

# The MARBLE Virgin

By  
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# Marble Virgin

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## CHAPTER I - Last Words

TIME everyone knows, is valuable and cannot be recalled. An hour from now, perhaps, less than that, time probably will mean nothing to me; possibly it will be a factor with which I no longer have to bother — but now it is vitally important. I am faced with the task, self-imposed it is true, of reporting certain events, and I dare say that no historian ever was so impatient to see “Finis!” typed at the foot of the last page. In sixty minutes, or less, I shall go to join Naomi, the marble virgin!

But before I go, while yet I inhabit a living body, and breathe, reason and act in the normal manner customary to me, I want to chronicle all that has happened in the last four months, beginning with April. When I am gone into the great void with a body of I know not what shape or contour, (if a body at all) I want the world to read these pages. Thus all mankind will learn why I acted as I did, and why I will dare inconceivable possibilities of terror to become invisible so that I may again claim the marble virgin.

To become *invisible*! I mean nothing less than that, but more! I mean that I, Wallace Land, shall enter the terrible cabinet devised by Professor Carl Huxhold; I shall be bathed in the awful rays of invisible force emanating from Huxhold’s fearful electrondissolver—and become nothing! Nothing, unless his tale is true, and I am shot forth into the vapor-filled Universe a mass of radio-active split-electrons, to find Naomi.

That is what I hope will happen, and what I feel assured, without knowing why, will happen!

Technically, in the eyes of the law, I am a murderer. I do not accept this charge, for I believe I was but an executioner, whether legally justified or not. Professor Carl Huxhold deserved death. I am only sorry it could not have been done gradually, to stab him one by one with a thousand twisted knives! You will say I am mad. I contradict your declaration. Huxhold took from me that which I prized more than sweet life itself—Naomi!

And when I saw that she was indeed gone, and Huxhold in his hour of triumph taunted me and swore that I should never again clasp her in my arms, and never again would feel her delicious kisses on my lips, I killed him! God, it was a pleasure to thrust the knife into his cruel heart, to see his demoniacal face whiten, his popping eyes stare, and finally to see the crimson flood gush from his breast as I drew the knife out and he fell!

But I must get on:

Perhaps my name, Wallace Land, means nothing to you. Yet among any circle of sculptors it is uttered with respect.

“Wallace Land?” someone asks. “He will go far!”

And the talk is eager and enthusiastic. Why not, when I have had commissions that excited envy from sculptors much older than myself?

### **A Sculptor’s Tale**

I BEGAN early, with clays. At twelve I could so use my fingers as to pat and form and mould a semblance of life into the tiny figurines I worked on. Though my parents were poor, they contrived to draw attention of the right people to me — so that I became the protege of a wealthy lover of sculpture, and was sent to Paris, Rome and Berlin! This, when I was but eighteen. You are correct in assuming that I was proud!

Yet do you know what one must go through, to become capable of reproducing in marble the likeness of, say, a *woman*? As the artist has to master pigment mix and the judgment of color values; as the musician is relentlessly enslaved to the practice of certain difficult scales, so does a sculptor bow to the acquisition of Knowledge in moulding. He usually studies from models in the nude, learning how a bare body looks in hundreds of different positions. Then it is a matter of endlessly striving to duplicate. As in anything else, practice must complete his tutelage. It was in this way that I, Wallace Land, studied abroad.

For three years after returning from Europe, I labored hard. One, with the skill I have, need never be idle! God allowed me to reach twenty-eight, my present age. Possibly it was fate who decreed that I was to meet Professor Carl Huxhold, for I should never have met him had I not moved!

I shall go back to the beginning: to that morning in April, four months ago. Hardly had the snow disappeared off the nearer hills, yet Spring spoke in the soft, warm winds that blew, and already the cottonwood trees had new, gleaming, miniature leaves. The park greens were velvety, lilacs about to bud forth, and that aroma of hedge-rows quickening with fresh sap came to one's nostrils like a piquant wine. It was spring! Geese were flying over, booming down peans that must ever excite adventurous youth!

The studio where I had worked since coming back to America was a big attic room on the third floor of a great, red sandstone building. My living room abutted it. Though it was impossible during cold weather, and I could easily have afforded quarters more comfortable, I am one who dreads a moving and so had endured its cheerlessness. The last winter made its shortcomings more apparent than ever, yet I had made no effort to seek out a place more to my liking. But April, dawning with her subtle assurances of spring, brought about a change.

Suddenly I felt myself answering Spring's magnetic call. I wanted to bound, to caper like a frisky colt, to run! Remember, I am but twentyeight! No less sensitive than any artist is, I responded to a seasonal impulse. I would move! It was a time when all things moved, one way or another; the birds migrated; geese flew off to habitats that they always sought in spring. Partaking of the migratory spell, I would move too!

An advertisement in a morning newspaper brought me here. To a little apartment house, with a spacious, pretty park adjacent on the north. What a slim, stooped man of middle-age who was the janitor, had to offer consisted of three rooms on the second floor. On inspection, they were revealed to be all that I desired, and the terms of lease were satisfactory. Wonder

here makes me pause — who will be the succeeding tenant, when I have left to seek the marble virgin, Naomi?

“Professor Carl Huxhold” — I read the neatly engraved card tacked to the door of room number 12, directly opposite my new studio, as I prepared to insert a key in the lock. It was my first day in the apartment house. I had just returned from breakfast downtown.

No premonition either of good or evil came to me, as I read the name. All that I conceded myself was that I at least knew the name of one tenant, a neighbor on the same floor. He might turn out to be a bore, a grouch, or a good fellow with whom it would be interesting to chat, I knew his name only.

