

# The Exploits of Elaine

A Detective Novel and a Motion Picture Drama

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## SYNOPSIS.

The New York police are mystified by a series of murders and other crimes. The principal clue to the criminal is the warning letter which is sent the victims, signed with a "clutching hand." The latest victim of the mysterious assassin is Taylor Dodge, the insurance president. His daughter, Elaine, employs Craig Kennedy, the famous scientific detective, to unravel the mystery. What Kennedy accomplishes is told by his friend Jameson, a newspaper man. Enraged at the determined effort which Elaine and Craig Kennedy are making to put an end to his crimes, the Clutching Hand, as this strange criminal is known, resorts to all sorts of the most diabolical schemes to put them out of the way. Each chapter of the story tells of a new plot against their lives and of the way the great detective uses all his skill to save this pretty girl and himself from death.

## NINTH EPISODE

### THE DEATH RAY.

Kennedy was reading a scientific treatise one morning, while I was hanging on the typewriter, when a knock at the laboratory door disturbed us.

By some intuition Craig seemed to know who it was. He sprang to open the door, and there stood Elaine Dodge and her lawyer, Perry Bennett.

Instantly Craig read from the startled look on Elaine's face that something dreadful had happened.

"Why—what's the matter?" he asked, solicitously.

"A—another letter—from the Clutching Hand!" she exclaimed breathlessly.

Craig took the letter and we both read, with amazement:

Are you an enemy of society? If not, order Craig Kennedy to leave the country by nine o'clock tomorrow morning. Otherwise a pedestrian will drop dead outside his laboratory every hour until he leaves.

The note was signed by the now familiar sinister hand, and had added to it a postscript which read:

As a token of his leaving, have him place a vase of flowers in his laboratory window today.

"What shall we do?" queried Bennett, evidently very much alarmed at the letter.

"Do?" replied Kennedy, laughing contemptuously at the apparently futile threat. "Why, nothing. Just wait."

We got up as usual the next day, and quite early went over to the laboratory. Kennedy, as was his custom, plunked straightway into his work and appeared absorbed by it, while I wrote.

"There is something queer going on, Walter," he remarked. "This thing registers some kind of wireless rays—infra-red, I think—something like those that they say that Italian scientist, Ulivi, claims he has discovered and called the 'Frays.'"

"How do you know?" I asked, looking up from my work. "What's that instrument you are using?"

"A bolometer, invented by the late Professor Langley," he replied, his attention riveted on it.

Some time previously Kennedy had had installed on the window ledge one of those mirrorlike arrangements, known as a "busybody," which show those in a room what is going on in the street.

As I moved over to look at the bolometer I happened to glance into the "busybody" and saw that a crowd was rapidly collecting on the sidewalk.

"Look, Craig!" I called hastily.

He hurried over to me and looked. We could both see in the busybody mirror a group of excited passers-by bending over a man lying prostrate on the sidewalk.

The excited crowd lifted him up and bore him away, and I turned in surprise to Craig. He was looking at his watch.

It was now only a few moments past nine o'clock!

Some time later our door was excitedly flung open and Elaine and Perry Bennett arrived.

"I've just heard of the accident!" she cried, fearfully. "Isn't it terrible! What had we better do?"

For a few moments no one said a word. Then Kennedy began carefully examining the bolometer and some other recording instruments he had, while the rest of us watched, fascinated.

Somehow that "busybody" seemed to attract me. I could not resist looking into it from time to time as Kennedy worked.

I was scarcely able to control my excitement when again I saw the same scene enacted on the sidewalk before the laboratory. Hurriedly I looked at my watch. It was ten o'clock!

"Craig!" I cried. "Another!"

Instantly he was at my side, gazing eagerly. There was a second innocent pedestrian lying on the sidewalk while a crowd, almost panic-stricken, gathered about him.

"It's no use," he muttered, as we gathered about him. "We're beaten. I can't stand this sort of thing. I will leave tomorrow for South America."

I thought Elaine Dodge would faint at the shock of his words coming so soon after the terrible occurrence outside. She looked at him speechless.

It happened that Kennedy had some artificial flowers on a stand, which he had been using long before in the study of synthetic coloring materials. Before Elaine could recover her tongue he seized them and stuck them into a tall beaker, like a vase. Then he deliberately walked to the window and placed the beaker on the ledge in a most prominent position.

