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CORALEONE

~~THE STORY OF A BEAUTIFUL SPOOK~~

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THE SHIPWRECKED MARINERS.

IF there is anything about which the present generation is bewilderingly well informed it is the subject of spooks. Theories as to their nature are as plentiful as blackberries; instances of their appearing are as the sands of the sea-shore for multitude. It will soon become an honor not to have seen a spook, and the summit of distinction not to possess a grandmother who has seen one; while he who shall chronicle a new apparition will meet with the scorn due to one who should bring coals to Newcastle, owls to Athens, patriots to Ireland, or fools anywhere. I do not propose, therefore, to tell my simple tales because of any singularity in the spook with which I was for a time in close relation; the interesting part of the story relates to myself.

It was about two years ago that I first saw Coraleone. That was not her real name, indeed; but I am anticipating. I was living in New York, after having taken my degree at Harvard, and devoting myself nominally to law and really to literature. College life had been so pleasant to me that I had very nearly reproduced my college quarters in the set of chambers in which I lived, and by a similar imitation of my former customs I had at hand the absolute seclusion and quietude necessary to my work, and attainable in full perfection only when one is "sporting." Then, whenever I wanted society, I had my club and wide circle of friends; and so my existence had gone on in quiet prosperity for some years, when the event happened which threw me off my balance for a time, and perhaps permanently.

It was in the afternoon of a bright autumn day that my lively friend and former fellow-student, Janette, bounced into my room as I sat writing. Without a word he seized my hat from a peg and jammed it on to my head; then, hauling me out of my chair by the collar, he inserted my arms into the sleeves of a light overcoat, and pulled it on with a jerk that brought the tears to my eyes. He next thrust my umbrella into one hand and my gloves into the other, and began to drag me to the door. Not till then was I able to collect my senses enough to ask him where he wanted me to go.

"Where are we going?" he echoed, "We're going a-spooking, my boy! No heel-taps, no knee-raps but the real article above proof, appearing and vanishing," and he thrust a bill into my hands.

It was a small and modest announcement that Baron Patchoulitchine would show his power over spirits to a small and select company of his friends at a "Penumbra" seance. The tickets of admission were very expensive, I believe, but this was a detail that I usually left to Janette in such cases. The wonders announced seemed at first glance to be of the common type, and even the special attraction, the "materialized" spook, which was to appear, would be sufficiently well worn. I was returning the bill to Janette, with a strong expression of my disgust that he should drag me off to such an ordinary affair, when he called my attention to something which I had not read. The obliging spirit, "Coraleone" by name, was to manifest herself out of vacancy in full view of

the company, the medium being in another part of the room, and, after performing whatever was required of her, she would vanish not only out of the sight, but out of the hold of any persons selected by those present! Here certainly was something new, and either the spirit was genuine or the exhibitor had got hold of resources denied to ordinary conjurors. My mind was made up at once; I would go and either see something very unusual, or unmask a peculiarly impudent imposter.

We strode off together through the streets, Janette chattering away as usual about everything, and I racking my brains to find some mechanical contrivance by which the disappearance of a material body in full view could be effected out of the hands of a person of ordinary intelligence. I could not think of anything, try as I might. No arrangement of mirrors could loosen ones hold, nor could a stuffed glove deceive the eyes in full light. My mind was still running on this idea when Janette twisted me into the door of a large restaurant, pulled me up the stairs and ushered me into the secluded drawing room where Baron Patchoulitchine was to have his performance.

The company certainly was both small and select, about fifty in all, seated on chairs about the room. I noticed besides some literary ladies and gentlemen of my acquaintance, an American Countess whom I knew but slightly, and her companion, a bright, pretty girl, whom I knew much better, also a Bishop and one or two Professors. In the center of the room was the usual cabinet for the medium, a cupboard raised from the floor, of which the doors were open, disclosing a wooden chair. A small table with tambourines, slates and other necessary paraphernalia, was placed before the cabinet. All this I could see quite distinctly, for the twilight of the "penumbral" seance was only caused by the use of semi-transparent blinds of soft tints, admitting a tender light that suggested mystery, but did not leave anything in obscurity.

The *soi-disant* Baron was standing by the table, ready to begin. He was a

small, wiry man, with heavy, coarse black hair and eye-brows, and piercing black eyes. He seemed intensely nervous, twitching all over from time to time and casting his eyes restlessly around the room. When the last of the company had arrived, Patchoulitchine drew himself up and began his preliminary address. He spoke excellent English, and impressed me favorably by not allowing himself to drop into the nauseous sentimentality and inane floweriness of language that spiritualism so often seems to entail. Truth and sincerity may go with no taste and style at all, but seldom with a thoroughly bad taste and vicious style—at least, I have always thought so.

