

# THE GHOST

SUPER-DETECTIVE

SPRING  
ISSUE

10¢

A THRILLING  
PUBLICATION

**THE GHOST STRIKES BACK**

A Complete Novel Featuring the  
Mystifying Exploits of the Magician Sleuth

10¢  
A COMPLETE  
BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL  
THE  
MAGICIAN SLEUTH  
SPRING 19





# Chimon - PICK YOUR PRIZE

BOYS - GIRLS  
MEN - WOMEN

THESE PRIZES ARE GIVEN TO YOU—Just send for 24 packets of easy selling Garden Spot Seeds which you can easily and quickly sell to your friends and neighbors at 10c each. Return the \$2.40 collected and select your Prize in accordance to our offers. SEND NO MONEY—WE TRUST YOU.

### 22 Piece TABLEWARE SET



6 Knives, 6 Forks, 6 Teaspoons, Butter Knife, Sugar Shell **GIVEN** for selling only one order.

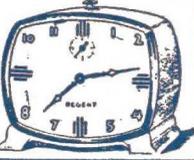
### Good Luck FISHING OUTFIT 22 PIECES



Steel rod, reel, casting line, 12 snelled hooks, 12 lead sinker, cork float and stringer. Sell only one order.

### Household CLOCK

Can be used anywhere. Richly finished in two tone effect. 30 hour movement. Dispose of only 1 order and Clock is yours. WRITE TODAY



### JUNIOR GUITAR GIVEN



Get this handsome instrument NOW. Here's How—Just send your name and address. **SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU** with 24 pkts of Garden Seeds to sell at 10c a pkt. When sold send \$2.40 collected and **WE WILL SEND** this mahogany finished guitar and Five Minute Instruction Book absolutely FREE. Send for seeds NOW.

### PRIZE TYPEWRITER GIVEN



\$10 for best and neatest letter written on this machine by July 1, 1940. Simply dispose of only one order of Garden Spot Seeds at 10c a pkt. and Typewriter is yours.

### Ladies' New Fashion WRIST WATCH GIVEN



More Than a Guaranteed Timekeeper. Sparkling enameled ivory case. Guaranteed Movement. Yours for disposing of only two orders of Garden Spot Seeds. MAIL COUPON TODAY.

### GIANT SPY-GLASS



See moon stars and people miles away. Gives new pleasure. Always ready. Given for selling only one order. Send for seeds today.

### Midget Pocket RADIO GIVEN



for selling only two 24 packet orders of Garden Spot Seeds at 10c a pkt. Radio needs no batteries or electrical connections. Is complete and ready for use anywhere. **SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU. Hurry!** Just use this Coupon. Do not wait; do it NOW.

### 3 FOOT TELESCOPE

See moon stars and people miles away. Gives new pleasure. Always ready. Given for selling only one order. Send for seeds today.

### Real Live CANARY



Safe Delivery Guaranteed. Sent Express Collect.

Latest Rubber Valve Type. Send No Money. Just name and address. Given for disposing of only 24 pkts. of Garden Spot Seeds at 10c a pkt. **WRITE FOR SEEDS TODAY. Hurry! Be First.**

**SEND NO MONEY Just MAIL COUPON**

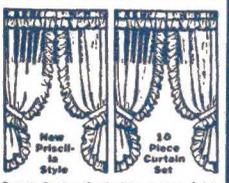


### Blue Bird Granite Cooking Set



Convenient and sanitary kitchen utensils. Entire Set, given as one Premium, consists of four regular-sized pieces: 1 Mixing Bowl, 1 Pudding Pan, 1 Preserving Kettle, with handle, 1 Sauce Pan. Given for selling only 24 pkts. of Garden Spot Seeds at 10c a pkt. Write for seeds TODAY. Send No Money. We Trust You. Hurry! Be First.

### 10 Piece Priscilla Curtain Set



Curtain Set in refined white pattern, finished with 2 1/4 inch ruffles in colors. Each curtain is 30x90 inches. 2 pairs, 4 Curtains, 4 Tie-Backs & 2 Ruffled Valances, 10 pieces in all. **ALL GIVEN** to you as one premium for distributing only one order. Postpaid.

### VIOLIN, BOW & INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN



Handsome finish, highly polished. Set of strings and bow included. Send no money. **GIVEN** for selling only one order. MAIL THE COUPON TODAY. BE FIRST.

### 32 Piece Rose Petal DINNER SET GIVEN



This sparkling set consists of 6 large plates, 6 small plates, 6 cups, 6 saucers, 6 cereal dishes, a vegetable dish and a meat platter. **GIVEN** for selling 2 orders. Sent express collect.

### Home BARBER Outfit



Here is a money-saver, you can trim children's or adults' hair yourself without spending them to the barber. Consists of one pair of guaranteed Hair Clippers as used by barbers for the latest style cuts, one pair Diamond Point Barber Shears & 7 inch Barber Comb. **GIVEN** for selling 1 order.

MAIL COUPON TODAY

## 5 FREE PRIZES!

**PROMPTNESS**

SENT RIGHT ALONG WITH YOUR REGULAR PREMIUM IF WE GET THIS COUPON IN THE NEXT 5 DAYS. SO HURRY! FILL OUT TODAY AND MAIL.

TRANSISTOR PICTURES

IMMULATION WRIST WATCH

G-MEN BADGE

G-MEN PIN

**MAIL COUPON TODAY**

Our 33rd Year

Lancaster County Seed Co., Station 320, Paradise, Pa. Please send me 24 packets (one order) of Garden Spot Seeds to sell at 10c a pkt. for a fine Gift. I will sell and pay for seeds in 30 days. Also send right along with my Regular Premium the 5 FREE PROMPTNESS PRIZES SHOWN ABOVE.

Name .....

Post Office .....

State .....

Street or R. F. D. .... Box .....

Print your last name plainly below

Save 8 cents by filling-in, pasting and mailing this Coupon on a 1c Post Card TODAY



**IF** you're that man, here's something that will interest you.

Not a magic formula—not a get-rich-quick scheme—but something more substantial, more practical.

Of course, you need something more than just the desire to be an accountant. You've got to pay the price—be willing to study earnestly, thoroughly.

Still, wouldn't it be worth your while to sacrifice some of your leisure in favor of interesting home study—over a comparatively brief period in your life? Always provided that the rewards were good—a salary of \$2,000 to \$10,000?

An accountant's duties are interesting, varied and of real worth to his employers. He has *standing!*

Do you feel that such things aren't for you? Well, don't be too sure. Very possibly they *can* be!

Why not, like so many before you, investigate LaSalle's modern Problem Method of training for an accountancy position?

Just suppose you were permitted to work in a large accounting house under the personal supervision of an expert accountant. Suppose, with his aid, you studied accounting principles and solved problems day by day—easy ones at first—then the more difficult ones. If you could do this—and if you could turn to him for advice as the problems became complex—soon you'd master them all.

That's the training you follow in principle under the LaSalle Problem Method.

You cover accountancy from the basic Principles right up through Accountancy Systems and Income Tax Procedure. Then you add C. P. A. Training and prepare for the C. P. A. examinations.

As you go along, you absorb the principles of Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Statistical Control, Organization, Management and Finance.

Your progress is as speedy as you care to make it—depending on your own eagerness to learn and the time you spend in study.

Will recognition come? The only answer, as you know, is that success *does* come to the man who is really *trained*. It's possible your employers will notice your improvement in a very few weeks or months. Indeed, many LaSalle graduates have paid for their training—with increased earnings—before they have completed it! For accountants, who are trained in organization and management, are the executives of the future.

### Write For This Free Book

For your own good, don't put off investigation of *all* the facts. Write for our free 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays." It'll prove that accountancy offers brilliant futures to those who aren't afraid of serious home study. Send us the coupon *now*.

Over 1850 Certified  
Public Accountants among  
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I want to be an accountant. Send me, without cost or obligation, the 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays," and full information about your accountancy training program.

Name.....

Address..... City.....

Position..... Age.....

# THE GHOST

## SUPER-DETECTIVE

ALAN N. GROSSMAN

Vol. 1, No. 2

SPRING, 1940

Price 10c

FEATURING THE MAGICIAN-DETECTIVE  
IN



# THE GHOST STRIKES BACK

*A Complete Book-Length Mystery Novel*  
By **GEORGE CHANCE**

*Follow the Super-Detective as He Tackles the Perilous and Baffling Case of the Prophecies of Death—Tearing Open a Tortuous Tangle of Mystery When Magic Meets Murder!.....12*

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*Norman Savage's Scalp Is at Stake when the Trail Leads to Slaughter.*

AND

- MEET—THE GHOST** .....Biographical Sketch 18
- CALLING THE GHOST**.....A Department 110

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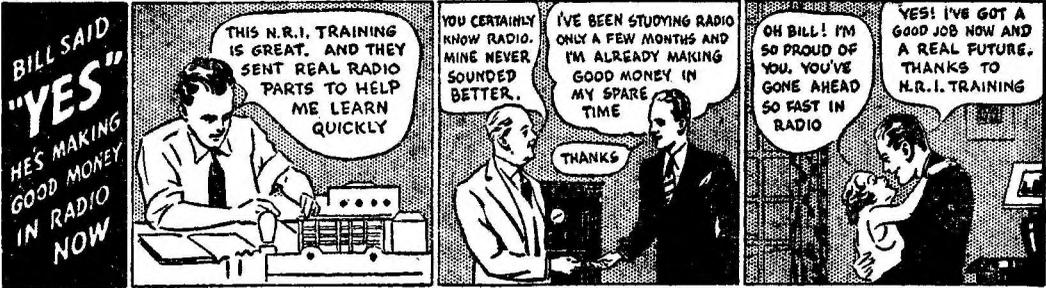
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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.



**YES-** I'M CONVINCED THAT I CAN MAKE GOOD MONEY IN RADIO. I'M GOING TO START TRAINING FOR RADIO RIGHT NOW.

**NO-** NOT ME. I'M NOT GOING TO WASTE MY TIME. SUCCESS IS JUST A MATTER OF LUCK AND I WASN'T BORN LUCKY.



BILL SAID "YES" HE'S MAKING GOOD MONEY IN RADIO NOW

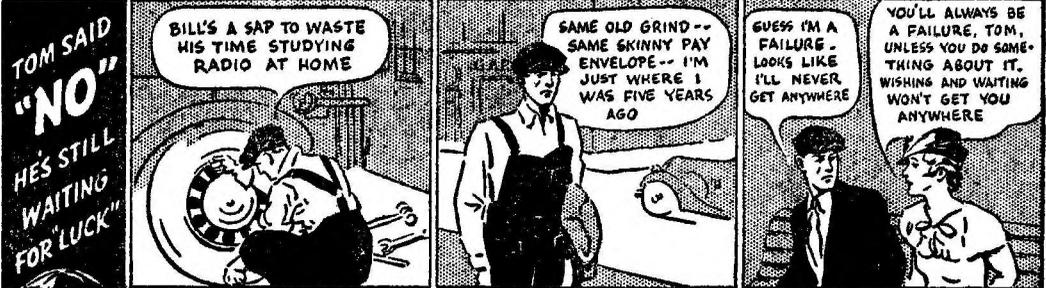
THIS N.R.I. TRAINING IS GREAT. AND THEY SENT REAL RADIO PARTS TO HELP ME LEARN QUICKLY

YOU CERTAINLY KNOW RADIO. MINE NEVER SOUNDED BETTER. I'VE BEEN STUDYING RADIO ONLY A FEW MONTHS AND I'M ALREADY MAKING GOOD MONEY IN MY SPARE TIME

THANKS

OH BILL! I'M SO PROUD OF YOU. YOU'VE GONE AHEAD SO FAST IN RADIO

YES! I'VE GOT A GOOD JOB NOW AND A REAL FUTURE. THANKS TO N.R.I. TRAINING



TOM SAID "NO" HE'S STILL WAITING FOR LUCK

BILL'S A SAP TO WASTE HIS TIME STUDYING RADIO AT HOME

SAME OLD GRIND-- SAME SKINNY PAY ENVELOPE-- I'M JUST WHERE I WAS FIVE YEARS AGO

GUESS I'M A FAILURE. LOOKS LIKE I'LL NEVER GET ANYWHERE

YOU'LL ALWAYS BE A FAILURE, TOM, UNLESS YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. WISHING AND WAITING WON'T GET YOU ANYWHERE



# I will Train You at Home in Spare Time for a GOOD JOB IN RADIO

J. E. SMITH, President  
National Radio Institute  
Established 25 years.

Radio is a young, growing field with a future, offering many good pay spare time and full time job opportunities. And you don't have to give up your present job to become a Radio Technician. I train you right at home in your spare time.

## Why Many Radio Technicians Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make \$30, \$40, \$50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make \$5 to \$10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, police, aviation, Commercial Radio, loudspeaker systems, electronic devices, offer good opportunities. My training includes Television, which promises to open good jobs soon.

## Many Make \$5 to \$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your

Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make \$200 to \$500 a year in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU! A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL, ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make more money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

shows many letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President  
Dept. ODO9,  
National Radio Institute  
Washington, D. C.

## Find Out What Radio Offers You

Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page Book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Course in Radio and Television;

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TAKE MY TIP AND MAIL THAT COUPON TO N.R.I. TONIGHT



J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. ODO9,  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Send me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio" which points out Radio's opportunities and tells how you train men at home to be Radio Technicians. (Write Plainly.)

Name..... Age.....  
Address.....  
City..... State.....



**Fascinating, Profitable Profession  
NOW OPEN to More Men & Women**

If you are looking for a NEW and BETTER way to make a living, take up Swedish Massage, for now you can learn at home. This interesting big pay profession was for years available only to a few. Its secrets were guarded jealously and fabulous prices were paid for instruction. This same instruction is now available to you at a mere fraction of the former price and you need not leave your present work until you have qualified as an expert and can command an expert's pay. The demand for BOTH MEN AND WOMEN has shown a steady increase and few, if any, have ever lacked employment.

**LEARN IN 90 DAYS AT HOME**

Use spare time at home to master a profession which has made thousands of dollars for ambitious men and women. Many graduates have completed their training in three months but you can take your own time, it need not interfere with either work or pleasure. All instruction has been prepared by the teachers in our famous resident school—the same material is used and a DIPLOMA is awarded upon graduation.



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No Obligation Of Any Kind SEND COUPON**

THE COLLEGE OF SWEDISH MASSAGE (Successor to National College of Massage), Dept. 663 — 30 E. Adams St., Chicago

You may send me FREE and postpaid, Anatomy Charts, booklet, containing photographs and letters from graduates and complete details of your offer.

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Address .....

City..... State.....

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If you suffer from Asthma Paroxysms, from coughs, gasping, wheezing write quick for daring FREE TRIAL OFFER of real relief. Inquiries from so-called "hopeless" cases especially invited. Write NACOR, 428-A, State Life Building, Indianapolis, Ind.



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RAILWAY OR BUS—WE HAVE JOBS**

Men—19 to 50—who complete easy, home-study course are placed at up to \$135 per mo., plus expenses to start, or we refund tuition. Qualify in your spare time. Get Free Booklet describing our 21 yrs. service. STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTE, Div. 8804, Buffalo, N. Y.

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Now, an electric welding, brazing and soldering Torch, complete with power unit, goggles and supplies. Works INSTANTLY on any tight sockets. Does a thousand and one repair jobs at amazingly LOW COST on aluminum, iron, steel and other metals. Indispensable for Auto, Body and Fender Repairs, and home repairs—shop, factory, farm, engineer, janitor, sheet metal, radio and bicycle repairs. Anyone can handle without previous experience with our simple instructions. **10-DAY HOME TRIAL** Write at once for Special Introductory Low Price Offer. Try 3 in 1 Electric Torch for 10 days at our risk. Not free or helping to introduce 3 in 1 ELECTRIC TORCH CO., 2813-HF, Michigan Ave., Chicago

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# FINED FOR IGNORANCE!

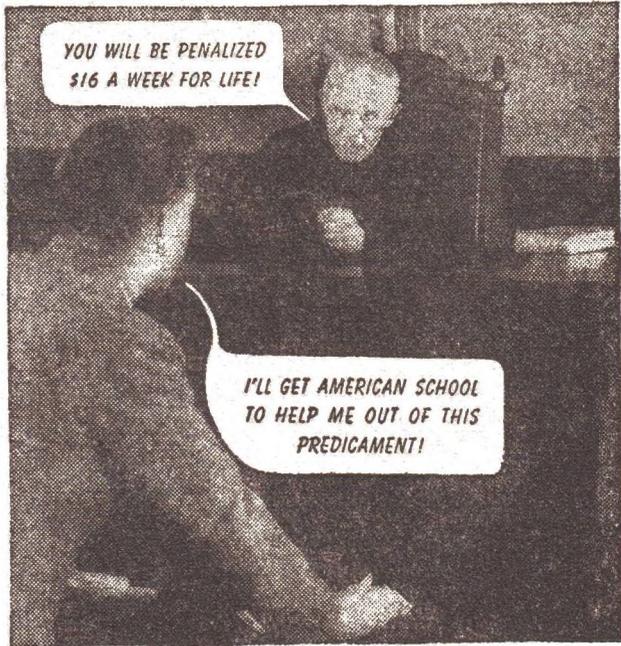
**Don't Let It Happen to You!**

The average grade school graduate earns \$16.30\* a week less than high school graduates earn.

The average high school graduate earns \$25.25\* a week less than do men with college or vocational training.

\*Figures computed from Government report. For basis of computation, write American School.

**College Grade  
Training Pays  
Up to  
\$40 a week\*  
EXTRA  
income  
Study at HOME!**



**You Too Can Win a Better Job!**

**HAVE YOU** thought about *home study*? You look around you at your friends, neighbors and fellow employees: This one earns \$10 a week more than you—that one earns nearly double—a third, though appreciably younger than you, seems to be making better progress. Why? How can you catch up with them? You know that literally *thousands* of ambitious men and women have won substantial Success through using their spare time at home to master the principles and practice of their chosen lines. How can HOME STUDY help you make good?

### The "Magic" of Home Study

There's no magic to home study. It's hard work—but it is worth the effort because it helps you overcome the handicap of having left school too soon. It frees you from the penalties of Ignorance—enables you to compete to better advantage in this NEW world of college trained men and women.

In 1900, only ONE person in 800 was a high school graduate. Today, one in every 837 is college trained. That's why you need so much more "on the ball" today than ever before. That's why American School has stepped up all its complete courses to include so much work of college level. You NEED it, to win out today!

### These Advantages Speed Your Progress

More than 150 noted educators, engineers and executives helped prepare American School courses. An Advisory Board of 20 outstanding authorities—each an active leader in his field—is consulted when our work is prepared or changed. A Staff of competent instructors—home study specialists—works closely with the individual student.

Courses are not prepared from the "academic" viewpoint—but from the *practical*. Although dozens of leading universities and colleges use the same texts, the primary aim of *home study* is to help graduates win BETTER jobs at BIGGER pay as QUICKLY as possible. Every course is geared to this end. Jobs and job requirements are analyzed, circumstances of the average student are weighed, then every course is *speed-lined* to put the *Man in the Job* he wants at the EARLIEST opportunity.

Write American School about your promotion problems TODAY!

**American School**

Drexel Avenue at 58th Street, Chicago, Illinois

## Promotion Begins at HOME

Pay raises depend largely on what you do in SPARE time. Make it pay you dividends!

American School, Dept. C-458, Drexel Ave. at 58th St., Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen: I'll sit down and consider my Promotion Problems carefully if you will send me FREE information covering special training in subjects checked below. No obligation on my part.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School Course          | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engineering     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting and Auditing     | <input type="checkbox"/> Drafting and Design    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture and Building   | <input type="checkbox"/> Liberal Arts           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Automotive Engineering      | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Secretary      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management         | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio and Television   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering      | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elec. and Gas Refrigeration | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Law           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning            | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Merchandising   |

Name .....

Address .....

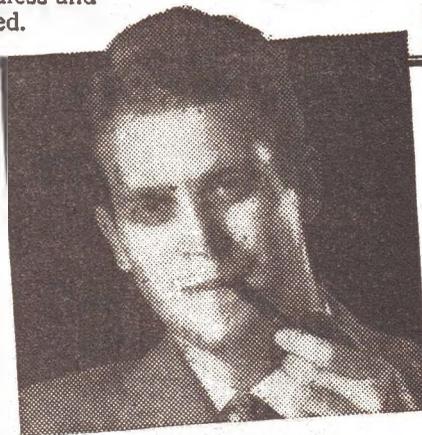
# DON'T let Rupture make you Look Old!

Not the rupture itself, but the *worry and fear* it can cause makes many a man and woman look old beyond their years. But this is one kind of worry that is *absolutely needless*. Right here and now we offer to *prove* that it's needless and it costs you nothing if you are not 100% convinced.

If you have reducible rupture, wear a truss, and still have to worry, there is just one reason—an old-fashioned truss that doesn't half do its job. A hard, gouging pad is making you miserable. You constantly fear your rupture will slip down. You feel your condition is growing worse and can never get better. You can't be normally active and, in short, you worry all day and dream your worries at night. Stop it!

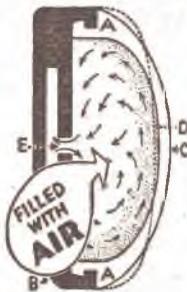
## YOU WON'T WORRY WITH A BROOKS PATENTED AIR-CUSHION RUPTURE APPLIANCE!

If you knew the grand and glorious security and comfort of the Brooks Patented Air-Cushion truss, you'd be *wearing* it right now, instead of just reading about it. You would be feeling free as air to do whatever you liked in every normal activity, hardly aware you had a Brooks on, and with not a rupture worry in your mind. You see, with a Brooks your rupture is held securely in place by a patented, air-cushioned pad of soft, yielding rubber instead of a hard, gouging pad. That patented Air-Cushion is designed to flatten and cling in any position. It is so comfortable you can wear



## THE FAMOUS BROOKS PATENTED AIR-CUSHION

- A—Pad which comes in contact with the body.
- B—Light weight disc which holds pad.
- C—Shows the shape of soft rubber pad before it is pressed against body.
- D—Dotted line shows how the pad flattens out under pressure, expelling air.
- E—Orifice through which the pad figuratively breathes as it adjusts to conform to different body pressures.



BROOKS CUSHIONS ARE MADE IN OVER  
75 SHAPES AND SIZES

it night and day. That and the fact that the Air-Cushion holds like a hand gives Nature the greatest possible chance to close the rupture opening and free you from wearing any truss, the Brooks included.

## YOU'D WEAR A BROOKS APPLIANCE ON TRIAL WOULDN'T YOU?

If complete deliverance from all your rupture worries sounds "too good to be true," don't let that stop you! BROOKS asks no man or woman, or parent of a ruptured child, to buy a BROOKS Appliance outright and "take a chance". No, we will send you a complete BROOKS appliance for a thorough trial. Wear it. Compare it. Put it to every test you can think of. Get your doctor's opinion. Then if you are not satisfied, if you don't bless the day you heard of BROOKS, the trial costs you nothing. Anyone can afford a BROOKS. It costs no more than many old-fashioned store trusses. Yet it is made up for you *individually*, after your order is received. It is never sold in stores or through mail order houses—only by BROOKS. Remember this and steer clear of imitations.

## OVER 9000 DOCTORS HAVE ORDERED THE BROOKS FOR THEMSELVES OR THEIR PATIENTS

The principle of the Patented Air-Cushion appeals to the physician's scientific knowledge of rupture. That's why we say "get your doctor's opinion." There are no stiff, punishing springs to set your nerves on edge and make you want to scream—no metal girdle to rust and corrode. A velvety soft body band holds the Air-Cushion in place with glove-like comfort. And you prove every advantage on trial, with an absolute guarantee of satisfaction or no cost.

## Send for FREE Rupture Book and Amazing PROOF OF RESULTS

The more you know about BROOKS, the more eager you will be to try it for yourself. You wouldn't be human not to want such glorious freedom from worry, such comfort and the peace of mind, the fresh, rested feeling that we say will make you younger looking, happier and more efficient. Send for FREE Book this very day!

**BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.**  
480-L STATE STREET MARSHALL, MICH.

## MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

Brooks Appliance Co.,  
480-L State St., Marshall, Mich.

In PLAIN ENVELOPE, please send your FREE BOOK on Rupture, PROOF of Results, and TRIAL OFFER. No representative is to call and bother me.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

State whether for Man  Woman  or Child

# NEW LIFE POLICY INSURES WHOLE FAMILY FOR ONLY \$1.00 PER MONTH



One Policy Protects Entire Sullivan Family,  
5344 Foster Ave., Chicago, Ill.

**UP TO  
\$3,000.00  
BENEFITS!**

**For Only \$1.00 Per Month**

**Ages 1 to 75!  
Men—Women—Children**

**\$3,000** maximum in event of travel death as outlined in this marvelous Family Group Policy.

**\$2,000** maximum in event of death by auto as shown in the policy.

**\$1,000** maximum in event of ordinary or natural death as explained in the policy.

**PAYS FOR DEATH  
FROM ANY CAUSE!**

**SEND COUPON FOR  
FREE DETAILS !!**

## FROM BABY TO GRANDPARENTS!

**One Policy, One Premium, One Price!**

Now you can insure your whole family at amazing **LOW COST!** Think of it! \$1.00 per month protects entire family—husband and wife, their parents, and children! Pays benefits for death from any cause, as specified in the policy.

### NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION! NO AGENT CALL!

No medical examination of any family member required. Just mail coupon for full details how to get the Family Group Policy for Free Inspection. No agent will call.

### UNDER STATE GOVERNMENT SUPERVISION!

The Family Group Policy issued by the Marquette Life Insurance Company is under state government supervision. Pays cash for death from natural causes or accidental injuries as stated in the policy.

### LEGAL RESERVE BASIS!

Approved securities, equal to the full legal reserve for every Marquette policy in force, are locked in the vaults of the State of Illinois.

### SEND NO MONEY!

Remember, you do not send one cent! Just mail coupon. No obligation! No agent will call!

**MARQUETTE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY**  
Desk 70, Jefferson Station, Chicago, Ill.

### NO AGENT WILL CALL!

**MARQUETTE LIFE INSURANCE CO.**  
Desk 70, Jefferson Station, Chicago, Ill.

Please send details how to get the Family Group Insurance Policy for Free Inspection without obligation.

Name

Address

City  State



# FISHING TACKLE at LOW Prices

Send today for New 1940 Catalog listing thousands of bargains in Fishing Tackle, Baseball, Basket Ball, Golf, Tennis, Archery, Guns, Clothing and Sporting Equipment of all kinds. Top quality—**Money Back Guarantee!**

### HERE ARE A FEW MONEY-SAVERS

- \$17.50 Bamboo Fly Rod, Alu. Case & 2 Tips **\$8.95**
- \$6.00 DeLuxe Split Bamboo Fly Rod . . . **\$4.95**
- \$4.00 Split Bamboo Bait Rod, 9 1/4' extra tip **\$2.85**
- \$3.00 1-pc. Steel Casting Rod, Offset handle **\$1.89**
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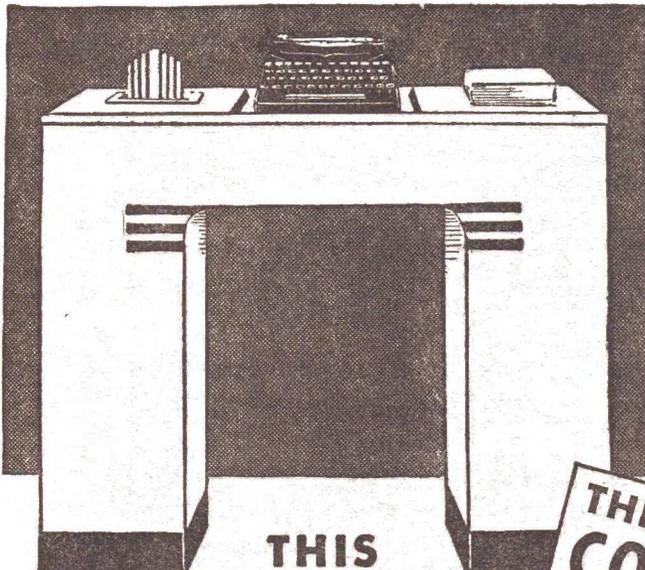
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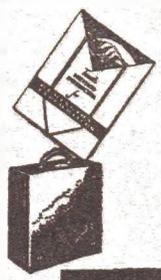
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# THE GHOST STRIKES BACK

By GEORGE CHANCE

*Author of "Calling the Ghost"*

Follow the Super-Detective as He Tackles the Perilous and Baffling Case of the Prophecies of Death!

## CHAPTER I

### *Murder Is No Laughing Matter*

**T**HE man in the rain was the most unprepossessing individual I had ever seen. He wasn't just thin, he was gaunt—almost starved looking. He was all but chinless. His eyes were protruding and glittering. He was rigged out in a seedy looking cutaway coat and baggy striped trousers. An almost colorless fuzz adorned one-third of his peaked cranium, noticeable only



when he removed his black fedora hat.

He stepped out of the shadows of the dark areaway at the stage door entrance as Merry White and I approached. In the drizzle of that rainy spring evening he was like a materialized spook, a stooped figure of a man, the yellow light over the door giving his cadaverous face the appearance of a parchment mask.

Merry, my fiancée and valued assistant, drew closer to me and shivered.

"He looks like he has a moldy mind," she whispered. "Who is he!"

"Doctor Seer," I murmured. But even if I had not known, the untidily elegant scarecrow would not have left us long in doubt. He bowed ironically and shoved one crooked hand against my spotless shirt front where it showed above the vee of my partially opened topcoat.

"You are George Chance, the magician," he stated rather than asked.

"Right," I said, studying him keenly as I gently but firmly removed his claw-like paw. This particular "thin man" had no reason to bear me any good will.

"I am Dr. Seer, the great psychic," he informed us with an almost fanatical air. "If you persist in this mockery of this evening, this obvious intention of casting reflection upon the living truth of spiritualism you will regret it."

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*I seized the wrist of one and jerked his arm upward (Chap. X)*

## The Ghost Tears Open a Tortuous Tangle

"I doubt it," I replied, coldly polite. "Besides, how does this concern you, Dr. Seer? I understand you're a crystal gazer, not a spirit medium."

"I, sir," he said, drawing himself up and placing his tented right hand on his hollow chest with all the dignity of a ham actor, "am a disciple of truth—a prophet of the future. Cancel this blasphemous performance while there is yet time. If you persist in your vile efforts to discredit the eternal truth, doom will be called down upon your head. Beware the death and destruction! Beware the doom to come!"

With that parting admonition Dr. Seer took himself off, his thin body seeming to melt away in the blackness of the rainy night.

"Here!" I called after him. "Would you like a pass to see the performance!"

But he was gone, and Merry was trembling. I bent my head to her lips in a reassuring kiss. A long moment later Merry's slender fingers took hold of my chin and gently pushed our faces apart. Her beautiful green eyes looked deeply into mine, and there was trouble in their depths.



Joe Harper

"George," she whispered, "I'm having a hunch."

Merry frequently had those flashes of intuition. Her hunches, I might add, have frequently helped me out of tight spots on those occasions when I have played a somewhat different role than that of George Chance, the magician.

"It's a bad one this time," she went on, her voice still a whisper. "It isn't just because of what that old fake said, either, but I feel that—that something terrible is going to happen tonight."

"You're silly," I said, and laughed. "Come, let's go in before we get all wet out here."

That was my last laugh for the evening. Murder isn't a laughing matter.

**P**ERHAPS I'd better explain at this point just what led up to that rather spooky meeting with Dr. Seer outside the theater. I'll begin with the visit of David Palmer to me a week before. Innocently he brought one end of a murder chain to thrust into my hand, and I had no idea how far out I was sticking my neck when I accepted it. The gift of prophesy might have belonged to Dr. Seer, but it was not included in the regulation bag of tricks of even a master magician.

I received the young financier cordially. He had been previously introduced to me by Merry, and that made him okay with me.

"Mr. Chance," he said as we shook hands, "I have come to ask a favor."

"Consider it granted if it's within my power," I assured him.

"Have you ever heard of a medium and crystal gazer who calls himself Dr. Seer?" he asked.

I nodded. It is not strange that magicians and mediums, being professional enemies more or less, should know about each other.

"He is a fake and a charlatan," said Palmer with sudden heat.

"There are many fakes," I agreed. "You seem upset. Why?"

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## of Mystery When Magic Meets Murder!

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"I have a sister," explained Palmer. "She has become involved in this spiritualistic stuff. Up to now, I have never interfered with Margaret's foibles, but she is going mad over this stuff, and is being played for a fine sucker. I'm growing weary of seeing my money disappear through such outrageous frauds. Dr. Seer is her present guiding star.

"In short, I want to expose him, and you're the man to do it. I want you to put on a spiritualistic performance to prove that all this mumbo-jumbo that is unbalancing my sister's mind is nothing more nor less than sheer nonsense. I want you to do a regular mediumistic show and then reveal that you have done it all by your stage magic. It isn't the money that's important but the state of my sister's sanity.

"I'm turning to you, the greatest living magician, for help. I remember that the great Kalaban, before his death, had a standing offer of ten thousand dollars for any medium who could materialize any spook or perform any miracle that he couldn't duplicate by admitted magic. Since his death, I understand that a great many fake mediums have tried to win the two-hundred-thousand-dollar trust fund he left for the person who could contact his astral body and give to his widow the exact message they had previously agreed upon as an authentic communication between them. So far no one has succeeded."

I nodded. I was well acquainted with Irene Kalaban and had been a friend of her husband's.

"What has the Kalaban offer to do with your problem?" I asked.

"Kalaban was a foe of fakery. So are you. I know I'm asking a great deal of you, but I will foot all expenses gladly. Will you do it?"

**I** REPRESSED a chuckle. Of course I would do it, but what made me chuckle inwardly was that Palmer would not know I was doing it in two



Merry White

capacities—not only as George Chance, the Magician, but as George Chance, the *Ghost*. David Palmer had brought a *personal* problem to George Chance, but at the same time, without knowing it, he had brought a *criminal* problem to that other side of George Chance which was the Ghost.

I had no quarrel with honest spirit mediums who worked without reward and honestly sought the truth. But I was doubly glad to aid Palmer because at the same time I would be striking a blow at a racket that annually mulched a hundred million dollars out of several million dupes. The Ghost was willing to walk at any time when such an issue was involved.

A word about how George Chance came to be the Ghost.

I was born in the show business. My father was an animal trainer and my mother a trapeze performer. Most of what I am today I owe to them and to my early life with the circus. I'm a fair tumbler and contortionist. I learned makeup from a clown named Ricki. Don Avigne taught me how to throw a knife. Professor Gabby patiently trained me in ventriloquism.

None of this, of course, made me a magician. It was to Marko that I owed

that. I have never forgotten the day he called me into his dressing tent and gave me a half-size set of multiplying billiard balls.

"You haff goot hands for tricks unt gimmicks, Chorge, my boy," he told me. "Learn to use these unt some day you vill know magic. Unt der world vill know you."

I still have the billiard balls Marko gave me, and the supple fingers they developed. They were the first rung on the ladder that helped me climb from the circus to vaudeville and from there to my own revues. Magic made me a fortune so that I finally retired from the stage to establish the New York School of Magic where amateurs, bitten by the unending craze to create illusions, are taught.

I first met Police Commissioner Edward Standish when I was performing at a policemen's benefit. We took to each other at once. I expressed an interest in police work. He invited me to take a hand in a murder investigation. When I exposed the real criminal by means of a spirit-slate trick, Standish showed what I thought was exaggerated enthusiasm.

"I'll take a second helping," he said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I intend to call on you again."

We looked at each other. I think the idea was born simultaneously in our brains.

"I'll study up on it," I said.

In the days and weeks that followed I found one concept more and more dominating my thoughts—Magic and Crime Detection, how to merge the two and make them one. And so, not all at once, but gradually, slowly—but surely—the idea of the Ghost took form.

**D**AVID Palmer was waiting for my answer.

"Okay," I said. "I'll put on the show."

He grasped my hand, shook it gratefully. He was still thanking me when I ushered him out.

I announced in the papers my inten-

tion of producing better spirit manifestations than any medium in the city and to do it without laying the slightest claim to supernatural powers. Further, I offered to take anyone from the audience who would volunteer, place him or her in a spirit cabinet, and let him act as my medium, guaranteeing a perfect job. This, I argued, would prove definitely that the professional spirit mediums were frauds.

The following day David Palmer announced through the papers that he thought my idea a splendid one and that he would act as my medium.

So here we were, Merry White and I, and Dr. Seer himself had just dematerialized like one of his pet spooks.

