

STARTLING 15¢ MYSTERY

MAGAZINE

VOL. 1

APRIL, 1940

NO. 2

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I AM THE DEMON

by William B. Rainey



It wasn't a dream! The face of that circus charioteer, twisted in horror as the maddened horses plunged into the screaming women and children, was—my own! I knew that I was the Demon of Speed, and that in the next race I drove, my wife and child would die!

DON WILMAN sat quietly and listened to his wife argue that he should give up racing. Paul Able, who had known and loved Judy before Don Wilman married her, agreed with her as he always did, but never actually became a part of the family quarrel.

Finally Able stood up. "I'll have to be going," he said. "If you get tired of arguing with Don and decide to leave him, you can always come to me, Judy." All three smiled. Able bowed from the waist, a tall, handsome, dark man. Then he was gone. Wilman closed the door.

Judy turned to him, fragile and golden looking. "Don," she said and put her hands on his wide shoulders.

Wilman's face set. "Let's not talk about it," he said. "If we are going to get Donnie to the circus on time we'd better hurry."

Judy's lips quivered. She said, "All right," and turned away.

The overwhelming desire to make Judy understand how he felt about racing filled Wilman, but he could find no words. How could he explain? Racing was something born in him, like the necessity to breathe. He had known as a child that he must be a racer: airplanes, automobiles, anything that moved fast. Sometimes he had the eerie sense that he had known even as a boy, that this desire was something out of the dark limbo of the past, out

of some previous incarnation where he had been a man on horseback rushing over plains, or perhaps the first Norseman to learn the furious speed of skis down a mountain slide. He didn't believe in that, of course; and yet sometimes he wondered . . .

That wonder came on him with renewed vigor at the circus when the charioteers came out for their race. As they lined up, cracking their whips and shouting to the horses, little Donnie leaned over to tug at his father's elbow. "Did you ever race in one of those, Dad?"

Judy said wryly, "No, but don't mention it to him or he will."

Wilman was scarcely listening. His mind had flashed back to ancient Rome when these races were a matter of life itself because losing meant death. What had made men become racers in those days? Surely it was the same thing that had driven him to the board track and to airplanes. The same spirit that filled those men filled him. If he had lived in ancient Rome . . . And suddenly it seemed as though he *had* lived there, as though he could remember the pounding of horses hooves, the shouts of the Roman charioteers . . .

The race started with loud shrieks from the children, a great roar from the drivers. Down the straightaway they came, a team of white horses in the lead, a black team half a length behind, running well under control, the two other chariots already dropping back.

The two teams came abreast and thundered by. Donnie was jerking at his father's arm and shouting, but Wilman didn't hear him. His mind, his whole being was centered on that race. It seemed to him, suddenly, that *he* was the man driving the blacks and that this was no longer a staged circus race. He was in the Rome of Claudius, and he was driving those horses, and his life depended on victory.

And all at once he was afraid. It was a weird, terrible sensation that he could not understand. He had been in one or two minor crashes, but his steel nerves had felt nothing but the thrill of danger. Now, suddenly, there was cold sweat on his forehead. His hands trembled.

The two lead teams turned into the straightaway again, almost abreast. This was the last time around. Now was the chance for the blacks to open and move to the front. Their driver began to swing his whip. The team stretched out in a wild rush that pulled them a half length ahead. Then the whites made their bid and held on. With the inside track they would have the advantage unless the blacks could move farther into the lead.

It was as they came thundering toward him that Wilman saw the face of the driver. He felt something leap up from his chest and tear at his throat—a scream though he was unconscious of it. For the man driving the blacks, the man with whom he had associated himself, *was* himself! *The driver was Don Wilman!*

IN THE seconds that followed he heard nothing; he was unaware of Donnie shouting and tugging at his arm, of the thunder of the horses' hooves, of the shrieking audience. He was staring at the man who was himself, feeling himself in that man's place, leaning forward, gripping the reins, whipping the horses in a wild effort to take the lead before the curve.

And in him as the horses tore at the end of the track, was terror!

He saw there'd be no chance to pull ahead of the whites. He'd have to go wide on the curve. That would lose time and it was dangerous, but there was no other way.

