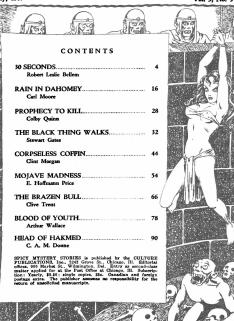
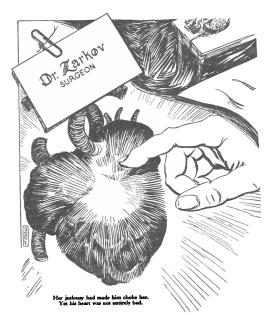
SPICY MYSTERY STORIES

July, 1937

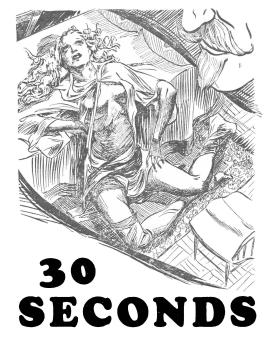
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He had killed his wife and now was about to kill himself. Only the Surgeon of Souls could see the one white spot that remained on the blackness of his soul LOTHED in darkness, Philip Haydon climbed grimly over the parapet; stood on the eight-inch ledge of concrete coping that surrounded the apartment-building's roof.

Twenty floors below him lay the black, deserted street. A sheer drop, with obliteration waiting for him at the bottom. He shuddered when he thought of the impact his hurtling body would undergo



By ROBERT LESLIE BELLEM

when he struck the paving. There would be a dull, squishy plop as his flesh exploded against unyielding asphalt. Perhaps there would be a single split-instant

when he struck the paving. There would of screaming agony. Then it would be be a dull, squishy plop as his flesh exover.

He hesitated, gathering his courage. He thought of Maizie, his wife, lying dead in their flat on the fourteenth floor. He remembered the way her eyes had rolled up to reveal glassy whites as his fingers constricted around her fair throat. He remembered the convulsive drumming of her bare heels against the floor as he throttled her. He could still seem to feel the labored, agonized throbbing of her swelling breasts against him as she fought for air in her tortured lungs.

Dead. Maizie was dead. He had killed her. Already her sweet flesh was growing waxen and cold. Far below him, at the street-intersection, the lighted hands of a bank's clock pointed almost to the hour of eleven.

It was all so strange. A half-hour ago, he had not been a murderer. Maizie had still been alive. She'd still be alive except for her jealousy. Philip Haydon would not have killed her if she hadn't quarreled with him about . . . that other woman.

But that was all over now. Maizie was dead. And in another instant, Philip Haydon would be dead too. His crushed, mangled corpse would be strewn all over the paying, twenty floors below.

THAT bank-clock on the corner was beginning to strike out the hour. Bong! One. Like a funeral dirge. Bong! Two. Like the slow, measured strokes of a doom-metronome. Bong! Three. Like the tolling of a lament for the dead. Haydon tensed his muscles to launch himself outward into space.

A hand fell upon his shoulder from behind. He felt himself being yanked back, hauled over the parapet. He landed on the roof, swaying, staggering, "God Almighty!" he panted as he whirled around to face the one who had interfered. Inexplicably, a cold slime of dread inched through his veins when he saw the little old man who stood there before him. The fellow was grey-haired, bearded; his expression was one of in-effable kindness. Yet there was something about the man's eyes that brought fear leaping into Philip Haydon's heart.

whispered

"What—what—?" he through chattering teeth.

The old man smiled; handed him a card. Haydon accepted the rectangle of pasteboard; and although he was surrounded by solid darkness, he could read the card's lettering. It was almost as if the thing had been printed with some luminous weird ink:

DR. ZARKOV Surgeon

From the cardboard, Haydon's eyes went back to the old man. "I don't tun-derstand!" he ground out. "How did you get here? Why did you pull me back? What right have you to meddle—?"

The greybeard smiled again. "I have been right here alongside you for a long time, Philip Haydon. In fact, I have been at your elbow all evening. I watched as you choked your wife."