The Baron's address was brief; and he then proceeded to the business of the seance. The first marvels were of the usual kind, divining and answering messages, writing on a locked slate, summoning spirits to rap and write, playing instruments when tied up in the cabinet, and so forth. I took little interest in this, for I had seen it all before, and could have done some of it myself, but he was certainly very clever, and surpassed most of the mediums and conjurors that I have seen. The company were evidently well acquainted with this part of the seance, and seemed rather inclined to be bored; but several times they were surprised into applause.

There was a brief interval after the first part of the exhibition was over, and we got up and walked round, chatting with our friends and stretching our legs in preparation for the next period of sitting. Then we all took our places again, and Patchoulitchine reappeared. I was struck by the change in his manner. Hitherto he had been tremulously nervous, indeed, but cheerful and confident, as if what he was doing were mere child's play, with no risk of failure. Now, however, his nervousness seemed to have been mastered by a powerful effort of will; he was unnaturally calm and solemn, and even had an apprehensive air about him which made him prepared for something unusual. He was not acting now; evidently he

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himself believed in what he was about to show us.

He began, as before, by briefly describing the nature of Coraleone, his apparition. He explained the nature of that hierarchy of unseen things to which she belonged, and of which she was (according to him) one of the most distinguished members; he dwelt on his own labors and risk in acquiring the moral eminence which enabled him to control such exalted personages—and finally he invited the company, as a precaution against deceit, to choose where the spirit was to be materialized, and to hold the medium or secure him in any way they thought proper. After some discussion it was decided that Coraleone should appear in the center of the room, the cabinet having been wheeled to one side; and two of the gentlemen present were to hold the hands of the medium in a corner of the room as soon as he had made the necessary passes. Janette and I were chosen for this duty. We placed ourselves on either side of Patchoulitchine, and watched him closely as he sat in his corner. As I looked at him I saw the nervous trembling come over him violently—his black hair bristled, and his eyes gazed wildly out into vacancy. Then he began to mutter some incantation or charm, like nothing I had ever heard. Never did such uncouth words issue from human lips before; I could not imagine how the fellow's throat held out. It was no known tongue certainly that he spoke. Then he made strange gestures, as of one beckoning, entreating, commanding—and lastly, after one cry of "Coraleone" he dropped his hands at his side and we took hold of them.

Grasping the Baron firmly I looked out into the room. The Countess was just opposite me, and she wore a very incredulous expression. A minute passed, and another. I could feel that the medium was growing uneasy. Suppose he should have failed? His hands were nerveless and damp in mine, and he shivered; and partly from pity, partly from my own curiosity, I set my mind hard that the spirit should appear. Whether I had any share in the result

I do not know; but as I looked at the Countess a sort of mist or silvery vapor seemed passing in front of her. It grew and thickened as I gazed, hiding objects beyond it, and seemed to outline itself and fall in folds. Then the mist was touched with cloudy gold and faint rose; and, then, in a moment, the cloud took shape and was the figure of a woman, and Coraleone was before us! I seem to see her now, for she was always the same. She had the pure profile of an antique statue, in which forehead and nose formed one line, hardly deviating from straightness. A mass of golden hair was loosely coiled behind her head. She was dressed in a loose robe of lustrous white with long hanging sleeves, falling in fine folds around her; her feet, as I noticed, were bare, and exceedingly delicate in form, as if unused to touch the ground. There was a faint flush upon her cheeks, and her large grey eyes looked with something of wonder and something of appeal round our circle. She turned her head until her eyes met the medium's and mine, and then she was still, but I fancied that she was looking rather at me than at Patchoulitchine, though perhaps this was only my vanity.

Janette and I now released our captive and left him to continue his performance. He began by asking Coraleone, in a very humble tone, whether she was willing to help him, and when she bowed her head in answer, he told her to do certain trivial things, such as carrying a book across the room, and striking a tambourine, chiefly, I fancy, to impress the company with a sense of her substantiality, and convince them that she was no mere Pepper's ghost. These commonplace actions also served to accustom the spectators to the novel intruder; for at first they had been sitting with eyes and mouth wide open, some frightened, and all too much astonished to speak. When the Baron saw that his audience was once more capable of appreciating a higher flight, he asked Coraleone to give answers to messages handed up by anyone who chose. Janette, ever ready to break the ice, called for the winner of the next

university boat race. The spirit-woman extended her arm and beckoned, and suddenly, we could not see how, a sealed envelope dropped at our feet. Janette opened it, and out fell a note tied with a pretty little bow of dark blue ribbon. It was not his name, and there was a general laugh at his crest-fallen look, for he was well-known as over-zealous for the athletic honor of his university. Other questions followed, some verbal, some written on folded slips of paper, to which sealed and directed answers were returned. Only not a word would our fair spook utter, and I asked Patchoulitchine if we could have a song from her, he shook his head with an apprehensive air. "I cannot ask it," he said in a low and serious tone, "it is beyond my power."

