

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 32

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Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 East Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, Cuba, Mexico, South America, Spain, \$2.50; Canada, \$2.75; elsewhere, \$3.00. English office: Otis A. Kline, c/o John Paradise, 86 Strand, W. C. 2, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

W. T.—1

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Green Horror

By H. THOMPSON RICH

*What was that hideous apparition that lured Joan to the greenhouse
and swayed beside her father as he worked?
A tale of horror*

AGERLY young Herbert Ames broke open the square feminine envelope. But one glance at its contents, in Joan's fine, vertical script, and he went numb.

Others of her recent letters had disturbed him vaguely, with their veiled inklings that all was not right and she wished he were with her. But this was a direct, almost hysterical plea for help. She urged him as her best friend to come at once, to save her, save her father and herself from some nameless horror.

The letter bore the postmark of the little town of Harwood, in southeast Georgia, where they had been spending the summer—the distinguished biologist, Doctor Burton Kendall, and this charming, usually so poised but now so distraught daughter of his, with whom Herbert Ames was very much in love.

It was a dismal town, Harwood, according to Joan's reports. Hovering on the north edge of Okefenokee swamp—a vast, mysterious morass of black gum and cypress that spread to the Florida border—it was scarcely the ideal place for a summer outing. They had gone there not on a vacation but so that her father might conduct certain experiments on the plants of the region.

Just what these experiments were, young Ames didn't know, though Joan had told him they had to do with mutations; which meant, it seemed, that Doctor Kendall was trying to effect some sort

of radical change that would result in a new species. Had he succeeded, and was this what she feared?

Every tales of scientific monstrosities, hideous Frankenstein monsters that destroyed their creators, rose in Ames' mind. But he shooed them from it as sheer nonsense, being a level-headed young man, and sought some more rational explanation of what might lie behind this panicky letter.

It was not forthcoming, however, though the fact remained that Joan was in some desperate trouble. Then there was the added fact of his personal feeling for her. Could he therefore, with these facts as premises, fail to deduce from them the logical conclusion? He could not.

So this young lawyer, junior partner in the prominent New York firm of Eaton, Ames & Ames, shunted his wrists and processes to other desks and boarded the first train for Georgia.

AT TWILIGHT the next day, after a change at Atlanta and another at Waycross, Herbert Ames was drawing into Harwood.

The view from the window toward the last, with its dreary wastes of marsh and quagmire, had been depressing. He was relieved when the creaking local dragged up to the little station—doubly so when there on the platform, in response to his telegram, stood Joan. Slim, appealing,

her dark hair merging with the dusk, the sight of her quickened his pulses.

"Oh, Herbert, I'm so glad you're here!" was her fervent greeting.

Her hand was cold. It trembled in his. He wondered, as they stood there talking a moment, what this thing could be that had so obviously shaken her. He was soon to learn, in part.

She led him to an old Model T parked by the platform, and presently they were headed out over a rutty road that seemed to be leading straight into the swamp. As they drove on, she told him, calmly, yet with a tense note in her voice that spelled nerves taut to the breaking-point, of the strange house she and her father had been living in.

It had been the property of a certain Miles Denniston, eccentric retired merchant of Savannah, whose hobby had been growing orchids. He had died there the previous year, and her father had leased the place from the heirs for the summer, because of its isolated location and facilities offered for his work by its well-equipped greenhouse.

All this Joan had touched on before, in her letters. But now she struck a new note.

"Herbert, you may think I'm perfectly mad," she said, "but the place is haunted —yes, and worse!"

"Haunted?" He gave a start. "Good Lord! By whom — old Denniston's ghost?"

"Yes, among others," she replied, slowly. "Don't scoff, Herbert. You don't know. Please—just wait!"

"Oh, I'll wait!" he assured her. "Nothing I'd rather see than a genuine, practising ghost. But seriously, dear, you don't believe any such—"

"Nonsense!" she flared back. "Call it that, if you want. Call it anything. As I said, you may think I'm perfectly mad. But please, Herbert—wait! Don't be

practical and hard-headed now, or you'll surely fail me. Oh, can't you understand? It's this that has stood between us, all along."