## CHAPTER II

### *I Call Up the Dead*



**W**ANTED to strike a note of informality in my performance tonight, making a friendly meeting of it rather than a show. So, when I had escorted Merry to her dressing-room, I went around to the

foyer of the theater and entered with the crowd.

There were several people whom I knew in the group. As I passed up the aisle I paused to speak with Irene Kalaban, widow of the Master-mentalistic to whom Palmer had referred.

Irene Kalaban maintained an open mind on the subject of spiritualism. Her famous husband had done the same, as attested by the proviso of his will which set up the two hundred thousand dollar reward. Kalaban, being a magician and therefore knowing the tricks, had precluded any possibility of fraud by arranging a secret code message with his wife.

As a spirit Kalaban would try to communicate with his wife through a spirit medium, revealing this code

message to her, through the medium, as proof that it was really his spirit speaking. This would prove spiritualism a fact rather than a theory, inasmuch as only Mrs. Kalaban and the trusted executor of Kalaban's will knew the message.

Naturally hopeful of hearing this message which would prove her husband's immortality, Irene gladly went to any and every spirit medium in the city who volunteered to give a seance for purposes of calling up Kalaban's spirit.

I always admired Mrs. Kalaban. She was a pale, blond woman who possessed a particular type of fragile beauty. Tonight she gave me her thin hand and a wan smile as she introduced me to her escort, Robert Martin.

This Martin was virile, square-shouldered. He had an aggressive jaw. His eyebrows were like wads of dental cotton. He tried to cripple me with his handshake.

"Y' know, Mr. Chance," he said, "you're dabbling in dynamite tonight."

I smiled at the dogged, rock-hard face that did not invite smiles and asked Robert Martin if he was a disciple of Dr. Seer.

"Dr. Seer," Martin said, "is the most remarkable medium I have ever encountered. A true medium. His powers are supernatural. He will some day give Mrs. Kalaban that long awaited message from her departed husband."

I was a little surprised to find that Martin was a spiritualist. He didn't look the type. Not at all the type to sit in a dark room waiting for a medium to crack the knuckles of her big toe and announce that was the spirit of dead cousin Elmer rapping.

Irene Kalaban laughed a bit uneasily and gave me a pointed look.

"Mr. Martin," she said, "is as determined a believer as you are an unbeliever."

I understood. Martin was a man whose faith could not be shaken. If I produced any unusual manifestations tonight by confessed material means,

Martin would declare that I was a true spirit medium and didn't know it.

"Your privilege to believe or not, Chance," Martin rapped. "But y' know, I wouldn't be in your boots tonight for anything."

**M**Y medium of the evening, David Palmer, was in the front row with his sister. She was a dark-haired, neurotic looking person, I went up to the front of the theatre and Palmer introduced me to her. Margaret Palmer gave me a look. Meeting her was a little like stepping into a refrigerator.

As I got up on the stage, I saw that Dr. Seer was also occupying a seat in the front row. A very nicely mixed audience of skeptics, believers, and fence-straddlers, I had that night.

I gave a little preliminary talk, at the same time going through a bewildering cigarette routine in which the fags floated, vanished, and were reproduced. The cigarettes showed up well against the black curtain.

I announced that the cigarette tricks were no less miraculous than the feats of the mediums, for whether a cigarette was produced or a spook, skill, showmanship, and material apparatus were used.

This produced a snort of reproach from Robert Martin in the audience. And on the front row I could see Dr. Seer twisting around in his seat, as though trying to find a comfortable hollow for his angular hip bones.

The black curtains behind me were pulled aside by Merry White in the wings. My setting was simple. There was a black drape background, and in the center of the stage a spirit cabinet, which was simply a frame work of steel tubing on which black curtains were hung reaching to within eight inches of the floor. There was a table of light construction in front of the cabinet and on the table was a tambourine.

"Remember," I said to the crowd, "the only difference between George Chance and a spirit medium is that I warn you ahead of time that you will

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# Meet—The Ghost

**I**N the last issue of THE GHOST George Chance made his bow. We are happy now to present his second memoir, THE GHOST STRIKES BACK, in which his courage, cleverness and skill continue to shine brightly in spite of his innate modesty.

George Chance, writing about himself, does not brag about his attainments in the twin fields which he has combined and made his own—criminology and magic. But he cannot stop us from bragging about HIM. He cannot stop us from saying, for example, that he ranks at the top of his profession—the profession once graced by the great Harry Houdini, master of escape technique. It was thought that no one would ever equal the great Houdini, but that was before the time of George Chance.

So we repeat that in employing his magical talents in his crime-fighting role of THE GHOST, he has perhaps done more in the service of the Law than any other crusader for justice. Small wonder that criminals quake at the prospect of tangling with THE GHOST—master of the science of criminology, remorseless crime-tracker and criminal-catcher. When THE GHOST walks, the underworld stirs into deadly life to combat him.

Remember these things when you read this and future memoirs of George Chance. You see, this modest, kindly, humorous magician is a far bigger man than he makes himself out to be. He won't say so himself. That's why we're once again saying it for him.  
—THE EDITOR.

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be fooled. The spirit medium voices no such warning. He *knows* you will be fooled."

While I was talking, Merry White was arranging folding chairs in a semi-circle about the spirit cabinet. She was my best misdirection. All eyes must have been on her. She was dressed in a flaring white satin skirt that failed to reach her knees by eight inches. Her red satin blouse fitted like a coat of paint. That ten-thousand-watt personality of hers was evidenced in every movement of her graceful body and in every arch glance of her green eyes.

I called upon the audience for a volunteer committee of six to come up on the stage and examine the spirit cabinet. I believe Robert Martin was first on his feet. He strode up the aisle, arms bowed, fists clenched. He stood on the stage, fiercely challenging the audience with his beligerent glance. At my request he announced his name.

**I** DIRECTED Robert Martin to enter the spirit cabinet and examine it carefully while other volunteers joined me on the stage.

The next man up the aisle also cut an imposing figure. His skin was deeply tanned and as smooth as satin. Though closely shaved, you could see the coarse blackness of his beard beneath his skin. Something about his bearing or the cut of his clothes gave out the impression that he might be a romantic figure out of a bit of colorful light opera—a Cossack soldier, perhaps.

As he stepped upon the stage, the audience whispered. Here was a man the women would call handsome. Men would look up to him as small boys look up to some story-book pirate.

The man's self-confident smile showed a gleam of polished teeth against the duskiness of his complexion. He shook hands with me, announced that he was Carl Van Borg.

This was a break for me. Van Borg



*George Chance*

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was a well-known author. There was no chance of anyone supposing that Carl Van Borg was my confederate.

"I sifted up here not out of curiosity, Mr. Chance," his deep baritone voice spoke loud enough for everyone in the audience to hear. "I want to help. I've watched fakers the world over, and they're an ugly lot. I'm bound to congratulate you, Mr. Chance, for the work you're doing."

"Thank you," I said. "Glad you don't mind helping."

Van Borg gave me his smile; it was like heat lightning behind thunder clouds. "It's an anticipated pleasure. A privilege, really."

And then when Robert Martin had come from the spirit cabinet, Van Borg went in to give it the once over while I called upon other members of the audience until I had a committee of six.

I asked for someone in the audience to come upon the stage to play the part of spirit medium, and as was expected,

David Palmer got to his feet. At the same time he did so, his sister seized his arm. Her strident, hysterical voice could be heard clearly throughout the room:

"David, for the love of heaven, don't go up there. *Don't do it!*"

Gently, David Palmer broke the hold his sister had upon his arm. He walked up on the stage. I shook hands with him, turned to address the audience:

"Many of you know David Palmer. You know him to be a man of integrity. He denies all knowledge of trickery and has also stated that he does not believe in the supernatural powers of the spirit medium."

I stepped to the spirit cabinet which had been examined by each of the committeemen in turn and revealed the inside of the cubical to the audience. The cabinet was equipped with a blue shaded light mounted at the bottom of it which would illuminate the me-

dium's feet beneath the lower edge of the curtains, proving that the medium was securely tied during the performance.

Palmer took his place in a chair inside the cabinet and was securely bound, the knots sealed with wax.

**T**HE lights were dimmed to deep purple. At one side of the stage, I took my place in a chair and clapped my hands.

"I call up the spirits of the dead," I said distinctly.

And my spook show began. I duplicated every stunt that I had ever seen a medium pull. A tambourine rattled, a small table tipped, ghostly hands floated out from the cabinet, and finally I produced some ectoplasm, that stuff of which spirits are supposed to be made. Into the ectoplasm, which was a simple bit of chemical magic producing a vapor, I caused a "ghost" picture to be projected.

The audience was considerably impressed. There was some commotion in the front row and I heard Dr. Seer's high-pitched musical voice:

"Mr. Palmer is a true medium, though he may not know it."

"That's true!" Robert Martin's voice sang out.

This was nothing more than I had anticipated. I called for lights, promising that I would repeat the performance with anyone in the audience taking the place of David Palmer.

I went to the spirit cabinet, parted the curtains.

The committee crowded around me. Palmer's face was somewhat ghastly in the pale blue light that pushed up from the lamp at his feet.

"That's all, Mr. Palmer," I said.

Palmer didn't reply. Robert Martin shoved in front of me and looked hard at Palmer.

"Mr. Palmer is a medium!" Martin sang out. "He's still in a trance!"

The impressive figure of Carl Van Borg shouldered Martin out of the

way. His rich, deep voice broke a taut, ill-omened silence:

"Damn it, Chance, look here a minute! Is there a doctor in the room? Mr. Palmer isn't well!"

And as I cut away the cords that bound Palmer to the chair I knew that medical aid would be futile.

David Palmer was dead.

### CHAPTER III

#### *The Box of Thorns*



**T**HE doctor got to the stage by a succession of apologies and elbow jabs. The audience was in an uproar. I knew that no one should be allowed to leave until the cause of death had been established.

A faded, near-sighted individual, dressed in tails and carrying a topper with which he might well have covered his totally bald head, popped up on the stage. He pushed a pointed, inquiring nose up into my face.

"Say, Mr. Chance, everybody ought to be made to stay here until the police arrive. Somebody just went out through that exit opening from the right box."

"Glad you mentioned that," I said to the bald man.

I reached over and yanked Van Borg's sleeve.

"Will you see what you can do to keep the people from leaving? Block off the entrance and see if you can get word to the police."

Van Borg nodded. "I'll see what I can do." He sprang from the stage.

My eyes traveled across the audience. Dr. Seer's gaunt form stood out clearly as the medium fought his way toward the front exit of the building. But he couldn't get out, because Van Borg was way ahead of him, blocking the doors.

I saw that Irene Kalaban had got up

near the stage and was comforting the dead man's sister. Always thoughtful, Irene Kalaban.

Back of me on the stage, the doctor straightened.

"This man is beyond help, Mr. Chance," he announced.

"What killed him?" I asked, turning around.

The doctor frowned. "It might be heart failure, of course," he said. "Palmer was obviously excited by the role he was playing tonight."

"Heart failure!" Robert Martin snorted, his nostrils spread like those of a war horse going to battle. "All death is heart failure, y'know. But that's not saying what killed Mr. Palmer. And you won't say, either. But y' know, don't you? Any man who persists in deliberately mocking the spirits of the departed—"

"Bosh!" said the doctor.

Martin squared off in front of the doctor and would have used his fists had I not wedged in between the men.

"He'll not bosh me!" Martin insisted. "Y' know, I'm not to be trifled with."

"I was about to say," the doctor continued mildly, "that it is possible that Mr. Palmer may have been poisoned."

"Poison!"

Though the word had been spoken for my ears alone, others had overheard. And the word spread like fire across a field of ripe wheat. Poison and its ugly brother, murder! And immediately a score or so of people remembered that they had to get home at once.

At the entrance Van Borg had his hands full. Smiling broadly, he blocked the door, shook his head when somebody requested to be allowed to go. One man insisted upon going so vehemently that Van Borg let go with his fist and the man went back violently, making a hole in the crowd that was in front of the door.

**I**T was a relief when a pair of uniformed police put in their appearance. The cops took one look at Palmer and phoned the homicide bureau.

One of the officers asked who was in charge of this meeting. Somebody pointed to me. The cop was a fat, red-faced person who didn't look too good-natured. He asked me what the purpose of the meeting had been.

"Spook crooks, isn't it?" he said when I had told him. "Well, listen, everybody." He faced the audience. "I want yuz all to take the same positions you was in when the body was

[Turn Page]



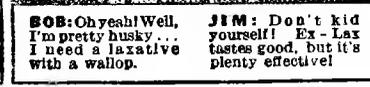
**BOB:** Say, fellow, are you taking Ex-Lax? 'Thought that was for women and kids.



**JIM:** Wrong, Big Boy! I've been taking Ex-Lax for years. It fixes me up fine!



**BOB:** Oh yeah! Well, I'm pretty husky... I need a laxative with a wallop.



**JIM:** Don't kid yourself! Ex-Lax tastes good, but it's plenty effective!

**LATER**



**BOB:** Thanks for the tip, pal! I tried Ex-Lax and it's great stuff!

**JIM:** What did I tell you! It's the *only* laxative we ever use in our family.

The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle*! No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family.



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discovered. Those that was on stage, up on stage now. The rest of yuz should be in your seats."

The doctor who had pronounced Palmer dead asked permission to take Palmer's sister out of the crowd. The cop said he might take Miss Palmer to the lounge but that they were not to leave the building.

Ten minutes later there was no chance of anybody leaving the building, the most efficient body of sleuths in the world, the New York Homicide Bureau was in control. And after a look at the body, Inspector John Magnus quietly announced that everyone on the stage would have to be searched. Though Medical Examiner Robert Demarest had not yet arrived, John Magnus seemed to need no medical attention to determine that David Palmer had been murdered.

The curtain was dropped over the stage to insure privacy. Detective-sergeant Hullick was to search the members of the committee which had assisted me in the fateful experiment. The search was to be an unpleasant ordeal to which, Carl Van Borg announced, "We might just as well submit without blowing off any steam."

Robert Martin blew off steam, however. In fact, he virtually exploded, which resulted in his being searched first. Hullick went through Martin's pockets swiftly and brought out a small, mean-looking automatic.

"Carrying a permit for this, Mr. Martin?" Hullick asked, eyeing the man coldly.

Martin snorted and produced the permit. Hullick examined it carefully, handed it back, and then turned to me.

"If you are going to search me," I said, "I request that you do it in private. As a magician, I carry certain articles necessary to tricks and which I would not care to have revealed to the public eye."

Hullick nodded. "I'll take charge of you in the men's dressing room, Mr. Chance. You're a friend of Police

Commissioner Standish, aren't you?"

I said I was but that I didn't expect any special privileges on that account. We went into the men's dressing room. Hullick's usually hard mouth twisted into a friendly smile as he closed the door behind us. He massaged his jaw with the palm of his hand.

"I don't suppose this is really necessary in your case, Mr. Chance, but I'd better give you the once over. I'll try not to ask too many pointed questions about any magical stuff you've got on your person."

**H**E was as good as his word until he removed from my right sleeve a black metal tube about a foot long. Almost at once his attitude toward me changed. His mouth was once again hard, his eyelids clamped to slits.

"What's this?" he asked.

"A cigarette dropper," I told him. "I pulled a few cigarette tricks tonight. That tube holds cigarettes until I'm ready for them."

Hullick looked into the tube, found it empty, which was natural since I had used all the cigarettes in my act. He put the tube aside from the other objects taken from my person. I noted that he paid much closer attention to what he was doing after that.

In the right hand pocket of my coat he found a safety match box. This surprised me, because I'm not in the habit of carrying matches in that pocket. However, Hullick didn't seem to attach any particular importance to the match box.

"If you don't mind, I'll keep this stuff and look it over more carefully, Mr. Chance," he said. "Now tell me, was anybody assisting you tonight?"

"Miss Merry White. She always assists me."

"Go back stage and get her, will you?" Hullick began stuffing my magical gimmicks into his pocket. And as he did so, he dropped the match box. The box came open and several little brown sticks that looked like burned matches scattered out on the floor.

Hullick knelt, picked up one of the little brown sticks, uttered a prolonged whistle.

"What have you here, Mr. Chance?" He looked up at me, his slits of eyes glittering shrewdly.

"I don't know, I'm sure," I said.

"Why not? They came out of your pocket, didn't they? Don't you know what they are,"

I shook my head.

"They're thorns, Mr. Chance."

## CHAPTER IV

### *Blood and Rouge*



DON'T know what significance Hullick attached to the box of thorns. All I knew was that they weren't mine and I told him so.

"We'll see, Mr. Chance," Hullick simply said. "If you'll just have Miss White step in here a moment. I want to talk to her. I want to get this thing straight and you and she are the ones to help me."

So I left Hullick to ponder over the match box full of thorns and went backstage to get Merry.

She wasn't there. I went into the wings and looked onstage. She wasn't there either. I went backstage again and to the stage door where a uniformed cop was on guard.

"Have you seen a young woman around here anywhere?" I asked the cop.

He wanted to know what sort of a young woman. I guess my description was enthusiastic. No, he hadn't seen such a little lady, but he would like to—especially in that costume that she wore.

I looked beyond the cop and into the alley outside. Perhaps the cop divined my thoughts for he took up a position completely blocking the doorway.

Merry White is the most unpredict-

able person I have ever known, but somehow I couldn't figure her leaving the theater here without me before the show was over.

I recalled the near-sighted bald man who had popped up on the stage directly after the discovery of the body to tell me that someone had gone out of one of the exit doors connecting the auditorium with the rooms back stage. A moment later a repetition of that thought gave me the "cauld grue" as I stooped over something clearly marked on the floor not far from the stage door.

"What have you got there?" the cop asked, altering his position and squinting in my direction.

"Blood," I said. "Three drops of fresh blood here on the floor."

Three drops of blood, Merry White unaccountably gone, the opening and closing of a door leading back stage—three ingredients of a nice dish of worry for me.

I straightened and looked at the cop who had come over to see the three sinister dots on the floor. The cop was a formidable person, but then George Chance is no pigmy either. I knew suddenly I was going to walk out that stage door. And I meant walk, not run.

"You got a four-bit piece?" I asked.

He looked at me and fished down into his pocket, his mouth screwed into a knot.

"Maybe I have, Mister. This ain't a touch, is it?"

I told him it wasn't. I just wanted to show him something. I took his fifty cent piece and held it at my finger tips.

"Watch it," I said. "Watch it closely. Because now you see it and now you don't."

**T**HIS time he didn't. I back-palmed the coin, and when he wanted to see the back of my hand I changed over quick to a front palm while I turned my hands over to display the back of it. And then I apparently picked the

coin out of the air and told him to watch again. I pulled the same stunt, except that this time I purposely fumbled, dropped the coin. He stooped to recover it, and when he straightened he looked into the muzzle of his own revolver which I had pulled from his holster.

The cop brought his whistle up to his lips. His cheeks bloomed angrily. But before he could get a *tweet* out of his whistle, I slapped the side of his head with the barrel of his gun. He fell forward to the floor, face down.

"I'm sorry about this," I said, but I don't think he heard me. I left his gun beside him and walked out of the door.

There were a couple of cops in front of the theatre, keeping the curious crowd moving along the sidewalk. They didn't pay any attention to me. I was just part of the crowd. I didn't see Merry anywhere, but then I hardly expected to. If you're not too optimistic you're less apt to be disappointed. Certainly I didn't have anything to be optimistic about.

There was a taxi stand a few steps from the front of the theater and a cab had just pulled up. I walked toward it. I didn't know where I was going. Perhaps to Merry's apartment or to my own house—any place where there would be a chance of getting some word from Merry. Those three drops of blood on the floor back in the theater weren't much. Perhaps it wasn't even Merry's blood. It was her unaccountable disappearance that was giving me the creepers.

"Taxi, Mister?"

I didn't answer just then. Against the curbstone, painted to indicate that the space was for cab parking only, I saw red marking. Something red as blood, but something that wasn't blood.

I bent over the curbing, looked at the mark. Large sized numbers were marked in red on the curb—703. I scraped a little of the red stuff onto my finger nail. It was lip rouge, the same scented brand that Merry used,

I was certain.

This mark was intended for my eyes, put there by Merry. She knew I would have to come to this stand for a taxi. 703—the numbers meant less than nothing to me. It was certainly not a telephone number. It might be part of an address.

"Mister, do you want a cab?" the driver said, leaning out of his window.

I looked up. The cab was painted white with red numerals on its door.

"Is there a cab in your crew numbered seven-ought-three?" I asked.

The driver nodded. "Jimmie Caldwell drives it. Why, Mister? Jimmie will be checking in at the office by now. That's why I'm here, Mister. I'm as good a driver as Jimmie, but if you'd rather risk your neck on your feet—"

I pulled open the door of the cab.

"Get moving. Take me to your office. I've got to see your pal, Jimmie."

It was just a shot in the dark but it might hit a bulls-eye.

**I** SETTLED myself back in the cab, forced myself to relax. It was the first moment I had had, since the finding of David Palmer's body, in which to do anything like connected thinking. And all that I could do was to try to get the facts in chronological order.

First, David Palmer had taken his place in the cabinet. He had been tied by the volunteer committee. I had lighted the electric light inside the spirit cabinet and pulled the drapes. Palmer had been alive then—alive and confident that what he was doing would have considerable influence on his sister who was rapidly falling into the web of Dr. Seer.

Then what? Well, then I had found Palmer dead. That interval between the closing of the curtains and the parting of them, that interval was the chasm of uncertainty over which there was no bridge of fact.

Had Palmer been murdered? I didn't know. The doctor had suspected poison. Supposing there had been poison, how had it been introduced?

Palmer had eaten nothing, had taken no drink. Bound inside that cabinet, what chance would he have had to take poison? But poison can readily be introduced through the skin and into the blood stream. A poisoned dart, perhaps—

And my thoughts bounced back to the finding of the match box full of darts in my pocket. That was a point I had overlooked in my anxiety about Merry.

Poison darts, of course. It all seemed very fantastic. Zulus killed with poison darts, but I hadn't seen any such savages running around New York. No, the more you thought about it the crazier the poison dart business sounded. How could a dart have been shot through the heavy velvet drapes of the spirit cabinet? It was impossible.

But it all came back to the one unalterable fact—David Palmer was dead. There's nothing more unalterable than death. How he had died, why he had died, might have a dozen answers. The fact remained that he was dead, and if poison darts had done the job, I might be in a bad spot.

It looked like the Ghost was going to have to take over the investigation. The Ghost had made all of New York's underworld his happy haunting ground. And if it takes a crook to catch a crook, why not a Ghost to catch a spook crook. But there was a joker in the deck, and had Merry White been with me we might have enjoyed the irony of it together.

Here's the joker: If George Chance and the Ghost were the same person and the half of the dual identity named George Chance got pinched for the murder of Palmer, how in the devil was the Ghost to solve the crime and bring the real criminal to book?

That, I decided, was almost as impossible as the idea that somebody had fired a poisoned dart into David Palmer through the walls of the spirit cabinet. Not quite as impossible, as I will explain a bit later.



*Robert Demarest*

## CHAPTER V

### *The Man with Claws*



MY cab came to the office of the taxi company. I paid the driver and promised him a tip if he would locate Jimmie Caldwell who drove cab number 703.

The tip was easily earned. We met Caldwell just as he was coming from the door of the office. He was a dumpy little man with a head too big for his vizored cap.

"This gentleman is looking for you, Jimmie," my cabby announced.

Jimmie took a cigarette out of his mouth.

"It don't cost nothing to look," he informed me.

"Did you pick up a fare near the entrance of the Thespian Club Theater—a small, dark-haired girl who was wear-

ing an abbreviated costume—”

Jimmie was already nodding.

“You bet I did. She came running out of the alley alongside of the theater. A Yellow cab was just slowing down to pick up a man who run out ahead of this girl, see. The girl lunged at me where I was waiting for a fare. She told me to keep an eye on the Yellow. And then she puts her lipstick and marks something on the curb.”

Jimmie pushed back his cap and scratched among the half dozen hairs that topped his head.

“I thought the girl was screwy, but maybe it was some new kind of a treasure hunt. I remember once—”

“The girl,” I said. “What did she do?”

“Oh, the girl got into my cab after she had written on the curb stone. She said I was to follow the Yellow cab, which was what I did.”

“Okay,” I said. “You’re taking me to the same place you took the girl. Only by the shortest route, and I’ll be responsible for any traffic rules you violate.”

What, I argued, was a mere traffic offense to a man who was apt to be pinched for murder?

On Ludlow Street not far from Essex Market, Jimmie Caldwell braked his cab.

“This is the dump,” he announced, waving at a blackened brick building front crowded close to the sidewalk. “It was sure none of my business, but I thought what a place for a lady.”

“You’re right,” I said, “it was none of your business.” I got out and told Caldwell to wait.

Six narrow stone steps between two gas pipe hand rails led me to the door where a sign advertising rooms for rent was hung. I didn’t look for a bell push but shoved against the weathered wood panel and stepped through into a dingy lower hall. Two sliding doors flanked the hall and ahead of me a stairway led to the second floor.

The place was dead quiet—that sort

of quiet you don’t like to break. I walked on tip-toe along the side of the stairway and to the end of the hall. There was a door leading out into a rear court. At the back of the hall there were doors on either side of me, tightly closed. Behind one of them I could hear somebody snoring. I tried the knob, found the door locked.

I went back to the stairway and quietly up the worn treads. The upper floor was darker than the lower. It was a good place to fall down stairs and break your neck.

A SMALL, faint sound came to my ears. I stopped, listened for a repetition of the sound. It came again and I recognized it as a moan. It came from behind a door on my right. I went to the door, pressed my ear to the panel. The sound was not repeated. I tried the knob of the door, met with better luck this time, stepped into a totally dark room, closed the door after me.

I listened again. Somebody in the room was breathing steadily. I groped around the edge of the door with my hands, trying to find a light switch. There was none. I might have guessed that such a house would have pull-cords operating from central lightning fixtures of the type designed for both gas and electricity.

I moved forward, sliding my feet cautiously. A string brushed my face about midway across the room. I pulled it and brought a saffron-colored light globe into life. Immediately I looked down at the floor. Not eight inches from the toe of my right shoe was Merry White, huddled on the floor. Except for the bluish bruise on her pale forehead, she might have simply curled up for a nap.

I dropped beside her, gathered her into my arms. Her eyelids quivered and then squeezed tight shut against the pain of a headache. Her hands clung to my arms tightly. She sighed and relaxed.

For a moment, I couldn’t drag my

eyes from her sweet face. Her regular breathing, the steady drumming of her heart, relieved my fears. It was just the thought of what might have happened to her that paralyzed me.

Finally, I got my eyes from her face and let them wander about the room. A closet door was open and I could see that it was empty. A scarred, gray-enameled bureau had every drawer open. The bed was unmade.

I looked down at Merry in time to see her closing one eye. A faint smile lingered around the corners of her sweet mouth. I whispered her name.

"Don't bother me," she said. "I like it here."

"Well," I said, "I can run along then—"

Her hands gripped me hard. "I mean in your arms. And I'm sleepy. Aren't I the lucky girl to get rescued by tall, blond, handsome you?"

"Merry, what happened to you? Why did you leave the theater?"

"Don't bother me," she said. "I like it here."

I picked her up and carried her downstairs and to the taxi. Jimmie Caldwell got out when he saw me coming and started to straighten his tie. I told him he needn't bother because the lady was asleep.

"The lady," Merry said, "is not asleep. But when she opens her eyes things go 'round."

I lifted her into the rear seat of the cab, held her close while the cab got underway. I told Caldwell to take us to my house on East Fifty-fourth.

**M**MERRY cuddled into a more comfortable position in my arms.

"Darlin', I hope you're not jealous. I left you at the theater to follow a man. If you could see the man, you wouldn't be jealous, would you?"

I didn't say anything.

"It was a strange man," she went on. A shiver coursed over her body. "The most hideous man I've ever seen."

"What was he like?" I asked.

"Like a mummy, darlin'. I was sure

a brave girl to follow him. Right after you found Mr. Palmer dead, this man came through the exit door that led back stage. I said: 'Where do you think you're going?' He didn't say anything. I tried to get in his way. He ducked aside and fell into the wall. There was a nail sticking out of the wall and he gashed his cheek on it. Funny thing was, he didn't seem to know he'd hurt himself."

That explained the blood on the floor, thank heavens!

"I thought he was the murderer, if Mr. Palmer was murdered. So I followed him and lettered the number of my cab in lipstick where I thought you'd find it."

"You followed him to that house?" I asked.

"Uh huh. And he hit me on the head with his suitcase when I went into his room. He was packing in a big hurry when I caught up with him. He was awful. He didn't have any hands."

"No hands?" I echoed.

"No hands, just claws. Yellow claws like a chicken. What do you make of it, darlin'?"

"Claws," I murmured. "A cut cheek and no pain. Honey," I ended softly, "unless I'm mistaken, there's a leper loose in New York."

## CHAPTER VI

### *On the Big Black Dot*



**B**Y the time we had reached my brownstone, Merry thought she could walk but declared she wasn't going to try.

"You've got to carry me across your threshold one time or another," she said,

"so tonight you can practice."

Joe Harper opened the door when I kicked on the panel with the toe of my shoe. My home doesn't belong to Joe Harper, but he doesn't know that. He

found my guest room a good place for a hangover one night years ago and he became a permanent fixture. The man's intestines are made of brass tubing. Incidentally, he's one of my staff whom the Ghost couldn't well do without.

Joe Harper had his green hat on, but he wasn't going any place. A cigarette dangled from his thin lips and he had a highball in one hand. From the shadowy nook beneath the brim of his hat his sharp, black eyes looked at Merry and me.

"She must have got her spirits out of a bottle, George," he said.

I placed Merry on the divan, and she promptly asked for a glass of sherry.

Joe Harper got the wine for her. Then, hands stuck in the tight slots of his trouser pockets, he asked what was what.

There's no getting around Joe Harper. Those eyes of his are like the probes of my friend Robert Demarest, the medical examiner. Joe Harper's career is as checkered as the suits he wears. He has been race-track bookmaker, theatrical booking agent, pitchman, gambler. He knows Broadway from the crust on down—all the way down. He is an invaluable agent for the Ghost. Beneath his calloused, sophisticated veneer he carries a very genuine and loyal friendship for me. He is one of the six persons who knows that George Chance and the Ghost are one and the same person.

Lounging on the back of his neck, cigarette ashes raining down on his gaudy, piped vest, Joe Harper listened to the events of the evening. When I had concluded, he said:

"No wonder Police Commissioner Standish has been calling here trying to get you, George. It looks to me like you were in the middle of a black dot. When Merry pulled her exit right after Palmer couldn't take his curtain call, you shouldn't have piled into that cop the way you did. Assaulting an officer"—Joe shook his head—"bad stuff, George. I should have been there. I

have hit cops and got away with it."

"Maybe you'd better call Mr. Standish and fix yourself up," Merry said. "It will be all right when he finds out you had to play hero for me."

I went over to the phone.

"By the way, Joe, this man with the claws—you ever see anybody like that running around?"

Joe nodded. "But I wasn't sober then. When I saw him he not only had claws but he also had a tail like a peacock."

**I** RANG the apartment of Police Commissioner Standish. He wasn't at home, so I tried his office at Headquarters. Hadley, his secretary, put me through at once.

"Ned," I said, "I guess you want to talk to me."

"George," he said, "I guess I do. By all that's holy, what the hell was the idea of running out on a murder investigation and slashing one of my cops with his own gun?"

I explained about Merry's disappearance, knowing that Standish could fix me up all right on that score.

"But you're suspect number one for the murder of David Palmer," Standish said. "Oh, I know you didn't do it, but Palmer was a well known figure. There's going to be all kinds of a smell raised about this."

"Tell me about the murder," I insisted. "What did Demarest find?"

"A thorn sticking in the back of Palmer's neck. The thorn was covered with a gummy substance which Demarest thinks is curare. And HULLICK found poisoned thorns in a match box in your pocket. Also a blow gun—"

"Listen," I cut in. "That blow gun was nothing but a cigarette dropper. You can't call it anything else. I can show you the thing in the suitcase of any magician who is going to pull a cigarette routine."

"Now, you listen, George," Standish said, his voice soft and I thought a little worried. "When you find poison thorns on somebody and you find any

kind of a hollow tube through which the thorns could be propelled, that tube become a blow gun even if it's a soda straw."

"So I did it," I said. "I unpinned the cigarette dropper from my sleeve. I have X-ray eyes that could see Palmer's neck through the back of the curtains of the cabinet. The curtains offered no resistance to the thorn. The thorn, shot from one side of the stage, curved, went through the back of the cabinet. It's as logical as snow in August. Hullo and Magnus have a motive all

parting the curtains, shooting the dart into Palmer."

"Am I pinched?" I demanded.

"Don't get me wrong," Standish said. "This is a difficult situation. Palmer, a prominent man and well-liked—"

"And I don't see how I can be cut to fit into the picture at all," I interrupted.

**A**T the other end of the line there was an interval of silence. Finally the commissioner said:

"Magnus is building up a swell case



"Look," I said softly (Chap. XIX)

doped out, have they? What was I after? Palmer's money. You know I don't need money."

"You never have so much of the stuff you don't want more, they say. And George, you once told me that a spirit medium puts atropine in his eyes so he can see his way around in a dark room. You could have pulled the same trick, walking to the back of the cabinet,

against you, George. You've got to realize Magnus' position. There has to be an arrest or there will be the devil to pay. And damned if you don't look like the murderer. What you ought to do is go to bed and get some sleep. Don't worry. *There's a way out for you, you know.*"

And Standish hung up!

I turned slowly from the phone. I

knew the way out he mentioned. Standish was one of the six persons who knew that I was the Ghost. And Standish knew that the Ghost could be two places at once—in Tombs prison awaiting trial for murder, and at the same time at large trying to clear himself. Standish knew the secret of this seemingly impossible thing.

So that was what Standish had been hinting at. That was the thing he expected me to do. Seriously, he didn't suppose I had killed Palmer. But if other members of the police force thought that I was a murderer, there was nothing Standish could do about it.

You see, the only other official on the police force or connected with it in any way who knew that George Chance was the Ghost was Dr. Robert Demarest, the medical examiner.

"Well?" Joe Harper asked, examining me critically with his dark eyes.

I worked up a smile which I let Merry and Joe share.

"Standish says I'm to go to bed and not worry. I think I'll drive Merry back to her apartment and then turn in. Tomorrow, I think the Ghost will have to take a hand in the murder case of David Palmer."

And I knew that maybe my not-worry story went over the head of Merry, but I hadn't deceived Joe Harper. Joe knew that Standish had said I was wanted for murder.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Murder Motive*



GO to bed, get some sleep, don't worry—that was the commissioner's prescription. I filled it by dozing off about dawn and pounding the pillow for maybe three hours. The soft buzz of the front door signal virtually pitched me out of bed. I staggered into the second floor study

which is adjacent to my bedroom.

In the top of my study desk is an illuminated glass screen. A periscope arrangement is employed to "pipe" a view of the front entryway up to this screen, so that I can see who is demanding admission into my house.

Pictured in the screen was not the burly figure of Inspector Magnus, as I had half expected. Instead, I looked down upon the lean, cadaverous image of Dr. Robert Demarest, Chief Medical Examiner of New York City.

Unless you know the man you are apt to consider Demarest the most gloomy and saturnine individual alive. He looks unhappy, what with his peculiar protruding eyes with their heavy, sleepy looking eyelids. His job is certainly the most cheerless one in the city. And, as though he realizes that his position is not one for making friends, he has carefully cultivated an attitude which seems to alienate people. For all that, his sleepy eyes front for the keenest brain in the field of pathology. His slow, tired movements are but a counterbalance for the nervous energy within him.

I went into the bedroom long enough to slide into slippers and pull a bathrobe about my shoulders. Then I hurried down the steps in order to let Demarest in.

Half-way down the steps, I heard some one open the front door, and Demarest's voice intoned:

"George, you couldn't be in a worse mess, aside from turning up as the prone and silent partner at an autopsy."

"I'm afraid you're mixed up again, Doctor," said the voice of the man who had let Demarest in. "George is still in bed."

That voice—the voice that answered Demarest—is an auditory miracle. Hearing it unexpectedly like that always gives me the uncomfortable feeling that I have somehow escaped from my body. The voice was like a perfect recording of my own natural voice in pitch, accent and inflection.

"Damn this seeing double!" Demar-

est said. "Why don't you keep a pipe in your mouth, Saunders, so I can tell you from Chance?"

And by that time I was far enough down the steps to see Demarest talking to Glenn Saunders, my assistant.