Elaine and Bennett, to say nothing of myself, gazed at him, awe-struck. "Is there no other way but to surrender?" she asked.

Kennedy mournfully shook his head.

"I'm afraid not," he answered slowly. There's no telling how far a fellow who has this marvelous power might go. I think I'd better leave, to give you. He may not content himself with innocent outsiders always."

Nothing that any of us could say, not even the pleadings of Elaine herself, could move him. The thought that at eleven o'clock a third innocent passer-by might lie stricken on the street seemed to move him powerfully.

"I'm so sorry—Craig," murmured Elaine, choking back her emotion and finding it impossible to go on.

"So am I, Elaine," he answered, tensely. "But—perhaps—when this trouble blows over—"

He paused, unable to go on, turned and shook his head. Then with a forced gaiety he bade Elaine and Perry Bennett adieu, saying that perhaps a trip might do him good.

They had scarcely gone out, and Kennedy closed the door carefully, when he turned and went directly to the instrument which I had seen him observing so intently.

Plainly I could see that it was registering something.

He walked fairly close to the window this time, keeping well out of the direct line of it, however, and there stood gazing out into the street.

"We are being watched," he said slowly, turning and looking at me fixedly, "but I don't dare investigate lest it cost the lives of more unfortunates."

He stood for a moment in deep thought. Then he pulled out a suit case and began silently to pack it.

Although we had not dared to investigate, we knew that from a building across the street emissaries of the Clutching Hand were watching for our signal of surrender.

The fact was, as we found out later, that in a poorly furnished room, much after the fashion of that which, with the help of the authorities, we had once raided in the suburbs, there were at that moment two crooks.

One of them was the famous, or rather infamous, Professor LeCroix. The other was the young secretary of the Clutching Hand.

This was the new headquarters of the master criminal, very carefully guarded.

"Look!" cried LeCroix, very much excited by the effect that had been produced by his infra-red rays. "There is the sign—the vase of flowers. We have got him this time!"

LeCroix gleefully patted a peculiar instrument beside him. Apparently it was a combination of powerful electric arcs, the rays of which were shot through a funnel-like arrangement into a converted or, rather, a sort of concentration apparatus from which the dread power could be released through a tubelike affair at the end. It was his infra-red heat wave, Fray, engine.

"I told you it would work!" cried LeCroix.

I did not argue any further with Craig about his sudden resolution to go away. But it is a very solemn proceeding to pack up and admit defeat after such a brilliant succession of cases as had been his until we met this master criminal.

He was unshakable, however, and the next morning we closed the laboratory and loaded our baggage into a taxicab.

Neither of us said much, but I saw a quick look of appreciation on Craig's face as we pulled up at the wharf and saw that Elaine's car was already there. He seemed deeply moved that Elaine should come at such an early hour to have a last word.

Our car stopped, and Kennedy moved over toward her car, directing two porters, whom I noticed that he chose with care, to wait at one side. One of them was an Irishman with a slight limp; the other a wiry Frenchman with a pointed beard.

In spite of her pleadings, however, Kennedy held to his purpose, and as we shook hands for the last time I thought that Elaine would almost break down.

We finally tore ourselves away, followed by the porters carrying as much as they could.

"Bon voyage!" called Elaine, bravely keeping back a choke in her voice. Near the gangplank, in the crowd, I noticed a couple of sinister faces watching the ship's officers and the passengers going aboard.

Kennedy's quick eye spotted them, too, but he did not show in any way that he noticed anything as, followed by our two

porters, we quickly climbed the gangplank.

"In there," pointed Kennedy, quickly to the porters, indicating our stateroom, which was an outer room. "Come, Walter."

I followed him in with a heavy heart.

Outside could be seen the two sinister faces in the crowd watching intently, with eyes fixed on the stateroom. Finally one of the crooks boarded the ship hastily, while the other watched the two porters come out of the stateroom and pause at the window, speaking back into the room as though answering commands.

Then the porters quickly ran along the deck and down the plank to get the rest of the luggage.

They took a small, but very heavy box and, lugging and tugging, hastened toward the boat with it. But they were too late. The gangplank was being hauled in.

They shouted, but the ship's officers waved them back.