"You-you-"

"And as to my meddling in your affairs," the old man went on, calmly, "I thought perhaps you might like . . . another chance."

Haydon's thoughts were a chaotic, blurred maelstrom. "You damned old fool!" he shouted hysterically. "It took me twenty minutes to get enough courage to jump. Now you've spoiled it! God. I—"

"One moment, my friend. I did not wish to see you die—that way. Not until you had time to think things over; to repent," the old man's voice was gentle. "Repent?" Haydon laughed shrilly. "What kind of a doctor are you—a psalm-slinger? Get your hands off me! Let me alone! I want to die! Die! Do you understand?"

"I'm a peculiar sort of doctor, Philip Haydon. I am a Surgeon of Souls. And I am offering you a chance to undo the evil you have wrought tonight. To erase the past hour—wipe it out entirely, completely. Do you want that chance?"

There was a new timbre to the old man's tone now; a weiled resonance that struck a hidden chord of fear in Haydon's flesh. And the touch of Dr. Zarkov's hand on his arm made his blood run frigid; congealed the marrow in his bones. He tried to jerk free; but Zarkov's grip was like a steel vise.

AS IF from a great distance away, Haydon could hear the greybeard spealing again: "Listen to me, Philip Haydon. I have told you I am a Surgeon of Souls. Your soul interests me—because it is so wholly black. I would like to test my ability. I would like to see if I can wipe out that blackness. But it rests with you. You must help me. If I succeed in purging the darkness from your soul, you will live again—happily, for the normal span of your days."

Haydon was seized with spasm of trembling. "I—I don't understand you!" he choked harshly. "How do you know so much about me? My name—and that I murdered my wife a while ago—"

"I know many things," the soul-surgeon answered slowly. "I have watched you from a distance for many, many days. As I have already told you, your soul interests me because it is so completely dark. I know, for instance, of your love-affair with Nadine Blanding. I know how your wife accused you of it, tonight. I saw the black rage welling up from your heart, and the murderfury. Yes; you are a murderer, Philip Haydon. And yet, if you wish, I can save you."

"Save me from-punishment?"

"From everything you have done. But you must do my bidding, my friend. You must not question me."

Haydon grew steadier. "What-what would you have me do?" he whispered.

"First you will come with me to the home of Nadine Blanding. You must break with her—forever."

"And after that?"

"You will return to your wife. You will live with her in peace, as if this past hour had never been."

Philip Haydon stared. "You must be insane!" he ground out. "Maizie's dead. I... killed her with my own two hands."

"That remains to be seen," the soulsurgeon smiled. His eyes seemed to bore through the younger man's body. "Already I see a tiny patch of clean white upon your black, leprous soul. It convinces me that there is still hope for your salvation. Will you do my bidding, Philip Haydon—and save yourself from everlasting damnation?"

Without realizing why he did it, Hayden nodded. This weird old man was crazy, of course; yet there was something hypnotically convincing about him. Haydon could not quite understand his own passiveness, his submission to Zarkov's will. "I—I'll do whatever you sav," he muttered dully.

"Then come. We must go to Nadine Blanding's house at once," the soul-surgeon said firmly.

The next few minutes were a confusion of movement. Haydon was not quite sure whether they took a taxi, or



"Phil, what brings you here?"

whether they walked. It was like a dream-sequence. It was as if he were standing still, while time and space rushed past him like a black liquid. THEN he found himself ringing Naline Blanding's doorbell: and when
he looked around, Dr. Zarkov was not in
sight. He wondered about that. Where
had the old man gone? It was very
queer. Strange, too, was the feeling
Haydon now had; a sensation that the
greybeard was very close to him, although invisibly so...

But that was bosh, he told himself. Zarkov was a madnan; had mouthed a lot of insane gibberish, then wandered off into the night. And now that he was gone, Haydon began to readjust himself, mentally.

He had almost committed suicide. Now, looking back, he saw how utterly unnecessary that had been. Why should he die? Instead, he would go away to some other city; start life over again with a new name, a new identity. The police would never find him if he moved carefully, cautiously. He need never pay the penalty for having murdered his wife. . . .