Little wonder that Demarest sometimes got Glenn and me confused. To see us together is enough to make a chronic alcoholic hit the water wagon. For by some quirk of nature augmented by a little plastic surgery, Glenn Saunders is my identical double.

**T**HERE is a Chinese proverb which states that there is always a twin. And in Glenn Saunders I had found my twin. His height measures up to my own six feet, one inch. He is broad at the shoulders and lean at the waist as I am. His face is like a reflection of my own—blue eyes, ruddy gold hair that waves back from a fairly broad forehead, thin nose and mouth, prominent cheek bones.

I encourage Saunders to ape my every movement, to develop a perfect imitation of my natural speaking voice. For Glenn is the reason why the Ghost has a perfect alibi. When the Ghost is on the haunt, stalking some criminal in any one of his many disguises, Glenn Saunders fills the shoes of George Chance, proving to my enemies that though the Ghost may employ magic in his investigations, he simply can't be George Chance!

Saunders leaves and returns to the house under cover of darkness, usually. When he is not playing the part of George Chance while I am ghosting he is busy in his basement shop, working on some new piece of magical apparatus. For magic is a mania with him. In exchange for all that I can teach him about the art, he has deliberately shucked his own identity.

So the Ghost's secret remains a secret. And when the Ghost seeks sanctuary from his enemies in the identity of George Chance, his real identity, his enemies never manage to pick up his trail.

So careful is Saunders to efface himself unless he is called upon literally to wear the shoes of George Chance, that he would never have presumed to open the door that morning were it not for the fact that Robert Demarest is one of our intimates.

Seeing me now on the stairway, the medical examiner looked from me to my double, a dour expression on his face.

"I am charitable only to myself when I say I hope neither of you ever turns up at the morgue," he said. "I would never know who was who."

As though to make sure that Demarest didn't become confused again, Glenn Saunders stuck his briar pipe between his teeth. It's his mark of distinction, since I smoke cigars or cigarettes.

I motioned toward the door of the living room, but Demarest shook his head.

"No time to sit down, George. So many people die I'm getting so my knees don't hinge because I'm standing over the autopsy table so much. I just thought I'd stop by and tell you the worst."

"Let's have it," I invited, smiling a little.

"Why, this murder business—you killing David Palmer," Demarest said. He pointed a bony finger at me. "Listen, Inspector Magnus is going to nail you to the wall on this job. Opportunity, murder weapon, everything points to you clearly as though the trail was marked in neon lighting."

**D**EMAREST was not a man to exaggerate. I considered what he had just said.

"Except motive," I said. "Palmer's money doesn't mean anything to me."

"Money," Demarest said, "isn't the root of this particular evil. It's the other thing. I mean women."

"What woman?" It was my turn to frown.

"Why, Merry White, of course. Hasn't Magnus found an autographed

photograph of Merry White in Palmer's place?"

"Has he?" I asked Demarest.

"He certainly has. David Palmer was mad about Merry. And when you're arraigned before twelve men who have been pretty thoroughly educated by the tabloids of this city, it pans out that you killed David Palmer because of jealousy."

Knowing Merry White as I knew her, I laughed a little. But not much. Because a smart prosecutor could paint the same picture Demarest had done with much more glowing colors. Merry had introduced me to Palmer. Merry had very probably carried on a harmless flirtation with the wealthy bachelor. It would be like her. It is as natural for her to flirt as it is for her to breath. With a personality like hers, nobody could be a wall flower.

But the idea of jealousy—it was absurd. Merry's loyalty to me had been tested too many times.

"George, that doesn't sound so good," Glenn Saunders said.

"It sounds rotten," Demarest said. He took the brim of his hat in both hands and pulled it well down on his head. "And if I can make it sound rotten, wait until the D. A. gives his version. Under the circumstances, if I were a magician, I'd vanish myself."

Demarest turned, reached for the doorknob. I told him to wait a minute. He shook his head.

"Magnus is probably on his way here now. I can't be found here by the inspector."

Demarest hurried out.

"You're not going to go down to headquarters with Magnus, are you?" Glenn said.

I asked him why not.

"Because you're in a tight squeeze," Glenn insisted. "Demarest wouldn't have come here—"

"Demarest is a calamity-howler," I said, going into the bedroom for my clothes.

Demarest wasn't anything like a calamity-howler. I wasn't kidding my-

self at all. I was in a jam. But it was a jam I was going to have to wriggle out of myself.

While I was dressing, I could hear that Joe Harper had joined Glenn Saunders in my study. The two were talking in low tones.

I joined them a moment later. Joe wasn't dressed. He was draped in that atrocious purple bathrobe of his which must once have belonged to a prize fighter.

**HIS** crisp, nasal voice attacked me the moment I entered the room.

"Listen, George, if you think this self-sacrifice act you're trying to pull is going to reap a hand from me, you're screwy. Glenn told me what Magnus has dug up. You're a smart guy, George, but you don't know what Broadway uses for a brain as well as I do. When the papers get hold of this, make a gooey scandal-murder out of it, the people will lap it up. You can't ad lib your way out of a mess like this."

"I was thinking the same thing," Glenn put in. "So suppose you let me face Magnus when he comes. Let him take me down to headquarters. They'll go easy on me, thinking that I'm George Chance who is a friend of the commissioner. Maybe I'll be indicted, but you know how a trial drags along. You'll have plenty of time to find the man who did the killing."

I put a hand on Glenn's shoulder.

"That's nice of you," I said, "but I can't take the chance."

"Where's the chance?" Joe said. "The Ghost has tackled harder jobs than this. A lot harder. But if you're in the Tombs, you can't ghost yourself out of this mess."

"Nothing doing," I said.

Yet there was logic in what Joe preached. As Commissioner Standish had pointed out, Inspector Magnus had a job to keep, and if he couldn't produce the murderer of as prominent a man as David Palmer, things wouldn't look so good for him. Not that Magnus was deliberately framing me—*somebody*

*had already done that*—but if he didn't arrest so palpable a suspect as I was, there'd be a holy howl from the press.

The why or wherefore of Palmer's murder hadn't occurred to me yet. That the fanatical Dr. Seer had somehow managed to cause it merely to keep me from convincing Margaret Palmer that professional spirit mediums were fakes was too far-fetched, although I did not rule it out as a possibility. There was an underlying motive beneath the whole thing that smelled like something the Ghost should be investigating, but I felt I must draw the line at the point where I would risk sending my double to the electric chair in my stead.

So I turned my back on the idea and went downstairs to await the call of the capable and thorough-going Inspector Magnus.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Magnus Makes His Pinch*



INSPECTOR MAGNUS put in his appearance promptly. He was accompanied by a plainclothes man. He came to his point with admirable brevity.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Chance, but you're under arrest for the murder of David Palmer. Those poison thorns, you know, and your magic blow gun. Motive, jealousy."

"The motive is haywire, Inspector," I said. "I grant that Miss White may have had some sort of a harmless flirtation with Palmer. Maybe Palmer, who didn't strike me as being particularly smart about women, took her seriously. But suppose a man named John Doe is murdered and an autographed picture of some Hollywood movie queen is found in his bedroom—you wouldn't think anything about it, would you?"

"That's different," Magnus said.



*Timy Tim*

"That's a whole lot different. The fact remains that you had every opportunity to kill Palmer. You had the weapon used in your possession after the crime. Palmer was in love with the girl you intended to marry. It don't make a lot of difference whether Miss White was serious or not. Palmer was plenty serious. It was Merry White or nobody as far as he was concerned."

Magnus jingled handcuffs.

"We better go down to headquarters, Mr. Chance. I want to make everything as easy for you as I can, so if you'll agree to come quietly—"

I smiled a little. "I don't think your handcuffs would mean much to a magician, Inspector, so let's just dismiss that little formality. I'll get my hat."

In my house there is a large closet just off the hall. I went out into the hall to go to this closet. Magnus and his man followed me. I opened the door of the closet and stepped inside, groping for my hat in what light there was that came into the closet from the hall.

And then suddenly there wasn't any light at all. The closet door closed. I heard a quiet, furtive movement at my elbow. I had scarcely time to real-

ize that I was not alone in the closet before something crashed on the top of my skull. In the darkness there was suddenly light, but no light you could see by. The brilliant, flashing array originated inside my own brain, and when the lights went out, so did every thing else, including my ability to reason that somebody had laid a sap on top of my head.

**W**HEN I came to, it was a gradual process in which headache and nausea were my first sensations. I was propped up by pillows and lying on the floor of my own basement, a mattress under me. Joe Harper was sprawled out in a deck chair not far from my furnace. He was fully dressed, which included his hat, and beneath the light of a single globe he was reading the latest issue of a Broadway magazine.

I tried to say something to him and couldn't. I couldn't move my jaws. I lifted my hand to my face and then to the top of my head. Somebody had tied an ice bag on the top of my head.

Sensing that I was conscious, Joe put down his magazine, came over and unbound the ice bag from my head.

"We had to get tough, George," he said. "When a man won't read his lines as they are written, you got to get tough. Glenn was in that closet, waiting for you to get your hat. He had to sap you and give you a goose egg for your head instead. You'll feel all right by nightfall."

I knew how it was. That closet into which I had stepped has a trap door in the floor. My house is filled with similar tricks which I have used to baffle guests. Glenn Saunders had waited in the closet, sapped me, dropped me through the trap, came out of the closet with my hat on.

In other words, Glenn Saunders had been arrested as George Chance—arrested for the murder of David Palmer, though I don't suppose that Glenn had ever seen Palmer in all his life.

"Now you can go to work on the case, Ghost," Joe Harper said. "If you fail,

you can spill the whole fraud to the cops and have Glenn released from the death house in time. Only," he added as I began to protest, "it isn't going to get as far as that. The Ghost has cracked tougher cases than this."

"Okay," I said, shrugging. "I go ghosting after the killer of David Palmer. Meanwhile get the best lawyer available to defend Glenn."

"Of course," agreed Joe imperturbably.

"And thank Glenn for knocking some sense into my head when you go down to see him," I went on. "I was acting like a sap."

"So we thought," replied Joe. "That's why Greek met Greek."

"Eh?" I said, frowning.

"Sap met sap," said Joe in a tired voice.

"A pun is the lowest form of half-wit," I retorted. "I was thinking, Joe—clearing George Chance of the murder charge is really only the preliminary to a nasty job. The question is, who actually did kill Palmer, and why."

"Yeah," Joe grunted. "You find that out."

"I will," I promised grimly.

I went down to that secret room just off the workshop in which Glenn Saunders and I have created some of those illusory miracles which have astonished and entertained the play-going world. This secret chamber was brilliantly lighted and contained, among other things, the paraphernalia of the Ghost. There was a large wardrobe and a tall three-panel mirror. In front of this mirror I began the process which brought that wraithlike hunter of men, the Ghost, to life.

**I** used as few makeup materials as possible. Small wire ovals go into my nose, tilting its tip and elongating the nostrils. I darken the inside of each nostril with brown pigment. Brown eye-shadow goes on to darken the eye pits. I get an effect of pallor out of a powder box. Next I highlight my cheek bones which are naturally

prominent. And over my own teeth I place celluloid shells the color of old ivory.

That done, I no longer look like George Chance. Dressed in a specially made suit and crusher hat, my appearance does not attract any particular attention. I am just another man, not very attractive, yet not particularly hideous.

But that's about half of it. I have only to part my lips in a skull-like grin, affect a fixed vacuity of expression with deeply sunken eyes staring glassily, and my face becomes something ghastly, like that of a skull. It is an instantaneous change which is the result of long practice in front of the mirror, this "turning on the Ghost" as I call it. I have seen many a hardened criminal quail before it.

The suit I had put on is always prepared. It includes secret pockets for bits of magical apparatus which I carry around and which have many times proved their value. A magical gimmick originally designed for quite another purpose holds my flat automatic.

Commissioner Standish has more than once told me I am a rotten pistol shot. I admit it. But sheathed in my right sleeve I constantly carry a weapon in which Don Avigne long ago taught me to have great confidence—my nasty throwing knife which has a double edge and a needle point. Coupled with trapeze-strengthened muscles, the Ghost has little trouble fighting his way into and out of corners.

So as dusk dropped on Manhattan I left my house by a special back exit which permitted me to drift onto the block without seeming to have come from the home of George Chance. Leaving there was like divorcing myself from my own identity. I was the Ghost in grim earnest this time and would be compelled to live the life of the Ghost until the real murderer of David Palmer was brought to justice.

My first move was to step into a telephone pay station near Columbus Circle and call Commissioner Standish.

"This is the Ghost, Ned," I said when I heard his gruff salutation. "How are tricks?"

**N**EEDESS to say, he was startled. After all, he was under the impression that Magnus had put the Ghost in the Tombs along with George Chance when the inspector had arrested Glenn Saunders.

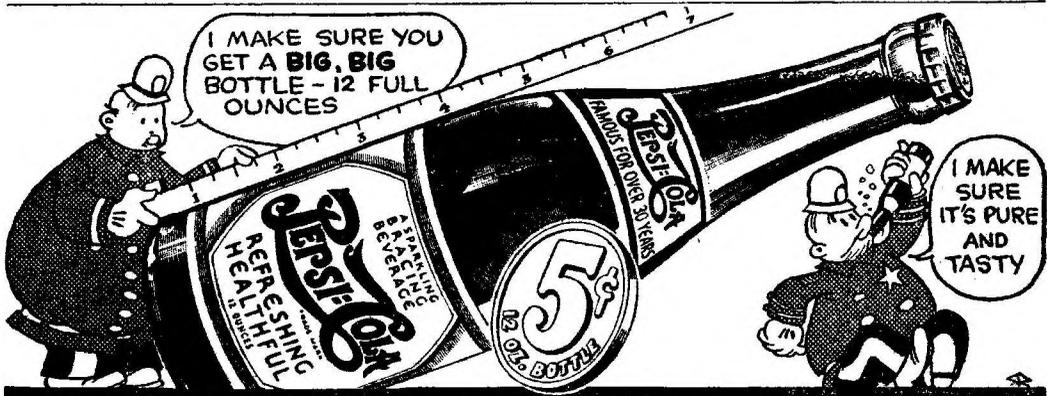
"Thank heaven you had the sense to see this thing right," he growled back at me, recovering.

"I didn't have the sense," I replied. "Glenn had a blackjack."

"Good!" The commissioner chuckled. "Somebody else was fooled, too. Merry White is in my office right now using her considerable charm trying to get you clemency by denying that there was ever anything between her and Palmer and that Palmer knew it and you knew it. In short, she's generally making a nuisance of herself."

"Give her my love," I said, "and tell

[Turn Page]



her she doesn't have to prove anything. Just how serious, however, is this case against George Chance?"

"Well," he answered gravely, "it's circumstantial, of course, but I've known men to burn on flimsier evidence. Damn it, just where did those thorns come from?"

"They were planted on me. Don't ask me who did the planting. At the time I discovered Palmer dead there were a number of people on the stage, any one of whom might have slipped that box into my pocket. One of them did, and that makes a horse of George Chance, a magician who was out-magicked."

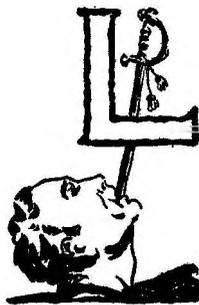
"I'd call it a strike," came back Standish dryly, "and I don't mean because it was a matchbox, either. But why were you singled out for the goat? Why was David Palmer killed, anyway? The only person to benefit is his sister, and she didn't need anything. It seems pointless."

"It does, but I'm afraid it has a point that is quite deadly. I'll keep in touch with you."

"Good luck . . . Ghost . . ." Standish whispered.

## CHAPTER IX

### *A Brate of Thugs*



LEAVING the telephone booth, I hailed a cruising taxi at the next corner and gave the driver the address of the Palmer home in Washington Heights. I had nothing definite to connect Dr. Seer with the murder save that he could have been the person to plant the poison thorns on me.

The Palmer place occupied a large part of one of the blocks south of Fort Tryon Park. I was not surprised to see several luxurious looking cars parked in the drive. Sympathetic

friends of the family were paying duty calls.

Dismissing my cab a block farther on, I walked back and cut across the lawn in the dark. I came out of deep shadows and surveyed the house. The place was well lighted. Several windows were open, but the screens had not yet been put up—a nice advantage for anyone who might wish to enter without arousing the occupants. I took advantage of the opportunity, and entered from the rear.

Several callers were gathered in the drawing-room with Margaret Palmer who was simply dressed in a black gown which heightened her pallor. I recognized only one of them—the bald-headed and near-sighted man with the inquisitively pointed nose. He was the party who had called my attention to the fact that somebody had left the theater through one of the box exits.

I was intent at the moment on searching David Palmer's study, but I didn't get the chance as the guests were leaving. I had to retreat down the hall in a hurry to get out of sight. I opened the first door I came to and slipped into the room. Through the crack of the door I watched Margaret Palmer tell her well wishers good-by. Then, to my great consternation, she came swiftly along the hall and entered the room in which I was. As I quickly closed the door behind her I saw that it was a downstairs sitting-room, obviously for private comfort.

"Don't cry out, Miss Palmer," I warned. "I want to help you find your brother's killer."

I didn't "turn on the Ghost," you can be sure of that. Thanks to what I had learned of ventriloquism and voice impersonation. I didn't sound like George Chance. In fact, I put all I knew of hypnotic appeal into that word of warning to Margaret Palmer. And she didn't cry out.

Hands at her throat, she stood straight and tall and somewhat pathetic, looking at what she could see of me in the shadows.

"You—you are from the police?" she asked. "Please go away. I've begged you not to question me now. I'm tired—so very tired."

**I** knew she was all of that. When a woman of Margaret Palmer's neurotic temperament holds herself together at a time like this it amounts to nothing short of heroism.

"No, I'm not a policeman," I said quietly. "I am simply a friend of your brother. I want to be a friend to you. I want to find out who killed David."

"David wasn't killed. It was simply his time to die," she said. "I knew it all along."

"You knew it? Why in the world did you permit him to go to George Chance's spirit show last night?"

"It would have made no difference where he was. It was his time to die."

"And yet you worried when he went into the spirit cabinet."

"Yes, something within me cried out against the inevitable. Doctor Seer predicted my brother's death at one of his seances. Naturally I believed him."

I repressed a start. So Dr. Seer had predicted Palmer's death!

I pretended to take this important piece of information casually. "That's rather interesting," I said. "Do you regard this doctor as infallible in his predictions?"

"Yes," she said flatly. "He prophesied the death of another man correctly—a man named Michael Holland."

It was another shock. I remembered having seen the name of Michael Holland, scientific worker, in the newspaper. He had died in some kind of accident while working in his laboratory.

"Have you spoken of these two prophecies to anyone else?" I asked.

"The followers of Doctor Seer knew about them. Tomorrow the world will know when it reads the newspapers."

"I see. Who was that bald man with the sharp nose in your drawing-room with your other guests?"

"His name is Harkness. I didn't know him, but he is associated with some bank where David had connections. He said he was a friend of David's. Mrs. Kalaban introduced him to me."

Margaret Palmer began twisting her handkerchief. I could see by her thin fingers that she was nearing the breaking point.

"Thank you very much, Miss Palmer," I said gently. "You've been a great help. I won't trouble you with any more questions, but there is one thing further. There must have been a



reason for your brother's death—even admitting Dr. Seer's gift of prophecy. I would like your permission to look over his private papers or thing of that nature which he kept here at home."

"Please, no."

"Why not?" I asked a little sharply.

"Our lawyer instructed me to keep everything locked up in David's safe and not let anybody go over his papers until—"

**T**HE faint sound of a crash in the next room—as though somebody had knocked over a pedestal over on a heavy rug—came to us. I glanced at the closed door and then shot a quick look at the bereaved woman. She seemed as startled as I.

"Where is your brother's study?" I demanded in a low, terse voice.

"There," she whispered, indicating the room from whence had come the sound.

With one leap I was at the door. It was locked. Margaret Palmer opened her mouth to scream.

"Don't!" I snapped at her so sharply that she stared at me in open-mouthed but silent amazement.

Twisting the knob and exerting pressure in a manner taught me by my old circus friend, Hercules, I lunged all my weight against the door. The latch snapped out of the keeper, and the barrier shuddered open. I sprang on into the room at a crouch. Margaret Palmer followed me across the threshold.

The room was a mess. And the cause of the mess was still present in the guise of as villainous a pair of thugs as I had ever encountered. One of them must have been an ex-puglist, for he had a beautiful pair of cauliflower ears. The other had a face like a shark and eyes just as mean. Sort of a soup and fish pair, if you get what I intend.

Like the bull in the china shop, they had been giving David Palmer's study the works. Desk drawers were open, book cases had been emptied, litter was everywhere. But I didn't have time for a detailed survey. At my feet was a pedestal ash-stand with a leaded bottom. That was the object one of the china shop bulls had overturned.

The thug with the garden variety of ears let out a hiss like a punctured locomotive and charged at me. I grabbed up the ash-stand and twirled it like a drum major's staff. It cracked him squarely across the shins and he fell on his face like a ton of second-hand bricks.

Shark-face used more discretion. He went the other way — toward the draped windows—but he drew a vicious looking automatic that seemed as big as a cannon. Perhaps that was because of the silencer he had on the end of it. Anyway, it was a one-shot weapon because of the silencer, but he must have had plenty of confidence in his ability to use it.

"Lay still, Bull!" he grated. "I've got 'im." And he leveled down on me with an expert motion.

It was touch and go. There wasn't any help for it. So I stayed in my

crouch and twitched my right hand against my left coat sleeve. Before Shark-face had time to slip his safety catch and squeeze his trigger my right hand flipped forward in the manner of a snake's darting tongue.

There was a silvery flash and then a faint thud just as he pulled his trigger. But that shot was really reflex action and the slug buried itself in the wall above the door. The shaft of my throwing knife was sticking out of Shark-face's upper arm muscle.

He let out a scream a calliope would have been proud of, whirled, and dived head first through the draperies behind him. Bull scrambled to his feet, took one glance, and followed through before I could snag him. Margaret Palmer cut loose now with her hysterics.

**B**Y the time I got to the drapes I saw the window had been left open by the two prowling artists and that they'd got away—fast. The butler was banging on the door which opened into the hall by now, a door which Bull and Shark-face had also locked against intrusion.

"Wait!" I snapped at Margaret Palmer. "Before you let anybody in—is your brother's safe in this room?"

That question shut her up as though I'd drawn a knife across her thin throat. She darted startled eyes toward a small tapestry of a dancing girl in a Turkish coffee house. Without waiting for her words, I sprang over there and swung the tapestry aside. Behind it was revealed the closed door and shiny knob of a wall safe. Using my handkerchief to avoid leaving prints of my own, I tried the door.

The safe was locked, intact, and the combination was not set.

"So they didn't get into it—yet," I said sharply. "Call the police at once. Get Commissioner Standish to come here in person and impound everything in this safe. Thanks for everything, and good-by."

I took a header through the window after the pair of routed prowlers.

## CHAPTER X

*Warning on the Wall*

**R**EACHING the street, I saw neither hide nor hair of the two fugitives. Getting my breath, I slowed to a circumspect walk and hailed the first cab I saw. I had plenty to think about, and I knew I would get the dope from Ned Standish if there was anything of importance in David Palmer's wall safe.

So I headed straight for Irene Kalaban's home, intending to hunt out Shark-face and his playmate Bull a little later. I employed my time by fitting the bald-headed Harkness into my pigeonhole of suspects along with Dr. Seer and all the others I could identify who had been on the stage with me at the time of Palmer's death.

As George Chance I had frequently visited the Kalaban home on the upper Riverside Drive, so I knew the place well. To my faint surprise I found one of the luxurious cars which had been at Palmer's home now parked in front of the apartment building. I dismissed my cab and walked boldly up to the chauffeur of the limousine.

"Who owns this car?" I demanded, just as though I had the authority to do so.

"Mr. Harold Harkness," the chauffeur said. "Who wants to know?"

"You'd be surprised," I said and walked away toward the front entrance of the house.

A maid opened the door in answer to my ring. She informed me that Mrs. Kalaban was busy at the present time. I told her that I must see Mrs. Kalaban immediately and that she might announce to her mistress that my visit concerned George Chance.

I stood around in the vestibule, waiting for the maid to make her announcement. Through the door of the living



*Glenn Saunders*

room, I could hear the voices of two men. One was clearly Robert Martin and I presumed the other to be this Harold Harkness.

The maid reappeared and told me that Mrs. Kalaban would receive me in the library, which was a small room opening off the right of the vestibule.

I opened the door of the library and stepped in quietly. Mrs. Kalaban was facing a spinet desk, her back toward me. At the moment I entered the room, I heard her give a small, frightened cry. Her hand went out to something on the wall—a slip of paper held there with a pin or tack. And then she knew that I was in the room with her and turned around.

Irene Kalaban was always pale so that the color of her skin was scarcely an indication of the emotions that went on within her. But she was taking in short, choppy breaths and her fragile looking fingers crushed that slip of paper into a ball as she greeted me.

"Mrs. Kalaban," I said, naturally keeping the ghost well turned off, "I am a private investigator. I'm interested in the case of Mr. George Chance. As you doubtless knew, Mr. Chance

was arrested this morning on the charge of murdering David Palmer."

"I know," she said. Her hands went behind her and fingered with something on the desk. "I was deeply shocked. George Chance wouldn't murder anyone. I have known him for a long time."

"You were at this spook show that Mr. Chance put on?" I asked.

**I** KNEW what her answer would be, of course, but I was trying to lead up logically to a question concerning Mr. Harkness who was even now talking with Robert Martin in the living room. When Mrs. Kalaban nodded, I immediately put my next question:

"Immediately following the discovery of the body, a man by the name of Harold Harkness approached Mr. Chance while the latter was standing on the stage. Mr. Harkness informed Chance that some member of the audience had passed out of the room through a rear exit. I want to check on the integrity of Mr. Harkness. I believe you are acquainted with him, as was the dead man, Mr. Palmer."

"Mr. Harkness is entirely reliable," Mrs. Kalaban said at once. She moved away from the desk and I saw that her hands were entirely empty. My glance darted to the surface of the desk and the only receptacle on its surface into which she could have dropped that piece of paper she had taken from the wall was a hammered copper ink well. If it was like most inkwells in these days of fountain pens, it was for ornamental purposes only.

"What experience have you had with Mr. Harkness?" I asked. I fumbled in my pocket, searching for a pencil which I purposely did not find. I took a step to the desk. As I did so, I brought my left hand out from behind my back, bringing with it a rubber plug, shaped very much like a sugar pear, and attached to a length of strong black elastic. I palmed the pear-shaped thing with what you might call the stem-end outermost.

"You have a pencil over here? I seem to have left mine somewhere."

Without waiting for her consent, I fumbled in a tray of pencils with my right hand while my left simple wedged the rubber "pear" into the glass lining of the ink well. A quick glance had shown me the wad of paper in the bottom of the dry well.

As I picked up the pencil with my right hand, I raised my left hand, released the pear, turned quickly toward Mrs. Kalaban at the same time. The rubber plug and the elastic carried the lining of the inkwell together with that wad of paper under the back of my coat. My left hand lied about what it had been doing by bringing a notebook from my pocket.

"Mr. Harkness," Mrs. Kalaban was saying, "was named executor of my late husband's will. Also, he is trustee of the two hundred thousand dollar reward my husband posted to be paid to anyone who successfully communicates with the spirit of my dead husband."

I pretended to note all this down.

"By the way," I asked, "if Mr. Harkness is trustee of that reward, I presume that he knows the secret code by means of which your husband's spirit will get in touch with you."

"That is true," Irene Kalaban said. "He knows and I know. No one else knows. Perhaps no one else will ever know."

**B**UT I wasn't thinking about that abstract matter at the moment. I was suddenly wondering if I would get out of this room alive, if my little disappearing act had gone undetected by other eyes than Irene Kalaban's. In short, I was wondering if I knew the owner of the pair of feet behind the Chinese lacquered screen in the corner.

How the devil my usually keen eyes had come to miss that pair of brogans I don't know, but there they were, and somebody was in them. Still pretending to be deeply interested in what Mrs. Kalaban was saying, and praying that she didn't say anything either of us

would not want an eavesdropper to hear, I carelessly drew a little rod from my breast pocket and tapped my lips meditatively.

Suddenly I placed it between my teeth and blew sharply through it. At once I returned it to my pocket, but a fine cloud of dust puffed out like a lance toward the Chinese screen and then billowed in a faint cloud that settled over and enveloped the Oriental piece of furniture.

There was an instant of silence. Then gagging and gurgling sounds from the corner. And finally a terrific *ker-chou!* Two of them! Half a dozen!

Sneeze powder, of course. It came in handy sometimes.

But the big surprise was on me. The screen toppled outward and fell flat, exposing not one, but two eavesdroppers. As ugly a pair of mugs as I had encountered at the Palmer home—but a different pair.

"I thought things came in threes," I murmured as Irene Kalaban uttered a tiny scream. "Somebody must have had the numbers wrong. They come in pairs."

That was my last quip for the evening. The two thugs, still sneezing and wriggling their noses, charged for me in a first-class line-buck that would have given Army and Navy a few pointers. I was caught flat-footed, without gun or knife.

I swept Irene Kalaban out of the way with a straight-arm gesture and set myself to meet the stampede. But it is harder to fight two men who are trying to flee than it is to defend yourself from attack. That precious pair swerved to each side and went around me like a freight train passing up a tramp. They hit me from each side and as I clutched them they ripped free from my grip, one of them leaving an entire coat-sleeve with me, and fairly tore through the door.

I felt as if I had been squeezed between a pair of twenty-ton trucks, but I recovered my balance and took after them. It was a photo finish to the front

door, and the pair of thugs won by a nose—my own. The slamming door nearly took it off me.

Then I made a mistake. I allowed my impetuosity to overcome my caution. I flung open the door and dashed out.

The thugs had anticipated just that, and that was why, instead of continuing their flight, they stood waiting, automatics handy. But even they were unprepared by the violence of my exit. My slam-bang eruption from the house, while placing me in danger, also worked to save me. I catapulted into them, and all three of us went flying off the porch.

**T**HE rest happened very fast. I reacted instinctively. I siezed the wrist of one of them and jerked his arm upward. The other was behind me, I knew he had an automatic too, and I kicked back, connected. But the next instant I knew I had not disabled him. There seemed no help for it—I would have to take his bullet and the most I could hope for was that it would wound but not kill.

Then I got the break—and it came oddly enough, from the one I was struggling with.

"Don't shoot!" he rasped hoarsely. "There's a beat-cop close. Sap him!"

And the other sapped me. I went down, stunned, but dimly grateful for the sudden change in my antagonist's plans. Their caution had made up for my lack of it. They got away, of course. It was a minute before I could stand on my feet.

Of course, that pair of housebreakers must have left the note that Irene Kalaban had found pinned to the wall. And I thought that I had recognized them, too. They looked strangely like a pair of hoods who belonged to a gang of crooks operating under one McTeeg. But McTeeg was a racketeer. He didn't go in for spirits unless they came out of a bottle.

What was he doing mixed up in this affair?

I thought of the note I had filched.

In the taxicab I hailed I removed the glass liner of the inkwell I had stolen from its copper receptacle and shook the wad of paper out into my hand. Opening the wad, I found these words scrawled in pencil:

We weren't kidding you at all, were we? We're watching you all the time. Get wise and come through.

## CHAPTER XI

### *The Avenger*



THE following day, a familiar figure entered the Centre Street entrance of Police Headquarters Building. Gray templed, his grave eyes encircled by gold Oxford glasses, his brow scored with many tiny wrinkles, the man known as Dr. Stacey went at once to the office of Police Commissioner Standish.

Hadley, the commissioner's secretary, greeted the doctor warmly. He hadn't seen Dr. Stacey for some time, he said, which was understandable considering the fact that the Ghost hadn't been haunting Headquarters for some time. For Dr. Stacey is simply the Ghost in one of his various roles.

When I entered Standish's office, I found the commissioner entertaining Carl Van Borg, of all people!

Standish shook my hand, turned to Van Borg, managed an introduction.

"Doctor Stacey is an intimate friend of mine," Standish explained, "and also an unofficial advisor."

"Unofficial meddler, the better term," I said in the voice I always employed while carrying the identity of Stacey. And then I had to return that powerhouse grip of Carl Van Borg.

We were seated finally. Van Borg slumped in his chair, but his powerfully built body was none the less impressive for all his slovenly attitude.

"I suppose, then," Van Borg said, his

teeth flashing brilliantly against his dark skin, "I can speak in perfect freedom before Dr. Stacey, Commissioner?"

Standish stroked his dark square of moustache and nodded.

"I dare say it's nothing to become alarmed about," Van Borg began, "but I sifted down here with the idea of shedding a wee bit of light on something that happened some days ago. Perhaps you remember a man named Michael Holland. Bit of an inventor, something of a genius—Mike Holland."

"Yes," Standish said. "He met with an unfortunate accident."

"Maybe not," I said. "It's a curious coincidence but I too came to talk about Michael Holland. Do you happen to know that this spiritualist, Dr. Seer, predicted Holland's death?"

"The hell he did!" Van Borg frowned, leaned farther back in his chair, stuffed his hands into his pockets. His tanned forehead was rippled by a frown. "Oh, well, that might have been as coincidental as our meeting with the commissioner this morning to discuss the same subject. Was Holland a friend of yours, Doctor Stacey?"

I told him that I hadn't heard of the man until a little while ago.

"Nothing we can really do about Holland," Van Borg said. "The man's dead and I understand that his death was accidental. But the fact remains that if a certain person had had his way, Holland would have been *murdered*."

IT was a startling pronouncement.

"Explain, please," Standish said rather brusquely. Standish hated hints and preferred directness.

"I wouldn't have brought the matter up at all," Carl Van Borg said, "if it weren't for the fact that—well, this man Chance—"

"What about Chance?" Standish cut in. "Suppose you begin at the beginning."

Needless to say, I too was rather interested in hearing the answer to that question.

"I attended that spook show Chance put on the other night," Van Borg said. "I was followed there by what I believe the police call a suspicious looking character. At first glance you'd have thought some bum had sifted into the theatre. At second glance—well, you wouldn't take a second glance if you could help it, he was that ugly."

Inwardly I tensed. That reference to ugliness had suddenly recalled to me Merry's man—the man with claws!

"I am not certain, understand," Van Borg went on, "but I believe that man who followed me would very much enjoy seeing me cooling my spine in the morgue. If this man is who I think he is, he would have also enjoyed seeing Michael Holland in the same position. And there are one or two others who might make pretty good targets for his vengeance."

Van Borg spoke slowly. An author, he was building up suspense. I concealed my impatience.

"His name you've probably all forgotten. At one time he was an outstanding explorer. His name is Eric Emboyd and he hasn't been in New York for years. In fact he has been confined to a leper colony in the tropics. Quite naturally he hates the men who discovered his disease and sent him to the leper colony."

There was no doubt of it any longer! My assumption had to be correct!

Merry's man with claws! Leprosy, in certain stages, stiffens the joints of the fingers, making hands look like claws. And there was that other matter of the man ripping his cheek open on a nail and not seeming to notice it. Leprosy also destroys the sense of pain.

"A leper here in New York?" Standish breathed.

Van Borg let out that slow, easy smile of his.

"That's not so alarming. People lock lepers up because they are superstitious of them and because they aren't nice to look at. The ailment isn't spread by mere physical contact, though it used to be thought that it was. The alarming thing is that it was Michael Holland and I who discovered that poor old Eric had the disease. We dragged him to a medical friend of ours—a man by the name of Livingston—and it was Livingston who was instrumental in having Emboyd sent away. Interesting, isn't it, Doctor Stacey?"

"Yes," I said. "I can understand how this Emboyd might not care for you and Holland."

"Exactly," Van Borg said with a smile. "In fact, he swore to settle the score, which in his imaginings might have been multiplied several times over. Emboyd was about to be married and of course the discovery spoiled that for him. Naturally, he's bitter."

"What does all this have to do with Chance?" I asked. [Turn Page]

# GOOD TASTE



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MARK

**V**AN BORG'S brow furrowed. "I don't know. Only you know how you'll meet a person and then take a fancy to him? I met Chance the other night, and damned if he looked like a murderer to me. I just thought you ought to know that Eric Emboyd may have been in that audience, and if so, probably had murderous intentions in his heart."

"Was David Palmer one of Emboyd's enemies?" Standish asked. "Or rather a man whom Emboyd might have considered as an enemy."

"I don't know that Emboyd even knew Palmer," Van Borg said. "That's a possibility, of course. But here's another one: Eric Emboyd might have been firing poison darts at me, where I sat up there on the stage. He might have missed me and hit Palmer. In other words, this might have been an accident."