The porters argued. But it was no use. All they could do was to carry the box back to the Dodge car.

Miss Dodge was just getting in as they returned.

"What shall we do with this and the other stuff?" asked the Irish porter.

She looked at the rest of the tagged luggage and the box which was marked:

Scientific Instruments

Valuable

Handle With Care!

"Here—pile them in there," she said, indicating the taxicab. "I'll take care of them."

Meanwhile one of our sinister-faced friends had just had time to regain the shore after following us aboard ship and strolling past the window of our stateroom. He paused long enough to observe one of the occupants studying a map, while the other was opening a bag.

"They're gone!" he said to the other

Craig donned the rough clothes of the porter and added a limp and a wig. The same sort of exchange of clothes was made by me, and Craig clapped a Vandyke beard on my chin.

"Mum's the word," cautioned Kennedy. "You must smuggle us out of the house some way."

Kennedy lost no time in confirming the suspicions of his bolometer as to the cause of the death of the innocent victims of the machinations of the Clutching Hand.

Both of them, he had learned, had been removed to a nearby undertaking shop, awaiting the verdict of the coroner. We sought out the shop and prevailed on the undertaker to let us see the bodies.

As Kennedy pulled down the shroud from the face of the first victim he disclosed on his forehead a round, dark spot about the size of a small coin. Quickly he moved to the next coffin and, uncovering the face, disclosed a similar mark.

"What is it?" I asked, awe-struck.

"Why," he said, "I've heard of a certain Viennese, one LeCroix, I believe, who has discovered, or perfected, an infra-red ray instrument which shoots its power a great distance with extreme accuracy and leaves a mark like these."

We thanked the undertaker for his courtesy and went out.

Meanwhile Elaine had called up Perry Bennett.

"Mr. Bennett," she exclaimed over the wire, "just guess who called on me?"

"Who?" he answered; "I give it up."

"Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Jameson," she called back.

"Is that so?" he returned. "Isn't that fine? I didn't think he was the kind to run away like that. How did it happen?"

Elaine quickly told the story as I had told her.

Had she known it, however, Bennett's valet, Thomas, was at that very mo-

ment in the laboratory table, he rapidly turned the pages.

"Here, Walter," he remarked. "This will answer your question about the mysterious deadly ray."

I moved over to the table, eager to satisfy my curiosity and read the notes which he indicated with his finger.

## INFRA-RED RAY NOTES.

The pure infra-red ray which has been developed by LeCroix from the experiments of the Italian scientist, Ulivi, causes, when concentrated by an apparatus perfected by LeCroix, an instantaneous combustion of non-reflecting surfaces. It is particularly deadly in its effect on the brain centers.

It can be diverted, it is said, however, by a shield composed of platinum backed by asbestos.

Next Kennedy opened the case which he had taken out of the cabinet, and from it he took out a platinum-asbestos mirror, which was something of his own invention. He held it up, and in pantomime showed me just how it would cut off the deadly rays.

He had not finished even that, when a peculiar noise in the laboratory itself disturbed him, and he hastily thrust the asbestos-platinum shield into his pocket.

"Though we had not realized it, our return had been anticipated.

Suddenly from a closet projected a magazine gun, and before we could move Clutching Hand himself slowly appeared behind us.

We started to our feet, but in an instant found ourselves sprawling on the floor.

In the cabinet, beneath the laboratory table, another crook had been hidden, and he tackled us with all the skill of an old football player, against whom we had no defense.

Four of them were upon us instantly.

At the same time Thomas, the faithless valet of Bennett, had been dispatched by the Clutching Hand to commandeer his master's roadster in his absence, and, carrying out the instructions, he had driven up before Elaine's house at the very moment when she was going out for a walk.

Thomas jumped out of the car and touched his hat deferentially.

"A message from Mr. Bennett, ma'am," he explained. "Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Bennett have sent me to ask you to come over to the laboratory."

Unsuspectingly, Elaine stepped into the car and drove off.

Instead, however, of turning and pulling up on the laboratory side of the street, Thomas stopped opposite it. He got out and Elaine, thinking that perhaps it was to save time that he had not turned the car around, followed.

The door was opened quickly by a lookout of the Clutching Hand and the valet asked if Craig and Elaine's lawyer were in. Of course, the lookout replied that they were, and before Elaine knew it she was jostled into the dark hallway.