The door opened, and he saw Nadine Blanding standing there. She was clad in gossamer-thin sleeping pyjamas, and her auburn hair was a flaming cascade about her flawless throat and white seductive shoulders. Blatantly pretty, she was; and her body was symmetrical perfection. Through her tissue-chiffon jacket he could see the rising lilt of her breasts—two boldly firm mounds of creamy deliciousness. Her hips were sleek and slender, and her thighs gleamed white through the thin trousers.

"Phil!" she widened her eyes when she saw him. "What brings you here at this hour . . .?"

"Let me in!" he rasped. "I've got something to tell you." The sight of her had already inflamed his blood, as he was always inflamed when he was near her. His whole being tingled and ached to take her into his arms; and his mouth was parched for the moist ardor of her kisses. He entered the house, kicking the door shut behind him.

She led him upstairs to her rosetinted boudoir. "Phil—what's wrong? You're acting so strangely! And that man who was with you outside—the one you locked out when you slammed the door—"

He scowled. "There was nobody with me! Don't be a fool."

"But-but I thought I saw a little old bearded man-"

Haydon stiffened. That described Dr. Zarkov, Surgeon of Souls! But Nadine must be mistaken about seeing Zarkov. The old man had not been at Haydon's side. "Nonsense, baby!" he grunted swiftly. "Nobody was with me. I'm alone. Plenty alone, now."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not married any more. I'm free of Maizie."

Nadine's breasts rose and fell once, sharply, quickly. "Free of her--?"

"She's dead. I killed her. Choked her with my hands when she accused me of running around with you."

"You-you murdered her, Phil?" He nodded.

"Oh, God-!" she whispered.

He leered at her. "So what? Lots of times you've told me you wished she was out of the way. Well, she's out of the way now. It's just you and me against the world from now on, sweetness. I've got to get out of town and hide, of course, until everything blows over. Well, you're coming with me. We'll go to some other town and settle down. How about it?"

Nadine looked into his eyes. Then her crimson lips parted in a smile of



"I've got something to tell you,"

assent. "I'm willing, Phil. Kiss me—to seal the bargain."

He kissed her, brutally clamping his mouth down upon her parted, shinily moist lips. His hands clawed into her shoulders in the first moment of that kiss; her pyjama jacket parted as he jerked her to him. She tore her mouth away with a moan from the savage pressure of his, and for a brief instant, breathing hoarsely he let his eyes lick over her quivering, half bare breasts . . . drop to the swelling roundness of her hips and the silken columnar delights of her thighs. Then he caught her to him again, bruising the throbbing whiteness of her throat with his mouth.

She writhed against the heedless strength of his arms—even though her own arms tightened spasmodically about him. As his kisses traversed her throat, she ran her fingers through his hair, closed them tightly. "Phil—darling—!" she gasped.
"God, you're beautiful!" he gritted

savagely; his muscles locked her to him with fiendish strength, until her slender frame cracked and she cried out—

"Phil-you're hurting me . . .

HIS eyes blazed—he knew he was hurting her... But something was wrong. A hideous devil of memory was probing around at the recesses of his brain. He remembered another moment, just an hour ago. He remembered another woman's soft flesh—Maizie's. His fingers had wrapped themselves about Maizie's throat, and he had closed down on her windpipe—

His dead wife's glassy eyes seemed to be staring at him now, out of nothingness. Her face floated spectrally between him and this Nadine Blanding woman. Some of the bestiality went out of Philip Haydon's heart then; was replaced by a suppurating fear. He released her and stepped back.

She looked at him with puzzlement in

her glance. "What's wrong, Phil?" She

What was wrong? God, he didn't know! But he seemed to be hearing a voice at his ear: "Have you forgotten your promise to me, my friend? Have you forgotten that you gave me your word you would break with Nadine...?"

