

Explorers of the Dawn

Explorers of the Dawn #3

Mazo de la Roche

fadedpage.com

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: Explorers of the Dawn

Date of first publication: 1919

Author: Mazo de la Roche (1879-1961)

Date first posted: May 22, 2023

Date last updated: May 22, 2023

Faded Page eBook #20230546

This eBook was produced by: Mardi Desjardins, John Routh & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

This file was produced from images generously made available by Hathitrust.

EXPLORERS OF THE DAWN

BY MAZO DE LA ROCHE

I

It all began with our discovery of the Dawn. Of course, we had known all along that there was a sunrise—a mechanical sort of affair that started things going like clockwork. But Dawn was a bird of another feather.

If we had had our parents with us, they would have, in all likelihood, unfolded the mystery of it in some bedtime visit; but our governess, Mrs. Handsomebody, if she ever thought about the Dawn at all, probably looked on it with suspicion, and some disfavor, as a weak, feeble thing—a nebulous period, fit neither for honest folk nor for cut-throats.

So it came about that we heard of it from our good friend the Bishop.

Mrs. Handsomebody had given a grudging permission for us to take tea with him. In hot July weather her voice and eyes always seemed frostier than usual. The closely shut windows and drawn blinds made the house a prison, and the glare of the planked back-yard was even more intolerable. Therefore when Rawlins, the Bishop's butler, told us that we were to have tea in the garden, it was hard for us to remember Mrs. Handsomebody's injunction to walk sedately and to bear in mind that our host was a bishop.

But as we crossed the cool lawn, our spirits, which had drooped all day, like flags at half-mast, rose and fluttered in the summer breeze, and we could not resist a caper or two as we approached the tea-table.

The Bishop did not even see us. His fine grave face was buried in a book he had on his knees, and his gaitered legs were bent so that he toed in.

When we drew up before him, Angel and I in stiff Eton collars, and The Seraph fresh as a daisy, in a clean white sailor blouse, he raised his eyes and gave us a vague smile, and a wave of the hand toward three low wicker chairs. We were not a bit abashed by this reception, for we knew the

Bishop's ways, and it was joy enough that we were safe in his garden, staring up at the blue sky through flickering leaves, and listening to the splash of a little fountain that lived in the middle of the cool grass-plot.

Surely, I thought, there never was such another garden—never another with such a rosy red brick wall, half-hidden by hollyhocks and larkspur—such springy, tender grass—such a great guardian cathedral, that towered above and threw its deep beneficent shade! Here the timorous cathedral pigeons strutted unafraid, and dipped their heads to drink of the fountain, raising them heavenward, as they swallowed—thanking God, so the Bishop said, for its refreshment.

It was hard to believe that next door, beyond the wall, stood Mrs. Handsomebody's planked back-yard. Yet even at that moment I could see the tall, narrow house, and fancied that a blind moved as Mrs. Handsomebody peered down into the Bishop's garden, to see how we behaved.

Rawlins brought a tray and set it on the wicker table beside the Bishop's elbow. We discovered a silver muffin-dish, a plate of cakes, and a glass pot of honey, to say nothing of the tea.

Still the Bishop kept his gaze buried in his book, marking his progress with a blade of grass. Rawlins stole away without speaking, and we three were left alone to stare in mute desire at the tea-things. A bee was buzzing noisily about the honey-jar. It was The Seraph who spoke at last.

'Bishop,' he said, politely, but firmly, 'I would like a little nushment.'

'Bless me!' cried the Bishop. 'Wherever are my manners?' And he closed the book sharply on the grass-blade, and dropped it under the table. 'John, will you pour tea for us?'

We finished the muffins and cake, all talking with our mouths full, in the most sociable and sensible way; and, after the honey-pot was almost empty, we made the bee a prisoner in it, so that, like that Duke of Clarence who was drowned in a butt of Malmsey, he got enough of what he liked, at last.

I think it was Angel who put the question that was to lead to so much that was exciting and mysterious. He said, leaning against the Bishop's shoulder, 'What do you think is the most beautiful thing in the world, Bishop?'

Our friend had The Seraph between his knees, and was gazing at the back of his head.

‘Well,’ he replied, ‘since you ask me seriously, I should say this little curl on The Seraph’s nape.’

The Seraph felt for it.

