

Hell Breaker Shadow Detective Book 9

I think it is Edgar Allan Poe who says that while a plain thing may on occasion be told with a certain amount of elaboration of style, one that is unusual in its very nature is best related in the simplest terms possible. I shall adopt the second of these methods in telling this story of my friend, Derwent Rose. And I will begin straight away with that afternoon of the spring of last year when, with my own eyes, I first saw, or fancied I saw, the beginning of the change in him. The Lyonesse Club meets in an electric-lighted basement-suite a little way off the Strand, and as I descended the stairs I saw him in the narrow passage. He was standing almost immediately under an incandescent lamp that projected on its curved petiole from the wall. The light shone brilliantly on his hair, where hardly a hint of grey or trace of thinness yet showed, and his handsome brow and straight nose were in full illumination and the rest of his face in sharp shadow. He wore a dark blue suit with an exquisitely pinned soft white silk collar, to which, as I watched, his fingers moved once; and he was examining with deep attention a print that hung on the buff-washed wall. I spoke behind him. "Hello, Derry! One doesn't often see your face here." Quietly as I spoke, he started. Ordinarily he had very straight and steady grey-blue eyes, alert and receptive, but for some seconds they looked from me to the print and from the print to me, irresolutely and with equally divided attention. One would almost have thought that he had heard his name called

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from a great distance. Then his eyes settled finally on the print, and he repeated my last words over his shoulder. "My face? Here?... No." "What's the picture? Anything special?" Still without moving his eyes from it he replied, "The picture? You ought to know more about it than I—it's your Club, not mine——" And he continued his absorbed scrutiny. Now I had passed that picture scores of times before and had never found it worth a glance. It was a common collotype reproduction of a stodgy night-effect, a full moon in a black-leaded sky with reflections in water to match—price perhaps five shillings. Then suddenly, looking over his shoulder, I realised where his interest in it lay. He was not looking at the picture at all. In the polished glass, that made an excellent mirror in that concentrated light, I had seen his eyes earnestly fixed on his own eyes, his cheeks, his hair, his chin.... Well, Derwent Rose had better reason than most men for looking at himself in a picture-glass if he chose. Indeed it had already struck me that that afternoon he looked even more than ordinarily fresh and handsome. Let me, before we go any further, describe his personal appearance to you. He had, as I knew, passed his forty-fifth birthday in the preceding January; but he would have been taken anywhere for at least ten years younger. You will believe this when I tell you that at the age of thirty-nine, that is to say in the year 1914, he had walked into a recruiting-office, had given his age as twenty-eight, received the compliments of the R.A.M.C. major who had examined him, had joined an infantry battalion as a private, risen to the rank of company-sergeant-major, and had hardly looked a day older when he had come out

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again, with a herring-bone of chevrons on his cuff and a captain's stars on his shoulder—not so much as scratched. He was just over six feet high, with the shoulders of a paviour and the heart and lung capacity of a diver. Had you not been told that he wrote novels you would have thought that he ran a ranch. His frame was a perfectly balanced combination of springiness and dead-lift power of muscle; and to see those grey-blue eyes that looked into yours out of unwrinkled lids was to wonder what secret he possessed that the cares and rubs and disillusiones of life should so have passed him by. Yet he had had his share of these, and more. His looks might be smooth, but wrinkles enough lay behind his writing. From those boyish eyes that reminded you of a handler of boats or a breaker of horses there still peeped out from time to time the qualities of his earlier, uneasy books—the gay and mortal and inhuman irony of *The Vicarage of Bray*, the vehement, unchecked passion of *An Ape in Hell*. If to the ordinary bookstall-gazer these works were unknown—well, that was part of the task that Derwent Rose had set himself. It is part of the task any writer sets himself who refuses all standards but his own, and works on the assumption that he is going to live for ever. Only his last published book, *The Hands of Esau*, showed a fundamental urbanity, a mellower restraint, and perhaps these were the securer the more hardly they had been come by. I for one expected that his next book would rise like a star above the vapours where we others let off our little six-shilling crackers ... but his body seemed a mere flouting of the years. And here he stood under the corolla of an incandescent lamp,

