

REVELATIONS IN

BLACK

by
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1933... IT WAS A DREARY,
FORLORN ESTABLISHMENT
WAY DOWN ON HARBOR STREET.
A DINGY WINDOW REVEALED
A DISPLAY HALF MASKED IN
DUST. I WAS DRIVEN FROM
THE SIDEWALK BY A GUST OF
RAIN AND PERHAPS BY A
FASCINATION FOR ALL ANTIQUES!

ANTIQUE

GIOVANNI
LARIA
PROP.

FRANK
REIN

EVEN AS I CROSSED THE THRESHOLD THAT SEPTEMBER AFTERNOON, THE GLOOM FELL UPON ME LIKE A PALL ... I HESITATED ...



CONDUCTED TO THE REAR OF THE SHOP, MY EYE WAS DRAWN TO AN ODDLY BOUND BOOK ...



MEASURING BUT FOUR BY FIVE INCHES, IT WAS BOUND IN BLACK VELVET WITH IVORY DECORATIONS ... BUT IT WAS THE **TITLE** THAT EXCITED MY INTEREST!



"MY BROTHER, ALESSANDRO, WAS STRONG AND HEALTHY ... BEFORE HE WROTE THAT BOOK! HIS WRITINGS WERE BEAUTIFUL ... FOR HOURS I COULD SIT WHILE HE READ TO ME HIS POEMS."



"THEN SUDDENLY... WITHOUT REASON... HE BECAME ILL! DOCTOR'S PRESCRIBED, GAVE MEDICINES... BUT NOTHING HELPED!"



"AND THEN... IT WAS HORRIBLE! POOR ALESSANDRO CAME INTO MY ROOM, SCREAMING, SOBING! HE WAS... **STARK RAVING MAD!**"



"THEY TOOK HIM TO THE INSTITUTION FOR THE INSANE! HE... DIED THREE WEEKS LATER WITH THE CRUCIFIX ON HIS LIPS."



"HE WROTE THIS BOOK WHILE CONFINED TO THE INSTITUTION?"



"THREE BOOKS! TWO OTHERS EXACTLY LIKE THE ONE YOU HAVE... THE BINDINGS HE MADE WHEN HE WAS QUITE WELL, BUT THE WANDERING OF HIS MIND WHICH FILL THE PAGES NOW, I HAVE NEVER READ!"



I HAVE ALWAYS HAD AN INTEREST IN ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY. MY MIND WAS MADE UP... I MUST HAVE THIS BOOK!

SINCE YOU REFUSE TO SELL, WOULD YOU CONSIDER LENDING IT TO ME FOR JUST ONE NIGHT? TEN DOLLARS AND BACK TOMORROW... UNHARMED!

VERY WELL, SIGNORE... I WILL TRUST YOU —



THAT NIGHT IN MY APARTMENT I OPENED THE BOOK... MY ATTENTION WAS DRAWN TO THREE LINES SCRAWLED IN A FEMININE HAND INSIDE THE FRONT COVER, IN WHAT LOOKED LIKE... **BLOOD!**



I BEGAN THE LAST WORK OF ALESSANDRO LARLA: "On the evening of the 15th of October, I turned my steps into the cold and walked until I was tired. The roar of the present was in the distance when I came to 26 bluejays silently contemplating the ruins. I seated myself where I could watch the leering fish. A child worshipped... and the pointed

shadow moved slowly to the left..."



I walked along the silver gravel until I came to five unicorns galloping beside water of the past. Here I found a pearl, beautiful but black. Like a flower it carried a rich perfume, and once I thought the odor was but a mask, but why should such a perfect creature need a mask? I sat between the leering fish and the unicorns, and I fell madly in love with the pearl.



I LAID THE BOOK DOWN... I COULD MAKE NO SENSE OF IT! THE AIR GREW HEAVY AND CLOSE... I JUST HAD TO GET OUT!



A POWER OTHER THAN MY OWN WILL WAS LEADING MY STEPS! IT WAS FAR OUT ON EASTERLY STREET THAT I CAME UPON A HIGH WALL... THERE I SAW...



...TWENTY-SIX BLUEJAYS
CARVED IN STONE!

I FOUND THE ENTRANCE... BEYOND ALL WAS WILD DESOLATION! AND ONLY THE TOWER WINDOWS WERE NOT BOARDED UP!