She was hysterical, beyond a doubt. But something had made her so. What? The loneliness of the place, probably, rather than its ghostliness. Still, he wasn't going to fail her. No fear! So Herbert Ames adopted a conciliatory attitude.

"I'll wait," he said, pressing her hand on the wheel. "I'm willing to be shown, even if I'm not from Missouri. So tell me, tell me everything—or what you can."

"You're a darling!" she murmured, patting him on the arm.

And then, as they drove on through that dismal twilit swamp, she continued her narration about that strange house, and its effect on them, principally on her father.

He had been acting strangely of late, she said, working all day long and half the night at the greenhouse; working secretly, furtively, behind locked doors, and behaving in other ways almost like a different person.

"You don't mean," Ames ventured, "that you think he, he's—"

"No, not insane, but under a spell," was the way she put it. "Oh, Herbert, something fearful is happening down there! This Miles Denniston was a fiend. They tell the most shocking tales about him. There was something he was trying to do when he died—something too hideous for words—and now he's forcing father to go on with it."

She trembled, was silent, and Ames sat silent too, as they drove along. A man under the spell of a ghost, he was thinking. What utter absurdity! Yet he had assured her he was willing to be shown. And in truth, he was eager to see—whatever there was to be seen.

Presently the road turned, skirted the edge of the swamp for half a mile. Then Joan swung the wheel and headed into a weed-grown drive to the right. It led through a long line of sycamores to a dim, old-fashioned house of the spire and gable type, set upon a slight rise some distance off. Beyond it, Ames could see the greenhouse, its whitewashed glass windows glowing with light from within.

Dusk had given way to dark and a dull half-moon hung in the summer sky, obscured by a miasmal mist that rose from the swamp. Ames shivered, but not with cold, for the air was warm, almost humid.

"Well, here we are," said Joan presently, as she brought the car to rest under a wide portico.

That mist, he thought, as he glanced around uneasily. There was something uncanny about it! He began to wonder if perhaps there wasn't some peculiar influence at work here, after all.

THE front door opened, as they stepped out, and an old negro hobbled toward them.

"The only servant we've been able to keep," said Joan, under her breath, adding aloud: "Peter, this is Mr. Ames. Take his bag and show him to his room. I'll put the car up."

"Yes, sah, Mr. Ames, sah," bowed the man. "This way, sah."

"And Peter, I'll go down and get Father. You may have dinner ready."

"Yes, Miss Joan."

Whereupon the old negro led him inside, up a wide Colonial stairway, down a long hall and into a spacious room on the left.

"There you are, Mr. Ames, sah," he bowed. "Ah hope you will be comfortable heah, sah."

But his quavering voice bore no conviction and in his bleared eyes was a look

Herbert Ames would have sworn was terror.

"Thank you, Peter," he said, as the man withdrew. "I'm sure everything will be quite all right."

His voice, however, bore no more conviction than the other's.

Nevertheless, as he dressed for dinner, he made a valiant effort to free his mind from the oppressive thoughts that were crowding in on it. He even whistled, or started to. But after a few bars he stopped, peered swiftly around, as though half expecting to see someone.

There was no one to be seen, of course. Yet something was in that room! He could have sworn it.

Cursing his nerves, he strode to an open window through which eddies of fetid mist whirled in, and slammed it shut. But the eery sense of some unseen presence persisted, and he hastened his dressing, eager to get below and rejoin Joan.

She was not there, when he descended at last, but her father was, and Ames was shocked by the way the man had changed.

Doctor Burton Kendall had been of distinguished appearance, tall and well set up, with piercing black eyes and thick brown hair with scarcely a streak of gray in it. But now he was stooped, worn, his eyes dull, his hair sprinkled with white. In fifteen weeks, the man had aged fifteen years.

