

THE SOLITARY HOUSE : A Mystery Story By E. R. PUNSHON

Copyright, 1919, by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright, Public Ledger Company. THIS STARTS THE STORY When his father's death shortened his university career Keith Norton took an office job, tired of it; shipped on a coaster, licked the captain and deserted; and in a ragged tramp when he reaches "The Solitary House."

AND HERE IT CONTINUES A Visitor HE LAID DOWN the cigar box he had been fingering doubtfully, and he listened quietly and without moving. The knock was repeated, quick and imperative, and Keith rose slowly to his feet.

"Now to face the music," he said to himself, and he went quickly out of the room and across the hall to the front door and opened it. On the threshold was standing a tall, slim girl with dark eyes and a grave and pale face. Her features were thin and not very regular, the nose being a little too prominent, the mouth a little too large. The cheek bones were a little high, too, and indeed she might have been called plain but for the fineness of the clear, smooth skin, the depth and beauty of the dark eyes and the perfection of the broad, serene forehead from which the hair was brushed back tightly beneath a small closely-fitting felt hat. She held herself very upright, with a certain suggestion of pliant vigor, and Keith noticed that her limbs were long and her hands and feet by no means specially small. She had ridden up on a bicycle, for she had her hand on one she had just placed to lean against the side of the house, and though she looked very intently and searchingly at Keith she did not speak.

He did not speak, either, but stood quietly, waiting for her to begin, and the pause allowed him to notice every detail of her appearance. He felt, too, that she on her part was watching him closely from those great dark eyes, and that this intent gaze of hers was hostile and even contemptuous. He wondered if she knew who he was and how he had come there, and he felt his temper beginning to rise under the slow scorn of her watchful gaze.

There was, however, in this enmity her manner seemed to show, no suggestion of fear or doubt or suspicion; it was rather as though he were some one whom she knew well and utterly despised. But then it seemed quite impossible that she should really know him, and it occurred to him at once that most likely she was taking him for some one else, presumably the rightful tenant of the house whose food he had eaten and whose clothes he was wearing. But then if the girl were really under such an impression it followed that she could never have seen this unknown tenant, and why, therefore, should she appear so hostile toward him?

Keith through whose mind all these considerations flashed like lightning, determined to be careful and cautious in what he said, and to endeavor, if possible, to find out what the girl knew or believed about him without in any way betraying himself.

"I have come to see my sister," she said suddenly and abruptly, her voice quiet and low and yet singularly clear. "Yes," he answered hesitatingly. "Yes, she lives here?"

For some reason his words seemed to fan to sudden flame the smoldering fires of her wrath.

"How dare you?" she cried, and she lifted her hands so that for the moment he believed she was about to strike him. But the gesture was only one of passionate indignation, and she said again: "How dare you? oh, how dare you?"

"But I assure you," he began and paused and felt himself flush red, so fierce and scorching was the indignation in her angry eyes.

"Do you suppose," she said bitterly, "that whatever you assure me, I should ever believe one word you say?"

"Well, if you don't," he remarked, "it doesn't seem much use my saying anything, does it?"

"Do you think you have any reason to expect me to believe you?" she demanded. He hesitated, reflecting that after all, since the very clothes on his back were not his own, he had perhaps no right to reply in the affirmative.

"I don't know," he answered, after a pause for reflection. "Liar," she answered, very slowly and distinctly. He went very red, for even a tramp, even a reckless housebreaker, does not like to be called a liar by a woman, nor to be addressed in tones of such vivid and intense scorn. He half rose from his chair and sat down again.

"Of course," he said, "if you were a man I should throw you out of the house for that. As you are a woman I can only repeat that I do not know." "It is a lie," she repeated. "Oh, well," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "you gave me fair warning you would not believe a word I said."

"Where is she?" she repeated, and she came a little nearer and stood slim and upright above him, her head thrown

back, one hand held out, like a young goddess threatening to unloose the powers of her wrath. "What is the use of my saying anything if you won't believe a word I do say?" he asked.

She did not reply, but stood looking down at him, and he felt a certain discomfort grow and increase in him beneath the scrutiny of those clear searching eyes. They seemed to know; and he felt it to be true that he was not treating her quite fairly since plainly she took him for some one else, probably the rightful tenant of the house. But he did not see that he could explain the truth to her. For one thing she would very likely refuse to believe a story that would sound to her a little fantastic perhaps; and besides he did not feel too much inclined to make the experiment. The bitterness of her manner, the contempt apparent in her every word and look, had very distinctly realized that her hostility was really aimed at some one else. Still he had to bear the brunt of it, and he had not found that pleasant—or pleasant to feel that if she knew the truth and what an awful intruder he was here, her scorn of him would probably grow greater and increase.