But even as I stood there, fumbling for the right key on my key-ring, the door bearing the little card tacked upon it opened. It was Professor Carl Huxhold at whom I stared.

## **CHAPTER II - Professor Huxhold**

SHORTER than I am, he had a body like a barrel — or like a gorilla! Hanging low at his sides, the backs of his hands, and what I could see of his wrists, were as hairy as the legs of an airdale! Wrinkled and ill-fitting was the dark suit he wore. Yet his face was clean shaven and smiling. And his curious, sea-green, slightly popping eyes twinkled at me from behind thick pince-nez!

Never shall I forget this — my first impression of the man. It was so different from a later opinion, when I knew him better. At this first meeting, I rather liked him; it was difficult not to like him.

“A scientist!” I told myself. “Above such things as clothes. Brainy — no doubt of it!” For Professor Carl Huxhold had the shape of head that fiction writers like to ascribe to Martians: bulging and dome-like, narrowing down to a pointed chin which, however, did not

retreat. Here was a man who soared infinite realms of learning, who delved in the very bowels of knowledge!

Personal magnetism emanated from him. Under his peculiar twinkling gaze, I felt that an aura, invisible yet commanding, was enveloping me. Then my skin prickled and I felt the epidermis tighten on the back of my neck! Was it because I suddenly realized my proximity with a being who recognized no inhibitions before his scientific lore? Did I fear for myself? Was some sense beyond the sixth sense, a not-quite-eradicated memory of an age thousands of years gone by, trying to warn me?

Then he was holding out his hand and introducing himself. “Wallace Land?” he smiled. “Jamison (the janitor) said you were moving in! Come in and see me sometime; when you aren’t too busy with your clays and marble!”

Almost before I could mutter some greeting in reply, he had clapped me on a shoulder and hurried off. Puzzled, I watched him run down stairs, taking the steps three at a time. But I was to learn that that, too, was in tune with his queer abilities. Huxhold, I found, was the hot-bed of high-tension energy! He was unable to walk slowly, but skipped along like a boy, half running. Odd-mannered, his brain flashed like lightning; cut-slashed, leaped figurative mountains, to reach logical goals — or results so illogical and true that none save himself could understand!

I visited with him, and he with me. He was most interesting, all right! But many times I was as uneasy in his presence as though I had been a young girl caged with a madman! That brain of his— God! Why he endured my visits my blundering ignorance; why he cared to come to me and explain his marvelous deductions, will ever be beyond my comprehension. I, Wallace Land, have very little understanding of the sciences.

Radio? Perhaps I could stumble through a description of a simple, one-tube receiver; nothing more complicated. Huxhold devised a twelve-tube radio with which, one night that I

was with him, he logged two hundred and twelve stations, in this country and Europe, South America and Africa! On wave-lengths, he explained, ranging from fifteen meters to a thousand! It was like an easychair adventure throughout the world!

Huxhold talked of Steinmetz, DeForest, Marconi — and other geniuses in things electrical.

“Bah!” he exclaimed, his sea-green eyes seeming to glow with chameleon colors. “Let them come to me! I will give them greater inventions than television! Bah!”

“Do you consider them so much inferior to yourself?” I asked, somewhat nettled.

Professor Carl Huxhold laughed. Merriment such as his, I have never heard elsewhere. It was contemptuous. It jarred by its jeering note. It made a hearer’s heart pound with rage. Yes — even though the undercurrent of ridicule that ran through it was intangible; as it was to me!

But on that occasion, which was early nightfall, he vouchsafed no information concerning some fearful capability. We sat in his living-room, a disordered place, smoking. April had come and gone. This was the night of May-day.

Those days I was doing very little serious work. It was spring — perhaps I had the spring-fever, though I have always believed that that expression is but an excuse to cover laziness. Still, I was finding it impossible to concentrate as I wished. Huxhold’s strange personality was driving all thoughts of art from my head. It maddened me. I could not put out the directed effort — of will, imagination and physical skill, that is necessary if I am to do artistic sculpture!

I took to avoiding Huxhold. He sensed it, and twitted me with it, which further angered me.

“What was he to me?” I asked myself, bitterly. “Was I not Wallace Land, the sculptor?”

## **The Inspiration**

"Whatever my shortcomings, I consider that art is greater, of infinitely superior benefit to the world, than any cold cruel law of science, or machine of metal rods and wheels. No doubt the latter are necessary; but they do not further the march of intelligence as does art. Huxhold merely experimented. His entire apartment resembled a machine-shop; even a junk-shop; such was its scramble of contrivances of all sorts! There were littered tables of chemicals, retorts, apparatus; and electric-furnaces, irons and devices, more than I had seen in any laboratory!

But, thought I, all these are not comparable to a single piece of sculpture, where every line of the carved marble is like a lyric!

Huxhold apparently had wealth beyond any desire that he might entertain. If he chose to pursue scientific machinations, why let him. Certainly it was none of my business! I realized that I was being very foolish in thus allowing any one to distract me from my art. Presently I began to feel mentally rectified, at ease in spirit, and ready for work. God gave me great skill, and I would use it greatly.

On a dais in my studio there rested a block of gleaming, white marble. It stood an inch over five feet in height, over eighteen inches through. It was of itself beautiful, but I saw in it something more beautiful still! Wonder pounded in my brain, as blood sometimes pounds at the temples. Could I — I, Wallace Land, carve this block of marble into the likeness of a maiden on the verge of womanhood? Into a superb marble virgin seeming to stand at the threshold of all God intended His priceless creation woman to be? Could I? The vision with which I was inspired was flawless, perfect! I could! I trembled with the power that suddenly seemed to sweep through me!

