

*The Supreme Grand Lodge of the Rosicrucians,
212 Clay Street, San Francisco, May 2, 1886.*

"We grow daily beyond our yesterdays and are ever reaching forth for the morrow. The world has had a long night, as it has had bright days; and now another morn is breaking, and we stand in the Door of the Dawn."—Dr. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *Magia Sexualis*

The young woman sat on the bench in the front row. The spiritualist gathering place was inside an old Victorian house owned by one of the members, a Mrs. Virginia Partridge. The girl was crying in the fading San Francisco window light that was illuminating her. Her body was folded over, her head in her hands, as she sobbed, her pale-blue bonnet hanging around her white neck by its frail ribbon.

Clara Shortridge Foltz, Esq., who had been part of the earlier meeting of spiritualists and suffragists, wanted to see if there was something she could do to aid the young woman in her discomfort. With her reddish-brown hair, the girl reminded Clara of her oldest daughter, Trella Evelyn, who was now twenty. Her swirled bun and curly hair was bobbing up and down as Clara walked over and placed a hand on her shoulder. The young woman wore a modest blue dress with bustle, and a satin sash encircled her thin waist.

"My dear, what's wrong?" Clara whispered, not

wanting to startle her.

The girl was far from startled. She slowly raised her head, and stared into space, her rouged cheeks slick with tears. Her face was pretty, yet Clara noticed she wore dark eyeshadow, and her eyebrows were red smudges above her glistening gray eyes. Clara had seen this type of shaved eyebrows in photographs of Japanese women, who wanted to affect a kind of mystical quality to their demeanor. The girl finally turned toward Clara, folded her porcelain-like hands into her lap, and cleared her throat.

“I don’t know how it happened. I heard the other witnesses, but I still don’t believe what they said.” Clara noticed the young woman’s pupils were constricted, and her words were slurred. The confusing words were perhaps due to a drug-induced condition.

“Witnesses? I don’t understand. I am an attorney. Perhaps I can help you.” Clara reached down to take the girl’s hand, but she pulled back and squealed.

“There were attorneys in that courtroom. All they did was argue about the different witnesses and what they saw. *He* never got called to the stand! He’s still out there!” The girl stood up and began humming and shaking her head back-and-forth, as if she were being seduced by a strange, inner demon.

“I can understand why you would want to come to our meeting. We support women’s rights under the guise of spiritual communication. What

happened to you? Are you drugged? Were you raped? What's your name?"

The young woman's humming began to transform into a chanting of words. Clara thought this might be a method of protecting her body. When she spoke, she clutched her arms across her breasts and looked up into the air at some invisible entity, perhaps a protecting angel or a demigod of some kind.

"Perhaps you can come with me. I don't live too far from here, and I have a friend who knows about the problems of young women such as yourself." Clara took a few steps toward the door, hoping the girl would follow. When she failed to do so, the attorney went back and grasped her arm at the elbow. She guided the young woman toward the door. The girl walked as if she were in another world, looking all about, squinting at the descending sun outside, and continuing to mumble her prayer, if that's what it was.

They took the cable car up California Street to the mansion. The girl seemed in a trance, staring out at the passing pedestrians, horses and merchant carts as if they were phantasms in her personal dream world. Clara realized this when she observed the young woman reach out and attempt to touch one of the passing horses, even though it was at least ten yards from her open window inside the trolley.

After getting clearance from the guard at the gate, Hannigan, the butler, answered the tall gray door of the Hopkins Victorian mansion at One Nob

Hill. Clara heard her younger teenage children roughhousing on the stairs. The Irish butler raised his auburn eyebrows and smiled. “Been that way since you left, mum. Banshees, they are, to be sure!”

“Could you please tell Ah Toy I want to see her? We’ll be in the living room.”

“It’s nice to get instructions all civilized like. Miss Ah Toy and her shouts. It’s my opinion, mum, she gets the wee ones all riled up.” Hannigan looked over the girl briefly before he turned to leave, the tails of his black coat bobbing against his backside as he climbed the stairway to the second floor.

Clara, now thirty-seven, had been living at the Hopkins residence since she solved the mystery of the eight murdered prostitutes two years before. Her best friend, Ah Toy, the former Chinatown Madame and now an independently wealthy artist and art dealer, was invited by Mrs. Hopkins to stay with her, and now it was the entire Shortridge family who lived with the widow. These were hard times, as the strikes were on at the railroads, and high unemployment was the result. The big investors and owners of the machines of progress were not being very kind to the working folks.

Mrs. Hopkins, at sixty-eight, was becoming senile, and as such, she was probably more receptive to having all these new, live-in guests to watch out for her. Her confusion was humorous to all of the Shortridge family, and Ah Toy, a shrewd

businesswoman in her own right, was making an effort to see that the old woman was not being tricked by sly businessmen or local politicians. The late Mark Hopkins, her husband, was one of the four owners of the railroads in the United States, so he had left his wife with a vast fortune.

Clara was thankful to be able to have this gigantic mansion for her family to live in. One of the main reasons she had taken the murder case in Chinatown was because they paid her enough so that she could finally bring her family from San Jose to live with her. Now that she was back to plying her daily trade of divorce cases and family law, the money was not as forthcoming as the one hundred dollars per hour she received from the Chinatown Six Companies during the murder case. One more reason she was grateful to have this abode.