It was Zarkov's voice. Not audible in the room itself, but seeming to slither into Haydon's, inner ear. Imagination! That's all it was! The insane old greybeard wasn't anywhere in sight; therefore, how could his voice be here, disembodied?

Haydon plunged once more toward Nadine; gathered the auburn-haired woman again into his arms. And now his kisses and his caresses were more brutal even than before. His clawing hands dug deep bruises on her bare arms, her shoulders. He crushed his mouth again to her white throat, so that she gasped and squirmed in his embrace. Her heart thudded furiously against his, even through the crushed softmess of her breasts. A red haze was flooding Haydon's soul now...

Then he heard the Voice again. "That timy white spot on your soul, Philip Haydon—it is turning dark again. You are plunging headlong into doom...!" Nadine's smouldering eyes had widened. She was staring up into Haydon's face. "Phil—someone spoke! I heard it! I heard somebody talking to you—"

He tried to hold her, but she fought free of him. She was frightened. Her face was pallid, waxen. It reminded him of another waxen-white face. Maizie's. His wife's face. The wife he had strangled...

In an abrupt, blinding instant of selfseen truth, he backed away from the redhaired girl. Gone was that shaking emotion that had engulfed him a moment ago. That Voice—the voice of Dr. Zarkov! And Maizie's dead face floating ectoplasmically before his eyes—

He remembered the promise he had made to the soul-surgeon. He recalled that Zarkov had offered him another chance—if he obeyed orders implicitly. And he had a sudden frantic desire for another chance. Bitterly, desperately, he wanted it.

He grabbed up his coat. Cast one last look at Nadine Blanding. "I—I'm going!" he rasped at her. "You'll never see me again. We're through, you and I. Finished, understand? I'm going back... to Maizie..."

"But she's dead, Phil! You must be insane!"

HE WASN'T listening. He plunged out of her boudoir, out of her house. He went racing out into the cool night, and a clean dark wind brushed at his cheek, like the touch of an evanescent wing—or the contact of sensitive, unseen fineers—

Unseen fingers? But that was not true! It was the hand of Dr. Zarkov that touched Philip Haydon's forehead. The old man stood there by him, smiling gently.

Where had he come from? Had he been concealed in the shadows, waiting? Or had he materialized out of nothing-ness? Haydon could not know; but one thing he was certain: Zarkov was there by him, steadying him, speaking to him.

"You . . . !" Haydon panted.

"Yes. And I am pleased with you, my friend. For a moment, I thought I had lost my battle to purge your soul of blackness. But you reacted magnificently, after I spoke to you. That tiny white spot near your heart—it is growing larger. The darkness is being driven off. I think I shall succeed with you, Philip Haydon. You are not beyond redemption, after all."

Queer, how the weird old man's voice could soothe and calm Haydon's overwrought nerves. Odd, how Zarkov's mere presence served to steady the younger man's trembling muscles. It was like a benign hypnosis; a healing necromancy.

And now, Haydon was no longer afraid of the soul-surgeon. Instead, he felt oddly uplifted; strengthened. He squared his shoulders. "Thank you, Dr. Zarkov," he said simply. "You have helped me over the hill."

Zarkov smiled again. "Yes. I am winning my battle. It is well, my friënd. But you still have one more test to undergo. One more ordeal to face."

"A test? An ordeal?"

The soul-surgeon nodded. "The test is not one of my making. I would prefer it otherwise, for I have grave fears. Yet I cannot change things that are ordained to happen. Come, Philip Haydon. You are going home to your own apartment. To your wife."

"My . . . wife . . ." Haydon shuddered involuntarily as he visioned her lying on the bed, pallid in death. "Then that is the ordeal? I must spend some time with her . . . corpse . . ?"

"We'll see," Zarkov answered gently. "Come along."

Again there came that odd, eerie sensation of standing rooted while time and space flowed swiftly by like a dark current. And then Haydon was once more alone. Zarkov had mysteriously vanished. And Haydon was at the door of his own apartment; fitting a key into the lock.