We had now almost all preferred our requests, and received answers of some sort. I felt at first rather disappointed that the spirit was so un-supernatural, so unappalling; but after all this was only to be expected from a materialized spook. She could not abdicate her special character and yet retain it. It was now the turn of the Countess to ask some service or answer, and after some hesitation she demanded that the spirit should conform to the old forfeit rule, to "kneel to the prettiest, bow to the wittiest, and kiss the one that you love best." She was soon to repent of her boldness. She had expected, no doubt, to secure (as Janette would have put it) at least two of the events; but a little reflection would have shown her that it was dangerous to require flattery from a spook—especially from one of her own sex. Coraleone gave a quick glance round the expectant ring, and then moving noiselessly forward, knelt for a moment in front of the lady's companion, who cast a frightened, deprecating look at the Countess. Then she rose, glided round the circle, and inclined herself gracefully before the Bishop—and as she did so the Countess grew yellow. Once more the white figure stood erect, hesitating, while the pure color deepened in her cheeks; then with noiseless feet she passed on and came toward the medium, who still sat between my friend and my-

self. Doubtless she must acknowledge the superior attractions of her master and exhibitor.

But no—she paused in front of me and bent forward, and as I sat powerless, trembling all over with emotion that I could not describe, there came a touch of soft warm lips on my forehead.

I felt myself flush hotly, and I did not dare to look around. Coraleone also seemed embarrassed, if a spirit can be embarrassed; and nobody was sorry when the Baron arose and announced that the spook had done all that could be demanded, and would now vanish. But the manner of her vanishing was to be the greatest feat of all. Two persons chosen by the company were to hold or fasten the spirit in any way they chose; two others would secure the medium in the cabinet, and Coraleone would then vanish out of the ken and very grasp of her captors. The votes for the spook's guardian fell on the Countess (since we wished to make some amends for her late disappointment) and the Bishop, as the most paternal and proper; and Janette and I, as before, had the custody of the medium. While we arranged his chair in the cabinet and secured him to it, the other custodians settled, after a brief debate, that they would bind the materialized spirit with a cord, of which each would hold an end, and thus prevent all trickery. Coraleone consented with a contemptuous nod, and the Bishop thereupon held her slender wrists, while the Countess, with much gusto, proceeded to tie them together. Being in a thoroughly bad temper she drew the cord as tight as she could; and when the Bishop remarked that she was hurting her prisoner, she replied crossly that she did not believe "it" could feel anything, and that in any case she did not mean to let "it" get away by any acrobat's trick. The Bishop appealed to Coraleone. I could see her lips part; but she suddenly closed them again, and bent her head with wicked smile, from which I drew the conclusion that she was meditating a little surprise for the Countess.

After tugging at the last knot to her satisfaction the lady jailer fastened the

loose ends of the cord together, and took hold with both hands of the loop, as did the Bishop; and we, having secured Patchoulitchine to his chair, closed the door of the cabinet on him and retired to our seats.

I kept my eyes still on Coraleone, who was standing motionless between her captors. Suddenly the doors of the cabinet flew open, and a large tambourine was hurled crashing into our midst. Everyone started and looked at it; I started, too, but did not take my eyes off the spook. I saw a shiver run up her dress and her whole form. Her robe became misty and undefined; her feet disappeared from the carpet; her flushed cheeks and golden hair were like a sunset cloudlet for a moment, and then were gone. Simultaneously there came the sound of two ringing slaps, and the Countess screamed and put her hands to her face—or would have done so had it been possible. But though the ends of the cord were still knotted, and the loop remained in the Bishop's hands, by some occult power, Coraleone in freeing herself had also bound her captor, and the Countess's wrists were, if anything, more tightly fettered than her prisoner's had been.

She stood, the helpless picture of rage, misery and confusion, while we flocked around to examine this curious instance of spookical revenge; and when at length the Bishop tried to untie his colleague, so hard were the knots that he had finally to borrow a knife and cut her loose.