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looking at himself for wrinkles! Then in the glass he caught my eye, and flushed a little to have been caught attitudinising. He gave a covert glance round to see whether anybody else had observed him. A few yards away, in the doorway, Madge Aird was smilingly receiving the Club's guests, but for the moment Madge was looking the other way. Then he spoke in a muffled voice. "Well? Notice anything? How do I look? How do I strike you? No, I don't want a compliment. I'm asking you a question. How do I look? I've a special reason for wanting to know." I laughed a little, not without envy. "How do you look!" I said. "Another ten years will be time enough for you to begin to worry about your looks, Derry. I know your age, of course, but for all practical purposes you may consider yourself thirty-five, my young friend." Sadly, sadly now I remember the eagerness of his turn. "How much?" he demanded. "I said thirty-five or thereabouts, you Darling of the Gods. I'm fifty, but you make me look sixty, and when you're a hundred your picture will be in the papers with the O.M. round your neck. You'll probably have picked up the Nobel Prize too, and a few other trifles on the way. You've got a physique to match your brain, lucky fellow that you are, and nothing but accident can stop you. Don't go out and get run over, that's all. Well, are you coming in?" But he hung back. And yet it was largely his own fault if in such places as this Club he felt like a fish out of water. It might even have been called a perverse and not very amiable vanity in him, and I had hoped he had got over this shyness, arrogance, or both. We have to live in a world, even if we are as gifted mentally and physically as was Derwent Rose. But it was

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no good pressing him. I remembered him of old. "Then if you're not coming in?" I ventured to hint; and again his hand went to the soft collar. "What have I come for, you mean? I want you to find out for me if there's a Mrs Bassett here." "I don't think I know her." "Mrs Hugo Bassett. Ask somebody, will you?" "What's she like to look at?" "Can't say. Haven't seen her for years." "Wait a bit. Is it somebody called Daphne Bassett?" "Yes, yes—Daphne," he said quickly. "Who published what's called a 'first novel' some little time ago?" Instantly I saw that I had said something he didn't like. The blood stirred in his cheeks. He spoke roughly, impolitely. And even up to this point his manner had been curt enough. "Why do you say it like that?" he demanded. "'First' novel, with a sneer? She wrote a novel, if that's what you mean." Yet, though he began by glaring at me, he ended by looking uneasily away. You too may have wondered why publishers so eagerly insist that some novel or other is a really-and-truly 'first' one. Your bootmaker doesn't boast that the pair of boots he sells you is his 'first' pair, and you wouldn't eat your cook's 'first' dinner if you could help it. You may take it from me that in the ordinary course of things Derwent Rose would have been far more likely to applaud the novel that ended an ignominious career than the one that began it. Yet here he was, apparently wishing to outface me about something or other, yet at the same time unable to look me in the eye. "There's got to be a first before there can be a second, hasn't there?" he growled. "Jessica had to have a First Prayer, didn't she? And is there such a devil of a lot of difference between one novel and another when you come to

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think of it—yours or mine or anybody else's?" It was at this point that I began to watch him attentively. "Go on, Derry," I said. "There isn't; you know there isn't; and I'm getting sick of this superior attitude. Why must everybody do the Big Bow Wow all the time? Can't somebody write something just for amuse—I mean must they always be banging the George Coverham Big Drum? As long as it doesn't make any pretence.... Have you read it?" he demanded suddenly. "No." "Then you don't know anything about it." It was here that I became conscious of what I have called the Change. Whatever had happened to put him out, this was not the Derry Rose I had lately seen. Surely my remark about that "first" novel had been innocent enough; but he had replied surlily, unamiably, unfamiliarly.... "Unfamiliar?" No, that is not the word. I should rather say remotely familiar, recollected, brought forward again out of some time that was past. Just as in his resplendent physical appearance he seemed to be "too" well, if such a thing can be, so in his manner he seemed to be too ... something; I gave it up. I only knew that the author of *The Hands of Esau* would not have spoken thus. "Well, will you find out for me if she's here?" he said in a softer one. I fancy that already he was sorry he had not spoken more quietly. "Why not come in and see for yourself?" "Oh—you know how I hate this sort of thing." "Not long ago you spoke of joining the *Lyonnesse*." "I know. I thought I would. But I've decided it's out of my line." "Then at least come and be introduced to Mrs Aird. She'll know whether Mrs Bassett's here or not." The blue-grey eyes gave mine a quick and critical glance. "Is that the Mrs Aird who writes those

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bright books about young women and their new clothes and how right their instincts are if you only give them plenty of pocket-money and leave 'em alone?" I smiled. Perhaps it was a little like Madge. But I noticed his sharp distinction between the novels of one woman and the "first" novel of another. It began to look as if behind Mrs Hugo Bassett the novelist lay Daphne Bassett the woman. "Well," I sighed, "I'm to ask for Mrs Hugo Bassett. What's the title of her book?" "The Parthian Arrow." "Mrs Hugo Bassett, author of The Parthian Arrow. Very well——" I approached Madge, but before I could ask my question she had drawn me inside the doorway. "Who is he?" she whispered ardently in my ear. Her plump ringed hand clutched my sleeve, and there was the liveliest curiosity in the dark eyes that looked up at me from under her nodding hat with black pleureuse feathers. "Is there a Mrs Bassett here—Daphne Bassett?" "No. But——" "Has she been, and is she likely to come?" "She hasn't been, and nobody'll come now. But George——" "I'll see you presently; just let me get rid of my message," I said; and I returned to Rose. A glance at my face was enough for him. He may have muttered a "Thank-you," but I didn't hear it; he had spun on his heel and in a moment was half-way to the cloakroom. I hope he got his own hat, for he was out again almost instantly. I had a glimpse of his magnificent back as he hurried along the passage, then a flying heel at the turn of the stairs and he was gone. Turning, I saw that Madge had watched his departure with me. She almost ran to me. "Quickly, George—who, who is your Beautiful Bear, and why have you been keeping a superb creature like that from me?" she demanded. "I knew

