

WEEK END SPECIALS

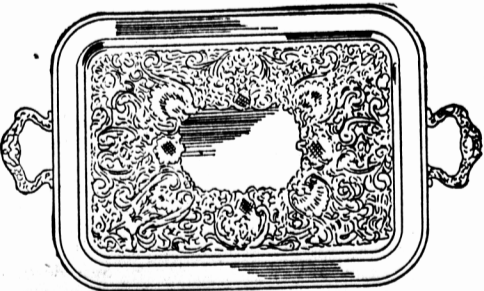
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By Lealie Beresford

"That seems to point to someone able to use the house." These servants of yours—

"Impossible." She shook her head firmly. "Quite out of the question. Old Henri and Simone, his wife, came here with me from Paris. They've known me and I've known them ever since I was a child. My father and I you see, lived for some time in Paris then, and they looked after us."

"And they're the only other people here at the Chateau?"

"There's Louis, the old gardener. He and his blind wife live at the lodge near the gates . . ." She laughed and shrugged. "I'd as soon suspect myself as them."

"But these Egyptians must have some accomplice, handing these things out to you—"

"If it really is the Egyptian people, I've no actual proof, though I suspect them."

"For what reason?"

"Their curious and persistent interest in me," she replied. "The one you saw in the lane just now—I simply can't lose him, except by keeping this side of the Chateau gate. Every time I go out, it doesn't matter where or when, I'm certain to see him about. Not that you'd think he was following me—oh, no. Nothing so open as that. Just a frightening sort of shadow creeping alone at one's heels."

"Nothing much to go on—that!" O'Hara was impatient now. "Personally, I can't see any link between your Egyptian shadow and these—"

"He flicked the typed messages with a forefinger scornfully—"these childish attempts at some form of blackmail!"

"Are they so childish?" she quizzed golden poised at an arresting angle. "I wonder. Let's go back to that mysterious relative of mine, Mr. Andrew Fayne. I believe that's where the real trouble lies. What he'd done, or whom he'd upset, I've no means of knowing yet. But Mons. Lemaire, the notaire in Blarritz who looks after my affairs and who also looked after those of Mr. Fayne, admitted to me this morning that, just before his death, the old man had been terribly afraid of something, talked rather wildly about a sort of vendetta."

"I'LL STAY WITH YOU."

"If that is so," her rapid torrent of words slowed down a little now. "now he's dead, isn't it pretty clear that the people who'd frighten him are trying to frighten me in turn, hoping to get out of me whatever it is they want?"

"Seems to me it's a thing for the Surete Generale to get their teeth into, as I said in the first instance," O'Hara suggested. "Surely your notaire advised that?"

"Oh, I haven't said anything to him yet," she retorted.

"And why not?" O'Hara stared.

"Because as I was waiting to see Mons. Lemaire, I caught a glimpse of the client he was letting out into a side-passage before seeing me. The client was this Youssef Hussein, who lives in the villa down there."

O'Hara found the affair becoming complicated, as well as seriously interesting. He had to admit that this girl, with her naive calm, had brains and was quick to use them. Another less swift-witted, might not have been so cautious as to hold the lawyer suspect, withholding a confidence she had doubtless gone there to make. Himself he knew nothing about this Mons. Lemaire, except by reputation, and his memories were too dim for him to be certain if the man was dependable.

On the other hand if as well

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might be—serious danger to this girl lay behind the threats in those melodramatic messages, it was only to the law that she could turn. She could not be left alone to face this thing at least until the strength of it was more apparent.

"Your notaire certainly looks like running with the hare while hunting with the hounds. As well you did keep the matter to yourself perhaps," he told her. "Of course, as you've taken me into your confidence, you must let me stand by, try to get at the real root of this mysterious business."

"Oh, I'm not really frightened," she cut into his offer. "and I'm sure you're more to do than be seriously troubled by my little affairs. It's the price of my heritage I suppose. There's more apparent in it than I'd foreseen, that's all."

O'Hara warned her all the same, that—whether she was frightened or not—it was necessary to take the matter seriously, and she shouldn't be expected to do that alone.

"I'm not admitting that those threats mean as much as they look in type," he said. "We'll keep on the safe side, however. Meantime it may not be too safe for you to be living here in this big Chateau with only a couple of old servants. I suppose you've no relative you could ask along to keep you company."

"Not one, who'd be of the least use to me," she replied, studied him doubtfully for a moment, then added: "I suppose, if you do intend to stay on here in the village, I mean—for a while, it wouldn't do for you to—I should perhaps say for me to invite you—to accept the hospitality of the Chateau? After all, it was your home once. These are modern days, and—well, there are always a few of us here, to supply the conventional touch."

"Somebody certainly ought to be here with you, that's certain," O'Hara agreed. "And despite conventions, I'd better be the person as there seems to be nobody else. It's merely a case of moving my baggage up here from the inn. I'll see to it now."

(To Be Continued)

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