When completed, I would call the marble virgin — “Naomi!”

Already I could see how the finished statue would appear. Already I knew what the posture of her limbs would be. Already I pictured the delicious curves of her arms, her throat

and breasts, the tilt of her small round chin, and the moulding of her shell-fragile ears! God, she would be beautiful! If my great talent could bring reality forth from the vision!

Huxhold should be forgotten. In the tremendous requirement of energy for the lovely task, Pluxhold should be absolved from my thoughts.

I would live only for my dream in marble; that I might not mistake a single chisel stroke!

Having decided upon this course of action, I went directly to work. Why be tardy to a task as glorious as mine? With the fire of inspiration glowing at white heat in my brain?

But upon the second day, the man, whom I supposed I could erase from my life as a slate is wiped, intruded himself. Looking up from labor on the marble when I heard the door open, I saw Professor Carl Huxhold entering. Strangely enough, I was not sorry to see him. In a way despite antipathy to his personality, I had grown to like him. It was not friendship, but interest. Huxhold was interesting!

He nodded appreciatively at the cutting which was accomplished on the marble; and nodded again with comprehension of my objective!

“A woman?” he asked, thrusting his hairy hands in his trousers pockets.

“Yes,” I said simply.

For a matter of minutes he said nothing else but watched while I worked. I was exasperated that he had guessed what my skill was toward, and that I had admitted it, and with the probing glances which he bent upon the marble! Somehow it seemed as though the white stone was a woman bare and beautiful, and that Huxhold was feasting his hot eyes upon her nudity!

I threw down my tools. What I would have said was restrained, as Huxhold asked me an amazing question!

“Wouldn’t it be great, Land, if the marble could be brought to life?”

I stared at the man, doubting his sanity. Then I smiled. He was joking, of course; kidding me! I said as much.

“Maybe,” Huxhold mused; and he walked out without another word!

### **CHAPTER III - The Inspiration Takes Form**

MAY passed. It was a month of many showers. In the shelter of my studio, intent upon the marble virgin, I did not care when it rained — was hardly aware of it when it did. But every evening that it was possible to be out, also in the fresh early mornings, I took long walks. These journeys rested me; they solved the problem I know every artist faces — the letdown in spirit after tense, concentrated effort, when it seems that the result of one’s application isn’t near as perfect as was the pre-vision.

I was kept optimistic, happy. From the season itself, I believe I took a subtle something which went into my cutting.

Huxhold, too, was busy. But upon what I knew not. He did not call, nor did I visit him. We met in the hall, and passed greetings. That was all. Yet I sensed, perhaps from his strange burning glance when it briefly rested upon me, that I was in his thoughts. And I flattered myself that it was respect of me, engendered by my art!

From Huxhold’s apartment came the noise of pounding, the rattle and clank as his lathe whirred, and the buzz of a little sawing. Once I heard the crackling sizzle as when the carbons of an arc-lamp are caught and pulled apart flaming; or the sound that wireless makes, the buzzing discharge across a gap before electrical energy leaps into the aerial — and on across space. Huxhold was busy upon television instruments, I thought, devising a method by which storage-batteries might be charged by radio. Huxhold had told me that he was interested in the possibility.

Meanwhile, sixteen, eighteen, twenty hours a day, I used the tools of my art upon the statue, the marble virgin. It was hard work, but I gloried in it, loved it! Loved it as I loved the marble upon which I toiled! Because every day it became more beautiful, more the perfect likeness of a woman, a virgin like unto Eve herself! And “Naomi,” the name I had given her, was as fitting a name as that borne by the first woman on this earth!

And I, Wallace Land, sculptor, loved Naomi! I loved a likeness that I was creating, a young woman in marble!

Without conscious arrival at such a conclusion, I believed that Fate, the gods, or what-you-will, had decreed it. Had foreordained that I was never to love before, but would be drawn in irrepressible mate-hunger to her! And always I would seek unlove, because Naomi was stone! It was a terrible answered kisses, unanswered response to my great realization to accept, was it not? After, with these hands the servants of my talent, I had made her into the lovely creature which she was?

I could love her, but the marble virgin could not reply with one endearing word. Though the expression on her face was pleasant, Naomi could never smile; and nothing, unless I put it there, ever could bring a dimple to her smooth firm cheeks.

Yes, foolish as it may appear, I was daily more enraptured of the marble virgin, Naomi. Not silly; I refuse to admit that; nor acting an iota as though she were flesh and blood. I loved her as any artist loves a pet brain-child, a work that he is proud of and responsible for, and that is all. Am I to be blamed if I entertained the wish that she was real? I did wish so, with all my heart!

It was about this time, the first of July, and the days often uncomfortably hot, that a series of loud, mad, excited shouts emanating from the apartment of Professor Carl Huxhold brought me on a run to his door. The hour was six, in the evening. I instantly concluded that

Huxhold must be hurt, perhaps caught in some of his machinery, and had yelled to attract my attention.

But, no!

Unhurt, Huxhold stood near one of his laboratory benches. His pince-nez dangled from the ribbon attached to his vest; he evidently had torn open the neck of his shirt in a fine disregard for good cloth and buttons; his hairy chest was exposed. The expression on his face was terrible, and I started abruptly back after throwing open his door.

“Come on in!” Huxhold insisted. “I’m all right ! I lost my temper and did some tall cursing, because that damned beast bit me!”

Huxhold pointed beneath a bench, where a small nondescript cur, very frightened, trembled and crouched down. “A dog? What in the world—?” I began.