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he was waiting for a woman. Every skirt that came in—" at the swing of her head the feathers tossed like an inky weeping-elm in a gale. "But," she added, "I confess I never saw a man admire himself quite so openly before." My friend has scored off me often enough in the past. This time I scored off her. "Derwent Rose always was good-looking," I remarked. She fell a step back. "George!—Derwent Rose! You don't mean to say that that was Derwent Rose?" "I always thought you knew everybody in London." "That was Derwent Rose!" Then she added, with inexpressible conviction and satisfaction, "Ah!" I am always a little uneasy when Madge Aird says "Ah!" in that tone. She was Madge Ruthven before she married Alec Aird, and I have often wondered whether in the past any of her Scottish forbears had any traffic with France. I am not now thinking of the air with which she always wore her clothes, from whatever it was on her head to the always irresistible shoes on her tiny feet. I mean the workings of her mind. There is none of our northern softness and hesitation and mystery about these. All she thinks and says has a logical completeness and finish that somehow always seems just a little too good to be true. Few things in this world are so neatly right as that. But wrong though her conclusions may be, they are always dazzlingly effective, and you have to swallow them or reject them whole. "Ah!" she murmured again, with the intensest self-approval; and I wondered what unreliable imperfection she was meditating now. You never know with her. She sees so many people, goes to so many places, hears so much. Often the mere mention of a name is enough to touch off that

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instantaneous fuse of her memory that leads straight into the heart of heaven knows what family history or hidden scandal. "And what do you mean by 'Ah'?" I asked her. "The gorgeous creature! I never dreamed—but this makes the situation perfectly fascinating!" "What situation?" "Why, of him and Daphne Bassett. But poor old George, I keep forgetting that you're the noblest Roman of them all and don't listen to our horrid petty little scandal. And evidently you haven't read *The Parthian Arrow*." "I haven't. Tell me what it's about." "But you've read *An Ape in Hell*?" "Of course. Tell me what the other's about." But at that moment she was claimed. Her next words came over her shoulder as, with a wisk of her ribboned ankles and another gale in the shake of feathers, she was off. "Not now—another time. I shall be in fairly early this evening if you're staying in town. It's quite an interesting situation. And if you'll bring your Beautiful Bear to see me some time, I'll——" I understood her to mean that in that case she would bring Mrs Hugo Bassett also. If I live out in Surrey, my car happened to be in dock, and I had my train to think of. As I walked slowly up the short street to the Strand I puzzled over Madge's words. Evidently she found some connection between that "first" novel, *The Parthian Arrow*, and Rose's own book, *An Ape in Hell*. Well, my ignorance could soon be remedied. There was a bookshop just round the corner, and I could be the possessor of a copy of Mrs Bassett's book in five minutes. But suddenly, on the point of hailing a taxi, I dropped the point of my stick again. Somewhere at the back of my mind was the feeling that there was some invitation or appointment I had overlooked. I knew

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that it could be of no great importance, and, looking back on these events since, I have thought that it was perhaps a mere disinclination to go down to Surrey that night that gave me pause. I may say that I am unmarried, and have got my housekeeper fairly well trained to my ways. So, standing on the kerb, I brought a number of papers from my pocket and began to turn them over in search of the forgotten appointment. I found it. It was a lecture by a Fellow of a Learned Society, and it was to take place at the rather unusual hour of six o'clock. No doubt this was in order that the learned speaker might get his paper over by half-past seven, leaving his learned listeners free to dine. A taxi slowed down in front of me. "Society of Arts," I said to the driver. A minute later I was on my way to see Derwent Rose for the second time that afternoon. I will tell you in a moment the subject of that lecture I had so suddenly decided to attend. First, a word as to my attitude at that time towards new discoveries and new thought in general. I was enormously, wistfully interested in them. Instinctively, at that time, I stretched out my hands to them. I had lived long enough in the world to realise that such events as Trafalgar and the French Revolution were mere events of yesterday, and the possibilities of an equally near to-morrow haunted me. I shrank from the thought that while the dead stones of the Law Courts and Australia House would still be there after I had gone, I should not at least be able to make a guess at the stream of Life, uncradled yet, that would beat and press and flow along those channels in so little a time, the new blood of London's old unchanging veins. One begins to think of these things when one