"Glad to see you, Herbert my boy," he quavered, extending a bony hand. "Glad to see you."

But Ames sensed it was not the truth, fancied he saw in those dull eyes a light of smoldering resentment.

"Strange!" he mused. "The old bird would have been a lot better pleased if I'd stayed home and minded my business. Why?"

As he was pondering the question,

Joan joined them, and presently Peter appeared, announced that dinner was served.

THAT dinner! It was the weirdest meal Herbert Ames had ever sat down to. Not that there was anything strange about the food, which was excellent, considering the limited facilities. But the atmosphere contributed by Doctor Kendall, in his amazing discussion of his work, was bizarre in the extreme.

What he was trying to do, he confided, was find the common denominator between life and death. He had approached the subject first by a study of the essence of life, examining certain lowly forms from the near-by swamp, notably the slime molds—those repulsive ameboid growths, part plant and part animal, that are the parasites of rotten logs and decaying leaves.

"Curious little devils, the slime molds," he smiled. "They develop in colonies — plasmodia — mere spreading masses of naked protoplasm, unlike the fungus molds, which are true plants. And like amebas, these voracious creatures engulf the tissues of whatever they attack, devouring their victims with the rapacity of animals."

Ames shuddered, as Doctor Kendall paused. A singularly ill-chosen topic for dinner-table discussion! Glancing at Joan, he saw her shrink, though her eyes urged him to listen attentively.

"To facilitate my observations, I found it necessary to stimulate the growth of my plasmodia somewhat," Doctor Kendall went on. "Then, once I had learned the essence of life, as expressed in the protoplasm of the slime molds, I sought to study the essence of death, as expressed in the ectoplasm of spirit emanation—which is provided abundantly hereabout," he added slowly, then paused again.

Ames' mental processes paused, too. He waited, scarcely daring to look at Joan now.

"In that research, too, I have been successful," her father declared after a moment. "Protoplasm and ectoplasm embody a single basic principle, and I have found it. I have found, in short, what I set out to find—the common denominator between life and death!" His thin voice rose on a crescendo of triumph, as the smoldering light burned high in his dull eyes. "Yes, and I have produced that denominator—have succeeded, my dear Herbert, in combining protoplasm and ectoplasm in a mutation that is a being neither alive nor dead!"

Whereupon Ames' mounting conviction of the past few minutes became settled. The man was mad, absolutely ravaging!

There was more of that weird discourse, but nothing to match what had gone before. Doctor Kendall seemed to draw into himself now, as though he had already disclosed too much.

AMES was relieved when the fantastic meal was over at length and the man had gone back to the greenhouse. He wanted to talk with Joan, see what could be made of this insanity, what could be done to save her father from himself, save her too from whatever ghoulish thing was threatening.

As he had surmized, Doctor Kendall had come down here to perform quite different experiments.

"You see, Herbert, it's as I told you," said Joan, her voice strained. "He's under a spell, the spell of Miles Denniston. It's that fiend who was trying to do these terrible things, and now his ghost is making father do them for him."

A man under the spell of a ghost! As before, the utter absurdity of it struck this logical-minded young lawyer, but not

quite so forcibly, now that he had sensed the eery atmosphere of the place and had heard Doctor Kendall talk. Still, the insanity theory was infinitely more comforting.

"Are you sure the whole matter couldn't be explained," he risked, "by—well, assuming that perhaps your father's mind has become temporarily unbalanced from overwork?"

But she shook her head.

"No, Herbert. It won't do. Father isn't any more insane than you are—and you're really quite the most maddeningly sane person I know! He's merely under a spell, the spell of Miles Denniston's ghost. You must accept that, or at least assume it, if you are to help me."

"But have you actually seen this ghost you speak of?"

A long pause, then:

"Yes, I have. You'll see it, too, Herbert—and worse things!"

