

"CAGLIOSTRO"

(Synopsis for a proposed original
script, based on the life of the
famous Italian magician of that
name,)

by

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T H E C A S T

Senor Cagliostro The Man who lived
three thousand years.

Helen Dorrington The Girl

Mrs. Dorrington Her invalid mother.

Dr. Jack Foster The Boy

Mr. Llewellyn A Lawyer

The Black Shadow Cagliostro's servant,
a giant negro.

Mr. H.C.H.Whemple The murdered
millionaire

Professor Thernley Whemple Noted Archaeologist,
brother of the
murdered man

Carlton Oews Head of the Trust
Department at The
Ocean Bank & Trust
Company

Chief of Police

Ratty Ryan The Stool Pigeon

Through learning the secrets of the ancient Egyptian priests a man has lived for three thousand years, without changing in appearance since his thirty-fifth year. In his real youth he was betrayed by the woman he loved and since then, through the centuries, each time he sees a young girl who resembles her, he seeks to possess her and then destroy her out of revenge. His great intelligence has made it possible for him to keep ahead of scientific inventions. He knows all the charlatan tricks better than Houdini or the Indian fakers.

The use of radio and television for purposes of robbery and murder, as indicated in this story, are scientifically possible, and he has improved radio-television to a point where he can project or receive pictures by radio to any desired spot, without a receiving-machine being necessary at this objective. In connection with the radio, he uses a death-ray of his own invention which paralyses the hearts of his victims. His wealth is replenished by apparently supernatural thefts. In his endeavour to trap a modern young girl, he is destroyed through lack of the nitrate injections which keep him alive and he crumbles to a handful of dust, leaving her safe with her young doctor-sweetheart.

SYNOPSIS

San Francisco, winter of 1932. A Japanese Liner from the Orient comes into the harbor during a dense fog, bearing a strange passenger, a blind man and his negro attendant. In their cabin is a curious machine—a super-radio, which greatly occupies them. In the blind

man's possession is also a curious illuminated portrait of a young woman, an early Egyptian miniature itaglis. This portrait resembles the girl, Helen Dorrington.

A short time before the arrival of the steamer, H.C.H. Whemple, houses on Nob Hill—the largest, finest mansion in the city, and a house which was built by him under sealed orders. The house not only commands an extra-ordinary view of the city from all sides, but it is reputed to be a sort of stronghold, as old Whemples had a fear of burglars which amounted to a complex. Never the less, while in perfect health and only two hours after he had been examined by his physician, young Dr. Jack Foster, and pronounced in fine shape, he had been found dead from a strange form of heart disease, a type so completely unknown that your Dr. Jack insists death was caused by some outside agency. The body was found in a room where doors and windows were both locked from the inside. Search of the panelled walls failed to reveal any secret mode of entrance and in the end the coroner's jury returned a verdict of death from natural causes. Whemple left only one relative, a brother, who was a distinguished archaeologist, head of the local museum, but the will disclosed the brother had been cut off with a dollar, owing to an old quarrel. It seems the millionaire, being very religious in an ignorant way, resented his brother's archaeological researches as sacrilegious. A bitter enmity had thus arisen between them and the brother is rather suspected of causing the death. The property has been left in trust to young Doctor Jack, who cannot touch any of it until he is thirty years of age, in six month's time. A bank sets as executor.

Dr. Jack is deeply in love with Helen Dorrington. The Dorringtons were once social leaders in San Francisco, but after the crash her father died, and her mother became an invalid and they are absolutely penniless and very proud. At least the mother is so proud that she makes things very difficult for her daughter, who face once graced all the rotogravures, and was known on her debut as society's favorite. Now the girl is working as ticket-seller at a small movie house on Front Street to support the mother. Helen loves Dr. Jack but will not accept help from him. In fact he can't offer much since Mr. Whemple was his only wealthy patient and Whemple's strange death has hurt him professionally. He now has a hard time supporting himself, pending his inheritance, as no provision was made in the will for any allowance.

Helen and Dr., Jack, however, have a good a time as their limited means will allow—lovers can get a lot out of a cheap Italian restaurant dinner if it is eaten together, and a bench in the park under a full moon has served other lovers before them. Incidentally, the radio brings the lovers dance music in her humble flat, and great concert music to which they listen, heads together on the sofa before her fire.