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is fifty. So, at a minute or so to six, my taxi set me down in the Adelphi, when I might have been a happier man had it taken me straight to Waterloo. And now for what that lecture was all about. My meaning will perhaps be clearer if I give an extract from a leading article in The Times of slightly later date. On a subject of this kind I would rather use an expert's words than risk the inaccuracies that might creep into my own. "Human beings," the article begins, "differ not only in the knowledge they have acquired, but in their dower of intelligence or natural ability. It has long been accepted that the former property may continue to increase until the natural faculties begin to abate, but that the latter has a maximum for each individual, attained early in life.... Intelligence, as opposed to knowledge, is fully developed before the age of schooling is over. Sixteen years has usually been taken as the age at which, even in those best endowed, the limit of intelligence has been reached. Obviously the standard varies in different individuals; the degree of intelligence passed through by the more fortunate at the age of ten may be the final attainment of others, and all intermediate stages occur.... Mr H. H. Goddard, an American psychologist of international repute, classifies the intelligence of his countrymen into seven grades, but believes that in exceptional cases, amounting to four and a half per cent. of the population, a superlative standard is reached at the age of nineteen. On the other hand, seventy per cent. of the citizens of the United States have to carry on their lives with the intelligence of children of fourteen, and ten per cent. with that of children of ten." It was to hear these conclusions of Mr Goddard's

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expounded by a fellow-savant that I had come that afternoon to the Society of Arts. To tell the truth, a certain whimsical humour in the idea had attracted me. When a man's books sell as well as mine do, and he is as flatteringly thought of as I am, it is rather tickling to be told that he is really an infant of sixteen or seventeen, telling fairy-stories to a gigantic public nursery the average age of which is perhaps twelve. Sir George Coverham, Knight, merely the top boy of a kindergarten of adults!... It pleased me, and I rather hoped the lecturer would approach his subject from that humorous angle. The lights were being turned down as I entered the lecture chamber. Quietly, not to make a disturbance, I tiptoed to the nearest seat. Then, as with a preliminary hiss or two the shaft of light from the lantern pierced the gloom, I was able dimly to distinguish that the subject of the lecture had not attracted more than a couple of dozen people. These barely filled the first two rows. The rest of the theatre appeared to be empty. Of the speaker himself nothing could be seen but a glimpse of white beard as he moved slightly at the reading-lamp. He read from a typescript in a flat, monotonous voice, with once in a while a halting explanatory remark that trailed, paused, and then stopped altogether. I watched the acute angles his wand made with its own shadow on the diagrams projected by the lantern. Then I thought I heard an impatient movement and muttering somewhere behind me. The speaker, after another long and painful pause, had just said, "I hope I've made that clear, gentlemen"; and I was almost certain that the muffled growl had taken the shape of the words "You don't know a damned thing about

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it!" Then, a few minutes later, the sound was repeated, this time accompanied by an unmistakable groan. "Sssh!" said somebody sharply from the front or second row. The lecture dragged on. But about the next and final outbreak there was no doubt whatever. Neither was there about the sharp suffering of whoever was the cause of it. Somebody a couple of rows behind me must be ill, I thought, and evidently others thought so too, for the lecturer came definitely to a stop, and my eyes, now accustomed to the gloom, saw the turning of faces. "Is anybody——?" a secretary or chairman called out, and I expected the light to go up at any moment. In the end, however, the lecture was finished without further incident. The lights were switched on, the dingy classic painted panels on the walls could be seen, and instantly every face, my own included, was turned towards the back of a man who was seen to be hurriedly making his way to the door. I cannot tell you what happened at the Society of Arts after that. I was already on my feet, hurrying after that back. It was the same back I had seen, in the same haste, leaving the Lyonesse Club less than two hours ago. He had got to the entrance hall before I caught him up. He accepted with rather disturbing docility the arm I slipped into his. All the fight had gone out of him; he might not have been the same man who had so recently tried to outface me about first novels. I looked at his face as we stood by the glass doors that opened on to John Street. It showed both fear and pain. "What's the matter, Derry? Can I be of any help?" I asked him anxiously. He muttered, "Yes—yes—about time I called somebody in—just about enough of it——" "Do you want a

