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All Stories Complete

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Front cover painting by H. W. McCauley, Illustrating a scene from "The Devil With You!"

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WINDOW to the PAST

**Was Delmar on the verge of insanity —
or was there really another world beyond
the window? If so, how could he reach it?**

By Chester S. Geier

DELMAR sat there, in the cavernous, shadowed library, staring at the window. He sat very quietly, an entranced expression on his long, fine-boned face.

A picture had somehow been blended into the glass of the window, the picture of a girl, life-sized and startlingly real in color and photographic detail. In the dimness of the library the window seemed to glow with a luminous quality. It seemed less a thing of glass and pigments than an actual doorway, framing the drapery-clad, slim figure of the girl and the sun-bright garden setting behind her. So real was the illusion, that almost Delmar expected the girl to step from her frame and to walk to him, lightly and shyly, along the carpeted floor, below.

But she did not move. Delmar was not a little disappointed, but it was a familiar disappointment, and his eyes remained fixed on her, fascinated and wistful. And as he gazed, he listened to the music that seemed to breathe from the window, hauntingly soft and sweet and distant.

He had heard it too often to decide now that it was just the result of his

over-strained imagination. He was almost convinced that the girl in the window was singing to him, that her song was for him alone.

In a detached part of his mind, he wondered, furtively, if he were going mad.

The thought had occurred to him often during the past weeks. The first time he had stood alone in the library and had heard the window's song, he had been certain that he had somehow crossed over the border-line of insanity. He had never experienced a phenomenon of the sort, and his mind had immediately rejected the evidence of his senses. It had been too bizarre, too incredible. He had dismissed the music as a delusion, or possibly as some trick of acoustics.

But whatever its basis, the phenomenon had persisted. Each time Delmar had been alone in the library, at some time of day when the house was particularly still, he had heard the faint, wraith-like melody that breathed from the window. It remained inexplicable, a mystery. And the very mystery of it crept into his mind like a thin, chill shadow, whispering of madness.



Delmar stared at her with a weird fascination. Framed in the glass, she seemed to be alive...

Madness.... Delmar closed his eyes and his long fingers tightened convulsively on the arms of his chair. The music, the fantastic window picture, his very presence in this house—all reeked of madness.

He wondered suddenly if the enormous, wrenching shock he had felt, at his first sight of Lorna in the window, had not seriously and permanently affected his mind. He remembered the afternoon he had first entered the library, accompanied by the agent who had been showing him around. That had been just a few days after he had learned that the old Kettering mansion was for sale. His inspection of the house had been prompted less by thought of purchase than by an intense personal curiosity that had its foundation across a gulf of fifteen years.

Sight of Lorna's portrait, in the glass of the window, had come as a complete surprise, for from outside, the window had the appearance of being opaque, as though frosted or coated thickly with dust. Only later did he realize that its one-way quality was somehow connected with the polarization of light. But at the moment in question it had seemed to him that Lorna stood framed in a doorway—Lorna, solid and alive, expecting him, waiting for him.

In his utter amazement he must have cried out, or made some sudden, involuntary motion. He remembered that the agent had turned to him in puzzled concern.

"Why, what is the matter?"

He had been unable to reply at once. Then, finally aware that he had mistaken a picture in a window for an impossible reality, he had muttered an excuse.

"Sorry. I've been rather tired from the trip up here, and the picture in that window startled me more than it otherwise would have done."

The agent nodded in quick sympa-

thy. "I know—it's a spooky-looking thing. Kind of scared me when I first saw it, too." He seemed to become aware that he might be damaging his chances of making a sale, for he added hastily, "Of course, it's only a picture. And mighty artistic at that. Gives this room a cozy atmosphere, don't you think?"

Delmar nodded abstractedly, and the other, seeing that his attention was still fixed on the window, resumed the subject in a confiding vein.

"That's a picture of Lorna Kettering."

"I know," Delmar said.

"You knew her?"

"We were acquainted." Delmar was deliberately evasive. He saw no point in telling the man of his deep and hopeless love for Lorna, a love that haunted him even now.

"She died about fifteen years ago," the agent went on. "It seems she was in an accident that happened in the laboratory her father had behind the house. Old Arnold Kettering was some kind of a scientist. Guess it was just a hobby, because with the money he had, he didn't have to do any work. Folks back in the village called him a sorcerer—and worse. They say he did a lot of queer things—like the window, there. Nobody has ever been able to figure out how it was made."

Thinking back now, Delmar wondered if that puzzle had been one of the motives behind his decision to buy the house, or whether he had simply been giving in to Vivian's constant nagging for a "country place".

The puzzle remained unsolved. He could find no clues which might have helped him reach a solution. Arnold Kettering's laboratory had been destroyed in the explosion that had taken Lorna's life. The ruins of the small building had been leveled off, and a garden plot now occupied the site. The mansion itself had been stripped

by the relatives to whom it had been turned over after illness had taken Arnold Kettering's own life—an illness which Delmar had heard was accompanied by complete insanity.

The window kept its secret. The means of its construction could not be determined without various tests, which would have required the removal of the glass from its frame. And this Delmar could not bring himself to do. The window was both a portrait of Lorna and a memorial to her. He did not wish to risk having it damaged or destroyed.

Even this, he thought wryly, was a kind of madness.

He knew that the window was exercising a subtle yet powerful influence on him—an unhealthy influence. It was a lodestone that kept drawing him back to the past, back to the disappointment, the bitterness and pain, he had once felt so intensely. He allowed himself to be drawn; there seemed nothing to hold him to the present. All the happiness he might have known was concentrated and symbolized in the window likeness of Lorna.

It was ironic that Vivian should have been delighted with the house, that by her very delight she should have entangled him further in the web of his own devising. He had never told Vivian about Lorna or old Arnold Kettering. To have done so might have complicated an already much complicated situation. The window was little more than an oddity to Vivian, though of late she had shown signs of becoming aware of its fascination for him.

He considered this and found that he cared very little. His marriage to Vivian had been a mistake, a last-ditch effort to capture the happiness which previously had eluded him. She had seemed charming and companionable enough, but it had not been long before he had found that they lived in

different worlds.