‘I yike it,’ he said, ‘but I yike my wart better.’

‘Good gracious!’ exclaimed the Bishop. ‘Don’t tell me *you’ve* a wart!’

‘Yes, a weal one,’ chuckled The Seraph. ‘It’s little, but its gwowing. I fink some day it’ll be as big as the one on Mrs. Handsomebody’s chin. *It can wiggle.*’

‘You don’t say so!’ said the Bishop, rather hastily. ‘And where do you suppose you got it?’

The Seraph smiled mischievously. ‘I fink I got it off a toad we had. He was an awful dear ole toad, but he died, ’cos we—’

‘Oh, I say, don’t bother about the old toad, Seraph!’ put in Angel hastily, feeling as I did that the manner of the toad’s demise was best left to conjecture. ‘We want to hear about the most beautiful thing in the world. Please tell it, Bishop!’

‘Well—since you corner me,’ said the Bishop, his eyes on the larkspur, ‘I should say it is the wing of that pale-blue butterfly, hovering above those deep-blue flowers.’

Angel’s face fell. ‘Oh, I didn’t mean a little thing like that,’ he said. ‘I meant a ’normous, wonderful thing. Something that you couldn’t *ever* forget.’

‘Well—if you will have it,’ said the Bishop, ‘come close and I’ll whisper.’ Instantly three heads hedged him in, and he said in a sonorous undertone, ‘*It’s the Dawn.*’

‘The Dawn.’ We three repeated the magic words on the same note of secrecy. ‘But what is it like? How can we get to it? Is it like the sunset?’

‘I won’t explain a bit of it,’ he replied. ‘You’ve got to seek it out for yourselves. It’s a pity, though, you can’t see it first in the country.’

‘Must we get up in the dark?’

‘Yes. I think your tallest attic-window faces the East. You must steal up there while it’s still gray daylight. Have the windows open, so that you can hear and smell, as well as see it. But I’m afraid the dear Seraph’s too little.’

‘Not me,’ asserted The Seraph, stoutly. ‘I’m stwong as two ephelants.’

‘You mustn’t be frightened when you hear its wings,’ said the Bishop, ‘nor be abashed at the splendor of it, for it was designed for just such little fellows as you. You will come and tell me then that happens, won’t you? I shall probably never waken early enough to see it again.’

Though we played games after this, and the Bishop made a very satisfactory lion prowling about in a jungle of wicker chairs and table-legs, we none of us quite lost sight of the adventure in store for us. Somewhere in the back of our heads lurked the thought of the Dawn, with its suggestion of splendid mystery.

We were no sooner at home again than we set about discussing ways and means.

‘The chief thing,’ said Angel, ‘is to waken about four. We have no alarm-clock, so I s’pose we’ll just have to take turns in keeping watch all night. The hall clock strikes so we can watch hour about.’

‘I’ll take first watch!’ put in The Seraph, eagerly.

‘You’ll take just what’s given to you, and no questions, young man,’ said Angel, out of the side of his mouth; and The Seraph subsided, crushed.

II

Came bedtime at last, and the three of us in the big four-poster; the door shut upon the world of Mrs. Handsomebody, and the windows firmly barred against burglars and night air.

Angel announced, ‘First watch for me! You go right to sleep, John, and I’ll wake you when the clock strikes ten.’

But I wasn’t at all sleepy, and we lay in the dusk and talked till the familiar harsh voice of the hall clock rasped out nine o’clock.

‘You go to sleep, please, John,’ whispered Angel in a drowsy voice, and I’ll watch till ten.’

I felt drowsy, too; so I put my arm about the slumbering Seraph and soon fell fast asleep.

It seemed to me but a moment when Angel roused me. I know I had barely settled down to an enjoyable dream, in which I was the only customer in an ice-cream parlor, where there were seven waitresses, each one obsequiously proffering a different flavor.

‘Second watch on deck!’ whispered Angel, hoarsely—‘and look lively!’

‘But I’d only just put my spoon in the strawberry ice,’ I moaned. ‘Can’t be ten minutes yet.’

‘Oh, I say,’ complained Angel, ‘don’t you s’pose I know when the old clock strikes ten? You’ve been sleepin’ like a drunken pirate, and no mistake. Must be near eleven by now.’

‘I’ll just see for myself,’ I declared. ‘I’ll go and look at the schoolroom clock.’ And I began to scramble over him.