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doctor? Shall we call at a chemist's?" He stared at me for a moment; then I vow he almost laughed. "A doctor? No thanks. One dose a day's quite enough." "One dose of what?" "Words," he replied, with a jerk of his head in the direction of the lecture chamber. We passed out and into John Street, he accommodating his ordinary London-to-Brighton pace to mine. He once told me that five miles an hour was walking, six stepping out a bit, and anything over six and a half really "going." "Which way?" I asked at the end of the street. "I suppose you'd better come round to my place," he replied; and we crossed the Strand and struck north past Trafalgar Square. He lived (I am not troubling you with the lobster we shared standing up at a counter, during which repast we did not exchange one single word)—he lived in Cambridge Circus, and I hope I have not given you the impression that Derwent Rose was desperately poor. When I spoke of him as having none too much either of money or success I meant as by comparison with myself. Until, quite suddenly and by no means early in life, my own reward came to me, I should have considered his quarters luxurious—once you had got there. This you did by means of a narrow staircase from the various landings of which branched off the offices of variety-agents, film-brokers, furriers, jewellers and I don't know what else. The double windows he had had fitted into his room subdued the noises of the Circus outside, and if he cared to draw his thick brocade curtains as well he could obtain almost dead silence. His black oak furniture was brightly polished by some basement person or other, his saddlebag chairs scrupulously beaten and brushed. The two or

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three thousand books that completely filled two of his walls might have been arranged by a librarian, so methodically and conveniently were they disposed, with lettered and numbered tickets at intervals along the edges of the shelves; and I knew that he had begun a catalogue of them. All this portion of his room spoke of a man settling down into meticulousness, whom disorderly habits and departures from routine begin to irritate. In marked contrast with it was the topsy-turvy state of the large oval table with the beaded edge. This was in an appalling state of confusion. Newspapers had been tossed aside on to it, open books with their faces downwards sprawled over it. Empty shells of brown paper still kept something of the shape of the books they had contained, and ends of packer's string with bits of sealing-wax twined among them. A teacup lay on its side in a wet saucer, a large oval milk-can stood next to it. And on the top of all were the snaky rubber cords of an exerciser and a ten-pound, horsehair-stuffed medicine-ball. I was about to hang up my hat in the neatly-curtained recess he had had fitted up as a lobby when he exclaimed "Oh, chuck it anywhere," and set me the example by throwing his own hat and stick on to the clutter. They caught the medicine-ball, which rolled an inch or two, tottered, and then fell with a soft dead thump to the floor. The next instant, as if now that his own door was closed behind him there was no longer any need to keep up appearances, he himself had fallen with a similar thud to the sofa. He, this piece of physical perfection who called six miles an hour "stepping out a bit," lay all limp and relaxed, with lids quivering lightly over his closed eyes. He spoke

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with his eyes closed. "Well, what did you think of it?" he said, breathing deeply. I tried to keep my anxiety out of my tone. "What did I think of the lecture?" "Yes, the lecture if you like. That'll do to start with. No, I don't want anything, thanks. Tell me what you thought of the lecture." I began to say something, I hardly remember what, when, still with his eyes closed and twitching, he interrupted me. "All those silly charts—all those useless figures about the American Army—that's all waste of time. Making work for work's sake. I could have told him all that straight away." I remembered those groans in the obscurity of the lecture-room. I spoke quietly. "Is that what you were going to tell him when you—interrupted a little?" I had to wait for his reply. When it did come I hardly heard it, so low did he speak. "I know what you mean; but I can only tell you that if you'd been vivisected like that you'd have squirmed a bit too." I couldn't help thinking he had taken that lecture in a curiously personal sense, and I said so. "Vivisected?" I exclaimed. "I was vivisected, as you call it, just as much as you were—perhaps more in some ways. What on earth are you talking about? It's a general question. It's human functions and faculties at large he was vivisecting, not you or me. So," I concluded, "we were all vivisected alike, and when everybody's vivisected—you see——" I made a little gesture. Then he opened his eyes, and there was an expression in them that suddenly dried me up. It was an even more remarkable throw-back to a remembered and earlier manner than that I had witnessed earlier in the afternoon. In short, it was an expression of unconcealed contempt. "Q.E.D.," he said. "Finis, Explicit, and the Upper Fourth next

