely a wax replica of her which I made. Now you have living proof of what an accomplished artist I am!” He laughed again in that crazy way.

Her face crimped with embarrassment as she stood there feeling like a fool. Now that she studied the figure more closely she saw that it was indeed of wax. But what a wonderful likeness and even wearing clothes similar to Georgette’s. There was no denying the strange little man’s talent.

She said, “You completely deceived me.”

He moved forward so that the glow of the candle illuminated the figure better now. And in the improved light it was more easily revealed as a replica. He said, “I wanted to make your introduction to my work dramatic.”

“You certainly did,” she admitted. “But why did you bother making such a figure of Georgette? She is not famous enough to warrant that much attention.”

The gnome was studying the figure and smiling. “I did it because she was an easily available model and I wished to try my skill at a reproduction of a living person. Also

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the Count Lissay commissioned such a figure. Since he has lost the reality this will allow him to cling to the dream.”

She frowned at the idea. “You mean he is buying this to take back to his chateau with him?”

Duprez chuckled delightedly. “Just that. So your sister’s beauty will grace his country home whether she likes it or not. He will care for her most gently.”

Betty felt her indignation grow. She was disgusted at the idea and felt an increasing revulsion for the strange, slightly mad Duprez. She asked coldly, “Did my sister know what this replica’s fate would be when she posed for it?”

“No,” he confessed. “I told her it was for a museum. Part of a group of figures to illustrate a moment in history.”

“I’m sure she wouldn’t have cooperated in posing for you otherwise,” Betty said.

His eyebrows raised. “You don’t approve?”

“No.”

He shrugged. “Well, no matter. We’ll move on to the other rooms and I’ll show you more samples of my work.”

She said, “Are you doing nothing but these wax figures?”

“Just the wax figures,” he agreed, moving ahead of her in the darkness with the candle held aloft in his hand. “They pay good fees for them you know. I have orders from all over Europe as well as from the wax museum in your own London. My work is of a very special nature, as you will see.”

They came to another room and he moved inside to show a group of stately figures representing the royalty of the era. Though Betty disliked the little man she could not help but gaze in awe at his work. His wax replica of Queen Victoria was as perfect as any portrait of the aging queen she had seen. And his figure of the bluff and stout Edward, Prince of Wales, was also most realistic. The Czar and Czarina of Russia stood there gravely in their royal robes, and among this eminent assemblage a fine replica of Napoleon in characteristic pose stood out.

“You approve?” Duprez asked, looking up at her.

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“You have done fine work,” she said grudgingly.
“You may as well see the rest before we go back downstairs,” he said, going along the hall to still another room.
She followed close behind him, uneasy in the ghostly atmosphere of this place of wax creatures, convinced now that the diminutive artist was at least slightly mad. She felt some relief in knowing that Georgette was no longer his student. She was certain her sister had been in a position of danger she hadn’t realized. If these had been any way of easily doing it, Duprez would have as quickly sold Georgette to the ancient Count Lissay as he would this replica he had made of her.
Her only hope was that this mad tour of musty rooms and wax figures would soon be at an end. Then she would make some kind of excuse and quickly flee from the strange old studio. She had decided there would be no further information to be derived there. The best thing she could do was book a passage to America as soon as possible. There was nothing more in Paris for her.
Duprez was standing before another door with a sly look on his face. “In here are my beauties,” he said in a mocking tone. “My special collection.” And he moved on inside.
She followed him and was at once filled with horror at the sight of the figures crowding the room. They all had cruel, cold countenances and in some cases both men and women were monstrously ugly. They represented all nations and centuries, but they had a similar repugnant air about them.
“What dreadful-looking people!” she exclaimed, standing back from them.
The little man was waddling from one to the other with a look of affection on his own twisted face. He held the candle up to inspect each figure carefully. “They were all murderers,” he said happily. “Some of them mass-murderers. I can’t make enough of them for the museums.” He gave her a wicked wink. “The people must have their idols!”

She said, “They sicken me.”
“But then, you’re a pretty creature of delicate taste,” the artist observed mockingly as he left the room and led her further down the dark corridor. When he came to
the very end of the corridor he said, "Now this is my masterpiece!"

She moved forward hesitantly, wondering what new horror he might have in store for her. As she came to stand beside him he drew back a bolt which held a door of steel bars in place, a door resembling that in a prison, and then he drew the green curtain behind it and revealed a grisly scene which drew a loud gasp of horror from her.

He lifted up the half-burned candle so the scene stood out. It was a group presentation of a guillotining. The figure kneeling under the blade had just lost his head, which lay upon the floor with a frenzied expression on its bearded countenance. Standing by the guillotine were the two ugly, muscled executioners gloating over their completed task.

"Realistic, isn't it?" Duprez gloated, leering at her.
She closed her eyes. "It's crude and hateful!"
"A work of art!" The little man snapped.
"I can't feel that way about it!"
"And I suppose I disgust you as well," Duprez said with menace cold in his tone.

She was about to reply to him when with a lightning gesture he shoved her forward with surprising strength and catapulted her into the area of the guillotine figure. Then with a look of wrathful glee on his gnarled face he slammed the iron door closed on her to make her a prisoner in the room. He snapped the bolt, locking the steel-barred door in place.

It happened in a matter of seconds and she was left grasping the bars and staring at him. "Let me out of here!" she screamed.

He stood there with the candle gloating over her predicament. "That will teach you to come here and sneer at my work!"
"You're mad!" she cried. "Let me go!"

Duprez was unmoved. He shook his head and said, "Not until you've had time to consider your arrogance towards me and offer an apology."
"I don't know what you mean!" she cried.
"I think you do," he snapped back. "So meditate a while. I won't leave you in the dark. I'm not unkind
I’ll place the candle on the floor here. And until it burns out you may enjoy the company of your friends in there. Especially the one with his head on the floor. It’s a duplicate of an actual guillotined head I promise you!” And with that mad laugh of his he placed the candle in the pewter candlestick on the floor just out of her reach and waddled off into the darkness on his short, bowed legs.

She screamed after him in a frenzy of fear. But her cries only echoed in the dark, empty corridor. He had gone off to some other part of the house and left her alone. What would happen next? Was he planning to return and harm her in some other way? Would his vengeance be satisfied by humiliating and terrorizing her or would he want to follow this up with some other torture? The prospect of what could happen and the knowledge that she was his prisoner sent her to the edge of hysteria.

Rattling the iron door, she was unable to budge it. She threw her weight against it with just as frustrating effect. Her eyes moved to the candle and she saw that it had burned down almost two-thirds. It would only be a little while before she’d be in utter darkness with the horror around her.

Against her will she glanced down at the distorted face and thick thrust-out tongue of the severed, bearded head on the floor. It was terrifyingly real down to the stain of blood around it. Looking over her shoulder, she thought it seemed that the executioners had threatening looks on their ugly faces meant for her. She turned to the steel-barred door again and began to rattle it and scream louder than before.

No attention was paid to her. Eventually her throat became raw and she ceased her screams to rest herself and ease her throat. She was so thoroughly exhausted that the bizarre figures around her no longer bothered her. But what did send a chill down her spine was the sight of the candle burning lower and the knowledge the mad Duprez would eventually return and she would be at his mercy in the darkness.

She rested weakly against the bars, clinging to them with her hands, clenching them feverishly as if merely doing this was a gesture towards winning her freedom.
Her head was swirling and there was a ringing in her ears.

All at once she heard voices and approaching footsteps. She held her head up and concentrated on trying to decipher the voices. For a moment she had a wild hope that one of them might belong to Quentin Collins and this would mean instant release she was sure. But as the voices came nearer she recognized one as Duprez and the other belonged to an older man.

Then they moved into the dim glow of the fading candlelight and stood peering at her like two grotesque figures out of some nightmarish mad drawing—the short man with his big head and tiny, bowed legs and at his side a skinny bent figure with a parchment face, thin, emaciated lips and rheumy, greedy eyes. The thin old man wore what was too obviously a black wig.

"Exactly like Georgette," he wheezed in an awed voice as he stared at her.

Duprez chuckled maliciously. "Much more interesting than a wax figure, eh, Count?"

Count Lissay rubbed his hands together nervously. "Yes, indeed," he said in that reedy voice. And to her, he said, "Well, my dear, what would you say to a little trip to the country?"

"You must both be mad!" she cried. "Let me out of here at once."

"Later," Duprez said knowingly. "You're not nearly tired enough yet. You're in no condition to give the Count a proper answer until you're really exhausted."

"But of course," the Count said with a look of anticipa-tion. "You mustn't lose heart, my dear. We'll be back later and I'm sure you'll listen to reason then."

"No!" she cried.

But they both ignored her cry and the pleas that followed. Aside from seeming to enjoy her distress it made no impression on them. They strolled off down the corridor in the shadows to leave her alone and despairing. Their plan was simple and fiendishly clever. They were going to keep her there until she was no longer strong enough to make any protest against whatever they de-cided to do with her.

Realizing this, she changed her tactics and began to
conserve her ebbing strength. Her only hope, it seemed, was to be in a position to fight back when they finally came for her. A dwarf and a thin old man should not make too strong antagonists if she were able to surprise them with an attack and burst for freedom. This thought saved her from becoming hysterical; it gave her something to cling to.

The candle had almost burned itself out. There was little wax left. She eyed its weakening flame with new fear surging up in her. She fought to ignore the nightmare wax figures around her and somehow regain her energy. And then from the shadows she thought she heard a stirring. She at once went rigid. The sound came again but this time as distinctly a soft footstep. And then another.

She stared into the shadows and saw a figure emerging from them. She almost screamed out her thanks when she saw that it was Quentin Collins. He at once raised a finger to his lips to warn her to be silent and she somehow managed it. She began to tremble. Her entire body was quivering and she could in no way control it. Nausea swelled up in her, and she thought she might faint or be ill. But she forced herself to stand there quietly.

He came to the barred door with furtive steps and then slowly slid the bolt back. With another glance of warning for her the young American gently eased the barred door open so that it made no sound. Then he grasped her by the arm and helped her out into the corridor.

She was still trembling and feeling ill. Without any attempt at a whispered thanks she leaned weakly against him. His arm was around her and supporting her as they made their way down the corridor. When they reached the landing he led her across to an open window. With a nod of reassurance he helped her out into the cool, refreshing night air. Perched now on the shingled slant of a sloping roof, she looked down—the drop to the street far below in the dark would likely be a fatal one. Yet she clung precariously to her place on the roof and kept her faith in Quentin.

He joined her in a moment and gingerly testing his weight against a metal drain gutter that ran along the edge of the roof, he began to inch forward pushing her
ahead of him. After what seemed like an eternity they reached a casement window that was open. He helped her inside and then followed her himself. Not until he was standing in the attic room with her in his arms did he speak.

“It's a good job I had this room rented and figured on a way of getting into Duprez's house,” he said. “When I came to his door and found he wouldn't let me in and saw the Count's carriage waiting outside I knew you were in trouble.”

“I couldn't believe what was happening,” she whispered in a strained voice.

He patted her gently. “Don't go over it in your mind. Bad enough it happened once. I was a fool to let you go to see Duprez alone. I realized that after I left you. So I came as soon as I could.”

She said, “What now?”

Quentin went to the window. “We'll wait until the Count's carriage goes, then we'll get away from here as quickly as we can and see you reach your hotel safely.”

“Even that hotel will be a welcome refuge after this,” she said.

“Duprez is a little mad and completely unscrupulous,” Quentin said with a grim look on his pleasant face. “It's fortunate Georgette married when she did and got away from here.”

“I'm beginning to believe that,” she agreed wearily.

Quentin said, “So she has found herself a good husband and home in America. Why don't you leave it at that?”

She stared at him in surprise. “What do you mean?”

“You can see the trouble you almost got yourself in here,” he reminded her. “So why don’t you let things rest as they are. Go back to London and wait until you hear from Georgette.”

Betty hesitated. “I wish I could do that,” she said.

“There's no reason that you can't.”

“There is.”

“What?”

“It's something I can't explain,” she faltered, moving away a little with her back turned to him. “I have a feeling about Georgette—that she's in some sort of danger.
I know it’s probably ridiculous. But I can’t ignore it. It’s a feeling I’ve had before. We used to joke about it and call it the twin sixth sense. One often knows what the other has in mind and even when the other is in jeopardy. That’s why I’m troubled about her now.”

“You’re allowing your emotions to blind your common sense.”

“Perhaps so. But I won’t have any peace of mind if I don’t pay attention to these nagging warnings.”

“My advice isn’t worth much now, though you were willing enough to have me risk my life for you a little while ago,” Quentin said with some bitterness.

She turned to him, apologetically. “I’m sorry, Quentin. I really am. It’s not that I don’t appreciate what you did.”

He stood facing her in the lamplit attic room. There was a strained expression on his pleasant features and he seemed very tense.

“I wish you would think over what I’ve said,” he told her.

“I will. I promise you.”

He gave a deep sigh. “I have no wish to interfere in your affairs. Nor do I want your twin sister to come to any harm. But I think you would be well advised to let this matter take care of itself. In due time Georgette will be in touch with you. I’m sure of that.”

“I’ll think about it,” she said evasively, though she could not see that she would be changing her plans.

“I have tried to be your friend,” Quentin said earnestly.

“You have been!” She was quick to tell him.

He spread his hands. “Now we come to a parting of the ways. I mean, if you do decide to go to America and look up Georgette and her husband. I can’t take any more responsibility in the matter.”

She was trying to understand his strange attitude and couldn’t. She said, “I wouldn’t expect you to concern yourself about me from now on. I owe you a great deal as it is.”

“We’ll forget that,” he said, his shrewd eyes fixed on her. “And we’ll not quarrel whatever you decide to do. I’ve given you my opinion and I’ll let it rest at that.”
"And I do appreciate your honesty," she said.
Quentin gave her a brusque nod and went across to the window and looked down into the street. Then he returned to her with some urgency in his manner. "The Count's carriage is gone," he said. "I think this would be a fine time for us to get away from here."

"Whatever you say."
He went over and extinguished the lamp and then they left the tiny room and made their way down several rickety flights of stairs to the street. It was dark and silent in the narrow, cobblestoned, dead-end street. Quentin grasped her by the arm and they quickly started off in the direction of the main thoroughfare. As they passed the ancient three-story house occupied by Duprez, she saw light showing at the second-floor windows and guessed that he must be up there trying to puzzle how she'd made her escape.

She gave a tiny shudder and told Quentin, "I'll not feel safe until I leave Paris."
He agreed, saying, "My advice is to go back to London at once."

Betty knew that she couldn't do that. She felt the pleasant young man was doing his best to protect her. His advice was well meant. But she felt too strongly about the possible danger that Georgette might be facing to listen to him. She knew that her next move would be to book a passage to America on the first available steamship.

Quentin hailed a passing cab and they were soon jogging through the dark Paris streets toward her hotel. When they arrived there she thanked him once more and he bade her a solemn goodnight. She noticed that he said nothing about seeing her again and was relieved by this. She wasn't going to do as he suggested and it would be embarrassing meeting him and having to admit this. It was better this way—to say their final goodbyes now.

It took quite a few inquiries before she located the offices of the Atlantic Steamship Company the following morning. It was an American owned and operated firm providing cargo and limited passenger service between

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Paris and Boston. In fact the elderly gentleman with full gray beard who was the Paris passenger agent hailed from Boston. He was a kindly, soft-spoken man and gave her all the help he could.

“We have a vessel leaving tomorrow morning,” the bearded man said. “There is available accommodation and no reason why you shouldn’t be a passenger.”

Her face brightened as she consulted him across the counter of the modest office. “That’s wonderful. I want to get to America as soon as possible.”

“This is not our fastest vessel,” the elderly man apologized. “But I guarantee you’ll set foot in Boston within ten days.”

“That will do nicely.”

“You understand the ship leaves from Le Havre,” the agent continued. “You will have to make the short train journey from Paris to that port. I suggest you book a train this afternoon and spend the night there.”

“I’ll do that,” she agreed. “I’ll get my things together as soon as I return to my hotel and then leave directly for the station.”

“Make sure you get the proper station,” the agent warned her. “I’ll write the name of it down for you. You would probably do best to take the train departing at three o’clock. It will get you to Le Havre in the early evening. You won’t need to find a hotel; you can go directly to the ship. I will see you are expected and your cabin is waiting for you.”

Betty was greatly relieved. “That is most kind of you,” she told the elderly man. “And now I’ll pay you for my passage.” She had brought a good supply of English pound notes with her and was thankful for that. When she arrived in Boston she would have to consult a bank there and get additional funds from her own bank in London. But she had sufficient money to see her across the Atlantic.

She was almost in a frenzy to leave Paris. The distorted face of the ugly Duprez haunted her. She feared that somehow the evil little man might find out where she was staying and try to capture her again. This threat gave her the impetus to pack quickly and leave the drab
hotel. She hailed a carriage and instructed the driver to take her to the railway station and settled back in the dim interior of the vehicle to rest along the route.

The railway station proved to be as crowded and full of confusion as the other one she’d passed through in coming to Paris. But somehow she managed to make her needs clear to an obliging porter and get herself and her luggage aboard the proper train. She shared a compartment with an elderly couple and a young frightened-looking girl who looked like she came from the country. She speculated on why she was on the train and decided she might be a servant in one of the fine Paris mansions on her way to her own farm home for a holiday.

With a jolting motion and a shrill whistle the train finally got under way. And as Paris was left behind her some of her fears subsided. She was thinking of the ocean voyage ahead and of what America would be like. She also still worried about Georgette and hoped she would reach her twin in time to save her from any possible danger. It was strange how certain she was that this threat to her sister did exist.

Quentin had scoffed at her feelings. And it might be that in the end he would be proven right. She hoped he might be. But she had to know this as a certain fact. She had to talk with Georgette and meet her husband, learn something of the way she lived in the small Maine village of Collinsport. Then if all were well she could return to London in a contented frame of mind. She wished she could have made Quentin understand that.

It was dark when the train reached Le Havre. Again she was lucky in locating a helpful porter who found her a carriage and saw her safely on her way to the docks. The smell of the ocean filled her nostrils as the carriage came to a halt close to the large vessel in which she was to make her Atlantic crossing.

There was a suggestion of fog in the night air as she mounted the gangplank of the American ship. When she gave her name to the officer on deck he at once summoned no less a personage than the captain, who proved to be a broad-shouldered, middle-aged man with a friendly manner and a short black beard.
“I’m Captain Leach of the *Eagle*,” he introduced himself. “Welcome aboard, Miss Ward. All arrangements have been made for you by our Paris agent. We’re delighted to have you as a passenger.”

“Thank you,” she said. Things were working out much better than she’d expected.

“I’ll show you to your cabin,” the Captain said. “We’ll have about fifty other passengers besides yourself. You’ll meet many of them later. Have you had your evening meal?”

“No,” she said.

“I’ll have your steward bring you something to your cabin,” Captain Leach promised.

Then he took her below deck to the corridor leading to her comfortable single cabin in the bow of the ship. He remained to chat with her for a few minutes and informed her that the vessel would be under way before she rose in the morning.

“We sail at dawn,” he said. “You’ll have breakfast at sea.”

When he left her she arranged her things in her cabin. She had no more than enough clothes with her for the fairly long voyage, but she felt she could manage.

A steward came with a tray of excellent food. And by the time she retired she felt relaxed and sleepy. For the first time in several nights her sleep was not disturbed by frightening dreams. When she finally awoke, she felt much refreshed. The first thing she noticed was the motion of the ship. This sent her to the porthole and a view of a sea-filled horizon. The captain had been right. They were already well on their way.

The steward served breakfast in her room. When she’d finished it and dressed she decided she would like to go up and take a stroll on deck. She made her way along the narrow corridor and then up a steep gangway to the open deck.

The rush of the fresh salt air was wonderful. She walked directly across the wooden deck to the rail and stared down at the waves through which the fine vessel seemed to be cutting a swift path. She clung to the rail breathing in the air and not minding the gentle rolling motion of the ship at all.
Then she turned to look along the deck and sight some of the other passengers. She gasped! For only a short distance away, walking towards her, was Quentin Collins. He had a look of amused irony on his face that showed he had spotted her.

CHAPTER FOUR

A series of frantic thoughts passed through Betty’s mind. She tried to recall if Quentin had mentioned any immediate plans for leaving France. Had he spoken of going home? She couldn’t recall that he had. And yet here he was on board the same ship with her!

“Well?” he said, coming up to her with a smile.
“What are you doing here?” she gasped.
“Going back home.”
“Wasn’t that a sudden decision on your part?”
“Perhaps.” His tone was mocking. He was still very much the dandy in a tweed suit and sea-going cap in matching gray shade.
She stared at him, still surprised at his appearance.
“Did you sail on this ship because I was a passenger?”
“Partly.”
“How did you find out I was to be on board?”
Quentin looked wise. “That wasn’t hard. There aren’t that many ships leaving for Boston. And I was sure you’d pick one going to that port.”
“I see,” she said. “I hope you haven’t come along because you still feel responsible for me. I don’t need any further protection.”

He seemed grimly amused by this remark of hers. “I think I told you I would no longer be your champion. I’m on board simply because I’ve had enough of Paris. I need to get back to my own country.”
She smiled. “In that case I’ll say I’m glad you’re on
the *Eagle* and I look forward to enjoying your company."

"So we’ve reached an understanding," he said.

"I’m anxious to see what kind of place this Collinsport is," she told him.

"It’s a pretty little village," Quentin said. "And Collinwood is just on its outskirts."

She studied his pleasant face. "Of course you’ve lived there," she said.

"Yes. I’ll be glad to show you around the area," he told her. And then he asked, "Are you still convinced that Georgette may be in some sort of danger?"

She nodded. "I do still have that feeling."

"I see," he said. "Well, I suppose you must discover the truth for yourself."

"That’s the only solution," she said earnestly. "I do hope that you understand."

"I think I do," the young man said rather coolly. "I’ll plan on seeing you later in the day. Just now I have an appointment with a friend I made on the train to Le Havre." With a slight bow he excused himself.

Betty watched him walk on down the deck until he turned a corner and vanished. She had the feeling that he was greatly displeased by what she had done in booking passage to America. She couldn’t believe that was why he’d also taken this ship. But she felt he was curious about how things were going to work out for her and this was one of his reasons for being there.

As the day progressed she began to make other friends. One of these was an elderly woman from Washington, a Mrs. Rupert Bucksley. She was a wealthy widow who spent a great part of her time in Europe and was prominent in the society of the capitol city when she lived in America. She was comfortably stout and had a round, kindly face. She wore dark dresses with flounced skirts and a broad-brimmed hat with pale blue ostrich feathers. She shared a table with Betty and some others in the dining room and they had deck chairs next to each other.

It was the stout, talkative Mrs. Bucksley who leaned across to her on the arm of the deck chair and began to wail about the werewolf that had threatened Paris for
weeks. "I'm sure it spoiled my visit this time," she said. "One felt that it wasn't safe to be out anywhere in the evening. They say the creature was seen stalking the gardens of several of the best Paris hotels."

"I heard about the scare," Betty admitted. "But I felt perhaps too much was being made of it."

"Not at all," Mrs. Bucksley said with great seriousness. "I have friends who saw the beast from their carriage."

Betty was interested. "How did they describe it?"

The older woman frowned. "They caught a glimpse of it lurking in an alley. It was the eyes they spoke of first. The eyes caught their attention. Burning amber eyes in the darkness!"

"And then they saw the wolf itself?"

"Werewolf," Mrs. Bucksley corrected her. "This was no ordinary animal. But the supernatural creature we've been warned about since childhood. The human who can turn into an animal at will. They saw its huge grayish form for just a moment and then their carriage passed by."

"Could it have been their imaginations at work? I mean they might have seen some large dog. And after all the talk decided it was the supernatural creature."

The woman sank back in her deck chair and eyed the ocean grimly. "I think not," she said. "And it wasn't imagination that murdered all those poor women and left them in the street with their throats torn open."

"They were ghastly crimes," Betty agreed with a shudder.

Mrs. Bucksley leaned close to her again and in a confidential tone said, "And guess what?"

"What?"

"There was talk in Paris that this werewolf was an American. That someone had followed an American from his hotel and seen him vanish in an alley. A moment or so later the werewolf emerged from the same alley and ran off into the darkness."

Betty frowned. "Did this witness report the incident to the police?"

"Yes," she said gravely. "He gave his story to the authorities and they were impressed. He didn't know the
name of the tourist but he was sure he could identify him if he saw his photo.”

“And what happened?”

“They began making a survey of all the American male tourists in Paris,” Mrs. Bucksley said. “The witness to the incident passed on the photos of the visitors as they came to him. But before the check could be completed the witness was murdered.”

She raised her eyebrows. “That was unfortunate.”

“But to be expected,” Mrs. Bucksley said. “He was found in an alley with his throat torn open. In exactly the same condition as the other victims left by the werewolf.”

“It’s an uncanny story,” Betty sighed. She recalled that Quentin had been the first to mention the werewolf scare to her. He’d seemed upset about it but he hadn’t linked the supernatural killer with any American tourist.

“What frightens me especially,” the older woman worried, “is that the killer appears to be one of my own countrymen. I shall even feel afraid at home now. Who knows when he will return to the United States?”