And then the horses thundered into the curve and he was trying to turn. Something happened to the whites. They were crowding him. He wouldn't be

able to make it! He jerked frantically—and the reins snapped! He saw the horses rear high, and in one death-long instant he saw the group of children standing by the railing. It was like a painting. The horses, front feet high; the heavy chariot driving on; the upturned faces of the children white with terror—their mouths open, but the loud shouts suddenly quiet . . .

Then horses and chariot thundered into the massed group of the children. The silence broke into bedlam.

The moments that followed were never clear to Don Wilman. Fear like a black cloud had swamped his brain, had stopped all thought, all sensation except the sickening one of dread. And then, gradually, he became aware of things about him. Little Donnie was standing at his left, gripping his arm, whitefaced, unspeaking. Judy put her forehead against his shoulder and was crying. He was sitting motionless on the bench where he had been all the while. The crowd had gone mad, but members of the circus were trying to quiet them.

"Come on," Wilman said huskily, "let's get out of here."

He helped Judy to her feet, then lifted Donnie. No one spoke very much until they reached home. Then Donnie, with a child's naturally quick recovery, went out to tell the neighborhood children what he had seen.

Judy stood on the side of the living room looking at her husband. On the other side Wilman sat quietly, his face pale, his mouth a thin, hard line. He was remembering that vision of himself driving the chariot and crashing into the children—killing, injuring, maiming for life.

Judy said, "Don."

Slowly his grey eyes focused on her face. "Yes," he said.

She stood slim and straight, her hands clenched. Her voice was unnatural though

she fought to control it. "Did you notice the driver—whose horses . . . ?"

"Yes."

"He looked like you."

"Yes," said Wilman. To himself he said: "*Looked* like me . . ."

"Suppose it *had* been you," Judy said. "Suppose it was you in that race tomorrow. Even if you didn't get hurt, Don, killing children . . ." Her voice broke and she held both clenched fists against her mouth for a moment. "Don, I'm afraid. I'm terribly afraid. You can call it a woman's intuition if you want, but it's not foolish, Don. Suppose you killed Donnie, killed some other woman's child." She ran toward him, crying suddenly. "Oh Don, please, *please* don't drive tomorrow! I'm afraid."

For a long moment he held her against him. He wanted to speak and couldn't. He knew that his reaction was only a natural one after seeing a man who resembled him figure in a racing accident. And yet, he too was afraid. The weird sense of actually having driven that race persisted in him.

"Please," Judy said again. "Don't drive tomorrow."

Wilman pushed her away, gently. "I've got to drive tomorrow," he said. "There are thousands of dollars bet on me, people who have backed me in every race. I couldn't let all those folks down." He turned and walked out of the house. Judy stood stiffly, watching him.

Supper that night was an unpleasant meal. Judy sat whitefaced and spoke very little. Donnie saw there was trouble between his parents. He watched them, but kept quiet. Soon after supper he went to bed.

It was still early when Wilman said, "I'd better turn in. I'll need plenty of sleep before tomorrow."

"Yes," Judy said. She didn't look at him.

There was a heavy lump in Wilman's

throat. For the thousandth time he wanted to explain himself to this woman he loved, and he was unable. He stood looking at her, gulping. Finally he said, "I love you, Judy. You know that anyway." He walked out of the room.

HE WENT to sleep quickly, dropping into slumber almost as soon as he lay down.

It seemed to him that he had been sleeping a long while, a dead, heavy sleep. Then, all at once, he was awake, sitting stiffly erect in bed and trembling. His face and hands were wet with perspiration, his body was cold. He was more afraid than he had ever been, a black and furious terror that ate its way up from his stomach. And for a full minute he didn't know what he feared.

Then he remembered the dream!

He had been driving a chariot in ancient Rome, a black chariot hitched to a pair of black horses. A white team had crowded him on the curve. He had tried to turn and—something had gone wrong. A rein was flapping loose. Then, somehow, the chariot and horses were hurtling over the wall that circled the track. He could see the wild, upturned faces of children as death crashed down at them.

And as suddenly the dream had ended.

Wilman sat there in the dark fighting his terror. It was the natural thing for him to have dreamed. The thought, the very picture had been on his mind since the circus. Yet he was not accustomed to dreaming. And now, remembering the vision, fear was like a cold wind upon him.