Keith sat still and listened to her light steps flying up the stairs. He heard her fling open the door of the bedroom and run in—and the next moment her voice shrieked out in a loud and fearful cry like that of a soul parting in agony. He sprang from his seat, dashed up the stairs three or four at a time and flung himself across the landing into the room. It was empty save for the

girl herself, who lay still and unconscious on the floor in the middle of the room, nor was there anything at all to tell what had happened or what had alarmed her. He looked all round quickly and then ran to the window and looked out. There was nothing, nothing at all, to account for that awful scream of terror, and he turned back to the unconscious figure of the girl, prone upon the carpet. He turned her on her back. She was quite unconscious.

There was nothing at all. What was there? "I don't know," she said: "I don't know." "You must know what made you cry out like that," he insisted, vexed for her sake that she distrusted him. She made no answer, and it was evident more than half believed that he was responsible for whatever had happened. And that something had occurred to frighten her very badly was plain from her ashen face and trembling lips.

"Look here," he said, with an impulse to try to explain the truth to her, "you are making a great mistake. I am not what you think: I—"

"You think you can talk me over as you talked her over, I suppose?" she interrupted wearily; "but I don't want to know anything at all except where my sister is. When you have told so many lies, why should you expect me to believe you now?"

Without waiting for an answer, she turned and went unsteadily out of the room and down the stairs. He followed and found her preparing to start off on her bicycle. But she was plainly not fit to go alone, for she was trembling violently and her hands were shaking so that she could hardly hold the bicycle upright.

"You had better wait a bit," he said to her. "And I wish you would tell me what made you cry out like that?" "I expect you know," she answered moodily. "Well, I don't," he insisted. "Why not tell me? What was it?" "I don't know," she answered again, and once more she shivered. He made an impatient movement, angry at what he thought her obstinacy, and turned back to the house. But once more he was turned to her. "You aren't fit to go like that," he said. "Won't you wait a little, or shall I come with you?"

"No," she flashed, her spirit greater than her fears; "no, I would rather see—that again than have you with me." "All right," he said sulkily. She mounted her bicycle and rode

away down the hill to the road. He could still see her in the pale twilight till she reached the road, but then she at once vanished from sight, and he stood for a few minutes leaning against the door post. "A regular little spiteful, a little Tartar," he said to himself, "but I wonder what it all means, and what on earth scared her so badly up there? It's all jolly rummy, and I would give a good deal to know what made her faint like that."

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The Three Strings By NATALIE SUMNER LINCOLN Author of "The Nameless Man"

Copyright, 1919, by D. Appleton & Co. Copyright, Public Ledger Company. "Go on, Mr. Maynard," directed Chief Connor. "My suspicions were aroused a month ago and I came to this country ostensibly to take part in training-camp activities. I remembered your interest in chess, Burnham, and decided to ask you aid; in fact sent a wireless when off New York telling you I was coming to Washington."

Maynard paused to sip a glass of water, carefully avoiding the medicine glass standing next to the bedstand. "I reached Washington Monday afternoon." Chief Connor nodded. "So I was informed by the taxi-driver whom I saw."

"Sam had called to lay information against you, Maynard, just before your telephone came asking me to come here. Sam is now under arrest."

A piercing scream from Mrs. Ward drew all eyes to the housekeeper, and Chief Connor addressed her sternly. "Sam finally confessed that he was your son," he stated. "And he implicated you in this kidnapping. German plot which Mr. Maynard has unearthed so cleverly. Sam confessed you had given him duplicate keys of this house and that he had passed them over for a consideration to a party whose name he would not divulge, even under pressure."

"Did he?" Chief Connor asked temptuously. "Prove it; there is no law which forces a suspected party to incriminate himself."

"We don't need further proof," interrupted Maynard with significant emphasis. "Sam—" "Had nothing to do with Count von Eltz's death," declared Mrs. Ward emphatically, her bloodshot eyes turning pleadingly first to Maynard and then to Chief Connor. "Sam is a good boy, but led astray by—" She stopped and bit her lip.

"I know he had nothing to do with the tragic happenings on Monday night," responded Maynard, quickly taking pity on the woman's evident agony. "Let me complete my story. Upon my arrival, I telephoned this house and a woman who recognized me told me that Mr. Burnham was out of town but would be back in two days. I had seen in the newspapers that La Montagne was in Washington and hurriedly called on him. At the Burlington I found the desk clerk so busy that I got the number of your room. Rene, from an elevator boy and went, unattended, directly to it. I found the door open and a chambermaid just leaving. On explaining that I was a friend of yours, she let me in and went away."