The library door opened. He heard Vivian's voice as she made a petulant remark about the evening dusk that was thickening in the room. A lamp switch clicked as he rose from the chair, and he blinked at Vivian's slim, chic figure and then, behind her, at the tweed-clothed athletic bulk of Tod Sheldon.

"Oh, there you are, John," Vivian said. She came forward. "I thought I'd find you here. Don't you realize it's time to dress for dinner?"

He shrugged and stretched. "In a few minutes more I might have begun to suspect it."

"Don't be sarcastic, John, please. I have a rotten headache." She pressed the back of a slender hand against her forehead and sent a slow, searching glance about the spot where Delmar had been sitting. She wore a figured silk afternoon dress, and her dark hair was attractively fluffed out around her small head. It was characteristic of her that everything she wore was perfectly in place, perfectly in taste. It was a characteristic Delmar had grown to find annoying.

"What have you been doing?" she asked.

"I might have been working up an appetite for dinner."

"Here, of all places?" She flashed him an irritated glance from hazel eyes whose long lashes had been carefully touched with mascara.

"Why not?" Tod Sheldon asked as he came forward also. In spite of his muscular build, he was an effeminately handsome man, with wavy golden-brown hair and smooth, fair skin. He was one of a group of friends with whom Vivian seemed constantly to surround herself. Delmar felt certain that the others were more or less camouflage for Sheldon, and that Vivian was carrying on an affair with the younger man behind his back.

Sheldon had a reputation for being a man about town and seemed to do little or nothing in the way of earning a living.

Sheldon was grinning at Delmar, his expression roguish and conspiratorial. As in previous encounters with the other, Delmar had the impression of being conscientiously patronized. He felt a dull disgust. It was a case of soft-soap the husband and sweet-talk the wife. He wanted no part in it.

"This isn't a bad place in which to work up an appetite," Sheldon said. "A man couldn't do it in more interesting company."

"What do you mean by that?" Vivian demanded. Her irritation diminished noticeably as she turned to Sheldon.

He tilted his roguish face toward the window. "That neat little package, over there."

Vivian sniffed. "The half-dressed hussy! Sometimes I wish—"

She broke off as Delmar caught suddenly at her arm. His disgust had become a swift, fierce anger.

"Vivian, you watch your tongue!"

She was bewildered and not a little frightened by what she saw in his face. "But I was only talking about—"

"I know what you were talking about. I don't want you to talk that way."

"But, John, it's only a picture."

He realized abruptly how true this was, how ridiculous his protest appeared in comparison. Vivian didn't know about Lorna, he remembered, and the emotional associations the window held for him. He released her arm and said mildly:

"That's all the more reason not to be insulting. A picture can't fight back."

It was not a very clever attempt to smooth over what was for him an embarrassing situation. Nor did it succeed. As he turned toward the door,

he saw Vivian's eyes swivel from the window and come to rest significantly on Tod Sheldon.

He found that he badly wanted a drink. It seemed to have become clearly evident, to Vivian as well as to himself, that the window picture was making him behave very oddly.

CHAPTER II

IN HIS room Delmar poured a stiff drink and took it straight. He waited until the whisky began to loosen up the tightness inside him, then began slowly to remove his suit.

Vivian didn't know about Lorna, of course. He wondered if she would understand if he told her. Most of all he wondered if it would accomplish anything to tell her in the first place.

It would have made a difficult story to tell; a story that went back fifteen years in time, and which had returned him, full-cycle, to the very place where it had started. He recalled the start of it quite vividly, even now.

He had met Arnold Kettering as the result of a newspaper advertisement for a laboratory assistant. Kettering had been a wasp-like man, well into his fifties, irritable and quick-tempered. Violent and uncontrolled emotion had grooved his sharp face into a permanent scowl, and his thin white hair seemed to float about his head in a cloud of abnormal nervous energy. He had been contemptuous both of Delmar's Ph.D. degree and of Delmar's ideals, still fresh, regarding the purpose and duties of science.

"Science!" Kettering had snorted. "What you call science is a superstitious, primitive cult, and so-called scientific experiments are little more than rituals performed by that cult. Only in the field of mathematics do your so-called scientists really begin to think. Outside of that hardly a one realizes that the so-complex, so-mys-

terious physical universe is merely a matter of structure in energy and frequency. And what do they know of that? They know only what their crude and makeshift instruments tell them—which is very little indeed.”

Kettering had tapped Delmar's knee with a thin, hard finger. “Young man, if you go to work for me, you'll have to throw away your fancy degree. You'll have to unlearn practically everything you've been taught. I'll teach you science—theoretical and applied science—of a type you won't find anywhere in the world today...or in very few places, if it can be found at all.”

It had been no mere boast. Kettering had been a genius, and if it were true that genius is compounded partly of insanity, then it was more true for Kettering than for any others Delmar could have named. Kettering had been as unpredictably eccentric as he had been brilliant. His talents had been a real loss to the world of what he had contemptuously dismissed as “so-called science”. Even now Delmar considered it a tragedy that Arnold Kettering had been too enormously irascible and impatient to co-operate with or assist other workers in allied fields, even to the extent of publishing his data. In the beginning, it seemed, Kettering had tried, but had met with ignorance, bewilderment, suspicion, and even an envy that had manifested itself in the form of derision, this from a much-published type of men who served as oracles and were more high-priest than scientist.

“Metaphysical!” Kettering shrilled, relating his experiences to Delmar. “Do you hear that? They called my work metaphysical! Why, I'm fifty to a hundred years ahead of them. They can't begin to understand me, so they conceal their stupidity with sneers.”

Kettering had retreated into a shell

of silence and isolation, and in this shell he had worked what had seemed to Delmar quite genuine miracles. Even while assisting with Kettering's “projects”—Kettering refused to call them experiments, claiming the word smelled of ritualism—Delmar had not fully understood just what was taking place. Kettering tried repeatedly to explain, using the only language that would accurately express his ideas—mathematics. But even this had been of an advanced, mutated type, necessary to his purposes, and the symbols had conveyed little more than hints to Delmar.