Huxhold for the moment made no answer, but bound up his bitten hand. He now had his glasses back astride his nose. And his curious, sea-green eyes glittered strangely behind their thick little windows. Then —

“It’s done, Land!” he swaggered. “The greatest piece of apparatus in the world! Carl Huxhold is the inventor! Look!”

### **The Great Invention**

I followed the directing wave of his bandaged hand and for the first time saw the electron-dissolver and the cabinet! The latter was six-and-a-half feet tall, with a top, bottom and three sides, but open on the fourth; the outside plain and smooth, of dark wood that I took to be walnut. The inside was not an open rectangular space, but was curved in a big half-circle from side to side, like a trough, or tub, stood on an end. This halfcircle was a single sheet of thick lead, fastened at top and bottom, and coated with what I took to be enamel, or thin glass.

The coating seemed to shimmer and glow. It was now a deep, dull red; now a vivid violet; appearing to comprise both colors and seem at the same time a weird green!

The open side of the cabinet faced toward the electron-dissolver: a squat, box-like affair having much the appearance of a radio, not overly large, on legs. There were many dials, switches, and tiny ammeters, both on the top and front; while directly in the center of the front was a sort of horn-shaped opening. The horn was carried six or eight inches forward from the box, and was not round at the mouth. It had a rectangular shape, its position corresponding to that of the cabinet, which it was pointed toward.

“The greatest invention in the world!” Huxhold repeated. “It was made by the great Carl Huxhold! Let us catch that damned dog, Land, so I can show you!”

“An experiment?” I demanded.

“No! A certainty!” Huxhold snatched his coat from a table where he had carelessly thrown it, and with this protecting his hands made a dive under the bench at the frightened, shivering animal. He succeeded in catching it, and came up triumphant, his eyes blazing.

“Look here!” I broke out. “I won’t be a party to any torture of that dog, Huxhold! Count me out. It’s inhuman!”

“Nonsense, Land! I shall not hurt it a particle! Watch and see!”

Before I could further object, Huxhold seized a hypodermic needle and had injected some fluid into the animal’s neck. The dog almost immediately became quiet, lethargic, but it did not become unconscious. Now its eyes were luminous, beseeching, pitiful.

I cursed.

Huxhold set the dog inside the cabinet, where it sank on its side, watching us with that fixed, pleading gaze.

“Huxhold ” I began. But he caught hold of my arm and drew me back from between the cabinet and the electron-dissolver. Another detail drew my eyes: there were heavy insulated

wires leading from the box to an electric switch above a farther bench. Huxhold snapped this switch shut, and immediately a low humming came from the electron-dissolver!

“Watch!” Huxhold commanded, his voice rising shrill and excited. His eyes snapped, glittered — glowed with a light which bordered on the insane!

Then Huxhold touched a vernier-dial, began to turn it slowly. An awful radiance shot forth from the mouth of the rectangular-shaped horn, bathing the entire inside of the cabinet, about six feet distant from it, in a torrentous luminosity!

“Watch!” shrieked Huxhold.

He touched and turned another dial. The poor sluggish-limbed dog, which had stirred and crouched lower as if hoping to escape whatever dreadful fate that it was to meet — at once vanished! Was gone! The cabinet stood empty!

“Great merciful God!” The cry was drawn from me involuntarily, as I blinked, and shook my head; and tried not to believe what I had seen!

I gazed at Huxhold as though he were Satan incarnate. This was necromancy, black art, demonology! Conjuraton raised to the nth degree, and aided by the bewitchery of a genius in science!

And Huxhold’s strange, sea-green eyes, glowing with fires one does not see in a normal person’s eyes, blinked and twinkled behind his thick pincenez!

“It worked!” he said quietly. His low words had all the effect of a robin’s soft cheep, after the lightning and thunder and rain is over.

“Yes,” I found myself saying, “it worked. My God!”

But Huxhold would not have it any other way than that I had uttered a compliment to his prowess!

“There is another thing that I want you to see,” continued Huxhold in that same confident quietude. “I noticed a marble leg in your studio. Do you still have it? Will you run and get it for me? Good! But hurry!”

#### **CHAPTER IV - A Startling Proposal**

I WALKED across the hall into my workroom like a man in a dream; found the leg, a limb broken from a small statue I had made several years before, and returned with it to Huxhold’s laboratory.

Huxhold took the marble leg, which weighed nearly forty pounds, and leaned it upright inside the cabinet. Again he commanded me to watch. Again I did so; my heart pounding and my hands clenched. What terrible revelation was I now to see? Would the leg disappear as had the flesh-blood dog?

It did not. Though the broad beam of radiance again flooded the cabinet, and the glassy-surfaced leaden curve seemed to respond with reflected shimmers of weird many-colored luminosity, the leg stayed.

But there occurred a change in its appearance, even as I gazed. It grew whiter, a faint pink then suffused it, and then — the knee bent, and I distinctly saw the toes wriggle! A second later it had collapsed onto the bottom of the cabinet, the stump end, where the marble had parted when the statue was broken, revealing itself as quivering, bloody flesh!

Before I could spring closer, Huxhold twirled the identical dial that he had when the cabinet held the dog, whereupon the leg vanished! Was gone! and Professor Carl Huxhold’s awful cabinet again stood empty!

“Now,” announced Huxhold, his twinkling eyes fixed upon me in an unwavering stare, “you have seen what the Huxhold Rays will do! Radio-magnetic-control? Bah! Television? Bah! My rays are a greater discovery! Do you know what I have done? I have split electrons

and protons, dissolved them into infinitely minute nothings of heat and light-flash! No scientist before me has succeeded in the feat, and there is no other living brain which can duplicate it!”

“What — what happened?” I asked inanely. “How does it work?” For I was trembling all over, and unable then to speak sensibly.