‘You will not then,’ muttered Angel, clutching me. ‘I shan’t let you!’

‘You won’t, eh? If it’s really ten, you needn’t care, need you?’

‘Course it’s ten—it’s nearer eleven; but you’re going to do what I say.’

At that we came to grips, and fought and floundered till the bed rocked, and the poor little Seraph clung to his pillow as a shipwrecked sailor to a raft in a stormy sea. Exhaustion alone made us stop for breath; still we clung desperately to each other, our small bodies pressed hotly together, Angel’s nose flattened against my ear. The Seraph snuggled up to us.

‘Just you wait!’ breathed Angel; his hands tightened on me, then relaxed—his legs twitched—

‘Strawberry or pineapple, sir?’ came the dulcet tones of the waitress. I was in my ice-cream parlor again! Seven flavors were laid before me. I fell to, for I was hot and thirsty.

I was disturbed by The Seraph, singing his morning song. It was a tuneless drone, yet not unmusical. Always the first to open his eyes in the morning, he began his day with a sort of saga of his exploits of the day before, usually meaningless to us, but fraught with color from his own peculiar sphere. At last he laughed outright, a Jovian laugh, at some remembered prank—and I rubbed my eyes and come to full consciousness. The sun was slanting through the shutters. Where, oh where, was the Dawn?

I turned to look at Angel. He was staring at the slanting beam and swearing softly, as he well knew how.

‘We’ll simply have to try again,’ I said. ‘But however are we going to put in to-day?’

The problem solved itself as all problems will, and the day passed, following the usual landmarks of porridge, arithmetic, spelling, scoldings, mutton, a walk with our governess, bread and butter, prayers, and the (for once, longed for!) *bed*.

That night we decided to lie awake together, passing the time with stories, and speculation about the mystery so soon to be explored by us.

I told the first story, a long-drawn adventure of shipwreck, mutiny, and coral caves, with a fair sprinkling of skeletons to keep us broad awake.

‘It was a first-rate tale,’ sighed Angel, contentedly, when I had done; ‘an’ you told it awfully well, John. If you like, you just tell another ’stead o’ me. Or The Seraph can tell one. Go ahead, Seraph, and make up the best story you know how.’

The Seraph, important, but sleepy, climbed over me, so that he might be in the middle, and then began, in a husky little voice.

‘Once upon a time there was fwee bwothers, all vewy nice, but the youngest was the bwavest an’ stwongest of the fwee. He was as stwong as two bulls, an’ he’d kill a dwagon before bweakfast, an’ never be cocky about it—’

Angel and I groaned in unison. We could not tolerate this sort of self-adulation from our junior. ‘Don’t be such a little beast,’ we admonished, and covered his head with a pillow. The Seraph was wont to accept such discipline at our hands philosophically, with no unseemly outcries or struggles; as a matter of fact, when we uncovered his head, we could tell by his even, reposeful breathing that he was fast asleep. It was too dark to see his face, but I could imagine his complacent smile.

The night sped quickly after that. There was some desultory talk; then Angel, too, slept. I resolved to keep the watch alone. I heard the sound of footsteps in the street below, echoing with a lonely sound; the rattle of a loose shutter in a sudden gust of wind; then, dead silence, followed after an interval by the scampering and angry squeak of mice in the wall. The mice disturbed me again. There was a shattering of loose plaster; and, suddenly opening my eyes, I saw the ghost of gray daylight stealing underneath the blind. The time had come!

III

Silently the three of us stole up the uncarpeted attic-stair. It was unknown territory to us, having been forbidden from the first by Mrs. Handsomebody, and all we had ever seen from the hall below was a cramped passage, guarded by three closed doors. Time and again we had been tempted to explore it, but there was a sinister aloofness about it that had hitherto repelled us. Now, however, it had become but a pathway to the

Dawn, and, as we clutched the banisters, we imagined ourselves three pilgrims fearfully climbing toward light and beauty.

Angel stood first at the top. Gently he tried two doors in succession, which were locked. The third gave, harshly—it seemed to me, grudgingly. The Seraph and I pressed close behind Angel, glad of the warm contact of each other's bodies.

