

# The DESTROYING ANGEL

By Louis Joseph Vance

## CAN YOU SOLVE LOVE'S PUZZLE?

What is love, anyhow? Is it, in the case of husband and wife, respect and admiration of certain spiritual qualities? Or, in your experience, is it pure physical attraction between a certain man and a certain woman—with respect and admiration as side lights?

Do you believe that an intelligent woman would love enough to live with him, the man who years previously had married her just to save her good name as a girl and then had disappeared? That is the problem confronting Sara Law, the great actress, in "The Destroying Angel."

Hugh Whitaker, you remember, was given just six months to live, by eminent surgeons. He discovered a decent young woman in trouble—her honor at stake. "One good deed before I go," he said; "I'll marry this frightened child, and give her my respectable name. Then I'll go off somewhere and wait for the end." This he did—and five years later turned up in New York from Australia, prosperous and healthy, and started a hunt for the girl of other days.

He discovers her in Sara Law, and mutual recognition across the footlights stops a play. Martin Ember, former detective, comes to Whitaker and tells amazing facts. A big mystery looms in this installment.

## CHAPTER VII—Continued.

"And you found her and told Drummond?"

Whitaker leaned over the table, studying the man's face with intense interest.

"No—and yes. I found Mrs. Whitaker. I didn't report to Drummond."

"But why—in heaven's name—didn't you?"

Ember suited himself at the drooping ash of his cigar. "There were several reasons. In the first place I didn't have to; I had asked no retainer from Drummond, and I rendered no bill."

"What I had found out was mine, to keep or to sell, as I chose. I chose not to sell because—well, because Mrs. Whitaker begged me not to."

"Ah," Whitaker breathed, sitting back. "Why?"

"This was all of a year, I think, after your marriage. Mrs. Whitaker had tasted the sweets of independence and got the habit. She had adopted a profession looked upon with abhorrence by her family. She was already successful in a small way, had little need of the money she would get as claimant of her estate. She enlisted my sympathy, and—I held my tongue."

"That was decent of you."

The man bowed a quiet acknowledgment. "I thought you'd think so."

"There was a third reason?"

He paused, until Whitaker encouraged him with a "Yes?"

"Mr. Whitaker—the query came point-blank—'do you love your wife?'"

Whitaker caught his breathers. "Right—right," he began, and checked abruptly. The blood darkened his lean cheeks.

"Mrs. Whitaker came me to understand that you didn't. It wasn't pleasant to perceive everything considered, that your motive was pure chivalry—quixotism. I should like to go to my grave with anything half as honorable and unselfish as my credo."

"I beg your pardon," Whitaker muttered thickly.

"Love her, then?"

"Love her? No."

There was a slight pause. Then, "I do," said this extraordinary man, meeting Whitaker's gaze openly. "I do," he repeated, flushing in his turn, "but . . . helplessly . . . However, that was the third reason."

Whitaker rose, and in a more level voice—"I thought you ought to know about it—that induced me to keep Sara Law's secret. . . . I loved her from the day I found her. She has never looked truer to me."

But that's why I never lost interest."

"You mean," Whitaker took him up diffidently—"you continued to—ah—?"

"Court her—as we say?"

Ember's shoulders, lifting, emphasized the disclaimer. "I'm no fool. I have had the sense not to invite the thunderbolt. She doesn't know it, unless Max told her against my wish; but I was I who induced him to bring her before the public, four years ago, as Joan Thursday. Since then her destiny has been rather too big a thing for me to tamper with; but I've watched and pondered, sending forces at work about her of which even she was unsuspecting."

"What in blazes do you mean?" Whitaker demanded, mystified.

"Did it strike you to wonder at the extraordinary mob her farewell performance attracted tonight?"

"Why—yes. It struck me as rather unusual. But then, Max had done nothing but tell me of her tremendous popularity."

"That alone, great as it is, wouldn't have brought so many people together to stare at the outside of a theater. The magnet was something stronger—the morbid curiosity of New York. Those people were waiting, thrilled with expectancy, on tip-toe for the sensation that presently came to them: the report of Drummond's death."

