

# THE KNAVE OF DIAMONDS

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### THE MISSING HEART

THERE came a sudden blare of music from the great ballroom below, and the woman who stood alone at an open window on the first floor shrugged her shoulders and shivered a little. The night air blew in brisk and cold upon her uncovered neck, but except for that slight, involuntary shiver she scarcely seemed aware of it. The room behind her was brilliantly lighted but empty. Some tables had been set for cards, but the cards were untouched. Either the attractions of the ballroom had remained omnipotent, or no one had penetrated to this refuge of the bored—no one save this tall and stately woman robed in shimmering, iridescent green, who stood with her face to the night, breathing the chill air as one who had been on the verge of suffocation. It was evidently she who had flung up the window. Her gloved hands leaned upon the woodwork on each side of it. There was a certain constraint in her whole attitude, a tension that was subtly evident in every graceful line. Her head was slightly bent as though she intently watched or listened for something.

Yet nothing could have been audible where she stood above the hubbub of music, laughter and stamping feet that rose from below. It filled the night with uproar. Nor was there anything out emptiness in the narrow side-street into which she looked.