In the large attic-room, the air was stifling, and the sloping roof, from which dim cobwebs were draped, seemed to press toward the dark shapes of discarded furniture, as if to guard some fearful secret. It took all our courage to grope our way to the low casement, and it was a struggle to dislodge the rusty bolt, and press the window out on its unused hinges. It creaked so loudly that we held our breath for a moment, but we drew it again with a sharp sensation of relief, as thirsty young animals drink, for fresh night air, sweet, stinging to the nostrils, had surged in upon us, sweeping away fear and loneliness and the hot depression of the attic-room.

Mrs. Handsomebody's house was tall, and we could look down upon many roofs and chimneys. They huddled together in the soft gray light as if waiting for some great happening, which they expected, but did not understand. They wore an air of expectancy and humility. Little low-roofed outhouses pressed close to high walls for shelter, and a frosty white skylight stared upward fearfully.

'Is this the Dawn?' came from The Seraph, in a tiny voice.

'Only the beginning of it,' I whispered back. 'There's two stars left over from the night—see! that big blue one in the East, and the little white one just above the cobbler's chimney.'

'Will they be afraid of the Dawn, when it comes?'

'Rather. I shouldn't be surprised if the big fellow bolted right across the sky, and the little one will p'raps fall down the cobbler's chimney into his workroom.'

The Seraph was enchanted. 'Then the cobb'r'll sew him wight up in the sole of a shoe, an' the boy who wears the shoe will twinkle when he wuns, won't he? Oh, it's coming now! I hear it. I'm afraid.'

'That's not the Dawn,' said Angel, 'That's the night flying away.'

It was true that there came to us then a rushing sound, as of strong wings; our hair was lifted from our hot foreheads, and the casement rattled on its hinges.

This wind, that came from the wings of night, was sharp with the fragrance of heather and the sea. One fancied how it would surge through the dim aisles of cathedral-like forests, ruffling the plumage of drowsy birds, stirring the surface of some dark pool where the trout still slept, and making sibilant music among the drooping reeds.

The sky had now become delicately luminous, and a streak of saffron showed above the farthest roofs; a flock of little clouds huddled together above this, like timorous sheep at gaze. The white star hung just above the cobbler's chimney; dangerously near, it seemed to us who watched.

There were only two of us at the window now, for Angel had stolen away to explore every corner of the new environment, as was his custom. I could hear the soft opening and shutting of bureau drawers, and once, a grunting and straining, as of one engaged in severe manual labor.

A low whistle drew me to his side.

‘What’s up?’ I demanded.

‘Got this little old trunk open at last,’ he muttered; ‘full of women’s junk. Look.’

Our heads touched as we bent curiously over the contents. It was a dingy and insignificant box on the outside, but it was lined with a gayly-colored paper, on which nosegays of spring flowers bent beneath the weight of silver butterflies and sad-eyed cockatoos. The trays were full, as Angel had said, of women’s things: delicate, ruffly frocks of pink and lilac, and under-garments edged with yellowing lace. A sweet scent rose from them, as of some gentle presence that strove to reach the light and air once more. A pair of little white kid slippers looked as if they longed to twinkle in and out beneath a soft silk skirt.

Angel’s mischievous brown hands dove among the light folds, discovering opera-glasses (treasures to be secured, if possible, against some future South Sea expedition), an inlaid box of old-fashioned trinkets, gold-tasseled earrings, a coral necklace, and a brooch of tortured locks of hair. His eyes were dancing above a gauze fan held coquettishly against his mouth; but I gave no heed to him; I was busy with a velvet workbox that promised a solution of the mystery: for, hidden away with thimble and scissors, as one would secrete a treasure, was a fat little book, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Someone had drawn on the fly-leaf, very beautifully, I thought, a ribbed sea-shell, and on it had printed the words, ‘Lucy from Charles’; and on a scroll beneath the shell, in microscopic characters, ‘Bide the Time!’

My brother was looking over my shoulder now. We were filled with conjecture.

‘Lucy,’ said Angel, ‘owned all this stuff, and Charles was her lover, of course. But who was she? Mrs. Handsomebody never had a daughter, I know; and if she had, she’d never have allowed her to wear these things. Look how she jaws when Mary Ellen spends her wages on finery. I’ll bet Lucy was a beauty. And she’s dead too, you can bet; and Charles was her lover, and likely he’s dead too. “Bide the time,” eh? You see, they’re waitin’ around yet—*somewheres*. Isn’t it queer?’