"Damn it!" he swore softly. "I can't sit here all night frightening myself. I will crash tomorrow if I'm nervous." He forced himself to lay back and closed his eyes.

In the same instant the door of his room burst open and Judy was running toward him. He could scarcely see her

in the dark but terror shook her voice. "Don! Don!" She flung herself on the bed beside him, holding him tight against her.

"Oh Don! I dreamed it all over! The wreck and you and all. And I'm afraid. It's going to happen tomorrow! I know it! I know it!"

Wilman did not sleep any more that night. He lay quietly, his arm around Judy, and stared upward into darkness. There was a cold, slow dread that he clamped iron nerves about and held. But he could not kill it. The fear lived inside him, crouched and waiting.

HE WENT to the track early the next day. There were tiny, dark lines beneath his eyes but his grey pupils were steady and his hands didn't tremble. "When the race is over I'll know this whole thing is a case of nerves. Even Judy won't be afraid any more." Yet his mind kept turning back to the dream and to the accident at the circus. Deep inside himself he was afraid.

Most of the bookies, he noticed, had made him the favorite at three to one with Rudolph Victori second at four to one. Short odds in a two hundred mile grind where anything can happen, and something generally does.

He was moving on toward the pit when someone said, "Hello, Wilman. I'm glad to see you don't look so good this morning. Have a bad night?"

Wilman turned suddenly, surprising himself at the way he jumped. Rudolph Victori, handsome, sleek, oily, was standing beside a bookmaking booth through the window of which Jack Fellows looked out with the thin, expressionless face of the professional gambler. "I hope you're not feeling well today," Fellows said, his voice soft and flat. "I'm giving big odds on you and taking in a lot of money."

Wilman glanced up to the chart above the booth, saw he was quoted at nine to

one. Then his grey eyes leveled square on Victori, shifted to Fellows. "It's your gamble," he said, and walked off. He had never liked either of these men, particularly Victori. An excellent driver but vicious and crooked.

At the start Wilman was nervous, his memory turning back time and again to the dream and the accident, groping beyond them into the dark mists of thousands of years. Fear of what was to come was like a sword hanging above him, a sword that he knew must fall at a certain, predestined hour.

But with the throb of the motor under him, the slipstream of air howling past, the board track leveling and tilting, leveling and tilting as he came out of a curve into the straightaway and went into the curve again, his fear dropped away from him. He felt once more the urge in his blood—the desire for speed, the wild pagan sense of freedom which had made a racer of him. After the first few miles he was unconscious of anything except the race. His hands continued to perspire, but he did not know it was because of a vision hidden in the back of his brain.

With a hundred and fifty miles lapped behind him the lead had settled into a duel between him and Victori. Barring accidents they would place one two and there would be little distance between them. They came out of a curve with Victori leading by less than ten feet. Then Don Wilman made his challenge.

He felt the car surge as he gave it the gun. It was like a human thing as it moved forward and Wilman was part of it. He could feel the throb of the motor in his own body, sense the impact of the wind. He was straining as the engine was straining; the wild whine of rubber on boards was like the blood in his veins. He was not conscious of the terrific speed with which he moved down the track, only of the speed with which he gained

those feet on Victori and began to push the man behind him. This was the thing which had been born in him and which he could not desert. The racing of his blood, the pound of his heart, his breathing, nerves, muscles—all were part of this race.

And then it happened. The whole thing took no more than a few seconds yet it seemed an eternity to Don Wilman. It was like a moving picture of a race with the film stopped on one scene.

He had gone past Victori but not enough to cut in. Then the high bank of the curve loomed ahead. He was running near the middle of the track with Victori on the inside and another car, which had been lapped several times, ahead of the Italian. As they roared into the curve Victori pulled wider to the outside than was necessary, forcing Wilman to the right. It made him lose slightly, but he could have come out still holding his lead.

Then something happened and the whirling picture of the race seemed to hang in Wilman's brain. His car went into a terrific skid and he knew that a tire had blown. He was moving sideways along the track and up the embankment. The wall of the stand loomed ahead of him. It seemed eternity to Don Wilman although his hands, moving swiftly, managed to cut the switch and close the throttle.

He knew where he would strike the grandstand—and raising his eyes he saw the long row of children's faces above it. An automobile company had sent a hundred school children free today. He would strike right in their midst!