I made no comment. I hated to admit it to myself, but if I couldn't have blown a poison dart into the back of Palmer's neck from my side of the stage, a man sitting out in the audience certainly couldn't have done so.

Van Borg shrugged and stood up.

"I suppose you police do get a bit fed up with us layman detectives. Well, it was just an idea. You might keep an eye on Randolph Curtis. He's some sort of a consulting engineer, runs in and out of the city a lot. But he happens to be the man who married Eric Emboyd's girl friend. Just another idea. I'll sift along and get out of your hair now, Commissioner."

Van Borg shook hands with us and left the office. When he had gone I said to Standish:

"Michael Holland was murdered."

Standish was taken aback.

"What makes you say that?" he demanded.

"Doctor Seer predicted his death," I said gravely. "I'm stubborn about some things, Ned, and one of those things is that nobody here on earth can predict a healthy man's death unless he's planning that death himself

or knows some person who is planning it!"

## CHAPTER XII

### *The Road Goes Nowhere*



**O**VER on East Fifty-fifth Street, not very far from the brownstone house of George Chance, there is an old church with two gimlet-like spires boring into the sky. Beside the church squats a square house of brick which was formerly used as a rectory for the church pastor.

The rectory has the reputation of being haunted, if you believe what the small boys in the neighborhood tell you. It has a shabby, somber appearance, and if it isn't haunted why is it continually unoccupied.

Well, it isn't always unoccupied, though it may have that appearance. The house belongs to George Chance who keeps the rent prohibitively high so that the place will never be tenanted.

If any of the children in the neighborhood were to smash one of the locked windows and get into the dusty interior, they probably wouldn't stay long because of certain ghostly effects which had been installed for the purpose of keeping the curious kids away.

But the haunting of the rectory is not all effect. It's haunted. I ought to know, for I am the Ghost who haunts it!

The basement of the building is well furnished in the modern manner, and the entrance to the basement is kept carefully locked. Only the Ghost and his six intimate friends have keys, and they are pretty cautious about entering the place so as not to be seen.

It was this house that the Ghost called home during the troubled days

that followed the arrest of George Chance—or perhaps I should say Glenn Saunders. For it was Glenn Saunders, remember, who filled my shoes, who was indicted, tried and convicted of the murder of David Palmer.

The night that Glenn Saunders was sent up to Sing Sing, there to await the deposition of his lawyer's appeal from the death sentence, I met with my aides in the basement of the Ghost's rectory. Joe Harper was there, green hat tilted over his eyes, a chair supporting a portion of his back and shoulders, his heels cocked on the glass top of a cocktail table.

Merry White was also there, looking tired and worried. She had been compelled to testify at the trial and the ordeal of the court room had been a little too much for her.

With Joe and Merry was Tiny Tim, my smallest and oldest friend. As you might guess by his name, Tiny Tim Terry was a midget I had known in circus days. He is hardly tall enough to see over a table, though well along toward middle age. As an investigator for the Ghost he is priceless. Wearing a boy's suit, he can pass for a child. Merry White has even packed him into a baby carriage at times, but he's a bit resentful at being goo-gooed by women.

However, in juvenile disguise, he can get information for me without running the risk of being suspected. His small body can slip through openings too small to admit the average adult. His is a child's body, you might say, but his brain is that of an adult.

**T**HERE are several angles to work on in this business," I said to my friends.

"One angle that seems to be played out is this man with the claws," Joe Harper said. "I went to that address where the man with the claws was hanging out, tried to trace him from there. But I think Merry must have scared him away."

"The police haven't had any better luck than you, Joe," I said.

"There's that moldy-minded Doctor Seer," Merry said. She swirled across the room in one of those unsuspected and graceful movements of hers, to land where I hoped she would—on the couch beside me.

"Yes, there's Doctor Seer," I said. "Seer, the death-prophet. If said deaths were murders, and we're sure Palmer's death was, then Seer, if not the murderer himself, is in some way connected with him."

Tiny Tim shoved an enormous cigar into his baby mouth and when he lighted it Joe Harper bummed a match off him for a cigarette.

"I want you to know I'll do anything," Tim said, getting a couple of lungfulls of smoke off his chest. "If it's another baby act with the frail playing mama, I'll even suck a pacifier if it will help."

The "frail" was Merry. Tiny Tim was very slangy."

"Another angle we've got to consider is the fact that somebody is trying to throw a scare into Irene Kalaban," I said.

"Where's the hook-up?" Joe asked, his cigarette wagging up and down in his lips as he spoke.

"Well," I explained, "when Kalaban left that two hundred thousand dollar reward to anyone who could prove communication with his spirit after death, he opened the door to a lot of crooked activity on the part of the spook crooks. Dr. Seer is the biggest spook crook in town. Suppose Seer has some way of knowing ahead of time when certain people are to be murdered. He makes his predictions based on that knowledge. Mightn't he do this for the sole purpose of throwing a scare into Irene Kalaban?"

"I don't get it," Merry said. "Clearer, please."

"Suppose," I tried again, "Seer convinces Irene Kalaban that he can predict death. Then suppose he predicts that Irene is to die. Then he goes to Irene and says that he can communicate with spirits and maybe he could prevail

upon the forces of life and death to spare her—for a price. Irene's income is limited to about ten thousand a year, I understand. But there's the matter of two hundred thousand dollars in reward money for anyone who can prove communication with Kalaban's spirit."

"So," Joe concluded for me, "if anybody can scare that secret code message out of Irene, the rest is velvet. With the secret code message, the fake spiritualist can hold a seance, use the code message to prove to the executor of the Kalaban estate that connection with Kalaban's spirit has been established."

"**W**HAT a nasty deal!" she said. "Okay," I said. "Now Joe, it's your job to see if you can figure out who is putting the hooks into Irene Kalaban. Remember also that Seer predicted the death of Michael Holland. I've got some dope on Holland and one of you might check on him. It's no job for you, Merry. I'd rather you'd get friendly with Irene Kalaban and help Joe."

"Holland was a sort of crack-brained scientist. He worked all by himself in a crummy little lab on the lower east side. About a month ago he was fooling with some poison gas and the apparatus he was working with seems to have blown up. The cyanogen gas got him like fly-spray gets a fly."

"Quick-like, huh?" Joe Harper mused thoughtfully.

"It seems to me," Tim said, "that after the Homicide Bureau, including Inspector Magnus' number twelve shoes, have tracked all over the place, most of the evidence would be slightly obliterated."

"Maybe," I said. "But where the Homicide squad made its mistake was in deciding that this was accidental. They figured it that way, and of course you can get pretty dead just fooling around with cyanogen. But if Seer predicted Holland's death, I think somebody *planned* that death."

"So we do what?" Merry asked.

"Tim," I said, "how about you invest-

igating the Holland death on your own?"

I felt certain he would enjoy playing a man's part for once, and would play it well.

Tim stood up, put his hands behind him, tilted his cigar, and paced the floor. The president of a corporation planning a merger couldn't have looked more profound.

"I'll take you up on that, George," the little man said. "I'll ferret out the evidence."

"And remember," I said, "Glenn Saunders is in the death house up at Sing Sing, taking a rap for a murder he didn't commit, because he's supposed to be me, convicted of a murder I didn't commit! Unless we solve this mystery, and solve it fast, I'm going to reverse the substitution, get Glenn out and put myself in! All right, let's get going."

## CHAPTER XIII

### *Spirit Temple*



**E**AST 127TH STREET near Lexington Avenue doesn't look like the convening place for the souls of the blessed dead. It is a narrow street with littered gutters and worn block sidewalks. Signs swinging from iron brackets attached to the front of closely crowded buildings advertise cheap lodgings, tailoring, hairdos and what-not. Narrow stone stair treads bound by ornate black iron rails lead up to the main entrances and down to basements. Some of the buildings look wrong-side-around, what with fire escapes zigzagging across their faces.

Such is the street where Dr. Seer, Prophet of Doom, had his "Temple." And it was to this temple that I went the night following the conference with my aides. I wore the disguise that can identify me as the Ghost when I will it to. But when I paid my two dollar fee



*Commissioner Standish*

to the squat, gray-haired woman in black at the door, you can be sure that the Ghost was completely "turned off." So I entered Dr. Seer's domain without attracting as much attention as my money did.

The place was pretty well filled. I could see that there was going to be a shortage of seats and for that reason I simply stood at the back of the large room, not far from the exit. People in the aisle near me were writing questions on billets of paper and these were handed to one of Dr. Seer's assistants who immediately burned the billets and tossed the glowing ashes into a large brass vase that rested on a wheeled table.

I watched the man doing the message-burning. He was quite an artist at his billet-switching, and needless to say the billets he burned were not the ones with the questions written on them. The question slips, I was certain, were perfectly whole and were preserved in a special compartment in the vase, deposited in that compartment when the assistant put the ashes of the burned billets in the vase.

As soon as I had learned the secret of the billet-switching trick, I turned my attention to the audience itself. Near the front in a sea of unfamiliar faces, I saw the rugged, granite-hard visage of Robert Martin, who had proclaimed Dr. Seer the greatest of all mediums previous to my spirit-show on the night of the murder.

Such a determined believer was Martin that I would have been greatly surprised if I hadn't seen him among those present. Nor was I surprised to see that equally determined non-believer, Author Carl Van Borg.

Van Borg was seated half way toward the stage and well over to one side. His dark, leathery countenance was illuminated by a wide smile. It must have been perfectly clear to everyone around him that he was greatly amused by the credulous people who composed Dr. Seer's clientele.

**S**EER'S stage was a simple black-draped platform, raised a foot and a half above the floor of the room. It was completely draped in black. Shortly after I entered, curtains were drawn back on rods disclosing the lanky, thread-bare prophet seated in an ornate chair which might have been picked up when some lodge had auctioned off its props. There was a small table in front of him and it was covered with black velvet. Resting on the stumpy pyramid in the center of the table was a large glass globe.

Seer's head was bare. Had I been in his place, with that colorless crop of fuzz on my head, I certainly would have hidden it with a turban. Dr. Seer, I learned, knew absolutely nothing about showmanship—the first requisite of a fake spiritualist. At least he didn't use any. The fact troubled me. It hinted that Seer might be sincere, and that didn't fit in with his prophecies of death followed by murder.

Seer's lack of showmanship, it appeared, didn't prevent him from having a large following.

Lights were dimmed, the audience

hushed. The door near me was closed. Dr. Seer rose to his feet, gaunt, starved-looking.

His angular body bent over the glass globe. His fingers closed upon the globe, stroked it gently as he spoke.

There were questions to be answered first of all before he attempted any spirit manifestations, his high-pitched, curiously magnetic voice announced.

As he stroked the glass ball, as his lean, ugly face contorted, the crystal began to glow with a purplish light that quickly changed to pale yellow and then green—each of the colors contributing their peculiar effect to the hollow-cheeked face of the mystic who bent over the globe.

It was the same old hooley, the same run of questions. Is my girl two-timing me? Can you tell me where that diamond cuff-link I lost is? When will I be married? And of course Seer gave the questions such complicated answers that the person who had originally written the question could interpret the answer to suit himself.

But the audience was definitely impressed. You see, a mentalist's job is really done for him when he is able to repeat questions that have been "destroyed." When he does this, his answer doesn't matter, because he already has his sucker hooked. I don't suppose any of those who had written down questions ever thought that if the papers on which they had written were really destroyed there would have been no possible reason for them to have been asked to write them in the first place!

Seer hadn't done any of the work himself. If there was any "art" connected with the racket it had been accomplished by that billet-switching genius who had apparently burned the messages in the aisle. And the cheapest assistant to a side-show mentalist could have done what this billet-switching assistant of Dr. Seer had done.

Seer, I was beginning to believe, was simply the ornate fringe of a racket. But if that were so, why hadn't a man with more showmanship been picked?

**T**HE question and answer part of the show complete, Dr. Seer threw himself back into his chair, seemingly exhausted. But his eyes continued to stare at the glowing globe in front of him. I saw his lank body gradually stiffen, and as though the audience knew what was coming, I noted a certain animal pricking-up of the ears among Seer's "congregation."

And the mystic's crystal ball glowed pink. The pink deepened to rose and then glowed steadily a blood-red. Beneath Seer's platform somebody, presumably friend Satan, beat on a brass gong.

When the reverberations of the gong had died, every member of the audience was on its feet. Dr. Seer also stood up, his reed-like body waving back and forth above the blood-red ball.

"This is my third prediction!" his voice shrilled as he squinted down into the globe. "Three days from today a man shall die. His name is—his name"—he passed a hand over his forehead—"his name I can see clearly now. Dr. Mathew Salvo Livingston. Three days from today, Dr. Mathew Salvo Livingston will die!"

The gong crashed again, masking the excited murmur that ran through the audience. Across the hall, I saw Carl Van Borg get half out of his chair and then sit down again. And I was about as startled by this announcement as he was. For wasn't Dr. Livingston the man who was responsible for sending Eric Emboyd to the leper colony?

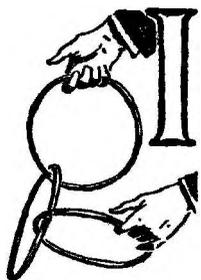
With the idea of getting beneath Seer's stage to see the mechanics of his miracles, I turned toward the door. As I did so, I bumped into a man. I steadied him by putting a hand on his shoulder. He blinked up near-sightedly at my face. Though I could not be sure in the gloomy interior of the room, I thought this was the man Irene Kalaban had named as Harold Harkness, executor of the Kalaban estate.

The meeting was breaking up in a lot of noise, so I slipped out of the door, through the hall, and to the front exit.

I hurried down the narrow stairs to the sidewalk, rounded the base of the stairs to the basement door which was directly beneath. The door was locked. I was certain that I would be a good deal wiser on the subject of Dr. Seer after I had investigated that basement.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Guns of the Racket*



I HAVE duplicated Houdini's classic escape from a Chinese water cell, and if you have ever seen that stunt on the stage you can well imagine that I had no great trouble picking the lock of the door that led into Seer's basement.

The door closed behind me, I stood there for a moment, eyes closed so that the pupils of my eyes might open to their fullest. When I opened my eyes I could see fairly well in the faint glow from the street which passed through the dirt-encrusted panes of glass in the basement windows. Dr. Seer's assistant seemed to have departed.

If there were any noises in the basement, I couldn't have heard them because of the rumble made by the shuffling of feet in the chamber above my head. I moved across a furnace room which was directly connected with a coal bin under the sidewalk in front of the building. I knew just about where Dr. Seer's stage was located. At the back of the furnace room was a good sized cubicle cut off from the rest of the basement by walls of unpainted wood.

Feeling my way along the wooden wall, I came to a door that yielded to my touch. If the door creaked when I opened it, I couldn't hear the sound because of the noise upstairs.

Inside, I was in the sort of darkness that clung to the eyeballs. I pulled my tiny pocket flashlight and thrust its

needle beam around until I located a light switch on the wall. I turned the switch on and a closely shaded light in one side of the room showed. Above my head I could clearly make out the outline of the base of Dr. Seer's stage. It was a mere shell of construction, which accounted for the closely shaded light—no tell-tale rays would pass up through the stage.

There was a large, old-fashioned roll-top desk in one corner of the room. Two or three good-sized packing boxes might have served as furniture. There was a tiny elevator with a foot-square platform connected with a sliding trap in the stage—

My investigation was cut short. It was cut short by the shadow of a man falling suddenly across the floor. Dr. Seer's assistant was back.

I didn't turn around just then. I simply kicked out with my foot at the lamp which was near the floor, smashed the bulb with the toe of my shoe.

"You're covered," a muffled voice said. "Don't move."

But before the man could spot me with a light, I had slipped my cigarette case from my pocket, clicked it open, and removed the third cigarette from the end of the row. When the flashlight beamed at me, I was simply holding the cigarette case in one hand and the cigarette between my fingers in the other hand.

There were two other men behind the man with the flashlight—Bull and Shark-face. Shark-face had his right arm in a sling, a memento of the set-to at Palmer's. The face of the man with the light was a blank. I mean a white curtain mask covered him from forehead to chin. Maybe his aspect wasn't as threatening as the faces of the two hard-looking eggs near the door, but there was menace enough in the determined jut of his gun.

**T**HERE was no way out of the room except the elevator to Seer's stage and the door. I had put my head in a perfect trap and getting out was

going to be plenty tough. The door might better have been closed and locked than blocked off by these men. And because of the noise upstairs I couldn't have been warned of their approach.

My lips peeled back from the yellow shell teeth I wore. My eyes stared blankly. All the indications of animation disappeared from my face. In short, I "turned on the Ghost."

The effect on the three men who blocked my entrance was evident at once. The gun in the masked man's hand wavered a little. The two toughs bunched close together.

Those of the criminal element in New York who have never had direct contact with the Ghost nevertheless know of his existence, have heard descriptions of him. These three knew they were having contact with him now, and were speechless.

It must have been something like digging for treasure and then finding that the spade you've been using has been hammering on a dud shell that is apt to go off at any minute.

I dropped the cigarette from my fingers to the floor. It showed up dimly against the dark concrete. I took a side step so that the toe of my shoe touched the cigarette.

"What are you doing down here?" the man in the mask asked unsteadily.

"I'm not here," I said. "I'm elsewhere, see?"

I brought my foot down on the cigarette with a scuffing motion. There was a sharp explosion, a flash of flame, and a column of smoke rolled upward, enveloping me.

The masked man dropped his light, scrambled for it. He cursed and yelled to the toughs to block off the door. He didn't need to bother, I wasn't going anywhere.

The masked man told someone to turn on the light. But by the time the light was on, I wasn't within sight. A pillar of smoke that mushroomed out as it met the ceiling was all that could be seen of the Ghost. For as soon as

I had dropped the cigarette and set it off with the toe of my shoe, I had dived for the roll-top desk, shoved the rolling curtain back, curled up on the top, and rolled the curtain down in front of me. I had to move fast, but I'm used to moving fast after spending most of my life in Magic. The small sounds I made were covered by the shuffling of feet overhead.

"Where'd he go?" Shark-face gasped.

"He disappeared—disappeared in a cloud of smoke!"

"Nuts!" said the muffled voice of the man in the mask. "The man's human. He couldn't have got out of here. Look behind those boxes. Get busy. We've got to find him. He's dangerous."

**C**RAMPED up inside the desk, I managed to wiggle out my little automatic which I held ready for a surprise just in case the baffled men got realistic and looked in about the only place that I could have hidden.

The trick I had pulled is known as "The Devil's Whisper." Needless to say the cigarette had been carefully prepared. It was simply a cushioning roll of tissue around a mixture of chlorate of potash and red phosphorus, a couple of chemicals which won't stand much jolting around when brought together. Actually I simply use the trick to produce sudden and surprising misdirection which is sufficiently startling to permit me to make a few moves which usually go unnoticed.

"He's not in here," the masked man said. "Search the basement."

"He couldn't have got by the door with me standing here." Bull objected. "It—it just ain't human."

Human, or not, the trio went out to hunt for me. I kept to the desk, and a little bit later I heard the audience in the hall upstairs going out. Possibly my basement explosion was the most successful "spirit" manifestation Dr. Seer had ever produced.

Somebody came back into the room beneath the stage and turned out the

light. Then the last whisper of footsteps died, and I wedged my finger tips under the edge of the desk curtain and raised it.

I tiptoed to the basement door and found that I was locked in. It was worth a laugh. Undoubtedly the spook racketeers had taken particular pains to lock up thoroughly to keep the Ghost *out* of their basement.

Back in the understage room, I made a pretty thorough investigation. I found the metal vase which had been used to handle the burned messages of the members of the audience. There was, as I had supposed, a separate compartment where the messages themselves were preserved. Ashes of duplicate billets were in the other compartment.

The crystal ball and its secrets, by means of which Seer read the questions, was subtle. A narrow shaft in the ceiling of the under-stage room reached up into the hollow center leg of the table which Seer had on his stage. A piston like arrangement on a long handle was made to fit exactly into this shaft and on the flat surface of this piston the messages written by the audience could be attached. But covering this piston was a silk curtain on tiny spring rollers. The silk curtain was part of the focal plane shutter of an old camera, I believed.

I puzzled over this for a moment. If Seer *knew* that he was a fake, there was no point in the shutter arrangement on the piston, because the messages thrust up into the shaft which probably ended at the bottom of his crystal ball couldn't be seen by the audience. There could only be one explanation—the shutter arrangement was to fool Dr. Seer himself!

**I**T worked in this way: One of the messages was placed under the shutter curtain and the curtain closed. The piston was thrust up the shaft to the illuminated crystal globe. Because the globe rested on a velvet topped table, Dr. Seer wouldn't know when

### ALAN N. GROSSMAN

the message was in place until someone down below pulled the shutter release. Then the message would fade into the globe.

That accounted for the evident sincerity Dr. Seer got into these meetings. He really believed he had supernatural powers.

Even the illumination of the crystal globe was so carefully concealed and operated from the room beneath the stage that I doubted if Dr. Seer understood it. And the trap in the stage which was connected to the elevator in the room below was a masterpiece of careful construction. When Seer materialized spirits by means of this elevator and trap he didn't know what he was doing. What was merely mechanical he thought was spiritual.

There was nothing in the roll-top desk of much interest save a ledger which indicated the profits the spook racketeers had made up to now. During six months of operation they had netted about ten thousand dollars. They had yet to make a really big killing.

A spook crook, you see, waits until some wealthy client in a moment of spirit-inspired confidence, reveals something out of his or her past that isn't savory. Then the spook crook becomes a blackmailer. Any blackmailing that this outfit had done hadn't got into the higher brackets, though it was evident the crooks were eating.

I might easily have taken this ledger to the police and had the whole gang rounded up. But first I had to establish what all this hocus-pokus had to do with murder. As far as I knew, out of two predictions of death, Dr. Seer had been a hundred percent right. First Michael Holland, the poor inventor and scientist, and then the wealthy and distinguished David Palmer.

Tonight he had made a third prediction. Dr. Mathew Salvo Livingston was to die three days from tonight. I had never met Livingston, but I intended to meet him now without delay.

There was a phone in the under-stage room and I consulted the directories

and eventually found Dr. Livingston's address on Beaumont Avenue in the Bronx. He didn't have an office phone, so I took it that his doctor's degree was something besides medicine. Possibly, considering his location, he was on the Fordham University staff.

As it turned out, just to show how wrong you can be, Dr. Livingston had a medical degree and also that of doctor of philosophy. He had retired on a small income and spent most of his time as a consultant for the Bronx Park Botanical Gardens.

It was about ten o'clock when I phoned Livingston's house. I asked if I couldn't see him for a few minutes on a matter of extreme urgency. He pumped me a little, trying to find out what it was I wanted.

Finally I said: "It concerns your death, Doctor," and hung up. Even if he didn't want to see me, I was pretty sure he wouldn't be asleep when I got there.

## CHAPTER XV

### *I Warn the Doctor*



**B**EFORE I lock-picked my way out of Dr. Seer's spirit temple, I took out my compact make-up kit and altered my disguise. I removed the wire ovals from my nostrils and got my nose back into shape again, took out the celluloid shells that covered my teeth, used a cloth to remove the powder and eye-shadow that did much toward making the Ghost.

With "plumpers" in my mouth to fatten my cheeks, a few extra years tacked on me by means of a lining pencil applied to the corners of my eyes and mouth, I no longer looked like the Ghost. I didn't look like George Chance either. In fact when I added dignity to my makeup by dusting my temples with powder and then bor-

rowed some wisdom from a pair of Oxford glasses, I had stepped again into the identity of Dr. Stacey.

As Dr. Stacey I had done a good deal of investigating in the past. It's one of my favorite disguises and one which I thought might make an impression upon Dr. Mathew Livingston. At least Livingston and Stacey had titles in common, though Stacey's title had come out of the Ghost's makeup kit rather than a university.

From the brief chat I had with Livingston over the phone I got the impression he was a garrulous old man. After my taxi had put me down in front of his house in Beaumont Avenue and I actually met the man, I found I was wrong on one count—Livingston was not old.

Livingston had a flat-topped head. The flatness was emphasized by the fact that his oily black hair was combed from a middle part and stood out over his ears like eaves. Oily black eaves overhung his eyes so that it was next to impossible to determine their color. When he opened his mouth his lower teeth stuck out a little like a bulldog's because that was the way his jaw was made.

He was a man who didn't carry much weight around his body but plenty around his head. I don't mean he was a fat-head. He was probably bright enough. But he had evidently resolved in his mind to be as unpleasant as possible.

A servant, who looked as if he had long suffered beneath the tongue lashings of his master, let him in. Livingston dismissed him in a way that was pretty definite.

"Get out, Jeffry!" he said.

Livingston and I were in the small central hall of the house. There were two occasional chairs in the hall, but I wasn't asked to sit down. Livingston didn't sit down either. Merry White would have said: "He don't look like he could bend."

"Are you the damned ass who called me on the phone an hour ago?" Living-

ston demanded. "You are, aren't you? Dr. Stacey, eh! Never heard of you!"

"What a coincidence!" I said pleasantly. "I was on the point of remarking that I had never heard of you either until tonight."

Livingston snorted. "You've heard of me, eh? Heard of me tonight. What did you hear of me?"

"Maybe you'd better sit down," I said. "This might be a bit of a shock."

**L**IVINGSTON shook his head savagely.

"Nothing shocks me. No news you could have could shock me. My family is all dead except one, and I wouldn't care if he was."

"You care about yourself a little, don't you?" I asked. "This bad news is about you, Dr. Livingston. I heard you were going to die three days from today."

If this made any impression on Livingston, I couldn't detect it.

"Go on," he said. "What else?"

"After you're dead," I said, determined to break through the man's crust if possible, "there isn't any else."

"Bosh!" he said. "What are you talking about? Do you think you're God, telling me I'm to die in three days?"

"I didn't say it. A man named Doctor Seer said it and he's predicted the deaths of two other men with awful accuracy. Dr. Seer is a spiritualist."

"Never heard of Dr. Seer either. Spiritualist! Twiddle-twaddle. You can go back where you came from and tell Dr. Steer or Speer or whatever his name is that if he comes around here with his unadulterated bosh I'll tweek his nose for him."

"Good!" I said. "We've got something in common. We both believe that Dr. Seer is full of—well, you've called it twiddle-twaddle. Just the same, I'd like you to answer a few questions. Dr. Livingston, have you any enemies—people who might want to kill you?"

"Rot!" he said.

"The impression that you've made gave me the idea you might have a lot of enemies," I said, watching the angry doctor carefully.

That did it. Livingston sat down as though he was a deflated balloon. He was breathing rapidly.

"Look here, Stacey," he said, fingering a fraternity key that dangled on his watch chain, "you got me a bit upset with your damned phone call. I have been doing some intensive research for the botanical gardens here and I didn't want to be bothered. But you're so determined—what is it you want, anyway?"

I offered him a cigarette, took one myself when he refused.

"Did you ever hear of Eric Emboyd?" I asked.

"I have indeed. One of my close friends of former years. The poor devil's out in the Philippines in the leper colony. I had him put out there to be cured. My private opinion was that he was too far gone to be cured, but there's nothing like giving a poor devil hope."

"Eric Emboyd is in New York," I said gravely. "Isn't it possible that he might be looking for you with murder in his heart?"

**L**IVINGSTONE snorted again.

"If Emboyd is back in town," he snapped, "he'll avoid doctors, not seek them out. Why, if I saw him, I'd send him packing back where he came from. What's all this got to do with Dr. Seer? Emboyd isn't this crazy mystic, is he?"

I shook my head.

"Then your spirit fakir pulled the wrong number out of the hat this time, Stacey. Mathew Salvo Livingston isn't good material for mysteries. Or for murders either. Why, when I die, I'll have just enough money left to bury me."

"Everybody has to die sometime," I said. "The question usually is how and when? It's possible, you will admit, that Emboyd might be out to kill you

for sending him to the leper colony."

"I say bosh again," Livingston said with a harsh chuckle. "I'd like to see him try it. I'd like to see anybody try it. Good night, Dr. Stacey. Sorry to rush you off. I have a hard day's work ahead of me and I'd like to get some sleep."

And he opened the door suggestively for me.

I saw that I could get no further with him. If ever a man believed himself perfectly able to take care of himself, it was the crusty Dr. Livingston.

It was midnight by the time I taxied back to the vicinity of the Ghost's haunted rectory. When I slipped through the back door of the squat, dark building, and went down into the basement, I found Joe Harper having a tall drink from my little bar. He was stretched out on the couch as completely as it was possible for him to be and still drink without pouring the stuff all over his face.

I could feel Joe's beetle-black eyes following me as I went to the bar for a bit of a drink myself.

"Where did you get, Ghost?" he asked me.

"Seer is a fake but doesn't know it," I said. "He thinks he's on the receiving end of all the telegraph lines leading from heaven or wherever our ends are rough-hewn for us. Under his crystal, which he alone looks into, there's a sort of camera shutter device that lets messages flash in under the crystal like magic. He wouldn't be trying to fool himself, would he?"

"If he doesn't pull the strings, who does?" Joe asked.

"A gang of crooks."

"I get it. Dr. Seer is the scenery. The crooks fool both him and the public and split the take. Well, that's your story. Merry and I made out all right with Irene Kalaban."

"How?" I asked.

"Well, Merry and I were looking the house over from the outside when a car drove up and out gets Irene Kalaban. Like a flash, Merry pulls a fake

twist of her right gam and falls down on the sidewalk.

"Mrs. Kalaban asks what the matter is and Merry goes into her act. She's hurt her ankle. Irene says: 'Aren't you the young woman who assists George Chance?' Merry says she is. Irene takes Merry up into her house for the night."

**T**HE phone rang. Joe and I both reached for it, but my reach was the longest. Tiny Tim's voice came shrilly from the receiver:

"I need help and need it quick! I'm locked in. I think he's going to fire the place. I—"

There was a sputtering crackling sound and then the steady line buzz of the phone and nothing more.

I dropped the phone into its cradle, turned, bumped into Joe Harper.

"What's up?" Joe demanded.

"Tim's in trouble. Sounds bad. Somebody cut the line before he could tell me where he was. But I sent him to Holland's so that's where he must be."

"Let's go," Joe said.

"You stay here. Merry may call any moment."

And I ran from the rectory.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *Murder Flame*



**J**OE HARPER'S car, or rather one that he had bought and I had paid for, was the one I used in getting to Holland's laboratory on the lower east side. I didn't spare horsepower or rubber getting there.

The laboratory was a disused livery stable on Water Street and as I passed it in the car the place looked dark and quiet enough. I parked the car up the block a little and hurried back. I tried the door of the place and found it locked.

I started around the building looking for a convenient window through which I might enter. A shedlike addition was attached to the rear and piled against the wall of it was a number of packing boxes reaching nearly to the low roof.

This looked like some sort of a stairway which Tiny Tim might have constructed. I climbed up it to the roof of the shed and saw that a hood ventilator pipe about a foot in diameter had been removed from its flange. Here was obviously the means of entrance which Tiny Tim had used, but it wouldn't do a full-sized man any good.

From the roof of the shed, I got to the roof of the main structure. There was a skylight up there and I knew I could pry the thing up and get into the laboratory that way. But as I was going across the roof toward the skylight, I heard the sound of a motor car starting. The sound came from the north side of the building. I ran to the edge of the roof and looked down.

Below me was an old model sedan, standing in the drive, motor warming. It was an eight foot drop from the roof to the top of the car, but as the car started to roll I sprang from the roof, landed flat on the top of the car. Had it been one of these newer models with a steel roof, I'd have had the wind knocked out of me.

Whoever was at the wheel knew well enough I was up above him. His first idea was to shake me off as a bronco tries to shake its rider. As the car hit the street, the driver skidded it around a corner. But I was looking for something like that and the toes of my shoes hooked down over the edge of the car top, keeping me crosswise of the car when centrifugal force would have thrown me off.

I got out my knife. Any more such twisting around and I'd drive the blade into the fabric of the car top and use that for a handle to hang on with.

The car turned at the next corner, headed for the river. The driver spurted for one of the piers and I rolled toward the back of the car. Nothing kept me

from flying off except my knife. I drove the blade deep into the fabric. The cloth was more than half rotten. The knife didn't hold until the blade struck a cross member.

My weight sagged the top of the car, weakened now by the long gash my knife had made. I heard threads pop as the car jolted over a bump. A sudden lurch and the top tore all the way across. I hinged in the middle, went all the way through, my back and shoulders meeting the rear cushions, my heels coming down on the shoulders of the driver.

**I** KNEW I was in the tightest spot of my life. I rolled myself off the cushions to the floor, got my legs down from the back of the front seat. At the same time, I went for my gun. I scrambled around, got onto my knees, thrust upward with my gun to the place where the back of the driver's head should have been.

At that moment, the smell of gasoline fumes came to my nostrils. A match flamed, arced above my head, struck somewhere behind me. The interior of the car was suddenly bright with flame. The car was going mad. I saw its driver standing on the left running board, giving an imitation of steering with one hand through the window. How close the wheels were to the end of the pier I didn't know. I simply pulled my gun around and fired at the man on the running board.

Only, he wasn't on the running board then. At the very moment I applied pressure to the trigger, he must have dropped off. What became of him after that, I had no chance of learning. The back of the rear cushion was a sheet of flame. The car without a driver was rushing toward one side of the pier, throttle wide open. And as I started to roll over into the front seat in a desperate effort to get control of the machine, I saw Tiny Tim Terry huddled in one corner of the rear seat, nicely bound and gagged.

I flopped to the front cushion,

glimpsed the side of the pier just ahead of the nose of the car. I got my left hand to the right side of the wheel, yanked the car away from the water's edge. Before getting my feet around to the clutch and brake pedals, I pulled the hand-brake back and jerked the hand throttle to a retarded position. Rubber burned as the car skidded; brake lining was seered. But the car stopped cross-ways of the pier.

The sudden stop must have rolled Tiny Tim to the floor of the car. Or perhaps he had managed to get there in his frantic wriggling to get away from the flaming rear cushion. Anyway, I got out of the car, got the back door open, dragged him out. The sleeve of his coat was burning, but I smothered it out. Then I put Tim down on the pier and looked around. The man who would have made torch victims of Tim and me was nowhere to be seen.

I cut Tim's bonds, pulled the gag from his mouth, rushed him away from the car that was now a flaming torch. Not so far away a fire alarm sounded. I picked Tim up in my arms in order to make better time. This was no time to stand and argue with fireman about the origin of the fire.

It was not until Tim and I were safely hidden in the shadow of a warehouse that I was able to get his story.

**T**IM had investigated the neighborhood in which Holland had his laboratory by daylight. From a talkative tailor, he had learned that Holland was a victim of hard luck. Holland had produced some sort of a triple-phase radio tube.

"And what do you suppose happened when Mike Holland applied for a patent?" the tailor asked Tim. "Somebody had beat him to the same invention by twenty-four hours! Here he had all that money invested in a machine for blowing glass tubes and extracting the air from them, and his invention was worthless to him."

Tim failed to learn anything further about how Holland had died. Everyone

seemed to agree with the police opinion on the matter.

That night Tim had entered the laboratory through the ventilator pipe on the roof. He was giving the place the once over when somebody unlocked the front door and came into the dark interior. Tim ducked through the door of a little office set apart from the main room of the laboratory and from there watched the prowler.

Guided by a flashlight, the man searched a cabinet, found a sheet of paper which he examined closely in the light of his torch. The paper was some sort of a map, Tim was certain of that. In an attempt to get a better look at the piece of paper, Tim stumbled over the leg of a stool.

The man in the dark swung around, spotted Tim with his flashlight. Tim ducked into the office and slammed the door, bolting it on the inside. The man tried to follow him, couldn't get the door open.

Tim crouched inside the little room, holding his breath. He could just see through the key hole. He saw the prowler apply a match to the paper for which he had searched. In the flicker of flame from the burning paper, he could see two things: the man wore a white mask that covered his face completely. And at the man's feet was a red can that might contain gasoline.

It was then that Tim got the idea that the man was going to set the laboratory on fire. Frantically, he looked for a phone in the office, found it, called the unlisted telephone number of the Ghost's rectory.

"But," I said, when Tim had concluded, "the man didn't use the gasoline to fire the laboratory. He simply wanted to destroy this paper you say, was a map?"

"That's it," Tim piped. "He used the gasoline to soak the cushions of that old jalopy he was driving. It took him some time to break down the door of the office. Then we had a bit of a fight. I'm kind of hard to catch, you know. But once he had me, the fight was over.

He must have intended either running his car into the river with me in it or setting the thing on fire."

"Probably both," I said. "Wanted to make it look like an accident. But tell me this, Tim—in your struggle with the man, did you make out a single identifying mark? Did he say anything so that you might have a chance to recognize his voice if you heard it again?"