Something in the way she said it, more than the words themselves, gave him the shivers. He looked up swiftly, saw with a pang how pale, how tense she was. Poor girl! What she must have been through, these past few weeks! He longed to take her in his arms. Instead, since that had never been and now seemed no time for it, he pressed her hand instead.

"Well, I'll be prepared, at least!" he smiled. "And Joan, I want you to know I'll do all in my power to help you and your father through this thing, no matter what."

"I knew you would," she smiled back, returning the pressure. "That's why I asked you down, Herbert. I knew my—my best friend would never fail me."

Was there in that little hesitation the thought that he might some day be more, if he didn't? At any rate, it spurred him on, steeled him for what lay ahead.

THE air was close when Herbert Ames returned to his room that night, and he strode forward resolutely, flung open the window again, despite the feeling that had led him to shut it while dressing for dinner.

As he stood there, peering out into the night, he could see the greenhouse below, agleam with light through the mist. Doctor Kendall was down there. What diabolical experiment was he at work on?

Ames was half tempted to go down, find out. But no, he wouldn't do that. Instead, he turned away, started undressing. And again, as the miasmal breath of the swamp whirled in on him, he wheeled, peered swiftly around, as though half expecting to see someone.

But as before, he saw no one. Yet something was in that room! He knew it now, and the knowledge sent chills up and down his spine. Then suddenly, out of nothingness, came a voice:

"Go down to the greenhouse!" It was an icy whisper. "See what Doctor Kendall is doing there!"

Rigid, and with goose-flesh prickling over him, Ames peered into every corner of the room. Still nothing. Yet actually nothing? That cigarette of his, smoldering on a tray—he fancied its wavering haze of bluish smoke was taking form. Sheer rot, of course, he told himself. Better buck up or he'd go off his bean too, for all Joan's confidence in his sanity. But even as he tried to reassure himself, came again that icy whisper:

"Go, Herbert Ames! Go to the greenhouse!"

That was all. Though he waited through tense seconds that dragged into minutes, there came no more. But it was enough!

He re-dressed swiftly, stole down and out.

The mist was thick, ominous, and he shuddered as he made his way through

its clammy shroud to the greenhouse that glowed phosphorescent on the edge of the swamp.

Arriving near, he crept up on tiptoe, reluctant to spy on this madman yet led irresistibly on, almost as though he too were under some sinister spell.

Now he reached it, searched for some flaw in its coated glass panels that would let him see through, found at last a place where the whitewash had peeled off, and as he looked, he recoiled as though struck.

There stood Doctor Kendall, by a laboratory table littered with microscopes, test-tubes and other biological equipment—and at his side hovered a vague, translucent figure he knew intuitively was the ghost of Miles Denniston.

WITH a gasp, Ames backed off, beat a hasty retreat to the house. He had seen enough for one night—too much!

Once in his room again, he sank into a chair, tried to analyze his state of mind. Was he sane, or as mad as that madman down there? Had he, or had he not, seen a ghost? And how explain the whole episode?

Finally, after a period of ineffectual thinking, he undressed again, slipped into bed—and strangely enough, slept. But in the middle of the night he was awakened by a piercing scream—a quaver of horror, so long, so agonizing, that there seemed no doubt it marked some tragedy.

His heart in his throat, Ames leaped out of bed, struggled into a dressing-gown, lunged into the hall.

The first person he confronted, to his relief, was Joan, in a negligée that in other circumstances would have been intriguing.

"Herbert!" she gasped. "What was it?"

"God knows!" he replied. "Your father—where is he?"

"Right here, my boy," came a voice at his back, as a door opened. "What is wrong?"

Turning, they both saw Doctor Kendall standing there, and Ames noted that he was fully dressed.

"That scream!" he exclaimed. "What was it?"

"Exactly what I would like to know," declared the scientist, calmly. "But since we all seem to be here, why——"

"Father!" begged Joan, rushing up to him. "What has happened? Oh, I thought—thought——"

"Steady yourself, my dear!" he urged her. "I am quite all right. Whatever it was, I am sure it will not trouble us again tonight. So since the hour is late, I suggest we all put it from our minds and try to get a little sleep."