Dr. Jack is a radio fan, and an expert radio-man. It is his hobby. In spite of Jack's free medical attendance, the mother grows worse. It is absolutely necessary for her to have comforts they cannot give her. Helen saves and scrimps and goes without her lunch in order to have extras for her mother, but it is not enough. Both Helen and Jack are in despair about the necessary funds when one day Helen receives a letter from a lawyer, Mr. Llewellyn, asking her to call at his office. She goes to the magnificent office suite and is told her father's younger brother from Australia is looking for her; he is blind, alone

in the world and enormously rich--will she take pity on him and come to live with him? He has rented the fabulous Whemple mansion and lives there alone with his colored attendant. Excited, she returns to her mother, who confirms the fact that her dead husband did have a younger brother--supposed to be a worthless scoundrel who died years ago. The girl goes to see her uncle and is admitted by a giant negro, who apparently cannot speak. The house is neglected --the great hall and drawing room cob-webby and dusty--but the large library, a circular room in a tower, is warm, lighted and comfortable--and there is the "uncle" helplessly blind, playing with this radio (an uncommonly large and handsome one) as any blind man might. During their interview the uncle makes only one condition--she must not bring her mother to live with them, as he cannot endure sick people in the house. But he will give her unlimited wealth with which to provide for her mother's needs. The girl feels something uncanny about the house, but tries to laugh it off--she is too desperately poor to have any choice in the matter--so she moves in. In waiting on her uncle, which she dislikes doing, she notices that wherever he has been there is dust--an unpleasant dust on the arm of his chair, on the cushion where his head has rested, etc. She has never seen his bedroom--and it slowly dawns on her that she has never seen him eat. As a matter of fact he takes an injection of some kind which he himself prepares. Helen has brought her pet dog to the house with her--a lovely dog. When the dog catches sight of the uncle, his bristles go up and he snarls. The uncle, showing terror of a mentality he cannot control, orders the dog out of the house, but Helen for once standing on her rights, refuses, and next day the dog is dead--of heart disease.

As us only natural Helen suggests that perhaps Dr. Jack could cure her uncle's blindness. She invites Jack to the house without permission, with the end in view. But the uncle is furious--won't allow Jack anywhere near him as soon as he senses that Helen is interested in Jack, and forbids Jack the house.

Meanwhile an extraordinary series of robberies and deaths have begun to take place. The safety vault of The Ocean Bank is robbed--an unheard of occurrence, since it was considered absolutely invulnerable. The doors have simple been opened without injury and a vast sum in cash is gone. Both watchmen are dead--of heart disease. As in the case of Mr. Whemple, there is no indication they died of fright, and no organic disease to account for death. The heart has simply congealed--the valves frozen and ceasing to function as though filled with ice. Only one witness was near the scene of the crime and this person claims to have seen the shadow of a giant negro on the blind of the bank. Dr. Jack, called in by Professor Whemple, (who is still somewhat under suspicion in connection with his brother's death) examines both bodies, but cannot solve the mystery. The professor, who is now devoting his life to clearing his own reputation, takes Jack to his house, asks if he has seen Helen's uncle, his tenant? Yes he has. The Professor shows Dr. Jack and 18th century portrait of Cagliostro, the great Italian magician of whose death there is no account. (Note: Cagliastro, the magician, is supposed to have solved the secret of longevity and is an actual historical character. He was much feted at the court of Louis XV) The Professor points out that Helen's uncle bears a startling resemblance to this portrait. He then tells Cagliastro's history--of the beautiful girl who deceived him, and of how Cagliastro went through the centuries, getting his clutches on every girl who

resembled her, ruining her, and then killing her by slow torture, in unholy revenge on all womankind. Where does the uncle get his wealth, the Professor asks? Nobody can find out, but he spends with extraordinary lavishness. The same was true of Cagliastro. The Professor then shows Dr. Jack a lot of evidence among his archaeological data, to prove that through the centuries people have believed the secret of eternal youth could be found—there was Merlin, the great English sorcerer of the 13th century—before that the Priests of Osiris in Egypt, who knew how to preserve the body indefinitely and were suspected of supernatural powers. The Professor points to the legend on the Wandering Jew, and many other instances of characters who were credited with defying the laws of God and man and living forever—What a monster such a creature could become! The Professor's claim is that modern science is the only half-baked and touches only the obvious, whereas there are all sorts of elements such as "ghosts" and other "supernatural" things which are really perfectly natural, but so far unclassified by scientific research and consequently abused by those who stumble on their potentialities and use them unscrupulously. He claims the "uncle" is such a character—perhaps worse, a physical phenomenon. The young doctor is unconvinced, but disturbed by this thought—and is not reassured when next day Helen tells him that in the middle of the night she awoke to find her uncle standing at the foot of her bed, a weird light around him, his eyes blazing at her lustily. She screamed and he vanished, but when she switched on the light and sprang from her bed, through the room was empty, on the footboard of her bed were two dusty hand prints where he had been leaning! When she came to her senses she realized she'd seized a little crucifix she always kept by her bedside, and is holding it. Dr. Jack begs

her to leave the house at once and she promises to do so. He does not believe all of her story but is afraid she's in for a nervous breakdown.