He frowned. The door was not latched. He walked in. His palms were

wet and clammy; his throat was tight as he strode toward Maizie's bedroom. A thrumming, taut nervousness was upon him as he approached the boudoir door. Maizie's corpse was in there waiting for him, he knew. And he knew that he must go in and stare upon the woman he had slain, because Zarkov had thus commanded.

He steeled himself for the ordeal. He went into the room.

A blasting wave of amazement flooded through him. "Maizie—" he cried out wildly.

SHE was seated at her dressing table, clad in a sheer negligee. She was smiling at him. She was alive!

"Darling!" she whispered. "I'm so glad you're home! I've had the worst possible experience . . ."

In numb incomprehension he looked at her. Drank in the wavy gold of her hair, the azure pools of her eyes, the sweet innocence of her mouth. He studied the shapely contours of her body: the firm, boyish little breasts and the slender waist and the graceful flare of hips and modeled thighs . . "Maizie!" he whispered as he went toward her. "Maizie-!"

She was in his arms, clinging to him. "Phil!" she said. "I—I had the most terrifying thing happen to me I must have fainted, a little while ago. It seemed that something was choking me, throttling me until I couldn't breathe. Everything roared in my ears. Everything got black before my eyes. I—I guess it must have been my heart acting up, after our quarrel. Oh, Phil—Phil, beloved—forgive me for accusing you of running around with other women! I'll never do it again! I swear it! I'll trust you—always—"

As he held her, Philip Haydon tried to orient his tangled chaotic thoughts. Maizie was alive! He hadn't killed her, an hour ago! And now she didn't even recall his having placed his fingers around her throat, choking her...

Now he knew what the weird Zarkov had meant by offering him another chance. The soul-surgeon must have known that Maizie wasn't dead. So the eerie old man had saved Haydon from suicide; talked him into breaking off with the red-haired Nadine Blanding. And now everything was peaceful, serene. Happiness lay shead ...

"My sweet little wife!" he heard himself whispering. "I'll always be true to you. I'll never look at another woman—"

Even as he said it, he heard a sound at the threshold of the boudoir. He turned, stared. His heart gave a great, painful leap within his chest.

A WOMAN stood there. A strange woman. In negligee. Dark, she was, and feline. Her black hair made her dead-white complexion seem even more white. Her mouth was a bloodscarlet shalsh of promising invitation.

She was smiling, so that her even, sharp white teeth were revealed, like twin pearl-rows. "I'm sorry!" she purred throatily. "I didn't realize—"

Maizie sprang from Haydon's arms: laughed awkwardly. "It's all right, Rosa. Come in. I want you to meet my hushand." She turned to Haydon. "Phil, this is Mrs. Rosa Farrand from the next apartment. She heard me fall a while ago, when I fainted—after you had gone out. She came in and helped me. Put water on my head, and all that. She brought me to."

Haydon looked at the brunette woman. "Good of you," he murmured perfunc-



torily. But even that much speech was a sharp stabbing pain in his throat. Because never before, in all his life, had he seen a creature so exquisitely exciting and so thoroughly, evilly pulse-stirring. Through the laciness of her negligee he could catch a tinkling hint of her breasts—magnificent white mounds, pliantly undulant as she walked across the room toward him with hands extended. Her every movement was a symphony of grace. Her hips swayed, and under the parted lower portion of her negligee her bare legs flashed daringly.

Her skin was like faintly blue-veined marble, yet warm with a warmth that could be seen, sensed, as well as felt. "I'm very happy to know you, Mr. Haydon," she was saying in that throaty pure. "We shall be . . . very good friends, I hope."

He took her extended finger-tips; and the touch of her hand sent shivering waves of heat into his blood. No other woman had ever affected him this way. Not Maizie, certainly. Not even Nadine Blanding.

"So you played Good Samaritan to Mrs. Haydon, did you?" he smiled at her.

"It was nothing. I was just being a good neighbor. I happen to have a bit of medical training; so I knew exactly what to do. And—er—I have some medicine in my own apartment; a prescription that fits your wife's case perfectly. I'll give you the bottle, if you like. One never knows when one might have need of such a drug ..."