Huxhold laughed. It was a note of excited superiority. “Ho-ho! What the world would give to share my secret! But no one shall have it — it is mine, mine, MINE!” His voice rose on a timbre of elation.

“The marble leg was mine,” coldly I cut in. “You made it kick, and seem like live flesh; but you didn’t pay for it!”

Huxhold disregarded this thrust. He took off his pince-nez, wiped each eye-glass and replaced them upon his nose.

Then —

“The leg was flesh!” he corrected. “Just for a moment. Then I shot it forth in dissolved electrons, as I did the dog before! It now inhabits the plane of split electrons, and supposing that it has any shape or form, it is one that even I, Professor Carl Huxhold, do not know!

“Did the dog suffer? It did not! What if the damned beast had? And the leg had no consciousness! It’s movement was an involuntary one of suddenly relaxed flesh. A body in the morgue sometimes slight moves; Hah — my discovery should supplant the electric chair! It could rid the world of criminals!”

“But how?” I persisted. “I don’t believe ”

“You have seen? Yet you don’t believe?” Huxhold again laughed, and shrugged. He continued in something of a classroom manner: “An atom was long believed to be the smallest particle of indivisible matter, Science then learned that atoms possess constituent parts — positively electrified ‘protons’, with countless infinitesimal negatively-electrified ‘electrons’

massed in a spinning, darting planetary-system about them. And it is the number of these alone that determines the element! Whether it is gold, iron, silver, a lump of potash — or live flesh!

“You see? If by some means or process the number of electrons could be altered, subtracted or added at will, then any substance might be changed into some other substance! I have discovered this secret! The Huxhold Rays, when played on any substance in my cabinet, cause the infinitesimal electrons to split and multiply! And a slightly added strength to the ray dissolves both protons and electrons, destroys the atom and the molecule! The substance becomes as nothing; it goes flying into the ether; seeking the plane of split electrons, because my ray had made it a mass of split electrons itself!”

Huxhold paused a moment. His right hand rested lovingly upon the electron-dissolver, the radio-like box with a horn. Then, his blinking seagreen eyes upon me, he quietly added: “Now I will buy your woman statue, Land. How much?”

### **Naomi Completed**

BUY Naomi, the marble virgin? Did my ears hear aright? I returned Huxhold’s gaze somewhat doubtfully. He could not believe that I would sell my beautiful work of love! Surely he spoke facetiously! And yet I knew that Huxhold was unaware of my love for the marble beauty!

“She is not for sale,” came from my lips. Anger that I did not then understand began to rise in me. I added: “Not for any price, Huxhold!” I turned to leave the laboratory where I had witnessed such demoniacal use of science.

Huxhold caught at my arm. “Don’t be a fool! A thousand dollars, man!”

Angrily I shook him off. “No!”

“Two thousand! Five!”

“No, I tell you!” Did Huxhold think that he had but to bid for her, as though she were a harem slave-girl ?

“But, Land— think!”

“No! Absolutely no! That’s final, Huxhold! My thanks to you for letting me see your ‘ray’ work!” I walked out. Silently, Huxhold stood and glared. I seemed to feel his sea-green eyes, bent upon me in a mad, hypnotic gaze, even after I had closed his door and was behind mine. There in my workroom. I seized the tools of my art. The marble virgin lacked but a little of being completed. I knew that I could never let her go. She was perfect, lovely! Like unto Eve herself! Sell her? Profane her slim gloriousness by accepting a price for her? Huxhold must surely be crazy!

It was evening, two weeks later, that I gazed in awe at Naomi — the marble virgin. Naomi! That is how I will speak of her, as I continue this chronicle. White, beautiful, standing on tiptoes, one arm of delicious curves thrust backward, the other half raised before her as if she sought to grasp an invisible something in the air, her delicate chin lifted; she was lovely!

God had been good to me, Wallace Land, in giving me the skill out of which she was born! Naomi stood completed! I sank before her, pressing my hands about her feet and weeping. In such a manner did a sculptor before me once clasp the feet of his creation, while he bowed himself and wept ! But the marble, his art had fashioned into a woman, so beautiful that he dared to pray for life to imbue her, was never to live!

But again I must remind myself to get on. There is, if Huxhold’s visitor comes at the appointed hour as I am sure he will, less than twenty minutes left me. Time does not cease its flight for anyone. Huxhold’s caller will notify the police; they will view the body; and be drawn across the hall to my workroom. Not, of course, to find me!

I had promised to call Professor Carl Huxhold when the statue should be finished.

After my departure from his laboratory, on the occasion when he tested electron-dissolver and cabinet, Huxhold and I had had a talk. The substance of it was this: He had expended no small fortune in preparing his scientific machine of so titanic a power; he had gotten it together in a feverish burst of genius for no other purpose than to transform my statue into a being of flesh and blood! Did I believe he could? I had witnessed the transmutation of the marble leg!

Huxhold then explained in intricate detail just how the electron-dissolver and cabinet worked. Most of it was over my head, but I remembered the dial-settings for both the conversion of objects, and that which dissolved them. There was but a slight difference of manipulation between empowering the Huxhold Ray to commute dissolution or metastasis.

Wonderful, as we common people describe something not understandable? Surely! I least of all would traduce the genius of Professor Carl Huxhold!

But as I write, I remembered the dial-settings. I would not, for any pleading of Huxhold, agree to sell him Naomi. I loved her; I caught Huxhold's confident enthusiasm that his ray would bring life to her; and I agreed to help him place her in his terrible cabinet only after he had sworn with mighty oaths to shut off the electron-dissolver when, if his experiment was a success, she lived and breathed!

