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be naked," are you so very sure. Tess that Fay would not have killed herself? That is not the letter, I think, of a very happy person. Not even of one who cared much for life."

"She wasn't happy. She was desperately, frantically unhappy. I don't know how much she cared about life, but I do know how much she cared about death. She was simply crazy on the subject; even the word made her sick with nerves. I mean actually, honestly sick. I've seen her—oh, a hundred times—get up and leave the room because someone just mentioned it—and she wouldn't come back. She couldn't. She wouldn't go to the theatre, or the opera, or the movies because she deeply didn't dare risk it. She'd close any book that had as much as the word on the page, and even when our car was caught in a traffic jam beside the hearse in a funeral procession, she looked dead away. It's the only time she ever fainted in her life."

"I see. It was, then, a real complex?"

TESS STUART gave a rather dreadful little laugh. "You can call it any nice, scientific name that you want to, 'obsession' and 'psychosis' and 'neuroses' are pretty nice, too, aren't they? I tell you that she was diseased on the subject; she was stark, raving mad. She'd have gone through every torture the Spanish Inquisition ever thought of, she'd have spent her life eating dry bread and drinking stale water, she'd have retired to caves from leprosy before she'd have lifted one hand to kill herself."

His eyes traveled, slowly and painfully, from the tall, pale girl beside him to the small figure on the end of the sofa. When he looked back, he was as pale as she.

"Do you know why she left this terror?"

"I know quite well, unfortunately. When she was six years old, a governess who had a beautiful Swiss accent, three perpendicular Newport substitutes and a few complexes of her own took her up to a bedpost and beat her into convulsions while she sneered her that little girls who weren't good—little girls who stole cinnamon jerkins from their excellent governesses—would go to hell when they died, and burn forever."

"I have never believed much in hell," said Karl Sneeden evenly. "But I am quite sure that the good Lord will invent one where that excellent Swiss governess may burn through several eternities."

"I wish I were quite sure of it," she said, with a deadly gentleness in her voice that went through him like a small, cold steel. "But I'm afraid that even Mlle. Neuhaus can't make me believe in hell. It doesn't seem a very—shall—solution of the other-and-punishment situation, does it? . . . But Fay believed in it, and she believed that she was going there. She hadn't been a good little girl at all, you see; she'd done some things that were even worse than stealing Cour de Jeannette. . . . She was only six when that happened, but that's the first reason why she couldn't possibly have killed herself."

"There was more than one reason, then?"

"There were two, that I know of. . . . She was right when she hated my mother in the courtyard." She put out her hand, straining herself against the chair back. "You didn't even know that my mother was dead, so naturally you don't know how she died, do you, K?"

HE SIGNED, his hand a sudden dreadful protection knocking at his heart as to just what the small, light, shining thing that had been Fay Stuart had found waiting for her in the courtyard eleven years ago.

"She jumped out of a window," said Tess Stuart. "Out of a third-story window. She had to, you see, because my father had locked her into her room, and gone off to the office with the key in his pocket. She wasn't the kind of a person that you can lock into a room."

"Yes." He came a step closer to her. "Do not tell me more."

"I have to tell you. I have to tell you everything, because if I don't, you won't help me. I'm telling you this to show you why you must. . . . My father—my father's a dreadful person, K. I have to tell you that, too, because I don't think other people would; I don't think they know. You have to be in his family to know—or perhaps his clerks and stenographers do, and the people who work under him. I'm not sure. If you talked to him, you'd think he was a very polite, rather flowery old thing, a little pompous and stiff, but quite intelligent and awfully pleasant. Really, he's a dreadful and a badly and a monstrous—simply glutted and obsessed with the importance of being Fyfe Stuart the eighth. He's like glass—cold and hard and smooth. There's nothing there to get hold of—nothing but coldness and hardness and emptiness around a little hot flame of pride."

"It is your father of whom you are speaking, Tess?"

"Yes—my father." She put her hands to her head, again pressing back the pale shining hair as though it were too heavy to be borne. "It was my father who locked my mother in her room that afternoon, so that she couldn't have tea with the young man that he was pleased to consider her lover. . . . Such a nice, tall boy, K., with white teeth and an English voice. He used to come nearly every afternoon and read her respectful, hesitating little poems by Francis Thompson and Coventry Patmore, and drink three cups of strong tea with rum in it, and stare at her as though she were the Blessed Damozel herself. Mother always let me stay, too, for my own special custard tart and toast and marmalade. The nurse was Dan. I did so love him, K."

Karl Sneeden said, "He sounds like a good fellow—I can see very well why you would like him."

DAD was off on one of his eternal conventions—Bath, I think—and when he came back Jules, his valet, thoroughly bribed butler, reported that Dan had been there five times in the last week, and butler told Jules that when Dan arrived that afternoon, he was to be returned Unit Mrs. Stuart had sent him for the last time to her. . . . The police asked me quite a lot of questions about it all; I was ten years old, you see, and not a bit stupid. . . . Dad locked mother in her room at first. I'd gone over to dutch course and play charades with one of the Chinese minister's small daughters, and Fay was off roller skating in Dupont Circle with the governess, a nice little curly-headed Scandinavian maiden. She skated on ahead through the back door into the courtyard—the governess had stopped on the corner for a nice, animated conversation with a friend, and Fay knew that orders were to go in the back way if we had skates or bicycles. . . . And so she skated straight on to, whooping like a good little hoodlum—and ran square into mother.

"She was eight years old, K, and simply mad about mother. Then everyone was, if it comes to that! But none of us ever saw her again except Fay and the police. They said that no one could see her—not possibly. Fay screamed for three solid hours, without stopping, and then she went off into—well, kind of stupor, just lying there and staring at everyone, with poor little crazy eyes, and trembling lips that she couldn't close. And from that day to this she's never mentioned mother's name. . . . Doesn't that seem terrible to you, K? Mother, who used to climb two flights of stairs every night to her little high beds to kiss us good night and turn out the light—whom we consulted on sin and close pinks, and had a dimple in her cheek, and lashes so long that they made little shadows. . . . I'm not a coward and it's wicked of me but, K., I'm glad—I'm glad that it wasn't I who skated into the courtyard that afternoon."

"I am glad, too, my poor Tess. And if, after that, the poor small Fay was not always as good (Continued on Page 46)

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