Once released, she hastily drew her gloves over the blue marks on her wrists, put down her veil to hide her burning cheeks, and simply plunged out of the room, followed by her companion. The girl was evidently frightened at the coming storm with her employer.

I heard afterwards that the Countess dismissed her companion as soon as she reached home.

Janette meanwhile had untied Patchoulitchine, who seemed much exhausted; and after warmly congratulating him, we took our leave.

II.

A few days after, I proposed to Janette that we should go and see Patchoul-

itchine and his spook again; but I heard from him that the Baron had given up the really original part of his entertainment, and was now exhibiting merely the same tricks as any common Mr. Sludge. His mysterious power over his spirit, whatever it might be, seemed to have gone from him; and I was left with a feeling of disappointment and loss which frightened me by its intensity. Whenever I let my thought rove I found myself recalling the brief hour for which I had seen Coraleone; her classic profile came between me and my manuscript, till I took to drawing Greek heads on the margin of my paper, as Theophile Gautier used to draw steeples. Gradually, however, the impresions wore off, and my old way of life took me again, and ruled my thoughts as well as my actions. I made up my mind that Coraleone was nothing to me, and I should never see her again. Here I was entirely wrong—but I will not anticipate.

One winter's day, when I came into my rooms in the evening, I was surprised to find my lamp burning, and not only burning, but smoking. I was greatly annoyed, for I had expressly charged my housekeeper, Mrs. Perrin, who alone, besides myself, had a key to my apartments, never to light the lamp before I returned. So after turning down the flame, I rang and asked rather crossly why she had lit my lamp. To my great surprise she denied having done so; and even when I showed her that the lamp had been smoking for some time, she persisted in her denial. I did not know what to think, for I had always found her scrupulously truthful; so I merely dismissed her with a strong recommendation not to let it occur again.

A few days later, as I was coming in, the housekeeper met me on the stairs, and at once announced in a low voice, "If you please, sir, a lady has called to see you, and she is waiting in your room."

I was surprised, for I had no female relatives, and it was a singular thing for anyone but a relative to call alone.

"Who is she, and what is she like?" I asked

"A tall young lady, very fine looking,

in a white dress, and with no hat on, which she never gave her name at all, sir," she answered; "And when I told her you was out, she said she would wait in your room, and I showed her in."

"You showed her in," I repeated severely. "An unknown woman without a hat—do you want everything stolen from my rooms?"

The old lady became almost tearful, "I knew you'd be angry, sir," she snuffed, "but when I told her so, she laughed and gave me a look, and I don't know why, sir, and that's the truth, but I let her in like a lamb and then I shut the door after her; and because I thought she might be after something wrong, sir, I've sat in the room opposite with the door open, and freezing cold, too, watching of your door, and she's in there still, and I'm sure I beg your pardon, sir."

As she spoke I suddenly heard from my room, indistinct through the thick outer door, the notes of a song, and I stood back and listened. Evidently the mysterious lady WAS in there still. The voice was a contralto, pure, rich and full, with the same thrill in it as stringed instruments have for me—something electric, that always moves me to the inmost of my nature. I could catch no words through the door. Suddenly the notes grew fainter, and were silent. Now was the time to act. I quickly inserted and turned my latch-key, and opening the outer door, cautiously flung the inner door back and burst into my room.

There was no one there at all.

The candles were alight, as the house-keeper had put them for the visitor. My piano was open—I had left it shut. The arm-chair was drawn up to the fire, and its cushions disarranged; one was lying on the floor as if for a footstool. But where was the owner of the voice I had heard? I took up a candle and looked in the cupboard and under the sofa and tables; nothing at all. Then I passed into the bedroom and my small study and examined them carefully: again nothing, and no place where even a rat could hide.

"There is nobody here, Mrs. Perrin," I said; "Perhaps the lady tried the win-

dow or chimney while we were at the door."

The windows were all shut and fastened inside; two rooms had bright fires in them, and in the bedroom the fireplace was blocked by an ornamental board which had obviously not been disturbed. It was rather uncanny, and I hardly liked to dismiss Mrs. Perrin; but she was so evidently scared and anxious to go, that I gave her leave. Then I sat down to my writing again, but I could not fix my thoughts to the story I was writing at, and to have something to do I began sorting the loose papers on my desk. Suddenly I came upon a small envelope of a very pretty pink color, sealed in golden wax with a very curious geometrical hieroglyph. I turned the missive over and over before I opened it; it was not directed, and when I cut it at length, I drew out a small sheet of paper, inscribed in gold with the most extraordinary and erratic marks I ever saw. Runic, Chinese, Arabic, were nothing to it; it meandered about the paper in the wildest manner, up, down, left, right, as if traced by a drunken stylograph. I stared and stared, but could not make out one letter of any alphabet I knew. Was I losing my senses? I called up Mrs. Perrin again, and questioned her closely whether she had seen the note before. She had not seen it, and could make no more of it than I. Finally, in despair, I rushed out again, got in at the fag-end of a concert of some kind somewhere, found a friend, went to supper with him, walked half round New York to get home, and arrived so dead beat that I simply flung myself on my bed and slept like a log. I was really afraid to go to my rooms till I had tired myself out of the possibility of being frightened.