Maizie was pushing at him; urging him forward. "Go with Mrs. Farrand, Phil. I might faint again. It would be nice to have some medicine—"

He hesitated; and there seemed to be a warning whisper in his ear. Was it Zarkov's disembodied voice? He could not be sure....

THEN the brunette Rosa Farrand was

I smiling at him again; her eyes seemed to be probing, boring into his brain. Telepathically she was inviting him, challenging him. Her hips were swaying a little. Lazily, almost imperceptibly. Her hands were against her

breasts, pressing them through the thin lace. "Coming?" she challenged.

For the split fraction of a second he weighed everything in his mind. He knew that somehow or other, the Farrand woman represented danger. Yet what sort of danger? What had he to fear? He wasn't a murderer; Maizie was alive. And he had kept his word with Zarkov by breaking off with Nadine Blanding. His obligation to the soulsurgeon had been discharged. He was free to do as he pleased.

And Rosa Farrand was unquestionably taunting him. He could tell that, from the way she was looking at him and smiling at him. He knew the excuse of loaning him a bottle of medicine.was just a subterfuge. She wanted to be alone with him.

Well, why not pick up the gauntlet she had figuratively thrown at his feet? Maizie wouldn't know; wouldn't suspect anything wrong. Maizie had been completely taken in by the brunette woman's offer of the medicine. So what?

He forced a polite smile, although his blood was steaming. "Okay," he nodded. "I'll go with you to get the bottle. And thanks."

Without a backward glance toward his golden-haired wife, he followed Rosa Farrand from the apartment, down the corridor to her own quarters. And it almost seemed to him that he heard a faint, weary sigh very close to him. It seemed like the sigh of someone who has struggled against impossible odds—and lost.

Zarkov's sigh

Haydon shrugged it off. He was in the Farrand woman's living-room now. She took his hand. "The medicine is in here," she whispered. She led him into her boudoir. A single lamp glowed dimly by the sofa. Mrs. Farrand's body gleamed like polished ivory through her lace negligee, in the faint illumination. The room held a heady fragrance, a subtle perfume of intoxication; it mounted like brandy to Haydon's brain; made him oddly dizzy.

The woman was grinning at him. "Is anything wrong?"

"No. Nothing. Except-"

"You look pale. Come. Sit on the bed beside me for a moment. You're tired."

She settled herself; made a place for him. The negligee fell open to reveal the smooth whiteness of her legs, the dimpled perfection of her knees, a hint of her flawless ivory thighs. Her breasts trembled beneath the lace as she moved her shoulders impatiently.

He went to her. "Did anyone ever tell you how gorgeous you are?" he whispered.

She laughed redly. "Many men have said that to me. But you're the first who has ever . . . thrilled me when you said it"

He stared into her dark, enigmatic eyes. "Tell me something. Why did you invite me in here?"
"Because I wanted to Because I

"Because I wanted to. Because I wanted to . . . know you . . . better."

Her frankness ignited searing blasts of heat within his marrow. "You mean..."

"I mean I want you to kiss me!" she answered.

The inside of his mouth tasted coppery from the electrical impulses that were generated in his blood. His arm slid around her waist. He pulled her close. His lips traveled along her bared arm, from elbow to shoulder, slowly . . .

Up to her shoulder. Then her throat. And at last, his mouth clamping against

hers. Feeling the moist redness of them, their fervid response.

HE stiffened. He seemed to sense a Presence standing before him. He seemed to hear a whisper in his ear: "You must help me, Philip Haydon! The white patch is turning grey...soon it will be solidly black..."

The voice of Dr. Zarkov, Surgeon of

"To hell with you, you old crackbrain!" Haydon heard himself grating. "I've got nothing to fear now! To hell with my soul!"

And Rosa Farrand was smiling, purring in her throat. "To hell with your soul indeed, my lover. Kiss me again! Drink deep of my lips. Hold me close ...close ...!"

Engulfed in the black riptide of evil that defied Zarkov, Haydon strained her yielding form against his own hard body. Then suddenly—

"Phil! Philip--!"