“I wouldn’t worry about it,” Betty said. “From what I hear you have a very large country. Your chances of meeting up with the werewolf should be slim.”

Mrs. Bucksley looked more hopeful. “That’s sound thinking,” she agreed. “I must keep telling myself that.” She lay back in the deck chair and closed her eyes for a nap.

Betty found the werewolf story looming large in her thoughts. It was such a weird business she couldn’t seem to get it out of her mind. During the balance of the afternoon and in the evening she met some of the other passengers including a man of middle age and of unusual appearance who introduced himself to her as Professor Damon when they were standing together at the rail of the upper deck.

Professor Damon’s hair was black and shiny and combed straight back. He had piercing eyes in a thin white face with hardly any lips at all. His eyebrows were black like his hair and slanted to give him a Mephisto-like turn of countenance. And to add to his oddness he dressed completely in black and wore a long black cloak.

“I’m Professor Damon,” he told her. “I have been in
France doing research on ancient medicines. I'm now returning to complete a book on the field."

"Are you a doctor?" she asked him, her curiosity aroused.

The odd eyes burned as he studied her. "No. But my studies have given me the equivalent of a doctor's knowledge. Mrs. Bucksley pointed you out to me, Miss Ward."

Betty smiled. "Yes. She is a friend of mine."

"A charming lady," Professor Damon said.

"Has she talked to you about the werewolf murders that caused such a sensation in Paris recently?" she asked him.

A strange look crossed his pale face. "I believe she did mention the subject to me."

"Were you able to give her any opinions on the matter? If you have delved into medieval medicine you must also know something of the legends."

The slanted black eyebrows almost met as he frowned. "I have no interest in the supernatural," he said harshly. "I would prefer not to discuss this werewolf business." He turned abruptly and walked away from her.

The steamship Eagle was making a smooth crossing of the Atlantic. Betty was thoroughly enjoying the voyage though she felt hurt that Quentin Collins seemed to be taking precautions to avoid her. Indeed it occurred to her that his behavior was almost furtive. She realized he was annoyed with her yet felt he was overdoing his indignation.

The third evening out there was a dance for the passengers. Captain Leach presided and received the guests in full uniform. The main salon had been decorated to take on a gala air. Lamps burned brightly from wall clamps and the orchestra, a quartette of three stringed instruments and a piano, played a lively series of gavottes, polkas and waltzes. Betty was thankful that she had brought along one suitable gown for the event, a yellow silk that showed off her dark hair and olive complexion to the best advantage.

All the ladies and gentlemen were present with Mrs. Bucksley resplendent in a wine gown and Professor Damon looking more Mephisto-like than ever in evening
dress with his black cloak still over his shoulders. Many of the ship’s officers took part in the dancing and Quentin was on hand, youthfully charming in evening dress and white tie. As he whirled about the room with one of the younger female passengers to a lively polka the tails of his evening coat flew behind him in the air.

It wasn’t until a waltz was being played that he came and asked Betty to dance. She accepted at once as she was anxious to make friends with the strange young man again. She hoped there would be no bad feelings between them since they would be bound to see a good deal of each other when they reached Collinwood. He was an excellent dancer and they were both breathless when the sprightly Viennese waltz came to an end.

Quentin took a white handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his temples. “Shall we go outside to cool off?” he suggested.

“Why not?” she said with a smile.

He led her out of the noisy, warm salon where the orchestra had again started to play. Outside the air was cool and the night clear with stars seeming close overhead and reflecting on a calm ocean. Holding her lightly by the hand Quentin led her to the rail. Then he placed an arm around her for protection from the sudden chill of being out there.

“Cold?” he asked.

“Not really,” she said. “Your arm around me does feel good, though.”

“Then there it shall stay,” Quentin said with a smile. And he bent close and kissed her gently on the lips. When he drew away he told her, “I’ve wanted to do that for some time.”

“The way you’ve been acting I was sure you were still angry with me.”

“Perhaps I am,” he said in his mocking way. “But I can’t ignore that you’re a lovely young woman.”

She pressed close to him, conscious of the warmth and weight of his arm around her. She gazed up at him earnestly. “I really do want us to be friends.”

“It would have been easier if you’d stayed in London.”

“Why do you say that?”

“I’d rather not explain.”
She felt it was useless to try and pursue the subject further. They each had strong feelings on the matter and neither were liable to change their minds. So she decided to switch the conversation to something else, saying, “I have heard more talk about that Paris werewolf since I came aboard.”

“You have?” he suddenly frowned.
“Yes. Mrs. Bucksley knows a lot about it.”
“She’s a silly old idiot!”
“Not as silly as you might think,” she objected. “According to her the werewolf may really be an American tourist. There was gossip to that effect in Paris.”

Quentin’s face showed rage. “That’s the ultimate in stupidity,” he declared.

She was startled by his strong reaction. “But you seemed to think there was something to the story.”
“I didn’t say anything like that!” he protested.
“You warned me about the werewolf scare and the possible dangers from it,” she reminded him.

Quentin let his arm drop from around her and he stood glaring at her with clenched hands. “Why do you pick on certain subjects and harp on them?” he demanded.

“I wasn’t aware that I do.”
“I’m sick of this talk of werewolves,” Quentin went on furiously. Then he lifted a hand to his forehead and passed it across it as if wiping away something. “I’m not feeling well,” he murmured in a complete change of manner. “Will you kindly excuse me.”

“Of course,” she said. She watched with amazement as he rather shakily strode away from her to vanish in the shadows of the deck. It was a strange ending to a most pleasant interlude.

She stood there for a moment considering it all. Should she blame herself? She thought not. She hadn’t actually tried to upset him. Indeed, she’d gone to great lengths to shift the conversation into something they could discuss without antagonism. Surely the gossip about the werewolf was a casual enough subject. And yet he’d reacted to it with anger. What did it mean?

It was beginning to strike her that Quentin Collins was a most mysterious young man. His outward appearance
of youthful good looks and his charm of manner masked a twisted and tormented person who could not stand to be crossed in any way. Whenever anyone disagreed with him he lost his temper. It was sad that he had this defect in his temperament, she decided as she slowly crossed the deck to enter the salon and rejoin the party.

Almost the moment she entered, the weird Professor Damon came over to her. His burning eyes fastened on her and with an eerie smile, he said, “This will be our dance.”

She had no opportunity to protest. He took her in his arms and led her around the salon to the lilting strains of the slow waltz. Looking up into his face, Betty was even more aware of those odd slanted eyes and black brows, the pale white face and the general suggestion of the unusual about this man.

Looking down at her, he said, “I’m sorry I was so abrupt with you this afternoon.”

She managed a wan smile. “It didn’t matter.”

“I have a hatred of superstition,” he went on. “I should try to control it better. You see, I have no belief in any of the creatures of the night such as vampires or werewolves or ghosts of any kind.”

“I hardly expected that in you,” she said.

“It is because of my studies of the medieval that I’m such a skeptic,” the weird man told her. “I have not found any basis for these wild legends.”

“That’s comforting to hear,” she said. “But it also means that the murders in Paris must have been perpetuated by a madman rather than a supernatural creature. I’m not sure which frightens me the most.”

His too-bright eyes met hers. “I do know a lot about madness,” he said. “And I do not fear the insane.”

“You’re an exception, then.”

“Say I understand them,” he said with an enigmatic smile as the dance ended.

She was glad to get away from him and join a circle surrounding the captain for conversation. Watching the weird professor march away, she felt that he probably didn’t mind the insane since he was likely a mental case himself.

When she returned to her cabin a little later she
was worn out. No sooner had she put her head on the pillow than she fell asleep. But it was not a sleep without dreams. Almost at once she was plunged into an eerie adventure in which Professor Damon pursued her along the deck and in the middle of the chase turned into a werewolf. She cried out in her sleep, waking herself.

She sat up on an elbow and stared into the darkness. The wash of the waves against the swaying ship was loud and clear at this quiet period in the middle of the night. As she listened to this heightened sound she became conscious of other noises from the corridor outside her door.

At first she couldn’t believe her ears and decided she must be dreaming still. But the sounds came clearly enough. A scratching against her door as if made by an impatient paw, then a whining that made her blood curdle and a chill run along her spine. Heavy breathing came next and more frantic pawing at her door. Then the sound of animal feet pattering off.

As the mixture of sounds ended she opened her eyes wide. It was too wild to accept. She’d heard what could very well have been the movement of a werewolf in the corridor. It had to be an animal of some sort and she knew of none being on board. She waited and listened for the sounds to come again but they didn’t.

But this wasn’t to be the end of it. When she went up on deck the next morning all the talk was of the previous night and a werewolf many of the passengers insisted they had seen at various places on the ship. Mrs. Bucksley was one of the most excited of all the eyewitnesses.

“I saw that creature with my own eyes,” she told Betty. “Just outside my cabin. Skulking along the deck. It was hideous.”

Betty decided against mentioning her own experience. There wasn’t much point. Her account would have been tame compared to the stories she was hearing on all sides. Mrs. Bucksley was not the only one who claimed to have seen the werewolf.

The manly, broad-shouldered and black-bearded Captain Leach was in a wrathful mood. Meeting Betty on deck, he halted to tip his cap to her and engage her in conversation about the unhappy affair.

He said, “Don’t tell me you also saw this werewolf?”
She shook her head and in a shy voice said, "No. But I think I heard it."

Captain Leach registered astonishment. "You don't mean it!"

"I heard a scratching and whining outside my door and what seemed like some animal running off."

He scowled. "I say we have a practical joker on the ship. Some fellow who has conjured up this sensation to enjoy the reactions of a few of the older female passengers!"

"Would anyone go to such lengths?" she asked in astonishment.

"Miss Ward, I have had some strange things happen in my time as captain," he assured her angrily. "Once a practical joker managed to smuggle a small goat up into the crow's nest. When the animal began to bleat in fear, no one would believe it. And you can imagine the nuisance of getting it back down."

Betty smiled in spite of what she felt was a serious situation. "This is rather different," she said. "If these ladies all agree that they saw the wolflike creature there must be some basis for their stories."

Captain Leach sighed. "I've never had anything like this to contend with in all my years at sea."

"I hope it is all explained soon," she said.

"It had better be," he declared. "Seamen are a superstitious lot. If they think there is something supernatural about this werewolf's showing up we may find a mutiny of sorts on our hands. I can't be responsible for those rough, ignorant fellows once fear takes hold of them."

"You should explain that to the passengers and ask them not to talk too much about it."

Captain Leach glanced angrily down the deck where Mrs. Bucksley and some of the other passengers were gathered in an excited circle. "You can no more hope to reason with them than with the crew," he declared in disgust.

"What are you going to do about it?"

He looked grim. "Install a sharp watch on deck. At the first sign of an unexplained shadow or a suspicious-looking figure they'll have orders to shoot directly at whatever it is!"
“That will make the passengers afraid to go on deck after dark.”
“T’ll order them not to until this emergency is over and we get the practical joker or maniac responsible for this scare.”
She sighed. “I hope you don’t wind up with a dead passenger.”
“We’ll have to risk that,” he said grimly. “T’ll this had to happen during this voyage.”
“It’s nothing you can help,” she said.
They each went their separate ways and she found herself being taken aside by a thoroughly excited Mrs. Bucksley. The stout woman bent close to her ear and said, “Do you know the latest?”
“What?”
“We think we’ve agreed as to who the werewolf is,” she said nervously.
Betty stared at her. “Who do you suspect?”
Mrs. Bucksley looked crafty. “I thought you’d be able to guess.”
“I’m afraid not.”
Her older friend looked scornful. “Professor Damon of course! I wonder we didn’t hit on it before. He’s exactly the type.”
Betty considered this. Professor Damon was weird. But she couldn’t picture him in the role of a murderous werewolf. She said, “I doubt if he’s guilty.”
Mrs. Bucksley sniffed indignantly. “I don’t understand why you feel that way,” she said. “Look at his pasty white face and those slanted black brows over those odd eyes. He’s a Dracula-type if I ever saw one.”
“Dracula was a vampire not a werewolf,” she reminded the stout woman.
“Amounts to the same thing.”
“Not quite,” she said.
Mrs. Bucksley showed suspicion on her round face. “Are you on his side?”
“I’m not on anyone’s side,” Betty assured her. “But I think you should be more careful in your accusations. This seems a ridiculous charge to me.”
“Why?”
“You have no proof. No basis for it. Have you seen
Professor Damon turn into a werewolf or even engage in any suspicious behavior?"

"We don’t have to!"

"I can only question you," Betty said wearily. "Why not? Do you think you’ll convict him on your own ideas?"

"He looks like someone dabbling in the supernatural. They say he’s been in France studying a lot of mumbo-jumbo like witchcraft and all that kind of thing."

"Medieval medicine," she told her. "There’s quite a difference. And Professor Damon has assured me he has no belief in the supernatural at all."

Mrs. Bucksley hunched uneasily. "He said that to throw you off the track. There’s a murderous werewolf on this ship and I say it's him!"

"You should be careful with your talk," Betty warned her. "Captain Leach is worried this gossip about phantoms may upset the crew. Then we could all be in serious trouble."

"I say we’re in serious trouble as it is," Mrs. Bucksley declared in a firm tone, terminating the discussion.

Later in the afternoon, the inquiry under the chairmanship of Captain Leach was called. All the passengers had been called together to give their testimony. Betty realized that only about a dozen of them had any claims to seeing the supernatural animal stalking the decks. Both Professor Damon and Quentin were among those who flatly denied seeing or hearing anything unusual.

Quentin kept well in the background of the gathering looking pale and remaining silent for the most part. She thought he still seemed ill and wondered what it was that had come over him the previous night. It was clear he had not yet completely recovered from it.

Captain Leach called Professor Damon before the gathering a second time to pointedly question the weird man about his movements on the ship and his background in general. The professor endured the questioning and the hostile faces of the group for a little then he turned to them with anger on his pale face.

"Don’t think I’m not aware of what you’re all thinking," he said, pointing a bony finger at them. "Because I
am of a superior intellect and different from you, it follows in your small minds that I'm some sort of monster!"

Captain Leach was on his feet. "We didn't say that, Professor," he told him in a placating tone.

The man in the black cloak turned his pale, skull-like face to him. "There was no need to put it in words," he snapped. "I know what you meant."

"I think we may call this inquiry ended," the captain said in a weary, disgusted tone.

Professor Damon glared at the assembly again. "If there is a murderer on board this ship I say it is one of you." And as a chorus of shocked gasps came from Mrs. Bucksley and others of the assemblage the irate Professor Damon stalked out of the salon.

Captain Leach addressed the others sharply. "Until this matter is settled the decks are restricted at night."

Mrs. Bucksley rose up with bustling indignation. "Indeed they should be, since you've just allowed that madman to threaten us all and go free!"

CHAPTER FIVE

The voyage of the Eagle went on and the sturdy ship was nearing the American shore and her first port of entry, Boston. But while the ocean had been strangely calm the mood aboard the vessel continued to be a stormy one. With the decks manned by armed sentries at night and the activity of the passengers cut to a minimum, an unfortunate feeling of hostility arose among them.

Some of the group refused to speak to others, blaming them for creating confusion and not backing up their stand that the unhappy Professor Damon was some sort of evil monster. Mrs. Bucksley was prominent in this stand and now steadfastly avoided Betty.

Betty tried to enjoy the voyage and keep her mind on its purpose. The frustrations and perils of Paris were
gradually fading from her mind. Now she was thinking of reaching Boston, the journey to Collinsport and meeting Georgette and her husband. She would have liked to have questioned Quentin more about the village but he had also kept out of her way. And on the few occasions on which she’d seen him he’d actually looked ill.

Captain Leach still confided in her and he assured her that there had been no sighting of the werewolf since he’d posted the men with guns to watch on deck.

“At least it has prevented a panic,” he said unhappily. “Though I’ll not be sorry to see this voyage end.”

She once encountered Professor Damon on the bow of the ship. He gave her an odd glance and seemed about to hurry away, but then he apparently changed his mind and remained to study her with those burning eyes.

“I wish to thank you,” he said gravely.

“For what?”

“I realize now that when you mentioned the werewolf business to me that day you were attempting to warn me of the gossip concerning me on shipboard.”

Embarrassed by his words and the intensity of his stare, she said, “That’s not really true.”

“I’m sure that it is,” he said.

She changed the subject quickly. “We’ll be arriving in Boston tomorrow or the day after according to the captain.”

The pale face of the professor showed a shadow of fear. “I’ll be glad,” he said. “I think my life is in danger aboard this ship. Those stupid people have banded in a league of evil against me.”

“They’re frightened,” she told him. “And in their panic they have to blame someone. It just happened that they picked you.”

“Do you have any idea what it feels like to be the object of concentrated hatred?” he asked her.

“No.”

“I warn you it’s not pleasant,” Professor Damon said. “I won’t keep you talking to me. They already blame you for not siding with them.”

“It will be all right,” she said, trying to sound more cheerful than she felt. “As soon as the ship docks they’ll forget all about it.”
The skull face with the deep-set burning eyes showed scorn. "I'm not sure that I will. I have devoted my life to the assistance of humanity. I begin to question whether I have been in error." He gave her a grave nod of farewell and walked away.

She felt genuine sorrow for the professor. In the beginning she'd been somewhat fearful of him. His appearance and manner had been against him. He was very different. But now she was convinced that he had been malicious by Mrs. Bucksley and the other passengers. Still, if this were true, who was the culprit? Was there some evil person on the ship who had managed successfully not to be suspected? As the professor had charged, did a murderer lurk among them?

After dinner that night she saw Quentin for a few minutes. He tried to hurry by without speaking but she blocked his way. Facing him in the narrow corridor she said, "We've hardly said two words to each other in the past week."

Still looking pale and harried, he said, "I hadn't noticed."

"Of course you have," she said. "I'm sure you've deliberately kept away from me."

He gave her a bitter smile. "You seem to have plenty of companions. Captain Leach and Professor Damon to name only two."

"The captain has been kind to me," she acknowledged. "And I feel sorry for Professor Damon."

"Indeed?"

"Surely you must feel the same way."

He sighed. "I'm trying to endure the ship and the company on it until we reach Boston."

"We may dock there tomorrow."

"And then you'll be taking the train to Collinsport?" he suggested.

"I've been intending to ask you," she said. "Is that the best way to get there?"

"There is a boat and a train," the young man said. "I prefer the train. It gets there sooner. Though they both leave Boston in the early evening and don't arrive in Collinsport until the small hours of the morning."
"I hope we arrive in Boston so there doesn’t have to be an overnight wait for the train," she said.
"That does help," he agreed. He gave her a grim look.
"You’re still determined to visit Frene Castle."
"Of course. Now that I’ve come all this way," she said.
"Do you mind if I warn you again? You’re making a mistake."
"It could be. But I don’t intend to change my mind."
"That’s a pity," he said. With a look that expressed something between warning and reproach he moved on.

The weather changed as they neared the coast of the United States. On the last night out it began to rain heavily and there was a strong wind. The vessel rolled more in the rough waves, and some of the passengers did not appear for the evening meal. Betty wasn’t bothered by the motion of the ship and sat at the captain’s table.

She asked Captain Leach, "Will you maintain your watch on deck on this stormy night?"

The captain looked grim. "I’m cutting down on the number of men. But there will be someone out there."
"I’d hardly think you’ll be troubled in this weather."
"A matter of precaution, Miss Ward," he said. "I can’t afford to take any chances. Violence on this last night would be just as ruinous for my company as at any time during the voyage. With the complaints I’ve received I have no choice but to remain vigilant."

She gave him a wan smile. "It is good to know that our safety is in such responsible hands."
"We do our best," he agreed.

Because of the storm she did not retire as early as usual but remained seated in her cabin reading a late copy of the London Illustrated News which she’d found in one of the salons. It was just as she was ready to put the magazine aside that she heard the report of a gun from the deck and quickly rose from her bunk.

Following this she thought she heard shouts from the deck and her curiosity got the best of her. She hastily left the cabin and made her way along the dark corridor to the gangway and the deck above. Bracing herself against the motion of the ship she stepped out onto the deck in time to discover Captain Leach wearing an oilskin coat
and wide-brimmed hat in conversation with a sailor dressed the same way.

Captain Leach turned from the sailor to give her a look sternly questioning. "What are you doing out here, Miss Ward?"

"I heard a shot and some cries following it," she said. "I wanted to find out what had happened."

The bearded face under the wide-brimmed oilskin hat was grim. "You appear to be the only one who heard. You'd best go back inside. We can talk just as well there and you won't be soaked to the skin."

He held the door open for her and she went in out of the rain. They crossed the empty salon to the entrance to his quarters. He opened this inner door for her and waited for her to enter. She did and found his desk placed in the center of a good-sized rather elegant room.

"Sit down, Miss Ward," he said, taking off the oilskin hat and coat at the same time.

She seated herself in the chair he'd indicated and waited for him to divest himself of the wet oilskins and come to stand in front of her. Then she said, "I hope you don't resent my curiosity."

He smiled bleakly. "Whatever I may feel about it there's no denying that it is a natural thing."

"I'm glad you're taking that attitude. What was the shot fired for?"

His eyes met hers. "The man on watch saw the werewolf."

"Oh, no!"

"At least that is what he says," Captain Leach continued grimly. "It could be that the storm, shadows and his imagination made him think he saw something that he didn't. To counter that I'll admit he has always been a reliable man."

"So the chances are he did see something. Something outside the normal. There was a tautness in her voice.

"It could be," he admitted.

"Did he describe what he saw and where it was?"

The captain looked weary. "The usual thing. His account jibes with the others. He saw a hulking grayish-green brute with amber eyes coming across the upper deck towards him. He fired at it and he thinks he hit the
thing in the right front paw. It snarled and fled in the
darkness."
  "But he does believe he wounded it?"
  "Yes."
  "Perhaps he may even have hit a vital spot."
  "It could be," Captain Leach said dryly. "But is that
important when you're dealing with a supernatural thing
like a werewolf?"
  "I suppose not."

He paced back and forth in front of his desk slowly.
"I wish it hadn't happened," he said in a worried tone.
"I don't know how to include a thing like this in my log.
Why did it have to happen tonight?"
"You don't care to mention the possibility that the
ship has been haven to a werewolf all during the
crossing?"

He halted and frowned at her. "I'd be the laughing
stock of the company if I wrote down anything like that!"

She raised her eyebrows. "It's probably the truth. So
how else can you express it?"

Captain Leach leaned against his desk front as he held
a hand to his forehead and closed his eyes to consider.
"I'll write that we had a dangerous criminal on our pas-
senger list who threatened the lives of crew and pas-
sengers alike. And that my man wounded him without
being able to stop him."

"It's fanciful," she reproached him.
"But something my head office will read and under-
stand," he told her. "I must not give them a problem for
which there's no solution."

"I'd consider it might be fun. You say the werewolf
was shot in the right front paw?"

"Correct."
"That might have significance later," she suggested.
"I fail to see it," he told her. "I'll be satisfied when I
dock the ship tomorrow and get rid of them all."
"Including me?" she smiled with raised eyebrows.
"Not you, Miss Ward," he said with sincerity. "I have
enjoyed your company. And what is a nice young British
girl like you doing over here on your own?"
"I'm going to visit my recently married sister in a
Maine village," she said.
“And then what?”
“I wish you’d make the return voyage on the Eagle,” he said. “We’ll be touching at Southampton before sailing on across the channel to Le Havre.”
“I’ll remember that,” she promised.
“You can learn the ship’s schedule from our Boston office,” he told her with a warm smile. “I hope we meet again, Miss Ward.”
“So do I,” she said, for she had come to like the serious man who could not be older than in his late thirties. “I will want to be in touch with a bank in Boston before leaving on the evening train for Maine. Will I have time?”
“Yes,” he said. “We should dock in Boston around noon.”
Perhaps you can advise me which bank to visit,” she said.

He made a suggestion. Then he escorted her from his quarters to the door of her cabin. “I wouldn’t think of allowing you to wander alone on the ship after what that man claimed he saw tonight,” he told her.

They said goodnight and she went into her cabin and prepared for bed. She had added another eerie experience to the ones she’d already encountered in her search for Georgette. At least she was getting close to the end of her mission. She would arrive in Collinsport and be on her way to Frene Castle and a reunion with her twin.

The weather had cleared by the following morning and she heard no mention of the incidents of the previous night from the others. Everyone was filled with excitement at the prospect of reaching Boston. The rails of the vessel were lined with those eager to spot the shore first. Betty was as eager as the others and she found herself a place to study the coast of the United States as it came into view.

“I’ll warrant you’re pleased at the sight of even distant land.” It was Quentin who had come to join her at the rail with a mocking smile on his good looking face.
She turned to him. “Yes. I’m glad the voyage is over.” He grimaced. “I should imagine everyone is.”

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“We’ll be able to attend to some errands in Boston and still be in time for the night train to Maine,” she said.

“That will be convenient,” he agreed.

“I’m visiting a bank,” Betty said. “Then I’ll come back here and get my things and find a carriage to take me to the railway station.”

Quentin said, “I’ll meet you here on the ship. We can take a carriage to the station together. We’ll be making the journey in company in any case.”