Believe me, as I rose from my knees before Naomi, and stumbled across the hall to Huxhold's apartment, I was trembling so desperately that I could hardly control my feet!

"She — she is finished!" I faltered, when I faced him.

"Damn!" Huxhold exploded, in blasphemous delight.

I caught his shoulders in my strong, young grip. I looked past his thick pince-nez, deep into his curious twinkling sea-green eyes. The man's face was not agreeable to me; it was ruddy, oily, and his nose had enlarged pores.

"If you harm her " I said.

“Nonsense!” Pluxhold laughed, and his eyes glowed. “Great dickens, Land, I want see what she does! Think of it — an opportunity to study the reactions of a woman who came into the world mature, without the formality of birth!”

“Then come, Huxhold! Help me carry her! And as you value your life, be careful!”

## **CHAPTER V - Naomi Lives!**

TWENTY minutes later, facing the electronsolver, Naomi stood within the cabinet! Huxhold snapped on a series of bright, ceiling electrics so that we might see every happening clearly. I stood beside him. The wall-switch had been closed. A weird humming came from the box whose horn was directed at Naomi in the cabinet!

“Now!” breathed Professor Carl Huxhold. He bent over; his fingers twisted the vernier-dial to a number.

From the rectangular mouth of the horn shot that refulgent phosphorescence. On either side of Naomi, the curved glassy-coated concave of the cabinet answered with glittering, shimmering, fluorescent darts of violet, deep red, and green!

“Now!” shouted Huxhold.

I took a step nearer the cabinet. Off in the distance, but the sound carrying clearly through the open windows of the laboratory, a clock in a tower far uptown began striking:

Boom, Boom! Boom!

Huxhold turned another dial to a number.

Boom! Boom!

He snapped shut a tiny switch.

Boom! Boom! The clock ceased striking. It was seven o'clock! And the beam of light coming from the horn of the electron-dissolver changed from fiery incandescence to gold! I held my breath. Transubstantiation was occurring in Naomi!

Huxhold whirled a dial, the beam slightly ascended, so that it swept no lower than the bottom of her toes. He was sobbing curses.

Before my eyes, I saw a delicate something — like the roseate tinge of an oyster shell — suffuse what an instant before had been cold marble! A wave of pink flooded her breast and climbed into her face! Her cheeks glowed; between lips suddenly carmine, I saw the gleaming pearls of two, white, perfect rows of teeth. Naomi's eyes took color — blue like that of an Italian sky, as the Bay reflects it at Naples! I saw dark brown hair fluff up on her head, and saw little tendrils of it escape the soft heat at her temples, to waver in a stirring of the air! Naomi lived!

She breathed! Her breast heaved! Then the beautiful arm which was half raised before her trembled and fell to her side! Her other arm swung forward, fingers wriggling! A foot was lifted, and rubbed softly against the ankle of the other!

Professor Carl Huxhold shut off the electron-dissolver. Exultantly he swung about toward the girl.

I shoved him roughly aside. “Naomi!” I called. “Oh, Naomi!” Whipping off my coat, I sprang forward and wrapped it about her nude, lovely form. Naomi turned her head and dazzled me with her smile! Trustfully, her hand clasped mine. “Naomi!” I said again. Gracefully she stepped from the cabinet!

“You fool!” shrieked Huxhold. “You fool! I made her live! Let her alone!” And he would have jerked my coat away and had her bare again!

Yes, it is the truth. I had felt offended at his gaze of her when she was marble, in the process of sculpture. Now she lived; and Huxhold's eyes mirrored an unholy desire! He should not see her! The man had become a devil!

I stormed at him: “You are forgetting yourself, Huxhold! Get back — away! Naomi is — goes with me!” I amended. “She — I love her!”

But Huxhold caught at Naomi's arm. She gave a pitiful little cry: "Oooo!" — her first sound in the world was a note of pain!

"Let her alone!" Huxhold screamed. He reiterated the words as if frenzy-driven. "Let her alone!" Then, like a mad man, he rushed upon me!

Thrusting Naomi behind me, I let go of her and drove a furious fist to Huxhold's face. I would give him plenty of fighting! The blow landed. Huxhold's head snapped back, he tripped and collapsed. Without waiting to see how he came out of it, I hurried Naomi across the hall and into my workroom. There, I locked the door!

"Naomi," I said — and when I let go of her she promptly let my coat fall to the floor. "Naomi, can you speak to me?"

"Oooo! she answered, cooing like a tickled baby. "Oooo!" And her cheeks dimpled, and she gave a happy laugh!

Then Naomi ran suddenly to me, threw her shellpink, deliciously cool arms about my neck, and her lips pressed dear, indescribably sweet kisses on mine!

## **New Problems**

TWELVE minutes are left me, in which I must complete this chronicle! A dozen periods of sixty seconds each!

Mortal man does not live who can describe the happiness of two such weeks as followed for me, in so limited a space of time!

Let me high-light, difficult as it may be, what transpired. And I, Wallace Land, am not as skillful in writing, as I am with chisel and carving tools!

First, there was the question of what I should do with Naomi — and this was quasi-humorous! Startling was the fact that I had on my hands a girl, young woman, who did not know the meaning of clothes! She was perfectly content to remain without them, it seemed;

running about my workroom like a Sappho, picking up things, dropping them ; and always with movements as light and effortless as those of a dancer. I had no little trouble in getting her to keep a long smock of mine on; it tripped her, and immediately she shrugged out of it!

Conversation with Naomi was impossible. “Oooo!” which she uttered delightedly with every new feature of interest that she discovered, appeared to be her limit in speech.

When I called to her, Naomi seemed to think it was an invitation to run to me, throw her arms about me and kiss me with soft fragrant kisses!

