

XVIII -The woman in the Alcove

In the chapter "The Closed Door" from "The Woman in the Alcove," the scene unfolds on an old highway near a deserted coastal town, now bypassed and neglected due to a new road along the cliff. Amidst the gloom of late twilight, Mr. Grey and Sweetwater journey to investigate a peculiar manufacturing establishment at the edge of the sea, producing patent medicine as described by Sweetwater. The environment is eerie, with the ocean's soft sounds melding into the desolation surrounding the town of C--.

Upon reaching their destination, a dilapidated building housing the manufactory, their initial observations reveal it to be unexpectedly large, though this perception shifts to seeing it as insignificantly small upon closer examination. Only part of the building appears active, signified by a light in the window and signs of recent, albeit minimal, activity.

As they deliberate on their approach to identifying Mr. Wellgood, an individual of interest, they find the building's door securely fastened from the inside. Despite attempts to call out for Wellgood, no response comes. Sweetwater, driven by curiosity and the need for answers, attempts to gain a better vantage point by climbing to a window, only to discover an empty room that quickly becomes shrouded in darkness as the lamp burns out.

The chapter evolves with a blend of suspense and mystery, heightened by the desolate setting and the peculiar behavior noted around the manufactory. Mr. Grey expresses a need to encounter Wellgood, hinting at personal reasons deeply rooted in evasion and suspicion. Their plan shifts towards a stealthier approach, contemplating a return by boat to surprise Wellgood, juxtaposing Mr. Grey's insistence on seeing this enigmatic figure against Sweetwater's detective instincts to circumvent their target's potential awareness of their presence.

This chapter effectively marries the atmospheric elements of its setting with the unfolding mystery, keeping readers engaged through the interplay of anticipation and the strategic maneuvers of its characters to confront the uncertain and possibly dangerous enigma that is Wellgood.