She gave him a teasing look. “Even though you think I’m making a mistake.”

“That no longer matters,” he said with a slight frown marring his youthful features.

It was then she noticed his hand. His right hand! There was a bandage around it. For most of their conversation he had kept the hand concealed but now she saw it and couldn’t help staring.

She said, “You hurt your hand?”

“Cut the palm when I was packing this morning,” he said, lightly. He at once thrust the injured hand in his jacket pocket seemingly very self-conscious about it.

She said, “That’s too bad. Does it hurt?”

“It’s nothing,” he assured her.

“Perhaps you should see a doctor when you land in Boston,” she suggested.

Again he showed impatience. “I’d rather not discuss it,” he snapped. “I said it was nothing. Why do you have to worry every subject to death?”

Chagrined, she said, “I’m sorry. I was only thinking of your good.”

“Thanks,” he said, relenting a little. “I realize that. But there’s no need to make a fuss over a tiny cut.”

She didn’t refer to it again. But when she was back in her own cabin doing the last of her packing she did think of that bandaged hand. And an odd thought flashed through her mind. The sailor on deck claimed he had shot the werewolf in the right front paw. She stood frowning into space for a moment. And this morning Quentin appeared with a bandaged right hand? Could there be any connection between the two things?

She at once decided there couldn’t. It was sheer non-
sense to think of Quentin as being the werewolf. He had been the one who had first warned her about it in Paris. It was unlikely the bullet had marked the supernatural creature the night before. And it was entirely believable that Quentin could have injured his hand in the manner in which he’d claimed.

The *Eagle* was made fast to a Boston dock and now it was the time for leave-taking. Betty saw the grim-faced Professor Damon leave the ship early and alone. He strode down the gangplank with his black cloak streaming behind him. She could understand that he was impatient to get off the vessel.

The stout dowager from Washington, Mrs. Bucksley, unbent enough to come over to her and offer a farewell and wish her luck on her journey. Betty thanked her and politely expressed the same wish for her.

Then it was time for her to leave the ship and take a carriage to the bank suggested by the captain—a branch of her own London bank. There she had no difficulty in establishing her identity and drawing additional funds for her needs. The bank manager was friendly and promised that she need only write him from Maine if she required more money. All in all it proved a pleasant experience.

She had the cabdriver take her for a short journey through the city. It was much smaller than London, of course, and the people spoke with a different accent. But she was impressed by the energy and friendliness she witnessed all around her. She spoke to the cabbie through the small back window and had him halt the carriage by Boston Common. There he pointed out a number of fine old buildings including the Parker House Hotel where he claimed Charles Dickens had stayed.

Betty enjoyed every minute of the tour of the American city and was reluctant to return to the ship. But she knew that Quentin was waiting there for her and so she had no choice but to go back.

He was on board and ready to make a final departure from the vessel. Betty sought out the captain for a last goodbye, promising to return to England on no other ship but the *Eagle*. Then she and Quentin disembarked to-
gether. At his suggestion they took their luggage to the North Railway Station and checked it. Then they went to the Parker House and had dinner in its elegant, paneled dining room with its ornate cut-glass chandeliers before leaving for the station in time to catch the train.

The evening train for Maine was made up and waiting on the tracks when they returned. There was not a large group of passengers so they had the choice of many empty seats in the first-class carriage. When Quentin had found what he considered a good one he swung back the opposite seat so they had two seats facing each other. He put their light luggage in the overhead rack and then sat across from her with a relaxed smile.

"In spite of all I've said you'll soon be beginning the last lap of your journey to see Georgette," he said.

"Do you honestly think I'm so wrong?"

"You've chosen to disregard me on the subject," he said. "I offer no further comment."

"But you do wish me well?"

"Need I say that?"

Somehow his reply bothered her. It seemed that he had deliberately evaded a direct answer to her question. He was a strange young man. Not easy to know. She found her eyes seeking out his bandaged right hand once again and tried to stop. She didn't want any more arguments with him now.

A conductor came through the car to punch their tickets and stick them in the tops of the seats. He was an elderly man with steel-rimmed glasses. In answer to an inquiry from Quentin he said the train would go through Collinport sometime around four o'clock in the morning.

As the conductor moved on Quentin smiled at her and said, "You'll need some sleep before then."

"I can manage sitting here," she said. "The seat is comfortable."

"You'll find the jolting of the train something else," he warned her. "The roadbed is far from the best."

Now a trainman came through the dimly lighted car and turned up the gas lamps in the ceiling so that the grimy interior was somewhat less depressing. The train gave a heavy jolt and then began to move forward at a
smooth and increasing pace. Betty glanced out the window into the darkness but was unable to see anything.

The roadbed was as rough as Quentin had predicted. Although she closed her eyes and sought sleep it did not come readily. She dozed off several times to awake with a start as the train jolted. There were many stops which the trainman mournfully announced, sticking his head momentarily in the door of the car and shouting in an incoherent fashion.

Oddly enough the passengers seemed to be able to understand him, for they got on and off the train at the various stations. But the car was never filled. It became cooler and Betty was aware of the covering of heavy soot on the window sills and panes. The actual smell of the soot was strong in the stale air of the car. She was breathing it and her head began to throb a little.

She thought that Quentin was looking rather pale and distraught again. He made little attempt at conversation and didn’t try to sleep. Instead he sat there uneasily staring out the window into the darkness. Some hours later a porter came through the car with hot coffee and sandwiches. They both bought some food and drink. Betty felt better afterward. She even slept for a short while.

When she opened her eyes Quentin informed her, “We’ve stopped at Bangor. This is the principal city in this area of Maine. Now we’ll be taking the branch line to Ellsworth and Collinport and the other coastal towns.”

She said, “It must be after midnight.”

“It is,” he agreed. As he replied a sudden look of recognition crossed his face and he rose to greet a new passenger who had just gotten on the train. “Cousin Barnabas!” he exclaimed, holding out his hand.

Betty turned to see the newcomer standing in the aisle. She thought he was one of the most handsome men she’d ever seen. He had a regal bearing and wore a dark caped-coat and carried a black cane with a silver head. His hair was brownish and several locks fell loosely across his broad forehead. His eyes were brown, deep-set and piercing.

“Quentin,” he said, shaking hands with her companion.
And she was surprised to hear that he spoke in a pleasant deep voice with a clipped British accent.

Meanwhile Quentin had turned to introduce her. “You’ll enjoy meeting Betty Ward,” he said. “She is from London.”

Barnabas flashed her a smile and extended a gloved hand to her. “Happy to know you, Miss Ward,” he said pleasantly.

“Sit with us, Barnabas,” Quentin insisted. He seemed to be delighted to see this cousin.

Barnabas hesitated, glancing at her as he asked, “You’re sure I won’t be intruding?”

“Not at all.” She smiled.

“Thank you,” he said in his courtly way and sat down beside her. “Is this your first visit to Maine, Miss Ward?”

“Yes,” she said. “I only arrived in this country early this morning, so it’s all very confusing. I’m on my way to Frene Castle.”

“Barnabas can tell you all about the Frenes,” Quentin promised from the seat opposite them.

“Not all by any means,” Barnabas demurred. “But I do know the family. They married into ours. And now Frene Castle is built on our estate not far from Collinwood, of course?”

“So I understand,” she said. “And you live at Collinwood of course?”

He smiled. “No. When I’m on the estate I live in what is known now as the old house. It was the original house on the estate and is still in fine condition.”

Quentin spoke up again. “Barnabas and I are the black sheep of the family. We show up at Collinwood every now and then for a visit. But neither of us ever stay long. Isn’t that so, Barnabas?”

The handsome, melancholy face showed a look of amused irony. “My visits to Collinwood are perhaps more infrequent than yours,” he said. “But then you often visit the village without making your presence known on the estate.”

Quentin crimsoned as if his cousin had reproached him in some way. He muttered, “I do what suits me best.”

Anxious to smooth over the awkward moment she told
Barnabas, “I’m going to visit my sister, Georgette. She has recently married Jeremy Frene.”

Barnabas nodded. “Ah, yes, if I remember rightly he is an artist and has been studying in Paris.”

“That is where my sister met him,” she agreed.

“I’m returning to Collinwood for my first visit in more than a year,” Barnabas explained. “My servant, Hare, is in the second-class car. We’ll be installing ourselves in the old house, and I hope we have the opportunity of seeing you. The old house is near Frene Castle.”

Quentin regarded them with a mocking smile that made her wonder about his sincerity again. He said, “You will find that Barnabas is not much of a day person. He works at his history of the family during the daytime—a recluse guarded by his servant. It is only after dusk that he resumes his social life. Isn’t that so, Barnabas?”

The penetrating eyes of the handsome dark man were fixed on Quentin. “We haven’t met in some time,” he said quietly. “But I can see you haven’t changed at all.”

Quentin looked upset at this. “I trust that is a compliment, Cousin.”

“I would hope you’d accept it in that manner,” Barnabas said smoothly.

Quentin swallowed hard. “If you two will excuse me I’m going out on the platform for some air. My head is aching.” He quickly got up and almost raced out of the car.

The train was underway again and going at a fast clip. Barnabas turned to her and asked, “Is you sister expecting you?”

She shook her head. “I’m afraid not. She’s my twin and she eloped without telling me. I’m worried about her. I’m making this journey to be sure that she is happy.”

“I understand how you feel,” he said sympathetically. “I know little about the present-day Frenes. But I’ve heard Jeremy is a fine fellow. He has an Aunt Vivian who kept house for him during his bachelor days.”

“She’s the one I’m worried about,” Betty was quick to explain. “I’m afraid she’ll resent her nephew’s marriage to my sister and make things difficult for her.”

“Such things do happen,” Barnabas said.
“So I had to make this trip,” she said. “Even though Quentin did his best to discourage me and thinks I’m wrong to interfere.”

Barnabas’ face was thoughtful. He said, “Have you known him long?”

“No. We met in Paris. He was kind to me there. But I find him strange. He can be curt and cruel as well as friendly.”

Barnabas Collins smiled sadly. “You are perceptive. I’m glad you’ve become aware of Quentin’s occasional shortcomings for your own protection.”

Listening to Quentin’s cousin she was convinced that he was barely telling her all that he knew. That he could give her much more information about the temperamental young man if he wished. But she could tell he was too much of a gentleman to indulge in gossip.

Her train of thought was shattered by the unexpected appearance of an elderly man at the end of the car. He was purple-faced with excitement as he waved his arms and shouted, “There’s a wild dog or a wolf in the car ahead! I just got away from it!”

CHAPTER SIX

This wild statement on the part of the excited old man caused the expected commotion in the first class car. Exclamations of surprise and doubt were voiced by the sparse group of passengers. The conductor appeared from somewhere and angrily made his way down to the old man who was standing balancing himself against the train’s rocking by holding onto the back of a seat.

“What did you say?” The conductor asked him loudly.

The grizzled old man was not about to change his story. He pointed a stubby finger in the direction of the car ahead and said, “I was alone in that other car and a wild dog came down the aisle.”

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The conductor looked as if he might have a sudden attack of apoplexy. "You've been drinking!" he thundered.

The old man looked slightly uncomfortable. "Maybe I had one or two," he admitted. "But I haven't been seeing things. I never get that bad!"

The conductor was joined by the trainman now, and they both were regarding the old man with disgust. The conductor told the trainman, "You go on to the next car and see what he's talking about."

Looking a trifle nervous, the trainman nodded and gingerly moved out the door at the end of the car on his way to check what was happening in the second-class car. There was a murmuring among the passengers as the conductor continued to stand guard over the old man who had created the disturbance.

Betty had listened to it all with growing apprehension. She now turned to Barnabas and saw that he was showing almost no reaction to the unusual incident. There was a gleam of quiet speculation in his deep-set eyes.

She said, "What does it mean?"

He glanced at her. "Don't let it upset you. Best for us to keep out of it."

"I wonder where Quentin is? And if he's really ill?"

"Don't concern yourself about him either," was the advice he gave her.

Her eyebrows raised. "But Quentin must be somewhere out there between the cars. He has to have heard the outcry the old man raised. If there is some wild creature in the other car, why hasn't Quentin come back to tell us?"

"I wouldn't ask myself questions to which there may be no answers," Barnabas said.

Betty began to feel more uneasy. She was certain there was more to this than was immediately apparent. She thought of what had gone on aboard ship and of the bandage on Quentin's hand. And the rumors coming out of Paris that an American tourist was the werewolf. She gave Barnabas a frightened look.

"Is it possible Quentin has some responsibility for what happened?" she asked in an awed voice.

"I can't answer that at the moment," the man beside her advised. "You're looking pale and frightened. You
mustn’t. Try to hide your concern and it will be better for all of us.”

“I’m sorry,” she said quietly.

Barnabas was sympathetic. “I realize this seems strange to you. I only ask you to believe in me. Later I’ll be able to explain.”

“Yes,” she said in a low voice. She began to fear what it was he would have to reveal. With each passing second it was dawning on her that the charming but temperamental Quentin Collins might be the werewolf killer.

The trainman came back into the car with a look of annoyance on his thin features. He addressed the conductor, “Nothing in the car ahead. I looked through it and the other second-class car ahead of it. No one there but an old mute. And he was asleep.”

The conductor turned on the old man who’d raised the alarm with fresh anger. “Do you know there’s a stiff penalty for causing a riot in a public conveyance?”

The man showed a stubborn expression on his grizzled countenance. “I didn’t cause no riot!”

“Not because you didn’t try!”

“I saw something!”

The trainman says the car is empty. What you saw was the result of your drinking.”

“I never had the d.t.’s yet!” the elderly man raged.

“And don’t you try to make out different!”

The conductor was equally enraged. “You’re lucky if I don’t put you off the train!”

“Put me off and the line will be in plenty of trouble!”

“Go back to your car,” the conductor said angrily, lifting a hand to emphasize the way.

“I won’t go back there!”

“You’re holding a second-class ticket and that’s where you’ll sit,” the conductor snapped.

“Not in that car! Not after what I saw!” the old man said.

The conductor turned to the trainman, “Take him on ahead to the forward second-class car where the mute is.”

The trainman gave the old man a bleak look and said, “No use making a fuss. You came along with me to the other car.”

The grizzled countryman murmured something Betty
couldn’t make out and with a parting scowl for the conductor followed the trainman out of the car. At the same time the conductor turned and made his way up through the car and past where Betty and Barnabas were seated. His face had a set, grim expression and he kept his eyes straight ahead, paying no attention to any of the passengers.

When the conductor had gone by she gave Barnabas a questioning look. “What do you make of it all?”

He looked at her ironically. “I’d say the crisis has passed—for which we can be duly grateful.”

“Do you think that old man really saw some kind of animal in the other car?”

Barnabas raised his eyebrows. “He seemed very positive about it. At least he’ll have company now. The mute they are putting him in the forward car with is my servant, Hare. Rather sullen character but at least it will mean the old man won’t be alone after his unfortunate experience.”

She was frowning. “I wish Quentin would come back. I’m worried about him. He left so suddenly.”

“He often behaves like that.”

Her eyes looked worried. “Where could he be?”

“Perhaps standing on a platform between the cars,” Barnabas said. “We’ll know soon enough. He mentioned wanting fresh air and that would be the best place to get it.”

“I’m wondering what his reaction will be to this business of the animal in the second-class car,” she said. “We had some happenings like this on the vessel coming over.”

“Indeed?”

“And there had been incidents in Paris as well,” she went on in a troubled voice. “I heard the blame put on a visiting American.”

Barnabas smiled bitterly. “That might be expected. Americans in France often are blamed for things of which they are guiltless.”

“I can well believe that,” she said. “But the fact these incidents have followed me all this way is upsetting. Especially since Quentin has been close at hand whenever this wolflike creature has been seen. Do you think it could have a significance?”
Barnabas gave her a knowing glance. "It would be wise for me to wait before giving you my opinion on that."

His reply startled her. "I hardly find that reassuring," she said.

His handsome face was set in a stern expression. "I didn't say that to upset you. But I don't consider this a proper time to discuss Quentin. Let us wait until we reach Collinwood."

"If you like," she said, still concerned.

The train rattled on through the night. She tried to relax and stared up at one of the gas lamps overhead which seemed on the point of fading out. The dim light of the grimy coach car should have lulled her to sleep, but it didn't. Nor did the motion of the train and the subdued atmosphere seem to have any effect on Barnabas. He sat there fully awake with his gaze fixed ahead as if he were in deep thought.

An hour went by and they came to a stop at some isolated country station. Several of the first-class passengers got up to leave. And the general movement in the car roused her from her inner turmoil of thoughts and made her turn to Barnabas once more.

"I think we should try and discover what happened to Quentin," she said.

Barnabas showed no emotion as he rose and stood in the aisle of the car. "We can go out to the platform and take a look," he said.

She got up and they moved down the murkyly lighted car to the exit. It struck her that Barnabas didn't seem to expect to find the missing young man. She had the nagging feeling that he knew a lot more about Quentin and his quirks than she did.

Barnabas opened the railway coach door for her and she stepped out into the darkness of the platform and the coolness of the after-midnight Maine air. She judged that the stop must be an isolated one for she could see no sign of a regular station. There was just a small shelter with an open front for those waiting for the train. The few passengers who had gotten out seemed to have vanished at once. The place looked deserted and the only sound was that of the train engine ahead.

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She could see the other platform and the empty second-class car in which the old countryman had insisted he’d been stalked by some animal. But there was no sign of Quentin.

Turning to Barnabas in the shadows, she said, “He’s not out here.”

“I didn’t expect he would be,” he said.
“What can have happened to him?”
“He’s probably left the train,” Barnabas told her quietly.

This surprised her. “Left the train?”
“Yes.”
“But why would he, without saying a word?”

Barnabas’ face showed resignation. “I warned you Quentin is that sort of person. He’s probably felt ill enough to think he should seek out a doctor. And he’s gotten off at one of the small villages we’ve passed through to look for help.”

She listened with a slight frown. She found it hard to believe this explanation of the young man’s disappearance, and she had the feeling Barnabas didn’t believe it. He was telling her this merely to placate her. To make her accept the unexplainable.

“You think he was that ill?”
“Apparently.”

“I’m shocked,” she admitted. “I counted on his being near when I arrived at Collinwood. I felt he would offer some support. I’m very nervous about my meeting with my sister and her husband.”

“Quentin will likely turn up in due time,” Barnabas said in a kindly tone.

“But I’ll be arriving there alone,” she worried.
His handsome face revealed a wistful smile. “You’re forgetting something,” he said.
“What?”
“I’ll be there.”

At once she felt embarrassed. The man in the caped-coat was obviously such a gentleman and so filled with good will she should have known that he would be anxious to help her.

“I hadn’t thought about that,” she admitted.

Barnabas said, “I’d like to be of any assistance I can.

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The house in which I will be staying while on the estate is no further from the main mansion of Collinwood than it is from Frene Castle. I'm at a point between the two houses. So I'll never be far away."

"And you do know Jeremy Frene and his Aunt Vivian?"

"Slightly. I would term them acquaintances rather than friends."

She managed a brighter look. "Then I can be thankful that you happened to board the train and were introduced to me by Quentin before he vanished."

"I'm also glad of that."

"I'll try not to be a bother to you," she said. "But it's good to know I'll have a friend to call on. I'm a long distance from London."

"When we arrive in Collinsport we can ride to the estate together," he said. "My cousin at Collinwood will have a carriage there waiting for me and Hare. I'll take you to Frene Castle first."

"Please don't interfere with your plans," she said. "I'll enjoy doing it," he told her.

The engine of the train began to gather steam and make more noise. From a car or two away they heard one of the train's crew cry the familiar, "All aboard!" Then with a tumultuous puffing and roaring the engine jolted the train to a start and they were moving through the darkness once more. She and Barnabas remained on the platform for a few minutes longer as the train gathered speed.

Loath to return to the murky, stale-smelling coach she stared out at the passing fields and took a deep breath of fresh air. Suddenly she saw a lithe form leap out of the shadows and run along the field parallel to the train. It was a wolflike creature greenish-gray in color and as it bounded along at a remarkable speed its glowing yellow eyes fixed on them with venomous air.

"Look!" she cried, pointing at the animal.

"I see it," Barnabas said tersely.

"The old man was right!"

"So it seems."

"We're losing him!" she shouted plaintively as the
wolfish creature fell behind with the train gathering its full speed.

Barnabas touched her arm gently. "Don't concern yourself about it," he advised her quietly.

"It's exactly the kind of animal the old man said he saw in the other coach and which was seen on the ship!"

"I wouldn't mention seeing it to the conductor or anyone else if I were you," Barnabas advised.

"Why?" She turned to stare up into his handsome face. He looked grave. "It might not be wise. We'd better go inside. It's too cool for you out here."

Somewhat unhappily she allowed him to escort her back into the coach again, where they resumed their former seats. She sat at his side tensely waiting for Barnabas to offer her some additional information. She felt reasonably sure that he would.

After a little while, with a serious look in his deep-set eyes he told her, "I wouldn't mourn about Quentin not being with you when you arrive at Collinwood."

"I'm trying not to be upset but I'm thoroughly confused. Quentin knew Jeremy and his Aunt Vivian. He even had a short friendship with my sister. It would have been a bridge in meeting them all. Even though from the first he didn't approve of my making this trip."

"He didn't?" Barnabas' eyebrows raised.

"No. He was very strange about it. And while he was charming during the time we knew each other in Paris and he rescued me from serious trouble he changed when I told him I was coming to America. He was against my interfering in the affairs of my twin sister and her husband."

"I see," Barnabas said thoughtfully. "Why do you suppose he felt so strongly on the matter?"

"I've worried about that," she said. "I'm not sure."

He looked sympathetic. "I've warned you that Quentin is an odd person. Given to strange moods. Perhaps this was part of it."

"Perhaps."

Barnabas hesitated as if he disliked going on talking about Quentin. But he finally resumed in a serious voice, saying, "I must also warn you that under the circumstances it would be best if you said nothing of your
friendship with Quentin when you reach Frene Castle.”
She stared at him. “Why?”
“He hasn’t a good reputation anywhere in Collinsport,”
Barnabas said. “And since he’s not arriving with you it
would do more harm than good to suggest you’re close
friends.”
This really shocked her. “Why is he disliked in his
home village?”
Barnabas became vague again. “There are various
reasons. I’d prefer not to go into all of them now. Later
we’ll discuss it. But believe me when I tell you this is
the best advice I can offer.”
“Of course I’ll do as you say,” she agreed.
“You can give them the impression that we met in
the train without his introduction. It would be natural
enough with us both having the same destination.”
“Of course.”
“Later, if Quentin shows himself at Collinwood, you
can admit to knowing him. But that should be time
enough.”
She eyed him anxiously. “You speak as if you don’t
expect him to arrive there.”
“I think there’s only a small possibility of it,” was the
puzzling reply Barnabas gave her.
The rest of the journey to Collinsport was a kind of
ordeal. She was caught between her apprehensions about
the reception she’d get from Georgette and her husband
and the fears and suspicions she felt concerning the odd
behavior of Quentin Collins. She was certain that Barna-
bas was shielding much of the evil surrounding the young
man she’d met in Paris. And she was strongly of the
opinion Quentin could be the murderer tainted by the
werewolf curse.
It was close to dawn when the train halted at the
Collinsport station. Barnabas helped her out of the coach
and down the steps of the train to the platform of the
small station. There were a few people about in contrast
to the lack of activity at some of the other tiny places
they had passed through along the way. And the coach-
man sent by Barnabas’s cousin almost at once presented
himself. He was a short, elderly man. When he heard that
Barnabas proposed to give her a lift to Frene Castle, he looked troubled.

"I only have the small carriage," he said. "There won't be room for you and your servant and this young lady along with the bags and all."

Betty saw the stocky, ugly-faced man whom she assumed was Hare standing grimly in the background by a heap of luggage. She turned to the coachman and asked, "Is there some other vehicle here at the station I could hire to take me to Frene Castle?"

"Yes, miss," the coachman replied politely. "Old Amos is here with his wagon. He meets all the trains."

"Would you please engage him for me, then," Betty said, and she turned to Barnabas who looked as if he might be about to protest the plan. "I'm sure this is the best solution," she told him.

Barnabas looked concerned. "But it will mean you will arrive at the castle entirely on your own."

"At this time of the night I think it makes little difference," she said. "I'll probably be met by some servant and put in a guest room. I'll make my explanations to my sister in the morning."

He sighed. "I suppose that's true. It's most unfortunate the other carriage isn't adequate for us all."

She stood facing him on the shadowed platform and forced a smile. "Please don't give it another thought. We'll manage very well."

He promised, "I'll see you tomorrow evening."

"Thank you," she said.

"I'll be occupied in the daytime," he explained. "But you can expect me any time after dusk."

"Please don't interfere with your own plans," she begged him.

"That will suit me very well," he said. And with a bow he left her. The servant followed carrying some of the luggage. They had no sooner vanished in the shadows than a thin, weird-looking man with a battered bowler hat appeared on the platform beside her. He touched a forefinger to the hat and with a nervous look on his scrawny face told her, "I'm Amos. You want a ride to Frene Castle, don't you?"
“Yes,” she said. “My bags are over there on the platform—near the station entrance.”