I was not troubled again for some time by any intruder; but a fresh annoyance developed itself—a sort of mental trouble, I thought, arising from the late mysterious event. When I was sitting alone in my study I used to be overpowered by the sense of a presence in the room, as if some one were close to me, and yet impalpable. Sometimes the sensation was so strong that it drove

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me from my work; sometimes I con-
 quered it and succeeded in abstracting
 myself from all thought but that of my
 subject. But so constant did this perse-
 cution become, that one day in February,
 when I had settled down for a long
 evening's work, and was once more pes-
 tered by this haunting, irrational feeling,
 I laid down my pen, resolved to put an
 end to my trouble.

"If there is any being here except
 myself, I call upon that being to appear."

I said these words resolutely, though
 with a consciousness of the ridiculous
 nature of my command, and I accompa-
 nied them with a strong and sustained
 effort of my will. There was no sound
 in the room; and as I sat I thought I
 had only made a fool of myself, to no
 purpose, but happily with no hearers.

As this reflection passed through my
 mind I happened to look at my fire-
 place, and on the broad, low bar of the
 polished fender, I saw something pink,
 which I could not make out, like a flake
 of mist clinging there, and lit by the
 ruddy firelight. I bent forward and
 glared over my table at the object. Un-
 der my glance it seemd to take shape,
 and I recognized with a mingled feel-
 ing of curiosity and terror the outline
 first of one and then another small and
 delicate foot, resting lightly on the fen-
 der, and apparently warming their dain-
 ty toes at the blaze. When I recovered
 my senses sufficiently to cast my eyes
 higher and discover to what these feet
 were attached, I saw that my arm chair
 was occupied by a sort of white mist,
 rapidly becoming defined and opaque.
 A hand dawned out of the mist by the
 side of the chair, and finally, the top of
 the cloud was kindled to gold; and be-
 fore I could utter a sound in my aston-
 ishment, a face, crowned by a mass of
 golden hair, shone on me like a sunrise.

There was no mistaking that classic
 profile, those great, grey wondering eyes
 —it was Coraleone.

She sat in the arm chair, solid and
 palpable enough, in an attitude whose
 careless grace a sculptor would have
 given his life to catch, looking with a
 slight smile at my bewilderment; then,
 when I had recovered a little from my

amazement, she opened her lips, and for
 the first time I heard her speak, and re-
 cognized the same thrilling voice I had
 caught through the door.

"You did not expect to see an acquaint-
 ance, Frank," she said, using my Chris-
 tian name in the most familiar way possi-
 ble; "I fear I frightened you."

"Oh, not at all—I am delighted to see
 you, Cora—that is, Miss—I don't know
 what you prefer to be called."

She sighed daintily.

"I suppose you must call me Cora-
 leone," she said, "It isn't my real name,
 but only what that wretched Patchoul-
 itchine called me. I have a very nice
 name, too, one of the prettiest I ever
 heard; but I don't know why when it
 is projected the section consists only of
 consonants and a few Arabic gutturals,
 and Patchoulitchine used to say it sound-
 ed like a man trying to talk bad Welsh
 on a channel steamer. It is such a pity,
 for it is a very pretty name—and I don't
 like Coraleone, or any of your names.
 They are not distinctive enough. Cora-
 leone might have been the section of a
 whole family of names, and all of them
 ugly"—and she sighed again.

I felt that my brain was reeling with
 the attempt to understand her speech,
 which seemed half sense half nonsense,
 like something heard in a dream.

"Coraleone," I exclaimed, "Do try to
 tell me what it all means. What do you
 mean by PROJECTING your name?
 Am I asleep, or what is it all about?
 How do you contrive to appear and van-
 ish in this way?"

She smiled, as if greatly amused at
 my bewilderment.

"Why, don't you see, Frank? I'M
 IN FOUR DIMENSIONS, and when
 I appear, of course, I have only to pro-
 ject myself into three, and here I am—
 that is, I used to be able to do so once,
 but now, oh dear," and she sighed again
 deeply.