And in that instant memory, smashed his brain. He was no longer in an automobile—it was a Roman chariot. His reins had snapped and the horses ran mad. He heard the crash of metal and wood. It was the chariot striking the barrier. He saw it all as though he were

outside his own body, watching. The machine leaped like a bird, clearing the fence. He was in the air, coming down, horses and chariot. The white faces of the children were twisted upward to look at him. He wanted to scream a warning, and there seemed ample time, but no sound came. The children, paralyzed, watched. Their faces were twisted with terror—and in Don Wilman was a feeling beyond fear, beyond sorrow. He was like a soul in hell knowing there can be no end to his torment, seeing ahead of him the long and grisly corridor down which he must go, knowing beyond doubt there is no escape.

In that instant he saw the future and knew that the greatest horror was still ahead.

Then, all at once, came blackness.

IT WAS two weeks later before visitors were allowed to call freely on Don Wilman. It had been two weeks of agony, of hidden and gnawing fear. His injuries had been no worse than he had sustained before: a broken collar bone, a fractured wrist, cuts and bruises. It was not these which had tortured him. It was the knowledge of what he had done—and the fear of what lay ahead. There had been children killed in his wreck; he knew that, although they had not told him how many. And all during those two weeks there had been a dream, repeating itself over and over.

It would strike vividly into his brain while he slept. He would be driving a chariot, urging his horses as they came into a curve. He was crowded and the reins snapped and the whole wild mass went plunging into the audience. He looked down as the horses fell and—here the dream ended. What face would be smashed beneath the horses' hooves, he could not tell; and yet that face tortured him. He kept trying to see it clearly; and at the same time wishing never to see

it. For instinctively he knew that here was the full hideousness of his dream, the full agony and terror of it.

Who was it he would kill in this predestined wreck? Who? The thought tortured him.

For a day or two the dream had not come again. Then there had been a second and third occurrence, and after that it came with increasing frequency until the thought of it was constantly with him.

He had fought against it, had told himself that it meant nothing. But he kept remembering the circus and the first dream and the way it had come true. He kept remembering that terrible sense of ineluctable horror that had hung like a sword above him as the race started. He had foreseen exactly what was going to happen. How? There was only one answer and Don Wilman would not admit the truth of it . . .

Judy didn't talk to him about racing during those two weeks. She tried to keep his mind off the subject. It was on the day that the newspaper men were allowed to call on him that the old quarrel arose again.

"Will you get back to the track this season?" one of the reporters asked.

Wilman didn't look at the man. His eyes were on Judy standing with Paul Able near the wall. Her face had gone suddenly white, her hands clenched. Her eyes were wild and dark with fear as she waited for Wilman to speak.

And he hesitated. The thought of racing sent wild terror rushing through him. In his brain, full fledged, slashed the memory of the dream. Another wreck, killing . . . whom? His veins were icy and sweat came suddenly on his forehead.

His voice was strange when he spoke, but still his eyes were on Judy. "Yes. I'll race again this season. I have to, you see. It's like an airplane pilot crashing. He's got to get up in the air again as soon as

possible. If he doesn't, his nerves will be shot forever. Not only about flying, but about everything else. It'll prey on his mind until he's an abject coward. So I've got to race again. Soon." He stopped, his eyes full on Judy's.

Slowly he said, "But after my next race, I'll quit. My wife has wanted me to for a long time, and I want to now that I've killed those children, and now that . . ." He was about to say something about the dream and checked himself. They would think he was insane. Perhaps . . . He swallowed hard. No, he wasn't crazy.

He added, "One more race and I'm through. If you'll go now fellows, I'm tired." He slumped back. The newspaper men went out of the room.

Judy came forward until she stood beside the bed. "You mean you're going to race again—after that dream . . . that dream that is so much more than a dream?"

"Yes." He kept silent for a moment. Then he put out his uninjured hand and caught hers. "It's only a dream!" he said desperately. "It's just that killing these children has torn my nerves up. I've got to drive again. Don't you see? I'll go mad thinking about this business unless I prove it's not so."

Paul Able crossed the room, lean and handsome, his eyes on Judy. "For Judy's sake, Don," he said, "give it up now. If you're going to quit, what's one race?"

"It's everything," Wilman answered slowly. "I have to race again."