He gave her a fatherly pat, sent her off to her room, and urged Ames to return to his own.

Ames did so, but there was no more sleep that night.

NEXT morning at breakfast they received another shock. Peter was not there to serve them.

They had searched his room, searched the premises, Joan explained, but could find no trace of the old negro. Something had evidently frightened him away in the night, as with the other servants. That long-drawn, piercing scream had been his.

But the agonizing horror of it! That was Ames' thought. Had the poor devil actually been frightened away, or——

"You've notified the police, I suppose," he said.

"No, not yet," she replied, blanching. "You—think we'd better?"

"Yes, I think we had," gravely. "But first——"

He told her how he had stolen out

last night, what he had seen in the greenhouse.

"Yes," she admitted slowly. "I heard you go. And oh, Herbert—I know! For as I told you, I've seen it." And when he made no comment, she added, "But the police, dear—they wouldn't understand. Don't you think we should keep that to ourselves, for the present?"

He acceded, though he wasn't so sure he agreed.

So when the police came, they gave them only the fact of Peter's disappearance, plus that mysterious scream in the night. And with nothing to work on, the police found nothing.

One clue they had, however, which might have led to something.

"Damn' funny business!" Sergeant Griffin, the officer in charge, confided to Ames. "This is the third disappearance we've had from this place in less than three months. First there was a maid, then a cook, and now this nigger butler."

"Yes, strange!"

"And get this. Before that fella Deniston died, we had half a dozen other cases of missing help from this same estate. Of course, we know as how the place is supposed to be haunted, and all that. But some say there's something here does more than scare folks off. Some say there's something here does away with 'em. You ain't seen anything like that, Mr. Ames, have you?"

"Good God, no!"

But in his mind was the thought of that gruesome dinner-table discourse of the night before, and he wondered what connection there might be between this wild rumor and the facts—resolved he would not let another night go by without learning what fearful experiment Doctor Kendall and that specter were collaborating on.

THE hours passed slowly. Doctor Kendall was in a bad humor the rest of the day. The police investigation had affected him deeply. He seemed to feel that they held him in some way responsible for Peter's disappearance, and no amount of persuasion could alter the conviction.

As for Ames, his persuasion was none too heartfelt. He could not shake the belief that this man, although the father of the girl he loved, was somehow bound up in the whole mysterious business.

There was a brooding menace, too, that seemed to hover over them all day, something sinister and evil from the swamp, for all the bright summer sunshine that poured down from the cloudless skies.

They almost felt relieved when night came at last and they retired to their rooms, after an admirable meal Joan had prepared and served by herself.

For a half-hour or more Ames waited, fully dressed—waited for a repetition of that peculiar icy command of the night before. At length, just as he was on the point of going to the greenhouse anyway, it came:

"Go, Herbert Ames! And do not come back alone tonight!"

Whereupon, numb but resolute, he went.

If Joan heard him, well and good. He fancied she must have known all along he would go, voice or no voice. His legal mind, with its passion for the facts! Grimly he smiled, as he stole down the wide Colonial stairs.

Outside, he was engulfed once more in that eery mist. Strange, with the night so clear! He shuddered, and an ironic laugh burst from his taut lips. He had been so sure there was no such thing as this, yet now he was experiencing it, overwhelmingly.

At length he gained the greenhouse,

sought that panel where the whitewash had peeled off, peered in.

There stood Doctor Kendall, putting around with his test-tubes. He was alone, and the sight of him thus innocently engaged was a shock. For an instant, Ames' suspicions seemed to vanish. Then suddenly they reappeared in a new direction, as a step sounded behind him. Or was it only a sense, not a sound? At any rate he wheeled—and went cold with horror, at the sight that now met his gaze.

A vague, translucent figure had loomed out of the mist—the ghost of Miles Den-niston!—and at its side, clearly under some occult spell, moved Joan.