**T**IM shook his head. "He didn't say a word. And in the darkness I didn't get much of a chance to see any identifying marks. Afraid we didn't net anything at all except the knowledge that the prowler wanted to destroy some sort of a map. And where will that get us?"

At the time, I was inclined to agree with Tim—that we knew nothing more than we had known before. But later the scene that Tim had witnessed through the keyhole turned out to be of the utmost importance.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *Shake-down*

**N**OT until late the following afternoon, as darkness fell, did I hear from Merry White.

"I guess I'm wonderful," she said gayly over the phone. "It's Mrs. Kalaban's maid who has been putting those nasty warning notes around the apartment. She's in the business with a Lexington Avenue photographer. I followed the maid to this man's picture shop. He's a man with one leg that would be shorter than the other if he didn't wear a built-up shoe. You go upstairs to his shop. I would think being lame he would have his place on the ground floor, but—"

"Where are you now?" I asked.

"At Mrs. Kalaban's. The maid is out

and so is Mrs. Kalaban. She went out with her boy friend, that nice Robert Martin. I'm all alone now. Mrs. Kalaban would like to adopt me, I think. And I found the picture."

"What picture, Merry?" I demanded. "Stop talking riddles.

"The picture. The one they're using to shake-down Mrs. Kalaban. I don't understand it. It's a photo of a man lying on the street in front of Mrs. Kalaban's car. And it shows Mrs. Kalaban getting in her car. The man on the street looks dead. On the back is penciled: 'We want two hundred thousand dollars or that something just as good.' Do you suppose that refers to the secret code message that could be used to collect the reward money?"

"Yes," I said positively. "Now listen, Merry. I'll drop by and pick up that photograph inside of an hour. And don't let me forget to tell you that you're wonderful."

I hung up and turned to Joe Harper.

"We're going to go after a shake-down artist, Joe. There may be some rough stuff so maybe we'd better look the part. I begin to see a little daylight in this business. Running into those things at Palmers, and then into another pair at Kalaban's, sort of confuses the issue. This affair has more than a single thread, it has at least two, and my hunch now is that even though they've tangled, they're separate in origin and perhaps in motive. Let's go."

When Joe and I left the Ghost's rectory, we were a couple of hard looking eggs. I had broadened my nose so that it looked like something that had stopped too many fists. And I had built myself a pugnacious chin. We both had on the oldest, sloppiest clothes we could find in the Ghost's wardrobe. Joe even traded his green felt hat for a cap and his piped vest for a turtle-neck sweater. He slid a sap into his pocket.

Merry was out in front of the apartment building where Mrs. Kalaban lived. She gave me a hello kiss, handed me the photograph, and then a good-bye kiss.

The picture was just about what Merry had described. The face of the man on the street was clearly shown, and he did look plenty dead. And Mrs. Kalaban was easily recognized, too.

**J**OE was driving the car, and when I gave him the address of the photo shop which Merry had given me, Joe said he would bet a fish he knew the photographer. His name was Oscar something and Oscar something didn't mind doing anything for money.

On the way to this photographer Joe called Oscar, I stopped at a drugstore and bought a photo-flash bulb and a box of writing paper. I came out of the drugstore, emptied the paper into a street receptacle, but saved the box. I took the photo-flash bulb and shorted it across the two ammeter posts back of the instrument board on Joe's car.

"What do you think you're doing?" Joe wanted to know.

"Getting something to stick our photographer with," I told him. Then I put the burned flash bulb into the paper box and told Joe to get going.

Up Lexington, not far from 128th Street, Joe pointed out a sign that hung over a door and read:

#### PHOTO FINISHING

"That's Oscar's, I think," Joe said. "Probably he lives there, too."

The building was an ancient red brick tenement. We parked, got out. I carried the box with the bulb under my arm. The doorway under the sign opened on a flight of steps. We went up to the second floor where another sign, identical with the first, was hung on a door. I knocked at the panel.

Pretty soon we could hear footsteps, half of which sounded as if made by a built-up shoe such as a cripple might wear. The door was opened, and Joe asked if this was Oscar. Anybody could see that it was—a largish man, lame, wearing a rubber apron to protect his clothes against photo acids.

"I've got some pictures I'd like to

show you," I said. "I'd like some enlargements made."

Oscar took a rank smelling cigar from between snags of yellow teeth. He asked us to come in, not very cordially. Maybe now that he was in the big blackmail racket he didn't care about stooping to pick up an honest penny.

We went into a small photographic shop with a dark room walled off in one corner. A door at the other side of the room opened into what was probably Oscar's living room and bedroom combined.

"What d'ya want?" Oscar asked.

"This," I pulled out the photo print that Merry White had given me. I shoved it under Oscar's nose and kept my eyes on Oscar's face. Beneath the dirt and beard stubble, Oscar's cheeks went pale. He gulped, wet his lips. He was not a good actor.

"You want me to make an enlargement of that? Have you the negative?"

"No," I said, "but you have. You took that picture."

"You're a damned liar!" Oscar said. His right hand went for his hip pocket, but Joe Harper cracked him across the wrist with the sap. Joe's fingers reached into Oscar's pocket and pulled out the automatic.

**O**SCAR sat down on a stool. He was trembling a little.

"I didn't take the damned picture!" Oscar declared.

"You did," I said. "I've got proof. When you got through snapping that picture, you took out your flash bulb as you crossed the drive of the filling station near where the accident took place. You dropped the bulb and it landed in the coiled-up air hose of the filling station. The bulb didn't break."

I was just making this up as I went along, but if he was a professional photo-snapper, the chances were he really didn't know what he had done with the flash bulb any more than he would have known what he did with the butt of a cigarette he had smoked some time ago.

I opened the writing paper box under my arm and showed him the flash bulb I had bought in the drug-store.

"This is the bulb," I said. "And if you'll look pretty close you'll see what a nice set of finger prints is on it."

I didn't say whose finger prints were on the bulb, but the implication was all that was necessary.

"Cops?" Oscar looked frantically from me to Joe.

I took the shield that was part of my Detective Hammill disguise and let Oscar get a flash of it. I asked him



if he knew what the penalty for blackmail was in this state.

"Listen," he said, "I honest to hell didn't know there was any blackmail connected with this. I was hired to do it, that was all. I just took the picture. You got to believe me."

Somehow I did believe him. His eyes looked earnest and his forehead had broken into an anxious sweat.

"Who hired you, then?" I asked.

"McTeeg," he said. "Augie McTeeg. You know him?"

I knew him. Who didn't? Maybe his name has been forgotten now, but once he had had the questionable honor of being listed on the roster of public enemies.

"Okay," I said to Oscar, "we'll see what McTeeg has to say about that."

Oscar jumped up and grabbed my arm.

"Don't tell McTeeg I said a thing," he pleaded. "McTeeg would kill me."

"Don't worry," I assured him. "If you've played on the level with us, we'll play on the level with you."

Joe and I returned to the car.

"What do we do now?" Joe asked. "This Augie McTeeg is one tough guy, what I mean, even if he is so fat he looks like he'd dent if you shoved a finger into him."

Joe couldn't tell me much about McTeeg I didn't know. During my ghostly escapades I had run into him before.

At the present time he was getting his living from a numbers racket over in Harlem. He always kept a pretty close eye on his source of income so it wasn't peculiar to find him living in an apartment on Lenox Avenue right in the colored district.

**J**OE and I drove over to within a block of the building where McTeeg lived, and then got out and walked.

I asked Joe if he felt up to doing a bit of burglarizing. He said he guessed he might as well feel like it. So we got out and walked to the apartment building where McTeeg lived.

McTeeg was on the second floor front. From the street we could see a light burning in the front window. Joe ran across the street to the drugstore and telephoned McTeeg's apartment. I waited for him outside. He returned a moment later to announce that a man had answered the phone and said that McTeeg wasn't in.

"It wasn't McTeeg who said that, was it?" I asked.

"No. I'd know the guy's voice any time. He squeaks like a juvenile's understudy his first night on stage."

I remembered that thin voice of Augie McTeeg's pretty well myself.

As we went up the steps I gave Joe my plans. Whoever answered the door was to get Joe's sap back of the ear. Then we would go on and go through the place with a comb, try and find the negative of the picture, and then get out as soon as possible.

I knocked at McTeeg's door. A voice on the other side asked who it was.

The vocal cords in my throat tight-

ened. So close an imitation of McTeeg's squeaky voice came from my mouth that Joe Harper gave me a startled look.

"It's Augie," I said. "Open the door."

A key turned in the lock. The door opened. Joe and I jumped the man, had him before he could make a move. Joe's sap went up and came down again and the man melted to the floor, face up. I closed the door of the apartment.

"Well, I'll be damned!" Joe said.

I turned around, looked at the man on the floor.

Maybe if he hadn't been stretched out on the floor just as he had appeared in the picture, we wouldn't have recognized him so readily.

You see, this man Joe had knocked out was the man in the photo—the one who looked as though he had been killed by Mrs. Kalaban's car. He was undoubtedly a professional dummy-chucker who made his living by having accidents and then filing suit for damages.

This time he had simply flopped in front of Irene Kalaban's car. Oscar had been planted where he could snap the photo easily. It was all a put-up job, as I had half expected. And so long as the man Irene thought was dead wasn't dead, McTeeg really didn't have anything he could blackmail her with.

Joe had the same idea that I did about the blackmail stunt. "There's no percentage in us sticking around here now, is there?" he asked.

"We'd better take a look around while we're here," I said.

It was in an unprotected drawer of a dressing table in McTeeg's luxurious living room, that we came across the negative of the shake-down photo. Joe and I were about to leave the bedroom with our prize when I heard McTeeg's shrill voice talking to someone.

"McTeeg's out there," I said to Joe.

"Yeah. We're in a spot."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *Hide and Seek*



AD I been alone, caught in this manner, it wouldn't have been half as bad as it was now. I could have faced McTeeg, pulled some sort of magic stunt, and depended upon my wits to take me the rest of

the way out of the jam.

But if I got out of this jam with magic and McTeeg saw that Joe Harper was with me, he might put two and two together and get the idea that the Ghost was George Chance. Like this: George Chance is a magician. The Ghost is a magician. Now if the Ghost has a friend known as Joe Harper, then the Ghost is George Chance, the magician.

So when Joe said we were in a bad spot, he hadn't exaggerated a little bit. There was no fire escape outside the bedroom window. Outside of breaking our collective necks by jumping out the window, there just wasn't any way out except through the door and into the living room. And I could hear McTeeg coming for the door now.

"Stay where you are," I whispered to Joe. "And if you get a chance to run for it, do it. No heroics. I'll get out."

I turned out the bedroom light, opened the door, walked right out into the living room. McTeeg stopped in the middle of the room and pulled his gun. Behind him and a little to one side was Artie Meyer, McTeeg's strong arm man. Artie had his gun out.

A mirthless grin slit McTeeg's fat face. He was one of the flabbiest men I have ever known. His number three chin spilled down all over his collar. He even had bulges of fat above his eyebrows. He didn't look as though he had been born; he looked like the product of a jelly mold.

"A visitor," he squeaked. "How nice. You didn't knock when you came in, but you knocked *after* you came in." A fat-handed gesture indicated the man Joe had sapped when we had entered the apartment.

Artie Meyer had the features of a cigar store Indian—high cheek bones, a Roman nose, thick lips. Also he was as expressionless as a wooden Indian.

I pointed at the dummy chucker on the floor.

"Irene Kalaban won't pay you much in the way of hush money if it leaks out that guy she thought she killed is alive."

McTeeg looked slightly annoyed. After all, it must have been quite a shock to learn that his blackmail scheme had got out.

"But," he said, "just as long as Mrs. Kalaban doesn't know anything about it, it's no monkey wrench in my machinery, is it? And if we bump you, you won't be in a position to tell her, will you?"

I said I didn't know about that. I thrust my right hand into my coat pocket and snipped the lid off a little box I had there.

"Take your hand out of there!" McTeeg warned.

"I'm just looking for cigarettes," I said. "Maybe you'll lend me one."

I knew McTeeg didn't smoke. Artie Meyer did and he was standing over by the phone which was not far from the door and consequently not far from the light switch.

"Give the 'condemned man' a smoke, Artie," McTeeg said.

**A**RTIE fumbled in his pocket. I brought my own hand out of my coat pocket, but not until I had scooped a good-sized piece of magician's wax onto the back of my thumb nail. I accommodated Artie by crossing the room to get the cigarette. I held the cigarette between first and second fingers and Artie flickered a lighter for me.

"Thanks," I said, and pushed the cigarette into the lighter flame. All

the time Artie's gun pushed into my middle.

I took a couple of pulls on the cigarette and then secretly scraped the wax from my nail onto the end of the cigarette. No matter how close Artie was watching me, he didn't see that move. If he had I doubt if he could have guessed its purpose. But he was suspicious of me and had moved back just a little way so he could see all of me at once.

I reached out my hand as though to use an arm to prop myself against the wall. Then I turned out the light switch.

I didn't have to move fast. Put yourself in Artie's place and you'll understand why. Wouldn't you expect me to make a dive for the door? Artie did anyway, and McTeeg expected the same thing.

"Watch the door!" McTeeg squealed.

What I did first was to move to the west side of the room where I stuck the glowing cigarette to the wall by means of the wax. Then I simply walked away from the cigarette, walked to the bedroom door and kicked it open.

Artie fired at where he thought I was but where only my cigarette was. The cigarette didn't move and it sounded to me as though both McTeeg and Artie were closing in on the place where they thought I was.

The bedroom door open, Joe Harper knew the way was clear for him. I felt him brush past me. Whether he could get the door open and get out depended a lot on how much time I could give him. I knew that Artie and McTeeg were just about to converge at the point where they thought I was. I tightened up on my vocal cords and said:

"Look out, Artie! He's right beside you."

The voice that came from my lips was McTeeg's voice. There was a scuffle and it sounded as though Artie had clubbed McTeeg. McTeeg's soft padding of fat was equal to a lot of

punches. He shrilled a curse that informed Artie he had made a mistake.

Across the room I heard the door open. That would be Joe Harper going out. I followed at his heels, but at the door I employed ventriloquism again. Using Artie's voice I said:

"I got the guy over here near the bedroom, Augie!"

And that created sufficient confusion so that I could get out of the door. I ran down the steps behind Joe Harper and sprang into the car that waited for us outside.

**A**FTER we were traveling, Joe looked at me and asked:

"Now where are we?"

"We've snapped one thread and done Irene Kalaban a favor," I said. "Let's be glad of that."

"It doesn't get Glenn out of the death house," Joe said.

"I know it," I answered grimly.

"Incidentally, tomorrow is the day that Dr. Seer predicted Dr. Livingston would die."

"Tomorrow?" Joe grunted. "Say, it's tomorrow now. Look at the clock on the dash."

It was two A. M.

"We're turning back," I said to Joe.

"What do you mean?" Joe asked, giving me a bleak look.

"Livingston's house is near Fordham," I said. "We're going in the wrong direction."

"Livingston will thank you for getting him out of bed at this time of night to ask him if he's dead yet."

"Murdered yet," I corrected. "Seer isn't grabbing these predictions out of thin air. There's a carefully directed murder machine behind all this. I don't know what the reason is, but the murder machine is guided by a reason. Livingston is in danger but too stubborn to believe it."

The doctor's house on Beaumont Avenue was dark, as might be expected at this time of night. Joe rolled the car past slowly.

"Everything is okay in there,

George," he said. "It's as quiet as backstage in a deserted theater."

I nipped Joe's arm and ordered him to brake. I was on the side nearest the house and could get a better view of the place than Joe. It seemed to me that the front door was standing open.

"That door's open," I said to Joe. "I'm getting out for a look."

I hurried up the approach-walk to the house. The closer I got, the crazier it looked—the house dark, the hands of the clock nearing three in the morning, and the front door standing wide open.

I stepped to the door and listened. The place was as quiet as a grave. If you can qualify silence, this sort of silence struck me as uncanny. I stepped through the open door, groped along the side of the door for a light switch, found a plate of three switches and turned the first one on.

Nothing happened. I tried the second and third switch, but no light came on. I pulled my flashlight and beamed it around the little reception hall in which I had talked with Livingston nearly three weeks before. Light globes were in the center lighting fixture.

It was a peculiar situation. What was I to do—try to wake the doctor up, or just look through the house and see that everything was okay, running the risk of getting shot as a prowler?

## CHAPTER XIX

### *Tomorrow's Murder*



**L**OSING the front door behind me, I decided to search the lower part of the house. To my right was a dining room. I entered it, my light beam pushing ahead of me. I went into the kitchen. A door from the kitchen opened onto a back porch. I just gave the porch a glance,

was about to turn away, when I saw the fuse box was open. Perhaps someone had pulled the electrical switch open.

I crossed to the fuse box and looked inside. The switch was closed. But the fuse—there was the trouble with the lights—the mica window in the plug-type fuse was blackened. I opened the switch to avoid getting shocked and unscrewed the fuse. If I placed a nickel behind the fuse the circuit would be completed. Lights once on, I would be more hesitant about looking around the house.

But when I unscrewed the fuse and fingered my nickle into place in the socket, I found that some sort of a coin had already been placed back of the fuse. I picked the metal disk out and looked at it in the light of my torch.

It didn't look like a coin. It was rather more like a washer except that the hole in the center was square instead of round. The disk was made out of some white metal that resembled silver yet felt lighter. Of course, with that hole in the center, the disk hadn't made contact with the tip of the fuse.

I traded the strange metal disk for my nickle, put the fuse in place, closed the switch. I went back into the kitchen where I tested my repair by switching on the kitchen light. I left the kitchen light burning and returned to the central hall. On the side opposite the dining room, there was a living room. I turned on a light there.

Here again, that same silent emptiness.

At one side of the living room was a sturdy looking panel of oak which possibly opened into a library or downstairs bedroom. I tried the knob of the door, found the door locked. I listened at the keyhole, heard no sound. I tapped at the door.

"Anybody home?" I called.

And there was no answer.

I turned, went back to the central hall, and hurried up the stairs to the second floor. Two bedrooms and a bath in the top floor, all empty, all in perfect order. My scalp prickled. It

was getting to be just a little too much — this loneliness and silence, this haunting idea of mine that something was wrong.

Whatever was wrong had to be behind that locked door. I went back to the living room and tried breaking in the door by ramming it with my shoulder. It was a solid piece of wood-work.

I turned to the livingroom fireplace and got hold of a heavy poker. Back to the locked door, I hacked at a portion of the panel that was nearest the lock. It was a slow job and noisy. When I did get a hole, it wasn't big enough to get my hand in. Finally, I inserted the tip of the poker in the opening I had made and used the poker as a wrecking bar to rip off a section of the wood. I got my hand in and twisted the key in the lock.

I pushed open the door. Before me lay a small square room. Except for a single window, the walls were lined with books. A lamp burned on an end table beside a chair. And in the chair sat Dr. Livingston, mouth and eyes wide open.

Need I add that he was dead?

**I**T was one of those things that you more than half expect. Yet I was not prepared to face an incredible situation like this. This was murder. Regardless of what anyone might have told me to the contrary, I knew it had to be murder. Dr. Seer wasn't endowed with any supernatural powers and he had accurately predicted this man's death. Therefore the death itself had to be premeditated murder.

But what material evidence was there to support my opinion? One thing—a knife sticking out of Livingston's chest on the left side. Yet it required only one look to convince me that the knife hadn't killed him. It had struck no vital spot and Livingston had not bled enough. Livingston, it seemed to me, had been knifed after death.

Here was a room thoroughly and

completely locked—window and door both locked, though the door could have been locked from the outside. There was no place the murderer could have hidden. There was no visible murder weapon except the knife, and I was positive it was n't the murderer's weapon, no poison darts anywhere. I knew all this because I gave the body a pretty thorough going over before leaving the room. I even noticed that the pupils of the dead man's eyes were constricted.

Had I gone so far as to have ventured a medical opinion, I would have said that Dr. Livingston was strangled. Yet there were no finger marks on the throat, no possible way that fingers could have reached him. Truly, the impossible crime.

I left the doctor's library, closing the mutilated door behind me. I went to the phone which I spotted in the living room, intending to call Ned Standish and inform him that the Prophet of Doom had clicked again.

I had hardly raised the phone when I heard the front door creak. I put down the phone, slipped my little automatic from the gimmick clip that holds it beneath my coat. A white-faced man wearing a chauffeur's cap slipped into the hall and with trembling hands closed the door behind him. It was Dr. Livingston's servant who had admitted me when I had first visited the doctor.

I cleared my throat.

The servant turned, took one look at me, jumped toward the door.

"Don't," I warned. "I'll shoot."

The man's knees were visibly knocking together. He raised his hands above his head. His eyes implored me not to shoot even if his quivering lips were incapable of speaking.

"Come in here," I ordered.

**T**HE man obeyed, his hands down now, sensing I meant no harm.

"Look!" I said.

"My God," he cried, seeing Livingston, "what's happened?"

I gave him a flash of the detective badge I was carrying in my pocket.

"Murder," I said.

"Good heavens!" the servant gasped. "The man with the hideous hands—"

"What's that?" I cut in. "Don't mix this up now. What's that about a man with hideous hands?"

Was this killing the work of the leper, Eric Emboyd? Or had Eric Emboyd entered after death, and thinking Livingston alive, knifed him?

"They were more like claws than hands," the servant said. "Horrible! And his face—I—I've never seen anything like it."

"The beginning, please," I said patiently. "What are you doing running around this time of night?"

The servant took a moment to collect his thoughts and get the events of the evening in chronological order.

"Dr. Livingston," he began, "was out to a scientific meeting of some sort until late. He came home about half past eleven. He went to his library as usual to read like always for an hour or so before going to bed."

"Does he always lock himself in?" I asked.

"No sir, though he don't like to be disturbed. He's said to me many a time, sir, that when he's reading, he don't want to be interrupted no matter if the sky falls or the house catches afire."

"How could he read when the fuses were blown out and there were no lights?" I asked.

"I'm coming to that, sir. The lights were all perfect until after midnight—I don't know just how long after. Usually I wait up for Dr. Livingston to get to bed, but tonight he must have had something unusually interesting to read because he didn't make any move toward bed, and I think I should up and assert my rights a bit and go to bed myself.

"I went upstairs to the doctor's room to turn down his bed and open his window, which I did. Back of his bed he's got a bridge lamp because he some-

times wakes up in the middle of the night and goes to reading in bed by that lamp. The lamp is near the door. And tonight, when I shut the door of his room, the lamp cord got caught in the hinged end of the door like it sometimes does, only tonight was the last time for that lamp cord. I mean, it got pinched one too any times and there was a short circuit and the fuse blew.

"I thought how terrible it would be for me, blowing a fuse when Dr. Livingston was reading. It would be an interruption, sort of, and he don't like to be interrupted when he's reading. I was all a fluster, it being my fault for pinching the lamp cord. So I ran out of the house and down to an all night drugstore to get a new fuse."

**I BELIEVED** he was telling the truth.

"Did you shut the door?" I asked.

"I shut it, but the night latch wasn't on yet. I remembered about the night latch when I was half way back to the house with the fuse. But when I got all the way back, the door was shut just like I had left it and I felt it was all right.

"When I went into the house, I turned on the flashlight I had been carrying since the fuse blowed out and I was going back toward the kitchen when I heard a noise out there. I said, 'Dr. Livingston, sir?' and there wasn't no answer. And then *he* came out of the dining room door."

"Dr. Livingston?" I asked.

"No. Not Dr. Livingston. If I live to be a hundred and ninety, I won't forget what did come out of that door. He was a thin man with the ugliest, twisted-up, boney face, and his skin was like old paper stretched over bones. And his fingers were crooked like claws. They *were* claws, a lot more like those of a bird than anything that you could call human.

"It was like in them horror pictures of Frankenstein and Dracula and such. I let out a yell you could heard to Hades and turned and ran out of the

house. And just now I got nerve enough to come back."

"Okay," I said. "You go up to your bedroom and stay there until you're wanted."

The servant obeyed me.

As soon as he was up the stairs, I took up the phone and called the apartment of Commissioner Standish. Ned had got me out of bed in the wee hours many a time and now I returned the compliment.

"Listen, Ned," I whispered, "Ghost speaking. Dr. Seer called another shot, and hit it on the nose, I think. He may have been a few minutes off, but I don't think so. Dr. Livingston on Beaumont Avenue, this time. And the servant has a story to tell about the man with claws. That's the second time Eric Emboyd has turned up at a murder. That doesn't make him the murderer however. You'll see from the set that Livingston was knifed after death. That was either done by Emboyd or somebody else—somebody else if Emboyd was the murderer. Anyway, Emboyd is no myth!"

I hung up and hastily left the house to rejoin Joe Harper. The sooner Joe's shrewd eyes got back on the trail of the man with claws, the better. When we all knew all there was to know about that hideous individual, we'd be a long way toward solving the mystery.

## CHAPTER XX

### *Coin of the Damned*



**W**E had a clue—the round washer with the square hole in the center of it which I had found the night before behind the burned-out fuse at Dr. Livingston's house. It was the only material clue I had been able to pick up so far.

I asked the hardware dealer what sort of machine such a washer came

from, and what its particular use was. He examined the thing closely, said it was stamped from steel stock and added that he had never sold anything like it or seen anything like it. If it was a washer, then it must fit on a square-shank bolt, and there wasn't any such thing.

So I put down another zero in my long column of zeros.

Gray templed, unsmiling, my eyes looking a bit severe behind Dr. Stacey's Oxford glasses, Merry White still found me an agreeable companion when we lunched that noon in an obscure corner of a restaurant on Sixth Avenue.

She had taken a look at the morning papers before going into court that morning and was familiar with the details regarding the death of Dr. Livingston. I showed her the impossible steel washer clue and told her where I had found it.

She wrinkled her brow over the thing and bobbed her head knowingly.

"What do you think it is?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. But then you don't either. You don't know it's a washer. You just have to have a name for it, so you call it a washer. It's more like a Chinese coin."

"The thing is made of steel," I said. "I never heard of a steel coin before."

"You're right," she said. "But people steal coins, don't they?"

"Don't pun," I said.

Merry put her cool hand on mine.

"Poor boy," she whispered. "I don't like to see you worried. You mustn't worry, because everything will be all right."

Many a time I had played Merry White's hunches and won. So I did not overlook her idea that the disk I called a washer might just as well be a coin. I paid a visit to a coin dealer who sold every sort of coin to collectors.

The coin dealer took one look at the steel disk and shook his head.

My heart sank a bit. I supposed he didn't know what it was either.

"It has no value," he said. "A curio-

sity, perhaps, but I wouldn't give you anything for it."

"I don't want to sell it," I protested. "I want to know what it is."

"Oh, it's a piece of token money used in leper colonies. When a person is sent to a leper colony out in the Philippine Islands or some place like that, they trade all their money for these disks which are used entirely within the boundary of the colony as a medium of exchange."

**I** LEFT the coin dealer and hurried over to Police Headquarters Building where I was admitted at once to the presence of Commissioner Standish.

"Emboyd was at Livingston's place last night," I said flatly. I showed him the coin I had found in the fuse box.

Ned Standish sighed.

"We'll pick Emboyd up some way," he said. "But you're solving every murder except that of David Palmér."

"The two are connected," I said.

"How do you figure that?"

"Dr. Seer predicted both deaths. Either he attends to the killings personally or somebody who knows of the killings ahead of time tells Seer about them. Livingston was murdered, wasn't he?"

Standish stroked his square of moustache and nodded.

"He was murdered. Suppose we bring Seer down to headquarters and give him a going-over?"

"Leave Seer to me," I insisted. "What killed Livingston?"

"Poison gas," Standish said. "You were right about the knife. The gas was cyanogen, or something equally potent. Traces of the gas were detectable in the room where Livingston died. How it was introduced—well, we're stumped there. And we considered every possible way."

"How deadly is the gas?" I asked. "Why wasn't I overcome by it when I broke into the room?"

"Demarest says you can put enough of the gas under pressure in a globe the size of a small orange to kill several

men if they get a sniff of the stuff right away. When you broke in, the gas was pretty well mixed with the air in the room and probably floated out the door, especially inasmuch as you had such a time getting that opening in the panel."

"Incidentally," I said, "the homicide boys must have been a little confused because I had smashed that door."

"That's right. Magnus thinks somebody made the hole in the door while Livingston was sitting calmly inside the room, stuck a hose through the opening, pumped the gas in. He says that sounds fishy, but that's the only way it could have been done."

"How about laying a little bet on something?" I asked.

"Speak your piece," Standish urged. "Only I don't bet with the Ghost. If you fumble now it will be the first time."

"It will also be the last," I reminded him. "But here's what I'll bet: Inventor Michael Holland, David Palmer, Dr. Livingston, were all killed by the same man."

**I** COULD hear Standish's gasp. "Holland's death was listed as accidental—"

"Holland," I said, "was killed by the same gas that got Livingston."

Standish nodded. "And Palmer was killed with a poison dart."

"Very probably because the killer would have had some difficulty using poison gas to kill one man in a room that was filled with people."

"I hope that's it," Standish said gravely. "If any man ever gambled his life, you're doing it now, my boy."

"Maybe you don't think I realize that."

"Got any ideas as to the motive?"

"I'm just playing a hunch," I said, "but I think the Kalaban reward has something to do with it."

And I wasn't more than about fifty percent wrong.

Still troubled by the Eric Emboyd angle, I tried to get in touch with Randolph Curtis, whom Carl Van Borg

had mentioned as being a possible enemy of the exiled leper Eric Emboyd, or rather the other way around, since Curtis had married Emboyd's fiancée.

Curtis was out of town. His charming wife did not except him in until late that night. I asked her if the name of Eric Emboyd meant anything to her. At the mention of the man's name, her lovely face paled a bit.

"Yes," she admitted, "I knew Mr. Emboyd some years ago."

"Excuse me," I said, "but I understand that you were engaged to marry him at one time."

"That is true, Dr. Stacey," she said. "Why are you concerned about the matter?"

I explained that I was doing a little unofficial investigation in an effort to assist Police Commissioner Standish.

"Is it true," she asked, "that Eric Emboyd has escaped from the leper island?"

"It is," I said. "How did you know?"

"A friend of mine, Carl Van Borg, warned me. I suppose that word 'warned' sounds a little melodramatic. But then Carl is melodramatic. I hardly think Eric would hold anything against me."

I left the telephone number of the Ghost's rectory with her and requested her to call me as soon as her husband returned.

## CHAPTER XXI

### *The Fourth Prediction*



**M**ERRY WHITE had reached the rectory ahead of time and was curled up on the couch, staring at the wall, a pensive and not particularly happy expression on her face.

"It's such a muddle, darlin'," she said. "Such an awful muddle."

I held her tightly in my arms. Even

as I did I fancied that I could feel the warden of Sing Sing tapping me on the shoulder, telling me that my time had come to take that last short walk.

"You're not losing your courage, are you?" I asked her. "You mustn't."

"Why can't the police see that the same person who killed David Palmer is also responsible for these other deaths?"

"They can't see it," I told her, "because outside of the predictions that Dr. Seer has made, there just isn't anything to connect them."

"But this crazy leper—"

"We can't prove that the crazy leper ever knew David Palmer, let alone was an enemy of Palmer's," I interrupted.

Merry took a long breath and patted my cheek.

"I'm all right now," she said. "See, I'm smiling—"

I kissed the smiling lips.

Ten-thirty came. No word from Mrs. Curtis. No word from Joe Harper who was out hunting for Eric Emboyd. No word from Standish who had all the available police hunting for Emboyd. And then I heard Tiny Tim's footsteps on the basement stairs of the rectory. Merry and I got up to greet the little man.

"Little man looks like he's had a busy day," Merry said.

Tim's babyish brow crimped into a tight frown.

"Cut it out, frail!" He tried to reduce his small voice to a grumble. "What I want to know is where this is going to end?"

"Where what is going to end?" I asked of him.

"These killings. He's done it again."

"Emboyd?" Merry gasped.

"Emboyd? Who's Emboyd?" Tim hadn't been brought up to date on all the developments. "I didn't say anything about anybody named Emboyd, did I? I'm talking about Dr. Seer. He says somebody else is going to die. Tonight."

Tim fumbled in the inside pocket of his perfectly tailored coat and brought

out a scrap of paper.

"I wrote it down for you, George. I don't know whether the name means anything to you or not. Randolph Curtis. I stopped to look his address up in the telephone directory."

"Don't bother," I said. "He lives out near Locut Point on Shore Drive. I was out there this afternoon. Did Seer predict Curtis' death?"

"He did. I just came from one of Seer's seances," Tim said. "Curtis is going to die tonight, according to that moth-eaten mystic. Hadn't we better get out there?"

"Not 'we'," I said. "You and Merry stay right here. I don't know that Curtis is home yet. I hope not. I've got to be there when he arrives."

I WENT into my dressing room and quickly removed what was left of the makeup which identified me as Dr. Stacey. Time was too precious to permit me to make any elaborate changes in my appearance. I simply slipped into the Ghost's black suit, altered the shape of my nose with the wire ovals. In short, I simply became the Ghost again.

I kissed Merry more hastily than she deserved and then hurried out to pick up a taxi at a stand over on Madison Avenue.

Seer was calling his shots more closely this time. The killer was becoming more sure of himself with each murder, it seemed, for if Randolph Curtis was to die tonight the killer only had about an hour and a half to do the trick in. Unless Curtis was already dead. I doubted that, because Seer's prediction wouldn't be a prediction if that was the case. A newspaper man might call it a scoop, but not a prediction.

The Curtis house was a small, newly-built place of brick and stone, beautifully situated on spacious grounds that overlooked the sound. My taxi driver let me out at the gate of a concrete drive and I hurried toward the house.

It is true that I had called on Mrs.

Curtis that afternoon disguised as Dr. Stacey. She would not recognize me as the man who had spoken to her earlier in the day, for I was now wearing the makeup of the Ghost. But that was the way I wanted it.

My reason for this was simply that if I arrived ahead of the killer I might be blessed with the chance to catch the man red-handed. And if I had been disguised as Dr. Stacey and then employed the methods of the Ghost in the capture of the killer, any chance observer would understand that Dr. Stacey was the Ghost. The alias of Dr. Stacey was too valuable to me to risk anything that would compel me to stop using it.

Lights were burning in the front hall of the house. But as I approached the door that inexplicable sense of uneasiness came over me. The place was too damned quiet.

However, a house that contains a lone wife waiting for the return of her husband may well be perfectly quiet. I sounded the brass knocker of the front door.

There were no answering footsteps. Was this to be a repetition of what I had experienced at Livingston's? I knocked again before trying the knob. The door was locked.

I left the small front porch and hurried around the house, testing the windows as I went until I found that one window at the back, though locked, was readily accessible.

A fortunate thing the Ghost had

had chosen to enlist his arts on the side of the law. He would have made a first class burglar. I had the window unlatched inside of ten minutes and then crawled across the sill to find myself in a small, neat kitchen.

I stepped from kitchen into dining room and from there into the lighted hall. The house was perfectly silent. You could almost feel its emptiness.

In front of me and across the hall was a door which I opened on the living room. It was a long room, a fireplace at one end in which a log fire glowed. At the other end of the room, light banked up against the wall from floor to ceiling from a desk lamp which had fallen to the floor.

**T**HE green shade of the desk lamp was broken and the bare globe shed its glaring light on the recumbent form of Mrs. Curtis. One outstretched arm lay across the bronze base of the overturned desk lamp.

I crossed the room, stood there staring down at the woman. Her normally pale skin was a ghastly shade of gray. Her blue eyes were open, her mouth open and jaw set—a mask of tragedy molded in flesh. Flesh without blood.

She was dead, I knew, before I dropped to the floor beside her. Her hands were cold, stony. One shoulder felt warm to the touch, but only because of the proximity of the light bulb.

Without disturbing the body to any great extent, I searched for wounds, found none. The flesh of one arm had

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been scraped a little by the edge of the lamp base, but there was no other mark.

I stood up and tried to reconstruct the moments of her life which had directly preceded her sudden death. There was no chair in front of the small spinet desk. The lamp had rested on one corner of the desk. Mrs. Curtis had been standing up and over the light, reading a folded newspaper that rested on top of the desk.

I glanced at the newspaper. She had evidently interested herself in a column of beauty hints—something she could have had little use for, I thought.

I looked at my watch. It was within two minutes of midnight. Had Dr. Seer's "spirits" made a slight error when they had predicted the death of Randolph Curtis? Perhaps they had meant his wife—the woman who was to have married Eric Emboyd.