“It's because of the way you think,” Kettering would snap with characteristic impatience. “You've had the wrong thought-structure built into your mind. Naturally you can't use this structure to obtain a picture of an almost entirely different structure. You can't discuss light-years in terms of micro-seconds, or mega-volts in terms of quanta.”

In his shell Kettering was entirely sufficient unto himself. He had inherited a comfortable fortune, and he had added to this from sales and royalties on industrial applications of his work—minor applications, as he made clear to Delmar, mere toys thrown to an infantile technology. Yet even these brought revolutionary changes and advances where they were employed.

Delmar had not liked Kettering from the first, and his work as the older man's assistant was accompanied by abuse, scorn, and violent outbursts of rage. The only reason Delmar had remained at all was because of Lorna Kettering. He had met her on his first visit to the house, and for him—as well as for her, as he had learned not long afterward—it had been a classic case of love at first sight. For Lorna's sake he had been patient throughout the indignities he had suffered at Ket-

tering's hands.

Lorna had been some three years younger than himself, a grave, quiet girl with ash-blond hair and strikingly lovely and expressive hazel eyes. She had dressed very simply and used no cosmetics, yet despite the restraint of her appearance, her delicate features and slim body had possessed a true, intrinsic beauty. Life under the harsh, lonely conditions her father imposed had not entirely subdued her, for deep within her, unquenched, music and laughter had remained, and a quick-burning fire.

She had, Delmar thought now, filling the glass again, been like some shy flower, opening its petals to the sun of his ardor. He remembered her first kiss, and the others that had followed—until Kettering had discovered their intimacy. Delmar had been fired in a paroxysm of fury so savage and out of proportion to the circumstances, that he had been stunned into an inability to protest or speak a word in his defense.

He had brooded over the incident countless times in the years that had passed. Nuances of Arnold Kettering's behavior, of which he had previously been unaware, slowly became clear. He grew to realize that there had been something unhealthy, something pathological, about the old man's intense, jealous affection for Lorna. It explained why Delmar was never again allowed to see her, or to communicate with her in any way.

He closed his eyes, feeling the raw warmth of the whisky in his stomach and recalling the very last time he had seen Lorna. That had been a day after Kettering's demoniac shrieks had driven him from the house. A note had been smuggled in to Lorna by means of a delivery boy, and she had dared her father's wrath to meet Delmar in the village.

He had assured her of his love and

urged her to leave with him. Her refusal had been mournful—but unhesitating and determined.

"No, John, I couldn't leave my father—not so abruptly, not like this. He has been kind, you know, in his own way. And he needs me. It...it would kill him for me to leave."

Persuasion, entreaties, had proved futile. "What are we going to do?" he asked finally, hopelessly. "What are we going to do, Lorna?"

"We'll have to wait. It's the only way. Father is old and not very strong, and though it seems cruel to say, he hasn't much longer to live. I'll join you then...afterward...if you'll wait."

"I'll wait," he said. "I don't know how I'll manage it, but I'll wait."

He had waited for six months. A sympathetic grocer in the village—the delivery boy had worked for him—acted as a go-between for smuggled letters. These alone made bearable the pain of continued separation.

Then—long weeks of silence. A note from the grocer, in answer to Delmar's puzzled queries, explained simply that it had become impossible to communicate with Lorna in any way.

Obviously, Kettering had discovered their stratagem.

Delmar had been planning a trip to the Kettering mansion with the purpose of demanding a showdown, when the grocer's telegram had arrived, informing him of Lorna's death in the explosion of the laboratory.

Newspaper accounts had been brief and uninformative, but Delmar's contact in the village had enabled him to piece the story together. Lorna, it seemed, had been serving as Kettering's laboratory assistant. She had been occupied with a routine task involving dangerous, high-voltage machinery. Kettering had been absent on an errand to the house—and Lorna

in the meantime had evidently made some fatal mistake.

Kettering made no attempt to rebuild the laboratory, or to resume his work. His grief had seemed very genuine. His health had declined rapidly, and barely two months after the explosion, he had followed Lorna in death. He had died quite mad.

Delmar had not gone back to pure research, having somehow developed an aversion to it as a result of his months with Kettering. Perhaps it was because he had come to realize that the science he had once so admired, beyond a few advanced thinkers in the field, was actually a backward and groping thing after all. He had gone into industrial research, and here even the mere hints he had obtained from Kettering had proved of enormous worth. His success had been so complete, that within four years he had owned a plant of his own, producing electronic devices of various types. It had remained only for the War to make him a wealthy man.

Money and leisure had not brought happiness. For him the only possible happiness lay back in the past, beyond awakening, beyond reclaim. This, he knew, was the reason why he had bought the Kettering mansion—to draw that much closer to the past. It was foolish, futile—and dangerous. He saw the danger so clearly. It was easy, so insidiously, poisonously easy, to go mad. . . .

He filled the glass again. He had lost count of the number of times he had done so. A haze seemed to have settled over him, and heavily he lowered himself into a chair. He was sitting there, staring emptily into space, when Vivian strode swiftly into the room.

"John! We've been waiting for you downstairs. Dinner's going to be spoiled. And you...why, you aren't even dressed yet!"

He shrugged, and she stared from his face to the whisky bottle on a nearby table. Jeweled pendants glittered at her ears. She wore a pale green evening gown, her bare, slim shoulders gleaming in the light.

"What in the world have you been doing?" she demanded, her voice harsh with anger. "You're drunk, that's what you are! Stinking drunk! What are my friends going to think?"

"Your friends," he said. "Your friends have never thought much of me, beyond what I furnished them in the way of free food and board. What they think of me now is the least of my worries."

Vivian fell to pacing the floor in agitation, her hands straining at a chiffon handkerchief. "This...this is humiliating! I don't know what's got into you, John. You never acted like this before."

She stopped abruptly, swinging around to face him. "Come to think of it, you've acted strangely ever since we moved into this house. And I think I know the reason. It's that picture downstairs, in the library window."

Awakening anger and a faint alarm brought him forward in the chair. "The picture is none of your business, Vivian. Take my advice and forget about it."