Believe me, it is not so easy to write of these things! Yet, as I sit writing them, I am conscious of a certain pleasure. It is as if I were re-living my wonderful experiences with Naomi, in a very rare dream. And quite soon, now, I shall go as she went onto the same invisible plane!

There ensued two weeks of beautiful companionship with Naomi, the like of which I know the world is incapable of realizing.

Being mature of body and in mind, Naomi learned fast — nay, like lightning! In four days she spoke a few words, knew her name, and that a shake of my head meant that she should desist in whatever she was about to do. In five, she called me “Wally” — pronouncing it “Wally!” — so sweetly, in such a gentle voice, that it drew hot tears to my eyes!

In eight days, clothed in a pretty dress of sheer French voile, silk stockings and black kid pumps, outwardly she was like any other lovely being of her sex; and I ventured upon a walk with her. Charming was her reaction to the outside world, previously seen only from the windows of my living quarters! Flowers fascinated her, and birds. She was forever springing lightly into the air, as if she hoped to succeed in brushing their feathery bodies with her velvety fingers. I laughed to see her bend and pat hands upon the park greens, or snuggle her dainty nose into the cupped petals of flowers!

Professor Carl Huxhold met us, as we returned from that walk. He stopped dead in his tracks. Then with a queer expression on his face, and hands outstretched, he came forward. I noticed that his curious, sea-green eyes did not twinkle as usual behind his thick pince-nez; they were brooding, I thought. He seemed very lonely, and ashamed, and like one who has no friends. It was because of this, and the fact that I owed Naomi, as she was, to him, that I waited — with an arm, nevertheless, raised protectingly about Naomi.

“My God,” Huxhold broke out. “Is it really she?” He clutched at my hand, and spoke rapidly: “Don’t hold that night against me, Land! I was wild — forgot myself! When I thought of what she was — great dickens!” Huxhold whistled. I allowed him to greet Naomi.

“How do you do!” she said quite correctly, as if the pleasantries were commonplace to her!

“Heavens!” stuttered Huxhold. “Now I know that I’m crazy! She’s learned to talk — already?”

“Yes.” I let him shake my hand. “If you like, Huxhold, you can come up with us.”

I can only believe that what was to happen was fated, foreordained. Else, why did no intuitive sense warn me against the invitation that I had extended to Huxhold? I gave it, unaware that it was to lead to something which would seal Naomi’s doom, and mine.

Huxhold stayed late that night. He dropped in every evening following. And I, meanwhile, went ahead with my education of Naomi. How I loved her!

Her voice in my ears was like song! The gentle touch of her hands, her manner of suddenly throwing both lovely arms about my neck and kissing me with soft pressure of lips as red as cherries, as fragrant as hyacinths, always brought the hot tears of happiness to my eyes! How I loved her! A dozen times a day I swore my servitude to her, and renewed my vow of protectorate. And my heart threatened to burst when my name, uttered in her inimitable, sweet way, came from Naomi’s lips! “Wal-ly!” she always said.

## **CHAPTER VI - Huxhold's Treachery**

BUT Naomi's attitude toward clothing was that of a savage. It seemed as though she thought it was very odd for anyone to have to cover themselves with garments! Nakedness had no meaning whatever for her; anymore than it has to a South American Indian, who has lived in the open all his life without coming to consider body-covering a necessity! Naomi was wholly innocent.

While she was in the confines of my workroom and apartment, what she wore did not matter. One watching her did but watch the loveliest being on earth. Yet I thought it best for her to wear garments of some sort; and I had a knee-length robe of sheer grey chiffon made for her. This, and sandals on her feet, with the ropes of jewels and bracelets I had given her about her throat and arms, and Naomi's mischievous habit of tucking a rose in one side of her dark, fluffy hair, made her appear more than ever like a lovely princess of some far earlier period.

"Naomi, Naomi!" I would catch myself saying. "I love you!"

"Oooo!" she would answer, delightedly pronouncing her first sound of all. "I love you, Wal-ly!" And again I would feel her intensely sweet kisses on my lips!

Professor Carl Huxhold, demon spirit of awful, evil genius, continued to be a regular evening visitor. I did not guess what was happening before my very eyes, nor what was to be his propensity in revenge when he was thwarted! No — I was blind; blind, and possessed of no judgment in character whatever, or I should not have failed so in my vow to protect Naomi!

Now I see what I was insensible to then. Now, I realize that Huxhold, the vile beast, was striving to ingratiate himself in Naomi's favor, was making love to her! Believing, because she was lacking in sophistication and acquaintance with men of the world, that his pretty talk and a veneer of manners over his bubbling purpose would wrench Naomi's affection from me to him!

Thoroughly disillusioned was Huxhold to be; and I should have killed him then ! Before his brain, flaming with a jealous, insane hate, evolved the malevolent atrocity which was his objective!

Four nights ago, returning from the phone instrument in the lower hall, after leaving Naomi alone with Huxhold in my living-room no more than five minutes, I sped lightly up the stairs and halted even as I opened my door!

Huxhold had his hairy arms about Naomi! He was striving to plant his gross brutal lips on her clean, beautiful mouth! Naomi, terror mirrored in her eyes, fear tightening the muscles of her face, was working to fight him off; and Huxhold had torn the filmy grey chiffon from her body!

“Wal-ly!” cried Naomi. “Wal-ly! He — hurts!”

Then, twisting aside, she managed to get one arm free of his grasp. Slap! Slap! Slap! Furiously angry, three times Naomi brought her hand in violent contact with Huxhold’s right cheek! Knocking off his pince-nez, and sending him, half blinded, reeling back!