"She never told me that any one had called," exclaimed La Montagne. "Forgot all about it, probably," went on Maynard. "I got rather restless sitting still waiting for you, and looked about for something to read. A letter from you with a key holding it down attracted my attention."

Maynard flushed. "I don't usually read private correspondence, Rene, and you must remember that I am a man, but on seeing Burnham's signature at the bottom of the page, I took the liberty to glance down it, and his statement that he would be at his house that night, and that he sent you the key to enter because the house was unoccupied, instantly plucked my curiosity. The statement was direct, contrary to what I had learned over the telephone half an hour before. Acting on impulse, I pocketed Burnham's key and left the apartment."

"Mon Dieu!" ejaculated Le Montagne in open-eyed astonishment. "In one of my disguises I went to Burnham's house that night," went on Maynard. "It is some years since I have been in Maynard and in the driving rainstorm I got confused and had to ask how to find the house."

"I was the person you asked," stated Marian, interrupting him. "You were softly—" your voice was familiar, but I did not recognize you in your make-up. My servant, Mammy, who was with me, answered your question."

"And I failed to recognize you in the storm for you were so bundled up," replied Maynard. "I was admitted by a man I had not seen for years, Count Fritz von Eltz. He had attempted to conceal his identity by a key holding and shaving his beard and mustache, but his disguise was badly done. Maynard paused. "I gave an assumed name and showed—" "Your name was doubtful how to act; he dared not turn me away for fear I might investigate his right to be in the house—and invited me in and took me up to his quarters, saying Burnham had permitted him to occupy the house in his absence."

"He did!" Mrs. Burnham's indignant interruption caused Maynard to look at her. "Where was he living in this house?" "In the housekeeper's suite of rooms on the third floor," explained Maynard. "Mrs. Ward covered her eyes under their glasses. "One thing and then another led Shipman—that was the name Von Eltz gave me—to suggest a game of chess and I jumped at the opportunity. We played most of the night, but during his frequent absences, I heard him at the telephone downstairs, presumably trying to reach you. He fake anagram physician clenched his fists in wrath. "Pity you didn't get the phone numbers he was calling," remarked Chief Connor.

"I didn't try to get the numbers; another and more imperative matter engaged my attention, in his absence," answered Maynard. "One thing and then another led Shipman—that was the name Von Eltz gave me—to suggest a game of chess and I jumped at the opportunity. We played most of the night, but during his frequent absences, I heard him at the telephone downstairs, presumably trying to reach you. He fake anagram physician clenched his fists in wrath. "Pity you didn't get the phone numbers he was calling," remarked Chief Connor.

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Von Eltz next absented himself from the room, I went over the problem diagrams again." Maynard paused.

White to Play and Mate in Three Moves.

White to Play and Mate in Three Moves.

White to Play and Mate in Four Moves.

White to Play and Mate in Four Moves.

White to Play and Mate in Three Moves.

White to Play and Mate in Three Moves.

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By using his established reputation as a chess expert to cloak their method of passing valuable information in and out of Germany."

"Heavens! I knew nothing of it!" Burnham, appalled. "I assure you, Maynard I had no idea—"

"I know that now," acknowledged Maynard quickly. "After my bath I went over the chess problem diagrams again, and this time my examination became more technical and its results increased my suspicions of a code."

"One I would have passed as a misprint, a hasty setting down of the wrong man, but hardly two such errors in six diagrams, and I concluded weighing the presence of Von Eltz under an assumed name in the house, that I had stumbled on a very serious message coded in the innocent disguise of chess problems."

"What did you do then?" demanded Burnham. "Continued to play the game," answered Maynard. "But before Von Eltz returned, I insured his sleeping soundly that night by pouring a small amount of diluted hyosine, which I carry with me for insomnia, in one of the liquor glasses containing cherry cordial which Von Eltz had brought upstairs earlier in the evening."

"Quite sure it was not hydrocyanic acid?" asked Hayden, and both tone and manner were as insulting as he could make them. "Quite," answered Maynard. "My idea was to insure Von Eltz sleeping soundly while I ransacked the house in search of other evidence of German espionage and intrigue."

"Just a moment," Chief Connor broke in. "Did Von Eltz bring up only two glasses of cordial?" "Only two glasses, but a decanter of the cordial," responded Maynard. "He sipped his at intervals, possibly as a bracer, but I drank sparingly. Frankly, my mind was so engaged with the problem of securing the chess diagrams without his suspecting it, that I paid little attention to what he did. I do remember, however, that just before the flash of lightning, followed by terrific thunder, which put out our lights temporarily, Von Eltz had refilled both glasses, and as his urging I took off mine just before I went to bed."