Amos nodded gloomily. “I’ll pack them in my wagon if you like. Can’t offer you any proper seat inside though. You’ll have to ride up front with me.”

Betty thought this odd. But she hadn’t any choice. It was cold but she felt she’d be warm enough for the short drive. “It’s not far to the Castle, is it?”

“Maybe a thirty-minute drive,” the thin man said, and then began a hacking cough which lasted an agonizing space of time. After which he cleared his throat and peering at her in the blue light of approaching dawn with his sunken eyes, he added, “I have a good warm blanket for your knees, miss.”

“Very well,” she said, with a hint of impatience. “I’m anxious to get on my way.”

“Yes, miss,” he said, staring at her oddly and not making any move as yet. “You ever been here before?” he asked. “Seems like I should know you.”

“No,” she said. “This is my first visit.” She could have gone into the fact that her twin had married Jeremy Frene and lived at the castle and it was probably Georgette he’d seen. But she felt in no mood for long explanations to a public coachman. She was nervous and wanted to get away from the station without delay.

“Strange,” he said. “Well, I’ll pack your bags, miss.” He slowly crept across the platform and picked up two of the suitcases. She watched as he left with them at a snail’s pace. He was either in poor health, which he could be on the strength of his appearance, or one of the laziest of men. She held her crimson cloak about her tightly and waited.

Eventually the bags all were removed from the platform and he came over to her once more in his deferential mournful way. “I’ll show you to my wagon, miss.”

“Thank you,” she said, relieved that at last they were ready to start for the castle.

He limped along at her side. Apparently his slowness was caused by a crippled leg. “It will soon be dawn,” he observed.

“Yes the train arrives here at a bad time.”

“Lucky a place like this gets service at all,” Amos
observed. "The Boston boat carries most of the freight, and it gets in here after midnight too."

They had rounded the corner of the station and for the first time she saw his wagon and the single horse between its shafts. She halted and gasped. "Is this what you're taking me to Frene Castle in?" Her shock was justified for it was no ordinary wagon. It was plainly a shabby old hearse!

The thin man eyed her glumly. "I told you that you couldn't ride inside," he reminded her.

"So you did," she admitted, studying its glass sides with the ornate fringe and black velvet trimmings showing through. She could see her luggage stacked inside where the coffin with its corpse would usually rest.

"Hope you ain't superstitious or nothin' like that," the doleful man ventured.

She curbed her feelings of panic and desire to turn away from the hearse. It was at a time when she would not likely find any other transportation. Barnabas had already left in the other carriage. And she didn't want any more delay in joining her sister at the castle.

She said, "It will do."

Amos helped her up onto the high front seat. Then with much groaning and effort he clambered up onto the seat beside her. He gave her the blanket to tuck around her knees and then grasped the reins in his bony hands. At a signal from him the dispirited black horse began to move in the same slow way he did. It was plain the animal had been trained not to hurry in its sad duties.

She said, "Do you know Jeremy Frene?"

"Yep," Amos said stolidly. "Knew him as a boy. He's turned into one of the artist fellows now. He makes them statues and he's got another fellow there makes statues same as he does. Queer sort by name of Harron."

"I believe Jeremy Frene is a sculptor," she said. "I'd imagine his friend is a sculptor as well."

"Yep. Both make statues," the scrawny old Amos said, perferring his own descriptive term.

"And you know Barnabas Collins, of course," she continued, wanting to make some sort of conversation.

"Mr. Collins isn't any stranger in these parts," Amos said. "He don't come too often. Another one nobody
around here understands. Keeps to himself a lot. And he seems to have a hankerin’ for the old cemetery.”

“I imagine that is because he’s a historian,” she suggested. “I understand he’s writing a history of the family, and there’s usually a lot of information on gravestones.”

“There is that,” Amos said as the hearse creaked along the narrow country road with tall bushes flanking it. Dawn was gradually appearing, and from the beauty of the sky it would be a fine day.

“I hear that Frene Castle has a wonderful location,” she went on, attempting to quell her growing feeling of panic at the prospect of presenting herself there.

“Near the bay and close to Collinwood,” the old man said. “You a kin of the Frenes?”

“In a sense,” she said. “My sister married Jeremy Frene in Paris a little while ago.”

Amos gave her a startled look. “Your sister married Jeremy Frene?”

“Yes. My twin sister, Georgette.”

The old man gasped. “That’s why I thought I’d seen you before.”

She smiled. “I suppose so. Have you met my sister?”

He nodded, a strange expression on his cadaverous face. “Yep. I’ve met her in a manner of speakin’. Not more than three weeks ago she rode in this here wagon with me.”

“Oh?”

“Yep,” the old man said grimly. “I don’t like to be the one to tell you this. Your sister died and I took her from the undertaker’s place back to Frene Castle. She was a passenger on the inside.”
CHAPTER SEVEN

Betty could make no reply for a moment. Nothing broke the silence but the slowly turning wheels of the hearse and the plodding of the horse's hooves on the dusty road. The news was so shattering that it brought a kind of merciful numbing effect with it. She found it impossible to believe the strange old man's story. Surely he must be mistaken.

Looking at him slumped dejectedly beside her with the reins in his hands as he stared glumly ahead she said, "You must be mistaken."

"No, miss," he said, giving her a bleak gaze from his rheumy eyes. "Old Madison, the undertaker, embalmed her and I took the coffin from his place to Frene Castle. And it wasn't but two or three days later Madison died. We got no undertaker nearer than Ellsworth now. And it's only in the last week that we've had a doctor in the village. Before that we had to go to Ellsworth or have the doctor come here. Now we have a young fellow from Boston. Seems smart enough, too!"

She was only barely hearing him. Her dazed mind was trying to cope with the monstrous news he'd delivered to her. In a small voice, she asked, "What did my sister die of?"

"Some kind of spell, from what I hear. Guess maybe it had to do with her heart. That fellow Ralf Harron, the statue-maker, he found her dead in the garden."

"I can't believe it," she protested. "She was married only a short time ago. She had only been here a few weeks."

"That's so," the old man admitted. "But I guess her time had come. I reckon Jeremy feels right bad. He's hardly left the castle since."

She tried to take it in. Argued with herself to accept
it, but it was no use. The enormity of it was beyond her. She sat there in an uncaring daze, oblivious to her surroundings and his attempt at conversation as they drove on.

She didn’t become aware of the countryside until they began nearing a dark sprawling mansion that stood proudly on a cliff overlooking the ocean. Gazing at it through eyes blurred with tears she wondered if this was the house where Georgette had so briefly presided as mistress.

In a taut voice she asked Amos, “Is that Frene Castle?”

“No. That is Collinwood,” he said. “Collins family own all this land. The Frenes built a little distance ahead. You can see the rooftop of the castle and the trees around it from where we are.”

She looked. The gray stone of the castle’s upper story loomed above a thicket of evergreens in which it stood. She lapsed into a shocked silence again until they halted before the broad entrance door of the gray stone building.

With further groaning the elderly Amos got down from the front seat of the hearse and then assisted her to the gravel walk. She tried to gain some control of herself and mounted the stone steps to the front door. She rapped on the door and stood there in the growing dawn feeling completely miserable.

Before Amos could gather her luggage and bring it up beside her the door was opened by a sensitive-looking young man with an aristocratic face, brown curly hair and sideburns. He was wearing a robe of red silk and when he saw her a look of amazement crossed his face. “Georgette!” he spoke her dead sister’s name in an awed whisper.

It was too much. She felt herself descending into a whirling black depth. Everything rushed away from her as she slumped down before him in a faint.

When she opened her eyes she was stretched out on a chaise lounge in a room of great elegance which was strange to her. The young man was bending over her with an anxious expression on his somewhat thin face.

“It’s all right, Miss Ward,” he said earnestly. “Forgive me for calling you by your sister’s name. You bear
such a resemblance to Georgette that I couldn’t think for a moment.”

She stared up at him. “You are Jeremy?”

“Yes,” he said, his tone sad. “And Amos told me that he broke the dreadful news about my wife’s death to you.”

Betty closed her eyes for a second and bit her lip. “I still can’t believe it,” she said.

“It is just as difficult for me. We had so much ahead of us. Such a wonderful life mapped out and then that had to happen. I’m still walking around like someone in a daze.”

His words touched her and she raised herself up from the chaise lounge to a sitting position. Giving him a sympathetic look, she said, “Please forgive me. I’ve been so filled with my own grief I didn’t bother to consider yours. Please believe how sorry I am.”

“Thank you, Betty,” he said. “May I call you that? She spoke of you so often your name is very familiar to me.”

“Please do call me Betty,” she said. “I went to Paris after your elopement. And when I found out you had left for here I decided to follow you. I had a weird kind of premonition that Georgette was in some sort of danger. As twins we’ve long shared the same thoughts and emotions, even when we were far apart.” She sighed. “Now I know what was bothering me. The shadow of her approaching death.”

“If only you’d arrived before it happened.”

She studied his grief-ridden face. “The coachman said she was found dead in the garden. What caused her death?”

“It must have been her heart,” Jeremy said sadly. “There was no outward evidence of an illness. It seemed just that her heart stopped beating. Madison, the undertaker, pronounced her dead on his arrival. He took her to his shop for a special embalming process which I requested. Since then the poor old fellow has himself died.”

“Where is Georgette buried?” she asked.

“I’ll show you tomorrow,” he said. “Just now you must be exhausted. I’ll take you to a guest room. Sleep as long as you like. Tomorrow we’ll continue our talk.”

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She sighed. "I'm in such a state I may not be able to sleep."

"I'm sure you will," he said, rising. "You are bound to be tired enough. The trip from Boston on the train is a wearying one. Bad enough without having to face the news you received on your arrival."

Getting to her feet, she said, "I met a member of the Collins family on the train, Barnabas Collins. He was extremely kind to me." She was following the advice of Barnabas and saying nothing about Quentin.

The sensitive face of her brother-in-law showed interest. "Is Barnabas back here again?"

"He came on the train tonight."

"He is an unusual person and has a lot of charm," Jeremy Frene said in a kind of grudging way that made her wonder if there was any bad blood between them. "He mentioned knowing you."

The young man with the curly brown hair nodded. "I know most of the Collins family. We have had this house here for many years. And in Paris, Quentin Collins was my good friend."

"How nice," she said guardedly.

"We mustn't stand here all night talking about the Collins family," he said. "You are tired. I'll show you upstairs."

Her room was on the third floor of the castlelike mansion and overlooked the ocean. After he saw her safely inside he bade her goodnight and went out closing the door after him. Betty saw that the bedroom, like the rest of the house, was furnished in a fine fashion. The draperies and the canopy and coverings of the bed were in a dark purple. The furniture was carved exquisitely and of solid walnut. Even the large mirror above the dresser was set in a fine oval frame of rich design.

Gray dawn was filtering in through the window curtains. Slowly she began to unpack one of her bags and prepare for bed. But she felt little like sleep. Too much had happened. She had been impressed by Jeremy's quiet earnestness and grief at the loss of Georgette. She was sure he must have made her sister a fine husband. If only the dark shadow of death had not struck her down so
suddenly their lives would have been filled with the good things of life.

So her long journey had ended with this shattering news. She might have saved herself the long trip as Quentin had urged. Memory of Quentin came surging back and she wondered about him and his strange disappearance. Had he some suspicion that Georgette might die? How could he? Unless, and the thought filled her with a sudden bleakness, unless there had been foul play in her sister's death?

It was no secret that Jeremy's Aunt Vivian had not approved of the marriage. Where did she fit in the picture? Could she have had anything to do with Georgette's sudden demise? Betty wondered and worried as she prepared for bed. In the end she dismissed the idea as too melodramatic. Jeremy had loved Georgette too well to allow anyone to harm her. Death of her twin must have resulted from heart failure as the young man had claimed. There was a history of heart disease in their family.

Her head barely touched the pillow before she was asleep. Grief had merely added to her exhausted state. She slept for several hours and came awake to the sound of a door being slammed down the hall on her floor and a murmuring of female voices in conversation. She sat up in bed, and a moment later there was a soft knocking at her door.

She called out, "Come in."

The door opened and a regal-looking woman of late middle age entered. She wore a black dress with a high neck and the mass of hair crowning her pale but still attractive face was iron-gray. She offered Betty a reserved smile.

"You are Georgette's sister?"

"Yes," she said.

"I am Vivian Frene, Jeremy's aunt," the older woman said with easy authority. "Let me offer my deep sympathies in the death of your sister."

"Thank you," she said. "The loss was great for Jeremy as well."

Vivian nodded. "Yes. Losing a mate is never an easy experience. I lost my husband many years ago. And I
still miss him. If it were not for Jeremy my life would have little point.”

Betty was trying to decide about this woman. One thing was sure, she was poised and confident. She was probably very capable of forming a plan and carrying it out. No weak female was she. Georgette must have found it difficult if Vivian had set out to oppose her.

She said, “Jeremy must depend on you more than ever now that Georgette is gone.”

The steely gray eyes of the older woman met hers directly. “But of course dear Georgette was with us for such a brief time,” she said. “I have taken over the household direction again as if she’d never been here.” Then apparently noting the pain this had brought to Betty’s face, the woman quickly added, “Though we all loved her and admired her for the way she took hold of things in those few weeks.”

“If I had guessed what had happened I would not have come here,” Betty said.

Vivian Frene was pleasant in an aloof way. “You must not think of yourself as an outsider. This was your sister’s home, however briefly. And Jeremy did love her deeply. So much so that I fear the poor boy’s health is suffering because of her death.”

“He mustn’t let that happen.”

“I tell him the same thing but he pays no attention,” the gray-haired woman said. “The truth is, most of the Frene family have a morbid streak, and I fear Jeremy is no exception. For a few days after Georgette’s sudden death I was afraid he might try to take his own life.”

“How awful!”

“I think so,” Vivian Frene said coolly. “So perhaps it is good that you came. I’m sure it will be helpful for Jeremy if you remain here for a short visit.” Whether by accident or design the woman emphasized the final words.

Betty found herself blushing. She said, “I have no intention of remaining here for more than a few days. I’d like to see Georgette’s grave and take some keepsakes back home with me. Beyond that I’m anxious to return to London.”

“I can understand that,” the older woman said, her chin held high. “I’ll have some food sent up to you.”
“I overslept,” Betty apologized. “I can wait until later.”
“We’ve already had luncheon,” Vivian Frene informed her, “so I’ll see that something is brought up. I’ll see you when you come downstairs.”

The older woman left her and Betty got out of bed to wash and dress. Before she’d finished an elderly maid-servant arrived with a tray of food which she placed on a table in front of the window. Betty seated herself at the table and poured herself a cup of tea. She sipped it and felt better.

She was grief-stricken by her sister’s death, but she determined not to reveal how badly she felt to Jeremy Frene. She must preserve some control over her emotions while she was a guest in his house and help him to bear the torment Georgette’s death had visited upon him. And because, due to her resemblance to her dead twin her very presence must remind him of the tragedy, she felt she should follow Vivian Frene’s hint and make her stay at the stately mansion as brief as possible.

She did want to see Barnabas Collins again and let him know all that had happened. She’d enjoyed her meeting with the charming Collins. His comfort and advice would be valuable to her and he’d mentioned calling on her in the evening. Perhaps the first thing she should do was see Georgette’s grave. Jeremy had promised to show it to her.

Searching among her clothes she found a dark brown dress that was close enough to mourning. When she had finished with her hair she went down the circular stairway to the broad reception hall. From the foot of the stairs she could see Jeremy in the living room in earnest conversation with a broad-shouldered, swarthy man with a flat nose that gave him the look of a professional boxer. The men apparently heard her, for they turned her way.

Jeremy at once came to greet her. “I’m glad you were able to get some sleep,” he said, studying her. “You look much better. Let me introduce you to my friend, Ralf Harron. Ralf is one of America’s finest sculptors.”

Ralf Harron advanced to her with hand outstretched. “Jeremy is far too complimentary, Miss Ward,” he said in a low, masculine voice. His grip as they shook hands was so powerful it almost made her wince.
Jeremy’s sensitive face showed admiration for the big, swarthy man. “Ralf is currently working on a figure of Georgette, which I have commissioned.”

Harron gave her an interested look. “The resemblance between you two girls is quite remarkable,” he said. “You might help me with this project by sitting for me a few times during your stay here.”

She said, “I’m sorry. I plan to leave very shortly.”

Jeremy’s aristocratic face showed chagrin. “But you mustn’t rush away. Now that you are with us you must stay a good while.”

“I’m afraid that isn’t possible,” she said. And then to Ralf she observed, “Weren’t you the one who found my sister dead in the garden?”

The sculptor looked uneasy. “Yes, I did.”

“Have you any ideas concerning her death?”

Ralf Harron’s face seemed to pale just a trifle. “I’m not sure I understand you,” he faltered.

“I’m thinking of the cause of death,” Betty explained. “Did it look as if she’d been struck swiftly or were there any signs of her having tried to return to the house when she knew she was ill?”

“I was very upset when I came on her body,” he said, “so a lot of the details are blurred in my mind. She had apparently been seated on a bench near one of the gravel walks. When she became ill she must have lost consciousness and toppled off it. I found her on the grass before the bench.”

“I see,” she said. “Thank you.”

“I’m afraid I’m not much help,” the sculptor apologized. “But I was in shock at the time.” He glanced at Jeremy. “If you’ll be kind enough to excuse me I must get on with my work.” He bowed to her. “We’ll continue our conversation at another time, Miss Ward.”

“By all means,” she said.

After he’d left the room to go upstairs Jeremy told her, “Ralf is a humble but greatly talented men. I’m hoping his figure of Georgette will be his masterpiece. I want you to see what he has done so far. It might be a big help for him to have you pose a time or two. You do look remarkably like Georgette.”
"I hope you don't mind that," she said, studying him for his reaction.

He smiled sadly. "I find it pleasing in you. It is a joy to have a living replica here in the house, though I can see that you have a completely different personality."

"I think both Georgette and I jealously guarded our individuality," she said, with a sad smile. "It became especially important to us since we were so alike in appearance."

"Understandable," he said.

"Your Aunt Vivian came to my room and introduced herself," she said. "She's a striking woman."

"She has a great deal of personality," he agreed. "Before she married my late uncle she was an actress."

"I might have guessed she had once been on the stage. That explains her poise and authority."

Jeremy gave a deep sigh. "Don't mention that I told you. She doesn't like to be reminded of her theatrical past. She has become more a Frene than anyone born to the name. It is odd that those of humble origin should set such stock on a family name while we who have come by it through the bloodline shouldn't think of it at all."

"There is a good reason for that sort of thinking," Betty said. "In the case of your aunt I would assume the Frene name gives her a feeling of security she may have lacked before her marriage."

The young man showed interest. He was wearing dark trousers and a fawn coat and vest now and she could see why Georgette had fallen in love with him. He was very nice.

He said, "Your comments about Aunt Vivian are shrewd. For one who has known her so briefly I'd say you are remarkably astute."

"I was offering a general impression," she said. "I have known some others like her."

Jeremy's sensitive face showed a shadow. "I wish Georgette had been able to read her as easily. I always had the feeling that she was secretly a little afraid of Aunt Vivian. And it annoyed me that my aunt wasn't as kind as she could have been with her."

"Well, that's over," she said. "Dwelling on it won't do anyone any good."
“I still worry about it,” he frowned. “I should have taken a stronger stand in Georgette’s behalf.”

Betty gave him a questioning look. “Was the trouble between them so much in the open?”

“No really. But from the first they were antagonists.”

“Your aunt would be bound to resent your marrying. No matter who the girl might be.”

“Exactly. I thought it would pass after Aunt Vivian knew she couldn’t prevent the marriage. But she kept bickering with Georgette about minor things of no importance until the very evening of her death.”

“I’m sure she must regret her actions now.”

Jeremy gave her a knowing glance. “She has told me that she does. I don’t put too much stock in it. If it weren’t that I feel an obligation to my uncle, I’d ask her to leave here.”

Betty said, “She speaks of you with concern. She seems worried that you may become morbid about my sister’s death.”

He smiled bitterly. “More of her pretense that I’m dependent on her. She wants everyone to believe she’s badly needed here. And that is one of her ways of doing it. Don’t pay too much attention to her and don’t allow her to chase you away.”

“I wouldn’t do that,” she told the unhappy young man, though in a sense she was allowing this to happen. “You mentioned that you would show me where Georgette is buried. It’s a nice fine day. I’d like to pause by her grave for a little.”

“Oh, yes, of course,” he said uneasily.

She interpreted his agitation as reluctance to visit the grave, and she was glad to have this evidence of his battling against his morbidity. She said, “If you’d rather not come with me you can tell me the way and I’ll find it on my own.”

“I wouldn’t think of it,” he said hastily. “Of course I’ll join you.” He stood there, silent and awkward.

She studied him solemnly. “I can see this is bothering you. Please don’t feel obligated.”

He gave a deep sigh. “You don’t understand.” Betty frowned. “What is it I don’t understand?”

His eyes met hers and there was an unknown some-
thing in his gaze that sent a chill of fear coursing down her spine. Carefully, he said, “Before we go ahead with this I must ask you to prepare yourself for another shock.”

“What sort of shock?”

“One that may not at first be entirely pleasant,” he said. He took her gently by the arm. “Come with me.”

He led her up the winding stairway until they reached the third floor. There he guided her along a narrow, murky hallway that smelled of dust and age. They came to the very end of it and he paused before a door with a padlock on it.

Jeremy gave her a warning glance. “Please keep in mind that I was deeply in love with Georgette.” He searched in his pockets until he found a ring of keys and proceeded to select one of them.

She watched with fascination. She was wondering why he had brought her up there and what all this had to do with where her sister was buried. She began to believe that Vivian Frene was right in at least one instance—her nephew was surely of a morbid nature.

Jeremy inserted the key in the padlock and opened it. Then he slipped it from the door and swung the door open. A kind of cold draft seemed to escape from the doorway. It gave Betty a weird feeling. Jeremy went inside the darkened room ahead of her, and crossing to a window, reached for a drawn blind.

“Don’t be afraid!” he cautioned her and then he raised the blind to let the sunlight into the room and reveal a spectacle so shocking it made her cry out!

On a stand in front of her sat a crystal coffin! A coffin constructed entirely of clear glass. And stretched out in the coffin as if she were asleep, eyes closed and hands folded on the bosom of her lovely white dress was the body of her dead sister!

Jeremy had come up beside her. There was a rapt expression on his sensitive face as he studied the body of his late wife in the crystal coffin. “I buried her in her wedding dress,” he said quietly. “Doesn’t she look beautiful?”

She was shocked. Turning to him, she demanded, “Why have you done this to her? Why didn’t you allow her a
normal burial instead of exposing her in this freakish way?"

A stern look crossed his thin features. "Because I love Georgette. Old Madison embalmed her with a process that he invented himself. He promised me there would be no deterioration of her body for a century."

"You can't go on keeping her here like this," Betty said in despair.

"Why not?" His question was a mocking one. "I prefer having her near me. Of course Madison expected me to bury her. When I said that would be wasting his talents he was very upset. Vivian was also emphatic that she should be buried at once. But I refused. Before anything was settled Madison died and the secret of his embalming process died with him. Georgette represents his great accomplishment. It was then I decided to transfer her to the crystal coffin."

"Where did you find such a macabre thing?" she asked, trying not to look at the lifelike Georgette in the shining glass casket.

"My father had it made. All the Frene family have had odd attitudes towards death. It was his plan to bury my mother in it. She asked him not to, so the casket was stored in the cellar here for years, gathering dust. All at once I knew I had a use for it."

"Georgette wouldn't want this any more than your mother," she protested. "If you go on keeping her here in this room you'll wind up mad."

His eyes had a strange gleam in them. "I disagree," he said. "As long as she is here I can watch over her. She will always be near me."

"It's indecent and insane," she protested.

He looked infinitely sad. "Do you grudge me this one link with the person I loved beyond any other?"

His words turned some of her anger to pity. No matter how horrible she considered this she realized he had done it from a worthy motive. But how to convince him he was wrong? That what he was doing would have made Georgette unhappy?

"I'm sorry for you," she said. "And I loved my sister. But I can't approve of this unhealthy business."
"You prefer to take Aunt Vivian's side in this?" he inquired coldly.
"I think Georgette should be buried and in a proper casket."
"Never."
"You'll wind up mad," she warned him. "What you are doing is against all religious belief and nature."
He regarded her sadly. "And I'd hoped you would understand."
"I'm trying very hard to be fair," she said. She glanced at Georgette again, marveling at the lifelike appearance the deceased undertaker had managed to achieve in her. She looked as if she might be going to open her eyes at any moment—so perfect was the deception.
"I felt it was too soon to bring you up here," he said.
"But you insisted you wanted to see her grave."
She turned her back to the crystal coffin. "I had no idea of anything like this," she said in a voice stifled with horror.
"Now you know."
"I wish I didn't," she said. "I'll be haunted by this room and what I've seen here for the rest of my life."
"There's no reason to feel that way," he reproved her as they slowly crossed to the door again.
"I can't help it," she said, head bowed.
She waited in the corridor while he went in to lower the blind and return the room to a place of shadows. She watched him go over and stand before the glass coffin for a moment. Then he came back out to her and replaced the padlock on the door.
He gave her a searching look. "You don't understand, do you?"
"No. However much it grieves us we should face the truth. Georgette is dead. What you have in there is only the mere shell of her. She will never come back."
"But you're so wrong," he said quietly as they stood together in the shadows of the hall. "Her ghost returns to this house almost every night!"
CHAPTER EIGHT

The eerie assurance of his quiet statement caused her to stare at him with terrified eyes. It seemed that his obsession with his dead wife had already twisted his mind—that the torment of her sudden passing had left him a madman.