The Seraph’s voice came from the window in a sort of chant,—

‘The little white star has fallen down the cobbler’s chimney!’

‘It has fallen down, and the cobbler is sewing it into a shoe!’

‘A milkman is wunning down the stweet!’

‘Tell you what,’ whispered Angel; ‘I’ll show you what Lucy was like—just a little. I’ll make a picture of her.’

The space between two tall chests of drawers formed a sort of alcove, in which stood a pier-glass, whose tarnished frame was draped in white net. Before it Angel drew (without much caution) a high-backed chair, and on it he began his picture.

Over the seat and almost touching the floor, he draped a frilled petticoat, and against the back of the chair—with a foundation of formidable stays for support—he hung a garment which, even then, he seemed to know for a camisole. Over all he laid a charming lilac-silk gown, and under the hem, in the most natural attitude, peeped the little party slippers. A small lace and velvet bonnet, with streamers, was hung at the apex of the creation; and in her lap—for the time has come to use the feminine pronoun—he spread the gauzy fan. He hung over her tenderly, as an artist over his subject,—each fold must be in place,—the empty sleeves curved just so: one fancied a rounded chin beneath the velvet streamers, so artfully was it adjusted. Her reflection in the pier-glass was superb!

‘It is here!’ chanted The Seraph. ‘Evwy bit of evwyfing is shinin’. Oh, Angel an’ John, *please* look!’

We flew to the window and leaned across the sill.

It was a happy world that morning, glowing in the sweetest dawn that ever broke over roofs and chimney-pots. The earth sang as she danced her dewy way among the paling stars. The little gray clouds blushed pink

against the azure sky. Blossoming boughs of peach and apricot hung over the gates of heaven, and rosy spirals curled upward from two chimneys. Pink-footed pigeons strutted, rooketty-cooing along the roofs. They nodded their heads, as if to affirm the consummation of a miracle. 'It is so,' they seemed to say; 'it is indeed so.' One of them hopped up on the cobbler's chimney, peering earnestly into its depths.

'It sees the star!' shouted The Seraph. 'It sees the star and nods to it. "I am higher now than you," it says!'

Something—was it a breath? a sigh?—made me look back into the attic, where Lucy's clothes clung to the high-backed chair, like flower-petals blown against a wall. The pier-glass had caught all the glory of the morning, and was releasing it in quivering spears of light that dazzled me for a moment.

I rubbed my eyes, and stared, and shook a little, for in the midst of all this splendor I saw Lucy! No pallid, rigid ghost, but something warm, eager with life, spreading the folds of the lilac gown like a butterfly warming its new wings in the strength of the sun.

Her bosom rose and fell quickly, her eyes were fixed on me with a beseeching look, it seemed. I drew nearer,—near enough to smell the faint perfume of her,—and I saw then that she was not looking at me, but at the fat little book, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which I still held in my hands. The book that Charles had given her! 'Bide the time!' he had written, but she could bide the time no longer.

Proud as any knight before his lady, I strode forward, and pressed the book into her hands,—saw her slender fingers curl around it,—heard her little gasp of joy. I should not have been at all surprised had the door opened and Charles walked in.

IV

As a matter of fact, the door *did* open and—Mrs. Handsomebody walked in.

She gave a sort of gurgling cry, as if she were being strangled. Angel and The Seraph faced about to look at her, in consternation, their hair wild in the wind, and the rising sun making an aureole about them. The four of us stared at each other in silence for a space, while the attic-room, with its cobwebs, reeled, the sun rose and sank, like a foundering ship, and Mrs. Handsomebody—resembling in my fancy a hungry spider in curl-papers—considered which victim was ripest for slaughter.

‘You—and you—and you!’ she gobbled. ‘Oh, to think of it! No place safe! What you need is a *strong* man. *We* shall see! The very windows—burst from their bolts!’

She slammed the casement and secured it, Angel and The Seraph darting from her path.

‘Even a dead woman’s clothes—to make a scarecrow of!’

She pounced upon them. I hid my face while she did it, but I heard a sinister rustling and the snap of a trunk-lid. It was over. ‘Bide the time.’

Ignominiously she herded us down the stairs. The Seraph, making only one step at a time, led the way. Far down the drab vista of the back stairs that ended in the scullery, Mary Ellen’s red round face was seen for a moment, like a second rising sun; but vanished as suddenly as it had appeared, at a shout from Mrs. Handsomebody.

