

# led Secret

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In moving his  
that his shoes  
he wondered if  
in his weird in-  
d mirthlessly at  
sitting on the  
brobbing temples  
thumb and fin-  
his knee, when  
ce father," she  
siles to the near-  
ve your prepari-  
ly: "Let him

ack to a heavy  
esting lightly on  
ng eyes on him  
y. He noticed  
to a house dress  
foamy lace, and  
ver him that she  
striking girls be-  
ite the most un-  
y instructions!"

I had't time,"  
eyes. I'm tired  
des," he said.  
ings up for me.

troubled express-  
e. "She hesitated  
ked over and sat

ie asked, looking  
mond Stryker!"  
is head: "He's  
who was here a  
en I was three  
ested for murder.  
at the evidence-  
ng and—he was  
fteen years. It  
the penitentiary  
s. And he was a  
paused and sat  
the rug, her chin

asked: "Didn't  
t man?"  
n almost imper-  
head. Sitting be-  
her bowed head  
lined slenderly in  
young Kelcey  
had told him: the  
compressed in a

his own predica-  
others from mind.  
k," he protested.  
ather feel savage

tly, her blue eyes  
ouldn't he?" she  
member of the  
call it what you  
those barbarous  
to prison. Why  
? Why shouldn't  
oward him, fists  
: In that instant  
ountered, striving  
ren't you also a  
ty?"  
ruck her little fist  
"I am on father's  
I am opposed to  
tands for. It is  
unjust, heinous!  
eked her runaway  
ghtly away. She  
more rapidly than  
oken fiercely, and  
had sent an ex-  
cheeks, richly  
ed skin.

l he, trying to  
her's living-room.  
with me? Am I

to his smile. In  
him silently, and  
bosom was rising  
stuously now.  
u," she said pre-  
arrival marked a  
ment is prode-

ing acquiescence.  
v myself on your  
ining back in his  
and studying her.  
enjoy his adven-

tate in a wild sort of way. Somehow,  
he could not take the thing seriously.  
"If my arm and monoplane weren't  
disabled I should bid you adieu and fly  
away. As it is—" He lifted his right  
shoulder and sighed.

Her big, solemn eyes were on his face  
again. "I am sorry you view your  
position with levity. It will anger  
father."

He pretended to become sober. "And  
if I should—what do you suppose he  
could do to me?"

"I don't know. You can not leave  
here without his consent—that I do  
know. The place is well guarded by  
men with rifles."

"And he would hold me against my  
will, against all law?"

She interrupted sharply: "We recog-  
nize no law except our own."

"But where's the sense in it?" he  
demanded. "What am I to him?  
What can he gain by making a prisoner  
of me? If it's money—" But a flash  
from her eyes stopped him.

She got up abruptly, took a turn  
about the room, touching a statuette  
here, a book there, her brows knitted,  
eyes troubled. Suddenly she faced him.  
"When you fell—did you—see any-  
thing unusual?" The words came jerk-  
ily, but her gaze was as steady as blue  
steel.

"Nothing more unusual," said he,  
"than a huge double-walled thing with-  
out windows nor any decent roof. If  
there's a door I didn't see it. And I'll  
bet it's damp inside."

"You didn't see what was inside?"  
Her voice, though low, was keyed to its  
highest tension.

"No," he shook his head, puzzled  
by the way she looked at him. "I  
couldn't see through the grating. I  
was falling too fast, and the light  
wasn't right."

She said nothing for a minute or two,  
but he could see that she was relieved.  
She stood beside the table toying with  
a book.

"Perhaps," she said finally, "I may  
be able to save you. Let me warn you  
to be guarded in what you say to father.  
It is too late now to assume an anarch-  
istic pose. He will know who you are  
when he returns. Above all, show no  
curiosity in what you have seen or may  
surmise. Say as little as possible. If  
I succeed in prevailing upon him to let  
you go he will probably enjoin you to  
silence. You must swear to say nothing  
of your stay here." She replaced the  
book on the table and, glancing at him  
briefly, started from the room.

A new phrase of the situation struck  
Kelcey. "Suppose you think I'm a  
cad," he began, "for showing such a  
pronounced dislike for your—shall I  
say hospitality?—but the unusual cir-  
cumstances—" he halted lamely. She  
had stopped at the door, her hand on  
the knob, and her attitude seemed to  
say: "If you are trying to be funny  
you are a ridiculous failure. If not,  
you display ill-breeding."

Then, without speaking, she went out  
and closed the door quietly behind her.

Laboriously, Kelcey stretched his  
length on the divan again. He was  
frowning. His bandaged arm, held  
rigidly in the splints, was aching with a  
steady, dull throb. He tried to see the  
humor in his predicament, but it es-  
caped him somehow. The girl's de-  
meanor was annoying, very. He had  
either fallen into a madhouse, or...  
There was mystery here, that much was  
certain!

The ache in his arm increased its  
tempo, rising and falling, rising and  
falling. He closed his eyes tiredly. His  
face, in the paling light of the dying  
day, looked drawn, waxen.

Listlessly, indifferently, he became  
aware that several persons had entered  
the room; and then he heard the snap  
of a button—and raised himself slight-  
ly, blinking his eyes against the daz-  
zling light that filled the room. Stryker  
stood near the door, his finger still on  
the electric button. Behind him, filling  
the doorway, were the three Africans  
and a fifth man, whose dead-white skin,  
bullet-shaped head and hangdog look  
proclaimed the habitual criminal.

The button clicked again and the  
room was thrown back into darkness.  
He heard Stryker say something in a  
quiet voice, heard a tramping of feet,  
and the couch on which he lay was

lifted from the floor and borne toward  
the hall. He muttered something—he  
knew not what—and attempted to rise,  
with some wild idea of leaping to the  
floor and dashing to the windows. But

a hand closed upon his throat and  
crushed him back. He struck out  
sharply with his right fist and dis-  
lodged the strangling grip. He felt a  
noose tighten about his ankles. He

drew his feet toward him and lashed  
back with all his strength, loosening  
the rope, which was immediately drawn  
taut again.  
(To be continued)

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