She said, “You can’t be serious!”

“Georgette does come back regularly,” he said in that odd, hushed voice. “I have proof of it.”

“What sort of proof?”

“Her paintings.”

“What about her paintings?” she demanded, still positive she was faced with an insane man.

A gleam had come into his eyes. “She still continues to paint. I have a complete collection of her ghost paintings.”

“You’re talking wildly!”

“I can show you,” he said with an air of triumph. “Her studio is just down the hall.” He walked swiftly ahead of her, passing several doors. Then he threw one open. “Come and see for yourself.”

After her other macabre experience with the crystal coffin she was prepared for almost any strange revelation. Somewhat hesitantly she entered the attic studio. It was well lighted by windows and a skylight. Paintings she recognized as being done in Georgette’s style hung all around the walls. There was even a head and shoulders sketch of herself she’d not seen for some time. There were completed canvases stacked against the baseboards. And over by the window an easel with a canvas on it.

Jeremy had gone over to stand before the easel. “Come over here,” he said.

Hesitantly she crossed to where he was. “Well?”

“Look at that painting,” he said indicating the easel.
“She must have done it last night.” He glanced at her. “I always leave a blank canvas and paint for her to use.”

She ignored him as she stared at the weird yet oddly graceful painting on the easel. It bore no resemblance to any work she’d seen Georgette do, so she discounted it as done by her at once. But there was a kind of bizarre genius behind the collection of various shades of coils that interlocked to form an interesting pattern.

“Georgette would never do anything like that,” she said.

“You think not?” he asked defiantly. “Let me show you some others by her.” He hurried over to a stack of canvases by the baseboard and lifted one up for her to see.

It was the distorted face of a man with a long black beard. At first glance it could be taken as normal but with a second look it was a thing of fantasy with the man’s features floating in space and bearing no true relation to reality.

She said, “That’s a face conceived by a madman. You’re an artist. How do I know you don’t come up here and do these yourself?”

He shook his head. “Nothing like that. I merely set out the blank canvas and whatever else she needs. Her ghostly hands do the rest. Take a look at this.” He held up what seemed a burst of flame that crowded the canvas and had a tiny fence of purple around it.

“I know Georgette’s work,” she said. “Those paintings are not done in her manner.”

He moved on a few steps and picked up another painting and offered it for her to examine. This one at once struck a note of memory for Betty. It was a seascape and it shouted of her sister’s painting style.

“I recognize that as one of hers,” she said.

“It’s the last one she did before her death,” Jeremy said excitedly. “All those others were painted by her ghost. That is why they are so much in contrast to her earlier work.”

“Most of these paintings you claim were done by a phantom are disgusting,” she exclaimed. “They’re horrible and grotesque. As if conceived by a disordered mind!”
The sensitive Jeremy gave her a mocking look. "So you suggest that I am the artist. You think me insane!"

"I don't know what to think," she said unhappily as she gazed around the studio. "I am shocked by what you are doing with Georgette's body and I can't accept your theory that a phantom hand has done these paintings."

"But I know better," he insisted. He went over and pulled out a canvas from a group by the wall. Holding it up for her to see its surface which revealed a hairy hand, clenched as if in agony. The nails were long and talonlike, and the hand had a peculiar demonic quality in its constricted crimson outline that was hard to define. He said, "The night after Georgette's death this was an empty canvas on the easel. When I came up here twenty-four hours later the painting had been completed."

She shook her head. "Georgette would never paint anything so gruesome."

"Not the Georgette you knew when she was alive. But who can tell what different vision she has now that she is on the other side. From death she seems to see things with a different eye." He was staring at the painting as he spoke.

"It's madness to believe such a thing," she said. "If you didn't do that painting and the others, it must have been someone else who came up here. Someone who wanted to play on your grief for Georgette and turn it into madness."

"Who?" he asked, putting the painting down.

She hesitated as she considered. "Why not Ralf Harron? He is an artist as well as a sculptor."

"He hasn't touched a brush in years. And what would his motive be for doing such a thing?"

"I don't know him well enough for that," she said. "But you will admit he has the ability to create those paintings."

Jeremy frowned. "I have seen paintings he did some time ago. They were nothing like these."

"Styles change."

"You won't admit that Georgette's has," he pointed out. "Even though she has transferred from the living to the dead state."

"That's different."

"I disagree," he said, turning and looking at the many
canvases stacked against the baseboards. “Having her in that crystal coffin where I can study and still enjoy her beauty and seeing these paintings which her ghost is producing gives me some relief from my sorrow. In a very real way Georgette is still alive in this house.”

Her eyes narrowed. “You’re on the road to madness. Stop before it is too late!”

The young man was obstinate. “I’ll never bury Georgette, nor will I do anything but encourage her phantom to continue producing new works of art.”

Betty sighed. “I’m truly sorry I came here now. All this will haunt me.”

“You should be pleased,” he argued.

“You’re sick in mind,” she told him, and she walked out of the studio and left him standing there amid the paintings which he was convinced had been painted by Georgette, alive and dead.

Betty was still frowning as she descended the elaborate circular stairway with its light gray marble steps and black iron railing. She had to believe that Georgette’s sudden death had plunged her artist husband into insanity. Nothing else could explain the body in the crystal coffin up in that locked room. And she also felt that it was Jeremy who was responsible for the weird paintings he credited to her sister. They could only be the work of a demented mind.

From the moment of her first meeting with the slender, sensitive Jeremy she had liked him. And even the macabre discoveries she’d just made hadn’t changed those feelings towards him. But it seemed almost certain that he was bordering on insanity if not already actually insane. His decision to place Georgette in the glass casket and his insistence she was doing those weird paintings were proof enough of that.

Her repugnance and sorrow were such that she felt she should leave the isolated castle as soon as possible. She would see Barnabas in the evening and explain. After that she would make preparations to go as soon as she could. Her mind was filled with these turbulent thoughts as she made her way to her room on the third floor. As she touched the knob of the closed door she had a strange feeling. A sense of another presence. Thinking it was her
overwrought nerves she opened the door and then halted in the doorway in surprise.

For the arrogant Vivian Frene was standing there by her dresser. Hearing her enter, the older woman turned to her with a look of defiance on her well-preserved, beautiful face.

Jeremy’s aunt said, “I hope I didn’t upset you. I came in to make sure the maid had taken good care of your room. Sometimes they are careless. I keep a strict rein over the way the house is kept.”

Betty quickly recovered from the shock of finding her there. She said, “I’m sure everything is all right.”

“Yes, it seems to be,” the older woman said casually.

Betty was thinking that Vivian had an abundance of gall. It was wrong for her to be in the room in this fashion. Especially with the door closed. It was likely she’d been quickly checking over her things either through curiosity or malice. In either case her behavior was unforgivable. But then Betty knew Jeremy’s aunt had been antagonistic towards Georgette and would likely resent her being on the scene as well. She expected that.

Vivian Frene made no move to leave. Giving her a sharp look, she said, “You’ve been upstairs with Jeremy?” There was a significant note in her voice.

“Yes,” she said quietly.

“You have been in that room?”

“Yes.”

“You’ve seen what he has done with your sister’s body,” the older woman said, anger and disgust now in her tone.

“I have.” She did not know what to say. While she agreed with the other woman in principle she did not want to join with her against Jeremy. She was of the opinion that Jeremy’s unhappy actions were motivated by grief while his aunt was feeling the same distaste for having Georgette in the house in death as she’d had when she was alive.

“It is a heathenish, awful thing, and I wake up at nights worrying about it,” Vivian went on.

“Perhaps when the worst of his grief is over you may persuade him to consider a proper burial,” Betty sug-}

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Vivian’s face twisted with annoyance. “Not much chance. When he sent her body to old Madison for that special embalming process I didn’t realize what was in his mind—nor did the undertaker. If he hadn’t died so suddenly he might have persuaded my nephew that it was wrong to try and preserve Georgette in this fashion.”

“I think it is something Jeremy must decide for himself,” she said with resignation.

Vivian’s eyes opened wide. “Don’t tell me you approve?”

“No.”

“I should hope not.”

“But I don’t want to interfere,” Betty said. “I’m sure he loved my sister and her death has shattered him.”

“I warned you the Frenes were morbid,” Vivian said. “And Jeremy is surely no exception. His artistic temperament has resulted in his being a little worse if anything. Did he also take you in to see the ghost paintings?”

“Yes.”

There was scorn in Vivian Frene’s voice. “What did you make of them?”

“They were clearly done by a tortured mind.”

“Exactly,” the older woman agreed. “You can read between the lines. I know what is going on. Jeremy goes up there at night and paints those dreadful subjects himself. Then he tries to convince everyone that Georgette’s ghost is responsible.”

This was the theory Betty had also arrived at, but she didn’t want to give Jeremy’s aunt the satisfaction of agreeing with her. So she said, “I have no idea who is responsible, but I don’t think it’s the spirit of Georgette.”

Vivian Frene crossed the room to speak to her confidentially. “I tell you how it will end. If Jeremy doesn’t mend his ways he’ll have to be committed to an insane asylum. Then I’ll be left in this unhappy house all alone. The thought terrifies me!”

But she didn’t sound terrified. She seemed to be almost gleeful over the possibility. All Betty’s suspicions of this shrewd, domineering woman, who had once been an actress, returned. She couldn’t help debate in her mind whether the jealous Vivian hadn’t in some way brought about the death of Georgette. It wasn’t normal that a
girl like her sister, who had always enjoyed perfect health, should succumb to a heart attack at the moment of her greatest happiness.

She said, “I hope it doesn’t come to that.”

“And so do I,” Vivian agreed. “But neither do I want to live here with a madman who might turn on me violently at any time.”

“Jeremy strikes me as being very mild in temper.”

“Don’t be deceived,” his aunt said darkly. “And take my advice. Don’t tarry in this house too long. Your resemblance to Georgette is most unfortunate when you consider his mental state. It could trigger him into some mad deed.”

Her eyebrows raised. “Do you really think that?”

Vivian Frene nodded gravely. “I’m telling you this only for your own sake. If I were you I’d remain here no longer than overnight. You can’t imagine what a dark business you’ve stumbled into.”

Betty was shocked by the older woman’s brazen attempt to scare her away. It wasn’t unexpected but she’d hardly believed it would be so direct. She was skeptical of everything Jeremy’s aunt had said. And she doubted that she was in any danger from the attractive young man despite his grief-stricken state. All Vivian was after was to get her out of the way.

She said, “You make everything sound frightening.”

“This is a house of shadows,” Vivian said solemnly. “And the shadows conceal the indescribably horrible. When I picture that dark, locked room up there and the crystal coffin in it I shudder.”

Betty said, “I prefer not to think about it. I want to remain to have a talk with Barnabas Collins tonight. Tomorrow I’ll likely make arrangements to leave.”

“Barnabas Collins!” Vivian spoke the name with harsh sarcasm.

“Don’t you approve of him either?”

The older woman looked wise. “I suppose he has taken you in by his charm.”

“I do like him.”

“Did he explain that he would not be able to see you during the daylight hours?”

She frowned. “Yes. He works during the day.”

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Vivian smiled coldly. "So he claims. But he did tell you he'd visit you after dusk?"

"Yes."

The older woman crossed to the door. She turned to offer her a grim glance over her shoulder. "If you remain here long enough you'll hear some odd stories about him."

"What sort of stories?"

"I'd rather not repeat them," Vivian said. "But if I were you I wouldn't go walking with him after dark. The Collins family has some strange members."

Her scathing remark about Barnabas angered Betty. In a moment when her rage took control of her feelings, she asked sharply, "Then I assume you prefer Quentin Collins to him?"

This brought a startling reaction from Vivian. She frowned and turned to study her. "What do you know about Quentin Collins?"

"I met him in Paris. He was your nephew's best man at the wedding."

"So he was," Vivian said in a strange preoccupied way. "But I happen to be fond of Quentin. He is my good friend."

"Did you hear rumors that he was suspected of being under the werewolf curse?" Betty demanded, throwing all caution aside.

The older woman paled. "No. I had not heard that."

"Strange," Betty said. "It is quite a common story. As his friend I felt you should know all the details."

"I think it is a scandalous attack on a fine young man's name," Vivian replied coldly.

"Perhaps."

"You would do well not to mention Quentin to my nephew," Vivian Frene said. "They had a quarrel before we left Paris. I considered it unfortunate and Jeremy's fault. But there seems to be nothing you can do to prevent these things."

With this she went out and closed the door after her. Betty remained there in a dazed state of anger. She knew she shouldn't have let Jeremy's aunt learn that she'd known Quentin. But in her rage it had slipped out. And from the reaction she'd gotten she began to won-
der if Quentin and this older woman hadn’t joined in some unholy alliance to destroy Jeremy’s marriage with Georgette. Perhaps that was what the quarrel between Jeremy and Quentin had been about.

When Vivian hadn’t been able to break up the marriage in Paris, she’d found a way to eliminate Georgette on their arrival at this old castle. It was a terrifying thought but could be true. And Quentin might have objected to her visiting Frene Castle because he knew what Vivian was planning to do. He was aware of the fantastic spider’s web of plotting and horror she would find herself in.

At any rate it was clear that the formidable gray-haired woman was friendly towards Quentin and didn’t like Barnabas. As far as Betty was concerned this was a compliment to the charming Barnabas. She felt that Quentin was a shady character if not actually the werewolf and a many-time-murderer. Yet none of this could be proven. It was all pure conjecture.

The afternoon was warm and pleasant, and she tried to shut out the nightmare of having visited the body of Georgette up in that dark room. Time enough to think about this when she discussed it with Barnabas. Until then it would be better for her nerves to shut it out of her mind altogether.

With this idea she went downstairs and out into the garden. It was landscaped beautifully and the surrounding pines made an impressive background. She strolled between the rosebeds and along the gravel paths and pictured Georgette there. In her short weeks at the castle she must have found great enjoyment in this fragrant and quiet retreat.

She passed several painted wooden benches and wondered which one her sister had been seated on when sudden death had overtaken her. Ralf Harron would know since he had found her. Thought of Harron made her wonder about that unusual-looking young man. He had the battered face and build of a prizefighter and yet the gentle voice and manner of an artist. His swarthy skin and unruly, wiry black hair also set him apart. Yet he had been very sympathetic at their only meeting.

At the end of the garden she saw a small stone cottage.
Curiosity drove her on towards it. There was a single door and window at its front, and the roof was of the thatched type and slanting. The window was small and many-paned. Coming up to the isolated building she tried the door and found it locked. Then she moved over to the window and shading her eyes from the glare of the sun gazed in at its murky interior.

She suddenly went rigid! For staring back at her from the shadows of the cottage room was the face of Georgette! Cold and more lifeless than that of the corpse she’d seen in the crystal coffin it gazed at her mournfully.

“You don’t have to do that. I’ll take you inside.” The voice from behind her made her whirl around and find herself staring at Ralf Harron. He was regarding her with a sad smile.

She was at once ashamed for her Peeping-Tom activity. She said, “I shouldn’t have been doing that.”

“Perfectly all right,” the sculptor said. He was in dark trousers with a white shirt open at the neck and revealing his hairy, swarthy chest. “I’ve been for a walk. Now I’m going to work for a while.”

“This is your cottage?”

“Jeremy has placed it at my disposal to live in and work in when I feel like it. I’m hurrying to complete the figure of your sister. That was what you saw through the window.”

“It gave me a start,” she admitted. “Her expression and the marble lent her a ghostlike appearance.”

Ralf was unlocking the cottage door. “It won’t have that look when it’s finished,” he promised her. “I thought Georgette was a vivid, exciting girl and that’s how I plan to do her in marble.”

“I’m glad of that,” she said with relief. “The mood here is far too funereal.”

“You’ve noticed that,” he said looking at her significantly. And then he invited her in.

She entered the cool shadowed interior of the cottage whose main room served as living room and workshop for the sculptor. He was doing a life-sized figure of her sister, which was mounted on a wooden stand. It was only partially completed, though much of the face, head

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and shoulders were done. The tools of the sculptor and fragments of marble were scattered on the floor around the figure.

"The place is not tidy," he apologized. "I can't keep cleaning up after every session with the marble."

"I understand," she said. She was still gazing at the unfinished work of art. There was no question that he had managed a striking likeness of Georgette thus far. He was picturing her in a dress with a flowing skirt, puffed sleeves and a bustle.

He was standing at her side also studying the figure. "Jeremy is urging me to finish it."

"What is his rush?"

"That is how the tragedy of his wife's death has left him," the artist said. "He wants to place this in the garden at the spot where she died. He feels it ensures that she'll always be out there as she was on that day."

She gave him a worried look. "That's unhealthy."

Ralf seemed embarrassed. "I feel exactly the same way," he confessed.

"Then why?"

"Why did I undertake the commission?"

"Yes."

He stared at the mournful figure of Georgette in white marble. "Because Jeremy is so heartbroken. And because he is my friend and patron. So far my art has made me little money. I couldn't continue as an artist without his help."

"Then you must be grateful to him?"

"I am."

She frowned. "Then how do you allow yourself to help destroy him? This is catering to the same madness that has made him preserve my sister in a crystal coffin up in that dark attic room."

Ralf Harron took a deep breath. "You've been up there."

"Unfortunately, yes. I'd rather he'd not taken me."

"It is bad."

"Beyond that. I fear for his sanity."

"Did he talk to you about the phantom paintings?"

"Which I suspect he does himself."

He looked startled. "I've been thinking that also."
“Somehow he must be guided away from his grief.”
“Is that possible?”
“I hope so. Otherwise he’ll become hopelessly mad,” she said. “He must be well on the road at this moment.”
“Have you discussed this with his aunt?”
“Yes. Were you in Paris with them?”
“No. I remained here. What do you think of Vivian Frene?”
Betty hesitated. “She’s an unusually strong person.”
Ralf stood there in the shadowed room giving her a probing stare. “What do you think of her in relation to Jeremy?”
“It’s hard to say.”
He smiled thinly. “I believe you’re being diplomatic. You can be frank with me. I’m on Jeremy’s side.”
“I’m sure she is destructive to him—whether that is her intention or not.”
“You’re right about that,” he agreed.
“And while she deplores his madness I have the feeling she is really exulting in what is happening to him. It gives her more power over him and might eventually hand her the ultimate control of the estate.”
“You score again,” he said. “You’re as smart as Georgette was. She saw through Vivian at once.”
“That wouldn’t make for happy relations between them.”
“I wasn’t in Paris,” Ralf Harron said again. “But from what I heard after they all returned, things were rough there after the wedding. Jeremy’s aunt kept insisting he’d made a mistake in marrying Georgette and telling him your sister cared only for her art and not for him.”
“That doesn’t ring true. Why would she have married him and deserted friends, family and home if that was the story?”
Ralf nodded. “Jeremy was clever enough to realize that. The big trouble came when his aunt insinuated there was a romance going on between Georgette and one of the Collins men who was visiting Paris.”
“Quentin?”
“Yes. You know him?”
“Slightly. It’s not important.” But she secretly felt it
was. It showed that Quentin had been in an evil collaboration with Vivian Frene.

“This Quentin attempted to compromise Georgette and the result was a handsome quarrel between him and Jeremy before Jeremy and his party left Paris.”

She asked, “Did Jeremy realize his aunt was probably masterminding the plot?”

“Pretty much so,” Ralf agreed. “And after they came back here Jeremy spoke to me of sending Vivian away. She’s only his aunt by marriage, you know. She has no real claim to anything here.”

“I’ve heard that.”

Ralf’s face shadowed. “But of course he never did it. Before that could happen, Georgette died.”

It was her turn to offer him a searching look. “You found her. Do you think there was anything suspicious about her death?”

The young sculptor looked troubled. “I’m not certain.”

CHAPTER NINE

Betty was not completely shocked by what the sculptor said. She had suspected from the beginning that there was something strange about her sister’s tragic death. Now perhaps she would hear more of the facts.

She said, “What makes you think there could have been foul play?”

“I can’t honestly say that there was,” Ralf said worriedly. “I was strolling in the garden. It was early evening. Suddenly I came upon her stretched out on the grass by one of the benches. I thought she had fainted.”

“But she was dead.”

“Yes,” he agreed. “I bent down to examine her. And I was stunned. There were no marks on her. No suggestion of violence and yet she didn’t seem to be breathing.”

“Have you any idea how long she was there?”
He frowned in thought. "That was discussed later. By piecing together various bits of information we judged she’d been there at least a half-hour. Vivian Frene had been out there talking to her. That was unusual enough in itself as they’d been barely speaking to each other for days."

Betty said, "Do you suppose Vivian attacked her in some way? You’re sure there were no marks of violence?"

"Positive. Because I was suspicious, I examined her carefully."

"And then what?"

"I went inside and got Jeremy and his aunt. Jeremy was in a terrible state. It was his aunt who had to assume responsibility for contacting the authorities."

"How long before a doctor arrived?"

He gave her an odd look. "No doctor ever came."

"No doctor!" she gasped.

"I agree that was wrong," he said. "Vivian sent a messenger for old Madison, the village undertaker. We had been without a doctor here for many months. Madison examined your sister and pronounced her dead. He promised to make the proper report to the authorities."

Betty was badly upset. She sank down on a nearby plain chair. "But that was negligence. There should have been a doctor!"

"It would mean bringing him all the way from Ellsworth to view a dead body," Ralf said. "That’s the way old Madison expressed it. And he claimed they would accept his professional verdict."

"And so they let him take her body away with him?"

"Yes."

"She might even have still been alive," Betty protested. "Sometimes people have spells and don’t seem to show breathing but they’re not dead."

"I have heard there are such cases."

"Georgette could have been one of them."

He turned to stare bleakly at the partly finished marble figure of the dead girl. "I keep thinking of that now. But even if I had protested at the time no one would have listened to me. Vivian couldn’t get the body to the undertaker’s quick enough to have it embalmed."
“Because she knew when it was embalmed Georgette would surely be dead,” Betty said bitterly.

“And Madison was a fanatic on the subject. He’d even developed that special method of preparing the dead that has preserved Georgette so perfectly.”

She shuddered. “And now he is dead and we can’t question him.”

“That is a pity.”

“So we’ll never be sure.”

“I worry about it. But I haven’t discussed it with Jeremy—he’s in a bad enough state as it is. And no use talking about it to Vivian since she created the situation. She had a stable boy on the way to Madison in the village before we could debate having a doctor.”

Betty was shocked. “She wanted Georgette dead.”

“I’d say so.”

“And now she’s been warning me that I should leave. That I’m not a good influence on Jeremy in his upset state.”

Ralf’s face became shadowed. “I don’t know what makes her think that, unless she’s afraid you’ll find out too much. Or that Jeremy will fall in love with you because you look so much like your dead sister.”

“Vivian wants to be in command here,” she agreed. “There’s no doubt about that.”

Ralf sighed and moved across to the fireplace of the cottage and leaned against the mantle. Studying her seriously, he said, “I think you should defy her and remain here as long as you like.”

“I can’t. It’s too awful here.”

“I realize it’s difficult for you, knowing that Georgette isn’t buried and all the rest. But I believe Vivian is out to destroy Jeremy now. She might not have as good a chance if you stay.”

“You’re here to help protect him.”

“I can’t reach him as you would be able to,” he maintained. “And my position here is very precarious. I dare not let Vivian know how I feel about her or she’d find some way of getting rid of me at once.”

She nodded. “You play your role of a neutral well. When I first got here I was worried that you were on her
side. That you might have been part of the conspiracy against Georgette."

"Never!"

"I understand that now. But that was my first im-
pression."

"I try not to show my feelings," he said. "But now
I'm begging you to remain here long enough to try and
find out what evil Jeremy's aunt has planned next."

She sat hesitating in the gloomy atmosphere of the
cottage. "I don't know," she said,

"I'll admit it will take courage on your part to do it.
But Georgette loved Jeremy. This is something you can
do for her even though she is no longer with us."

Betty looked up at the solemn, swarthy face. "I'd not
thought of it in that light."

"Do."

She stared at him. "You're a very different person from
the way you look—much more thoughtful and sensitive
than anyone would guess."

He laughed ruefully. "My Greek father and my broken
nose don't make me the drawing room type. But I'm not
exactly a roughneck either."

"I'm fully aware of that," she said hastily. "About re-
main ing, I'll think it over. And I'll talk to Barnabas."

Ralf said, "I've never met this Barnabas, though I've
heard about him. He's back visiting here, is he?"

"Yes."

"Seems to me he's been mentioned as a mysterious
type. Keeps a lot to himself. But then all the Collins
family is like that. We hardly ever see the people at
Collinwood."