And as the door slammed she caught sight of the fearsome Clutching Hand himself.

She drew back, but was too frightened even to scream.

With a harsh, cruel laugh, the super-criminal beckoned to her to follow him and look down through a small trapdoor.

Unable now to resist, she did so. There she saw us. To that extent the valet had told the truth. Kennedy was standing in deep thought, while I sat on an old box, smoking a cigarette—very miserable.

Watching his chance, when the street was deserted, the Clutching Hand and his followers had hustled us over to the new hangout from the laboratory. There they had met more crooks and had thrust us into this vile hole.

As the various ineffectual schemes for escape surged through my head, I happened to look up and caught a glance of horror on Craig's face. I followed his eyes. There, above us, was Elaine!

I saw her look from us to the Clutching Hand in terror. But none of us uttered a word.

"I will now show you, my dear young lady," almost hissed the Clutching Hand at length, "as pretty a game of hide and seek as you have ever seen."

As he said it another trapdoor near the infra-red ray machine was opened and a beam of light burst through. I knew it was not that which we had to fear, but the invisible rays that accompanied it, the rays that had affected the bolometer.

Just then a spot of light showed near my foot, moving about the cement floor until it fell on my shoe. Instantly the leather charred, even before I could move.

Kennedy and I leaped to our feet and drew back. The beam followed us. We retreated further. Still it followed, inexorably.

Clutching Hand was now holding Elaine near the door where she could not help seeing, laughing diabolically while he directed LeCroix and the rest to work the infra-red ray apparatus through the trap.

As we dodged from corner to corner, endeavoring to keep the red ray from touching us, the crooks seemed in no hurry, but rather to enjoy prolonging the torture, as does a cat with a mouse.

"Please—oh, please—stop!" begged Elaine.

Clutching Hand only laughed with fiendish delight and urged his men on. The thing was getting closer and closer.

Suddenly we heard a strange voice ring out above us.

"Police!"

"Where?" growled the Clutching Hand in fury.

"Outside—a raid! Run! He's told them!"

Already we could hear the hammers and axes of the police whom Kennedy had called upon before, as they battered at this outside door.

At that door a moment before the lookout suddenly had given a startled stare and a suppressed cry. Glancing down the street he had seen a police patrol in which were a score or more of the strong-arm squad. They had jumped out, some carrying sledgehammers, others axes.

Almost before he could cry out and retreat to give a warning they had reached the door and the first resounding blows had been struck.

The lookout quickly had fled and drawn the bolts of a strong inner door, and the police began battering that impediment.

Instantly Clutching Hand turned to LeCroix at the Fray machine.

"Finish them!" he shouted.

We were now backed up against a small ell in the wall of the cellar. It was barely large enough to hold us, but by crowding we were able to keep out of the reach of the ray. The ray shot past the ell and struck the wall a couple of inches from us.

I looked. The cement began to crumble under the intense heat.

Meanwhile the police were having great difficulty with the steel bolt-studded door. Still it was yielding a bit.

"Hurry!" shouted Clutching Hand to LeCroix.

Kennedy had voluntarily placed himself in front of me in the ell. Carefully, to avoid the ray, he took the asbestos-platinum shield from his pocket and slid it forward as best he could over the wall to the spot where the ray struck.

It reflected the ray.

But so powerful was it that even that part of the ray which was deflected could be seen to strike the ceiling in the corner, which was of wood. Instantly, before Kennedy could even move the shield, the wood burst into flames.

Above us new smoke was pouring into the room where the deflected ray struck the floor and flames broke out.

"Confound him!" ground out Clutching Hand as they saw it.

The other crooks backed away and stood hesitating, not knowing quite what to do.

The police had by this time finished battering in the door and had rushed into the outer passage.