I was touched with her grief, though
 I did not know in the least what she
 was sighing for. I rose from my chair,
 went round to her seat, and kneeling be-
 side her, took one of her hands in mine
 and kissed it. She did not attempt to

withdraw her hand, and seemed pleased by my sympathy.

"Dear Coraleone," I murmured, "tell me all about it, please. I should be glad to help you. I am a lawyer, too, and if anyone has been annoying you, or if there is any complication—"

She laughed long and musically—and then, with sudden contrition, threw her disengaged arm around my neck, and bent to kiss me.

"Forgive me, Frank," she said, "but you men are so funny. I don't think you need trouble to prosecute Patchouitchine, for he will be punished soon enough; and I don't think, either, you could plead against one of the Patriarchs—" she broke off suddenly and shuddered. "Oh, no," she whispered in a hurried, frightened manner, "I did not mean to mention them. Don't speak of them, please, Frank."

"Never mind, dear," I answered soothingly, "no one shall touch you while I am here."

"Oh, you don't know," she answered, still in a whisper, "you could not save me, I could not help you, if THEY were to come. I can't tell you about it now but when you know—you did ask me to tell you all about myself, did you not, Frank?"

Coraleone's very affectionate demeanor might have seemed rather forward in an ordinary mortal, but in her it was somehow no more than I expected. After all she must know that although I had only seen her once before, I was deeply in love with her; and knowing this she felt bound to acknowledge that she reciprocated the feeling. I passed a protecting arm about her and she told her story, which I give without interruptions—there were interruptions.

"Yes, Frank I am in four dimensions, when I am in my usual health. WE always reckon by fours. You have heard of a four dimension space, dear, have you not? A space in which one can get out of the room without opening the door just as easily as you can walk out of a circle chalked on the floor, by stepping over it without touching it. Frank, when I was well, I could do with your room just what you could do with the

circle. And so I would appear and disappear as I chose—we can all do it—by simply walking into your space, just as you can appear in a world that is all on the surface. But now—oh dear, it is humiliating to say it—I HAVE LOST CONTROL OF MY DIMENSION. Among our better classes, Frank, it is thought rather foolish, but not wrong, to materialize ourselves, as the Baron called it; and the family specters, who do it for good ends, are often highly respected. Appearing to a medium even is not blamed very much, and some of the best connected spooks have done it lately, just as your aristocracy, I heard someone say, are going on the stage. But some spirits go much further; they are always materializing themselves for a low class of mediums, and even when invisible they rap and ring bells and lend themselves to all sorts of disreputable things. We call them habitual materialists, and we have asylums for them. The mediums call them by silly names—Jim and Jack and Kitty and Fay and they really like it all, poor wretches. But I didn't, as you saw, Frank. I used to go at first just to help Patchouitchine, for he was poor, and I was sorry for him; and when I tired of it he got some horrible influence over me, and I could not help myself without calling them in—the five dimension spooks—the Pentarchs." This in a low, frightened whisper. "But at last it grew too hard to bear, and I asked for help and was freed from the Baron. Would you like to see how he will be punished?"

She beckoned, and a white cloudlet appeared in the room, which took shape and dropped as a newspaper. I picked it up and found that it was the *Herald*, apparently moist from the press and dated three months ahead. One of the leading articles was framed in red ink, and the journal was folded so as to show that only. It gave the usual polysyllabic inflation of the account of the mysterious death of a medium calling himself a Baron. He had been tied in his cabinet as usual, and when the doors opened, he was found strangled, having apparently wound a turn of the cord with which he was bound round his

neck, and tightened it by his struggles. The most singular fact in the case was, the journal stated, that though a surgeon pronounced life to have been extinct for some time before the death was discovered, THE PERFORMANCE HAD BEEN GOING ON AS USUAL UP TO THE MOMENT WHEN THE DOORS WERE OPENED.

As soon as I had read this Coraleone waved her hand, and the paper disappeared before I could catch any other items of news. I was appalled at the idea of a man going about with his death-sentence registered and his obituary already written; but Coraleone went on with her story as if such a matter were quite a commonplace occurrence.

"I was rid of him then, Frank, but I had not been free long before I found out a terrible thing. I could no longer control my fourth dimension. At any moment I might become as I am now, and at moment return to my usual state. It was frightful to feel materialization coming on, and not to have any place to go to. Happily, I thought of taking refuge with you, Frank. Perhaps you may think that I should have gone to a lady, but I knew no one except that Countess and the girl who was with her. I could not have anything to do with that creature again and as for the girl—Frank, do you know, she has been dismissed, and does not know what to do; and, dear, I think she is rather fond of you. You ought to marry her some day."