THE GATE WAS UNLOCKED... AND LIKE A MAN IN A TRANCE, I MADE MY WAY TO ONE OF THE BENCHES! ACROSS WAS THE STATUE OF A CHILD KNEELING IN PRAYER!



SUDDENLY THE FOUNTAIN AT MY SIDE CAUGHT MY EYE! THERE, CARVED IN STONE... WERE **FIVE UNICORNS!**



AND THE CLIMAX OF IT ALL! THE OTHER FOUNTAIN... A **LEERING FISH!** AND THE LONG POINTED **SHADOW...** ON THE GROUND TO MY **LEFT**—



THERE STOLE INTO THE COURT A FAINT ODOUR OF PERFUME... *HELIOTROPE!* LOOKING ABOUT, I SAW SEATED ON ANOTHER STONE BENCH...



I MOVED ACROSS THE COURT UNTIL I STOOD AT HER SIDE...

I SUPPOSE YOU ARE THE OWNER HERE. I... I REALLY DIDN'T KNOW THE PLACE WAS OCCUPIED—I'M SORRY I TRESPASSED!



SHE MADE NO REPLY, AND I MOVED HESITATINGLY TOWARD THE GATE... *SUDDENLY—*

PLEASE DON'T GO! I'M LONELY... OH, IF YOU ONLY KNEW HOW LONELY I AM!



I SAT DOWN BESIDE HER. ABRUPTLY SHE TURNED TO HER DOG AND SAID IN GERMAN...

FORT MIT DIR, JOHANN!

SHE ROSE OBEDIENTLY AND STOLE SLOWLY OFF INTO THE SHADOWS...



1 THEN SHE SPOKE TO ME IN STILTED ENGLISH MARKED WITH A SLIGHT ACCENT...

MY NAME IS **PERLE VON MAUREN**... MY HOME IS IN AUSTRIA. IT WAS TO FIND MY ONLY BROTHER THAT I CAME TO THE UNITED STATES! HE WAS REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION... IN 1916!



TONIGHT I CAME HERE BECAUSE THERE WAS A PLACE OF QUIET WITHIN. NOW, HAVE I BORED YOU WITH MY PERSONAL HISTORY?

NOT AT ALL! I CAME HERE BY CHANCE MYSELF. I DABBLE IN AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHY AND REACT STRONGLY TO UNUSUAL SCENES! I WENT FOR A STROLL TO RELIEVE MY MIND FROM THE BAD EFFECT OF A BOOK I WAS READING...



AFTER THE ARMISTICE, A FELLOW OFFICER CLAIMED TO HAVE SERVED WITH HIM ON GRAVE-DIGGING DETAIL AT A FRENCH PRISON CAMP! AND LATER CAME A RUMOR THAT HE WAS IN THE UNITED STATES... I CAME HERE ...

4 HER VOICE DWINDLED OFF... SHE SAT IN SILENCE STARING AT THE BROWN WEEDS. WHEN SHE RESUMED, HER VOICE WAS LOW AND WAVERING ...

I - I FOUND HIM... BUT WOULD TO GOD I HADN'T! HE ... HE WAS NO LONGER... LIVING!



BOOKS ARE POWERFUL THINGS! THEY CAN FETTER ONE MORE THAN THE WALLS OF A PRISON!

5 HE CAUGHT MY PUZZLED STARE AT THE REMARK AND ADDED HASTILY ...

IT IS ODD THAT WE SHOULD MEET HERE!



THE HOURS PASSED... SHE WAS A CHARMING CONVERSATIONALIST, BUT... SOMEHOW I FELT UNEASY...

HER HELIOTROPE PERFUME... TOO STRONGLY APPLIED FOR GOOD TASTE! AS THOUGH IT CLOAKS SOME SECRET— AND HER VEIL... I WISH I COULD SEE HER FACE!

MINUTES BEFORE DAWN... A MOVING SHADOW MADE ME LOOK UP! THERE I SAW A CLOUD IN THE SHAPE OF A MONSTROUS FLYING *BAT!*

THAT CLOUD! THAT STRANGE CLOUD... DID YOU SEE —

?!
?

DURING THE NEXT DAY I WENT ABOUT MY DUTIES IN THE LAW OFFICE WITH ONLY HALF INTEREST. THE INCIDENTS OF THE NIGHT BEFORE WERE RUSHING THROUGH MY MIND!

TO COME UPON THE VERY DETAILS DESCRIBED BY MAD LARLA IN HIS BOOK "FIVE UNICORNS AND A PEARL"! THE UNICORNS WERE ON THE FOUNTAIN, YES — BUT THE PEARL?