"Why should I forget about it?" she cried. "How can you expect me to sit back and allow something so silly as a window picture to come between us?"

He snorted. "As if anything could come between us, after Tod Sheldon."

She was suddenly still, her dark eyes intent. "Just what do you mean by that?"

"You know very well what I mean, Vivian. After the past few weeks, even a blind man would have guessed that you and Tod Sheldon were more than just good friends."

"It isn't true. You seem to be imagining all sorts of incredible things. . . . John, I think you ought to see a doctor."

"If I need to see anyone, I'd say a lawyer would be more in order."

For an instant panic showed in her face. Then, with a disdainful flip of her handkerchief, she turned away. "You're drunk, John. You don't know what you're saying. This whole conversation is unpleasant, and when you sober up I'm sure you'll see it the same way."

She paused with her hand on the doorknob. "I'll tell the guests you aren't feeling well and won't be down to dinner. I'll have something sent up for you."

"Suit yourself." He settled back into the chair and closed his eyes.

Her going left him with an uneasy feeling. The little game between Vivian, Tod Sheldon, and himself could be a dangerous one. He had incautiously shown Vivian his hand—and in a pinch she was no fool.

CHAPTER III

THE VILLAGE had a typical late-morning quietness. Only a few pedestrians were visible, and only occasional cars droned along the sun-bright streets. Delmar paused in the shadow of an awning and peered back over the route he had taken in his walk from the house. He slowly lighted a cigarette, trying outwardly to give the impression of being unconcerned and purposeless.

He saw nothing to indicate that he had been followed, and feeling somewhat foolish, he crossed the street to the drug store. He didn't know what had made him think Vivian might have him followed. It had just seemed natural to take precautions.

Now, however, it did not seem so natural. It seemed instead rather

frightening proof of growing unbalance.

The few persons present in the drug store were seated at the soda fountain. Delmar strode over to a telephone booth and eased his long body into the interior, closing the door carefully. From his wallet he took a card bearing the name and telephone number of a firm of lawyers back in the city. Then he obtained long distance and put through his call.

"Blaine?" he asked presently. "This is Delmar."

"Well, John!" the lawyer returned. "I heard you'd gone into rustic seclusion, or something of the sort."

Delmar briefly explained his purchase of the secluded Kettering mansion. Finally his tone became crisply purposeful.

"My reason for this call is strictly business, Blaine. Some things have happened out here to prove my marriage was a big mistake from the start, and I want to make an adjustment in certain legal matters."

"I'm sorry to hear you say that about your marriage, John."

"I'm not sorry to say it. Now listen, Blaine, I want to change my will first of all. Vivian is to be left out completely, and there is to be a corresponding increase in shares among the other persons and institutions named. Here are the details."

Delmar spoke slowly and at length. Then he asked for a read-back.

"All right," he said. "Get that written up, Blaine. I'll be in the city in a few days, to sign it. I want the whole matter handled so there will be absolutely no question later about my sanity at the time the will was signed."

"Question!" the lawyer exclaimed. "As if there ever could be any question, John!"

"You'd be surprised," Delmar returned. "As for the other matter I want to discuss when I get to see you,

I want to arrange for a divorce from Vivian."

"On what grounds?"

"Infidelity."

"Any witnesses?"

"I'm positive that the servants at the house have seen enough. At any rate, a little money would stimulate their imaginations."

"All right." The lawyer's voice seemed to have undergone a subtle change. "We'll talk over the details when you get in, John."

When Delmar hung up, he was thinking about the change in the other's voice. In hinting of possible claims of madness against himself, had he given Blaine to suspect that these might have a basis in fact?

Frowning, Delmar left the drug store. That he should be confronted by the question of sanity at almost every turn he took, was beginning seriously to worry him. Even going to the village to make his telephone call now seemed a questionable act. Of course, he had wanted to avoid the possibility of having his call listened in on by Vivian or the others at the house—but this could be little more than a pathologically clever rationalization.

Wrapped in thought, Delmar collided with an elderly man as he reached the sidewalk. He caught at the other's arm to steady himself and muttered a quick apology. Then he peered at the face opposite his, struck with the impression of familiarity.

It was the elderly man who spoke first. "Say, didn't you used to work for old Arnold Kettering? That was about fifteen years ago, but I never forget a face."

Delmar smiled. "That's right. And I remember you now. You're name is Sam, isn't it? You worked as a handyman around the Kettering place."

"Sam Burrel, that's me. It's been a long time."

"It sure has. I'm John Delmar, if

you'll remember."

"Delmar!" Sam Burrel exclaimed. "Then you're the John Delmar who bought the Kettering house a while back. I might've guessed it."

Delmar still had his hand on the other's arm, and now he drew the man to the edge of the sidewalk. He felt a queer excitement, which he fought to keep hidden. Burrel was inclined to be garrulous, and Delmar let him run on, waiting for an opening. He wanted to bring up a subject that had leaped into his mind almost immediately after he recognized the handyman.

Finally his chance came.

"Sam, do you happen to know anything about the window Kettering put up at the house—the one with the picture of Lorna in it?"

"I've seen the window," Burrel returned. "I did some work for the relatives that lived at the house after old Arnold Kettering died. That window is the Devil's own contraption! Every time I've looked at it, I've sort of had the feeling that Lorna wasn't dead at all, but was there as real as life."

"I know," Delmar said impatiently. "Look, Sam, do you know anything about the window—anything at all? Did you ever hear Kettering say anything about it?"

Burrel shook his grizzled head. "Short time after you left, Kettering told me he wouldn't need me around the house any more. I never knew about the window until after he died. But—" Burrel shrugged in sudden unease and remained silent.

"Sam," Delmar said with pleading intensity, "I've got to know what's behind that window. If you know something, no matter how crazy it may sound, I want you to tell me. It's important—damned important. You can trust me."

"All right, listen." Burrel glanced about him with a secretive air and

drew closer. "Last job I had with old Kettering, he wanted me to move some records out of the laboratory—notebooks, papers, and things like that. He said he was going to use them for writing a book. Well, carrying one batch of stuff up to his room at the house, I saw he had a sort of little door open in the wall where you wouldn't have guessed it would be—like them secret panels they have in the movies—and he was putting some of the stuff inside. He shooed me out fast, and I know he didn't like me seeing it.