"Well, what then?" demanded Hayden. The strain was telling on him and he sought to hurry Maynard's leisurely speech. "Then, contrary to my expectations, I slept heavily all night," answered Maynard, untroubled by his questioner's manner. "On rising I went into the sitting room, Von Eltz having insisted that I should occupy his bed and he take the sofa there, and I found him lying on the floor dead."

Coroner Penfield broke the silence that followed. "When did you make this discovery?" "About eight in the morning," "Good gracious! Were you hiding in the house then?" I arrived at 10 o'clock," gasped Evelyn. "No, I was stunned by my discovery, but half awake, and my first thought was that I had inadvertently given Von Eltz an overdose of hyosine and killed him," explained Maynard. "In my confused state of mind, I dressed immediately and left the house, taking my suitcase, which I had brought with me, as well as the six chess problem diagrams; first, however, I searched Von Eltz's body and your clothing—not even a pocket handkerchief. I overlooked the string which you discovered later, Penfield."

"And which I promptly lost," and the Coroner made a wry face. "I took it unseen from your pocket when coming out of my faint," volunteered Mrs. Ward from the background. "I was in mortal terror Sam was mixed up in the man's death and so I also stole the ball of cord out of Mr. Burnham's library; I knew he used it to send his parcels abroad, and I gave the cord to Sam. He told me, Mrs. Evelyn, that he accidentally handed you a piece from the ball when helping you gather up your bundles."

"So that was it?" and Evelyn sighed with relief; the tangled skein was rapidly unwinding and brighter hopes seemed ahead with the clearing of the mystery. "Where did you go after leaving here, Mr. Maynard?" "To the home of an old dresser of mine who is still employed in a local theater," replied Maynard. "He took me in without requiring explanations, and after a bath and something to eat I was again in condition to reason things out. I concluded to return here that afternoon, await developments, and if possible find out if Burnham was in any way aiding the

Whipped Topics The Bolsheviks have put the "peet" into Budapest. We are in hearty accord with the headline, "Let's Defeat Bolsheviks." "Let's" by all means. Air traveling, they tell us, is going to be safer than any railway. So we shall seek safety in flight. Between supporters and denouncers of "Jazz" dances we are neutral. We neither dance them graceful nor disgraceful. Many busy city men are giving up their allotments because they find a plot is too much for them. So do most revue-writers. "Feminine night attire grows more and more daring," asserts a fashion writer. So may yet have a play entitled: "When Nightgowns Were Bold."

A new occupation for aviators is as observers over the principal fishery grounds, to signal to the trawler the presence of shoals. This is the new "fly" fishing. The peace treaty will be signed in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. It is easy to imagine the Hun delegates' "reflections."

The war-cry of the girls out of work who decline domestic service is evidently "Britons never will be slaves!" The Insulating Board of Guardians has appointed a gardener as barber. Expecting him, perhaps, to use his own lawn-mower. The suggested tax on bachelors would presumably come under the heading of luxury taxes, in the opinion of many husbands. Apropos the termination of the control of certain commodities, some people consider that they are not so much released, as let out on bail. "The question of the Saar Valley," we read, "has been threatening to create a chasm between the Allies." Bargachan at the Peace Conference in out of place. The corn crop will be materially increased through the influence of "corn clubs," which have been organized all over this country among the children of the rural communities.—London Opinion.



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back, one hand held out, like a young goddess threatening to unloose the powers of her wrath. "What is the use of my saying anything if you won't believe a word I do say?" he asked.

PERSONALITY When Georgie Porgie went to school He often broke the golden rule. But was so very nice about it. You didn't mind just how he acted. Ah, yes, 'twas true, you needn't doubt it. His personality attracted. He's now a movie star, I hear. And makes a million plunks a year.

But when to school went Willie Wit A wicked deed he'd ne'er commit. And yet his abstinence annoyed us. His sense of duty never held us. His righteousness forever cloyed us.

His personality repelled us. He's now a statesman—one of those Who irritates both friends and foes. Now, it has oft occurred to me How very, very nice 'twould be If Georgie and Willie had but traded. A little vice, a little virtue (For virtue's sin when it's paraded; And just a mite of sin won't hurt you. So Riley says) and mixed with skill It had improved both Georgie and Willie.

GRIF ALEXANDER.

DOROTHY DARNIT—She Didn't Figure Long Hair Meant a Long Memory



DOES ANYONE KNOW WHERE I PUT MY CLASSES? THEY'RE ON TOP OF YOUR HEAD. OH YES—MY ERROR—NOW WE WILL GO AHEAD WITH TO DAY'S LESSON— DOTTIE—WHAT IS THE SUM OF TWO AND TWO? TEACHER—IT'S NO USE TO TELL YOU— YOU'D ONLY FORGET IT—ANYHOW—

By CHAS. McMANUS



CHARLES McMANUS.