

# The DESTROYING ANGEL

By Louis Joseph Vance

## TO OUR FEMININE READERS

Young ladies, if you were living in a secluded neighborhood and discovered a respectable, nice-looking young man on an adjoining place watching you all day, would you notify the police or would you encourage a bit of flirtation just for curiosity? What one young lady did in such circumstances is told entertainingly in this installment.

You remember, Hugh Whitaker, thinking he was about to die, married an innocent girl to save her honor and departed immediately for the Southern seas. Five years later he returns to New York, healthy and wealthy, and finds the wife, now a famous actress known as Sara Law, engaged to marry Drummond, his old friend and partner. She disappears suddenly. Drummond supposedly commits suicide, as her previous lover had done. Whitaker is murderously assaulted in the dark and goes to the country home of his friend Martin Embury, near the sea. He discovers a mysterious spy there and thinks it is Drummond.

## CHAPTER X.

The Spy. Already the sun was warm, the faint breeze bland. Standing at the window and slandering his eyes against the glare, Whitaker surveyed the landscape. The washed and radiant, the indolent bay dimpled with vernal catpaws and sullied with sunlight as with a scintillar of fire; the earth fresh and fragrant, steaming faintly in the ardent glow of the dawn.

In another moment he was at the kitchen door, interrupting Sum Fat's first maternal attentions to his teeth with a demand for something to eat. Three minutes later, from the end of the small dock, he dived noisily, coming to the surface with his flesh tingling with delight of the cool water; then, with the deliberate and powerful movements of an experienced swimmer, struck away from the land. Two hundred yards out he paused, rolled over on his back, and hands clasped beneath his head, floated serenely, his light warming his upturned face, his body reclining in the suave, clean, fluid embrace.

Then something disturbed him—a dull fluttering, vibrant upon his submerged eardrums. Extending his arms and moving his hands gently to preserve his poise, he lifted his head from the water. From the landing stage on the Fliske place a motor boat was standing out. The churning of its propeller had aroused him. He could see but a single person for all its crew. Seated astern, dividing her attention between the side steering wheel and the engine, she was altogether ignorant of the onlooker. Only her head and shoulders showed above the coming—her head with its shining crown, her shoulders cloaked with a light wrap gathered at the throat.

Whitaker, admiring, wondered. . . . Sweeping in a wide arc as it gathered speed, the boat presently shot snarled on a straight course for the barrier beach.

Why? What business had she there? And at an hour so early? No affair of his—Whitaker admitted as much freely. And yet he was beginning his fourth day on the Great West bay without having set foot upon the Great South beach! Ridiculous oversight! And one to be remedied without another hour's delay.

Grinning with amused toleration of his own perverse sophistry, he turned over on his side and struck out in the wake of the motor boat. When at length he waded ashore he found the motor boat moored in shallow water at the end of a long and substantial dock. He patting the danks of the vessel as he waded on.

"Good little boat!" said he. Walking rapidly, very soon he stood at the head of a rude flight of wooden steps which run down from the top of a wave-crooked sand bluff, some ten or twelve feet in height, to the broad and gently shelving ocean beach. Midway between the sand bluff and the breaking waters stood the woman, Whitaker followed. (There wasn't any unmeaning term—he had followed her in his confounded, fatuous curiosity!) Her face was to the sea, her hands clasped behind her. Now the wind moved her cloak sweetly to her body, now whipped its skirts away, disclosing legs straight and slender and graciously upturned. She was dressed, it seemed, for bathing.

Whitaker turned to go, and turning left his gaze swept up from the beach and along the brow of the bluff. He paused, frowning. Some twenty feet or so distant the legs of a man, trousers and boots, protruded from a hollow in the beach, protruded from a hollow in the beach, protruded from a hollow in the beach.



Whitaker Closed in Promptly.

from his grasp. Then he brought up against solidly with a bump that seemed to expel every cubic inch of air from his lungs. And he heard himself cry sharply with the pain of his weak ankle newly twisted.

He sat up, gasping for breath, brushed the sand from his face and eyes, and as soon as his whitening was settled a little, comprehended what had happened.

Half buried in the debris of a miniature landslide, he sat at the foot of the bluff. Immediately above his head a ragged beach showed where the sand, held together solely by beach grass, had given way beneath the weight of the bathers.

A little distance from him the other man was picking himself up, apparently unhurt but completely surfeited. Without delay, with not even so much as a glance at Whitaker, he staggered off for a few paces, then settled into a heavy, lumbering trot westward along the beach. He did not wish the woman to recognize him; therefore he was putting himself out of her way.