Betty said, "Jeremy's aunt seems to have something
against Barnabas as well."

"That would be in his favor as far as I'm concerned," he
said.

"I feel the same way. I'll be inclined to follow his ad-
dvice. He seems very sensible. And I do appreciate what
you've told me, of course."

He moved away from the mantle and over to the
marble figure of the dead Georgette. He touched his hand
lightly on a shoulder of the piece of sculpture. "I'll have
this finished soon. Then I haven't much excuse for stay-
ing on. I worry what will happen to Jeremy if he’s left alone with that woman.”

“She is a threat to him, I’m sure.”

Ralf swung around to face her. “There’s something else you should know. In a way it ties in with those ghost paintings Jeremy insists are done by Georgette.”

“Yes?”

“Georgette’s ghost has been seen in and around the castle. Several of the servants have been badly scared and have complained. In fact, some of the help have left the house.”

“I’m not surprised,” she said bitterly. “Not with Jeremy spreading that story of her phantom continuing to paint up in the attic studio. And with her body still up there. It’s bound to have the servants full of superstitious fear.”

“Exactly,” he said. “But I’ve talked with several of those who have claimed to have seen the ghost, and I must admit they almost convinced me.”

“You can’t mean it?”

He smiled wryly. “I said almost. Mind you, their stories were detailed enough to worry me. They seemed sure they had seen Georgette.”

Betty said, “It all goes back to Jeremy’s unhealthy attitude. And it could get worse.”

A sudden footstep alerted her and she turned to see the arrogant Vivian standing in the doorway of the cottage. The older woman had a scornful expression on her face. “I see you two have discovered each other.”

Anxious to divert any suspicions the other woman might have, Betty rose quickly and said, “I came by the cottage and Ralf invited me in to see his figure of Georgette.”

Vivian sniffed her annoyance as she stepped inside and surveyed the partially completed sculpture. “If I had my way I’d take an axe to it and pound it into bits.”

“Come now,” Ralf said with an easy geniality. “You aren’t that critical of my work, surely.”

“It has nothing to do with your skill as an artist,” she said, glaring at him. “It’s the idea of having that figure standing out in the garden. Can you imagine the effect it
will have on the servants? They’ll see it in the moonlight and insist they’re seeing her ghost!”

He nodded. “It could be put to better use.”

Betty turned to her. “Perhaps he might be talked out of placing it out there. I agree it’s a morbid idea.”

Jeremy’s aunt smiled sarcastically. “It’s obvious you don’t know my nephew well. If you did you’d discover that you can’t talk him out of anything. He is wildly fanatical about all that has a bearing on his late wife.”

“Understandable,” Ralf said quietly.

“Deplorable,” Vivian snapped back. “I hope you take a good long time to finish that thing. It might be a smart idea for you to abandon it and then the problem would be solved.”

“I doubt that,” he said. “Jeremy would probably place it out there in an unfinished state.”

Betty, feeling she should leave, turned to Ralf and said, “Thank you. I’ve enjoyed seeing the figure.”

“You can help me with some of the details if you’ll consent to sit for me,” he reminded her.

Jeremy’s aunt spoke up. “That’s not practical. Miss Ward isn’t planning to remain here, are you, Miss Ward?”

She glanced at the older woman. “I’ll probably be leaving soon,” she said with suitable ambiguity.

She and Jeremy’s aunt walked back to the house together. Vivian seemed in an angry mood. She complained about almost everything, and fairly ranted about the money Jeremy had wasted supporting Ralf Harron. She considered the young sculptor a bad influence on Jeremy and lazy as well. Betty wasn’t impressed since she knew the real reason Vivian hated Ralf so. He had taken a stand against her. Not openly perhaps. But Jeremy’s aunt was cunning enough to sense how he felt.

The balance of the day passed without event. At dinner Jeremy presided at the table. But he had little to say and no more than picked at his food. Betty and the others were forced to maintain the conversation. She was once more impressed by the fact he was a sick young man.

When dinner ended he followed her into the living room, and separating her from the others, began to ques-
tion her about her plans. "Can you stay here for the sum-
mer?" he asked.
"I don't want to," she said, her eyes meeting his with
frankness.
He frowned. "Why not? It's lovely here in the warm
months."
"I'm sure of that," she said.
"Well, then?"
"I can't stand the atmosphere you've created in this
house," she said. "Death and despair fill the air like a
fog. You're destroying your own life and you'll hurt
everyone around you.
His sensitive face was bitter. "You condemn me be-
cause I loved Georgette and mourn her."
"No. I blame you for extricating the last ounce of
anguish from her death," she told him. "I loved her as
much as you in my own way. But I would consider it
wicked to do what you have done."
"Different people, different views," he said.
"There's more to it than that," she warned him. "Until
she is properly buried I could never think of staying here
for any lengthy period."
"I'm sorry you feel that way."
"You're not open to reason, then?"
"On that subject the answer is no," he said.
"Then I'll be leaving very shortly," she said. She left
him to go out the front door to the steps. It was close to
dusk and because of the circle of tall evergreens that
shaded the stone castle it seemed darker on its grounds.
She walked away from the house in the direction of the
cliffs thinking what a strange business it was that she
should travel halfway around the world to encounter this
sort of tragic situation.
Even stranger was the story of Georgette's death. The
knowledge that no doctor had been called nagged at her
more each hour. It was possible, perhaps likely, that her
sister had been dead. But there should have been a doc-
tor to declare her so. The word of some senile old under-
taker on the edge of death himself could not be thought
of as satisfactory.
Her mind in a turmoil she moved close to the edge of
the cliff. From this vantage point she could view the
breakers below and hear the roar of the waves as they crashed against the rocks and shore. To the left stood stately Collinwood. Lamps already were showing at its windows in the fading light. The people in the big house had little to do with the Frenes, it seemed. She heard the melancholy call of a night bird in the distance and gave a tiny shiver.

Could it be true that Georgette's uneasy ghost wandered about the grounds and in the old castle? The servants apparently thought so. And perhaps there was reason enough why her twin's phantom should return to accuse those who had allowed her to die with so little concern. For her own part she was skeptical of the existence of ghosts.

She glanced in the direction of Collinwood again and saw a familiar figure coming through the shadows towards her. Her heart gave an excited leap of relief. It was Barnabas Collins; he had seen her standing out there. She began walking to meet him.

He smiled as they came together. "I'm glad you strolled out here. It saves me going to the house. I find visiting Frene Castle awkward."

"You'd think it more so than usual just now," she said. "There are a lot of strange things happening there."

The handsome face of the man in the caped coat showed interest. He took her by the arm and they strolled on together towards a bench set out on the cliff. He swung his black walking stick as they moved along and she was fascinated by its silver wolf's head. She quickly filled him in on what had gone on at Frene Castle. He was concerned and sympathetic to hear of her sister's death.

When they had seated themselves on the bench in the growing darkness he asked her, "Had your sister ever complained of an illness?"

"Never."

"And she'd never been treated for a heart condition?"

"No. My fear is that she went into some kind of unconscious state and that old undertaker pronounced her dead wrongly."

Barnabas sighed. "It could happen. It has happened before. Madison was a strange old man. We'll never hear his side of it since he is dead."

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“Yes,” she said, and she glanced back at the castle and the trees surrounding it. “Worst of all is the fact that Jeremy won’t allow Georgette to be buried. There she is in that glass coffin up there in that dark room. What am I going to do, Barnabas?”

“There seems little you can do,” he said. “Perhaps you should leave and forget that you’ve ever witnessed this unpleasantness.”

“There’s more to it than that,” she said. She explained Jeremy’s aunt had been against Georgette from the start, and recounted the opinion Ralf Harron had offered concerning the strong-willed woman.

“You feel that this Vivian Frene is encouraging Jeremy in his madness,” he said.

“Yes. She pretends just the opposite. But I know that is what is happening. And because Georgette loved Jeremy I’d like to save him if it were possible.”

Barnabas’ deep-set brown eyes studied her in a gentle fashion but the expression on his handsome face was bleak. “It would be much easier to help this young man if he were trying to do something for himself. But he seems determined to commit self-destruction.”

“I know,” she said unhappily.

“Have you discussed all this with him?”

“In a way. It’s impossible to be completely frank. He wouldn’t listen in any case. But I have hinted. I begged him to have a burial for Georgette. He refused.”

“I see,” Barnabas said. “What about the aunt?”

“I make her uneasy. Perhaps because I seem so much like Georgette to her. She keeps urging me to leave.”

Barnabas smiled faintly. “That would be in character. How do you feel about it? I mean, knowing that you are placing yourself in danger by remaining there.”

“I’d like to leave but I hate to abandon Jeremy.” Her tone was rueful, and she stared down at the grass around her feet.

The man in the caped coat bent close to her. “May I be very honest with you?”

“Please do.”

His eyes met hers. “Are you in love with Jeremy?”

His question startled her. “I haven’t thought about it,” she said after a few seconds hesitation.
“It might pay you to do so,” Barnabas said in his knowing way.
She shook her head. “I don’t think so. To me he is Georgette’s husband.”
“But your twin sister is dead.”
“I suppose I haven’t fully realized that. It’s so soon after I’ve been faced with it.”
Barnabas warned her. “It would be well to know your motives before you make any decisions.”
“Perhaps so,” she sighed, looking up at him in the darkness. “Since we’re indulging in frankness I’ll tell you that I feel much closer to you than I do to him. I trust you more.”
Barnabas smiled in his charming way. “I’m flattered.”
“I mean it.”
“Why do you have reservations about Jeremy?”
She considered. “I suppose because he has become so neurotic. According to his aunt the Frenes have always been morbid. He must be worse than the average. The idea of placing my sister’s body in that crystal coffin and keeping it where he can visit it is repugnant to me.”
Barnabas looked at her strangely. “You know, that doesn’t bother me nearly as much as it seems to concern you. Perhaps I do not have the same aversion to coffins as such. Your sister was a lovely girl. If Madison managed to preserve her beauty for a time, why should Jeremy quickly hide the body in the ground? Merely because it is the conventional thing to do? Is that a good enough reason to banish a thing of beauty that gives him some satisfaction?”
She stared at him. “I’d never thought about it in that way before. The idea of the dead being above ground after a suitable period has passed shocks me.”
“I’m afraid I don’t share your feelings,” he said calmly. “But then I’ve been exposed to some strange things in my travels.”
“I’m sure of that,” she agreed. “But then there is the business of the ghost paintings. I know Georgette would never paint that way.”
“If he derives some comfort from the idea let him cling to it for a little,” was the advice Barnabas gave her. “No
doubt there is a logical explanation which even he may not understand."

"And the servants claim they have seen my sister's ghost on the grounds," she went on forlornly. "That's not strange when you consider all the rest, of course."

Barnabas smiled sadly. "The estate of Collinwood has always been considered a haunted place," he said. "Fren Castle is so near that it is not strange it has also taken on the taint."

"And she spoke disparagingly of you while sticking up for Quentin," Betty said.

"You don't surprise me. I doubt if any friend of Quentin's could be a friend of mine. But why should she and Quentin have formed a friendship?"

"I think he conspired with her to attempt to turn Jeremy against my sister. And that right after they were married. It didn't work of course. But it wasn't Vivian's fault nor Quentin's. And even after he met me he tried to dissuade me from coming here."

"No doubt for reasons good and sufficient," Barnabas observed in a quiet voice.

"I think he knew something was going to happen to Georgette and he didn't want me here to find out and cause trouble."

"Very likely," Barnabas agreed.

She gave his sallow, handsome face a searching look. "Tell me the truth, Barnabas. Is Quentin cursed?"

He nodded. "For many years he has borne the werewolf curse. Don't ask me to explain more. It's enough you should know he is a very dangerous person."

"I knew it had to be," she exclaimed. "And yet when I first met him he was nice enough. He even rescued me from the clutches of a villainous old artist named Duprez."

"When he is himself his character veers from good to bad," Barnabas commented. "But when the curse overtakes him he is all bad. He left us so hastily on the train because the curse was overtaking him. He had to get away."

Her eyes were wide with fear. "Then he was the animal the old man saw in the car ahead?"

"Yes."
“How awful! And it was he we saw from the train platform.”

“No question of that,” Barnabas said. “So avoid him if he should show up here at any time.”

“I would in any case,” she said. “I’ll be doubly careful now.”

Barnabas sighed. “It is hard to advise you. I would prefer to see you far away from here, aside from the pleasure I have in your company, but if you feel a responsibility to try and lift Jeremy Frene out of his depression of course you must stay.”

“Ralf Harron thinks I should.”

“The talented young sculptor,” Barnabas said with a sad smile. “Is it possible you find him interesting?”

She blushed. “I hardly know him.”

“Still, you are favorably impressed, aren’t you?”

“I must admit that,” she said. “If I do remain at the castle I’ll feel I have at least one staunch friend there. And I have you on the outside.”

“Which is a little different,” Barnabas said.

She frowned again. “Jeremy’s aunt made some nasty comment about my not risking walking in the dark with you. What could she mean?”

Barnabas rose. “Anything she meant you can discount as the malicious saying of a dangerous woman. Be careful of her. I’m going to make a few discreet inquiries and see if I can learn any more about Georgette’s death.”

Betty was also on her feet. “I wish you would,” she said earnestly.

“Now I must see you back to the entrance to the Frene estate and be on my way,” Barnabas said. “I’ll assume you’re going to be here for a few days and be in touch with you soon again.”

A moon had begun to show over the bay. She pressed close to Barnabas as they made their way through the darkness to the opening in the evergreens that led to the grounds of the castle. There he halted, a romantic figure in his caped coat with his loose strands of brown hair tumbling carelessly over his forehead.

His golden brown eyes met hers. “I shall worry about you,” he said.

“Please don’t.”
“Stay close to the castle. Especially at night,” he warned her. “I agree with you there is something strange about the death of your sister. I promise I’ll try to find out the facts.”

She smiled up at him, admiration lighting her eyes. “Thank you, Barnabas. I don’t know how I would have managed if I hadn’t met you.”

“I have been the fortunate one,” he said. He took her in his arms as if to prove it and placed a gentle kiss on her lips. The touch of his lips was cold but that in no way spoiled her enjoyment of the moment. Then he let her go and with a parting smile and a nod vanished into the shadows.

She went on toward the entrance of Frene Castle feeling better than she had since her arrival. Barnabas was probably the most wonderful person she’d ever known. There were things about him that eluded her, things she couldn’t quite understand. But she did not mind this. She was ready to accept him as he was.

These comforting thoughts were uppermost in her mind as she neared the broad stone steps of the castle entrance. Then suddenly she felt an icy sensation at her spine and she stood still for a moment. There was a somber, eerie atmosphere around her, as if a bony hand had reached out from its shroud and touched her arm. Hesitantly she turned her fear-stricken eyes towards the garden. And then she gasped loudly! For standing there in the glow of the moonlight was her sister Georgette in the wedding dress in which she’d been buried.

At the sound of her gasp the ghostly figure paused and glanced at her for a brief moment. Then the phantom turned and moved away with the filmy white gown trailing after her. As the ghost vanished behind a hedge, Betty recovered a little from the stunning shock.

“Georgette!” she cried out and ran across the lawn towards the spot where she’d seen the spirit of her sister.

But she didn’t go far. Suddenly from the shadows a snarling grayish-green creature with burning yellow eyes bounded forward to crouch before her and bring her to a halt. She stood there at bay as the strange, menacing beast continued its growling and made ready to spring at her!
CHAPTER TEN

Betty stood there speechless with terror, waiting for the animal to attack her. Then suddenly from behind her someone shouted her name and she heard running footsteps coming towards her. The arrival of this other person had a startling effect on the crouching thing in the shadows. It turned quickly and ran off as a breathless Ralf Harron came up to her.

“All right?” he asked.

“Yes,” she replied in a taut weak voice and then she thought she would faint and sway a little.

“Easy now,” the young sculptor said soothingly and placed a sustaining arm around her. “Some kind of animal was threatening you, wasn’t it?”

She nodded. “I’ve seen it before.”

Ralf showed a frown on his swarthy face. “I can’t say that I have. It looked like a big dog. A wild-looking big dog!”

“I think I know where it came from,” she said in a small voice.

“It ran quickly enough when I showed up.”

“Yes.”

“I’ll speak to Jeremy about it,” Ralf said in a troubled tone. “He’ll have to find out who owns the animal. We can’t have it running wild on the estate and menacing people.”

“It may not come back,” she said. For now that she was herself again she was convinced that the animal had been Quentin in his werewolf form. Perhaps ready to attack her on instructions from Vivian. Or at least attempting to scare her away from the castle. It meant that he was lurking somewhere in the district.

“Would you like to stop by the cottage for some hot tea?” Ralf asked. “You need something after that scare.”

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“Thank you,” she managed a faint smile. “It sounds good.”

They strolled through the garden to the cottage. There were lights in the cottage windows and it looked cozy. Ralf showed her inside. In the soft glow of the large enamel-base lamp on the table the living room studio was more pleasant than it had been in the daytime. She tried to avoid looking at the lifelike figure of Georgette which stood partially finished on a stand in one corner of the room. The figure in white marble too much resembled the ghost she had seen in the garden.

Ralf saw her seated in an easy chair by the fireplace and then busied himself boiling some water over the flames and making the tea. When he finally handed her a cup and stood beside the fireplace with a cup in his own hands most of her terror had vanished. Though she was still haunted by that vision she’d had of Georgette.

Over the tea she became confident enough to tell him about it. She said, “Before that thing came to threaten me I had another eerie experience.”

Ralf’s battered countenance showed concern. “What sort of experience?”

“I saw a ghost,” she said simply.

“A ghost?”

“The figure of my dead sister Georgette in the wedding gown in which Jeremy had her laid out.”

“That’s fantastic!” he exclaimed. “Are you sure you didn’t see a moving shadow of some sort and your imagination filled in the rest?”

Betty’s face took on a stubborn look. “It was no shadow.”

He eyed her over his cup. “I thought you were the one who didn’t believe in ghosts?”

“I didn’t,” she said in a quiet voice. “Not until now. I saw Georgette clearly. She glanced my way but then went on without apparently having seen me.”

“This is the sort of story the servants have been telling,” he said. “I’m surprised to hear it from you.”

“I did see her.”

Ralf sipped his tea. “I didn’t mean to imply that I doubted you,” he said. “I’m only wondering if you may
have been confused in some way. That you saw something you thought was a phantom."

"It was Georgette. I saw her clearly. Her features were as plain to me as they are on that figure over there." She nodded towards the marble replica of her sister in the corner.

Ralf pursed his lips. "Then what does it mean?"

"Probably that Jeremy is right. Her spirit is restless and coming back to wander about the place."

"You've been quick in coming around to his views," he said pointedly.

"What else can I do?" she wanted to know.

His expression was sardonic. "I'm still a skeptic," he told her.

"Be what you like," she said. "I'm only telling you what I saw."

Ralf frowned. "Do you propose to take the ghost business up with Jeremy?"

She hesitated. "I haven't decided."

"I wouldn't."

"No?"

"No," he said emphatically. "It would only serve to stimulate Jeremy's fanatical views on the subject and as you have seen he's near a breakdown now."

"I suppose you're right," she admitted ruefully, staring down at her half-empty cup of tea. Then she glanced up at him again. "But I had to tell someone. It was a shocking confrontation. I hope you don't mind my confiding in you."

He smiled. "I'm flattered."

"Yet you think me a flighty young woman with too much imagination," she said reproachfully.

"I'm mystified," he admitted frankly. "I have always been a skeptic. I've discounted all the stories I've heard about the pale phantom figure of your twin sister being seen on the grounds. Now you ask me to believe that you saw her."

"Yes."

"And I can't without a good deal of consideration," he went on in a serious voice. "Accepting Georgette's ghost would mean my changing my whole viewpoint about the existence of spirits."
“I’m inclined to after what I saw.”
“But I didn’t share your experience,” he pointed out.
“When I see the phantom for myself I’ll feel differently.
What concerns me now is that wild creature that was ready to attack you when I showed up.”
She sighed. “That is also puzzling. The way it ran off.”
“I agree,” he said. “Frene Castle has always been a weird kind of place. But in these last weeks the atmosphere has been stranger than ever.”
Betty put aside her empty teacup and stood. “I must go back to the house,” she said.
“You were out with Barnabas Collins, weren’t you?” Ralf asked.
“Yes. He saw me to the entrance to the grounds.”
“He should have accompanied you to the door. That way you might have been spared those unpleasant experiences.”
“He’s not on friendly terms with Vivian, and he and Jeremy are only casual acquaintances,” she said. “I don’t think he wanted to come any further.”
“Did he have any opinion of what’s been going on here?”
“He has promised to make some inquiries,” she said.
“He’s suspicious of foul play in Georgette’s death just as I think we all are. But whether we’ll find out anything or not is another matter.”
“He has plenty of contacts in the village,” Ralf said.
“He may turn up something.”
“I’d like to know the truth before I leave,” she said.
Ralf nodded. Then he strolled across to the door with her. At the door he paused to ask, “Will you think about sitting for me? You’re so much like Georgette it would be a great help.”
“I’ll think about it,” she said. “Though I won’t make any promises. Not that I don’t admire your talent. It’s only that I find the subject of your work upsetting.”
His eyes met hers with sympathy in them. “I understand,” he said. “At the moment you have enough troubles without taking on the role of model.”
“If I remain I’ll find some time for you.”
“That’s all I can ask,” he said. And then as he stared at her with a fond intentness he suddenly surprised her by
embracing her and offering her a kiss. It all took place very quickly and when he let her go there was a look of embarrassment on his face. “I didn’t bring you here for that,” he told her awkwardly.

She stared at him. “Yet you let it happen?”

“I forgot myself for a moment,” he said. “I find you enchanting. I’m sorry.”

“We can both forget it,” she said evenly.

“I’m not certain that I want to do that.”

“It would be wise,” she said.

“You find me ugly and uninteresting?”

She smiled wanly. “Neither of those things. But I am not in the mood for a romantic involvement. There is too much to learn about here. Too many secrets to be answered.”

Ralf gave her a knowing look. “I suppose that is true. But I sense there is more to it than that. I think you are in love with Barnabas Collins.”

She was unable to restrain a blush at the mention of his name. Slowly she said, “I like Barnabas very much. Though I’m sure he isn’t interested in me.”

“Then he’s a fool,” was Ralf’s comment. “Come, I’ll see you safely inside the castle.”

She bade him a whispered goodnight and then made her way up the winding staircase to her bedroom on the third floor. The great mansion was all shadows and hushed silence. She supposed the others were sleeping. As she entered her own room she thought about Georgette’s body in that crystal coffin in the dark attic chamber and shuddered.

No wonder her sister’s ghost wandered through the place. There should be a burial. As soon as she felt the proper moment had come she would talk to Jeremy about it again. Eventually he would have to see that the only sane thing to do was to find Georgette a resting place in the family cemetery.

It had been an eventful evening. One of the things she would have to discuss with Barnabas would be the appearance of the werewolf. They would consider Quentin’s role in the drama that was taking place at the castle—Vivian Frene’s struggle for complete domination of her nephew and the mansion itself.
Betty knew she couldn’t face the prospect of remaining there without Barnabas and Ralf to stand behind her. They gave her courage. She could not look to Jeremy for anything since he was still in a distraught, grief-shaken state at the loss of Georgette. All these thoughts tumbled about in her mind as she extinguished the lamp and got in bed.

Because she was tired she went to sleep almost immediately. But it was a stormy, nightmare-filled sleep in which she was stalked by fresh terrors. Quentin played a part in the bizarre dreams, as did the grotesque little Duprez who had threatened her in Paris. And there was Georgette, sad-eyed and silent, staring at her from the shadows at the foot of her bed!

She opened her eyes with a feeling of alarm and gazed into the darkness of the room. It seemed to her that only seconds ago Georgette had been standing there and now she was gone! She sat up, and resting on an elbow, tried to decide whether this had been part of her nightmare or whether she’d wakened just in time to catch a glimpse of the fleeting ghost!

An icy fear gripped her. She was convinced that Georgette was unhappy and trying to reach her from the spirit world. Attempting to get through to her! Once again she blamed Jeremy for his strange attitude. He must see that the body in the crystal coffin was placed under six feet of earth in a proper way. Maybe then the ghost of her twin would cease its restless wanderings.

The morning was gray and it was raining. When Betty went downstairs she encountered the cold Vivian Frene.

“You were out very late last night,” she said accusingly.

“Not really,” Betty told her.

“In spite of my warning you were with that Barnabas Collins,” Vivian went on spitefully.

“I didn’t realize you had meant to warn me against him,” Betty said faintly. “I have found him very nice.”

Vivian curled her lip in a sneer. “Many other girls have said the same thing about him. And they’ve lived to regret ever meeting him.”

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“I’m sure I won’t do that,” she replied with some defiance. Vivian’s cold eyes were fixed on her. “Then you were in Ralf Harron’s cottage. Don’t bother to deny it. I saw you coming out of there with him. It was close to midnight.”