"Well, after Kettering died I got hired by those relatives of his that moved in. They wanted me to cart all the junk out of his room—leastways *they* said it was junk. Doing that, I remembered the little door in the wall. It made me itch, sort of, and I set out to see if I could get it open. I got it open, all right. There was a spot in the wall that moved when you pressed on it." Burrel paused for a grin of triumph at Delmar.

Only dimly was Delmar aware of it. His mind had contracted around a grim discovery. Kettering had moved his records out of the laboratory a short time after he, Delmar, left—and a short time before the laboratory explosion. Had Kettering guessed—or known for a certainty—that the explosion was going to take place?

Burrel said doubtfully, "I know it wasn't right to do—"

"Go on," Delmar said, his tone urgent. "Go on, Sam. It doesn't make any difference now. What did you find?"

"About half a dozen notebooks, that's all. Wasn't anything in them but a lot of figures and writing that looked like Greek or Russian, but I figured they must have been mighty important for old Kettering to be hiding them. I didn't see any sense in

putting them back, because they'd never do anybody any good, hid away like that. I put them with the rest of the stuff I was moving out, and the relatives told me to burn everything up. They were a cold and uppity bunch, and I didn't see any use in telling them what I'd found. It wouldn't have made any difference to them, anyhow."

"What happened to those notebooks?" Delmar demanded. "You didn't burn them, Sam?"

"I kept them," Burrel said. "And some other stuff, too." He looked defiant. "What those relatives were paying me, I thought I had a right to earn some extra cash by selling what I could."

Delmar caught at the other's arm. "Sam—you didn't sell the notebooks!"

Burrel shrugged. "Well, I showed them to a physics teacher from the high school in the next town and asked him if they were worth anything. I told him they were part of some stuff Kettering's relatives were throwing away. This teacher couldn't make heads or tails out of what was in the notebooks, though. He said they were written in a sort of scientific code, and it wasn't worth anything to anybody unless they knew how to read it."

"The notebooks," Delmar said in desperation. "Where are they now?"

"Why, I got them up in the attic at home. Didn't see any use in—"

"I want those notebooks. I want you to take me there, Sam."

"But I just came to town, and—"

"Here." Delmar fumbled for his wallet and shoved bills into Burrel's hands. "I want those notebooks—and I want them right away."

"All right," Burrel said, staring at the bills. "My truck's parked just around the corner. Let's go."

CHAPTER IV

IT WAS well toward the middle of the afternoon when Sam Burrel dropped Delmar off in front of the house. With the notebooks under one arm, Delmar quietly let himself into the hall. From the direction of the living room he heard laughter and the sound of a piano. His mouth had a wry twist as he continued toward the library, hoping to slip by unnoticed. The notebooks pulled at him with a consuming hunger, and he wanted to avoid Vivian and her guests.

He heard swift footsteps behind him as he passed the living room entrance, and he turned to see Vivian hurry toward him.

"John! Where have you been all day? I was beginning to grow badly worried." Her dark eyes lingered curiously on the objects he carried.

"I just took a walk down to the village," he explained. "Ran into an old acquaintance and came off with some scientific material he had kicking around." He indicated the notebooks with a casual wave of his hand and prepared to turn away. "I'm going to do a little research work in the library."

Tod Sheldon appeared suddenly, a glass in one hand, his handsome face flushed. "Hey, Viv, you should've heard what—" He saw Delmar. "Hello, there! Long time no see."

"For me," Delmar grunted, "it hasn't hardly been long enough." He was moving toward the library door when he heard Vivian's barely audible murmur behind him.

"There he goes again!"

Delmar locked the door behind him and stood for a long moment, looking at the window picture of Lorna. Her smile seemed expectant, sympathetic, as if, somehow, she understood his purpose and approved. The uncanny realism of the portrait caught at him

with a familiar poignancy. He listened for the music, and presently he heard it, ethereally soft and sweet.

"Maybe I'll know the why and how of this, Lorna," he whispered. "Maybe I'll know at last."

He shook himself a little and walked over to a desk. He placed the notebooks on it and removed his hat and jacket. Then, lighting a cigarette and loosening his collar, he opened the first of the notebooks and bent over it with frowningly intent eyes.

The writing was partly in a shorthand code and partly in mathematical symbols. Both had been evolved by Kettering to fit his unusual ideas and techniques, and while meaningless to others, Delmar had worked for Kettering long enough to have gained an understanding of them. His only serious problem was to fill in the memory gaps of fifteen years.

He began making notes to aid him in his decipherings. His progress was slow and difficult at first, but the doors of memory began opening and his deductions from context enabled him to close other gaps. The notes grew, while the sunlight dimmed and the shadows of evening deepened in the library.

A knock at the door finally interrupted him. He heard Vivian's muffled voice, and he rose with a feeling of irritation and deep reluctance.

"What is it now?" he demanded as he opened the door.

"John, what is the matter with you? Aren't you coming out of there for dinner?"

He considered the prospect briefly, recalling now that he had gone without lunch. But he could not bring himself to desert the notebooks, even temporarily.

"I'm just getting started with the work I'm doing," he said. "It's important, and I'd hate to drop it at this point. Have a tray sent in, will

you?"

She sent a sharp glance into the darkening room behind him. "Just how long is this going to go on?"

"Until I find out something I want to know."

"And may I ask what that is?"

He said quietly, "Look, Vivian, you worry about your end of things, and I'll worry about mine."

"Well, I'd say this was included in my end of things," she returned. "You could at least make a pretense of being sociable when we have guests in the house."

"They're doing fine without me around. We covered the subject thoroughly enough last night. Now let me get back to work."

Vivian's dark eyes brimmed with a hot light that seemed imminently about to spill over into angry words. But she remained silent, turning away with a shrug.

Delmar went back to his desk and switched on a lamp. A short time later a servant entered with a tray of food, and he consumed this while continuing his work on the notes.