Like a man in a nightmare, Herbert Ames stood beholding this harrowing scene. He tried to call out but had no voice. Paralyzed, he watched the helpless girl and her hideous escort draw near.

When they were scarcely ten feet off they turned slightly and headed toward the door of the greenhouse. There followed a scratching knock, and looking in, Ames saw Doctor Kendall stiffen, then advance like an automaton to the door, unlock it. He saw them enter, Joan and that malevolent ghost—saw the latter lift a skeleton hand, point commandingly at something out of sight—saw Doctor Kendall back off, utter a cry of protest at the gesture. But the phantom was adamant. It advanced like Nemesis, that fleshless hand still pointing, and the quaking scientist retreated helplessly before it.

To the far end of the greenhouse they went, Joan following with trance-like steps. Now the specter lowered its hand, indicating the ground; whereupon, to Ames' amazement, Doctor Kendall bent, shoved aside a tray of slips, lifted a trap-door.

What happened then was baffling, incredible. An emanation seemed to rise from the dark pit that yawned there—an emanation invisible at first but so power-

ful, so all-pervading that its evil breath reached Herbert Ames, chilled him, even where he stood—a vague, loathsome vapor that was the very stench of hell. Something was down in that pit, something horrible beyond all thought.

A wild conjecture leaped into Ames' mind. Those disappearances! They were sacrifices, sacrifices to some hideous thing lurking there, something the fiend Den-niston had created, or had forced Doctor Kendall to create for him.

Yes, and even now Joan was to be fed to that nameless horror! But not unless *he* died first, was his grim thought. And rushing to the door of the greenhouse, he burst in.

As Ames lunged forward, the specter loomed in his path, on its face an expression of such malignant fury that for an instant he paused, stunned. And as the smoldering phosphorescence of its hollow eyes fixed him, he felt himself swaying under its evil spell.

But the sight of Joan and her father standing there helpless beside that yawning pit gave him strength. By a supreme effort he rallied, flung off the spell, lunged on.

Reaching the trap-door, he seized it to hurl it shut. But too late! For already a vast protoplasmic form was oozing out—undulating from that foul pit like a tide of gray filth, weirdly vague, translucent.

Backing away with a cry of revulsion, Ames seized Joan, seized her father, staggered with them to the door of the greenhouse, that malevolent phantom protesting vainly.

"Quick!" he gasped. "This way!"

With an arm linked in the arm of each, he raced with them across the lawn toward the house, through that eery mist—and as they sped on, behind them rose the crash of breaking glass, mingled with a screeching, wailing sound that curdled the night.

'Somehow he gained the house, got them inside, locked and bolted the door, stood waiting as though for doom. But nothing happened, and presently the hideous sounds outside died down.

Now Joan turned to him. She had recovered somewhat, and that dazed, trance-like look had gone from her face, but she was white as a sheet and still shaking with terror.

"Wh-what has happened?" she begged. "Oh, Herbert—am I going mad?"

It seemed to him as though they all were, but he curbed his own fears and assured her the worst was over. Then, turning to her father, he added:

"Tell me, Doctor, what is this thing? Let me know, so that we can fight it."

The man lifted his dull eyes, opened his thin lips as though to speak; then slowly he shook his head, collapsed.

BETWEEN them they managed to get him upstairs and to bed, where he lay for a while moaning and mumbling incoherently, then fell into a heavy sleep—leaving them alone in that house of horror, with only four frail walls between them and God knew what.

After a few moments they returned below, sat tensely waiting, scarcely daring to speak. But as time wore on and nothing happened, they began to breathe easier.

The atmosphere of the house seemed purged—the atmosphere of the whole estate, in fact. It was as though some evil spell that had long clung to it was dissipated. There was no longer the sense of ghostly presences among them. The mist outside seemed no longer to hold a menace.

Finally Joan spoke what was uppermost in her thoughts, urged Ames again to tell her what had happened. He said he would, but asked her first to tell him what she remembered.