Maizie's voice. From the doorway. Shocked; horrified; unbelieving. "Phil—you and this—this creature—!"

He sprang to his feet. His face darkened with abrupt spasmodic anger. "Maizie! Get out of here!" he snarled.

"Phil! You—you'd talk that way to me—your wife—"

"Get out, I say!"

And Rosa Farrand was laughing, deep in her purring throat. "Yes, yes! Send her away. You are mine now! Tell her to go!"

Maizie raced forward; clutched at Haydon's arm. "Phil! You—you beast! You vile, loathsome beast! I hate you! I.—"

Some malign, external violation seemed to lay hold of his hands. His

(Continued on page 118)

30 Seconds

[Continued from page 15]

fingers darted out; wrapped about his wife's pulsing throat. "I'll teach you to spy on me, you sneaking little sniveler!" he rasped. "I'm going to kill you, do you hear? I'm going to get rid of you, once and for all time!" He tightened his grasp on her gullet.

She tried to scream; tried to claw at him. Behind him he could hear Rosa Farrand's purring whisper: "Yes. Kill her! Kill her! But not here! Take her back into your own apartment and throttle her. And when she is dead, you will return to me..."

HE knew that he was lifting Maizie's struggling form in his arms. He knew that he was carrying his goldenhaired wife into their own apartment; into the boudoir. And now he had her pinioned in a death tight clasp. Her negligee was ripped open, so that her tiny boyish breasts were half bared and heaving against the pressure of his chest. He was choking her again. Her naked feet were drumming against the floor, even as they had convulsively drummed once before tonight...

Her features were engorged, crimson with suffused blood. Her eyes were rolling back in their sockets, so that only the protruding whites showed. She was panting, trying to breathe. And he kept throttling her, his thumbs gouging and biting into her throat...

Then, at last, she lay still. A waxen pallor began to steal over her cheeks. He placed his palm beneath her breast. Her heart was not beating. She was quite dead.

Like a madman, he raced from the room; down the corridor to Rosa Farrand's apartment. He plunged in. Then he brought up short.

The place was totally dark. No light showed in the rear room. Dully he flared a match. His eyes widened—

The apartment was untenanted, vacant! There was no furniture, no rugs; no sign of the brunette Farrand woman.

The match burned Haydon's fingers; he dropped it, and it glowed redly for an instant, then flickered out. The solid darkness that ensued was like a smothering shroud that engulfed him and paged him. For the third time that night he had a sensation of being helplessly fettered by psychic bonds, while time and space flowed past him like a black river...

Then a wave of nausea welled into his bell. He was back on the roof of the building. He was on the outside of the parapet. He was wavering on the narrow coping, with the dark street mocking at him, twenty stories below. He swaved—

He seemed to hear a voice saying:
"You failed to pass the ordeal, Philip
Haydon. There is no longer even a tiny
patch of white upon your black soul.
There is only one thing left for you, my
friend."

He turned around. In the shadows, he

thought he saw Dr. Zarkov. Then the soul-surgeon was gone—either down the stairs, or swallowed up by the night. Philip Haydon never knew.

He heard the tolling, somber strokes of a bell far below him. It was the bank's clock at the intersection. He stared down—

BONG! That was the eleventh stroke. The illuminated hands of the clock pointed to eleven. Just thirty seconds had sped by since the first rolling, knell-like stroke had sounded. Thirty seconds since Philip Haydon had first been pulled back to safety by the Surgeon of Souls. And everything that had happened since them—the sence with Nadine Blanding, the discovery that Maizie was still alive. and the meeting with Rosa Farrand—had all taken place in thirty seconds!

And now everything was exactly as it had been before. Maizie was dead . . . again. Philip Haydon was a murderer. He'd had another chance; but he'd been fool enough to toss it away—

He leaped far out into space. The night was split open by his shrill shriek of fear as he plummeted downward. Then his scream was drowned out by a duller sound: the sound of a body impacting against hard payment.