“I have no intention of denying it,” she exclaimed angrily. “And I don’t consider it any of your affair.” Vivian stood there stiffly. “You are a guest here and proper behavior is expected of you.” “I’m Jeremy’s guest!” she told the overbearing woman. “And I’ll answer to him for my actions.” “Because my nephew is in a distracted state you think you can do as you please,” Jeremy’s aunt said angrily. “You will find that is not so.” Betty was disgusted at the smallness of the woman in deliberately baiting her into an argument. It was plain she wanted to force her to leave the castle by one means or another. Betty said, “I went to Ralf’s cottage for some tea. I had a bad scare. Perhaps you may know something about it. A wolfish creature came after me!” The older woman paled. “Why should I know anything about it?” “I’m wondering if Quentin may not have come back to Collinwood,” Betty said pointedly. “That could explain a lot. And he is your close friend!” “I don’t know what you’re talking aobut!” Vivian protested, but she had guilt in her voice. “I think you do,” Betty told her. “Where is Jeremy now?” “I have no idea,” the older woman said. “If you have come here only to cause trouble I say you should leave at once!” Betty smiled derisively. “You’re anxious for me to do that!” “Frankly, yes!” “Too bad,” Betty said with more bravado than she felt. “I’m not ready to go yet. I have a few things to discover about my sister’s death.” Vivian looked shaken. But she managed to say, “It would do you more credit if you used your influence to
make Jeremy give up his madness and bury your sister properly.”

This touched Betty on a weak point. At least in this she was in full agreement with the unpleasant Vivian Frene. But she did not want to discuss it with her. Deciding that Jeremy might be up in the attic she quickly turned from Vivian and hurried back up the winding stairway.

She was breathless when she reached the attic level. She paused a moment at the landing, her hand still resting on the iron rail. Her heart was pounding as much from anger and frustration as from her energetic ascent of the stairs. She could hear the steady downbeat of the rain on the rooftop of the castle. Taking a brief few minutes to gain control of herself again she finally walked down the dark, narrow corridor in the direction of that room!

That room containing the crystal coffin. And as she slowed her pace and hesitated in the shadows with a tense expression of fear on her lovely face she saw that the door of the room was ajar. Moving towards it like someone in a dream she swung the door open all the way to discover Jeremy standing there with head bowed beside the coffin.

He did not hear her and remained staring down at the body of his dead wife in the glass casket. She advanced into the murky atmosphere of the room and went over to stand beside him. Again she was startled by the lifelike expression of Georgette as she lay there in her dainty wedding gown. Only the odor of stale flowers, lingering in the air like a sigh for happier times, suggested that this was a body rigid in death and not that of a beautiful sleeping girl.

She gently touched Jeremy’s arm and he reacted in a startled way. Turning and seeing her, he asked, “Why have you come up here? I know you don’t approve of this.”

“I had to talk to you,” she said quietly.

His sensitive face was lined with sorrow and strain. “Don’t ask me to bury her. I have no intention of doing it.”

“It would be best for her and for you.”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” he said.

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“I have other things to discuss with you.”

“Very well,” he said. He left the dark room with her and carefully locked it after him. “We’ll go to her studio,” he suggested.

She said nothing as they walked down the corridor to the other room. She could see that there had been no change in Jeremy’s feelings. He was still in the same macabre mood which made it seem desirable to keep the dead body of Georgette in the house and pretend she was doing spirit paintings from the beyond.

Leading the way into the studio, which was gray under the rainswept skylight, he went directly to the easel. A triumphant smile came to his worn face. And glancing at her, he said, “Georgette was here at the easel again last night. And this time I doubt if you’ll deny it.”

“I’m afraid I must,” she said.

“Look for yourself before you decide,” he urged her and stepped back to make way for her.

She crossed to the easel and when she saw the painting there she was unable to restrain a startled cry. For the subject was herself. There could be no doubt of that. It was an excellent color sketch of her wearing the identical yellow dress with pale green trim of braid she’d been wearing the previous night.

She said, “I don’t believe it!”

“Now deny what I’ve been telling you,” Jeremy said in an excited tone. “Georgette saw you here and she’s put you on the canvas so you would know.”

Betty turned on him reproachfully. “You did that sketch!”

“No!”

“It had to be you,” she said. And she stared at the likeness again. “Either you or Ralf. Both of you are skillful enough.”

“You’re being obstinate and stupid if you refuse to recognize that portrait was done by the hand of your dead sister,” Jeremy said.

“Then I’m both those things,” she said. “I know this is some sort of trick.”

“And I recognize Georgette’s style of painting,” Jeremy said. “It’s as personal as her signature. And there’s nothing grotesque or different about this sketch.”
She gave a deep sigh. "I still say this is a deliberate attempt to impress me. Someone is trying to convince me that Georgette’s ghost does return here."

"Don’t you think that possible?"

It was a hard question for her to answer. She had seen that weird phantom figure in the garden the previous night, and it had resembled Georgette. But she’d promised Ralf not to mention it to Jeremy since they had both agreed it would only serve to intensify the grief and madness now torturing him.

She tried to think of some possible explanation of the sketch. If neither Jeremy nor Ralf had done it, there had to be someone else with artistic ability in the castle.

She asked Jeremy, "Can your aunt paint?"

He frowned. "Why do you ask that?"

"I’d like to know."

He shrugged. "She has done a few landscapes. I’ve given her some instruction. But she has a very modest talent. If you’re under the impression she could manage a likeness such as this you’re very wrong."

"Someone in the house did," she insisted. "Someone with a purpose."

"Georgette," was his reply.

"No," she said. "I have to find another answer."

"Whether it is the right one or not?"

"It will be the right one," she said. "You know your aunt is very jealous of you and her position as mistress of the castle. I’m sure she wanted Georgette dead whether or not she actually had anything to do with her death."

He frowned. "You mustn’t say such things!"

"But you’ll not deny there was trouble between your aunt and my sister?"

The young man standing by the easel hesitated. Then he made a disparaging gesture. "They had a few arguments. There was bound to be a little friction. But Georgette smoothed everything over."

"Even when your aunt tried to make it seem Georgette was involved in an affair with Quentin Collins?"

Jeremy looked shocked. "How do you know about that?"

She smiled thinly. "I’d prefer to have that my secret. But I do know it. Your aunt was ready to go to any
lengths to destroy your marriage and regain power over you.”

He sighed and looked down. “She was difficult,” he said. “But Georgette was too smart for her—she wouldn’t do anything really bad, I mean, not anything like try to harm Georgette.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” Betty said grimly.

“You don’t understand the situation,” he protested. “The blow came with Georgette’s death. I think not even Aunt Vivian had wished anything like that.”

“You can’t deny it was convenient for her.”

“No. She’s glad to be in charge here again,” Jeremy admitted. “But she had gone as far as she intended to in opposing Georgette long before the tragedy.”

“Now she’s trying to drive me away,” Betty said. “We had words just a little while ago downstairs.”

“You can expect that,” Jeremy said. “It doesn’t mean anything. She has a quick temper.”

“I’m sure you underestimate her,” Betty warned him. “I think she’s a dangerous person.”

He shook his head. “Not in the way you think.”

“Ralf doesn’t like her,” she pointed out.

Jeremy looked grim. “Ralf and she never got along. You can’t let that influence you.” He moved away and then stood staring out the rain-streaked window.

“You ask me to accept this sketch as evidence that my sister’s ghost does return?” she said.

“Yes.” He kept his back to her.

“If it is true,” she said slowly and firmly, “I call it evidence that she is unhappy and crying out to be released from her misery. You have to give up this unseemly grieving for her and bury her.”

Jeremy turned with a twisted smile on his sorrow-ravaged face. “You never lose an opportunity to turn my words against me, do you?”

“I’m only asking you to be sensible,” she said quietly.

“I wish you’d go and leave me alone,” he said.

“Very well, I will,” Betty replied quietly.

He had turned to gaze out the window again as she left. On her way down the winding stairs she debated what she should do. It seemed stupid for her to remain in the castle despite Ralf’s pleas that she should. Jeremy plainly
didn’t want her. Not when she interfered with his grief. He had abandoned himself to a deluge of self-pity and wouldn’t be denied it.

With his spirit broken it was easy for Vivian Frene to do as she liked. Perhaps she was being too hard on the older woman. Condemning her for things of which she might not be guilty. Betty found herself wishing she had never made the long, trying trip to America and this somber Maine mansion.

When she reached the third floor and was about to go to her own room she was surprised to see a figure step out of the shadows and come towards her. It was the overbearing Vivian Frene. But a glance told her that Vivian was in a chastened mood.

Jeremy’s aunt asked, “May I have a moment in private with you?”
She hesitated. “Is it important?”
“Yes.”
Again Betty was reluctant. She said, “You don’t have to worry. I’m leaving here shortly. So I won’t be in your way.”
“It has nothing to do with that,” the older woman said. “And I’m sorry we had that argument downstairs. It wasn’t my intention. But one word seemed to lead to another.”
“It doesn’t matter.”
“But I feel it does,” Vivian Frene insisted. “I wasn’t tactful. My intentions were excellent but I spoiled everything with my sharp tongue. I have some things I must tell you.”
Betty still was suspicious of the woman but it seemed wrong not to give her a chance to say whatever was on her mind. “We can go into my room,” she said.
“Thank you,” Vivian said quietly.
Betty led the way the few steps down the hall wondering what it was the woman might have to say. Could it be possible that she was going to reveal something about the circumstances of Georgette’s mysterious death? She fervently hoped so though she was not certain she could believe anything that Vivian might tell her.
They went inside and Betty closed the door. The rain was continuing and the light in the room was bad. She
could see that Vivian was having an awkward moment. The older woman cleared her throat and then began to speak.

“What I started out to tell you before we had the quarrel downstairs,” she said, “was that you were taking a terrible risk in going out at night with Barnabas Collins.”

“We discussed this earlier,” Betty reminded her. “I don’t feel that way. I’m quite willing to take my chances.”

“Indeed?” There was a hint of sarcasm in the older woman’s tone that alerted Betty. “Would you mind moving over to the window where the light is better?”

Betty was puzzled by the request but complied with it. Vivian went with her. As they stood together in the improved light Vivian gave her a searching glance that made her flesh creep. Then abruptly Vivian went across to the dresser and picked up a hand mirror which she brought back to her.

She offered the mirror to Betty with a scornful look on her attractive face, saying, “Take a look at your throat in the mirror. You’ll see a strange red mark on it!”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The older woman’s dramatic gesture had a stunning impact for Betty. She took the mirror from her and held it so she could study her throat. And there was a strange red mark there! She looked up from the mirror and saw Vivian’s almost gloating expression.

“I don’t understand this,” she said. “I haven’t felt any annoyance from it. I didn’t even notice it until you pointed it out.”

“That is to be expected,” the older woman said smugly.

She lowered the hand mirror and stared at her. “What are you hinting?” she asked sharply.
"You were with Barnabas Collins last night."
"What has that to do with it?"
"A great deal," was Vivian Frene's prompt reply. And then she starfled Betty again by asking, "Did he kiss you?"

Betty was amazed at her boldness. Crimmoning, she said, "I don't think you have any right to ask that."

Vivian's eyes met hers. "I'm doing it for your good."
"I can't see that it has any bearing on the mark on my throat," she protested.
"You will," the other woman assured her.
She hesitated, realizing this was something she didn't fully understand—that there was some sinister link to it all she didn't know about. But she had no choice but to play the older woman's game.
"Very well," she said, defiantly. "He did kiss me goodnight. Now are you satisfied?"
"I knew he had," Vivian said. "I just wanted to hear you admit it."
"Why? To humiliate me?"
"No. To make sure you understood the reason for that mark. You may not believe what I'm about to say. Because you'll have no memory of it. But after Barnabas Collins kissed you last night he bit you on the neck."
"Ridiculous!"
"You'd be wise to believe me. It has happened many times before. He has a way of numbing you to what is happening so you have no clear recollection of it afterward. He kisses you and then bites you on the throat and draws off some of your blood."

She stared at the older woman in consternation. "You're making that up!"

Jeremy's aunt smiled grimly. "You'll learn that I'm not. It's an old story with Barnabas. Several times he's been literally asked to leave the area because of similar attacks on young village girls."
"What would make him do such things?"
"His need for a daily supply of warm human blood. Long years ago he was tainted by the vampire curse. That is why you never see him in the daytime. He lives only in the hours between dusk and dawn."
It was the worst shock yet. She couldn’t believe it of Barnabas. She said, “I’m positive you’re wrong!”
“What about that mark on your throat?”
“There must be some other explanation for it.”
“I doubt if you’ll come up with one,” the older woman said. “You may as well reconcile yourself to it; you’ve been taken advantage of by a man who lives by his wits and charm.”
“Barnabas is a fine person!”
“He is cursed. A creature of the night,” Vivian said with scorn. “If you want to place your belief and dependence in him you do so at a great risk. I warned you of that when you first mentioned his name.”
Betty felt sick and ashamed. “You’re making all this up to frighten me,” she said.
Vivian shrugged. “I don’t care whether you listen to me or not. I’ve shown you the mark on your throat and I’ve told you how it got there. You can heed my warning or go on taking reckless chances with Barnabas.” And with that, the older woman turned and strode out of the room closing the door behind her with needless gusto.
Betty stood there miserably. Then she lifted the mirror again and touched her throat with her fingers. The red mark was recent. There could be no doubt about that. And it looked like a bite. But the story about Barnabas being responsible was just too ridiculous. She couldn’t take it as truth.
Feeling the urgent need for someone’s advice she quickly slipped on her crimson cloak, pulling the hood up over her hair, and left the room to go down the garden to Ralf’s cottage.
It was raining hard still and she hurried so as not to get too wet. The cloak gave her some protection but not enough. She needed to be careful to pick her steps along the path since much of it was muddy and slippery. When she reached the cabin she knocked on its door and the cheery voice of Ralf inside invited her to enter.
When she did he glanced up from his work on the marble statue of Georgette to regard her with surprised delight. “So you’ve come to pose for me after all.” He put down the mallet and chisel he’d been using and came over to greet her.
"I'm not here to pose," she said. "I've come for advice."

"You couldn't seek it from a more dubious source," he said with good humor. "You look as if you'd seen another ghost. Have you?"

"No. But something almost as bad."
He sat down on the cot with her. "Tell me."
She told him all that Vivian had said about Barnabas and he listened with a solemn expression. She ended with,"I could see she was enjoying telling me the horrible details."

"That sounds in character," he said dryly.
She was looking at him with pleading eyes. "You don't think any of it could be true?"
He sighed. "Well, now."
"Say it isn't," she insisted.
Ralf gave her a knowing smile. "I can say that if it's what you want to hear. But aren't you interested in my honest opinion?"
"Of course."
Ralf studied her. "For one thing you do have the mark on your throat."
"Yes."
"And it must have appeared there last night. Or at least during the night."
"I suppose so."
"And you were with Barnabas and he did kiss you."
"So did you," she reminded him.
He smiled bleakly. "I did," he admitted. "But I can promise you I didn't touch your throat."

"You think it was Barnabas?" she said unhappily.
The young sculptor got up and began pacing up and down before her. "I have heard a few rumors. Nothing you could put much stock in. Call them whisperings if you like. A lot of people regard Barnabas as a pretty weird character."

"Because he is different. The people here are bound to think him odd."
Ralf paused and gave her a warning glance. "There is more than his odd habits involved. He's had trouble with the family at Collinwood. That's one of the reasons he's
living at the old house. I’m told the rest of the Collins family don’t want him here.”

“I could understand if they felt that way about Quentin but not about Barnabas,” she said.

“Barnabas is the one I’ve heard most discussed,” he told her. “As a stranger in the village I didn’t want to show too much interest. But they claim he spends a lot of his nights around the family cemetery.”

“He’s interested in the history of the family. He’s devoted a lot of time to writing an account of it.”

“Maybe,” Ralf said, with a frown. “But why go to such places in the middle of the night?”

She hesitated. “I suppose it’s his only chance to examine the stones at his leisure. He knows the townspeople watch him and he wants privacy.”

“That could be true but it’s not likely.”

“Then just call him eccentric,” she said with annoyance. He shook his head. “I don’t think he’s even that. Haven’t you always found him to be a pleasant, reasonable sort of man?”

“He’s one of the nicest persons I’ve ever known,” she maintained. “And I refuse to believe what Vivian said.”

“There could be some truth in it,” he warned her. “I have no doubt that both she and the villagers are exaggerating the facts. But the question remains, how much are they exaggerating?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “But I’m sure Vivian told me that story to discredit Barnabas in my eyes. She knows he’s trying to help me and she wants to turn me against him. She’s afraid that with his aid I’ll find out the truth about what happened to Georgette.”

“It could be,” Ralf agreed.

She stood up. “I’m not going to think about it again.”

“I can’t advise that,” he said. “Do you feel all right?”

“As well as I could expect after the awful things I’ve been experiencing,” she said bitterly.

“Then my advice is that you discuss this frankly with Barnabas. I’m positive he’ll be honest with you.”

The rain pounded on the cottage roof as they stood there in the near darkness facing each other. He had an earnest look on his face. He was wearing his sculptor’s white apron and had his shirt sleeves turned up to reveal
arms as swarthy as his face. Behind him in the darkness of the corner loomed the ghostly marble likeness of Georgette.

She said, "Dare I mention such a thing to Barnabas?"
"I think you should."

Betty nodded. She knew he was right. Until she had spoken frankly to the charming gentleman about the accusations of his being a vampire she would have no peace.
"He said he'd be in touch with me tonight," she told him.

"You can discuss it with him then," Ralf suggested.
And then she remembered to mention the portrait of her which Jeremy had shown her. The one he claimed had been sketched the previous night by her sister's ghost.
Ralf listened intently. And he said, "I must go up and take a look at it. I might discover some clue as to who did it."

"I wish you would," she said.
Ralf saw her to the cottage door and as she lifted her hood to protect her hair from the driving rain, he said, "Don't think too much about that mark on your throat. I don't consider it all that important. The main thing is that you regain your confidence in Barnabas."
She gave him a grateful look. "I hardly know who I'm most in debt to, you or him."
"I don't think that is important either," Ralf said with a smile.

Betty hurried back to the castle in the rain. She felt better for having talked to Ralf. He had an understanding way and she depended on his advice. She determined not to let Vivian's words panic her. Ralf had made one thing clear to her. Her belief in Barnabas was more important than any dark suspicions the older woman had raised.

The hours until evening passed slowly for Betty. When she came down for dinner she found the tension at the table almost more than she could endure. Jeremy was in a bitter mood and made a number of disparaging remarks about Barnabas. She was sure he had learned about her rendezvous with Barnabas the previous night and disapproved of it.
Ralf gave her a warning glance across the table. His signal that she should not pay any attention to the remarks of her disturbed brother-in-law. When Jeremy could not get her to rise to the bait about Barnabas, he began to taunt her more directly.

"You doubt everything I say," he told her. "Yet you're ready to believe anything that Barnabas or anyone else tells you."

"That isn't so," she said quietly.

"The estate of Collinwood including the part on which we built this place has always been the haunt of phantoms, yet you refuse to accept that there can be ghosts in the castle. Don't you have any ghosts in your part of England?" Jeremy said.

"Too many," she told him.

"I don't know why you harp on ghosts so," Vivian said from her end of the candlelit table. "If you would preserve certain decencies here no one would feel this strangeness."

Jeremy gave her a mocking glance. "Aunt Vivian thinks we should hold a funeral. She doesn't like having Georgette still in the house."

Vivian's stern face showed her anger. "I do not enjoy having dead bodies in the house if that's what you mean!"

Jeremy, too, was angry. "And I don't require your advice in that or anything else."

The sharp exchange continued all through the meal. Betty ate little and left the dining room as soon as she could. She hoped that Barnabas might call by the house early and she would have a chance to talk to him. It was already dark although the rain had dwindled to a drizzle and in its place there was a thick fog.

She waited in the reception hall and peered out the side window by the door. The fog was so heavy she could barely see across the lawn to the evergreens. She was standing there gazing out when Ralf came up beside her.

"You were properly discreet at dinner," he said. "It was wise not to allow Jeremy to upset you."

She looked at the swarthy young man in despair. "How could Jeremy be so mean?"

"He's been very bitter since Georgette's death," Ralf said. "I would expect him to be especially kind and con-
siderate of you. I have an idea he means to be but every so often a wave of grief overtakes him and he strikes out at anyone near him.”

“I sometimes wonder if he didn’t manage Georgette’s death in some way,” she said.

Ralf sighed. “I doubt that.”

“He’s not stable in mind now,” she worried. “How can you be sure that he was mentally sound before her death?”

“There’s no way of telling that,” Ralf said. “But I know how he reacted at the time. It almost destroyed him.”

“Wouldn’t he be equally hard hit if a guilty conscience was tormenting him?”

“It’s a possibility,” the young man agreed. “But I’d be inclined to rule it out.” He gave her a knowing look. “I’m going upstairs now for an examination of that sketch of you Georgette is supposed to have done.”

“Yes, I want your opinion of it,” she agreed.

Ralf left her and made his way up the winding stairway. She went back to her lonely vigil by the door. At last she felt she could stand the suspense no longer. She began to fear that Barnabas was not going to come to her. She decided to take the initiative and go visit him.

It was still early, even though it was almost dark, so she felt she would be safe enough. Throwing on her cape she quietly made her way out the front door and down the steps. The damp fog was unpleasant and she found the grass very wet from the rain. But nothing would send her back now. She was determined to walk as far as the old house and find Barnabas.

Once she’d left the boundaries of Frene Castle and was on the main estate of Collinwood she was able to see the great mansion overlooking the bay. There were lights in a few of its windows and she wondered what the people were like who lived there. Ralf had hinted they were an aloof group who rarely associated with others in the area.

Drawing her cloak tightly around her as protection from the foggy, cool night she walked a little more quickly. She passed the barns and outbuildings of the main house and then she saw the old Collinwood house ahead on the right. She recognized it from the descrip-
tions Barnabas had given her of it. It was of red brick, plain in design, and much more modest in size than the sprawling new mansion by the cliffs.

Her nerves became taut as she neared the entrance of the old house. No lights showed anywhere and she began to wonder if the house mightn’t be closed. Could Barnabas have suddenly decided to leave as he had on other occasions? She mounted the several steps to the front door aware that she was trembling. She rapped on the door and waited.

No one answered. Not sure what to do next she left the house and walked on. She began to feel uneasy. She had counted on Barnabas being there and instead she was alone. It was growing darker and later. Memory of that snarling wolflike animal that had stalked her the night before came to mind to increase her fears. Quentin’s angry, pale face also was prominent in her mind. She was dismayed at the prospect of walking back through the night by herself.

Now she had reached the crest of a hill. Although she couldn’t see clearly because of the fog and drizzle she knew that the Collins family cemetery was straight ahead of her down at the foot of the large field. And as she stood there debating her next move she saw the distant tiny glow of a lantern held by someone as it moved about in what she thought must be the cemetery.

It took her only another minute to decide it must be Barnabas. She had heard the talk of his many explorations there after dark. And so she began to hurry down through the wet grass. Several times along the way she stumbled and once she turned her ankle and halted to utter a tiny cry of pain. But the sprain had been only minor so she continued on in the direction of the moving lantern.

Her progress was more cautious now as she moved slowly to the entrance of the graveyard with its rusty iron railing. Inside she could see the monuments and tombstones rising like ghosts in the foggy night. From a short distance away she saw the reflected glow of the lantern which had lured her there like a will-o’-the-wisp.

“Barnabas!” she called out.

There was no reply and a chill of terror ran through
her. Suppose she had made an error. Whoever was here among the dead on this macabre night might be someone unknown, even a madman! She had taken too great a chance. She paused by a tilted gray headstone ready to dodge behind it for cover if the person carrying the lantern turned out to be anyone else but Barnabas.

Then to her relief the man in the caped coat came fully into view with the lantern in his hand. He paused, with the many gravestones making a eerie background for his highlighted figure.

She ran forward to him. “Barnabas! I’ve been looking for you!”

His sallow, handsome face showed concern. “Betty! You shouldn’t have come all this way alone in the darkness.”

“I thought I’d find you at the house,” she said, staring up at him. “But no one answered when I rapped on the door.”

Barnabas looked grim. “Hare probably didn’t hear you. I came down here before it was really dark. I brought along a lantern to continue my work among the gravestones. I’ve been copying down some of the more interesting inscriptions.”

“I somehow guessed you might be here. And when I saw the lantern I decided to risk it.”

He looked weary and gaunt. “And it was a risk. I don’t advise your doing such a thing again.”

“Last night after I left you I had a frightening experience,” she said.

Barnabas lifted the lantern so he could see her face better. “What happened?” he asked.

She quickly told him about the werewolf and then about seeing the phantomlike figure of Georgette. “I could almost have sworn she was alive. But she didn’t seem to see or hear me. She went in the other direction and vanished.”

Barnabas’s deep-set eyes were thoughtful. “Interesting,” he said.

She knew she would soon have to question him about the accusation Vivian had made against him, and it caused her to be more uneasy than ever.

She looked up at him anxiously. “So many strange
things have happened to me here. I’m terribly confused.”

“I know,” he said in his kindly way.

“The first dreadful news was that Georgette was dead.”

“That had to be a shock.”