For she was approaching. When Whitaker caught sight of her, she was already close at hand. She had been running. Now as their glances met, her keenly inquiring eyes, she pulled up abruptly and stood astute.

He saw, or fancied, something closely akin to fright and consternation in her look. The flush in her cheeks gave way to a swift pallor. The hands trembled that drew her beach cloak close about her. She seemed to make an ineffectual effort to speak.

On his part, Whitaker tried to get up. A keen twinge in his ankle, however, wrung an involuntary grunt from him, and with a very grimace he sank back.

"Oh!" cried the woman, impulsively. "You're hurt!" She advanced a pace, solicitous and sympathetic.

"Oh, not much," Whitaker replied.

down, by night, and to swim over to the beach in her wake the next morning. But what right had anybody else to constitute himself her shadow? Besides, it was possible that the man was Drummond.

"He strode forward and stood over the man, looking down at his back. It was true, as he had guessed—the fellow was watching the woman. And his back was very like Drummond's. A little quiver of excitement mingled with anticipative satisfaction ran through him. Now, at last, the mystery was to be cleared up! His future relations with the pseudo-suicide defied and established.

Deliberately he extended his bare foot and nudged the man's ribs. "Drummond?" he said in a clear voice, decided but unaggressive. With an oath and what seemed a single, quick motion, the man jumped to his feet and turned to Whitaker with a startled and indignant countenance.

"What the devil!" he cried angrily. "Who are you? What do you want? What do you mean by coming round here and calling me Drummond?"

He was no more Drummond than he was Whitaker himself.

"For that matter"—something elicited in Whitaker's brain and subconsciously he knew that his temper was about to take the wrong—what was he saying on that holy point?"

I, being indisputably none of his concern, the unfairness of the question only left it offensive force. The man made this painfully clear through the medium of an intolerable epithet and an attempt to land his right fist on Whitaker's face.

The face, however, was elsewhere when the fist reached the point for which it had been aimed; and Whitaker closed in promptly as the fellow's body followed his arm, thrown off balance by the momentum of the unobstructed blow.

What followed had entered into the calculations of neither. Whitaker felt himself suddenly falling through air, thick with a blinding, choking cloud of dust and mud. The body of the other was simultaneously wrenched violently

"I don't seem to think of anything useful to say," he ventured. "Can you help me out? Unless you'd be interested in your name's Whitaker—Hugh Whitaker—?"

She acknowledged the information merely by a brief nod. "It seems to me," she said seriously, "that the pressing question is, what are you trying to do about that ankle? Shall you be able to walk?"

"Hard to say," he grumbled, a trifle dashed. With infinite pains and the aid of both hands and his sound foot, he lifted himself and contrived to stand erect for an instant, then bore a little weight on the hurt ankle—and blanched, paling visibly beneath his inscrutable tan.

"I don't suppose," he said with effort—"that I grow—crutches—on this neck of land?"

And he was about to collapse again upon the sands when, without warning, he found the woman had moved to his side and caught his hand, almost brusquely passing his arm across her shoulders, so that she received no little of his weight.

"Oh, I say—" he protested feebly. "Don't say anything," she replied shortly. "I'm very strong—quite able to help you to the boat. Please don't consider me at all; just see if we can't manage this way."

He endeavored to withdraw his arm, an effort rendered futile by her cool, firm grasp on his fingers.

"Please!" she said—not altogether patiently.

He eyed her askance. There was in this incredible situation a certain piquancy, definitely provocative, transcending the claims his injury made upon his interest. Last night for the first time he had seen this woman, and from a distance had thought her desirable; now, within twelve hours, he found himself with an arm round her.

And then suddenly she turned her head and intercepted his whole-hearted stare. For a thought wonder glimmered in the violet eyes; then they flashed disconcertingly; finally they flashed utterly cold and disdainful.

"Well," she demanded in a frigid voice.

"He looked away in complete confusion, and felt his face burning to the temples.

"I beg your pardon," he mumbled unhappily.

He essayed to walk. Twenty feet and more of treacherous, dry, yielding sand separated them from the light of the beach that ascended the bluff. It proved no easy journey.

The stairway accomplished, he limped to a wooden seat and sat down with much grim decision in his manner. But he had not time to settle to his work of concern, and shook his head.

"Thus far and no farther."

"Oh, but you must not be stubborn!"

"I mean to be as stubborn as a mule," he said, I don't mind warning you that there's a famous strain of mule in the Whitaker make-up."

She was, however, not to be deterred; and her fugitive frown bespoke impatience, if he were any judge.