Helen goes to her uncle in the big circular room and tells him she is going. He apparently permits her to go, but the negro, at a signal, shadows her to her room. She sees his shadow and faints. The negro picks her up and carries her to the cellars and locks her in, still unconscious. When she comes to she is a prisoner, she does not know where—the walls are stone and very thick—but she has a horrible feeling that she is being watched. And she is—by Cagliastro through the medium of his television-machine. Mean while the Doctor is waiting for her with his car, out in the shadows of the great house. She does not come and he gets worried. He goes to the door and the negro tells him she left sometime ago. So Dr. Jack goes away, looking for her at her mother's. She is of course not there.

That night Professor Whemple's house is robbed and the portrait of Cagliastro is among the missing articles. Also some valuable data on longevity. Nothing else has been touched, but the Professor has seen the Black Shadow of the giant Nubian on the window—the same shadow which has followed every murder and robbery in the past few months. The police are making a wide search for this negro, and cannot find him or anyone the least bit like him except the Blind-man's attendant. who, it is absolutely proven, has never left the big house since his arrival. His shadow has of course left it, projected by television, in an effort to mislead the police. But the police do unearth the fact that a band of international crooks are in town—a group who have operated successfully in Europe and in Asia at different times. However, nothing can be pinned on them and their leader is, they swear, unknown to them—they have never even seen him, they all declare upon being rounded up and examined.

Then one boy, a weak sister, breaks down under the third degree and lets out that a robbery is planned for the next night—the robbery of a certain vault in a safe deposit, known to the officials to contain nothing but certain precious chemicals. The boy who makes the confession palpably does not know what they are to steal and thinks it is money. But the police, knowing the nature of the contents of the vault, are puzzled. On his promise to act as stool pigeon, the boy member of the gang is released. Then the Chief sends for Professor Whemple, with whom he has been associated over his brother's mysterious death. The Chief asks the Professor what the latter thinks of such a robbery? anyone who had taken the trouble to discover what the vault might contain must want the contents for a peculiar reason. The vault contains nitrates and other life-prolonging chemicals in condensed form. The Professor is intensely interested, but when the Chief invites him to shadow the gang to the scene of the proposed burglary, he refuses.

The next night the Professor, who is familiar with his dead brother's peculiar house, gains access to it by a secret entrance. He creeps in and examines the place. In a hidden cupboard at the head of the carved bed in which the master of the house sleeps, the Professor finds a set of hypodermic syringes and a substance which he recognizes as being part of the formula supposed to have been used by the Priests of Osiris, by Merlin, by Cagliastro, etc., for indefinitely prolonged the preservation of the human body. It is plain that this outfit belongs to Helen's supposed uncle. Trembling with excitement the Professor confiscates the whole layout for future analysis, puts it in his pocket and steals through the ghostly house until he reaches the circular library in the tower room. There he finds the creature, Cagliastro, in the very act of guiding the robbery by means of his radio.

The "uncle" is so deeply absorbed by what he is doing that the Professor sees the whole operation. The machine is not a harmless ordinary radio, as first appears, but a television-machine as well, by which the operator is enabled to see anything he wishes. At the moment of the vision is centered on the outside door where the robbery is to occur. The watchman comes into sight on the screen: Cagliastro, turns on a death-ray, and the watchman drops dead. Then Cagliastro speaking in an ordinary voice into some sort of microphone, informs the waiting gang-leader that the coast is clear. Plainly his method has been to instruct his gang by radio only, the leader carrying a small receiving set, and getting the message in code, both as to when and how the robbery is to occur, and where the loot is to be placed for collection by the negro. It later comes out that any who failed to obey these orders were destroyed by the death-ray.

Overcome by horror at what he sees, the Professor inadvertently makes a sound. Cagliastro, who is not blind at all, whirls upon him and, with the aid of the negro, overcomes him., and the Professor is thrown into the cellar adjoining that which Helen is hold a prisoner. The Professor hears her sobbing, and communicates with her, but cannot get to her.

Next morning the town is agog with the new murder which was accomplished under the very eyes of the shadowing police. The robbery was not completed, owing to the interruption of Cagliastro's signals. But the Professor has now disappeared. He was last seen in company of Dr. Jack, so the Chief sends for Jack who tells him about Helen's disappearance. The police, lead by Dr. Jack, storm the house on the hill. Inside it, the giant negro holds the door while his master, wild-eyed and slowly decaying before the Black's very eyes, searches

wildly for the hypodermic, without which he cannot live. Failing to find it in the bedside cupboard, he falls feebly on the bed. The door is broken, in the Black goes raving mad and is overpowered. The two in the cellars, Helen and the Professor, are rescued, but Cagliostro has disappeared. On his bed his clothing is discovered, lying as if it had once contained a man, but inside is nothing but a few handfuls of dust--the sort of dust to which Egyptian mummies crumble when exposed to the air.

The Professor demonstrates that his brother was killed by the deathray, operated by Cagliastro from the e incoming ship, because the house suited his purpose and he wanted it to be available. The Professor is cleared and the lovers are united.

THE END