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Term. You'd have made a good schoolmaster.... I tell you that when I say 'I' and 'myself'"—he positively glared with irascibility and impatience—"I mean myself singly and specially, understand—the egregious and indestructible ego—and not merely just as much or as little as anybody else. Get that well into your head or I won't talk to you." Had he not been so visibly suffering I shouldn't have stood the tone of it for a moment, not even from him. And let me tell you at once the surmise that had already flashed through my brain. I am a dependable sort of person myself, one of the kind that nothing startlingly new is ever likely to happen to; but I was not so sure about his kind. Brains like his often fly off at queer tangents, and I wondered whether he had been reading too much of this current cant about "multiple personality" and had allowed it to run away with him. Every Tom, Dick and Harry seems to rush to that for an explanation of everything nowadays. I had already noticed, by the way, that one of the books that sprawled cover uppermost on his table was a book on the thyroid gland. But suddenly he seemed to guess at my thoughts. He spoke more quietly. Indeed he seemed to be fully aware of these outbreaks of his, and to be trying to resist them more and more strenuously as our conversation proceeded. "Sorry, old fellow," he said contritely. "I'm very sorry. I oughtn't to have spoken like that. But I'm not what they call 'disintegrating'; I'm the last man to do that. When I say 'I' I mean the 'I' I've always been. That's just the devil of it." "Suppose you begin at the beginning," I suggested. "There you are!" was his swift reply. He was sitting up on the sofa now, and was facing it, whatever "it" was, with

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a calmer courage. "I can't begin at the beginning. All I really know yet's the end, and of course that hasn't come.... It's a damn-all of a problem. Get yourself a drink if you want one. No, I won't have one; I—I daren't. And you might draw the curtains. When I hear the buses and taxis it makes me want to go out." I drew his curtains for him, but did not take the drink. He sat on the sofa leaning a little forward, his great hands clasped between his knees and working slightly and powerfully, as if he cracked walnuts in the palms of them. The grey-blue eyes avoided mine. I have seen that same avoiding glance in the eyes of a man who had something perfectly true to tell, but so utterly improbable that he was self-convicted of lying even in speaking of it. "About what you were saying this afternoon in that Club place—my age," he began in a constrained voice. "You—you meant it, I suppose?" "That you'd live to be a hundred and be world-famous? Yes, I meant it in a way. I didn't mean you to take me too literally, of course." "And you thought"—he hesitated for a moment and shivered slightly—"it was something to be congratulated about?" "Well— isn't it? Professionally you've staked out a magnificent course for yourself in which time means practically everything, and so, if you live long enough, as you look like doing——" Yet I cannot tell you what premonition of calamity seemed already to flow like an induced current from him to me. Ordinarily I am not specially sensitised to receive impressions of this kind. I am just a man who had had the luck to think as most other people think and to be able to express their thoughts for them. The greater therefore must have been that current's projecting force. Certainly

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the greater was my shock when it did come. "I shan't live to be a hundred," he said in a low voice. I cannot remember what I said, or whether I said anything at all. All that I do remember is his own next words, the swift and agonising collapse of the whole man as he said them, and the feeling of my own nape and spine. "No, not a hundred. You're counting the wrong way. You got my age quite right this afternoon. I'm thirty-five. And I shall live till I'm sixteen." III Among the things that have contributed to the wordly success of Sir George Coverham, Knight, has been that author's rigid exclusion from his books of everything that does not commend itself to the average common sense of his fellow-beings. The most he seeks in his modest writings—I speak of him in the third person because, as Derry's head dropped over his knees, it seemed impossible that this Sir George Coverham and I could be one and the same person—the most he seeks is a line somewhere between ordinary experience and the most, rather than the least, attractive presentation of it. In a word, his books are polite, debonair, and deliberately planned so as not to shock anybody. Therefore in some ways he may be quite the wrong person to be writing this story of Derwent Rose. For example: he had known Rose for some fifteen years, and, not to mince matters, there had been many highly impolite things in Rose's life during that time. More than once it had seemed a very good thing indeed that he had had to work hard for his money. The great mental concentration necessary for the writing of some of his books must have kept him out of a good deal of mischief. So I (I am allowing myself the man and Sir George Coverham

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the novelist gradually to reunite, as they gradually reunited that evening)—I, his friend, had already done what we all do when we are completely bowled over. I had instinctively sought refuge from his lunatic announcement in trifles—any trifle that lay nearest to hand. Suddenly I found myself wondering why he was afraid to take a drink, and why I had had to draw his curtains lest the sound of the buses and taxis should call him out into the streets. But presently he had recovered a little. He was even able to look at me with the faint shadow of a smile. "Well, that's the lot," he said. "I've given you the whole thing in a nutshell. You heard that lecture and you know me. You can fill in the rest for yourself." Suddenly I looked at my watch. It was not yet half-past nine. I got on to my feet. "You'd better get your hat and come down to Haslemere with me," I said. "We can catch the ten-ten. You're all on edge about something and you want a change. Leave word here that you'll be back in a week, and come along." But he did not move, except to shake his head. "I expected you'd say that. It's what anybody would say. It simply means that you haven't taken it in yet. No, since we've started we'll go on—unless you'd rather not. I warn you there's a good deal to be said for not going on." "Why not talk about it down at Haslemere?" Once more there was the hint of irascibility. "Do you want to hear or don't you?" Slowly I sat down again, and he resumed his former attitude of cracking nuts with his palms for nutcrackers. "There's not an atom of doubt about what I'm going to tell you," he began. "Not an atom. Unless I'm mistaken you saw for yourself this afternoon—though of course you didn't know what you were