By that night, with his notes as a basis, he was able to skim through the various notebooks and narrow down his field of search. Two gave promise of containing the information he sought, and he put these aside for more intensive study.

Three days passed, during which Delmar barely stirred outside of the library. He grew hollow-eyed from insufficient sleep, his hair was perpetually rumpled and his face carelessly shaved. He had hardly bothered to change his clothing, and while trays were brought in to him at regular intervals, he ate only when thought of food crossed his mind.

He was practically alone at the house, for Vivian's week-end guests had left, and she herself had accompanied them, explaining that she

wished to spend several days in the city to do some shopping. Thought of Vivian had brought a hazy recollection of his business with Blaine, but the urgency of it had gone. He was vaguely aware that his neglect of Blaine was unwise, yet he was being carried along by currents that swept all other matters from his mind.

His notes had grown to imposing proportions, though his success in deciphering Kettering's code-like data remained incomplete. Nor did he fully understand even what he had managed to translate, since it represented the ultimate development of Kettering's already highly evolved work. Instead of a clear picture, Delmar found himself with a rough sketch, the details of which were only dimly suggested. Seated at the desk, he went over it again with dogged persistence.

Kettering, it now seemed clear enough, had pictured the objective physical world as a four-dimensional super-stratum, which was characterized by the infiniteness and perpetuity of energy and being. To limited sense perceptions and instruments, abstractions from the super-stratum appeared as finite three-dimensional cross-sections. Three-dimensional objects, in other words, were "shadows" of four-dimensional "extensions", and were thus illusory. There was no ultimate reality, but only a relative point of view.

Extensions had orientation within the super-stratum up to the instantaneous "present" in any particular system of space-time. A reorientation or displacement involved the infinite energy of the super-stratum and accordingly took place at the speed of light, and at a right-angle to the original orientation. From the three-dimensional point of view, the relatively dynamic became the relatively static, and therefore a three-dimensional object became a two dimen-

sional cross-section, or shadow. Here the Lorentz-FitzGerald contraction was in the direction of "thickness". Equilibrium of the energy relationships between the extension and the super-stratum was reached in another system of space-time, on the plane of the probability-future.

Delmar's formulation had never been clearer. For the first time the problem was beginning to make sense, and he pursued his reasoning in mounting excitement.

A human being, of course, was a three-dimensional object, a cross-section of a four-dimensional extension. Subjected to a process utilizing the infinite energy of the super-stratum, this object could literally be shifted into another system of space-time. The object thus had extension in the original system up to the point, or instant, of application of the process. Beyond this point in the original system the object no longer had extension or three-dimensional reality, but remained as a two-dimensional cross-section or shadow, since this was all that now had extension in that system.

A two-dimensional shadow would be superimposed against any surface that came within the field of influence of the process, a wall—or a window. Two systems of space-time would meet here at right angles, and as a result there would be certain abnormal phenomena, among which would be a faintly audible "singing".

The process itself involved three-dimensional abstractions from the basic energy of the super-stratum in the form of electro-magnetic frequencies. It was fully reversible, infinite in one direction, finite in the other. The transformation was essentially one of degree rather than kind, since the only real difference was in the point of view. From the three-dimensional point of view, an electro-magnetic process directly involving the super-

stratum would have perpetuity and would be self-sustaining by its very nature.

A haze had finally cleared away. Delmar sat stunned at what was revealed. It was incredible, bizarre—but it fitted perfectly with certain other sinister facts.

There was, first of all, the shadow of insanity that had lain over Arnold Kettering's unquestioned genius. A direct symptom of this had been a pathological devotion to Lorna, which would not permit him to share her affection with another man. Threatened with what he had evidently considered her imminent loss, he had used his abnormally advanced scientific knowledge in retaliation.

It had been no coincidence that Kettering had moved his records from the laboratory before the explosion. His plans had already been made. Lorna's disappearance would have raised questions and had to be accounted for in a way that would be definite and final. She had not been in the laboratory at the instant that the explosion, arranged by Kettering, took place. She had gone on her incredible journey a short time before.

Kettering had paid a ruinous price for success in his campaign against Delmar. In the loneliness to which he had doomed himself, remorse and guilt had hastened the final crumbling of his mind. This knowledge was the only satisfaction Delmar now had.

Or—his eyes slowly widened on the picture—was it? Was Lorna actually gone beyond reclaim—dead? What was death in Kettering's conception but the extinction of a single individual cross-section—a shadow, an illusion? The four-dimensional extension remained, having in Lorna's case been shifted, or bent, to a probability-future plane. And where could this be except in the "direction" of the window?

Delmar stood up, breathing fast, a leaping excitement mirrored in his face. The window...an electro-magnetic process forming a focus, an outlet, for the infinite energy of the super-stratum—a process that was fully reversible. Alter the focus—and the response was on an infinite scale. A miracle could be accomplished. An extension once bent could be bent again.

Lorna could be brought back. Fundamentally it was as simple as that.

CHAPTER V

BUT IN practice—

Delmar sat at the desk in the library again, his elbows on its paper-littered surface and his head resting against his clasped hands. He stared down at a sheet of equations with morose, brooding eyes. During the past month difficulties and problems of all types had arisen to block his path, and he wondered now if the problem he had set for himself were not an insurmountable one.

He sat back, sighing, and ran a hand over his unshaven jaw. His face was haggard and slow. He had lost weight, and dark shadows lay under his cheekbones.

His world had become even more strictly bounded by the walls of the library. He seldom left it, taking his meals there and sleeping there—when he slept at all—on a cot that he'd had moved in.

He had seen little of Vivian throughout the weeks that had passed. In his mind their relationship had become something extinct and distant. Caught up in the complexities and disappointments of his work, he had no patience with her questions and protests. Her return from the city had been followed by a bitter argument, and shortly afterward she had left again. He had not seen her since.

There had been a telephone call from Blaine, which Delmar in his preoccupation had ignored. Only later, when he received a puzzled note of inquiry from Blaine, did he remember that the lawyer had called at all. Delmar had made a new appointment, but this too had been forgotten.