"What the devil—?"

"Patience! This is the third time it has happened—the same thing, practically: Sara Law on the verge of leaving the stage to marry, a fatal accident intervening. Did Max by any chance mention the nickname New York has bestowed on Sara Law?"

"Nickname? No?"

"They call her 'The Destroying Angel.'"

"What for?"

"Yes; but what coincidence. Three men loved her—and one by one they died. And now the fourth. Do you wonder . . . ?"

"It isn't, blame—it's superstition. Listen . . ."

Ember beat forward, holding Whitaker's gaze with intent, grave eyes. "The first time," he said in a rapid undertone, "was a year or so after her triumph as Joan Thursday. There were then two men openly infatuated with her, a boy named Custer, and a man I believe you knew—William Hamilton."

"I knew them both."

"Custer was making the pace; the announcement of his engagement to Sara Law was confidently anticipated. He died suddenly; the coroner's jury decided that he had misjudged the intentions of a loaded revolver. People whispered a suicide, but it didn't look quite like it."

Hamilton stepped into his place. Presently we heard that Sara Law was to marry him and leave the stage. Hamilton had to go abroad on business; on the return trip the wedding was set for the day after he landed here—he disappeared, no one knew how. Presumably he left overboard by accident one night; some men with everything in the world to live for do such things, you know—according to the newspapers."

"I understand you. Please go on."

"Approximately eighteen months later a man named Thurston—Mitchell Thurston—was considered a dangerous aspirant for the hand of Sara Law. He was exceedingly well fixed in a money way—a sort of dilettante architect, with offices in the Metropolitan tower. One day at high noon he left his desk to go to lunch at Martin's; crossing Madison square, he suddenly felt dead, with a bullet in his brain. It was a rifle bullet, but though the square was crowded, no one had heard the report of the shot, and no one was seen carrying a rifle. The conclusion was that he had been shot by somebody using a gun with a Maxim silencer, from a window on the south side of the square. There were no clues."

"And now Drummond?" Whitaker exclaimed in horror. "Four fellow! Four women!"

A slightly sardonic expression modified the lines of Ember's mouth. "So far as Mrs. Whitaker is concerned," he said with the somewhat portentous mode of speech which Whitaker was learning to associate with his moments of most serious concentration—"I echo the sentiment. But let us suspend judgment on Drummond's case until we know more. It is not as yet an established fact that he is dead."

"You mean there's hope?"

"There's doubt," Ember corrected acridly—"doubt, at least, in my mind. You see, I saw Drummond in the flesh, alive and vigorous, a good half hour after he is reported to have leaped to his death."

"Where?"

"Coming up the stairs from the downtown subway station in front of the Park Avenue hotel. He wore a hat pulled down over his eyes and an old overcoat buttoned tight up to his chin. He was carrying a satchel bearing the initials C. S. D., but was otherwise pretty thoroughly disguised, and I fagged, anxious enough to escape recognition."

"You're positive about this?"

"The man was Carter S. Drummond. I don't think I can be mistaken."

"Which way did he go?"

"Toward the Pennsylvania station. I fancy; that is, he turned west through Thirty-third street. I didn't follow—I was getting into taxi when I caught sight of him."

"But what did you think to see him disguised? Didn't it strike you as curious?"

"Very," said Ember dryly. "At the same time, it was none of my affair—then. Nor did it present itself to me as a matter worth meddling with until, later, my suspicions were aroused by the scene in the theater—obviously the result of your appearance there—six and a half years later."

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ing possible explanations. There's a third."

"Well?"

"He may have received a strong hint that he was nominated for the fate that overtook young Custer, Hamilton and Thurston; and so planned to give his disappearance the color of a similar accident."

"You don't mean to say you think there was any method in that train of tragedies?"

"I'm not in the least superstitious, my dear man. I don't for an instant believe, as some people claim to, that Sara Law is a destroying angel, hounded by a tragic fate: that her love is equivalent to the death warrant of the man who wins it."