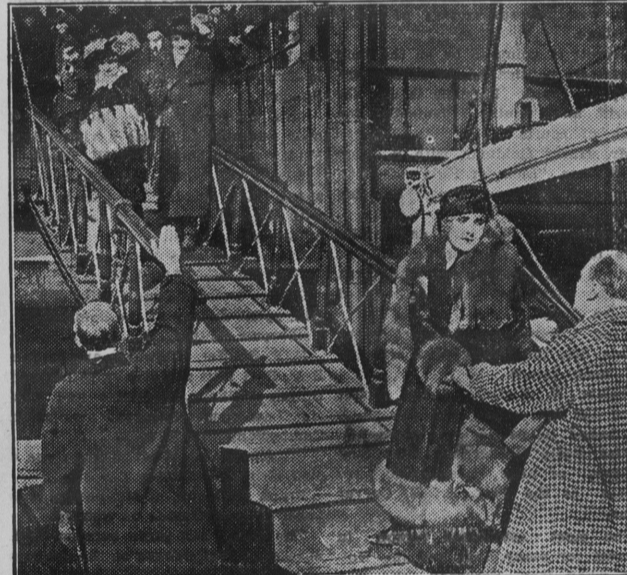
While the flames leaped up, the crooks closed the last door into the room.

"Run!" shouted Clutching Hand, as they opened a secret gate, disclosing a spiral flight of iron steps.

A moment later all had disappeared except Clutching Hand himself. The last door would hold only a few seconds, but Clutching Hand was waiting to take advantage of even that. With a last frantic effort he sought to direct the terrible ray at us. Elaine acted instantly. With all her strength she rushed forward, overturning the machine.

Clutching Hand uttered a growl and slowly raised his gun, taking aim with the butt for a well-directed blow at her head.

Just then the door yielded and a policeman stuck his head and shoulders through. His revolver rang out and Clutching Hand's automatic flew out of his grasp, giving him just



"Bon Voyage," cried Elaine, bravely keeping back a choke in her voice.

as he rejoined him on the dock, giving a nod of his head and a jerk of his thumb at the ship.

"Yes," added the other crook, "and lost most of their baggage, too."

Slowly the car proceeded through the streets up from the river front, followed by the taxicab, until at last the Dodge mansion was reached.

Elaine sighed moodily as she walked slowly in.

"Here, Marie," she cried petulantly to her maid, "take these wraps of mine."

A moment later Aunt Josephine left her and Elaine went into the library and over to a table. She stood there an instant, then sank down into a chair, taking up Kennedy's picture and gazing at it with eyes filled with tears.

Just then Jennings came into the room, ushering the two porters laden with the boxes and bags.

"Where shall I have them put these things, Miss Elaine?" he inquired.

"Oh—anywhere," she answered hurriedly, replacing the picture.

Jennings paused. As he did so, one of the porters limped forward.

"I've a message for you, miss," he said in a rich Irish brogue, with a look at Jennings, "to be delivered in private."

Elaine glanced at him surprised. The she nodded to Jennings, who disappeared. As he did so, the Irishman limped to the door and drew together the porters.

Then he came back closer to Elaine. A moment she looked at him, not quite knowing from his strange actions whether to call for help or not.

At a motion from Kennedy, as he pulled off his wig, I pulled off the little false beard.

Elaine looked at us, transformed, startled.

"Wh—what?" she stammered. "Oh—I'm—so—glad. How—"

Kennedy said nothing. He was thoroughly enjoying her face.

"Don't you understand?" I explained, laughing merrily. "I admit that I didn't, until that last minute in the stateroom on the boat when we didn't come back to have a last good-bye. But all the care that Craig took in selecting the porters was the result of work he did yesterday, and the insistence with which he chose our traveling clothes had a deep-laid purpose."

"The change was made quickly in the stateroom. Kennedy's man threw on the coat and hat he wore, while



She Looked at Him Speechless.

enough time to dodge through and slam the secret door in the faces of the squad as they rushed in.

Back of the house Clutching Hand and the other crooks were now passing through a bricked passage. The fire had got so far beyond control by this time that it drove the police back from their efforts to open the secret door. Thus the Clutching Hand had made good his escape through the passage which led out, as we later discovered, to the railroad tracks along the river.

"Down there—Mr. Kennedy—and Mr. Jameson," cried Elaine, pointing at the trap which was hidden in the strife.

The fire had gained terrific headway, but the police seized a ladder and stuck it down into the basement.

Choking and spitting, half-suffocated, we hurried up.

"Are you hurt?" asked Elaine, anxiously, taking Craig's arm.

"Not a bit—thanks to you!" he replied, forgetting all in meeting the eager questioning of her wonderful eyes.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)