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seeing. You simply thought I looked younger, didn't you?" I waited in silence. "And I fancy my manner got a bit on your nerves—does a bit now for that matter?" This also I let pass without remark. "Well, let's start from that point. You said I looked thirty-five. Well, it's just that that's getting on your nerves—the less amiable side of my character when I was thirty-five, and—and—well, when you go you might take that bottle of whisky with you and make me sign the pledge or something. I'm trying—I'm honestly trying—to hang on, you see." I sighed. "I wish you could make it a bit plainer," I said. "I'm making it as plain as I can. Is this plain—that something's happened to me, I don't know what, and I'm getting younger instead of older?" "Derry——" I began, half rising; but he held up one heroically-moulded hand. "Let me finish. And if I happen to go to sleep suddenly you just walk straight out, do you hear? Walk right out and shut the door. You're to promise that. There are some things I won't ask even a pal to go through.... So there it is. Instead of getting older like everybody else I'm simply getting younger. I'm perfectly sober—I haven't had a drink for five days—and I tell you I shall go on till I'm thirty, and then twenty-five, and then twenty, and then, at sixteen or thereabouts—that fellow wasn't very sound on his ages to-night—I shall die. Now have you got it?" Even about human nature there are some things that you have to accept as it were mathematically. I am no mathematician, but I do know (for example) that the common phrase "mathematically certain" is a misnomer. The whole essence of mathematics lies, not in its certainties, but in its assumptions, its power to embrace any concept whatever and pin it down in

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the form of a symbol. Once you have adopted the symbol you don't trouble about what lies behind it. You merely proceed to reason on it. It can only have been in some such way that I accepted Derwent Rose's mad statement and was willing to see what superstructure he was prepared to raise upon it. I was even able to speak in an almost calm and ordinary voice. "Tell me how you know all this," I said. He was logical and prompt. "By my knowledge of myself, and also by my memory. I know what I was at thirty-five, and I know what I did; well, I simply know that I'm that man again, and that I shall go on and re-do more or less what he's already done. At some point in my life I must have got turned round, and now I'm living it backwards again. And put multiple personality quite out of your head. That's the whole point. I'm not anybody else, and I shan't be anybody else. At this moment I'm Derwent Rose, as he always was and always will be, but simply back at the mental and physical stage when he wrote *An Ape in Hell*." To-day, looking back, it gives me an indescribable ache at my heart to remember the sudden and immense sense of relief his words gave me. I breathed again, as if a window had been opened and a draught of cool fresh air let in. For if he only meant memory, then the thing wasn't so bad. The maniacal idea that had sent that cold shiver up my spine was capable of an ordinary explanation after all. For what else is memory but the illusion that one is living backwards again in this sense? How many ancient loves, hates, angers, can we not re-experience in any idle hour we choose to give over to reverie? Beyond a doubt Rose had in some way been abusing this

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mysterious faculty, and Surrey and the pine-woods was the place for him. "I see," I said at last. "I confess you frightened me for a moment. Anyway that's all right. You only have what we all have more or less. You merely bring greater powers than the rest of us to bear on an ordinary phenomenon. I don't want to talk about your work, but it always did seem to me that you went to rather appalling heights and fearsome depths for the stuff of it. Personally I don't think either heaven or hell is the safest place to go to for 'copy.' Too terrifying altogether." He seemed to consider this deeply. He was almost quiet again now. Again he cracked invisible nuts, and his heels and toes rose and fell gently and alternately on the carpet. "That's rather a new idea you've given me, George," he said at last. "I admit I hadn't thought of that. It might explain the beginning anyway—the turn-round. I suppose you mean I've been too close to the flames or the balm, and have got singed or the other thing, whatever you call it. I see. Yes.... It's probably nothing to do with the thyroid after all. I've been reading the wrong books. I never thought of the writings of the Saints. Or the Devils.... By the way, some of the Saints induced the stigmata on themselves by a sort of spiritual process, didn't they?" I frowned and moved uneasily in my chair. I wasn't anxious to hear Derwent Rose either on ecstasy or blasphemy. But he went on. "So that's useful as far as it goes. But—you'd hardly call this spiritual, would you?" I think I mentioned that he wore a soft white collar, pinned and tied with exquisite neatness. A moment later he wore it no longer. Without troubling about pin, studs or buttons, with a swift movement he had ripped the collar, tie

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reviews of the books, and quotes from the principals.