Abruptly Delmar swung the palms of his hands to the desk top in a flat crash of sound and heaved to his feet. His mouth was twisted in an agonized grimace. He walked to stand before the window picture of Lorna, bright with late-morning sunshine.

Was it imagination—or did an echo of his own distress show in her hazel eyes? Had a hint of pleading touched her face?

His misery deepened, and his glance went to the lattice-like framework, like a skeletal doorway, which he had erected against the outline of the window. The framework supported an intricate maze of wires, and on each side of it were long workbenches piled high with a jumble of apparatus, predominant among which were several banks of huge vacuum tubes.

The library had been almost completely emptied of furniture to make room for the equipment Delmar needed. Heavy cables made serpentine patterns across the floor. Against one wall was a row of generators and transformers. In the middle of the room stood a tall switchboard, covered with rows of meter faces, switches, and control dials.

The main apparatus was still in an experimental stage. Many refinements were needed before it would accomplish what Delmar hoped to do. These required time, and time was a factor he bitterly grudged. He could not escape the realization that he could have made swifter progress with a deeper understanding of Kettering's notes and figures. Even with only the hints and guesses he had to go on now,

he could have done more if he had spent the last ten years at engineering work in a laboratory instead of at a desk.

The thought of failure haunted him. To have the answers he needed just within reach, yet elude him, was maddening. He had thrown everything else aside to make this effort, and defeat would leave him little or nothing to return to. But he doubted whether he cared to return at all, for he had stood in the dazzling brilliance of a god-like, potential power, and the world he had known could never be the same again.

A knock at the library door made him turn sharply, startled. It was the housekeeper, with the information that two men, complete strangers to Delmar, had arrived at the house.

"They want to talk to you, Mr. Delmar."

"What about?"

"They said something about the work you've been doing."

Delmar rubbed his jaw, frowning. "Tell them to wait, then. I'll need time to freshen up."

The two men were seated in the living room when Delmar joined them a short time later. One was a slight, youngish man, with pale eyes and sharp features, the other stocky and middle-aged, with a full-cheeked jovial face and wiry gray hair.

It was the older man who rose and stepped forward. "Mr. Delmar? I'm Andrew Glasser, and this is my associate, Norton Plimsoll."

Delmar shook hands and gestured the pair back to their seats. He dropped into a nearby chair. "I understand you're interested in the experiments I've been making here," he told Glasser. "I hadn't known it was general knowledge."

The other spread his plump hands. "Gossip, let us say. I have acquaintances in the village. You see, Mr.

Delmar, I have been interested for quite some time in the window portrait Arnold Kettering made of his daughter. Several years back I had the opportunity to examine the window, having persuaded the people who owned the house then to allow me to do so. My main interest has been to determine the method used in making the portrait. Perhaps it has occurred to you that there are important commercial applications for that sort of thing."

Delmar shrugged. "I've thought of it. But the method is...well, too difficult for commercial application."

"Ah!" Glasser leaned forward in sudden eagerness. "Then it would seem that you understand the method."

"I have a general understanding of the theory involved. The technical and engineering end is quite another matter."

"Have you found this impossible to solve?"

"So far," Delmar said. He had the haunted feeling again, and it brought an irritation with Glasser and his questions.

Glasser was still leaning forward. He hesitated and then said slowly, "Mr. Delmar, since it seems such a difficult problem, I wonder if it would be presumptuous of me to inquire just what is the reason for your interest in the window portrait."

"It's personal." Delmar was aware that his tone had made his irritation obvious.

"Of course," Glasser said quickly. "I hope you'll pardon my curiosity." He indicated Plimsoll. "My associate is deeply interested in the portrait, Mr. Delmar. I wonder if you would be so kind as to allow him to see it."

Delmar caught himself on the verge of a refusal. While certainly inquisitive, the two men appeared harmless enough. There would be no point in slighting them.

He stood up. "All right, come along."

After their first glances about the haphazardly littered library, Glasser and Plimsoll concentrated their attention on the window. They were silent for a long moment. Finally Glasser turned to his companion.

"You hear the sound?"

"Yes." Plimsoll's pale eyes were wondering. "Almost like music. What on earth causes it?"

"Electro-magnetic fields," Delmar said. "The merging and overlapping of frequencies produces audible sound. It's like the ancient idea of the music of the spheres."

The two were silent again. Plimsoll said slowly:

"The picture's so incredibly life-like. One can hardly believe the girl is dead."

"She isn't dead," Delmar returned sharply. "Not in the sense that we understand death." It was, he realized abruptly, a fantastic statement, and he felt a need to justify it. Glasser and Plimsoll were staring at him in evident disbelief.

His explanation was longer than he originally intended it to be. Enthusiasm for his subject fired him, and after his many weeks of self-enforced loneliness it was a relief to talk, especially to persons who gave every indication of being deeply interested and sympathetic.

Only after Glasser and Plimsoll had gone did he realize that he had said too much. Recalling his words, he felt a pang of dismay. They could only have sounded like the wild ravings of a deluded man. Kettering's work had been so advanced, that he couldn't possibly have made Glasser and Plimsoll understand. And Kettering had died insane, which in the final analysis placed his ideas in a suspicious light.

After his first reactions, Delmar

shrugged the incident aside. What Glasser and Plimsoll thought mattered nothing to him. He threw himself back into his experiments.

One afternoon a week later Delmar stood before the switchboard in the library, watching meter faces. The hum of generators filled the room. Flickering needles told him the old, familiar story of failure, and his shoulders sagged with the deathly weariness he had been fighting back.

He was convinced now that the experiments were futile. He simply did not know enough. He had allowed himself to accept inferences as facts, and had gambled on sheer chance to show him the road to success. He knew now that the odds were too high.

More time was needed. He had to begin all over, to dig back into Arnold Kettering's notebooks for the all-important details he had missed.

Time... *time!* In despair he turned to gaze at the window picture of Lorna, and it seemed to him that her smile had the quality of pity.

"I'm afraid," he whispered. "Afraid, Lorna. I have the feeling that time is playing against me."