THE WOMAN IN BLACK WAS NAMED *PERLE VON MAUREN!* WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

1 RETURNED TO THE ANTIQUE-DEALER AND BEGGED HIM TO LOAN ME HIS BROTHER'S SECOND VOLUME! WHEN HE REFUSED, BECAUSE I HAD NOT RETURNED THE FIRST BOOK, I OFFERED HIM MORE MONEY, UNTIL...

VERY WELL! BUT RETURN IT TOMORROW!



1 THE SECOND VOLUME WAS OUTWARDLY IDENTICAL TO THE FIRST, EXCEPT IT BORE NO TITLE! EVEN MORE WANDERING, THERE WAS A PARAGRAPH TOWARD THE END THAT PUZZLED ME —

"Can it possibly be? I pray that is not! And yet I have seen it and heard it snarl... Oh, the loathsome creature! I will not, I will not believe it!"



2 LOSING THE BOOK I TRIED DIVERTING MY ATTENTION BY POLISHING THE LENS OF MY NEWEST CAMERA, BUT AGAIN, THAT DESIRE TO VISIT THE GARDEN STOLE OVER ME! THEN...

WHAT A REMARKABLE PICTURE SHE WOULD MAKE! SITTING ON THAT OLD STONE BENCH... CLOTHED IN BLACK... WITH THE CLASSIC BACKGROUND OF THE OLD COURTYARD!



3 GATHERING TOGETHER THE NECESSARY GEAR I DREW ON AN ULSTER (FOR IT WAS A WET, CHILLY NIGHT) AND HEADED NORTHWARD. THE WOMAN WAS NOT THERE YET... I SET UP MY CAMERA...



SOON SHE APPROACHED! OUR CONVERSATION GRADUALLY CENTERED ON HER DEAD BROTHER...

HE WAS THE BLACK SHEEP OF OUR FAMILY! HIS SUFFERINGS IN THE WAR PRISON CAMP WERE INTENSE, ACCORDING TO HIS FELLOW-OFFICER ... ESPECIALLY THE GRAVE-DIGGING DETAIL!

WHY WON'T SHE TELL ME HOW HE DIED?



TOWARD MIDNIGHT THE HEAVENS CLEARED AND THE MOON SHONE! THE TIME HAD COME FOR MY PICTURE ...

SIT WHERE YOU ARE! I'LL BE BACK IN A MOMENT...



THE RANGE WAS PERFECT...A CLICK, AND A DAZZLING WHITE LIGHT ENVELOPED THE COURTYARD ABOUT US!

SHE LEAPED TO HER FEET...!



FOOL! BLUNDERING FOOL! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?



GATHERING UP HER DRESS, SHE RAN DOWN THE PATH TOWARD THE DESERTED HOUSE! SHE DISAPPEARED IN THE SHADOWS OF THE GIANT BUSHES...



SUDDENLY, HER DOG CAME HURTLING THROUGH THE LONG WEEDS! WITH A LUNGE HE WAS UPON ME... I THRUST MY FLASH-LAMP UPWARD IN HALF PROTECTION... THE BULB EXPLODED!



I FELL BACK... SCREAMING! MY FINGERS GROPED BLINDLY FOR ITS THROAT... I COULD FEEL ITS BREATH MINGLING WITH MY OWN, BUT I HUNG ON!



THE PRESSURE OF MY HANDS TOLD! HE COUGHED AND FELL BACK... I STRUGGLED TO MY FEET AND PLANTED A TERRIFIC KICK STRAIGHT INTO THE BRUTE'S MIDDLE!



IT LEAPED BACK, FANGS BARED... GLARED AT ME MOTIONLESS FOR A MOMENT.

THEN ABRUPTLY TURNED AND SLUNK OFF THROUGH THE WEEDS!



ON THE FOLLOWING DAY I DEVELOPED THE PICTURE, BUT...

THERE'S THE GARDEN... CLEAR AND SHARP!
BUT THE BENCH IS... **EMPTY!** FERLE VON MAUREN DID NOT PHOTOGRAPH!



RETURNING TO BED, I SLEPT THROUGH THE DAY. WAKING FROM A VAGUE NIGHTMARE, I HAD NOT THE STRENGTH TO RISE! AND THE CASEMENT, WHICH I HAD CLOSED... WAS **OPEN!**



CREEPING DOWN INTO MY LUNGS WAS THAT DETESTABLE ODOR OF... **HELIOTROPE!**



MORNING... I CALLED THE DOCTOR...

