

else he had ever experienced. He blinked and rolled over and thought about Jane. He had kissed her, and on his first real date. The breeze wiped his face again, but he was already beyond its touch.

Revelation

Diane S. Masters

CLIFFORD WEBSTER entered his apartment and sank wearily on the divan. Closing his eyes, he relived in his mind the entire day, starting with breakfast, the train ride uptown, and the morning's happenings at the Exchange. A rise in prices had come just before noon, and it had appeared that his financial ventures were to be highly successful. He had gone to lunch elated and was enjoying a leisurely meal when he had been interrupted by his partner. Prices had begun to fall, and by closing time Clifford Webster was bankrupt. Sighing, he opened his eyes and glanced about the room. In his ears he could still hear the ceaseless chatter of the tickertape, the jangling telephone bells, the steady shuffle of feet.

"What I need is a good stiff drink," he mused. He got up and walked to the ebony liquor cabinet that he had always regarded as a symbol of his success. Choosing a glass, he methodically mixed his drink: lemon and sugar, two shots of rum, one of coke. He lifted the glass to his lips, tilting his head to drink. As he did so, he noted his image in the mirror above the bar.

"Say, you look pretty awful!" he said to himself. "Hair almost gray . . . and getting thin, too. And those eyes!" He took another swallow of the drink. "If I didn't know your past, I'd think you were dead." He laughed softly, for he knew that although he was in his late fifties he still had the charm, poise, and that special way with women which he had possessed in his college days. "Pity you never married," he remarked as he turned away.

Crossing to the far side of the room, he selected and put on the phonograph his newest records. Good music and a good drink, he thought, and I'll soon get rid of this nerve business. He seated himself and, placing his feet on a huge red leather ottoman, he stretched out comfortably.

"God, I'm bushed," he muttered. And he was tired, more tired than he could ever remember except, perhaps, for the day he had driven in the Mexican Road Race some thirty-odd years ago to collect a bet from his father. He turned to place his glass on a table nearby and saw black spots dancing crazily in the air before him. He blinked his eyes, thinking to destroy the specks, but the room grew increasingly blacker. A sharp pang in his chest caused him to grimace with pain. The drink dropped to the floor from his relaxed hand.

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Clifford Webster imagined himself dressed in evening clothes and white gloves, dressed for dinner and dancing at the Windsor, but instead of entering the lavish club with Sylvia holding his arm, he found himself knocking on a heavily paneled oak door. The door was opened by a tall, extremely handsome Negro, also dressed for a formal occasion.

"Clifford Webster, I believe." His smile was cordial and warm. "Won't you come in?"

Webster, usually never without a comeback or a witty remark, at this moment found himself utterly incapable of speech; he entered almost mechanically.

The room was a richly-decorated office. Straight ahead of him he saw an immense mahogany writing desk. To the right stood an ebony liquor cabinet, an exact duplicate of Webster's own. The entire left wall was hidden from sight by a heavy pink velvet drapery; a thick carpet of the same shade covered the floor. To the side of the desk were two armchairs, separated by a black wrought-iron smoking stand. There were no other furnishings except a picture of a white Gothic arch in an elaborate frame on the wall behind the desk.

"Won't you have a seat?" The Negro gestured as he sat down.

"Well, in the first place, I . . . I really don't know why I'm here," stammered Webster.

"Let us not be troubled with that, Mr. Webster. Since you are here, the least you can do is be comfortable. Do you not agree?"

"I find it hard to disagree in my circumstances, sir," replied Webster. He walked stiffly across the room and eased himself into the chair. He was still very tired. "How did you know my name?" he blurted.

The Negro smiled. "Actually, Mr. Webster, I do not know. It is quite a miraculous thing, almost supernatural, I suppose."

"Oh, I see."

"But tell me, Mr. Webster, how have things been lately?"

"Frankly, I don't care to discuss my affairs, financial or otherwise, with a stranger. I know, rather, I hope you understand."

"I understand perfectly, of course." The Negro reached into his inside pocket and produced a cigarette case. Offering one to Webster, who declined with a shake of his head, he took one himself, lighted it, and leaned back in his chair, crossing his legs. "I realize that you have had a great shock," he continued. "However, please feel free to discuss with me anything that you wish. People often come to me for advice . . . I am known as the Counselor."

"I don't quite get the point." Webster squirmed uneasily.

"All things in this world are not for one's understanding," the Counselor stated quietly. "Have you seen the city?"

"No, I haven't. As a matter of fact, I came directly to the office, I think. I don't remember seeing anything at all. It's as though my mind were a complete blank." If this thought startled Webster somewhat, the manner of the Negro calmed him, for the Counselor

was a very composed and reassuring person.

"Then allow me to show you. We are indeed fortunate that we can view it from the window." The Negro pulled back the heavy drapery, revealing an enormous window as the fourth wall. "I dare say that you will find our city beautiful," he added.

Clifford Webster again could not reply. He could only stare with unbelief at the scene before him. Beyond the window stretched a plaza fully two hundred yards in dimension, an architectural wonder of gardens and marble statues and fountains. On either side and at the end of the plaza lay three wide boulevards, lined with mansion after mansion of gleaming white or soft pink marble. The entire city was teeming with people of all ages, of all physical builds, of both sexes. All were Negro.

"Why, it's fantastic," exclaimed Webster, "utterly fantastic! Everyone here is colored! They're all niggers!"

"Is that so strange?" questioned the Counselor. "Have you not bothered to look at yourself?"

Trembling, Mr. Webster pulled off his gloves. He gasped. "I'm colored!" he screamed hysterically. "I'm a nigger!"

"You are indeed," the Counselor agreed, as he turned again to gaze upon the city.

"What's going on here, anyhow?" Webster's voice cracked with rage. "Is this your idea of a joke? Well, is it?"

Shaking his head sadly, the Counselor spoke. "I see that the time has come when I must tell you the truth, Mr. Webster. You see, three days ago, after you returned to your apartment a bankrupt man, you died of a heart attack." He paused. "You were buried, following tradition, in Memorial Cemetery—and, I might add, with quite a display of mourning from your friends. The moment your coffin came to rest upon the earth, you found yourself knocking at my door, here in this beautiful city . . . in Heaven, Mr. Webster."

June Balm*

Carla Harris

Sunset Lane, Bloomington

JUNE 20, 19—. I have had what I believe to be the most remarkable day in my life, and while the events are still fresh in my mind, I shall try to record them in my pocket secretary.

To begin, I am James Clarence Withencroft, forty years old, and have always enjoyed perfect health. By profession I am an artisan, designing and repairing jewelry in my own small shop, and I make enough money to satisfy my simple needs. My aging mother, whom I supported for many years, passed on last autumn, leaving me alone in this world and independent.

I opened my shop at nine this morning, and after glancing through

* A parody on *August Heat*, by W. F. Harvey.