"I'm not so sure," she replied, with a shudder. "I was asleep, I think, when suddenly I woke to see that terrible ghost in the room. It was Miles Denniston, I knew. He told me to get up and follow him, and I did. Or perhaps I only dreamed I did. It's all so vague, yet so terribly clear."

"No, you didn't dream it," Ames assured her, "for I saw him leading you down to the greenhouse." And he went on to explain how he had come to be there himself.

Together they pieced out a picture of that harrowing experience, a picture Ames softened in some of its stark details, to spare Joan a little.

"How awful!" she shuddered, when she had heard it all. "Oh, Herbert—if you hadn't been there! I—I owe my life to you."

"I only want your love, dear," was his answer to that.

And her answer, in turn, was to slip her hand in his an instant. Then, as she removed it:

"Poor father! He is blameless. You believe that, Herbert, don't you?"

"Yes," he assured her. "He is absolutely so."

"But the police?" voicing her inmost fear. "They may not think so. Oh, I'm so terrified at what they may find down there in that pit!"

Ames said nothing, though a sudden chill ran through him.

"Yet we must send for them, must we not?" she went on.

"Yes, I fear we must." His voice was low, reluctant. "And I think we'd best send for a doctor, too."

IN the early morning, both police and doctor arrived.

Leaving Joan with the latter and her father, Ames accompanied Sergeant Griffin and his men to the greenhouse.

As he had suspected, it was demolished, literally upheaved as though by an earthquake, and over it hung the reek of the grave. The odor was emanating from the pit, which still yawned open.

They made their way to it, through the debris, peered down into that foul hole, while Griffin flashed his light—and what they saw there filled Ames with nausea.

The pit was littered with bones—*human* bones.

Old Peter's were among them, he thought with a shudder, as they turned away. Yes, and Joan's would have been there, too, had he not gone down to the greenhouse last night, had he not found strength to defy that phantom fiend.

But what would the police make of this? Would they hold Doctor Kendall on the evidence?

Fortunately, since the stricken man was still in a coma and could not be questioned, they made of it what police generally make of such matters.

"I figure something the old duffer was working on blew up," was the way Sergeant Griffin put it. "Lucky for us, too, otherwise we'd never of got the low-down on this fella Denniston. Wish it could of happened when he was alive. I'd of liked the pleasure of seeing him hang."

"You and I, too!" said Ames fervently.

But at least the ghost of the fiend was laid, he reflected. With that grisly secret exposed at last, there would be no more of those hideous experiments. Yes, and the ghosts of his victims were laid, too. They had wreaked their revenge. That house would be haunted no longer.

On his return with the police, Ames

broke the news of their grim find to Joan as gently as possible, told her what Griffin thought; and the relief in her eyes, as they lifted to his, was eloquent.

But something more was in them than relief.

Herbert Ames learned what it was, in time. Joan is now his wife and those tragic days are behind them for ever.

Doctor Kendall recovered, moreover, mercifully remembering nothing of those fearful experiments he made in collaboration with a ghost.

As for that horror in the greenhouse, Herbert and Joan now know that it is laid for ever, that it will no longer throw terror into the hearts of men or wreak its vengeance on their bodies. For a group of hunters, emerging from the swamp some three days after its disappearance, brought back with them such nauseous evidences of the monster they had tracked there from the greenhouse as to leave no doubt in anyone's mind that this hideous creation had succumbed as horribly as it had been born.

Naked, reeking masses of half-flesh they had brought back, asserting some huge animal had floundered there and perished—but no one could be found to believe them.

Only Herbert and Joan, and poor Doctor Kendall, knew what they were talking about, and none of them had any comments to make. As for Herbert and Joan, they have made none since, for they are too happy, too preoccupied with plans for the future to dwell much on that episode.

Doctor Kendall, it is true, is preparing a technical thesis on the subject, but it may be some years before he is ready to reveal his findings to the public.