"But what do you think, then?"

"I think," said Ember slowly, his gaze on the table, "that someone with a very strong interest in keeping the young woman single—and on the stage—"

"Max! Impossible!"

Ember shrugged. "In human nature no madness is impossible. There's not a shred of evidence against Jules Max."

And yet—he's a gambler. All the theatrical managers are, of course; but Max is a card-fake. The tale of his plunging runs like wildfire up and down Broadway, day by day. A dozen times he's been on the verge of ruin, yet always he has had Sara Law to rely upon; always he's been able to fall back upon that asset, sure that her popularity would stave off bankruptcy."

And he's superstitious; he believes she is his mascot. I don't accuse him—I suspect him, knowing him to be capable of many wild extravaganzas."

Furthermore, it's a fact that Max was a fellow-passenger with Billy Hamilton when the latter disappeared in mid-ocean."

Ember paused and sat up, preparatory to rising. "All of which," he concluded, "explains why I have treasured upon your patience and your

Champion Shorthorn Cow.

their cream layer is generally quite thin. Accordingly it often tastes much better than one would suppose from the depth of the cream layer. Jerseys, Guernseys and Shorthorns give milk with larger fat globules, and therefore their cream separates and churns more thoroughly than that of the Holstein and Ayrshire.

Appalling Loss of Cream Due to Universal Tendency of Operator to Work Machine Slowly.

At Purdue university the experiment station collected and published a lot of data showing the appalling loss in cream due to the universal tendency of separator operators to turn the machine too slowly. Their bulletin No. 218, volume 13, was a revelation to many, many dairymen, who had been losing anywhere up to \$100 per year worth of butterfat, simply by turning their separators below speed.

At the fairly recent, a leading speedometer manufacturer had thousands of tests run to get further proofs positive that a great majority of operators turn the machines below speed. Over 95 per cent of the dairymen turned their machines too slow.

A majority turned them so far below speed that they were losing pounds and pounds of butterfat every week.

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held in any position and the liquid poured. An added feature consists of a cover which is adapted to overlay accurately the bottle top. A rearwardly projecting thumbpiece enables the user to lift the cover at will—Popular Mechanics.

DRY PASTURES RAISE PRICES

More General Use of Silos on Dairy Farms Would Have Many Babies in Large Cities.

Dry pastures have raised the price of milk in many cities this year, which means that many a poor little city baby has starved for lack of this life-giving fluid.

It is a long way from a slum baby to a silo, but the more general use of the silo on the dairy farm would have saved many little lives. Pastures are poor things to depend on in dry years.

GOOD FEED FOR DAIRY COWS

Sweet Clover is Rich in Nutritive Qualities and Does No Harm—Watch for Frosts.

Sweet clover has been found to be a good feed for dairy cows, not only in respect to its nutritive qualities, but because it is said not to bloat. There have, however, been cases recorded of bloating from eating sweet clover that has been frosted. Watch for this condition.

Friendship.

Doctor—Did you sleep well?

Patient—Not a wink.

Doctor—That is too bad. Sleep is our best friend and especially to the sick.

Patient—It is a friend like all the others who abandon you at the moment when one has most need of them.

—Medical Pickwick.

# DAIRY FACTS

## MORE BUTTERFAT IN CREAM

Shorthorns, Jerseys and Guernseys Give Milk With Larger Fat Globules Than Other Cows.

Toughness no more indicates richness in cream than it does in pastry. The more shortening in the pie-crust, up to a reasonable amount, the crisper and mellower it will be. The less butterfat in the cream, the less tough it will be as a general rule.

Milk of Holstein and Ayrshire cows usually has small fat globules, and

their cream layer is generally quite thin. Accordingly it often tastes much better than one would suppose from the depth of the cream layer. Jerseys, Guernseys and Shorthorns give milk with larger fat globules, and therefore their cream separates and churns more thoroughly than that of the Holstein and Ayrshire.



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Dear Mr. Yes!

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—Grey.



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