“You damned vixen!” Huxhold shouted. And —

Then I had him! With my hands on his collar, I so savagely jerked him about that his coat parted in one mighty rip! I slashed my fists into his face, pounding his nose, and eyes and mouth! I drove home smashing blows, propelled by a red rage! He could not withstand me!

And Naomi, a glorious creature of brilliant blue eyes, nude except for sandals on her feet, the swishing ropes of beads and jingling bangles, danced about us like a veritable savage, voicing “Oooos!” of delight!

Naomi would have leaped upon him, as he lay senseless and supine, finally, on the floor; but I restrained her.

“No,” I said. “No, Naomi dear, it is enough!”

Then I dragged Huxhold into his laboratory. I dumped him on the floor, and as I turned to leave his eyes opened. Deprived of his glasses, his eyes inflamed from the effects of my blows, he could not see me clearly; but he muttered: “By seven hells of devils, I will get even, Land — for this!”

And I will kill you, Huxhold! As surely as you ever cross my path again!” I answered his threats. Feeling a little sick, I returned to my living-room and Naomi.

### **Huxhold’s Revenge**

CAREFUL as I was after that, it was useless. I did not dream of the direction that Huxhold’s implacable vengeance would take. A telephone call — to get me to leave Naomi an instant unguarded!

An hour and a half ago, it was. And perhaps it was Naomi’s womanly intuition of inhuman dangers pending, that caused her to leap up from beside the little tea-table where we were in the midst of dinner, and clasp me tight to her breast in an embrace of love while her honey-scented lips rained dear, tremulous, but fragrant kisses on mine!

“Wal-ly!” she murmured in a voice that was heaven-made music to my ears. “Wa-lly — I love you so!”

And I answered her kisses, and breathed answering assurances of love to her; and went into the hall and down the stairs with hot tears of happiness misting my eyes!

I had lifted the telephone receiver when I heard Naomi scream!

I think I must have been paralyzed for an instant. Or it was that I was numbed, while my brain reminded me that a phone call before had given Huxhold an opportunity to lay hands on Naomi!

I took the steps up four at a time, leaving the telephone receiver dangling, knowing in an inspired flash what the call was for! Yet it seemed an age before I had snatched open my door.

“Naomi!” I called. “Naomi! N-A-O-M-I!”

But no dear, sweet voice answered me; my living rooms and workrooms were strangely still and quiet — empty!

Naomi was gone!

Yet, “Naomi!” — I shouted in a mad frenzy again; before hurling myself out, across the hall, and at the door of Professor Carl Huxhold’s laboratory!

It was locked, and I battered at it, tore at it with the strength of desperation! Unaware of the hurt that my shoulder received, I stepped back a few paces, then lunged forward with all my might! And Huxhold’s door burst open!

I saw him standing beside the fearful electron-dissolver, heard him turn with an animal snarl as I plunged into the room ; and I saw Naomi, whom I knew I loved with all my powers to love, standing against the glassy-surfaced curve inside Huxhold’s terrible cabinet!

I screamed a man-scream of fear and agony! But while I raced forward with the speed of lightning, Huxhold’s fingers were quicker!

Naomi had evidently been doped with the same hypodermic that Huxhold had used to quiet the dog, on that occasion when first he tested his scientific prowess. But the injection had not been sufficient to thoroughly subdue her; she was standing erect, dazed but recovering her wits; and had she had another instant she must have escaped to my arms!

Hellishly despicable was the speed with which Huxhold flicked the switches shut and whirled the dials of the electron-dissolver!

From the rectangular-shaped horn of that awful box there shot that appalling beam of effulgent, voltaic potentiality! It swept about Naomi, was reflected back from the gleaming curve of the terrible cabinet in dizzying flashes of violet, of red and green!

Naomi half raised beautiful arms to me; her lips voiced one low tragic cry — “Wal-ly!” Then the beam, like a wave of live malignancy, became a blood-hued shaft! Barely uttered, trembling in the very air, Naomi’s voice ceased! She . . . was . . . gone!

I saw that Huxhold’s cabinet stood empty; only the luminosity from the electron-dissolver striking and being beaten back and repulsed by the scientific capability of that curve of shimmer-surfaced lead! Utterly, irrevocably, Naomi had been torn from me!

The rest has been written at the beginning of this chronicle. How I stabbed Huxhold, and he died. I am glad that I killed him. I know that he had planned, after shooting my beloved Naomi to the plane of split-electrons, to send himself by the same means after and join her there! Because Huxhold believed that a being, dissolved by his ray, has some sort of a life there, and a form, although he did not know what it was!

I dragged the electron-dissolver and cabinet to my workroom, by the act making deep scratches and gouges in the floor which I know that the police who come to investigate will follow, and it is set up here and ready. I have connected the wires to a switch, and the dials on the box are properly set. It only remains to place myself inside the cabinet and pull the farther electric switch shut by an attached cord, which is likewise ready for me! Then, in the twinkling of an eye, I shall dart into the eternity of space, myself a swirling mass of split-electrons, to find Naomi — the girl of my dreams, whose form I made by my skill in sculpture!

To find Naomi! Glad is the promise carried in those three words!

My time is up. There are steps on the stairs. It is Huxhold’s visitor, come to keep his appointment! Huxhold’s door is unlocked; in an instant the man will open it.

There!

The man is shouting something. Displeased, no doubt, at finding Huxhold dead, when he should be glad!

What shall I write to bring this to a close? A “Good-bye?” No, I think no. It will be beautiful to go out with her name on my lips!

Now I will step inside Huxhold’s terrible cabinet and grasp the switch-cord!

“Naomi . . .”