I stood as nearly as possible in the exact spot where Mrs. Curtis must have been standing when she had fallen to the floor. I looked up to the ceiling, at the wall with its two small etchings hung in black frames. I looked to either side. There were no doors or windows in direct line with the place where I stood.

But why doors or windows? Hadn't death been *with* her in the room? The house was locked. Death had been locked into the house, too.

**M**Y pulse hammered against my temples. Was it possible? What kind of a brain could have conceived murder like this? The undetectable, the all but perfect crime again. She had died as Livingston had died. Perhaps the same subtle weapon had been used—poison gas. How introduced? The central heating plant was not in use. Besides, I notice that the house was heated with hot water radiators so that the heating plant could not have been the means of introducing the gas.

I crossed to one of the bracket lights at the side of the mantel at the other

end of the room. I unscrewed the cold bulb from the socket and took it back to where Mrs. Curtis lay. I dropped to my knees again.

Using my handkerchief as a glove against the heat of the bulb in the desk lamp, I unscrewed the bulb and in what little light there was from the fireplace, I screwed the cold globe into the lamp socket. The room was again flooded with light. I wrapped the hot bulb I had taken from the lamp in my handkerchief and put it in my pocket.

I had started for the phone to inform Standish of my discovery of the body, when I heard the click of a key in the lock of the front door. I stopped, stood perfectly still in the center of the room.

## CHAPTER XXII

### *I Meet the Murderer*



**R**ANDOLPH CURTIS called out as soon as he had the front door open.

"I'm back, honey! The train was late."

He advanced to the center of the hall, both of his hands occupied with briefcase and Gladstone bag, before he noticed me.

He was a large man with a broad, happy-looking face. He was happy to get home, happy to get back to his wife. That's what got me. That's why I couldn't say anything to him for just a moment.

So we stood there staring at each other, the smile on his face changing to a look of bewilderment into which a little fear might have crept.

"Mr. Curtis," I said finally, taking a few steps toward him.

"Who are you?" he asked. "What are you doing here?"

"It doesn't matter who I am," I said. "I am afraid I have some bad news for you."

"Bad news," he echoed dazedly. "Where's my wife?"

I went up to him and put a hand on his shoulder. His frightened gaze searched my face, a not too pleasant face even though I had "turned off the Ghost."

"This will be a terrible shock for you, Mr. Curtis. Your wife isn't here."

It was hard for me to frame the picture with words. His wife was here. Her body was here.

"Isn't here? Where is she, for heaven's sake?"

"Your wife is—is dead," I finally worked out.

"You're fooling," he said huskily. His voice wasn't the same voice that had called out to his wife when he had entered.

"I wish I was," I said. "She's been murdered. The police have not yet arrived."

He dropped his bags.

"Where is she? I've got to go to her. Let go of me, damn you!"

I let him go into the living room. When he saw the body, he advanced slowly as though he didn't know what his feet were doing. His big body wilted. I saw his shoulders shake with silent sobs as full realization came upon him. Finally he collapsed in a chair and buried his face in his hands.

For fully ten minutes I sat there with him. Then I spoke gently.

"Your wife has been murdered. You must help me find the murderer."

He raised his head. I was afraid that he would get the idea that I might easily have been her slayer. But apparently no such thought crossed his mind.

"Yes," he whispered. "Yes. Anything. I'd kill him with my own hands." He covered his face again.

"Did you ever hear of Eric Emboyd?" I asked him.

**H**E nodded his head without taking his hands away from his face.

I shook him. He looked up quickly.

"Emboyd?" he said. "Emboyd? He

didn't do this. He's in a leper colony. Livingston and Van Borg sent him to a leper colony."

"He's in New York now," I said. "He had reason to hate you, didn't he?"

"Because of—"

Curtis looked at the body of his wife. His shoulders shook. For a moment he couldn't say anything at all. He just nodded his head and kept looking at his wife.

I went out into the dining room to a cellarette and poured a stiff drink of brandy for Curtis. When he had taken that down he seemed to have a little better control of his emotions.

"Don't leave her there," he begged. "God! It isn't human."

I pulled down one of the drapes and covered the body.

"The police have to get here before we can move the body," I told him. "Now you'll best help by telling me what you know of Emboyd. Do you think he might have killed your wife?"

Curtis stood up. He seemed to get a better hold on himself by pacing back and forth in the room.

"I have to think that now, don't I?" he choked out. "And yet he once loved her. And I—I always loved her, I guess. I tried to steal her from him when she was engaged to Emboyd. If Emboyd was jealous, why didn't he kill me when we were down in the wilds of Mexico together?"

What was this, I wondered. Mexico? Was this a fresh thread?

"You were in Mexico with Emboyd?" I prompted. "What region?"

He stopped his pacing and looked at the desk, at the pitiful, draped mound at the front of the desk.

"There's a map in my desk drawer," he said. "Our expedition is pretty clearly marked. Yes, he could have killed me there. Only perhaps he was afraid of the others. We weren't alone, you see, and he might have been afraid that—"

"Was Michael Holland with you?" I asked.

He stared at me, surprised, and I saw

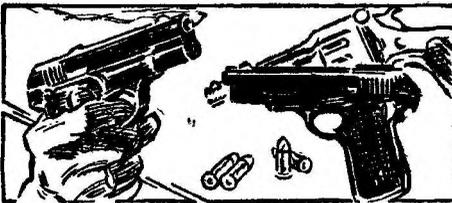
that I had hit something. Here was something that might tie up. Holland had had some sort of a map which Tiny Tim had seen burned by the prowler in Holland's laboratory. And now Curtis has a map.

"Mike Holland," Curtis said, "was with us. And—"

A single pistol shot crashed thunderously in the silence of the night. A bullet snicked through the lead glass of the large window in the living room. Curtis' eyes seemed to bulge and cross a little. A dead blank expression froze on his face. He fell forward stiffly like a statue toppled from its base.

**I** PICKED up a chair as I ran toward the window. I flung the chair ahead of me through glass and leading, cleaning out a jagged opening which I got through without opening an artery by some miracle. I landed on hands and knees in the middle of a shrub, scrambled out, got to my feet.

That smooth acting gimmick-clip delivered my little automatic into my



right hand. The shadowy figure of a man, dimly discernible in the gloom, raced across the lawn a good two hundred feet ahead of me.

I wished then that I wasn't the mediocre shot that Commissioner Standish says I am. But even if I had been a marksman, I doubt if I could have clipped the murderer, for in another instant he was lost in a forest of small trees and shrubs that artistically landscaped the lawn and made the escape of a murderer comparatively easy.

I put in five minutes of hunting before I drew a bead on a man and told him to stick up his hands. When I got close enough, I saw that my catch was none other than my cab driver who had

got out to see what all the shooting was about. He wanted to know if he shouldn't call the police. I told him he shouldn't, I had already done so.

The reason behind that little lie was that I didn't want to be bothered with the police until had taken a look at the map Curtis had said was in his desk. I hoped it was still there. Because the killer had destroyed the map that Holland had, I hurried to get back to the house. The murderer might have doubled back on his tracks to try and beat me to the map.

I entered the house through the front door which Curtis had not had time to lock. I went into the living room. Curtis was dead. Probably he had never known what had struck him, for he had been shot squarely in the back of the head. Poor soul. Perhaps he he would not have found life worth living anyway, after what had happened.

I went to the desk, stepped over the corpse of Mrs. Curtis, and pulled open the desk drawer. There must have been half a ream of bond paper lying inside the desk drawer, a pile of old letters, some paper clips and rubber bands. At the very bottom of the stack of letters, I found the map.

Rather it was a part of a map of the Coahuila district of Mexico, cut from what must have originally been a very large map of the country. The part of the map concealed in Curtis' desk was about the size of a sheet of letter paper.

I was stooping over, trying to get some of the rays of the upset lamp to fall on the surface of the map, when a whispering voice said:

"I have you covered."

I straightened, dropped the map into the open drawer of the desk. I turned around slowly, my face freezing into that skull-like mask that identifies the Ghost.

From the window which I had broken, a man stepped into the room. His crooked fingers were covered with black gloves. A curtain domino mask covered his face completely. His right hand held a heavy automatic.

## CHAPTER XXIII

*Stalemate*

THE Ghost!" the man whispered.

I think he was just a little afraid. He might have killed with impunity, he might have laid murder plans cleverly, but the legendary reputation of the Ghost carried a little weight even against this master criminal. But his gun did not quiver.

That was the main thing—his gun did not quiver.

I had seen a sample of his marksmanship that night and the position of target was not a comfortable one to be in. I reached down to the desk drawer for the map, picked it up.

The eyes in the mask watched my fingers closely. The man knew the Ghost's reputation for trickery. I knew that he would kill at the first sign of it.

I picked up the map, turned it around so he could see the face of it.

"This?" I asked.

The masked man nodded. He took a step toward me. I took a sideways step away from the desk and toward the end of the room where the fireplace was. At the same time, I turned the back of the map toward him. At least, he thought it was the back of the map.

I folded the map once and deliberately tore it in half, or so it must have seemed. The eyes in the slots of the mask watched me closely.

"Give it to me, I said," the masked man repeated. He took another step toward me and I backed toward the fireplace. My eyes were locked on his trigger finger. And at the same time, my own fingers worked rapidly, folding the paper and tearing it until I had a pile of scraps about two inches square.

"You want it, eh?" I laughed. And

my laughter was that taunting, gruesome laugh of the Ghost's. And then I flung the scraps of paper into the fireplace where they blazed up.

Yellow flame cast dancing shadows upon the wall of the room.

The masked man chuckled.

"I only wanted the map in order to destroy it, Ghost," he whispered. "You have saved me the trouble. I must warn you not to cross my path too often. I am rather deadly."

"When you know you're good it isn't bragging, is it? Yes, I've seen evidence of your deadliness."

We stood there facing each other like a couple of fighters in an area, neither caring to make the first blow. My attitude was entirely bluff based on the Ghost's reputation for doing the impossible. He could have shot me easily enough. And I didn't know how far I dared strain his nerves. Something had to break soon. Though I knew that I was taking my life in my hands and juggling it, I made the first move.

My eyes fixed on a point in space some five feet from me, and I reached out toward that spot as though to pick something out of the air. The sudden forward and upward movement of my hand threw my knife out of the loop inside my sleeve and into the palm of my hand.

The masked man saw the glint of the knife blade. He had heard of its deadliness. Fear hastened his shot before it was well aimed. I never knew where that bullet landed, but I heard its whine. It was a clean miss, and I had not yet thrown my knife. I threw it now.

THE masked man was in motion. He sprang toward the desk. My knife, intended for his heart, needled through the padded portion of the shoulder of his coat. The weight of the knife hasp carried it clattering to the floor as the masked man swooped down upon the lamp to jerk the cord from the socket.

Because of the glow from the fireplace, the room was not in total dark-

ness. The masked man fired at where I had been, but by that time I was behind a chair, my own gun out. In the matter of misdirection, he was no mean magician himself, for he threw a vase or something toward the broken window and drew my fire. My gun flame pointed out my position. I felt the impact of his heavy slug as it struck the chair in front of me.

The masked man was on the move again, running toward the door. I came from behind the chair, saw the living room door, fired. Before the door slammed, he tried another shot through the crack. It went wild.

Instead of following him through the door and into the lighted hall where I would have been a swell target, I took the same exit I had before—the broken window. I thought I might get around to the front door and head him off. I felt certain his exit would be slower than mine because he would be expecting me to follow through the door.

Around in front of the house, I took up what I supposed was a strategic position behind a tall spike of juniper. But the front door of the house didn't open. Tense seconds ticked off, and still the door didn't open.

I was about to enter the house and face it out with him when the whine of an automobile starter sent me running across the lawn toward the street. It was my own taxi that had got under way. And riding in it, his gun very likely at the head of the driver, was the killer.

I have never been able to watch the front and back door of a house at one and the same time. The killer had simply used the back door while I watched the front.

His victory it was, but not entirely. The map of Mexico—well, *I hadn't burned it*. There was some consolation in knowing that I had pulled a trick right under the man's nose.

Remember, I had dropped the map back into the desk drawer. I had taken care to drop it squarely on the pile of bond paper in the drawer. In picking

the map up, I had also picked up a piece of the bond paper. When I had showed the masked man the map, the bond paper had been behind it. When I had turned the map around, it was the bond paper he had seen, not the map.

In folding the map, I had also folded the bond paper. But it was the bond paper which he had watched me tear. With every fold and every tear, I had crimped the map up into a smaller parcel, but always kept it whole behind the pieces of torn paper.

So I had the map safely in my pocket. Perhaps it was the vital clue to the whole mystery.

I was feeling the need for sleep. I decided to get some and did—not much but enough to keep me going.

**T**HE following day, Standish, who felt the desperation of the situation as keenly as I, did what I had asked him not to do. He had Dr. Seer taken up and brought to headquarters where the prophet was given a working over that frightened but didn't give the police any information.

Seer took his grilling with the air of a martyr. But he wouldn't budge from his opinion that he got his predictions direct from the spirits.

All that resulted from the commissioner's earnest efforts was that Dr. Seer temporarily locked up his temple.

Joe Harper was still searching vainly for Emboyd. Merry White, Tiny Tim, and I puzzled over the map which I had brought from the Curtis house. On it a route was clearly indicated leading down from the Texas border. Then there was an arrow pointing to a spot on the map marked with the word "ours." This point was enclosed with a penciled circle and inside the circle was the word "He."

We had a nice pair of personal pronouns that meant exactly nothing.

I thought of Glenn Saunders in Sing Sing, and my heart was heavy. How was he standing the confinement? The question troubled me, and I knew I could not proceed with a clear head un-

less I first paid a visit to Sing Sing. I went as a clergyman.

Glenn was thinner than when he had left my house to fill my shoes in prison. Worry had done that to him. His high cheek bones stood out like doorknobs above hollow cheeks. He was pale. His eyes were red-rimmed with lack of sleep.

I took my place opposite him and my thumb and forefinger formed the letter "G," a sign by which he knew me in spite of my disguise. He repressed an expression of joy. He was full of curiosity. I told him all that I knew. He gripped my hand.

"I'm not worried," he whispered. "I know you're on the job. I can stand this if you can."

When I left, we both felt better.

That night I telegraphed to the Mexican government for information about the region indicated in Curtis' map.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### *The Fifth Prediction*



**D**R. SEER re-opened his temple. I paid him a second visit in the disguise of the Ghost. I waited until the crowds were packed into his building, watching the place from across the street. He was really packing them in. Believers and non-believers—all were curious to see the man who predicted death with unflinching accuracy. And the crooks who were backing the prophet boosted their entrance fee to five dollars a head.

I didn't need an entrance fee. When the seance was well started, I crossed the street, unlocked the door of the basement of the temple building by means of a key I had made, and entered the basement.

I was surprised to find that no one was on guard at the door. The under-stage room at one end of the basement

had a light in it. As I moved toward it, somebody in the under-stage room beat on a gong. I stopped, listening to what went on in the hall above.

Dr. Seer's strange voice rose, shrilling above the excited murmur of voice in the audience:

"This is my fifth prediction! Five days shall pass and then a woman is to die. Her name—it is somewhat indistinct. Her name is Irene Kalaban!"

My automatic dropped into my right palm as my left hand seized the knob of the door of the under-stage room. There was only one man in the room—one of the toughs I had encountered on my first visit to the temple. He was in the act of putting down his big brass gong when I entered.

He dropped the gong, made a fumbling effort to draw his gun as his staring eyes met the blank, skull-like face of the Ghost.

I took two strides to him and slapped him down with a blow from the barrel of my automatic. He fell without a groan. I sprang to the platform of the tiny elevator which was used for spirit manifestations. On my first visit I had acquainted myself with the mechanism of the elevator. I had only to trip a lever with the toe of my shoe and I shot upward toward the stage with astonishing speed.

The trap above me opened and the platform of the elevator took its place in the floor of the stage. It was an all but instantaneous change. The Ghost must have appeared to materialize out of thin air. I was within two feet of where two feet of where Dr. Seer stood over his glowing crystal globe.

Gasps, screams from the audience, and even Dr. Seer who admittedly was a friend of the beings from another world, didn't look sure of himself. He shrank back from his spirit table. I reached out my left hand in which I had concealed my small flashlight. I picked up his crystal ball with my fingers, at the same time thumbed on my flashlight. The light beam passed into the crystal ball so that the ball

continued to glow even while it was in my hands.

My right hand reached into the hollow beneath the glass and I picked up a small square of white paper. I merely glanced at the paper, saw that it carried Dr. Seer's prediction, neatly typed. The spirits must have encountered a typewriter salesman!

I knew only one way I could get out of the building, and that was down through the audience. The elevator that was responsible for my appearance on stage was operated only from the room below.

**H**OLDING the glowing crystal ball at arms length, I stepped majestically from the platform. The audience melted back before me as though I was Poe's gruesome figure of the Red Death. To put teeth into my bluff, I recalled a portion of a biblical passage:

"Nor let there be any among you who seeketh the truth from the dead. For the Lord abhorreth all these things and for these abominations, He will destroy them at their coming."

So I passed through the hall and no one so much as touched me. It was too bad I couldn't have walked through the door at the rear without opening it, but that is a little beyond my magic.

Once through the door, I stood at the top of the stone steps leading down into the sidewalk of East 127th Street. Not far away I could see Irene Kalaban, more than half supported by the stocky Robert Martin. Mrs. Kalaban was sobbing. Martin was telling her to be brave.

I vaulted over the iron railing that bound the steps, hid in the shadows below.

"Get control of yourself, my dear," I could hear Martin pleading. "You mustn't take that message as final. There is surely some escape."

A sedan, its back shades pulled, started from the curb a few hundred feet east of Seer's temple. Its right hand tires didn't leave the gutter. The car braked alongside the spot where

Martin and Irene Kalaban were standing. Two men got out. I saw the flash of gun steel before Martin did.

One of the men from the car was Artie Meyer, McTeeg's wooden-faced henchman. The other man I didn't recognize. Martin, struggling furiously, was beaten back to the car where hands out of the rear compartment seized him. Irene Kalaban was gunshoved into the car by Artie Meyer. I think it was Artie who got in under the wheel.

I left my hiding place on the run, sprang onto the back bumper of the car as it got under way and clung to the spare tire carrier.

It was the wildest ride I ever took. The edge of the bumper seemed to be cutting through the soles of my shoes. My feet were as unfeeling as blocks of concrete by the time the car came to a stop in front of an old loft building.

I stepped off the bumper, but kept hidden behind the car while Artie Meyer and his pals got Martin and Mrs. Kalaban out of the car and hustled them into the building. I got a glimpse of the last man to enter and had no trouble recognizing the flabby figure of Artie's boss, McTeeg.

I had succeeded in putting a crimp in McTeeg's blackmail efforts to extort money from Irene Kalaban. Now he was up to some new scheme but with that same motive in sight, no doubt—the two hundred thousand dollar reward money that was to be paid to anyone proving that they had communicated with the dead Kalaban.

**A**S soon as McTeeg and his captives were inside the building I came from behind the car and followed. They had gone to an open doorway beyond which were stairs leading up to the quarters above. I was about to go up the steps when the door at the head of the stairs opened. I ducked back, flattened myself against the building, and waited for someone who was coming down.

It was that henchman of McTeeg's

I had not recognized. McTeeg had probably sent him down to watch out for cops if what went on upstairs got noisy enough to attract attention.

When the man came out of the door, I flicked my knife from my sleeve and sprang in behind him. I let him taste the steel of the knife between his shoulder blades.

"Try anything funny," I said in the Ghost's flat, chill voice, "and I push it all the way in!"

"What the hell?"

Turning his head, the man looked into the skull-face of the Ghost. I brought the knife out of his back and hammered the hasp of it to his temple. As he went limp, I crouched, catching his body across my shoulder. Then I carried him up the steps to the landing at the top and dropped him in front of the door.

I listened at the door. I could hear McTeeg's voice squeaking.

"Now listen here, Mrs. Kalaban, you're coming across with the secret code that you and your husband arranged before he died. You're coming across right now. I'm not asking. I'm telling."

"I never will," Irene Kalaban said. Her voice quivered. "I know what you want to do. You want to use the code in order to convince those who hold that two hundred thousand dollar reward that communication has been established with my dead husband. You're after that reward, aren't you?"

I heard Artie Meyer laugh.

"How'd you guess it, Mrs. Kalaban?" McTeeg said. "That's just how it is. Of course, if you could hand over the two hundred grand to me yourself, then I wouldn't have to bother with this secret code business."

"Don't tell, Irene," Robert Martin's voice warned.

"Now you listen, hard guy," McTeeg said, evidently to Martin, "the way we're going to persuade Mrs. Kalaban to talk is by pulling out your toe nails with a pair of pliers. If she doesn't seem inclined to talk then, why we'll

just start in with *her* toe nails. See how it works?"

"You touch her and I'll break every bone in your fat bady, you damned swine!"

I think McTeeg hit Martin in the face.

I did not wait any longer. If McTeeg was getting rough, it was time I stepped in.

**I** RETURNED my knife to my sleeve, took a gun out of my coat pocket. Then I started to groan as though I were the unconscious man at my feet. I heard the man speak just three words when I had encountered him at the foot of the steps, but I now imitated his voice fairly well, calling out in anguished tone to Artie and McTeeg for help.

I could hear somebody approaching the door from the other side. I stepped to the side of the door, waited for it to open. It was Artie with his wooden-Indian face who came out to see why his pal was lying in front of the door groaning. I reached out and tapped Artie on the back of the head. He toppled down on top of his pal.

I swung around the edge of the door to enter the room and slammed squarely into McTeeg himself. I think I bounced back a little from his rubber belly. McTeeg's right hand went back to his hip pocket where he always carries his gun. I rushed him at the same time and my hand went around to his hip pocket also.

What I did was simply shove the gun I was carrying within easy reach of his grasping fingers. When I shoved him back his draw was so hurried he simply pulled my gun from my fingers instead of his own. Then I rocked his big body back a few steps with a punch to one of his chins.

McTeeg brought around the gun which he thought was his own, pointed it squarely at me and pulled the trigger.

I don't know why it is, but I simply have never been able to break myself

of having a little fun at the expense of men like McTeeg. When McTeeg pulled the trigger of that gun I had been so careful to hand him, a banner of green silk about a foot square and bearing the word "BANG" in white letters, was expelled from the barrel of the gun. It's just a comedy stunt I've used a lot on the stage. The gun itself is of the "scare" variety, a perfect duplicate of the real thing in appearance.

To say that McTeeg was amazed is putting it mildly. He took one look at the gun in his hands, at the green streamer that mocked him. He thought that the Ghost was the devil-incarnate, thought, maybe, that the Ghost had actually changed his own gun into this harmless thing he had in his hand.

McTeeg dropped the trick gun, never thought about drawing his own and much more deadly weapon, and rushed at me like a mad bull. His one desire at the moment was to get out of the place.

His fear and rage made him an easy mark. In spite of that padding of flesh, I finished him off with half a dozen blows. The man just didn't have any guard. He was too nervous after the gun trick. So McTeeg fell within a couple of yards of where his henchmen lay.

I had time to look around the room. McTeeg hadn't got far with his torture. Martin's shoes hadn't even been removed. Both Martin and Irene Kalaban were tied in straight chairs. I cut them loose with slashes of my knife.

"Y'know, that's damned decent of you!" Robert Martin sputtered as he got out of his chair. "Thought Mrs. Kalaban was in trouble for a moment."

**M**RS. KALABAN grasped both my hands in hers. There were tears in her lovely eyes as she thanked me.

"You must tell me who you are," she said. "Are you—are you this poor leper the police are hunting?"

Maybe I did look like Mrs. Kalaban's conception of a leper. I smiled

with my eyes and I think the Ghost's face looked less dead and certainly more happy.

"I'm the Ghost," I said. "You may have heard of me."

"Yes," she said, "but I thought the Ghost was—was a sort of criminal—"

"A detective, my dear," Martin said knowingly. "He's a private detective, or something of the sort. Smart man."

"Whoever you are, I want to thank you sincerely," Mrs. Kalaban said.

Little did she know she was thanking her old friend, George Chance!

"I happened to hear Dr. Seer's prediction tonight, Mrs. Kalaban," I said. "Don't worry too much about it. Take every precaution, of course. You see, McTeeg seems to be only one of the persons who has designs on that two hundred thousand dollar reward. Someone else has a similar idea."

"What do you mean?"

I turned to Martin.

"Will you run downstairs and see if you can find a cab in which to take Mrs. Kalaban home?"

Martin hesitated. Perhaps he didn't like to leave Mrs. Kalaban alone with a ghastly looking stranger. But she urged him to go.

As soon as he was down the stairs, I smiled at Irene Kalaban.

"Some one may be trying to scare you into revealing the secret code which would enable them to claim the reward money," I said. "I believe that in a little while you will receive another message from Dr. Seer. When you do, inform me immediately by putting a potted plant in the front window of your home. I will see it and communicate with you. Do that, please. Will you promise? I am trying to help you and others, too."

"I will promise," she said gravely. Again she took my hand. "Thank you, Mr. Ghost."

Left alone with the three unconscious crooks, I telephoned Standish and told him to send men to pick up McTeeg and his pals. I told him that Mrs. Kalaban would gladly swear out

a warrant for their arrest on the charge of extortion.

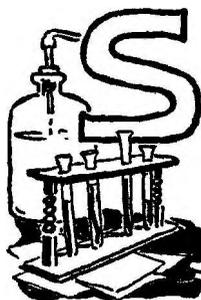
"Can you pin the Palmer murder on McTeeg?" Standish demanded.

"I can't," I sighed. "I can't pin it on anyone yet."

"We haven't found a trace of this Eric Emboyd," Standish said, and his voice sounded grave. "I have a piece of unpleasant information for you. The Court of Appeals handed down its decision on Glenn's appeal. The sentence stands. George Chance . . . must die . . . in the electric chair."

## CHAPTER XXV

### *The Essential Clue*



SLEEP was not for me that night. I worked. Scarcely moving in my chair except to light a cigarette or look at the material clues I had picked up during the adventure, I still worked harder than ever before in my life.

Slowly the tangled threads of the mystery unrolled before me. The four material clues I had gathered dropped into their places and fit—first the leper's coin, then the Mexican map with its cryptic pencil notes, then the message I had stolen from beneath Dr. Seer's crystal, and finally the light globe which had come from the murder scene in the Curtis house.

In the morning, my mental notes arranged, I went down to Centre Street in the disguise of Dr. Stacey to pay another visit to the office of Police Commissioner Standish. Standish was at his desk and in the company of Merry White and Robert Demarest. Merry had tears in her eyes. The commissioner was looking grave and worried. Demarest lolled in his chair, his lips looking as though he had a sour taste in his mouth, his heavy eyelids drooping.

"The condemned man looks as though he had eaten a hearty meal," Demarest said as I entered. "A meal consisting principally of the fruits of despair."

"Don't, Dr. Demarest!" Merry pleaded. "This is serious."

"Serious, did you say?" Demarest raised one eyelid a little higher and gave Merry a look. "You don't hear me chortling with glee over anything, do you?"

Standish gripped my hand hard, a glum look on his face.

"Have you got anything?" he asked quietly. There was a hopeful light in his eyes.

"I've got a lot of work laid out for Demarest," I said. "And for you, too. I don't know what strings you have to pull to do it, but I want the body of David Palmer exhumed!"

"An exhumation order takes a while to get," Standish said calmly. "But I'll take a short cut. Why do you want it?"

"Because," I said, "I think Demarest made a mistake in the cause of Palmer's death. A very natural mistake," I added lest Demarest be offended. "The poison thorn was found in the back of Palmer's neck. He had every symptom of curare poisoning. Curare, when it acts fatally, strikes the respiratory system, producing a paralysis of the body's breathing apparatus."

"You've been reading up on the stuff," Demarest said. "Well, maybe you're right about us missing the cause of Palmer's death."

"Isn't it right that you can't tell much how curare is going to act on different individuals?" I asked.

Demarest nodded.

"Personally, I didn't think there was a lethal dose of the stuff on the thorn in Palmer's neck. But as you say, it's a funny poison."

"Couldn't poison gas have killed Palmer?" I asked. "The same gas that killed Livingston and Holland and Curtis' wife?"

**D**EMAREST nodded again. "I suppose so, though naturally we didn't make any tests for poison gas. To poison one man in that room filled with people by means of gas sounds more fantastic than the poison thorn. Besides, we could see the poison thorn and we could detect curare."

"You forget," I said, "that when Palmer died, he wasn't in a room filled with people. He was in a spirit cabinet, smaller than most closets. Gas introduced into that cabinet would have passed upward because of the construction of the cabinet itself. That cabinet would have acted like a chimney, air coming in at the bottom and out at the top, carrying the gas upward where it would have been lost in the upper reaches of the stage itself and carried out by the ventilators."

"I'll be damned!" said Standish. "Had you thought of that, Demarest?"

"It's logical," Demarest said. "But why the poisoned dart?"

"Simply because the murderer brought *two* weapons with him," I said. "He wasn't expecting to have the opportunity of using the poison gas. But he *did* have that opportunity. Then after Palmer was dead, he shoved the poisoned thorn into the back of Palmer's neck to throw us off the track, planted the box of thorns in my pocket to give Magnus somebody to pinch right away."

"Goody!" Merry said, clapping her hands. "Then that proves George Chance couldn't have killed Palmer!"

"Does it?" Standish asked softly. "If the poisoned thorn was to throw the cops off the track, how can we prove that George Chance didn't employ the poison gas, too? I'm not trying to be contrary. I'm showing you how hard this thing is to break down."

"No use borrowing trouble," I said. "We've got to depend on getting further medical evidence. Meanwhile, puzzle over this."

I put the small piece of paper bearing Dr. Seer's fifth prediction down on Standish's desk. My friends crowded

around, studying it. It was simply a typewritten note which Standish read aloud:

This is the 5th prediction. Five days from today, Irene Kalaban will die.

"Where did you get this?" Standish asked.

**I** TOLD him. I pointed a finger at the typed numeral "five" which numbered the prediction. Directly above the figure five were two tiny marks that looked like dots.

"Take a look through a magnifying glass," I suggested. "I think that's our essential clue. Whoever typed that note accidentally touched the shift key of the typewriter just a little as he wrote the figure five, so that the character which is mounted above the five on the same type-bar showed up. A common typist's mistake."

Merry jerked one end of Robert Demarest's watch chain from the doctor's vest pocket. There was a magnifying glass on that end of the chain and she looked at the tell-tale mark through the glass.

"Above the figure five on the standard typewriter keyboard is a percent sign," Standish said. "That doesn't look like a percent sign. Looks like two little dots."

"Not dots," Merry corrected. "Two little *lines*. And they both slant in opposite directions as though they might meet like the peak of a roof. Only these don't meet."

"They would have met," I said, "had the shift key of the typewriter been completely depressed. Since I believe the killer is working entirely alone, we can make a close guess that the person who made that typewritten message is the killer. And those little marks above the five tell the tale."

"I don't get it," Standish said, "but I know better than to ask for the answer at this moment. What do we do next?"

"A lot depends on what Demarest

finds out," I said. "There isn't a whole lot of time, but in that time I may hear from Mexico."

"Mexico?" Merry gasped. "What's Mexico got to do with it?"

I remembered that I had not shown them the map I had taken from Curtis' house. I showed it to them now, pointing out the penciled markings—the arrow labeled with the word "ours" and the encircled letters "He."

"More Greek," Merry said.

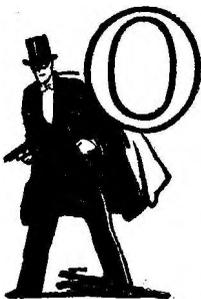
"Literally Greek," I said with a smile. "I think the 'He' originally came from the Greek word that means 'sun.'"

"Now," I went on, "in case nothing turns up before the night of the execution, I want to arrange a little party. Our guests will be Robert Martin, Irene Kalaban, Carl Van Borg, Dr. Seer, Harold Harkness, Mc Teeg, Artie Meyer, and if Emboyd should show up, he'd better come along too. Maybe I can get the killer to try and make a ghost out of the Ghost."

"This party," I went on, "will take place at the house of George Chance. Not the Ghost's rectory, understand, but the house of George Chance. I have my reasons."

## CHAPTER XXVI

### *The Leper*



ON the day following, Joe Harper came into the rectory. He didn't say hello to me, but then he seldom does. He simply walked down the basement steps into my presence, his cigarette dangling from his lips, his face bearing a haggard look, and started to strip off his clothes.

"I want to take a bath," he said. "Flop houses and lepers—the association sort of has me itching."

"Lepers!" I gasped. "Joe, have you found Eric Emboyd?"

"Found him? I slept on a mattress about six feet from the one he slept on," Joe said. "In the morning I offered to buy him a breakfast and he was half starved. So he followed me to a meal. Who am I to go around setting up bums? Let the city attend to it, I think. So I led him into the hands of the cops."

Joe sauntered over to the bar and began looking for a drink.

"I could use some internal antiseptic, too," he explained, pouring whiskey. "Emboyd looks like one of Demarest's cadavers. I didn't touch him. I let the cops do that. Not only has he got leprosy, but he's nuts, too. He tells everybody that he killed Dr. Livingston and Michael Holland and Curtis and Van Borg. But Van Borg hasn't been killed and Emboyd doesn't know how he killed any of them. But he may have done it."

"What about Palmer? Did he confess to killing Palmer?"

"No, he didn't," Joe said. "So you're still in a black spot. Emboyd never heard of Palmer."

That was the way it was. That was how it had been all through the case. I seemed able enough to prove nearly everything except that I did not kill David Palmer.

That afternoon, I passed Irene Kalaban's house and saw in her front window the potted plant—the signal that she needed the Ghost. In a hotel wash-room, I switched my makeup to the Ghost disguise and went immediately to her house. She had received a communication from Dr. Seer who offered to contact her husband's spirit and get Kalaban's spirit to intercede for her with the fates that had promised her death.

He could do this, Seer claimed, but only if he had that secret code that Mrs. Kalaban and her husband had arranged. He was sure he could contact her husband's spirit and that Kalaban's spirit would be able to persuade the fates to "lay off."

It was as clear a case of extortion as

the one McTeeg and Artic Meyer had tried to pull. It was, perhaps, more subtle. I am certain it would have worked had it not been for the Ghost's intervention, because poor Mrs. Kalaban was worked up to such a hysterical pitch by Seer's prediction that she would have parted with anything to appease the demons of doom that threatened her.

I assured Mrs. Kalaban once more that she needn't worry. Then I got in touch with Standish and told him to have the cops pick up Dr. Seer. This only resulted in some collective headaches down at headquarters, because all that could be got out of Seer was that he had gone to Mrs. Kalaban with that proposition because the spirits had told him to do it and had threatened him with certain death if he didn't.

**D**R. SEER was easily the most sincere and determined believer in spiritualism I had ever met. And he made a perfect dupe for the unscrupulous murderer I was hoping to catch.

Still no word from Mexico. I visited Robert Demarest in the morgue on the north side of Bellevue Hospital.

Demarest took me into his private room, sat down wearily in a chair, motioned me to do likewise.

"Well, we've done things," he told me. "Exhumed the Palmer cadaver, gone over the whole territory of his anatomy. Cyanogen gas got him, too. But right there I quit. How the devil the gas was administered, I don't know."

I took from my pocket the electric light globe I had taken from the lamp in the Curtis home. I asked Demarest if he remembered the overturned lamp which was almost directly beneath the body of Mrs. Curtis. He nodded.

I took a pin from my pocket, used it to explore the frosted glass of the light globe I had removed from the lamp. At that portion of the globe where the trade mark is usually stamped, I showed Demarest a hole into which I could put the pin.

"And yet in spite of that hole, you

can screw the bulb into a socket and it will light up," I said.

"The bulb's double then," Demarest said. "The inner bulb contains the light filament."

"And the outer contained the poison gas under pressure," I said. "This tiny hole here was sealed with some transparent cement which was melted by the heat from the inner globe, allowing the poison gas to escape. You can see some of the melted cement still there."

Demarest showed considerable excitement, which means that he opened his drooping eyelids a bit wider.

"Cyanogen was a perfect choice," he said. "Extremely deadly. A single whiff of it will kill. Yet it dissipates rapidly, leaving but little trace. But if a globe like that was used to kill Palmer, where was it placed?"

"Inside my own spirit cabinet! In that close little booth where David Palmer was tied! The globe was simply screwed into the blue-shaded lamp inside the cabinet. It's there right now and it's just like this globe I brought from the Curtis place."

"Remarkable," rasped Demarest. "Remarkable the lengths you go in order to prove yourself a killer."

"*Anyone* could have had access to the stage to examine my spirit cabinet inside and outside with the curtains closed," I told him. "I invited people up on the stage to look the cabinet over."

