

# The Exploits of Elaine

A Detective Novel and a Motion Picture Drama

By ARTHUR B. REEVE  
The Well-Known Novelist and the  
Creator of the "Craig Kennedy" Stories

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CONTINUED

He gazed about keenly. Then he took a few steps to the window and threw it open. As he stood there he took the parts of the rods he had been carrying and fitted them together until he had a pole some eight or ten feet long. At one end was a curious arrangement that seemed to contain lenses and a mirror. At the other end was an eye-piece, as nearly as I could make out.

"What is that?" I asked as he completed his work.

"That? That is an instrument something on the order of a miniature periscope." Craig replied, still at work.

I watched him, fascinated at his resourcefulness. He stealthily thrust the mirror end of the periscope out of the window and up toward the corresponding window upstairs. Then he gazed eagerly through the eye-piece.

"Walter—look!" he exclaimed to me.

I did. There, sure enough, was Michael, pacing up and down the room.

As I looked at him nervously walking to and fro, I could not help admitting that things looked safe enough and all right to me. Kennedy folded the periscope up and we left our room, mounting the remaining flight of stairs.

In fifty-nine we could hear the measured steps of the footman, Craig

knocked. The footsteps ceased. Then the door opened slowly and I could see a cold blue automatic.

"It's all right, Michael," reassured Craig calmly. "All right, Walter," he added to me.

The gun dropped back into the footman's pocket. We entered and Michael again locked the door. Not a word had been spoken by him so far.

Next Michael moved to the center of the room and, as I realized later, brought himself in direct line with the open window. He seemed to be overcome with fear at his betrayal and stood there breathing heavily.

"Professor Kennedy," he began, "I have been so mistreated that I have made up my mind to tell you all I know about this Clutching—"

Suddenly he drew a sharp breath and both his hands clutched at his own breast. He did not stagger and all in the ordinary manner, but seemed to bend at the knees and waist and literally crumple down on his face.

We ran to him. Craig turned him over gently on his back and examined him. He called, "No answer. Michael is almost pulseless."

Quickly Craig tore off his collar and laid his breast, for the man seemed to be struggling for breath. As he did so he drew from Michael's throat a small, sharp-pointed dart.

"What's that?" I ejaculated, horror-stricken.

"A poisoned blowgun dart, such as is used by the South American Indians on the upper Orinoco," he said lowly.

He examined it carefully.

"What is the poison?" I asked.

"Curari," he replied simply. "It acts on the respiratory muscles, paralyzing them and causing asphyxiation."

The dart seemed to have been made of a quill with a very sharp point, hollow, and containing the deadly poison which had sharpened end.

"Look out!" I cautioned, as he handled it.

"Oh, that's all right," he answered casually. "If I don't scratch myself, I am safe enough. I could swallow the stuff and it wouldn't hurt me—unless I had an abrasion of the lips or some internal cut."

Kennedy continued to examine the dart until suddenly I heard a low exclamation of surprise from him. Inside the hollow quill was a thin sheet of tissue paper, tightly rolled. He drew it out and read:

"To know me is Death."

"Kennedy—Take Warning."

Underneath was the inevitable Clutching Hand sign.

We jumped to our feet. Kennedy rushed to the window and slammed it shut, while I seized the key from Michael's pocket, opened the door and called for help.

A moment before, on the roof of a building across the street, one might have seen a bent, skulking figure. His face was copper colored and on his head was a thick thatch of matted hair. He looked like a South American Indian, in a very dilapidated suit of cast-off American clothes.

He had slipped out through a doorway leading to a flight of steps from the roof to the hallway of the tenement, and, like one of his native venomous serpents, worked his way down the stairs again.

My outcry brought a veritable battalion of aid. The hotel proprietor, the negro waiter and several others

spite of the fact that it was broad daylight, it was running. His face puckered.

"They are using no current at present in the house," he ruminated, "yet the meter is running."

He continued to examine the meter. Then he began to follow the electric wires along. At last he discovered a place where they had been tampered with and tapped by other wires.

"The work of the Clutching Hand!" he muttered.

Eagerly he followed the wires to the furnace and around to the back. There they led right into a little water tank. Kennedy yanked them out. As he did so he pulled something with them.

"Two electrodes the villain placed there," he exclaimed, holding them up triumphantly for me to see.

"Yes," I replied, dubiously, "but what does it all mean?"

"Why, don't you see? Under the influence of the electric current the water was decomposed and gave off oxygen and hydrogen. The free hydrogen passed up the furnace pipe and combining with the arsenic in the wall paper formed the deadly arseniuretted hydrogen."

He cast the whole improvised electrolysis apparatus on the floor and dashed up the cellar steps.

"I've found it!" he cried, hurrying into Elaine's room. "It's in this room—a deadly gas—arseniuretted hydrogen."

He tore open the windows.

"Have her moved," he shouted to Aunt Josephine. "Then have a vacuum cleaner go over every inch of wall, carpet and upholstery."

Standing beside her, he breathlessly explained his discovery. "That wall paper has been loaded down with arsenic, probably Paris green or Schweinfurth green, which is acetarsenic of copper. Every minute you are here you are breathing arseniuretted hydrogen. This Clutching Hand is a diabolical genius. Think of it—poisoned wall paper!"

No one said a word. Kennedy reached down and took the two Clutching Hand messages Elaine had received. "I shall want to study these notes, more, too," he said, holding them up to the wall at the head of the bed as he flashed his pocket lens at them. "You see, Elaine, I may be able to get something from studying the ink, the paper, the hand writing—"

Suddenly both leaped back, with a cry.

Their faces had been several inches apart. Something had whizzed between them and literally impaled the two notes on the wall.

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As Craig had thrown open Elaine's window and turned to Elaine the figure had crouched closer to the chimney.

Then with an uncanny determination, he slowly raised the blowgun to his lips.

I jumped forward, followed by Doctor Hayward, Aunt Josephine and Marie. Kennedy had a peculiar look as he pulled out from the wall a blowgun dart similar in every way to that which had killed Michael.

"Craig!" gasped Elaine, reaching up and laying her soft, white hand on his arm in undisguised fear for him. "You

Dodge," he said, as he held the note out to me, "you are suffering from arsenic poisoning—but I don't know yet how it is being administered."

He gazed about keenly. Meanwhile, I had taken the crumpled note from him and was reading it. Somehow, I had leaned against the wall. As I turned, Craig happened to glance at me.

"For heaven's sake, Walter," I heard him exclaim. "What have you been up against?"

He fairly leaped at me and I felt him examining my shoulder where I had been leaning on the wall. Something on the paper had come off and left a mark on my shoulder. Craig looked puzzled from me at the wall.

"Arsenic!" he cried.

He whipped out a pocket lens and looked at the paper. "This heavy, fuzzy paper is fairly loaded with it, powdered," he reported.

Kennedy paced the room. Suddenly, pausing by the register, an idea seemed to strike him.

"Walter," he whispered, "come down cellar with me."

"Oh! Be careful!" cried Elaine, anxiously for him.

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