We were in the schoolroom now, placed before her in a row, as was her wont in times of retribution. Seated behind her desk, she wore her purple dressing-gown with magisterial dignity; the wart upon her chin quivered as she prepared to speak.

‘Now, David,’ she said, addressing Angel by his proper name as usual, ‘can you say anything in explanation of this outrage upon my property? Hold your head up and toe out, please.’

Angel looked at his hands. ‘Nuffin’ to explain,’ he said, sulkily. ‘Just went an’ did it.’

‘Oh, I thought so,’ said our governess. ‘It was just one of those seemingly irresistible impulses that have so often proved disastrous for all concerned. If your father knew’—She bit off the words as if they had a pleasant, if acrid taste—‘If your poor father in South America knew your criminal proclivities, he would be a *crushed* man—a *crushed man!*’

The Seraph was staring at her chin.

Then, ‘I have one too,’ he said gently.

‘One *what?*’ Her tone should have warned him.

‘One wart,’ he went on, with easy modesty. ‘It’s just a little one. It can’t wiggle—like yours—but it’s gwowing nicely. Would you care to see it?’

Mrs. Handsomebody affected not to hear him. She stared sombrely at Angel and me, but I believe The Seraph sealed our fate, for, after a moment’s deliberation, she said curtly, ‘I shall have to beat you for this.’

She gave us six apiece, and I could not help noticing that, though The Seraph was the youngest and tenderest, his six were the most stinging.

When we had been sent to our bedroom to say our prayers, and change our pitifully inadequate night-clothes for day things, I put the question that was burning in my mind.

‘Did either of you see *her*?’

‘Who?’

‘Lucy, sitting there in the chair.’

Angel’s brown eyes were blank.

‘I saw her *clothes*. What sickens me is that the dragon took that spy-glass. You see if I don’t get it yet.’ (Mrs. Handsomebody was ‘the dragon’ in our vernacular.)

‘Did *you* see her, Seraph?’

The Seraph was sitting on the floor, his head on his knees. He raised a tear-flushed face.

‘I’m ’most too cwushed to wemember,’ he said, huskily. ‘But I *fink* Lucy was fat. It’s a vewy bad fing to be fat, ’cos the cane hurts worser.’

I turned from such infantile imbecility to the exhilarating reflection that I was the only one to whom Lucy had shown herself—her chosen knight!

I was burning to do her service, yet the passage that led to the attic stronghold was well guarded. Two days had passed before I made the attempt. I had been sent upstairs from the tea-table to wash my hands,—although they were only comfortably soiled,—and after I had dipped them in a basin of water that had done service for both Angel and The Seraph, I gave them a good rub on my trouser-legs, as I tiptoed to the foot of the attic stairs.

Cautiously, with fast-beating heart, I mounted, and tried the door. It was locked fast. I pressed my eye against the keyhole, and made out in the gloom the dark shape of the trunk, sinister, forbidding, inaccessible. No rustle of lilac silk, no faintest perfume, no appealing sigh from the gentle Lucy greeted me. All was dark and quiet. ‘Bide the time!’ Who knew but that some day I might set her free again?

Yet my throat ached as I slowly made my way back to the table, presented my hands for a rather skeptical inspection by Mrs. Handsomebody, and dropped languidly into my seat.

The Seraph gave me a look of sympathy—even understanding. Perhaps he had heard me mount the distant attic stairs; his hearing was wonderfully acute. He chewed in silence for a moment, and then he made one of those seemingly irrelevant remarks of his which, somehow, always set our little world a-rocking.

‘One fing about Lucy,’ he said, ‘she was always sweet-tempud.’

‘Who?’ snapped Mrs. Handsomebody.

‘Lucy,’ repeated The Seraph. ‘Such a sweet-tempud gell!’

Mrs. Handsomebody leaned over him, and gobbled and threatened. The Seraph preserved a remarkable calm, considering that he was the storm-centre. He even raised his small forefinger before his face and looked at it thoughtfully. His speculative gaze traveled from it to Mrs. Handsomebody’s chin. I perceived then that he was comparing warts!

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

A cover was created for this ebook which is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *Explorers of the Dawn* by Mazo de la Roche]