"How damned easy," Demarest said. "And just as damned deadly. But where can you get globes like that—double-bulbed, filled with poison gas?"

**T**HE truth is, Bob, that you can't get them now. They must have been made to order by Michael Holland. Holland had the equipment. He could make the gas, because according to you he died of a dose of the gas while making it in his lab. He had glass-blowing equipment. And anybody who could make a triple-phase radio tube could certainly construct a double light globe."

"And according to you, Holland was murdered?" Demarest murmured. "Ghost, you poke too many holes in the dignity of the office of Chief Medical Examiner Demarest. I said he died an accidental death."

"We won't fight about that," I said. "The only thing there is to indicate murder in that case is the fact that Holland's death was predicted by Seer. Holland and the killer had planned to work the scheme together. After Holland had made up some of the poison gas globes, enough for the killer's purpose, how easy for him to just happen to drop something on the apparatus that was being used to generate the gas. The gas would burst out into the killer's face. The murderer would simply hold his breath and walk out."

"But what's the motive?" Demarest insisted. "The case has as many convolutions as a human brain."

"Wait until tonight," I said. "We'll net killer, motive and all."

"Or," he concluded sourly, "we'll each net a nice little boudoir out there." He gestured toward the next room where the cadavers were kept in their individual coolers.

By eight o'clock that night, I was ready for the little party that had been arranged in the home of George Chance. Inspector Magnus and two of his plainclothesmen were on the reception committee in the hall. It was their duty to search the suspects as they came in.

Van Borg was the first to arrive. While some of my guests would have to be dragged to the house, Van Borg came voluntarily, smiling his charming smile. Through a secret peep hole in the wall, I watched what went on.

"What poor devil, Chance!" he exclaimed to Magnus as he entered. He tapped a rolled up newspaper under his arm. "I've just been reading about his scheduled execution."

"Well, murderers will be murderers," Magnus said. "You don't mind if I search you, do you, Mr. Van Borg?"

"Not at all!" Van Borg put his newspaper into Magnus' hands and raised

his arms above his head. The two plainclothesmen went over him very carefully. Then he was led into my little auditorium.

For the entertainment of my friends, my house has a room which is equipped with a small stage on which I sometimes do magical tricks. It was from this stage tonight that I expected to point out the killer.

AS soon as the guests had been assembled, Police Commissioner Standish stepped out onto the stage. He got quickly to the point.

"I have brought you here at the suggestion of the Ghost, that mysterious individual who has the uncanny knack of getting at the bottom of mysteries in a hurry. The Ghost is of the opinion that George Chance did not kill David Palmer. The Ghost delights in irony, and he thought it would be quite ironical if the real killer was brought to justice in the house of the man he had framed. Before I turn the meeting over to the Ghost, I want to say that I have never once supposed George Chance guilty of that crime for which he is scheduled so soon to pay the penalty of death I sincerely hope that there may yet be time to save him from the chair."

Standish stepped down, and instantly I made my appearance from behind black curtains. My face was the skull face of the Ghost, my eyes expressionless as I looked out upon the little audience.

McTeeg and Artie Meyer were sitting close together. Police were on either side of them. A single policeman watched where Eric Emboyd sat a little apart from the others. Emboyd, his face made hideous by his disease, his thin hands like claws, was a more frightful looking person than the Ghost.

Then there was Irene Kalaban, beautiful and serene. At her side was Robert Martin, his craggy face looking like a mask of granite. Van Borg lounged in a club chair behind them, his newspaper lying in his lap. Beside Van Borg was that near-sighted, bald

little man Mrs. Kalaban had introduced to me as Mr. Harkness, executor of her late husband's estate and keeper of the coveted two hundred thousand dollar reward for proof of Kalaban's spiritual existence.

Dr. Seer's starved figure was perched uneasily on the edge of a straight chair. His eyes moved furtively from the police to me. Only one door at the back of the room was unguarded. Perhaps he planned to make a break for it if the opportunity arose.

In the flat, emotionless voice of the Ghost, I began to speak:

"In this room is a murderer. And inside of half an hour, the finger will point unerringly to him. There is no escape. Do you understand that thoroughly? *There is no escape. McTeeg—*"

"Who? Me?" McTeeg jerked nervously up in his seat.

"McTeeg," I went on, "you were extremely interested in getting your hands on that two hundred thousand dollar reward which according to the will of the late Kalaban must be paid to anyone receiving from the spirit world a code message. This code message you tried to force Mrs. Kalaban into giving you so that you could hoax the executors of Kalaban's will into giving up the reward.

"You tried first of all to blackmail Mrs. Kalaban on trumped-up evidence. The price she was to pay for your silence was the code message which would enable you to claim the reward. Blackmail failing, you tried brutal extortion with the code message as the price of mercy."

"I didn't kill nobody," McTeeg said.

"I know you didn't," I said. "Because the motive behind the murders was *not* to get the two hundred thousand dollar reward. It was something larger than that. Look to your right and at the wall."

**A**S I said this, I pressed a button with the toe of my shoe. Lights in the room went out. By means of a projector, a greatly enlarged image

of the Mexican map I had found in Curtis' desk was thrown on the wall.

"You see, Mr. Murderer," I said mockingly, "the Ghost's fingers are quicker than your eyes. I didn't destroy the map, did I? You would have destroyed it, because it points clearly to the real motive.

"Before he died, Curtis told me that he was one of several men who formed an expedition into Mexico. The route of this expedition is indicated by the pencil marks on the map as you see.

"You will also note a region which has been encircled and marked with the letters 'He.' Now 'He' is the chemical symbol for the gas helium. In as much as Livingston, Holland and Curtis were scientists, we can assume that they discovered a deposit of helium gas in Mexico. You will also note that an arrow on the map is marked 'ours,' which would indicate, perhaps, 'our property.'

"What happened was that the five men discovered a profitable supply of helium in this region, kept the secret to themselves, bought up the property for a song. The five men held joint ownership of this helium property. The deed to this property can be checked with the Mexican authorities.

"Since the property was owned jointly, a motive for murder is at once apparent. Livingston is dead. Curtis is dead. Holland is dead.

"Since the United States government has a monopoly on helium with the chief deposits in the entire world located in Mexico, the value of this property can scarcely be estimated," I went on. "So we have a motive for murder. Mr. X must destroy all the co-owners of the property except himself in order to become a very wealthy man."

"Helium," a voice croaked out of the darkness. "That was it. It was helium. And we didn't want to develop the property because—"

I stepped on the button that turned on the lights in the room. The croaking voice had come from the leper, Eric

Emboyd. All eyes turned on him. Realizing this, he stopped talking.

"You recall something, Emboyd?" I urged.

"I do," he said. He passed a hand over his forehead. "It is so vague. Hate has crowded out so much. But those men I hate were with me in Mexico when we discovered helium there. We bought the land, as you said. Then after we bought it, some of us thought it was wrong to develop it because it would destroy our country's monopoly on the gas. If the gas was sold to foreign countries and used in the foreigner's dirigible balloons, we might be destroying our advantage in case of war. So we never spent a penny to develop the land and sink the gas wells."

My deductions checked with Emboyd's testimony. Considerably more confident that I could force the killer into making a break which would positively identify him, I stepped to my small draped magical table which was sitting on the stage. It held not a single piece of visible apparatus except a lamp without a shade. I lighted the naked globe.

I made no comment. My idea was just to let the killer sit there and watch that light globe and worry about whether or not I knew his murder method.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### *The Finger of Light*



STEPPING a little to one side of the table, I continued my little lecture on murder.

"Emboyd has spoken of men he hates. And Emboyd's hatred has made him a perfect fall guy for the murderer!

Realizing that Emboyd had escaped from the leper colony determined to be revenged on his enemies

who had sent him there, the killer had nothing to do to frame Emboyd except let the police draw their own conclusions. Emboyd was afraid of the police because he didn't want to be sent back to the leper colony, so naturally his movements were furtive. And Emboyd was determined to be revenged on the men who had sent him to the leper island. Emboyd actually *did* stalk some of the men who were murdered with malicious intent. He actually did stick a knife into Livingston in the dark, not knowing him to be dead. But he did not commit murder!"

"Can you prove that?"

It was the bald, near-sighted Mr. Harkness who spoke.

"I can," I said. "First of all, consider the murder of Dr. Livingston. And Livingston's death is the only one in the group in which there is any actual evidence against Emboyd. Emboyd visited Livingston the night of the murder as attested by Livingston's servant.

"The servant had accidentally blown a fuse in the house. He had left the house to go buy a fuse. When he returned, he met Emboyd coming out of the house. A bit later Livingston was found murdered. But Livingston died in the light, not in the dark as he would have done had his death occurred after the fuse had been blown out. The constriction of Livingston's pupils at the time the body was found proves that he died in the light.

"Yet Emboyd did not arrive at Livingston's house until after the fuse burned out, plunging the house in darkness. We know this, because in order to hunt out Livingston, Emboyd's first act was to go to the fuse box and try to repair the lights. He used the usual emergency method of making such a repair—by putting a coin back of the burned out fuse.

"Reaching into his pocket for a coin, Emboyd's diseased fingers could not distinguish between a coin and a leper's token which the police have

now on exhibit. He put a leper's token back of the fuse and the lights still did not come on because the hole in the center of the token prevented the proper contact to be made. Emboyd groped in darkness, found what he thought was the living Livingston.

"Then the return of the servant frightened Emboyd away. Now, if Emboyd did not kill Livingston, he did not kill the others. Why? Because it is very unlikely that two criminal minds could have thought up the same clever, subtle murder method that was employed in each murder case except the last.

"For in the last murder, the killer intended to remove Curtis by the same means he had killed the others—by poison gas. But Curtis' train was late and it was Mrs. Curtis who stumbled into the death trap the killer had arranged. Curtis then had to be shot."

"What does all this have to do with the killing of David Palmer by George Chance?" Robert Martin asked. "Y'know, I'd like to see Chance cleared of this crime."

**I** MENTALLY echoed Martin's wish.

"I'm coming to that," I said. "For Palmer, too, was killed by poison gas, not by a poisoned thorn. Chief Medical Examiner Robert Demarest will bear me out in this. To throw the police off the track, the killer put the thorn into Palmer's neck and planted a box of thorns in Chance's pocket. The killer had probably intended to use thorns and a blow gun on Palmer, because he was afraid he might not have the opportunity to use his poison gas.

"But why kill Palmer at all? Was Palmer one of the joint owners of the Mexican helium property? There is no evidence to support an affirmative answer. But Palmer knew about the helium property and who owned it. The killer, in order to try and get money advanced to develop the helium property, broke the secret to Palmer.

Palmer was a clever investor and the killer thought Palmer would be willing to back development of the helium land with money.

"Palmer refused, but you can rest assured that he did not refuse without first making a careful investigation which proved to him that the killer was not the sole owner of the Mexican property and therefore had no right to develop the gas wells. Then Holland died a violent death. Put yourself in the killer's shoes. Could the killer start eliminating the co-owners of the property while Palmer lived? Not without arousing Palmer's suspicion. And Palmer's suspicions must have already been aroused by Holland's death—at least so the killer thought. So we have the motive for Palmer's death.

"Of the co-owners of the Mexican property, Holland, Livingston, Curtis were to be murdered. Emboyd was to be framed for the murders and die in the electric chair, leaving the killer the sole owner.

"But now let's consider Dr. Seer for a moment."

When I spoke his name, the gaunt Prophet of Doom got to his feet. A policeman promptly pushed him down again.

"The killer, in order to realize on his murder-investment," I went on, "had to have money to develop the property. He hit upon the same source of money that McTeeg did, namely the two hundred thousand dollar reward money in the Kalaban estate. But the killer's methods of getting at that money were more subtle.

"Since he was going to kill Holland, Palmer, Livingston, and Curtis anyway, the killer decided to predict his victims' deaths ahead of time—predict them in such a manner that Mrs. Kalaban would be sure to hear those predictions. In the company of Robert Martin, Mrs. Kalaban was attending all of Dr. Seer's seances.

"Now Dr. Seer isn't a fraud, not consciously a fraud, anyway. Dr. Seer is simply the ornamental fringe of a gang

of spook crooks who have been duping the public for some time. Dr. Seer really believes in spirits.

"The killer simply made a deal with the spook crooks behind Dr. Seer. The killer furnished the crooks with the murder predictions. And the crooks, by mechanical means, made these predictions appear in Dr. Seer's crystal."

**I** GAVE them a minute to let this sink in, then went on.

"Why these predictions? Simply to build up Mrs. Kalaban's belief that Dr. Seer had supernatural powers and could predict death. If he could do that, the killer was certain that when Mrs. Kalaban's own death was predicted, he would have her sufficiently frightened that she would reveal that secret code message which she and her dead husband arranged. And that code message is the only key to the two hundred thousand dollar reward which the murderer needed to develop his helium property."

A gesture of my hand signaled to Joe Harper in the wings. Except for tiny footlights at the stage edge and the light globe which burned on my magic table, all the lights in the room went out. I stepped to the table.

"A few hours from now, an innocent man will die in the electric chair if the real killer of David Palmer isn't found," I said in a grave voice. "But George Chance was framed for that killing—framed for a definite reason. Perhaps the killer might have easily cast suspicion on Emboyd for the Palmer crime as he did for the others. But George Chance had to be removed from the picture. Why? Because everyone knew that George Chance was out to break the spook crooks—to prove that Dr. Seer was a fraud. If Chance had done that, the killer's chances of getting his hands on the Kalaban reward were slim."

I unscrewed the lamp bulb from its socket, stepped off the stage and into the audience.

"This globe may not be as innocent as it looks," I said. "I want each of you to examine it closely."

"What's the meaning of this tommyrot?" Robert Martin growled.

The meaning was that I was trying to scare the killer into making a break. I didn't tell anybody that, though.

After the globe had passed through the audience, Augie Meyer handed it back to me and I went up on the stage.

Now, because I was going to switch light globes and get hold of a trick one in place of the one I had passed for inspection, I had placed a little mark on the base of the bulb I had handed out. When I took a look at the bulb in my hand, my heart gave a bound. It wasn't the same bulb I had passed out. Clever to the very end, the killer had panned off on me one of his deadly gas-filled globes, hoping that I would screw it into the lamp socket where it would have shortly delivered its deadly contents into the room. But more importantly, directly into the Ghost's face.

Somewhere, out in the darkened end of the room, I detected the opening and closing of a door. The killer! He had slipped out. He didn't care to be around when the room was filled with poison gas. But what he didn't know was that he had sneaked into a dead end. There was no exit that he was apt to find from that room except the door through which he had passed!

**T**HE deadly bulb in my hand, I vanished into one of the black art wells of my magic table at the same time that the second well delivered the trick bulb into my hand. My idea originally had been to perform the floating light bulb illusion, cause the globe to float right down to where the killer sat, and at the same time explain how the murders had been accomplished by light globes. If the killer made a break for the next room through the only exit unguarded, my globe would have followed him through the wall.

Now my moves were essentially the same, only I didn't have to explain anything.

The killer in the next room supposed that I was using his deadly light globe in my experiment!

I merely set my trick light globe on top of the lamp socket, though I pretended to screw it into place. The trick globe was powered by flashlight batteries concealed in its shank, and I lighted it by simply screwing the brass base of the globe.

A system of silk threads operated by reels concealed in the front portion of the house had been arranged for the floating illusion. There are a number of other ways of causing the levitation of a light globe, but here I had to have an assistant manage the trick while I pursued the killer. Merry White and Joe Harper were actually responsible for the trick.

While the audience watched, I waved my hands over the globe. The thread they couldn't see tightened and the globe, still lighted, floated up from the socket and out over the heads of the audience. They were so intent on watching the globe, they didn't see the Ghost vanish through the trap in the floor of his stage.

Instantly I was in the basement of my house, running in the direction of the room above my head in which the killer waited. An elevator and trap arrangement very similar to that which had been incorporated in Dr. Seer's stage, gave me instant access to the room where the killer was.

I stepped onto the platform of the elevator and was virtually shot up into the room above. There was no light in the room, but the Ghost would furnish that shortly!

I could hear the killer moving about in the room, trying to find a way out. Once he whispered a curse. It was then that I uttered the rollicking, ghoulish laugh of the Ghost.

"Wh-what was that?" the killer whispered.

I laughed again.

"Don't you know, murderer? Don't you know who it is? There isn't any escape," I said. "We will simply wait here for the light to come."

The killer said nothing. It sounded as though he was moving toward me. I wondered if he had the nerve to come to grips with the Ghost.

He must have been half way across the room when he stopped. He stopped because light was coming into the room through the wall. It was my trick light passing through an opening which was cleverly concealed by a tightly stretched silk curtain painted to resemble wall paper.

**T**HE burning globe apparently passed through the solid wall, floated on its unseen thread across the room. The killer didn't move. Fear must have frozen him.

"The deadly light globe," I whispered. "And you are the only man who had the opportunity in each murder case to plant those deadly globes where your victims were bound to light them.

"But your big mistake, Mr. Murderer, was using your typewriter to write the predictions which appeared in Seer's globe! Because you made an error on your last prediction note—a simple typographical error. You accidentally depressed the shift key a little when you made the figure five. The character on the upper part of the figure five type bar came in contact with the paper and showed us two tiny lines slanting toward each other like the peak of a roof.

"That was how I knew your identity," I whispered. "On an ordinary typewriter, the character above the figure five is a per cent sign. But on your typewriter you have a piece of special type, a special character particularly useful to men of your profession!"

The light globe floated nearer and nearer. I could see the killer's face clearly illuminated. He was white as death. His eyes followed the floating globe that for all he knew contained

the deadly gas that might be discharged any moment.

"That special character on your typewriter was a caret mark, particularly useful to authors, Mr. Carl Van Borg!"

As I said that, I reached out, tweaked the silk thread that carried the light globe. The light globe fell to the floor, shattered. And Van Borg—well, Van Borg simply fainted. You see, he really didn't know but what I was using the

murderer, enabled the governor to stay the execution of "George Chance." Van Borg when he came to and found himself hopelessly caught, confessed to all the murders. His confession corresponded quite closely with the evidence we had gathered.

ONE thing that came up that night of the Ghost's party was the question of how Van Borg had got his gas-filled light globe into the house at all

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

# MURDER MAKES A GHOST

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### AND OTHER EXCITING STORIES

deadly gas-filled globe he had panned off on me!

\* \* \* \* \*

There is very little more to tell. The party Merry White and the Ghost put on in the Ghost's rectory for Glenn Saunders, on his release from prison, was memorable. Besides Glenn and Merry, Tiny Tim Terry, Joe Harper, Robert Demarest, and Ned Standish were there. We talked about the case of the Prophet of Doom quite a bit, naturally.

Standish's message to the governor saying that he had found Palmer's real

that night I exposed him. Standish claimed that Van Borg had been searched carefully, just as the others had.

"And how did Van Borg know you were going to pull the floating light globe stunt and thus give him a chance to substitute the deadly bulb?" Tiny Tim piped.

"He didn't," I said. "He didn't know I was going to pull the floating light globe stunt. If that hadn't given him the opportunity to use his globe, he would have simply gone to the door, thrown the globe across the room to

break against the wall, hoping that by holding his breath he could slip out while the rest of us breathed in the gas."

Merry White sat down on the arm of my chair.

"Suppose you tell us, smart man," she said, "how Van Borg got that gas-filled globe into the house when the policemen so carefully searched him. You're trying to dodge the important question."

"I am not," I said, giving her hand a playful pat. "While Van Borg was being searched, good old Inspector Magnus was holding the deadly light globe. It was rolled up in Van Borg's

newspaper. Van Borg smilingly handed his newspaper to Magnus, took it back after the search was over."

I had never heard Robert Demarest utter a hearty laugh until that moment.

"If Magnus knew that," he said, "he'd come into the morgue and curl up on a slab!"

"Here's to the Ghost's next case!" Tiny Tim cried, raising his glass.

"What's your hurry?" Joe Harper asked. "Can't a man get some rest around here?"

But he knew, and I knew, and we all knew, that there would be a next case, and that when it broke, the Ghost would walk again.

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**MURDER MAKES A GHOST**  
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# MURDER BY THE YARD

By **CARROLL B. MAYERS**

*Author of "Disc of Disaster," "Minted Menace," etc.*



*I half-stepped back, tried to wrench my gun from his grasp*

**I** KNEW I'd have to murder Roger Merrick as soon as I heard his voice over the phone. It wasn't instinct or a strange hunch. It was Merrick himself. His words were curt, peremptory, pregnant with unmistakable disaster.

"Clark Castell? Come over to fund headquarters at once. There's something I want you to explain."

So the old boy'd caught those last two entries. I swore shortly. I'd known at the time I wasn't covering them enough, but I'd been in a hurry at the moment, had promised myself I'd go over them later. Now it was too late.

Merrick had located me at my hotel. Before leaving, I drew on a pair of

**Short of Funds, Castell Tries  
Balancing His Books With  
the Red Ink of Murder!**

gloves, took a .38 automatic from my dresser, wiped it thoroughly with a handkerchief and slipped it into my topcoat pocket.

"Good thing I picked you up, Roscoe," I muttered aloud, patting the pocket briefly. "With your silencer, you're good for just one shot, but that'll be plenty."

Roger Merrick, one of Cosmo City's

civic leaders, was chairman of the annual Community Chest drive. I'd known the old boy for some time, and when the campaign had first started I'd landed a position as his secretary.

I'd felt the setup would be about the softest snap I'd ever dealt myself in on, and I wasn't far wrong. The goal of the drive was \$250,000 and the money just rolled in. Rolled out, too—into my pocket to help pay a string of gambling debts and market obligations. Juggling entries to cut myself ten grand in three weeks was the easiest work I'd ever tried.

I'd slipped, though, through plain damned carelessness. But the .38 I had in my pocket would take care of that angle.

It was just starting to drizzle when I left the hotel, but I didn't bother flagging a hack. The Acme Building, wherein Merrick had established campaign headquarters, was a short three blocks away. I'd make better time walking. And I wanted to get there before the old boy did any more phoning.

I made the office building in less than five minutes. Ducking inside quickly, because the rain had suddenly increased, I rode up to the fourth floor, walked down the corridor to a door at the far end. Lettering read:

COSMO CITY COMMUNITY CHEST  
HEADQUARTERS

I made sure the corridor was deserted. Then, slipping my right hand into my topcoat pocket, gloved fingers curling snugly around the gun butt, I entered the office.

Old Merrick was seated behind a desk across the room. In addition to the neat piles of envelopes, pledge slips, gummed display stickers for pasting in home windows to signify contribution, a bulky ledger was opened before him.

The old boy looked up sharply as I came in. He was a tall man, well-built, with iron-gray hair, and a pair of kindly gray eyes.

Only those eyes weren't kindly now. They narrowed accusingly as soon as Merrick saw me.

"See here, Castell," he rapped, coming to the point at once and tapping the ledger with a heavy forefinger. "In going over the last few pledges, here, I've found some startling discrepancies. I . . ."

"Sure, sure, I know," I interrupted. "You find some queer-looking entries, and you call me over to explain. Well, don't worry, I'll straighten everything out all right."

He didn't like my cocky tone.

"Now, see here, Castell," he began again.

ONCE more I cut him short. I didn't intend wasting time arguing. The old boy had me, had me red-handed enough to send me up the river for ten years. I knew it—and I knew what I had to do about it.

"Listen, Merrick," I told him quietly, slipping the .38 from my pocket and stepping close before the desk to cover him squarely. "I know you've tumbled at last. But you're not going to do any talking. I'm clearing myself right now with a robbery-and-murder setup that'll have the cops chasing themselves all over town."

"No, Castell! You're mad!"

Even before I finished, Merrick read death in my eyes. Suddenly, as I slowly squeezed the trigger of the silenced automatic, he reared, lunged across the desk-top, grabbed frantically at my right wrist, twisted the gun from my hand.

I swore harshly. Merrick's desperate action had caught me unprepared. I half-stepped back, tried to wrench my gun from his grasp. But he fought me savagely, bent still more over the desk-top. I managed to get both hands on his wrist, but the next moment, with a mighty surge, he flung himself bodily across the desk.

Envelopes, display stickers, pledge blanks, cleared wildly from the smooth surface by Merrick's catapulting form, swept to the floor in a white shower. The heavy ledger shot directly at me, caught me in the stomach a split-second before Merrick's own weight smashed into me. But I had the gun again, twisted free of his clutch.

Knocked off balance I crashed to

the floor on my back, the old man on top of me, fighting desperately for the gun.

He never got it. Despite my prone position and the fact that the entangling tails of my topcoat hampered me greatly, I managed to wriggle clear of Merrick's body, bring up the .38 and bury it beneath his heart.

Sput!

Muffled by the closeness of our bodies, the silenced report was barely audible. With a final, choking gurgle, Merrick collapsed in a grotesque heap.

I climbed to my feet, breathing heavily, eyed the old boy's corpse briefly. That was that! The next step—and an act which could do nothing but strengthen my position with the police in the event of any possible suspicion—was to report the “attempted robbery” and murder.

I'd determined before hand to make no attempt to dispose of the gun, and I wasn't worried about it being traced. I'd bought it out of town, under an assumed name. And the careful wiping I'd given it at the hotel, plus the gloves I'd worn ever since, removed all danger of fingerprints.

Leaving, then, the automatic on the paper-littered floor, and giving Merrick's body a final derisive kick, I paused only long enough to smooth my hair, adjust my clothing, recover my hat from the corner into which it'd been knocked in the scuffle.

Then, after opening the door a mere crack to determine the corridor was still deserted, I quickly left the office, walked back to a public phone booth beside the elevator bank.

I made my voice breathless, excited.

“Police headquarters? I—I want to report a murder. . . .”

**I** HAD difficulty in restraining a leering smirk of derision as I stood in one corner of the office quietly watching the police investigation.

Detective-lieutenant Loft, who'd answered my phone call with a homicide squad detail, appeared inclined to accept the robbery-murder angle. All his first questions had been along that line.

The fingerprint expert and photog-

rapher were just finishing their work. I'd had to choke back a snort of scorn as I'd watched the former give the automatic I'd left on the floor a thorough, yet fruitless, going over. Loft dismissed the two briefly, gave orders to one of his men to keep the outer corridor clear of the morbid thrill-seekers who'd quickly collected upon the squad's arrival, turned to me suddenly.

“The M. E.'ll be here shortly,” he remarked. “In the meantime, it won't do any harm to run over this setup again.”

“Of course, Lieutenant,” I agreed readily. “Anything I can do. . . .”

He interrupted me with a brief nod.

“Naturally. Now, as I understand it, Castell, you were employed by Merrick as his secretary during the course of this Community Chest drive. You weren't working this afternoon, but you called here at the office to pick up some papers you wanted to go over tonight. When you opened the door you found the office ransacked, Merrick's body on the floor. Without entering the office you immediately returned to the phone booth at the end of the corridor, called headquarters. Is that correct?”

“Quite,” I affirmed. Loft had reviewed my story as I'd excitedly given it to him upon his arrival. It was a simple yarn, yes, but unshakeable. I hadn't a thing to worry about. After the first excitement of the murder died down, I'd cover up those ledger discrepancies, just to be sure, then coast along until the whole thing blew over. After that, I'd quietly settle my obligations, leave town.

Loft came back to my story again.

“I'm assuming, you understand, Castell, that everything here's just as the killer left it. You're certain you didn't come into the room after opening the door? Didn't disturb anything?”

I shook my head.

“Positive. I only opened the door, looked across the threshold. That was enough.”

A strange, steely glint of conviction suddenly appeared in Loft's narrowed eyes.

“All right, Castell,” he snapped

curtly, hand descending heavily on my shoulder. "You're through—and you're going to burn. You've probably been milking the fund, here, had to kill Merrick when he found you out. I knew from the first you were our man, but I stalled you along to see what sort of setup you'd try to put over."

Wild-eyed, an icy finger of terror tracing my spine, I glared defensively at him, tried to shake off his hand.

"What do you mean?" I demanded roughly. "Are you suggesting. . . ."

Loft cut me short.

"I'm not suggesting anything, Castell. I'm telling you. You shot Merrick, tried to build a robbery setup out of the murder. But you slipped, and I'll show you where. Take off your coat!"

As he spoke Loft seized the collar of my topcoat. Numb, dazed thoughts whirling madly, I mechanically shrugged my arms from the sleeves. Loft pulled the coat clear, abruptly held it in front of me.

Instantly a horrible, choking gasp broke from my lips. He was right! I was headed for the chair.

Clawing at my throat frantically, I collapsed on the floor. Above me, Loft's acrid words echoed dully:

"And you didn't even come into the room, eh?"

I scarcely heard him. With lightning swiftness, my mind was flashing back to the scene in the office a short time ago. Old Merrick flinging himself across the desk-top, clearing its smooth surface of papers in a wild flurry—smashing into me, bearing me to the floor, flat on my back—momentarily holding me there—

Holding me there long enough for my topcoat-covered shoulders, damp from the sudden rain, to come in contact with, pick up the damning evidence of my crime—one of the gummed display stickers swept to the floor by Merrick's frenzied lunge!

\* \* \* \* \*

Only six hours more. My cell is at the end of the wing in the death house. That makes "the last mile" just about twenty yards long.

Twenty yards—and I'll walk them for the sake of ten grand.

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# NERVOUS ENERGY

By HAROLD F. SORENSON

Norman Savage's Scalp Is at Stake  
When the Trail Leads to Slaughter

**S**AVAGE toed the door open in his stride, and ran up the stairs. Considering how neutral he was in person, it was astonishing how frantic Wimberley had sounded over the phone. Savage strode to door 1B, and knocked. Even in the hall, he could hear the howling wind.

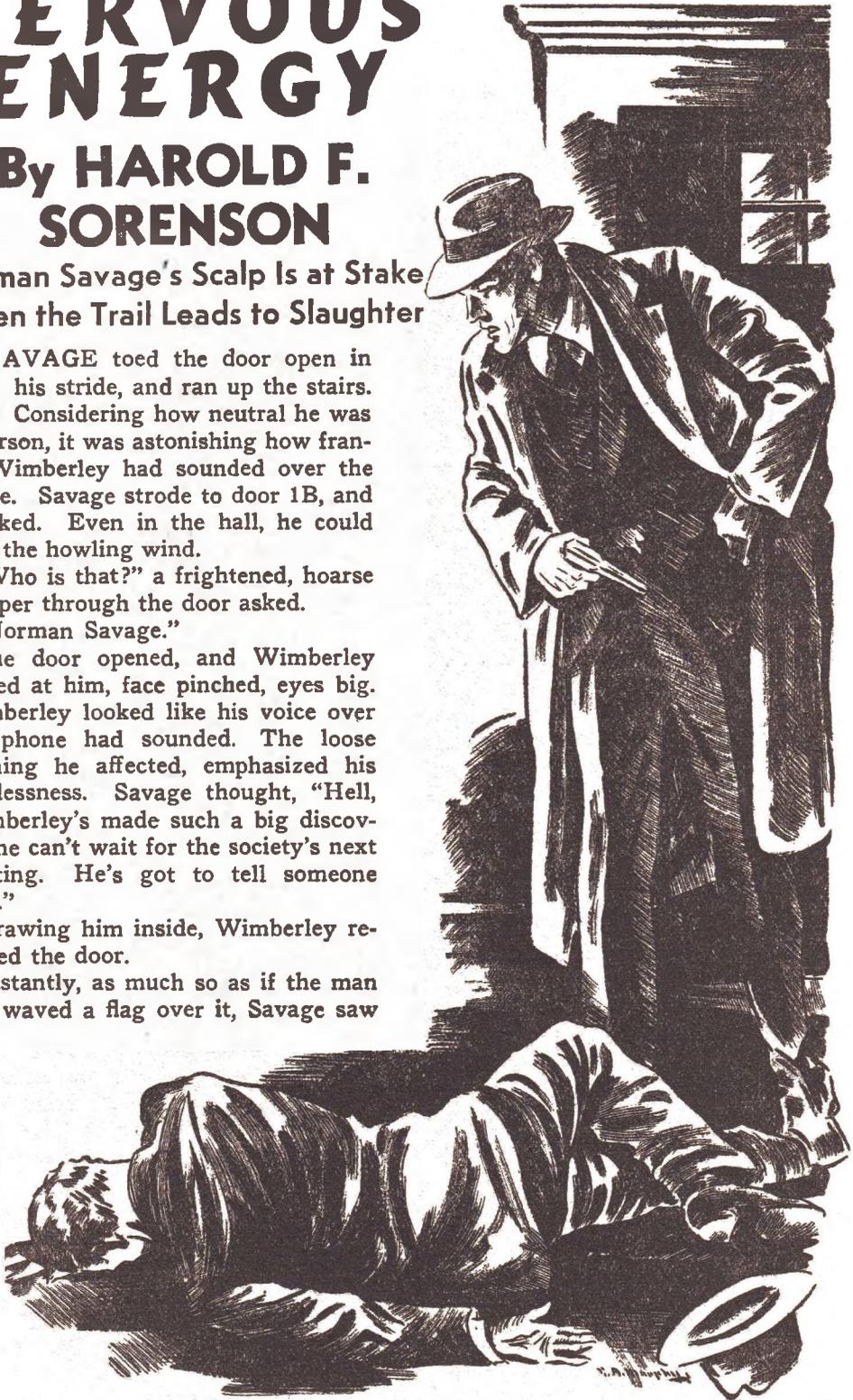
"Who is that?" a frightened, hoarse whisper through the door asked.

"Norman Savage."

The door opened, and Wimberley peered at him, face pinched, eyes big. Wimberley looked like his voice over the phone had sounded. The loose clothing he affected, emphasized his helplessness. Savage thought, "Hell, Wimberley's made such a big discovery he can't wait for the society's next meeting. He's got to tell someone now."

Drawing him inside, Wimberley re-locked the door.

Instantly, as much so as if the man had waved a flag over it, Savage saw



"Who is he, Bob?" Savage asked, looking down at the corpse

the spilled-looking corpse near the studio couch.

"I came home and found him like that." Wimberley gripped Savage's muscular arm as if it were a rope he was climbing. "I nearly went mad—till I thought of calling you."

"Well, it's okay, Bob," Savage said, friendlylike. "You should have called the police. We'll do it now."

"No!" Wimberley clung to him. "You're a private detective. You can handle this. You do it every day for people."

High cheekbones and straight black hair gave Savage's tan face an Indian-like appearance. The Indian stuff helped business, people being suckers for that great trackers and hunter-downers stuff. He couldn't help it that often he looked cruelly skeptical.

Wimberley cowered, but insisted. "You do, Savage, you do. . . ? Every day . . . things just like this. . . ."

Savage shook his head.

"Oh, God!" Wimberley streaked white fingers down a still whiter face. "I thought once you got here—"

"Stop it!" Savage didn't feel like pampering.

All this stuff of people insisting he must be an Indian had inspired Savage with an interest in Indians. Almost regularly, he attended meetings of the Society for North American Indian Perpetuation, and as much as he knew about Wimberley was that he'd met him there. True, he had a soft spot for Wimberley, for saying, "You look like an Indian yourself, but of course you're not. Scot, maybe some French, right?" Which was correct.

"Who is he, Bob?" Savage asked.

"John Hantz." Wimberley flopped into a Navajo blanket covered chair.

Lighting a thin, dark cigar, Savage swept his eyes over shelves of Indian pottery and relics, over walls encrusted with tomahawks, bows, scalping knives and some war clubs. All so handy, yet apparently unused in this killing.

The dead man was about fifty. His

hair was mostly gray, as if the copper color had worn off. He presented the profile of a man never good-looking, but probably pleasant. Worry lines were etched too deeply into the face for death to have smoothed them away yet.

Savage found the apartment had only the one door, from the hall, and that was okay. The locked windows had not been tampered with. Impatient to call the police, he yanked Wimberley to his feet.

"Who else lives in this house?"

"There's just four apartments," Wimberley moaned. "An old lady and her daughter on this floor. But they're away. Right over me, is Douglas Arant. On the floor with Arant is some fellow named Mordort."

"There's a janitor, isn't there?"

"In the cellar," Wimberley said.

Savage took him down there.

**T**HE janitor was snoring on the floor of his untidy cellar quarters. Savage sniffed the empty pint bottle beside him, tasted the dregs.

"Chloral hydrate, he's been doped."

He gestured to the board hung with tagged keys. "There's your answer."

"Thank God! I knew you'd do it, Norm." Wimberley's eyes softened, and his soul seemed to slip back into him, filling out his cheek hollows. "When he comes to, he'll tell us who gave him the doped bottle."

Savage found several bottles with the same liquor label. "Someone doped the janitor's own bottle." Savage unhooked the 1B keys and rushed Wimberley back up into the apartment.

