

THE INDIAN DRUM

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made. The freshness of these other marks startled him; they had been made within a day or so. They could not have been made by Sherrill, for Alan had noticed that Sherrill's hands were slender and delicately formed; Corvet too, was not a large man; Alan's own hand was of good size and powerful, but when he put his fingers over the marks the other man had made, he found that the other hand must have been larger and more powerful than his own. Had it been Corvet's servant? It might have been, though the marks seemed too fresh for that; for the servant, Sherrill had said, had left the day Corvet's disappearance was discovered.

ALAN pulled open the drawers to see what the other man might have been after. It had not been the servant; for the contents of the drawers—old brittle lace and woman's clothing—were tumbled as though they had been pulled out and roughly and inexpertly pushed back; they still showed the folds in which they had lain for years and which recently had been disarranged.

This proof that some one had been prying about in the house before himself and since Corvet had gone, startled Alan and angered him. It brought him suddenly a sense of possession which he had not been able to feel when Sherrill had told him the house was his; it brought an impulse of protection of these things about him. Who had been searching in Benjamin Corvet's—in Alan's house? He pushed the drawers shut hastily and hurried across the hall to the room opposite. In this room—plainly Benjamin Corvet's bedroom—were no signs of intrusion. He went to the door of the room connecting with it, turned on the light, and looked in. It was a smaller room than the others and contained a roll-top desk and a cabinet. The cover of the desk was closed, and the drawers of the cabinet were shut and apparently undisturbed. Alan recognized that probably in this room he would find the most intimate and personal things relating to his father; but before examining it, he turned back to inspect the bedroom.

It was a carefully arranged and well-cared-for room, plainly in constant use. A reading stand, with a lamp, was beside the bed with a book marked about the middle. On the dresser were hair-brushes and a comb, and a box of razors, none of which were missing. When Benjamin Corvet had gone away, he had not taken anything with him, even toilet articles. With the other things on the dresser, was a silver frame for a photograph with a cover closed and fastened over the portrait; as Alan took it up and opened it, the stiffness of the hinges and the edges of the lid gummed to the frame by disuse, showed that it was long since it had been opened. The picture was of a woman of perhaps thirty—a beautiful woman, dark-haired, dark-eyed, with a refined, sensitive, spiritual-looking face. The dress she wore was the same, Alan suddenly recognized, which he had seen and touched among the things in the chest of drawers; it gave him a queer feeling now to have touched her things. He

felt instinctively, as he held the picture and studied it, that it could have been no vulgar bickering between wife and husband, nor any caprice of a dissatisfied woman, that had made her separate herself from her husband. The photographer's name was stamped in one corner, and the date—1894, the year after Alan had been born.

But Alan felt that the picture and the condition of her rooms across the hall did not shed any light on the relations between her and Benjamin Corvet; rather they obscured them; for his father neither had put the picture away from him and devoted her rooms to other uses, nor had he kept the rooms arranged and ready for her return and her picture so that he would see it. He would have done one or the other of these things, Alan thought, if it were she his father had wronged—or, at least, if it were only she.

Alan reclosed the case, and put the picture down; then he went into the room with the desk. He tried the cover of the desk, but it appeared to be locked; after looking around vainly for a key, he tried again, exerting a little more force, and this time the top went up easily, tearing away the metal plate into which the claws of the lock clasped and the two long screws which had held it. He examined the lock, surprised, and saw that the screws must have been

merely set into the holes; scars showed where a chisel or some metal implement had been thrust in under the top to force it up. The pigeon-holes and little drawers in the upper part of the desk, as he swiftly opened them, he found entirely empty. He hurried to the cabinet; the drawers of the cabinet too had been forced, and very recently; for the scars and splinters of wood were clean and fresh. These drawers and the drawers in the lower part of the desk either were empty, or the papers in them had been disarranged and tumbled in confusion, as though some one had examined them hastily and tossed them back.

SHERRILL had not done that, nor any one who had business there. If Benjamin Corvet had emptied some of those drawers before he went away, he would not have relocked empty drawers. To Alan, the marks of violence and roughness were unmistakably the work of the man with the big hands, who had left marks upon the top of the chest of drawers; and the feeling that he had been in the house very recently was stronger than ever.

Alan ran out into the hall and listened; he heard no sound; but he went back to the little room more excited than before. For what had the other man been searching? For the same things which Alan was looking for? And had the other man got

them? Who might the other be, the ^{land} ^{can} ^{with} ^{and} ^{fe} ^{ubt} ^{ust} ^{ist} ^{ra} ^{ld} what might be his connection with Benjamin Corvet? Alan had no doubt that everything of importance must have been taken away, but he would make sure of that. He took some of the papers from the drawers and began to examine them; after nearly an hour of this, he had found only one article which appeared connected in any way with what Sherrill had told him or with Alan himself. In one of the little drawers of the desk he found several books, much worn as though from being carried in a pocket, and one of these contained a series of entries stretching over several years. These listed an amount—\$150—opposite a series of dates with only the year and the month given, and there was an entry for every second month.

Alan felt his fingers trembling as he turned the pages of the little book and found at the end of the list a blank, and below, in the same hand, but in writing which had changed with the passage of years, another date and the confirming entry of \$1,500. The other papers and books were only such things as might accumulate during a lifetime on the water and in business—government certificates, manifests, boat schedules of times long gone by, and similar papers. Alan looked through the little book again and put it in his pocket. It was, beyond doubt, his father's.

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