

# SARDONYX

FLOYD McKNIGHT

**P**ADRE RINALDO saw the sardonyx glitter  
In red and blue on his golden chasuble;  
Faint on his lips he felt a lingering pleasure  
Of holy wine; he sat, and bowed his head  
While priestly chants called forth their antiphons,  
And watched the jewels on his golden robe  
Shine in the pale light of altar-candles.  
Opal and jade and amethyst and ruby  
Cast their twinkling colors into his eyes  
Out of the dark folds of his cloth of gold.  
Padre Rinaldo wondered if his eyes  
Reflected the lights . . . and wondered other things,  
For Padre Rinaldo had a curious mind.

Details not whispered in confessional,  
Shapes that once moved in the imaginings  
Of Alessandra Amato before she felt  
A deathly fever burning her tired flesh  
And something else in her that was tired too,  
And came to church, and lived a little while,  
Then, ceasing to live, began to live forever;  
Well, many such an ordinary thing  
Might set a curious mind to wondering.  
Alessandra had worn jewels and gold,  
Had worn upon rich cloth of gold the jewels  
Given to her by lovers to adorn  
A pale recipient wrist or throat or ankle;  
Opal and jade and amethyst and ruby  
Attracted the dark eyes of hungry lovers  
Searching for strange delights beyond the beauty  
Of precious stone and the luxury of silk.  
And there came one who said he loved her more  
Than the whole world; his token was a ring  
In filigree, set with a sardonyx,  
Which Alessandra wore, and in return  
She gave him her love and her regard, until  
In one of those weird intricacies of passion

That move the earth, yet are not understood,  
She bade him drink a goblet of old wine,  
While she caressed him. The goblet was of gold,  
Its content sweetly, pleasantly narcotic,  
Its poison clear, invisible, and potent . . .

Alessandra could never quite forget,  
And her last testament bestowed her jewels  
As decorations for the robes of priests.

*Padre Rinaldo saw the sardonyx glitter  
In red and blue on his golden chasuble,  
His thin hand pallid in the candle-light.  
Possibly he himself did not know  
If he had sent a quiet vertical prayer  
To his own personal God for Alessandra.  
A miracle of music shook the arches,  
Trembled within the organ-pipes, and echoed  
Against the colors of the sainted windows.  
Padre Rinaldo heard a glorious anthem,  
Heard piety reverberant and triumphant,  
Hundreds of mighty voices of the pious . . .  
Then, curiously, his gaze happened to meet  
An acolyte with a jeweled crucifix.*

# THE TONIC OF DISASTER

## *An Escape from the Misery of Being Bored*

HUGH A. STUDDERT KENNEDY

“I REMEMBER once sitting in a room in Harley Street with a distinguished surgeon and a great mental specialist. They were both men absolutely consecrated to their warfare with disease. They hated disease as St. Paul hated sin. We had been discussing modern anesthetics and their power of killing pain. The surgeon had been an untiring worker in that field. It had been an animated and interesting talk, but at last there fell a silence on us all, and for some time we sat and smoked and thought, listening to the dull roar of the London traffic as it floated in through the open window. Then the surgeon said quietly:

“After all, the greatest of human miseries, the most deadly of diseases, is one we cannot touch with a knife or save men from by drugs.”

“What do you mean?” I asked. “Cancer?”

“Oh, no!” he replied; “we’ll get that little devil yet. I mean—boredom. There is more real wretchedness, more torment driving men to folly, or to what you parsons call sin, due to boredom than to anything else. Men and women will do almost anything to escape it; they will drink, drug themselves, prostitute their bodies, and sell their souls; they will take up mad causes, organize absurd

crusades, fling themselves into lost hopes and crazy ventures; they will torment themselves and torture other people to escape the misery of being bored. Any one who discovered a cure for that would put an end to more misery and tragedy than all of us doctors and physicians put together.”

So did a distinguished English clergyman of world-wide reputation write to me sometime ago. It set me thinking along unexpected lines. I found myself agreeing with the distinguished surgeon; but, try as I would, I could not apply myself, as I suppose I ought to have done, to answering him. A nebulous army of panaceas for boredom did, it is true, hover dutifully in the background of my subconscious mind, whatever that may be; but, subconsciously, I ignored them. I really was not interested, because I fancied I had seen a great light—in another direction.

I found that the distinguished surgeon was answering another question which I had been putting to myself fearfully and distrustfully for many years. Baldly and brazenly stated it would appear somewhat as thus: Do we not all really enjoy disasters in which we are not person-