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The entire field of film historians awaits the AFI volumes with eagerness.--Eileen Bowser,
Museum of Modern Art Film Department Comments on previous volumes: The source of last
resort for finding socially valuable . . . films that received such scant attention that they seem
'lost' until discovered in the AFI Catalog.--Thomas Cripps Endlessly absorbing as an excursion

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into cultural history and national memory.--Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Kyle Henry has a new name, a new school, and a new life -- one without the shadow of the Bonebreaker hanging over him. It's been a year since his serial killer father's execution, and it finally looks like things are turning around for Kyle. Until he recognizes the girl sitting in the back row in homeroom. Naomi Steadman is immediately intrigued by Killdeer Academy's newcomer. She does not know he is the son of the man who murdered her mother. What she does know is she and Kyle have a connection with each other -- and a spark that Kyle continues to back away from. Soon after Kyle's arrival, the death count on campus starts to rise. Someone is set on finishing what the Bonebreaker started, and murdering ghosts from the past may be the only thing that can stop the spree. Told in alternating viewpoints, Kat Ellis's tale of mystery and horror is full of broken bonds and new beginnings.

This annual selection guide covers new novels in the mystery fiction, science fiction, fantasy, horror, western fiction and romance genres. It is intended to help readers to choose titles of interest published during 1995. By identifying similarities in various books, it seeks to help readers to independently choose titles of interest published during 1995. Entries are arranged by author within six genre sections, and provide: publisher and publication date; series name and number; description of characters; time/geographical setting; review citation; genre and setting notations; and related books.

Traditional Chinese edition of *The Glass Castle: A Memoir*. Raised by an eccentric artist mother and a brilliant but alcoholic father, Jeannette Walls, who writes for MSNBC, and her 3 siblings lived a horrible and neglectful childhood. In

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The Bookseller and Newsman ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE: 21 Novels & 188 Short Stories (Including Poetry, Plays, Works on Spirituality, Historical Books & Memoirs The Sherlock Holmes Series, The Professor Challenger Books, The Brigadier Gerard Stories, The White Company, The Great Shadow, Mystery of Cloomber, Beyond The City, A History of the Great War... Musaicum Books Presents extended reviews of noteworthy books, short reviews, essays and articles on topics and trends in publishing, literature, culture and the arts. Includes lists of best sellers (hardcover and paperback).

More than fifty specialists have contributed to this new edition of volume 4 of The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature. The design of the original work has established itself so firmly as a workable solution to the immense problems of analysis, articulation and coordination that it has been retained in all its essentials for the new edition. The task of the new contributors has been to revise and integrate the lists of 1940 and 1957, to add materials of the following decade, to correct and refine the bibliographical details already available, and to re-shape the whole according to a new series of conventions devised to give greater clarity and consistency to the entries.

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A guide to programs currently available on video in the areas of movies/entertainment, general interest/education, sports/recreation, fine arts, health/science, business/industry, children/juvenile, how-to/instruction.

This carefully edited collection has been designed and formatted to the highest digital standards and adjusted for readability on all devices. Table of contents: Sherlock Holmes A Study in Scarlet The Sign of Four The Hound of the Baskervilles The Valley of Fear The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes The Return of Sherlock Holmes His Last Bow The Field Bazaar How Watson Learned the Trick Professor Challenger The Lost World The Poison Belt When the World Screamed Brigadier Gerard The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard The Crime of the Brigadier The Adventures of Gerard Novels Micah Clarke The White Company The Great Shadow The Refugees Rodney Stone Uncle Bernac Sir Nigel Mystery of Cloomber The Firm of Girdlestone The Doings of Raffles Haw Beyond The City The Parasite The Stark Munro Letters The Tragedy of the Korosko A Duet Short Story Collections Mysteries and Adventures The Captain of the Pole-Star, and Other Tales Round the Red Lamp Stories of War and Sport Round the Fire Stories The Last Galley: Impressions and Tales Danger and Other Stories Tales of Pirates and Blue Water Other Stories Poetry Songs of Action Songs of the Road The Guards Came Through, and Other Poems Plays Sherlock Holmes The Crown Diamond Jane Annie Waterloo A Pot of Caviare The Speckled Band The Journey Spiritualism The New Revelation The Vital Message The Wanderings of a Spiritualist The Coming of the Fairies Stranger Than Fiction Fairies Photographed The Uncharted Coast Historical Works The Great Boer War The War in South Africa The Crime of the Congo The German War A Visit to Three Fronts A History of the Great War A Glimpse of the Army The

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Duello in France True Crime Stories Personal Memoirs Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) was a British writer best known for his detective fiction featuring the character Sherlock Holmes. He was a prolific writer whose other works include fantasy and science fiction stories, plays, romances, poetry, non-fiction and historical novels.

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