YOU ARE ON THE VERGE OF COMPLETE COLLAPSE! TAKE IT EASY FOR A WHILE... I'LL CAUTERIZE THESE TWO LITTLE CUTS ON YOUR NECK!
WHAT CAUSED THEM?

I... I DON'T KNOW...



THE NEXT DAY I WENT TO THE ANTIQUE STORE AND TRIED TO PERSUADE LARLA TO GIVE ME THE THIRD, AND LAST, VOLUME! BUT...

No! NOT UNTIL YOU BRING THE OTHERS BACK!

BUT THE OTHERS ARE OF NO VALUE WITHOUT THE SEQUEL! I MUST READ THE ENTIRE NARRATIVE AS A UNIT!



WHEN LARLA TURNED AWAY I SEIZED THE THIRD BOOK AND SLID IT INTO MY POCKET!



BACK HOME, I OPENED THE BOOK... SUDDENLY MY EYES CAUGHT SIGHT OF LAST PARAGRAPH... WRITTEN IN BLOOD-RED INK!



"What shall I do? She has drained my blood and rotted my soul... my pearl is black as all evil! The curse be upon her brother, for it is he who made her thus! I pray the truth in these pages will destroy them forever!"

"Heaven help me, Ferle von Mauren and her brother, Johann, are... **Vampires!**"



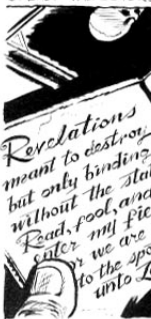
LEAPED TO MY FEET!

VAMPIRES! THOSE HORRIBLE CREATURES WHICH LUST FOR HUMAN BLOOD... TAKING THE SHAPES OF MEN— OF BATS— OF DOGS!

AFTER THE WAR, JOHANN BECAME A VAMPIRE! WHEN HIS SISTER SOUGHT HIM OUT HE FORCED THIS TERRIBLE EXISTENCE UPON HER TOO! ALESSANDRO LOVED HER... THE TRUTH ABOUT HER DROVE HIM MAD!



WHIPPED THE FIRST BOOK FROM THE TABLE AND OPENED THE COVER!



THESE BOOKS BOUND THE VAMPIRES TO THE OLD GARDEN! ONLY HE WHO HAD PASSED THE GATE COULD THEY PURSUE AND ATTACK! AND YET... THE READER WAS DRAWN THERE!

Revelations meant to destroy, but only binding without the stake, Read, fool, and enter my field, or we are chained to the spot. Oh woe into Larla!



I SEIZED ONE OF THE WOODEN TRIPOD-LEGS OF MY CAMERA... AND SNAPPED IT ACROSS MY KNEE!



I HURRIED TO THE GARDEN, ENTERED THE CELLAR OF THE HOUSE...



...AND STUMBLED INTO A SMALL ROOM HOUSING TWO WHITE WOOD COFFINS!



THE ODOR OF... *HELIOTROPE!* BUT DEFILED BY THE ROTTING SMELL OF AN ANCIENT GRAVE!

I LEAPED TO THE NEAREST COFFIN, AND RIPPED ITS COVER OPEN! THERE LAY THE WOMAN-IN-BLACK... UNVEILED!



S-SHE'S BEAUTIFUL! BUT HER LIPS ARE SCARLET... STICKY WITH HUMAN BLOOD!

SEIZING A FLAGSTONE FROM THE FLOOR, I PUT THE TRIPOD POINT JUST OVER HER HEART... AND STRUCK A CRASHING BLOW! UP TO MY FACE RUSHED A NAUSEATING BREATH OF DECAY!



I HURLED OPEN THE LID OF HER BROTHER'S COFFIN! I BROUGHT THE OTHER STAKE STABBING DOWN WITH ALL THE STRENGTH IN MY RIGHT ARM!



IN THE COFFINS NOW WERE TWO GRAY AND MOLDERING SKELETONS!

BACK AT LAST, SAFE IN MY APARTMENT, I VIEWED THE THREE VOLUMES OF ALESSANDRO LARLA! I FLUNG THEM ONTO THE GLOWING COALS OF THE GRATE!



AND AS THE LAST GLEAMING SPARK DIED INTO A BLACKENED ASH, THERE SWEEP OVER ME A MIGHTY FEELING OF QUIET AND RELIEF!