I started back in mingled grief and indignation.

"Coraleone," I exclaimed, "you know I only care for you, and never can care for anyone else. How can you be so cruel?"

She smiled sadly, and stroked my hair with a caressing hand.

"That is all very well, Frank," she said; "and you are good to say so; but I shall be going away soon, and you will not see me again, and then you will need someone else—and when you do, dear, here is her address."

She extended her hand, signed in the air, and a little card came fluttering

down and settled in the frame of my looking-glass over the mantelpiece.

"And now," said Coraleone, lightly checking my protestations, "I will go on with my story. The first time I came here, I got in before I was materialized, and stayed here some hours. I lit your lamp to read by, and I fear I left it too high—I did not expect to vanish so soon. Then some days after, I was caught by the first symptoms some way from your house, and I could not get in before I was materialized, and I had to wait outside till the house keeper let me in. Oh, how cold my feet were on the stairs, Frank. I thought I should cry with pain. Your fire was so delightfully warm when I did get in—but I am afraid I frightened the house keeper, poor old soul—and you, too, Frank, for the matter of that. I could not help it, dear, I was singing, and when you burst in the shock or something brought back my dimension in a moment, and I disappeared—it was so silly, just when I wanted to stay and explain. I left a note for you, but perhaps you could not read it."

I assured her that I had done my best but failed.

"I don't wonder," she said, laughing merrily, "Poor Frank, trying to read a section of OUR writing. I quite forgot in the hurry to use your language. After that, seeing what alarm and trouble I caused you, I didn't wish to show myself, and I used to slip in here before the seizures came, and when I was materialized I hid in your other room, but when you called for me to appear I was in here, and thought I would stay; and somehow your will seemed to bring on the change, and I found myself sitting in your chair. That is all my story, and I hope you don't think very badly of me, Frank."

I tried to prove to her, not by words alone, how much I admired and respected her; but there was something more that I wanted to find out.

"Coraleone," I asked, "What did you mean just now by saying that you would leave me soon and perhaps not see me again? Why should we have to part?"

"I will try to tell you," she answered,

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Her voice faltered and failed. I looked up from the hand I was fondling, only to see a mist drifting from the chair; I looked down again and the hand was gone.

III.

My spook had vanished again, and I was left in doubt whether I should ever have another visit. Though I sometimes seemed to feel a presence in my room, I was some days without any manifestations. I stayed in constantly; but in vain, and I began to fear that Coraleone was lost to me. But one evening, as I was sitting writing, I had occasion to take a volume from my revolving book-case, and for that purpose I swung it round. I was then surprised to see the book-case, instead of slacking its pace and stopping, begin to revolve swiftly and still more swiftly, till half my books were flung out on the floor. I instinctively stretched out my hand to stop the erratic piece of furniture; but before I reached it my fingers met and closed over something warm and soft. I looked at it, and it was a foot; and the next moment, out of a hovering white mist dawned Coraleone, seated on the top of the book-case with her feet dangling over the side, and smiling at me.

"Hold my foot for a moment, Frank," she said, "I am going to get down," and she rested a hand on my shoulder and let me lift her to the floor. Then, after rewarding me with a kiss, she took her old place by the fire.

"I thought I should never get back to see you and to be seen by you, dear," she said. "You see, I can't materialize myself when I wish, now. I had not time to tell you then that I had to go in for a course of treatment that is meant to destroy my power of projection altogether. Involuntary materialization is looked on as an ailment among us; and indeed, I wanted to be rid of the tendency myself, for I might have got into all sorts of awkward predicaments if the fit took me suddenly. If I had appeared in the streets for instance, I should have been shut up for an escaped lunatic; and I could never be sure of reaching you

in time, Frank. Still, I shall be very sorry when I can't come any more. I am very fond of you, dear, but THEY would never allow me to stay."

"Coraleone," I suggested, "could you not reverse the treatment and recover your old power of appearing when you liked. Why should not your Pentagons or Pentacles, or whatever you call them, allow that? It seems much the fairest course."

She shook her golden head. "No, no," she answered, "I don't know whether THEY could do it—perhaps they could; but they never would, never. What we are to you, THEY are to us, but they rule us as we never try to rule you. Even if I were in four dimensions now, a Pentarch might be close to me, and I should never know it unless he chose—and they are terribly strict. I dare not offend them."