Who do you think this girl is? And what is the purpose of her unrecognized spy? Do you think the girl knows Whitaker?

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## THE KITCHEN CABINET

Forget thyself; console the address near thee—  
Things can shall then depart,  
And songs of joy, like heavenly birds,  
shall cheer thee.  
And dwell within thy heart.

## CHRISTMAS CANDIES.

Christmas time would lack much in the pleasure of anticipation if we could not prepare our home-made candies. No other man knows that even the little people make them, or with the more elaborate kinds they may help in getting the materials ready for the candy-maker.

Brown Sugar Nut Candy.—Mix one pound of brown sugar and one pint of molasses with one teaspoonful of soda dissolved in a little water. Stir the ingredients until well mixed, then boil until the candy will harden when dropped in cold water. Remove from the fire and stir through it one pound of pecan nuts or walnut meats; the more nuts the better the candy. Pour into flat, greased dishes to cool and break off in squares.

Fruit.—Dissolve one pound of brown sugar (coffee A), with enough water to dissolve it, until it threads when poured from the end of a spoon. Stir in a pound of pecan nuts and when evenly mixed drop by spoonfuls on a marble slab. Flatten and round each one and when cool take up with a spatula. Pralines should have the taste of cooked brown sugar with pecans.

Fondant.—This is the foundation which may be used for any number of French candies. Boil together a pint of granulated sugar, a half cupful of water and a tablespoonful of glucose; this latter to keep the sugar from grain.

A pinch of cream of tartar may be used in place of the glucose. Boil until it hardens when a drop is put into cold water; remove from the heat and allow it to cool, when still warm begin to stir and cream with a wooden spoon until it is creamy white and smooth. Put into a bowl, cover with a buttered paper and a damp cloth and allow it to stand for a few days to ripen. Then it may be used to dip bon bon, for peppermint or

wintergreen wafers; when mixed with chopped nuts may be made into a loaf, water colors and picking it in leaves; small balls of the fondant flavored then dipped in chocolate make the popular chocolate cream.

If you do not know anyone who needs help, chances are that you are short-sighted.

It is better to forgo an excuse than a bad one, if at any time you do happen to fall into error—George Washington.

## FOR THE CHRISTMAS BOX.

When counting for your special delight there are countless foods, candies and dainties each that can be put into a Christmas box and fill the recipient with delight.

A gift that may be eaten and enjoyed with another never calls forth the expression of "What on earth shall I do with it, and where shall I store it?"

In these days of elimination of the non-essentials we need to study the art of gift giving and present appropriate and pleasing gifts to our friends. This can be done, but it takes thought, not indiscriminate buying.

There are so many good things that we never think of, that would be so much more pleasing to our friends than the gifts we usually give. Do you make nice doughnuts? A box of two dozen nutty brown doughnuts would never go begging in many homes. Such a box may be arranged with as much of the festive air of Christmas as the taste of the giver desires.

It is always a good plan to have a shelf or drawer in the attic where all boxes may be kept through the year. They are then ready for gifts of any size and in leisure moments one may cover them with pretty wallpaper, making quite elegant boxes, which, if bought, would cost quite a sum.

If you have a girl or boy friend at boarding school, too far away to get home, don't forget the box of goodies. No one knows, unless he has felt it, how such a gift warms the cockles of the heart.

A plum pudding wrapped in lace paper and tied with red ribbons, with a bunch of holly or wintergreen makes a happy gift. Fruit cakes may be baked weeks before, packed in soft brown sugar to keep moist. Any attractive kind of cookie, rocks, berries, are good. The macaroon letters may be used to spell the children's names on little cakes, which gives them a special touch.

For the little children, and what party would be complete without that small box of goodies? With waxed paper, they are filled with the cream and the top sprinkled with chocolate grated over it with a small daisy for the flower.

Small cakes frosted and decorated with the pretty candies, children all ways enjoy.

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Neenie Maxwell

## A HOLIDAY SUGGESTION

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to make life more enjoyable for the few remaining years that some loved one is to be with you, be it Mother or Father, Grandmother or Grandfather?

Perhaps the chief delight of that person is reading, perhaps it is looking at pictures that bring fond recollections; maybe it is just watching the passing of the seasons.

With old age comes physiological change known as Presbyopia, which can be corrected by the wearing of glasses. There can be no Christmas gift more appropriate or more appreciated than a pair of properly fitted glasses. They will enable that dear one to forget in part the infirmities of old age and will bestow hours of pleasure and enjoyment that can be had in no other way.

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