He did not understand how. But he sensed that emotional forces were building up within him to the point of an explosion. There had been too much of hope and failure, too much of longings and disappointments.

A knock at the library door broke the humming stillness. Delmar stared at the panel for a moment, then crossed the room slowly. Instants later he found himself looking at Vivian. A small group of men stood behind her, and with a shock of recognition he saw that one of them was Glasser. The faces of the men had a grim purposefulness of expression that filled him with bewilderment and a dull alarm.

"Hello, John," Vivian said. Her dark eyes glittered with a nervous excitement. "Aren't you going to invite

us in?"

He stood aside to allow the group to file into the library. There were four of the men. Glasser avoided Delmar's eyes as he strode past.

"What is this all about?" Delmar demanded, turning to Vivian.

Her glance shifted evasively. "We might say it's for your own good, John."

"I don't get it," he said slowly. "Just what are you up to, Vivian? I thought I made it quite clear that I wouldn't stand for your meddling in what I chose to do."

"I think you're going to stand for it after all—whether you like it or not." She indicated Glasser. "You remember this man?"

Delmar nodded, and his eyes narrowed with understanding as they swung to Glasser's fleshy face. "This has something to do with the window."

"Not exactly," Glasser said. "I'm afraid my previous visit was in the nature of a ruse, Mr. Delmar. The window was not my reason for calling on you. It was merely a convenient pretext to engage you in conversation and . . . ah, to study you. I am, you see, a psychiatrist. Norton Plimsoll was a physician."

"Psychiatrist. . . ." Delmar's eyes returned to Vivian in dawning comprehension. His earlier alarm was now a hard pulsing in his chest.

Vivian said swiftly, "You've been allowing this silly picture window to drive you out of your head, John. I couldn't stand by and just let it happen. I've seen how strangely you've been acting. Mr. Glasser has seen it. And . . . well, I've obtained a court order to have you committed to a sanitarium. What you need is rest and quiet, John, don't you see?"

Her words washed over him. Beneath her outward nervousness he detected eagerness and triumph. Vivian, he realized with a chill touch of panic,

had played her cards well.

He had revealed his knowledge of her intimacy with Tod Sheldon. Evidently she had seen herself in danger of being divorced and cut off from his wealth. By having him legally declared insane and committed to an institution, she would obtain control over the money—indefinite control, for being committed might very well mean for life. Sanity or the lack of it would make very little difference, since bribes would keep him imprisoned as securely as in any jail. Vivian would be able to carry on her affair with Tod Sheldon in luxury and without interference.

Delmar knew now that he had been a fool to neglect his own opportunities. He should have carried out the original plans he had made with Blaine. By immersing himself in his experiments he had betrayed to Vivian the fact that he intended no immediate moves against her; and she had cunningly bided her time until he had become emotionally entangled and upset.

Now it was too late. He realized that he had no real defense. It would not be enough to show Kettering's notebooks as proof that his experiments had been mentally sound. Kettering's advanced ideas and his use of code would puzzle almost any scientist and lead inevitably to the conclusion that Delmar had become fully as mad as Kettering had been.

He saw himself hopelessly trapped, and a savage anger swept him. He started abruptly toward Vivian.

"You scheming, lying little devil! This is a rotten frame-up! You know it—and I'll make you admit it!"

She stepped backward in convulsive fright. The men about her jumped to intervene.

"Here, now!" one of them said. He was a burly man, obviously a male nurse. "No rough stuff."

"Stop him!" Glasser said. "He's

dangerous.”

With furious strength Delmar broke through the barrier of restraining arms. Vivian whirled to run deeper into the library, her face contorted in fear. What happened then happened very swiftly.

Vivian's foot caught in one of the cables that ran across the floor. In the next instant, with a choked scream, she was flying with outflung arms at the switchboard. The generators were still running; powerful currents existed at the various switchboard connections. Under the impact of Vivian's body it toppled. There was a flash of brilliant, blue-white light, the sharp odor of ozone—and Vivian lay twisted and still.

Delmar checked himself, staring, shocked out of his rage. For stunned instants a heavy silence filled the room. Then there were shouts as Glasser and the others ran forward.

“Get him!”

“He killed her!”

Delmar took a deep breath. Almost instinctively his eyes went to the window picture of Lorna, and he knew just what he had to do then. The electro-magnetic process was one of dynamic equilibrium, delicate balance. Upset that balance sharply, and—

Suddenly he discovered that he had been blind. He had been trying, in effect, to bring Lorna through a doorway. What Kettering had completely

overlooked, and what he himself had overlooked until now, was that the process was full reversible. The doorway was a doorway in more directions than one. And the process, after all, was self-sustaining.

Fingers closed on Delmar's arm. He twisted and struck out, and then, with a breathless, eager laugh, he was running across the gap that remained—plunging toward the window. His hurtling body went through the opening in the lattice-like framework around the window and was briefly silhouetted against the sunlit glass. Then he vanished in a burst of rainbow brilliance and a silvery peal of sound, like music.

With the others at his heels, Glasser hurried around the corner of the house. His eyes ran along the wall and found the empty rectangle where the window had been. Then his glance went to the ground immediately below.

“Looks like the guy got up and ran away somewhere,” one of the male nurses said.

“No, he didn't get up,” Glasser said slowly. He swept a hand at the moist black earth beneath the window. “You'll notice there's no glass here, no marks in the ground, no flowers crushed—nothing to show that a man fell. We saw Delmar jump through the window—but he never came out on this side.”

CRYSTALLINE POWER PLANT

★ By A. T. KEDZIE ★

IT IS NO NEWS that if you squeeze a crystal of quartz, you get electrical energy. Everybody who owns a phonograph knows that this is the commonest type of principle employed in the pick-up arm of the instrument.

The *piezo-electric* effect as it is called, stems from the work of Pierre Curie back in the eighteen eighties. It has since been

employed in many things ranging from radio frequency controls to phonographs as mentioned.

But we're going to hear a lot more about quartz crystals. For one thing, these precious hunks of crystalline sand can finally be made in the laboratory—and the factory—in generous sizes and quantities. The scarcity of Brazilian quartz made this dis-