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"THE MASTER KEY"
Every Friday

The Million Dollar Mystery
Every Saturday

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busy broker and, being thoroughly and temperamentally an actor, felt the call of this lack of interest and would certainly have fallen down in his part had he not been prompted by Mrs. Darnell. He was kind to nudge away to find the elusive taxi.

The real George Everett got out of his limousine on the corner of Vanderbilt avenue and hurried through the revolving doors; brisk, debonair, alert, decided; with that happy style which denies foppery and avoids surveillance. It seemed strange that he should have a photograph in his hand at which he looked intently until he got in the car. There he stopped and, with the picture still in his hand, composed watching the faces of the people thronging through the gates under the vast dome. As he waited he frowned slightly. "Why had John Dorr sent him during business hours on a wild goose chase?" He thought of this articulately and then smiled to himself. "A wild goose?" he muttered. It brought up darkling sunset vistas, lakes smooth as quicksilver under the evening sky, and slim, gray, beautiful birds homing downward. The frown left his forehead.

"After all it will be good to see somebody from out of doors," he said to himself.

Half an hour later he discovered that he had irretrievably missed the arrival of the Chicago express and with it Ruth Gallon. He went back into his car and drove to his office. Once there he called his head clerk, an ancient and fragile man, as crisp and bloodless as the money that passes on Wall street, and told him to see at what hotel Miss Ruth Gallon was stopping. Then he wired John Dorr:

John Dorr, "Master Key" Mine, Silent Valley, Cal.
Could not find Miss Gallon at train. Am seeking for her, as it is important that the business be settled immediately. Wire any possible address.
GEORGE EVERETT

Far out on Broadway, above the eighties, an operator was ticking off another message addressed to Harry Wilkerson. It read:
5 A West Eighty-fourth St., New York. Harry Wilkerson, "Master Key" Mine, via Valle Vista, Cal.
Everything all right. George met Ruth. She is now with me and waiting further particulars. Have seen Everett under guise of prospective purchaser of stock. The girl is charming.
JEAN DARNELL

Some houses, like some people, should never be illumined with sunshine, and Mrs. Darnell's residence, overlooking the Hudson, was of this type. Its dull, red stone front, marked by windows that seemed blind to all that went by, was not distinctive in that neighborhood. A thousand doors within a mile would have suggested to the passerby nothing more nor less than the great oak portals within which she lived. To Ruth Gallon, of course, the house seemed tremendously formal and stately. Within she found an atmosphere so absolutely strange and alien to all she had ever known that she shrank within herself and had nothing to say until she had been conducted to her own room on the third floor and a discreet maid was busy unpacking her things. Ruth felt that society had already laid its restrictions on her. She recognized the maid as the "gown and hat" policeman.

This silent, but exceedingly obtrusive personage having retired at last, Ruth studied her surroundings. When she had completed her survey she thought to herself that there were two things wanting. One was a silk haired Persian cat and the other a flaming colored scarf across the bed that completed the altogether of an apartment severely luxurious. Then she tried to analyze the odor, delicate yet insistent, which she was ever afterward to associate with Jean Darnell and her experience in New York.

At last she traced it to some faded flowers in the great green and dark red vase, whose unwholesome beauty was that of plants whose roots have never been in good, sound soil. They looked to her much like lilies, whose buds had floated on some dark and opalescent pool scented with odors of the night. She was still staring at these and sniffing their scent through widened nostrils when Mrs. Darnell knocked on the door and entered slowly. She had changed her street gown for a negligee, which instantly caught the girl's appreciative eye.

"You look beautiful," she said quickly. Jean Darnell turned her tawny eyes on her and smiled faintly. "I am not usually up until noon," she responded, "and I am getting old, my dear." She threw out her jeweled hands with a sparkling gesture of half comic resignation. Ruth inhaled. "John Dorr says everybody gets old in New York. Don't you like him?" Mrs. Darnell looked into the clear eyes of the girl and almost failed to follow her baser instinct. But at that loose throat she saw the heavy gold of "The Master Key." As if it had supernatural powers, the sight of that key locked the door of her heart. "Of course I like John," she said easily. "We must get everything fixed up now. George will be here—George Everett, of course. I mean—tonight and you and he can talk the business over."