Savage went to the phone.

"Don't phone!" Wimberley shouted.

"I owed Hantz money. Everybody knows that. He made a terrible scene in my office. Last night he followed me into a bar, and started it all over again. They'll say I killed him on account of that."

Savage lifted the phone. Wimberley charged. Savage half turned. Wim-

berley got the shoulder point in the chest, and bounced back. He scrambled up quickly, and got out the door.

Savage sprang after him.

Up the stairs came a heavy-set, thick-shouldered man. Glancing at Wimberley, at Savage, he put his foot out, tripped Wimberley—Too late, he exclaimed:

"Wimberley!"

Throwing himself in Savage's path, the man put up a pair of big fists.

"You leave him alone!" he ordered.

Savage hauled Wimberley back by the ankle. An abnormally tall man came halfway down the stairs from the floor above, leaned over the banister.

"What's going on there? Arant! What is it?"

Wimberley's protector took a quick look at the too-tall man, snapped his eyes back at Savage.

"I don't know what it is, Mordort. This fellow. . ."

"Tell them it's all right," Savage growled.

"It's all right, Arant," Wimberley gulped.

Savage lugged Wimberley back into the apartment. He put through the call to the police.

"What the hell you think you'd get out of running away like that?" Savage scolded. "Who's Arant?"

"I told you. He lives overhead. No, no friend. Arant's been after me to spend an evening with him, but I told him I'm almost never home lately."

The police came. Savage took particular pains to give Inglis a smooth version of Wimberley's story. This did not include the attempted escape. A bad thing to hide, but Savage took the chance. He turned over the janitor's keys.

Inglis' gray eyes searched Wimberley's washed-out face. Then the glare dug at Savage. Savage grinned a little, just enough to convey that he and Detective-lieutenant Barry Inglis, men of the world, knew Wimberley was up against one of those things.

Inglis' big features were stony.

Savage understood. Lieutenant Inglis had been a swell guy. But higher-ups had impressed on Inglis that Savage was not a police department favorite. Inglis, perforce, had become tough.

Inglis pulled Wimberley's loose jacket tight.

"You're not helping yourself. Where were you tonight?"

Wimberley had been walking! He refused to add to that.

"You owed Hantz money," Inglis shouted. "That janitor doesn't mean a thing. You could have doped him!"

Wimberley shook his head doggedly. Color heightened in Inglis' face, he growled at Savage as if he were to blame.

The medical examiner came over.

"Strangled, Inglis. Powerful hands, neck almost broken. Died"—the m.e. glanced at the electric clock, then with professional caution consulted his hunting-case watch—"between eight and nine. That's the best I can tell you now. Maybe a half hour either side."

**I**NGLIS asked the doctor something.

"Dropped dead right here from the killer's hands," the doctor wagged his goatee. "No question. Why do you ask?"

Inglis shook his head, and shot Savage a glare.

The fingerprint man reported smudges and part of the janitor's thumb on keys and tag. The janitor was still dopey.

"This looks bad, but actually, there's not much of a case against Wimberley," Savage placated. "It could have happened the way he says. Admit it, Inglis."

Inglis might have, but his attention was caught by something else. Savage turned quickly, to see Arant and the tall, tall Mordort in the room, gapping at the corpse. Savage backed quickly to the door.

"All right, then you don't have to admit it, Inglis. I say Wimberley is innocent, and I'll prove that someone besides Wimberley murdered John Hantz."

Savage stamped out.

Now, there would be fireworks. Arant would tell the story of Wimberley's attempted escape, and Mordort would confirm it. Savage hurried down the stairs.

That meant Inglis would want to take him and Wimberley to police headquarters.

The wind swooped and howled about him in the street.

He was hardly able to breathe, and he was glad to get into his car, slam the door, and gasp.

Inglis had dragged John Hantz' address out of Wimberley, and Savage had memorized it. He drove out there now, with the wind pounding like surf against the windshield.

A woman opened the door of the spacious house. She was plainly dressed, about twenty-eight. Savage had expected a butler.

Savage said he had come about John Hantz.

"I'm Eunice Hantz, his wife."

She invited him in. Savage hated the job of breaking bad news. He delayed till they were in the living room, and then broke it to her as best he could, telling her the entire story.

Mrs. Hantz pressed her chin down on her clasped hands.

"Oh, poor John! This is so terrible for him! I'm so awfully sorry for him," she cried.

Savage thought she sounded more as if regretting the death of a dear, respected friend, than of a husband. He was about to press her with questions. He had difficulty framing just the right question.

Then she looked up. Her eyes were a pale bluish-green, clear windows through which a tormented spirit stared at him, and he at it. He knew instantly that she was concealing

something. And he sensed that she was going through a more terrible ordeal than any questions of his could inflict upon her.

He sat there breathless while she battled it out.

"Bob Wimberley couldn't have killed John. Bob was here!" she exclaimed, torturedly.

"Here!" Savage gave a quick gasp. He swallowed. He asked, tightly, "What time was he here?"

"He came about seven. He left before nine. I expected John home, and . . . there was no reason why my husband shouldn't have known, shouldn't have seen Bob here, only that. . . ."

**ONLY** that Eunice Hantz and Bob Wimberley were in love.

This put a chilling aspect on things. While Savage was confident that she respected herself too much for any of the common lapses in conduct, he felt shaky about Wimberley. He'd scarcely given a thought to the possibility that Wimberley had killed John Hantz for money.

But now, now that he knew Wimberley loved Hantz' wife—

"Mr. Savage, shall I tell the police Bob was here?"

Savage turned his eyes away, and slowly lit a thin, dark cigar. He'd stuck his neck out once tonight, concealing that Wimberley had tried to escape.

Inglis knew about that now.

Should he cover up for Wimberley a second time? It takes only a few things like this, and a private dick discovers that he's not licensed to practice any longer, that his thousands of dollars of bond money are forfeit. Especially when he is not a police department favorite to begin with.

And there was more to it than that he didn't want to protect a guilty man. Savage was dedicated to his job. He didn't think what else he could be if he were not a private investigator. He knew he'd just be nothing.

Well, at least he'd go down fighting for his last client.

"The time Bob was here," he said, swallowing, "would not prove an incontestable alibi. With just money for motivation, the police have him strapped tight enough. With this—"

She wrung her hands in numb despair.

Savage held another match to his cigar, and his eyes made a swift survey of the room.

"There's been a change in your circumstances. Servants gone—"

"John has been losing money in the used-car business." She laid her clasped hands in her lap. "Two weeks ago, he was deliriously happy. He confessed that he'd been in sight of bankruptcy. But he was about to recoup, he had a magnificent opportunity. He said we would be twice as rich as ever. I was terribly afraid he'd make another mistake, but it would have hurt him if I had said so. And he told me nothing, said it was all very, very secret."

Savage got up, touched her shoulder lightly. He knocked ash off his cigar, and sat down, puffing energetically.

She got hold of herself, continued: "Two days ago, John was penniless. He was like a madman. He had to get hold of some money, that he might save everything."

"I see. So he hammered at Wimberley. Who else owed your husband money?"

"John was always known as a soft touch. I don't know how many owed him various amounts. But besides Bob, only Kenneth Mordort owed him a great deal."

"Mordort? A very tall man with a nervous face? Why, he lives in the house with Wimberley."

"He moved there lately." She nodded. "I don't understand why, he's not Bob's friend. What made my husband especially furious was that Mordort owed him some ten thousand dollars. John had a mortgage on Mor-

dort's home, but John waived that so Mordort could sell. Mordort got the money, and came here, empty-handed. He promised to pay John later. All he would tell John was that he had invested the money. John gave Mordort till this week to pay up. There was a terrible scene," she ended weakly.

"Don't worry too much." Savage got up. When he smiled, as he did now, that Indian look completely disappeared. "If I can do anything, I'll do it."

**H**E walked down the hall, and out. The moment he was outside, the wind blew the tip off his cigar in a streamer of sparks. Savage dug his teeth into the cigar, and dove for his auto.

He decided to return to Wimberley's. The janitor should be revived by this time. Savage pressed down heavily on the gas.

Breathless from the wind, he got into the hall, and hurried down to the cellar.

It was tough getting the janitor out of bed. Savage thought him drunk, but the man was sick, and frightened.

"Please," he begged, "leave me alone."

Savage pushed into the untidy, musty room that was like an animal's lair.

"What time were you drinking?"

The janitor laid a hand over his narrow, antique ivory forehead.

"After I make supper, I drink plenty steady. From six on, I take a nip every time I feel like it. But not through the day," he insisted. "I would not touch a drop during the day."

"For my part, you can start tomorrow," Savage replied. "What time did you take the drink that laid you out?"

The janitor dropped into a sagging wicker chair, and pressed his horny hands between his dungareed knees.

"I can remember that. Sure! I was figuring that I had time to go for an-

other bottle before I called for the garbage on the dumb-waiters at eight. So it was a quarter to eight. I think, I will finish my bottle. Then I wake up with the cops shaking me."

"But before that," Savage insisted. "How long was it before a quarter to eight that you took a drink?"

The man's dreamy eyes became vacant. He pulled at his straggly mustache.

"Oh, I tell you. I wasn't drinking much. I was making the bottle last. I bet I don't have a drink from half-past seven till I took that one that knocked me out."

"You were nursing that bottle! Fifteen minutes between drinks! And you were out of this room during that time from half-past seven to a quarter to eight?"

"Oh sure! I don't make the bottle last so long, if I am hanging around it. I got to be running around a lot anyway. I can't lock my door every time."

Savage nodded, and left him. He thought things over, and decided to go home and do some thinking, have a couple of cups of coffee.

It was a short drive. He set the car under the street light outside his house, and started across the sidewalk, hand clamped atop his hat, body slanted forward. He heard the growl of a siren. Looking under his arm, he saw a police car come to a stop. Savage gained the doorway. Inglis shoved across the sidewalk, and got in beside him, his face wind-whipped, as Savage could see by the police car spotlight that was on them.

"I just came from Mrs. Hantz," Inglis grumbled. He gave Savage no time to speak. "All right, wise guy. I have Arant and Mordort as witnesses that Wimberley tried to escape. You weren't going to tell that. No case against Wimberley! No, not with you covering up for him at every turn.

"And I got it out of Mrs. Hantz. From hints I got from Wimberley, I forced her to admit she and Wimber-

ley are in love. You've had time, and you haven't reported that either. Okay, Savage. You have an early morning appointment with the commissioner." Inglis hurled the last words as he turned away, the wind almost choking him:

"Expect to lose your license."

Inglis bucked the wind, lunged into the police car, and the machine drove off.

**S**AVAGE threw his coat on one chair, his hat on another, up in his apartment. Swell stuff! Losing his ticket! He lit the gas under the coffee, his throat so tight that he wondered if he would be able to swallow. He had to eat, he couldn't let this get him. There was some cheese in the refrigerator. He'd better eat, before they took that away from him too. This trouble could not have hit him at a worse time. He was nearly broke.

The phone rang. He was so disgusted that his first idea was to let it ring till it stopped. Then, shrugging, he went out and answered.

It was Kenneth Mordort. Savage's thoughts were in sufficient confusion that he couldn't place the man right away. Then he remembered Mordort for his abnormal tallness, recollected that Mordort lived on the floor with this Douglas Arant, above Wimberley's apartment. Mordort owed Hantz, had sold his home to pay Hantz, then had diverted the money from Hantz.

Mordort all but begged Savage to come over. Savage was inclined to refuse. He'd get to Mordort, in his own time. Savage knew there was one possibility of saving his license—cracking this case. But he didn't see how he could do that, without having a chance to think. Running to Mordort now, wouldn't help. But he heard the coffee boiling over. Savage said he'd come, just so he could hang up and get out to the coffee, and shut off the gas.

The wind swooped and drove, during the ride to Wimberley's. It shook

the car. Savage parked in front of the entrance, took a deep breath, a leaping take-off from the running board, and dove for the house.

His hat brim flicked before his eyes, something whoofed down past his body, then hit the sidewalk, and cracked. He jumped.

A brick! He looked up. Of course he could see nothing. The lacy oil-smoke clouds moving across the unlit sky were like a black curtain. And the wind cut his eyes till they watered.

Smacking the door open, Savage flew up the stairs, his coat straight out behind him. His mind raced even faster than his legs. He was under no illusions. There had been an attempt on his life. The wind had inspired someone with the idea of dropping a brick, because the wind might have made his death look like an accident. Accident hell! The coping would not have to be examined with a magnifying glass to disclose that a brick had been newly chipped out of it.

Savage reached the top floor, skidded, gained traction, and dashed for the roof stairs. The door at the top opened, and Mordort started down from the roof.

He seemed to rise to even more spectral height at the expression on Savage's face.

"Getting some fresh air?" Savage asked aggressively.

Mordort came down, shaking his head.

"I heard someone on the roof. There's been so much here tonight! I thought I'd better see. But there was no one. The way the houses are, he could have run over half a dozen roofs, or gone down an escape."

"What'd you want me to come here about?"

**M**ORDORT gestured him into the apartment. It was the rented furnished type, bare, unhomey, and Mordort had done nothing to individualize the place.

"Savage," Mordort wrung hands as big as shovels, "you said openly that you think Wimberley didn't kill Hantz. That means you're going to hunt till you find someone you can convict. Well, you're going to learn that I owed John Hantz over ten thousand, if you haven't already. But I swear I didn't kill Hantz."

Mordort bowed down to Savage's five foot eleven inch level.

"Who knew you'd asked me to come here, just now?"

"Why, no one. I used Arant's phone. I have none. But he was in the bathroom, with the water running, and couldn't have known whom I called. Why do you ask?"

"Where were you tonight Mordort?" he went on.

"I rang Arant's bell at eight o'clock, just to have a talk, but he wasn't home. So I went to the newsreel movies. I'd just come back, and before entering my apartment, I tried Arant's again. That was when I heard the noise downstairs, and you were pulling Wimberley away from Arant."

"Sort of a fraternity house, this, for Hantz' debtors. Did Wimberley's living here inspire your moving in?"

"No," Mordort denied. "I don't know Wimberley."

"You know Arant. You moved in here because of Arant?"

Mordort stuck his head up near the ceiling, and his voice came down slowly.

"I know Arant only since I'm living here. I moved into this house by chance."

"Okay. I don't have to beg for answers. I got a story out of the janitor. I'll bust things wide open with that story, tomorrow."

Savage said goodnight, and got out, pulling the door shut after him.

He went across the hall, and pushed the button.

Douglas Arant was dressing in the damndest get-up! Maroon velvet trousers, and indigo blue silk shirt, and a collarless, sleeveless heavy black bro-

cade jacket worked in patterns with gold thread. Emerald slippers, also gold stitched, adorned his feet, the toes long and upcurling. Arant had none too much hair, but there was a decided wave rippling its grayness. Savage introduced himself, winced as they shook hands.

Savage entered, on invitation. A radio-phonograph was playing the polivetzian Dances. Savage accepted a cigarette, puffed at rich, heady Turkish tobacco. He got the idea all this was very, very soothing. The only sign of the world of business was a roll of blueprints on the radio. Arant lay back in a chaise longue, eyes closed, round face suffused with serene delight.

When the record came to an end, Arant turned the machine off, sat down.

"Don't be alarmed at my costume. I believe in this sort of thing. Color, softness, harmony, these relax me after the day, restore my all-important nervous energy."

"Of course," Savage nodded appreciatively. He put down the intoxicating cigarette, and lit one of his long, dark cigars. "You hear anything, about eight o'clock?"

"Nothing."

"I asked," Savage said quickly, "because the janitor says you were in the house. Why didn't you let Mordort in?"

Arant's eyes got so big and dark they seemed to sink into his head.

"Mordort has too much woman trouble. A man sickens of listening to that sort of thing by the hour."

"How well did you know Hantz? I was out to his house, tonight. Splendid woman, his wife."

"Haven't met her, only Hantz casually. So the janitor told you I was home around eight! You investigating me?"

**S**AVAGE smiled widely, shrugged deprecatingly.

"You're a private detective, aren't you, Savage?"

"Yes." Savage sat back expansively, puffing importantly at his cigar. "I'm independent, though. The past sixteen months, I've earned just short of a quarter million dollars." He sighed, and let that terrific lie float about the smoky room.

"A quarter million! I ought to be worth ten times that."

Arant stared, politely. He poured two doses of something from the queerest bottle Savage had ever seen. It was a sirupy wine, vile and resinous. Savage hastily sucked the cigar to chase the taste.

But Arant smacked his lips, waited for Savage to speak.

Savage acted too indignant with himself to talk. But he calmed down.

"Couple of years ago, I fixed up a little woman trouble for a client. He wanted me to invest in his gadget for testing oilwells. I was too smart." Savage's face fell. "His gadget made him a millionaire several times over." Savage went through several facial contortions, wrung his hand, gradually fought away a black mood. "Are you in business?"

"I have a lab. Something of an inventor myself. Now don't think I'm offering you a chance to become a millionaire. I want no partner. But I'm working on an automatic gearshift that will revolutionize the automobile industry." Arant laughed, rubbed his palms. "I'll make them sit up and take notice."

Savage eagerly leaned forward.

"Won't it work?"

"Of course it works! But I want to cash in on it alone. I'm waiting for some stocks to rise, then I'll sell them, and finance myself."

"Why not let me help you?" Savage cried, and, at Arant's negative, "Delay is dangerous, Arant. Every invention has been brought forth by several men almost simultaneously. You're waiting for stocks to rise. Consider the motor industry's labs! What if they anticipate you, even by a day?"

"I'll lose it all, before I'll share it with anyone."

"Let me put in a hundred thousand," Savage demanded sullenly, a dynamo purring warningly under his tone.

Arant shook his head.

"Oh, Hantz was good enough, but I'm not, eh?"

"What are you talking about?" Arant sprang up.

"Hantz was in. I told you, I talked to his wife. I suspect Hantz hadn't money enough, and was squeezing Mordort and Wimberley for more. That's why it became murder. Now, I'm in."

Arant regarded him sidelong.

"You're cracked on the subject of making money on an invention."

Savage grinned like an Indian about to take a prize scalp.

"That makes me the more dangerous, Doug," he purred.

"Damn him! Hantz swore he'd told no one. I'll never trust another person." Arant slowly stood straight.

**S**AVAGE took a long step, hulked over him.

"Try to deal me out! The janitor saw you in the cellar, about twenty-five of eight. The man had taken a drink at seven-thirty, and it didn't knock him out. Ten minutes after he saw you near his apartment, he took another drink, and it did knock him out."

"You can go to hell!" Arant shouted.

"You think that's all?" Savage sneered. "The janitor saw someone come into his room. The figure wavered, the janitor was doped and isn't sure if the man was tall, medium, or short. You're short, Arant. Wimberley is medium. Mordort is tall. If you think I can't make the janitor remember the figure the way I want him to, try me. The murderer of Hantz is Wimberley, or Mordort, or you, and it's all up to the janitor to point the accusing finger. I have enough against Mordort to make him holler. He owed Hantz money, couldn't pay. You know why?"

(Continued on page 104)



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(Continued from page 103)

Arant retreated, shaking his head. "Because Mordort is in on your invention." Savage sneered. "If Hantz had made him pay, Mordort wouldn't have had the money to come in with you. You're the reason Mordort moved into this house. Mordort will talk, and when he does," Savage stabbed a long finger at Arant's face, "it will be about you! He'll save himself by swearing he rang your bell. He'll remember that as he went out to the movies, he saw someone that could have been you, go into Wimberley's apartment. Now, am I in?"

Arant clenched his teeth. His face had passed through the reddish stage to deep purple. His rage choked him. His eyes scanned Savage's face like twin acetylene torch flames. His words came out chopped up.

"Give me tonight to think it over."

"Think smart." Savage went to the door.

Savage stepped out, and smacked into Inglis. He slammed the door shut, clapped a hand over Inglis' mouth. Running Inglis along the hall, he pulled him down the stairs.

"Hey!" The cop at Wimberley's door started for them.

"Tell that cop to shut up and get inside Wimberley's apartment," Savage whispered fiercely.

Inglis took care of the cop. Savage led down into the cellar.

"You hear everything I said to Arant?" he asked.

"You lied like hell to him," Inglis barked. "You should have let me in. We could have put the pressure on him."

"Sure but try to make it stick, when it might be Mordort." Savage told him about Mordort's phone call, and the brick from the roof. "Someone's going to try to protect himself tonight. Got your flashlight, and a skeleton key? Fine! You and I are going to guard the janitor. It might get tiresome, but there won't be any question of making it stick, if it happens this way."

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"Oh, I may get tired," Inglis said airily, "but not you. You can call on that Indian blood."

"Don't start that again, now."

Inglis unlocked the door, flashed his light. A half-empty pint bottle stood on the table beside the bed, and the janitor was sleeping, snoring. Savage pulled Inglis to the small bathroom. Standing in the doorway, they were close to the foot of the bed.

Savage chewed on the end of a cigar. After a solid hour, Inglis fretted and fumed.

"Dammit, does he have to snore, like that?"

Savage felt the same. It was dark,  
(Continued on page 106)

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(Continued from page 105)

and smelled as if the janitor kept the garbage from the house under his bed.

Inglis stepped back from the door, and sat on the tub. He removed a shoe, and massaged his foot. Savage stretched, swallow a yawn whole—and tensed.

The door from the apartment to the cellar opened. The cellar light had been put out, but there was enough difference in the darkness in here and out there, because of the whitewashed walls outside, that Savage knew the door was opening.

Instantly, Inglis was at Savage's back, his chin on Savage's shoulder, his warm breath tickling Savage's ear. The prowler snapped on a handkerchief hooded flashlight.

Except for the janitor's snore it was silent. Resting the light on the table, a pair of hands poured all but a sip out of the bottle, then lighted the dingy oil lamp. Pulling up the cuffs of rubber gloves, the man produced a vial, emptied it into the whiskey. The rubber clad hands grasped the janitor's nose, forcing his head into the pillow, and stuck the bottle in the janitor's open mouth.

Savage and Inglis tumbled out of the bathroom.

"All right, stop it!" Inglis called.

Arant dropped the bottle, jumped for the door.

"Stop, or I'll shoot!" Inglis warned, with finality.

**T**HE janitor sat up and began to howl, piercing shrieks that belonged in the d.t. ward.

Arant leaned against the wall, gasping, trembling.

"Giving him a death dose this time, eh?" Savage turned the light up.

"Arant, with one thing and another, we have you. Won't bother to argue. You swindled Hantz, you're halfway through swindling Mordort, right?"

Savage took Arant out, shut the door on the janitor's bedlam, as the cop came tearing down into the cellar

**BEST FUN, FICTION AND FOTOS IN**

from Wimberley's apartment.

"Bucket water over that guy," Inglis ordered.

The cop went in.

Savage resumed:

"Arant, you took Wimberley's key from the janitor's board. When Hantz came, you took him into Wimberley's. You were afraid of me because I said I would save Wimberley if there was any way to do it. When Modort phoned me, you overheard, and threw that brick off the roof. You got down by the fire escape, I suppose."

"I wouldn't have killed Hantz," Arant blubbered, "only he made such a fuss about his money. I knew there'd be no shutting him up. I had other deals ready. With him shooting off his mouth—" Arant glared at them. "But it was self defense."

There was a great splash inside, the screams stopped, and the cop came out grinning.

"Phooie! If you didn't intend to kill Hantz, why'd you take him into Wimberley's?" Inglis shoved Arant into the cop's arms. "Hold tight, you got a killer there."

The cop got a good grip, and at Inglis' signal, hauled Arant up out of the cellar. Savage and Inglis went up abreast, as nearly as the stair width would allow. "Of course you knew it was Arant." Inglis remarked drily.

"I was pretty sure of it, Inglis. Everyone was short of money, and I  
(Continued on page 108)

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(Continued from page 107)

got curious about where it was all going. Follow the money, see? From what Mrs. Hantz said, I thought her husband had been blackmailed or swindled. The attempt to kill me"—they reached the top of the stairs and stood at the back of the lower hall—"was the first hint that the killer was worried. He was desperately trying a second murder because I was getting close to the answer to the first one.

"But what was I getting close to? Nothing, but the fact that Hantz had been swindled or blackmailed, and was so desperate about it that he was getting rough with his debtors—and maybe, with the swindler. Besides, I re-



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membered that Wimberley had told Arant he was never home in the evenings, lately. I suppose Wimberley meant, since he'd fallen in love with Eunice Hantz."

"You still have a long way to go, to prove to me you doped it all out, and didn't just tumble across it."

"Well, there was something of the man who lives by his wits about Arant," Savage explained. "Then, when his hands nearly crushed mine in a handshake, I recollected Hant's broken neck. And when I saw that outfit he wore, and heard about his all-important nervous energy, I was certain Arant was the type, if not the man. The blue-prints gave me the clue to his racket, together with the fact that inventions would appeal to a man in debt in the automobile business.

"Everything pointed to him, by the time our conversation was over. And, I'd have broken him tomorrow with the story I'd have primed the janitor to tell, and all the evidence I had against him. But"—Savage shrugged meaningfully—"you wouldn't give me the time. Tomorrow would have been too late—to save my license.

"So, I decided—I'll try it all out. If it works, all right. If it doesn't, so what? I'm no worse off than Inglis, he doesn't know anything either."

"Is that so?"

"You know the truth when you see it." Savage clapped him on the shoulder. "It's just that I have to dig it up for you to see."

"Okay, you dug it up." Inglis threw his hands up in a small gesture. "You can forget about that date with the commissioner in the morning."

Savage rattled some coins noisily in his pocket.

"Beer and sandwiches, on me. Come on."

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**CALLING  
THE  
GHOST**

**A DEPARTMENT FOR READERS**

**T**O those of you who have met the Ghost before, and to those who are meeting him for the first time in this issue, his alter ego, George Chance, sends greetings!

He and his aides—Glenn Saunders, the Double; Tiny Tim, the Midget; Joe Harper, the Broadway Rounder; Merry White, the girl with personality plus; Ned Standish, the Commissioner of Police; Robert Demarest, the sharp-tongued Medical Examiner—thank you for the wonderful reception you gave the first book-length novel in this new magazine, setting forth his and their exploits in the field of crime detection.

How do you like **THE GHOST STRIKES BACK**, the complete novel in this issue? We're eagerly awaiting your opinion of it. We think it's great—and hope you agree!

**The Next Memoir**

The next book-length novel from the memoirs of George Chance will be **MURDER MAKES A GHOST**. It will plunge the reader into a mystery in which George Chance's magical talents and the Ghost's criminological skill are taxed to the utmost in order to smash the **CASE OF THE HELMET MURDERS**.

Perils aplenty and thrills galore bring death close to the Ghost and his aides. You

will grip the sides of your chair tightly as you read **MURDER MAKES A GHOST**, a baffling mystery that packs a knockout punch in every paragraph!

### Our Mailbag

And now let us turn this column over to the readers who have written in to tell us what they think of **THE GHOST**. We wish we had space to print all of them, but a few must suffice.

From way down south in Tennessee comes the following:

Dear Sir:

I have just finished reading **CALLING THE GHOST**. I think, after meeting George Chance and the Ghost, together with his aides-de-camp, that they are great.

I followed the professional stage for a number of years—drama, vaudeville, and magic—and the Ghost's magical tricks were not strange to me.

Success to your new magazine.

H. A. Thompson.

Gallatin, Tenn.

And success to you, too, Mr. Thompson, in whatever line of endeavor you pursue.

### An Interesting Question

J. B. Harper—is his first name Joe?—raises an interesting question in his letter:

Dear Sir:

Upon reading the initial issue of your Ghost Magazine, I was very much interested in the story but somewhat startled about the Ghost's revelations. By this I mean the revealing of tricks and gimmicks used by him.

I am an amateur magician and know that no professional one who depends on his Art for his "bread and butter" would publicly reveal "how it's done." Also, one buys a mystery magazine to be mystified, so I merely voice the knowledge and experience of magicians all over the world when I say—"for our sake please stop revealing 'how it's done.'"

Sincerely yours,

J. B. Harper.

7023 Jeffery Ave., Chicago, Ill.

There is a saying that "it's fun to be fooled but it's more fun to know." It is on that basis that magicians—not George Chance alone but others as well—have now and again revealed to the world a small part of the secrets of their magical art. No violation of professional ethics is involved in doing this. The books on the subject of Magic obtainable in your libraries are compilations of material freely given to the world by magicians.

Of course, there are some secrets that magicians would not and do not reveal. George Chance has several such. As to exactly what **THEY** are, you'll never know—and neither will we.

Dear Sir:

While Joe Harper, Tiny Tim and Merry White make for fascinating reading, when George Chance takes the part of the Ghost it isn't all fiction. He actually lives the part and is writing from personal experience (or seems to be).

I'll be watching for your next issue.

Sincerely,

Wilfred H. Nelson.

240 12th Place, N. E., Washington, D. C.

And we'll be watching for your next letter, Wilfred. Thanks.



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The next letter is similarly heart-warming:

Dear Sir:

I have just finished reading your first edition of the GHOST and I am enthused over the entirely new idea which you have for this magazine, not the ordinary run of cut and dried material which I have found in others, but an absolutely new and fresh idea. This man who works with the Police in his own novel and effective way is something for which I have been waiting for a number of years and now that it has come you can be sure that it will be on my must list every time it comes out. How about a little more often than quarterly?

I have a suggestion which I think will help too. How about having Standish give George a few lessons in marksmanship? A fellow who carries a gun as often as the Ghost does should know how to use it effectively.

More power to your magazine and more of them.

Yours truly,

James J. Bailey.

R. R. No. 7, Box 364-A, Westwood Station, Cincinnati, Ohio.

We'll do our best to follow this reader's request for the more frequent appearance of THE GHOST. Also, we can inform him that the shooting lessons he suggests for George Chance are an actuality. Nevertheless, we can also say that George Chance will never be what is called a "born shot."

We don't think you readers will mind that so much, however. A few imperfections make a man human, and that's what George Chance is—above all things, human.

Next:

Dear Editor:

I just finished your first edition of THE GHOST. I think it's a great book. I've been looking for something new in this field and believe I've found it at last in THE GHOST. I'm looking forward to the next issue.

Yours truly,

John Harrison.

1407 Wellington St., Montreal, Canada.

The next issue won't disappoint you, John, nor will those to follow.

Dear Editor:

I've just finished reading a dandy magazine, THE GHOST. I think no detective magazine character as good as George (Ghost) Chance has ever been invented. His magical exploits are very exciting.

# 13

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Yours truly,

Arthur C. Liberty.

175 So. Main St., Concord, N. H.

Thanks for your suggestions, Arthur—and—wait and see.

### A Special Department

THE GHOST will shortly begin to feature regularly a special department devoted to magical tricks and stunts, simple but interesting and exciting. Watch for it. It will explain the performance of magical feats so clearly and concisely that regular readers will have little difficulty in attaining sufficient mastery to perform tricks in person, at home for the delectation of family or at parties for the entertainment of friends.

And here's an interesting letter from one of our many feminine readers:

Dear Editor:

Just a few lines to compliment you on the fine story in your first issue of THE GHOST. It is very pleasant reading—not a dull moment throughout the whole novel.

Best of luck and more power to the Ghost. I assure you I will be one of his most ardent fans.

Miss Florence Peterson.

4 Summer St., Worcester, Mass.

Thanks, Florence. It seems fitting that one of your sex should have the last word, and a very nice word it is indeed.

Now keep the letters coming in, Ghost fans. Regards from George Chance. See you next issue.

—THE EDITOR.

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30x4-75-20	3.50	1.00x24	2.25
30x4-50-19	3.65	1.00x24	2.25
30x4-50-17	3.65	1.00x24	2.25
30x4-50-15	3.75	1.00x24	2.25
30x4-50-13	3.75	1.00x24	2.25
30x4-50-11	3.75	1.00x24	2.25
30x4-50-9	3.75	1.00x24	2.25
30x4-50-7	3.75	1.00x24	2.25
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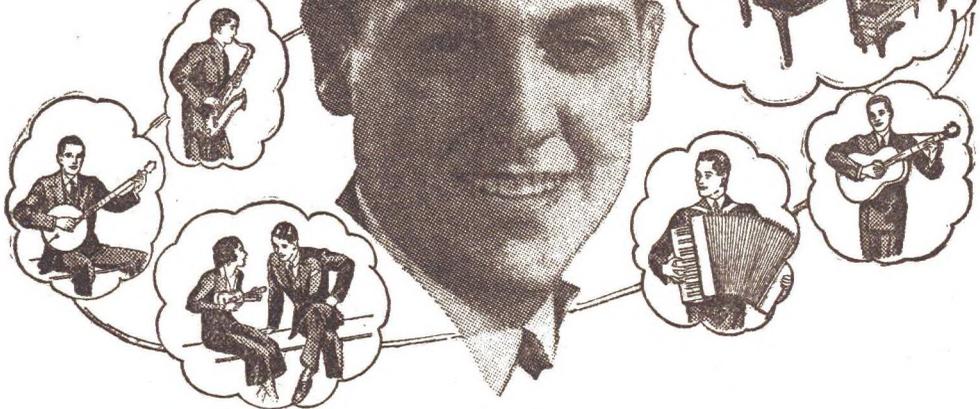
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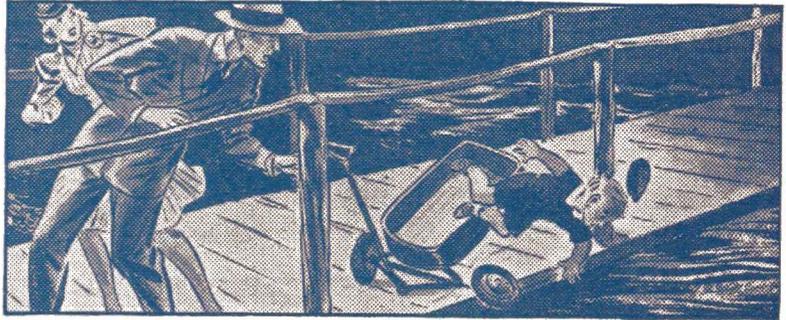


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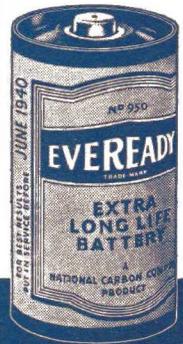
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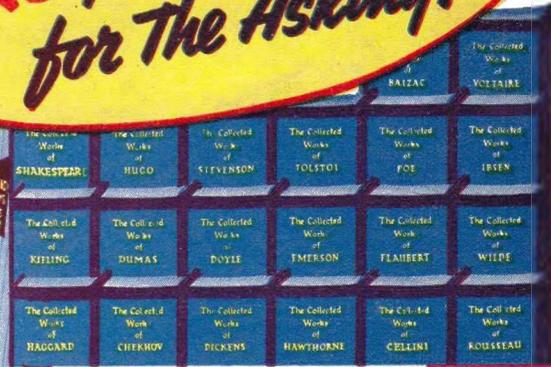
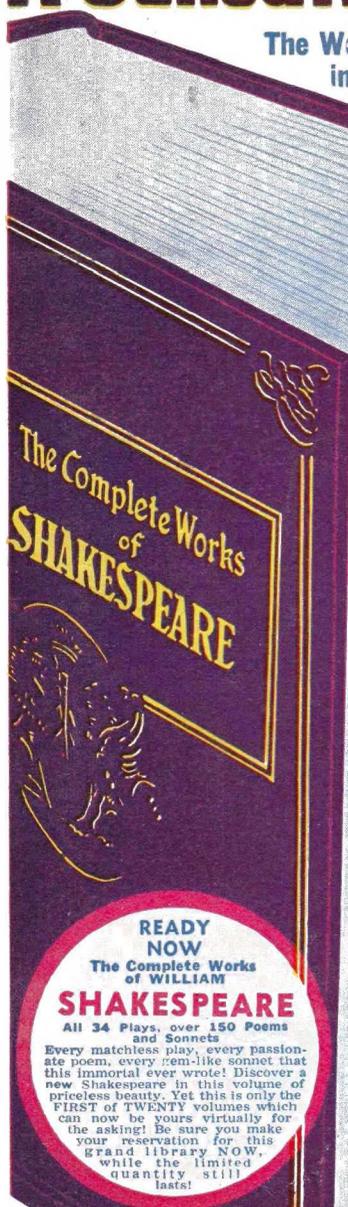
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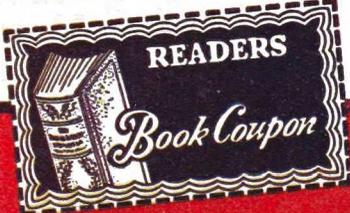
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