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A few hours before I should have scoffed at the very idea of attaching any importance to what are known as presentiments. Yet from the moment when I came in sight of that grim, smoke-stained tenement, and hurried up the crazy, uncarpeted stairs, I was conscious of a grim foreshadowing of some sort of evil. For a wonder there was no brawling in the lower rooms, no sound of angry, drunken voices from any of the half-opened doors. Only now and then, on the landings, I heard the heavy breathing of sleeping men and women, lying about like rats upon the floor. I reached the last flight of stairs, and the candle in my hand shook so that the drops fell spluttering upon the ground. Was she alone, I wondered? Was there no one to watch by her side and wait for my coming? If she had recovered from her faint, how dreary the time must seem!

I pressed on, and came to a standstill outside her door. Still silence—deep, unendurable silence—and still that vague sense of some evil close at hand. Fearfully I pushed open the door and stood upon the threshold.

My first sense was one of relief. In the dim twilight I could just catch the outline of a dear, familiar figure leaning back in a chair drawn up to the fireplace. But the fire was a handful of white ashes, and the figure never turned to greet me. The chill of the room struck into my heart, and my voice trembled as I called out to her—

"Miss Desmond, wake up! It is I, Dr. Faggett!"

No answer. The figure in the chair was still and silent. With trembling fingers I raised the candle high over my head, and peered forward to where its pale, sickly glow smote the darkness. Oh, the horror of that moment—the unspeakable horror of it! I felt my knees totter, a mist floating before my eyes, and a deadly sickness creep like a numbing paralysis over all my senses. Yet, through it all, I knew that it was she who reclined in that straight-backed chair, still and cold, with a little spot of blood on the bosom of her dress, and a dagger, driven straight into her heart.

She was dead. She must have died in a single moment, for there was no trace of even the slightest spasm in her white, still face. Nay, something of the old softness was still lingering about her tightly compressed mouth, and the half-closed eyes, vacant though they were, had none of the glazed hardness of death. In those moments of anguish I forgot my first duty. I forgot everything except that I had loved this woman; and sinking on my knees, I caught her hands in mine and buried my face in her lap. There I remained, heedless of the flight of time, for hour after hour of the long winter's night.

I arose at last and stood by the little window with tightly clasped hands, acutely conscious of all that had happened, the ethical horror of it mingling with my own sense of personal loss. The little chamber was seven storeys high; and away eastwards I could see a faint streak of light, and presently a blood-red sun shining down through the white vaporous mists upon the awakening city. I watched it gradually appear until its first struggling rays smote the dome of St. Paul's, and the noises increased in the streets below. Then for the first time utterance came to me, and the pent-up agony of my heart escaped in one long, deep cry—a cry of wrath, of bitter, relentless anger, against the man who had done this thing. And with that cry ended the first chapter of my life.

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