“And then there were the mysterious circumstances of her death. A doctor not even called in.”

“That is also very mysterious,” Barnabas agreed.

“And next being shown her body upstairs in that crystal coffin and hearing Jeremy talk wildly about her ghost coming back to complete paintings!” She shuddered.

“Last night a sketch of me was left on what had been an empty canvas. And of course Jeremy insists that it was Georgette’s work.”

“I have made some interesting discoveries,” Barnabas told her. “I went to the village last night. And I had the good fortune to meet a lad who was apprenticed to undertaker Madison before his death.”

She opened her eyes wide. “Did he tell you anything?”

“Quite a lot,” Barnabas said. “And he promised me that he’d talk to me more. I’ve arranged to meet him there another night.”

“I wonder what he knows,” she asked tensely.

“That’s hard to say,” Barnabas said. “But I have an idea he has some information that may be useful. He was very sly and wouldn’t tell me too much on a first meeting.”

“There’s something else,” she began, and then halted as Barnabas suddenly stiffened and lowered the lantern.

“What is it?”

He was staring into the foggy night. “Is there a chance anyone followed you here?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” she said. “I didn’t notice anyone.”

His eyes were staring into the darkness. “I’m almost sure there’s someone lurking out there,” he said. And then grasping her arm, he told her, “Come with me.”

She allowed him to guide her between the ghostly headstones and across the grassy mounds, under each of which a Collins slept, as they hastily fled further into the ancient cemetery. She was breathless from exertion as they finally came to the rusty door of a tomb which rose high above the ground.

“In here!” Barnabas said tensely. He led her down
some moss-covered steps to the door and swung it open. The iron door was rusted and creaked ominously as the lantern revealed the dusty interior of the tomb. It had the very smell of death!

She watched in fright as Barnabas pushed the door closed so they were now left to breathe the fetid air of the small stone chamber. The murky glow of the lantern revealed shelves on either side of the tomb at regular intervals from floor to ceiling. On each shelf there rested a coffin.

She was trembling. “I don’t like it here,” she said. Barnabas placed an arm around her. “It’s just for a few minutes,” he told her. “I want to make sure you weren’t followed.”

“Do you really think you heard something?”

His handsome face was stern in the reflected light from the lantern. “Yes.”

She stood there pressed close to him, wondering who it could be. Jeremy perhaps. He had behaved very weirdly at dinner. Or perhaps Ralf had come in search of her, wanting to protect her.

She suddenly remembered and looking up at Barnabas said, “Last night a strange thing happened to me. A red mark appeared on my throat.”

Barnabas’s golden brown eyes met hers. “Indeed?” he said calmly.

“I had no idea how it came there,” she went on quickly. “And then this afternoon Jeremy’s aunt pointed it out to me and told me that you were responsible.” She kept her voice low so she couldn’t be heard outside.

“Interesting.” He replied in the same controlled tone.

She had to go on with it now, so she let the words tumble out. “She told me a wild story about you being a vampire. She said you were one of the living dead who attacked people and took blood from them. And she said the mark on my throat meant you had taken blood from me under a kind of hypnosis.”

Barnabas showed no emotion as he listened to her. Then he said, “I find it pertinent that Vivian Frene should take such an interest in me and in hypnosis.”

She looked up at him pleadingly. “Tell me the story isn’t true, Barnabas.”
He sighed. "Do you think I would ever harm you?"
"No."
"And do you still believe I am your friend and that I'm trying to find out what really happened to Georgette?"
"Yes, I do, I have never doubted you, Barnabas," she told him, her voice tight with emotion.
"Then don't be concerned by the mark on your throat," Barnabas said. "It has no importance. And you have suffered no harm. Let Vivian Frene tell all the wild tales she likes about me now. For soon I'll have one to tell about her. And a true one."
"Please don't hate me for what I said, Barnabas," she pleaded, feeling utterly miserable.
"I want you to always be open with me," he told her. "Now let us forget about it. Listen for any movement outside."

They both became silent and stood there in the ancient tomb straining to hear any sound from the graveyard. The smell from the lantern oil mingling with the stale odor of death in the small room brought a feeling of nausea to her. She leaned close to Barnabas and hoped the crisis would soon be over. That he'd soon decide it would be safe for them to emerge into the fresh air again.

Suddenly he straightened and gave her a warning glance. Then from the other side of the rusty iron door she heard a scratching followed by a low growling!

CHAPTER TWELVE

Barnabas gave her a warning glance. Then, as the ominous growling continued outside, he quickly twisted the head of his cane and drew out a concealed sword. Motioning her back against the far end of the tomb he doused the lantern and then slowly advanced to the rusty iron door. When he reached it he threw it open. The huge wolflike animal with its burning amber eyes
was framed in the doorway ready to spring at them.

As it leaped towards them in snarling frenzy Barnabas expertly thrust out the sword and plunged it into the side of the mad creature. It fell back with a shuddering movement as Barnabas withdrew the sword and prepared to use it again. But he had no opportunity. The greenish-gray monster fled as quickly as it had appeared.

All during this frantic time Betty had cowered in the rear of the small stone chamber. Now Barnabas turned to her. “You needn’t be afraid,” he said. “We’ll not be troubled again.”

She came forward to him. “So I was followed.”

“Yes.”

Her eyes met his. “Do you think it was Quentin?”

“I’m not interested as long as we’re rid of the threat,” Barnabas said, replacing the sword in the walking stick. This done he touched a match to the lantern wick and they left the tomb to retrace their steps back to Collinwood.

As they walked through the foggy darkness, she asked, “What now?”

Barnabas seemed concerned. “I think we should settle things as soon as possible. If Vivian and Quentin have been in league she’ll learn that he was seriously wounded tonight. And so she’ll be apt to make some move against you on her own. We must be ready for that.”

“How?”

“I’m going back to the village,” he told her. “I want to meet that young man at the Blue Whale. Better to follow up with him while he’s willing to talk.”

She sighed. “I want to leave Frene Castle as soon as I can.”

“I agree that you should.”

“Jeremy is to be pitied. But he’s so bitter in his grief it’s impossible to reason with him.”

Barnabas said, “We can only hope that will change. At least there is one person at the castle you feel you can count on, Ralf Harron.”

“Yes,” she agreed. “Next to you he’s the one I depend on most.”

“So you are not completely alone,” Barnabas said.

They made their way up the hill, the lantern swing-
ing a little in Barnabas's hand. He was more inclined to silence than usual and she could tell something was troubling him. The mist was heavier, though the drizzle of rain had ended. But you couldn't see more than a few feet in the shrouded night. As they came by the old house it loomed out of the fog in ghostly fashion.

She said, "You needn't come all the way with me if you're anxious to get to the village."

"There's no hurry," he told her. "The Blue Whale remains open late. And that fellow never shows up until the latter part of the evening."

She glanced up at his handsome profile and said, "I hope you're not angry with me for repeating those awful things Vivian said about you."

He gave her a thin smile. "Not at all. There should be no secrets between us."

"From the moment we met on the train that night I knew we were meant to be friends," she said.

"That was also my hope."

They finally reached the entrance to the grounds of Frene Castle and he halted. "I'll not go any further," he said. "But I'll stand here where I can watch you until you're safely inside."

"You needn't."

"I want to," he said. "We can't have any repetition of what occurred last night."

Betty gazed up at the stern, handsome face of this man she had come to love and respect. In a gentle voice, she said, "I love you, Barnabas, no matter what."

His smile was sad. "That makes me very happy. But I'll spare you a goodnight kiss since Vivian believes it to have such grim side effects."

She pressed close to him. "I don't care what she thinks."

"Just the same," Barnabas said quietly. He touched his lips to her forehead for only a second. "There. I don't believe even Jeremy's aunt can claim that did you any harm."

"Barnabas!" she reproached him softly.

He touched her arm. "It's all right," he said. "Now please hurry on in. And remember I'll be here until you enter the house."
She left him standing there in the heavy mist, a tall regal figure outlined by the glow of the lantern. Her heart was heavy at the parting between them. Her eyes were blurred with tears as she hurried towards the big oak door of the castle.

The moment she let herself inside a familiar figure showed from the shadows of the reception hall. It was Ralf. There was an anxious look on the face of the young sculptor.

"I've been worried sick about you," he said. "When I came downstairs you had gone."
"I went to see Barnabas."
"Did you find him?"
"Yes."
"Good," Ralf said. "Did he have anything to tell you?"
"He has a lead. He's been talking to a youth who worked for Madison, the undertaker. He's sure he knows something about Georgette's death but he hasn't been able to get him to tell him yet. He's going to the Blue Whale now to try to get the information from him."
"Sounds interesting," the young man said. They were both talking in near whispers so as not to be overheard. "I had a good look at that sketch of you."
"What do you think of it?"
"It's excellent," Ralf said. "And I don't know whether you're going to want to hear this or not. But I have to be honest and admit it is done in a style similar to your late sister's."

She frowned at him. "Really?"
"Yes. It has all the touches of her work."
"Then Jeremy has carefully imitated her style."
"That could be," he sighed. "I thought I should tell you."

"I wish I could leave here in the morning," she worried. "I have no more taste for this."
"But you do want to find out if there was any foul play involved in Georgette's death?"
"Yes. Aside from that I wouldn't stay."
"I'll let you go up and get some rest," he said. "I'll return to the cottage now that I know you're safe."

She gave him a grateful smile. "Thanks for waiting."
"I couldn't do anything else," he said. And then he
took her in his arms and kissed her gently on the lips. His eyes met hers in a fond gaze. “You must know how much I care for you.”

She nodded. “Goodnight, Ralf.”

As soon as he left she made her way up the circular stairs. She didn’t want to give him any encouragement though she liked him well enough. In the beginning she’d thought him ugly with his swarthy skin and battered nose. But now that she knew him better she saw him with different eyes. The gentleness of his nature shone in the plain face and she thought him attractive in a special kind of way.

It was her love for Barnabas that made her restrained with Ralf. If there was any chance for a romance between herself and Barnabas she knew that no other man could lay a claim to her heart. She still hoped that when this sorry business was settled she and Barnabas might leave Collinwood together for a new and wonderful life. It was the one thing that sustained her.

That night she had a series of frightening dreams again. She experienced the dreadful moments in the tomb with the werewolf attacking them. But, in her nightmare version Barnabas was not able to fend off the monster and it came snarling at them. Then her dream had moved on swiftly to an encounter with her dead sister. Georgette was by her bed and there was something in her hand—some kind of weapon. She saw the upraised hand of the dead girl and screamed out her fear.

She woke up in a shattered state. For long minutes she gazed into the darkness of her room haunted by the nightmare. Gradually her nerves eased and she was able to put her head on the pillow and return to a light, restless sleep until morning.

It was another gray day with the fog not so heavy but still lingering. The foghorn at Collinsport point gave off its mournful cry at intervals and it set the mood for her own feelings. The first person she met downstairs was Jeremy. He approached her in the living room with an apologetic look.

“Forgive me for my rudeness at the table last night,” he said.
“It didn’t matter,” she told him.
His face was grave. “I feel differently. I’m truly sorry.”
“I know you’re still upset over Georgette’s death,” she said. “Because of that, you can be forgiven a great deal.”
“Thank you.”
She studied his thin, drawn face earnestly. “But for your own sake you should try to accept her death and resume life in as normal a fashion as you can.”
“I know you’re right,” he sighed.
“Then why don’t you make some attempt at it?”
His eyes had a haunted look. “You’ll not be able to understand this. I realize no one else does. Not Aunt Vivian or anyone. But I can’t believe that Georgette is really dead.”
She stared at him. “That is why you keep her up there in that crystal coffin?”
“Yes. I can’t face the thought of burying her.”
“And so you keep up this mad pretense that she still goes to her studio and paints new canvases.”
“I believe that she does. What other explanation can there be?”
Betty’s tone was bitter. “I can think of several. Have you ever spent the night in the studio? Kept a vigil until she arrived?”
“One night only,” he said.
“Did you see her?”
He nodded. “Yes. Just for a moment in the doorway. When she saw me she turned and vanished. I decided she didn’t want me there. She never liked me in the room when she was painting. It made her nervous. I assume she still feels the same way. So I have never gone to the studio or tried to spy on her since.”
“I’m sorry,” she said. “I still think you do the paintings.”
He spread his hands. “Why should I carry on a charade of that sort?”
“To protect your illusion. To keep making it seem that Georgette is alive as you wish her to be.”
Jeremy looked crestfallen. “It’s not so,” he told her. And then he gave her a sharp look. “You have been here some time now. Can you honestly tell me you haven’t
seen her phantom figure at least once in the corridors or on the grounds during this period?"

She hesitated. She knew she couldn’t answer him honestly. For his own protection she had to evade the question. She turned away. “I’d rather not talk about such things. Georgette is dead. She should be buried and allowed to rest.”

“I’ll never agree to that,” he told her solemnly. And he left her alone in the room.

During the gloomy day Betty’s tension continued to build. She had few contacts with anyone in the house. The few times she saw Jeremy’s aunt the older woman had a drawn, grim expression on her still attractive face. It made Betty wonder if Quentin and Vivian had been in some evil partnership, and knowledge of his wounding the night before had upset her. It seemed very likely.

Betty kept wondering what success Barnabas had in his interview with the youth at the Blue Whale the previous night. She warned herself not to count too much on it. So many things had gone wrong, this might have come to nothing as well. When the evening arrived she saw Ralf at the dinner table.

He found a moment to get her aside and whisper, “I had a message from Barnabas today. Hare brought it to me at the cottage. Barnabas wants you to meet him there at nine tonight.”

“I’ll be there,” she promised, and she at once felt more hopeful, though she was excited.

A few minutes before nine she slipped quietly out of the castle and made her way down the garden to Ralf’s cottage. She was trembling with excitement and for the moment forgot to be afraid of the fog and darkness. Lights showed in the windows of the cottage and when she knocked on the door Ralf opened it at once.

“Is Barnabas here?” she asked.

Ralf smiled and nodded towards the corner where the marble figure of Georgette stood. Barnabas had been standing there studying it. Now he turned to greet Betty.

“I’m glad you had no difficulty getting here,” he said. “Ralf gave me your message. What did you learn last night?”

Barnabas looked wise. “More than you might expect.
Tonight I mean to put it to use. I want to bait a trap. And you must be the bait. I hate to ask it of you.”
“I don’t mind,” she said.
Ralf spoke up, “You could be in serious danger. You don’t have to do it. Barnabas might devise some other plan if you refuse.”
“True,” Barnabas agreed. “Don’t rush into this without considering the risks carefully.”
“I want to play a role in bringing whoever harmed Georgette to justice,” she said. “Please tell me what you want me to do.”
“Nothing beyond leaving the door of your bedroom unlocked,” Barnabas said.
“I rarely do lock it,” she told him.
Tonight be sure you don’t,” he said. “I think you may have a visitor. I’ll be in the house and nearby so don’t be too afraid.”
“I’m anxious to get it over with,” she said.
Barnabas nodded. “Then I’ll let Ralf take you back to the house now. Go up to your bedroom and pretend to retire early. I’ll remain here and later Ralf will let me in the castle by a back door.”
She and Ralf made their way back to the house through the spectral mist of the garden. It was a night for ghosts, she thought with a shiver. She was beginning to feel panicky now that the moment of revelation was drawing near. What other horrors did the old castle hold beyond the body in the crystal coffin in that dark attic room?
“You’re trembling,” Ralf said kindly.
“I’ll be all right.”
“You can depend on Barnabas,” he said.
“I’ve never doubted that.”
“I’m not going to be able to help,” Ralf said gloomily.
“I’ve been relegated to the role of guard downstairs.”
“You’ll be doing your share,” Betty told him.
“I’d rather play a more important part,” he said.
He left her at the front entrance to the castle with final words of reassurance but she could sense that he was just as nervous as she was. The old mansion was silent and brooding as she entered the dimly lighted
entrance hall. There was no one in sight, so she started up the stairs.

At the first landing she encountered Jeremy’s aunt on her way down. Vivian gave her an appraising glance. “You’ve been outside on this miserable night?”

“Yes,” she said nervously. “I wanted some fresh air.”

“You must have gotten chilled.”

“I do feel cold,” she said. “I think I’ll go straight to bed.”

“Very wise,” Jeremy’s aunt said, in a tone mild for her. “I’ll have one of the maids bring you up a hot toddy just to guard you against a possible cold.”

“There’s no need,” she protested.

“I insist,” the older woman said, and continued on down the stairs.

Betty was suspicious of her kindly interest, but there was nothing she could do to prevent the drink being sent to her. Though she could avoid taking it. No point in exposing herself to this extra hazard when things were at a crisis. She had changed into her dressing gown and night dress by the time a maid arrived with the hot drink on a tray. She thanked the girl for it. But as soon as she was alone she emptied the drink out the window. Then she extinguished the lamp and got into bed.

She didn’t sleep but she closed her eyes and waited. She knew it might be a long while before anything happened, and that there was a chance nothing might take place. Barnabas might be wrong. But in the meanwhile she had to assume that he wasn’t and act out her role.

The warmth of her bed and the darkness of the room finally played a trick on her. In spite of her tension she dropped off into a light sleep. She had no idea how long it lasted. But she was awakened by a footstep by her bed, and when she opened her eyes to stare up into the shadows she was confronted with the pale face of the dead Georgette. Georgette in her wedding gown. And just as in her dream her twin sister was holding some sort of weapon in her hand. The weapon was poised above her!

“Georgette!” she screamed as the phantom figure plunged the weapon down at her.

At the same instant Barnabas sprang out from the
darkness and seized the ghostly Georgette and dragged her back. Then he roughly slapped her across the face several times. Now it was Georgette who began screaming.

Barnabas turned to Betty. “Are you safe?”

“Yes.”

Still holding a hysterically weeping Georgette in his arms, he ordered Betty to light a lamp.

With trembling hands she groped for a match and removing the shade from the tall lamp touched the flame to its wick. Then she replaced the shade and turned to study the two in the ample glow of the lamp.

She studied the weeping Georgette and in an awed voice, she said, “It is Georgette. Alive!”

“Very much so,” Barnabas said grimly.

“But the body in the crystal coffin?”

“Was a live Georgette under a sleep of drugs and hypnosis,” Barnabas said. “She was never embalmed. That was a hoax in which the undertaker joined with Vivian. Georgette was first drugged and later kept under hypnosis by Jeremy’s aunt.”

“But how?”

“Simple enough. Before Vivian married a Frene she was a vaudeville actress—an assistant to a mesmerist. Working for him, she learned the art of hypnotism and many other tricks which she was able to put to use later. She bribed Madison to pretend that Georgette had been embalmed. She fully expected that when the body was sent back to the castle Jeremy would bury his beautiful bride in the family cemetery.”

Betty stared at him in horror. “She planned to have Georgette buried alive?”

Barnabas still held her whimpering twin by the arm. “I’m afraid Vivian is not the gentlest of women. It suited her cruel streak. But Jeremy upset her plans by placing Georgette in the crystal coffin and refusing to bury her.”

“So Vivian changed her plans?”

“Exactly,” Barnabas said. “She visited Georgette regularly and kept her in a hypnotic state and drugged except for a few hours in the night. Then she allowed her to rise from the coffin and take some nourishment. She also began to have her paint that series of canvases which Jeremy believed to be done by a ghost. She was
developing a new plan, using Georgette to send Jeremy insane. Then she could be rid of them both and take over control of the Frene fortune and this house."

"Then I came on the scene to complicate things for her," Betty said.

"Yes. And she had to either get rid of you quickly or have you murdered. When you acted as if you were suspicious and refused to leave, she had Quentin make some attempts on your life in his werewolf guise. Last night he failed and was also badly wounded. So she decided to make Georgette the killer. She had her under her control and all that was necessary was to place a dagger in her hands and send her in here to do her bidding."

Betty moved forward to her weeping sister. "How could you do such a thing?" she asked her.

"Don't expect a rational answer from her yet," Barnabas warned her. "I brought her out of the hypnosis by slapping her but she is still in a kind of stupor from drugs."

Betty was about to take her sister in her arms when the door of the bedroom swung open. Vivian was standing in the doorway with a gun in her hand. It was obvious that the weapon was aimed at them.

She came into the room a step with a grim smile. "I heard your explanation, Barnabas," she said acidly. "Very clever of you. You had most of the details right. You even guessed that Quentin and I had been working together in Paris. That Quentin knew I planned to kill Georgette and so tried to prevent Betty from coming here. But I'm afraid it won't do you any good. None of you will leave here alive."

Barnabas said, "That threat doesn't alarm me."

"I've never believed you were a vampire," Jeremy's aunt said. "I'm sure a properly placed bullet will kill you as well as it will the others."

"You'll never get away with a multiple killing," Betty warned her.

"I think I can manage a suitable explanation," Vivian said calmly. "It will be Jeremy who killed you all. Poor insane Jeremy! And of course he'll kill himself as a climax
to his mad frenzy.” She gave them a malevolent smile as she prepared to use the weapon in her hand.

“That’s very good,” Barnabas said calmly. “You might get away with it.”

Betty couldn’t understand his taking it so casually until she noticed a shadow in the hallway. She fought to keep from betraying her emotions as she watched Jeremy emerge from the darkness and move towards his aunt.

It took only a few seconds but seemed like an eternity. Then Jeremy sprang on Vivian and wrenched the gun from her hand. In the struggle it went off, its bullet lodging wildly in the ceiling. Vivian screamed insanely and somehow twisted free of Jeremy’s grasp and raced across the bedroom with a vindictive look on her still attractive face.

She reached the bedside table with its lamp and without hesitation raised the lamp to defend herself with it as the only available weapon.

“Put that down!” Barnabas ordered her.

She laughed wildly and plunged the lamp down on the bed. It exploded in a burst of flame and the bed-clothing and the canopy were almost instantly caught up in the fire. While the others backed away from the inferno created by the madwoman she continued to stand there in an insane frenzy as the flames licked out towards her, catching her clothes on fire.

Barnabas told the others, “Get out of here! Quickly!”

They left the room of flames with the screams of a dying Vivian ringing in their ears. At the head of the stairs they met Ralf with a frightened expression on his face.

“What now?” he asked.

“Get the servants to form a bucket brigade,” Barnabas ordered him. “We may be able to save the house.”

They made their way downstairs and the battle to save Frene Castle began. But the supply of water and help to bring it to the house was woefully inadequate. The flames spread from room to room and then from floor to floor until the great stone castle was one burning mass that could be seen from Collinsport all the way along the bay. The workers, discouraged, turned their efforts to keeping the walls and roof of the cottage wet
and saving it. They also were on the watch that no sparks reached Collinwood to set it aflame.

By the time dawn was beginning to show, the castle was a wreck of charred ruins, collapsed walls and still burning embers that sent a black pall of smoke high in the sky. Barnabas left the men he’d organized into a fire brigade to come over to where Betty was standing.

“The end of Frene Castle,” he told her grimly.

She gave him a meaningful look. “Perhaps it is better this way. Now Jeremy and Georgette will feel no need to remain here. It would be awkward for her to live on in the village. There would always be superstitious gossip about her returning from the coffin.”

“The crystal coffin,” Barnabas said with a wry smile. “It saved her life.” He glanced at the smoldering ruins again. “There’s nothing more I can do here. I must go back to my own place for a little. Hare will be worried about me.”

She studied him anxiously. “But you’ll return. We’ll have to make a lot of plans.”

“Of course,” he said with a reassuring smile. “I’ll place you in Ralf’s care until I do.”

And then he walked away, a lonely figure vanishing across the field in the gray light of dawn. A sudden sadness went through her for no reason she could understand. Ralf came and stood by her without saying anything, as if he sensed her unhappy feeling. It wasn’t until later that she knew this moment had been her farewell to Barnabas. When they went to the old house in search of him he had vanished. She never saw him again.

* * * * *

Carolyn had listened through to the very end of the story in silence. As Barnabas finished, she said, “You make it all seem so real. And yet it happened nearly a century ago.”

He smiled at her sadly. “Those were very real days though they seem far away to us. I’m glad you enjoyed the story.”

“But you didn’t finish it,” she protested. “What happened to them all?”

“Georgette recovered completely,” Barnabas said. “She
and Jeremy built a fine new house in Bangor and had a flock of youngsters. Their descendants still live there."

"And what did Betty do?"

"She and Ralf Harron married when she despaired of ever seeing Barnabas again. They went back to live in London, and Ralf became a famous sculptor. They had a son and he in turn had a grandson whom I have met. He is a theatrical designer and you may be amused to learn that his name is Barnabas."

"I think that’s wonderful," she said. She felt a drop of moisture on her face. She glanced up and another drop hit her. "It’s finally beginning to rain. We’d better get back to the house."

"Yes, we’ve stayed too long as it is. Elizabeth will be worried," he said, rising.

As they began walking back to the lights of Collinwood through the darkness Carolyn said, "Of course both Ralf and Betty are dead now."

"Long ago, I’m afraid," Barnabas said sadly.

She sighed. "It’s too bad she couldn’t have married that ancestor of yours. Do you think they would have been happy? I mean, after all the excitement was over. Do you believe he really loved her?"

Barnabas showed a gentle smile. "I’m sure of it," he said quietly.
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