"You know, we simply must have the mine isn't paying now, but John knows where we can find the mother lode again; then we'll all be rich."

"Ah!" said Jean Darnell. "You're selling stock, I presume?"

"I own it all," Ruth returned proudly. "It's my mine. My father left it to me when he died." She did not see the sullen hatred that slowly flamed until Jean Darnell's eyes fairly blazed.

In her own room she stood a moment breathless. Then she tore off her feeble negligee in an intensity of silent rage and despair, seen only by the unseeing eyes of the rod whom she had defied.

It is wickedness, not virtue, which is theatrical, and at this moment Jean

Darnell flung herself into her girl passion with all the abandon of the tragedian; only her voice was almost indelible: "Tom Gallon, Tom Gallon, dead though you are, I'll have revenge!" When her fury had spent itself—and, like all physically indolent women, she could not yield long to emotion—she prepared her campaign.

First she called up George Drake and made certain that he would be at her home for dinner that evening. Then she called up two old acquaintances who were always glad to fill empty chairs at her well set table. This settled, she again sought Ruth and persuaded her from going down immediately to Everett's office.

"You must be very tired, my dear," Mrs. Darnell purred. "And, sayway, you know, in New York young ladies do not go about unescorted to men's business offices, and I cannot go with you until tomorrow or next day."

"That will be too late," cried Ruth.

Mrs. Darnell opened her eyes wide, as if in surprise. "Mr. Everett is coming to dinner tonight," she said soothingly. "You can talk business to your heart's content right here."

"That will be much better," said Ruth.

When her hostess was gone she stood by the window trying to think more calmly of all that had happened since she had left "The Master Key" mine, but one thought was prominent: "What was John Dorr doing?" She recalled that there was three hours difference in time. It was now 2 o'clock in New York, and it was only 11 in Silent Valley. Tom Kane would be just making his final preparations for dinner, and she could almost smell the odor of his coffee. These homely details occupied her mind tenderly for an hour; then she caught up and dressed herself for the street again.

She had barely finished when the maid came in with tea, followed by Mrs. Darnell.

"My child, what in the world are you going to do?" asked Jean. "Look, we'll have tea together."

"I was going out for a walk," Ruth responded. "You know I have never



"What was John Dorr doing?"

been in New York, and it seems a shame to waste this fine afternoon anyway. I want some fresh air."

Mrs. Darnell looked at her thoughtfully and smiled presently in a way that made Ruth flush. It seemed to convict her of discourtesy to her hostess. "You had best have tea," and the girl obediently removed her hat and jacket and sat down.

It seemed to her that the rest of the afternoon passed in flashes of such entertainment as she had never known. It must be remembered that Ruth, living in the mine nearly all her life since leaving school, had not had the advantages of the society of trained, alert, smart, clever women. Mrs. Darnell was very clever and she used her every art to keep Ruth's attention. She succeeded.

That night at dinner George Drake, posing as George Everett, suddenly flushed darkly and turned to the girl at his left. "Miss Gallon," he said in a whisper, flashing his dark eyes toward his hostess to see if she were watching. "I really hope that the trust you put in me you won't find misplaced. I'll do everything I can to help you, even if it is funny that I didn't know that John Dorr has red hair."

Ruth looked at him very soberly. "I don't just understand a great many things," she said. "It all seems so strange, Mr. Everett, and, you know, I am worried. I ought to go to the Ritz Carlton and see if there are telegram wires for me, for that's where John would wire me. I'm afraid Mrs. Darnell thinks I'm awfully impolite because I want to go and make sure for myself that John has not wired."

"I'll go myself," said the false Everett, looking at his plate. "I'll go tonight. In fact, I'll go right now." He caught Mrs. Darnell's eye and said apologetically: "I'm afraid, my dear hostess, I'll have to leave you. I have just remembered my solemn promise to be at the club at 9 o'clock, and, besides, I've promised Miss Gallon to go to the Ritz and get her mail and telegrams." He turned to Ruth, and she noticed a very grave look in his eyes, which she was to understand later. He bent gallantly over her hand and lightly kissed her fingers. "You may trust me," he said.

Continued next week

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No one of us may do that which is done by all would ruin society.

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