"Well, then," I persisted, "Would you think it very terrible to be materialized for good and all, Coraleone, and be my wife? I would try to make you happy, far happier than you would be in your dimensions, I should think. I am not a jealous, strict, five dimension spook to rule you with a rod of iron."

"Hush," she whispered, laying a finger on my lips, "they may be hearing you. Don't offend them if you value your life. Remember how poor Patchoulitchine was punished ten weeks hence—no, how he will be punished ten weeks ago—oh, dear, you know what I mean. I would not mind doing it for you, dear, if I could; though you cannot understand—of course not—what a mesalliance the other spooks would think it. But I don't mind that, Frank. Only I should have to disobey the Pentarchs, break all their laws, defy their power and surprise their secrets; and if I failed, it would be a long misery for me, and a great danger for you. Don't ask me, Frank, for I should try to do it if you asked me. Give me up and forget me, and go take care of that poor girl who has no friends now—" and she began to sob.

I ought to have yielded to Coraleone's beautiful unselfishness, I know, but I could not help myself. Her beauty was

enhanced ten-fold by her grief; her eyes shone deeper for her tears, and the pathetic tremor of her lips, made me long to kiss away her trouble. My passion carried me away. I knelt beside her, kissing her hands and pouring out an incoherent flood of words, adjouring her with tears not to leave me, but to stay ever by me as my goddess, my bride—to trust to my love and protection, and to cast off and defy the tyranny of five dimensions. I even ridiculed the idea that the dreaded Pentarchs could do much. Four dimension spooks had hardly any effect, I said, on our three dimension world; and only superstitious and silly people ever obeyed them in anything. Let the lower dimensions rise in revolt against their tyrants, proclaiming the liberty of individuals and the inalienable right of every free-born spook to choose how many dimensions he would have.

My energy and passion overcame Coraleone's fear, or her duty. She was carried away by my eloquence—fool, miserable fool that I was, I had conquered, she whispered to me, and she would be mine and descend to the world, if she could do it—and she would find out a way. If need were, she would conspire with disaffected spooks, and head a desperate band to free the wretched beings now confined to keep them from willing slavery to mediums. Like a true woman, she was ready to trample upon all laws of all dimensions, and upset the whole social order and established hierarchy of spookdom, if only she could please the man she loved; and I in my selfish madness and conceit was ready to let her do it. I cannot excuse myself except by saying again that I could not help myself; and how often do we find the man who will abstain from asking for the woman he loves, because he fears his nature may drag her down.

The fatal resolution was taken. I will not go into the wild plans we formed for overthrowing all obstacles to what we deemed our happiness. There is something painful and humiliating in the very thought of them. The time flew by, and Coraleone at last felt the premonitory symptoms of her return to four dimensions. With a woman's caprice, she insisted on vanishing from the

top of the book-case. I lifted her up, and we said farewell; and then, as before, her golden hair grew vaporous, her white robe flowed away in mist, and last of all the little feet seemed to melt away beneath my kisses. I stood looking at the empty space she had occupied, when there was a shriek, and Coraleone seemed to rush back into sight and feeling, as if driven out of the spirit world by some mighty repulsion.

"Oh, Frank," she gasped, as she clung to me tightly, "Save me. There was a Pentarch near us all the while. He has come into four dimensions after me. Oh, oh, he is coming into THREE."

It was too true. One of the jealous tyrants whose downfall we had fondly plotted, had been listening to our treasonable talk; and now, for my sins, I saw what no mortal before me ever knowingly saw—the section of a five-dimension spook. It was terrible beyond all powers of description. Whether Pentarchs in their native state are majestic as befits their power, I do not know; but I do know that their projection is pure monstrosity. I seemed encircled by vague ghastly shapes, writhing, slimy, phosphorescent, unspeakably loathsome, coiling and lashing round me like the tentacles of a Kraken. Then the lamp was overturned, the fire scattered and all was hideous darkness. I was fighting wildly, despairingly, against something I could not seize, could not wound. I felt Coraleone's arms round my neck still; but suddenly they relaxed—or did their clasp dissolve into vacancy. Yet still I struck out at random till my senses failed me and I fell.

When I awoke from a long swoon, in the chill grey light of early morning, my room was a desolation, as if a herd of wild buffaloes or the guests of a bump supper had been let loose there. Every single piece of furniture had been broken in pieces and hurled into a heap of tangled rubbish.

My mirror was shattered; frame and glass alike; but poised on top of the mound of ruin, untorn, was the card bearing the name and address of the girl that I knew.

Was it chance, or Coraleone's last message to me? I do not know, for I never saw my spook again.

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