

Roeder, Von Sochocky

VON SOCHOCKY. Arthur. So it is you making all this noise.

ROEDER. I left messages with your housekeeper. I know you got the messages. *(A beat.)*

VON SOCHOCKY. As we are no longer in business together, I thought it best not to respond.

ROEDER. Is that what this is about?

VON SOCHOCKY. Perhaps a cup of tea will calm your nerves.

ROEDER. You never told us the paint was dangerous. You never said a word about it—not to me, not to Dan—

VON SOCHOCKY. I didn't know.

ROEDER. You didn't know. You invented the paint, and you didn't know. How can you lie like that?

VON SOCHOCKY. I didn't know until it was too late, Arthur.

ROEDER. I should put you through that wall.

VON SOCHOCKY. Perhaps you should. But you will not. You will sit down. You will have some tea. And you will calm yourself.

ROEDER. I was not the technical man. You were the technical man.

VON SOCHOCKY. Ya. I was the technical man. Sit down, Arthur.

ROEDER. I sold watches, for Christ's sake. I was a salesman.

VON SOCHOCKY. A good one at that. Very good head for the business, you have. Not such a good head for the science, but for the business, very smart. Always you could find ways to cut the costs without losing the quality. That's a gift, Arthur. So. Why don't you have some tea? *(VON SOCHOCKY hands him a tea cup. ROEDER sees that VON SOCHOCKY's fingers are black to the second knuckle.)*

ROEDER. Jesus Christ! What's the matter with your hands?

VON SOCHOCKY. It's been that way for some time.

ROEDER. What—have you been—dipping them in ink?

VON SOCHOCKY *(laughs)*. Dipping them in ink? How fond of the pretty story you are. If only it were ink. No. Dr. Martland tells me—it's a necrosis of the tissue. The cells. They are dying. *(ROEDER stares at him.)* With the dialpainters, in the jaw it started. The necrosis. With me, in the hands.

ROEDER. I had no idea.

VON SOCHOCKY. No reason why you should. It's been a long time since I've seen you.

ROEDER. How—how long—

VON SOCHOCKY. But I've known for a while. Miss Wiley — from the Consumer's League — persuaded me to assist Dr. Martland in testing the dialpainters for radium exposure. There aren't that many people around, you know, who can measure that kind of thing. So she came to me. Knowing I had the equipment, and, of course, the skill. I didn't believe her either, Arthur. I didn't want to believe the girls could get sick from working with my paint. I wanted to show her it was a

mistake. So I agreed to help. Dr. Martland and I conducted expired air tests on the girls. It was then that I found out. When my own breath registered radioactive. Then my fingers, they began to turn black. (*Beat.*) Now. You wish to have words with me.

ROEDER. I'm sorry.

VON SOCHOCKY. Well. Perhaps now you should make an appointment yourself with Dr. Martland?

ROEDER. Me, what for?

VON SOCHOCKY (*laughs*). Arthur. You did not notice the glowing dust on your shoes when you went home at night?

ROEDER. How could I miss it? I tracked it all over the house...

VON SOCHOCKY. You can be sure that a good deal of it is now in your lungs. (*VON SOCHOCKY produces the bibliography, tosses it to ROEDER.*) Look familiar?

ROEDER. It's our promotional piece.

VON SOCHOCKY. An excellent promotion. How many new sales did that book account for?

ROEDER. I didn't track it exactly. I like to think it helped our medical market quite a bit.

VON SOCHOCKY. Page ninety-six.

ROEDER. What?

VON SOCHOCKY. Open it. The last chapter. Read it to me?

ROEDER. The last chapter? Radium—Dangerous Effects.

VON SOCHOCKY. Dangerous Effects. How many articles do you have listed there? Ten? Fifteen?

ROEDER. About eighteen, it looks like.

VON SOCHOCKY. How far back do they go, those articles?

ROEDER. I don't know—

VON SOCHOCKY. Look at it. The first one, there. What is the date?

ROEDER. 1906.

VON SOCHOCKY. 1906. Now let me see. When you go into court, you plan to testify that you had no idea radium was dangerous? How do you plan to do that, Arthur? When your own book says that it was. How can you claim that you did not know?

ROEDER. I never—I never-really read it.