"And after that?" Judy asked.

"And after that I'll quit." Wilman's hand tightened on hers.

She smiled then, leaned and kissed him. "Well," she said, "tell Mr. Victori and Mr. Fellows that I tried to keep you away from the tracks. They've called several times to ask about you. Both said they hoped you did give up racing; they've lost too much money on you."

Wilman's face set hard. "They didn't lose on that last race."

THE dream continued steadily during the weeks that followed. By the time Wilman was out and visiting the tracks again, arranging for a new car, it had marked him physically. He was thinner and his face was drawn until his cheek bones showed above dark hollows. His eyes were deeper and there was a strange flickering shadow behind their greyness. His fingers were no longer rock-steady. His movements were nervous and uncertain.

He sent his entry for the Montgomery two hundred mile race and waited for it with a sort of frantic urgency. He wanted to drive that race, he *had* to drive it, and rid himself of this haunting terror. "It's only a dream," he told himself over and over. "Only a dream." And yet it was making him insane. He had begun to smoke one cigaret after another. He was afraid of the dark and the thought of sleep tortured him.

He began to read books on reincarnation, cursing himself while he did so. He didn't believe that he could see into the past and in it see a reflection of the future. That was insane! Yet the thought stayed with him.

It was the last night before the race that the dream came to him clear and complete.

He was sleeping more soundly than he had done for days, a dead, log-like sleep. And then, with the force of a blow the dream struck. He had the weird impression that he had been snatched out of his sleep, awakened to stare with bulging eyes at the actual reenactment of a scene in which he was the chief actor. And with the first instant the fear came. It lanced into his heart and lungs, stopping them, making his whole body rigid while the sweat oozed cold and clammy from his pores.

As before there was the vision of himself driving the chariot, being crowded on the curve, the broken rein, the crash against the barrier. And then as the horses and chariot crashed down to smash whatever was beneath them, he looked—and this time the dream did not end. The upturned face was hideously, furiously clear, terror whitened, waiting for death.

It was the face of Judy, his wife!

He did not know that the dream was over. He did not know that he had screamed for ten seconds and ceased only because his breath was gone. The vision of Judy's face was like a white-hot iron that had eaten through his skull and into his brain. He was on hands and knees, writhing and twisting in his bed, when Judy rushed into the room. "Don! Don! What's happened?"

Her voice brought him back to consciousness. Even then he seemed dazed, unable to believe that she was alive. He called her name and tried to get up, but fell back upon the bed.

She put her arms around him, holding him and saying his name over and over, until finally he was quiet. He told her of the dream then, huskily.

"You won't drive tomorrow," she said. "You're sick. You can't drive." It was semi-dark in the room, but moonlight drifting through a window near the bed showed her face. He knew then that she thought him mad.

But strangely Don Wilman's mind was clearer than it had been at any time during the last six weeks. "I may be insane," he thought, "but it's not the kind of insanity that persons generally know. That dream wasn't in my mind alone. I actually saw it. Perhaps it was two thousand years ago in Rome and now history has completed its circle. I am the same person under another civilization and Judy is the same person, but now there are automobiles instead of chariots." He

lay there, futilely trying to frame those thoughts into words, to find some way to tell Judy. Something he knew she would not understand.

"I'll call the track in the morning," Judy interrupted. "I'll tell them you're not well enough to drive."

Wilman sat up on the bed. "No," and his voice grated. "I'm going to drive tomorrow. You can't interfere with that, Judy. No matter what you think about me, you mustn't interfere with my driving tomorrow. I've got to race. I've got to! And there's one thing you have to do. Promise me."

"What is it?"

"Promise me."

"Without knowing what it is?"

"Yes."

She hesitated, her eyes on his. His face was strangely pale in the moonlight and the dark circles showed gruesome under his eyes. But the eyes themselves were level, the mouth straight. It was not the face of a man insane. "All right," she said. "I promise. What is it?"

"You won't go to the track tomorrow. Not under any circumstances. You won't watch me race."

"But, Don, I've never . . ."

"You promised," he said flatly.

"All right," she said. "I won't go to the track tomorrow. Not for anything."

HE FELT suddenly like a man who has been trapped under water until his lungs were bursting and at last has come to the surface for air. He gasped, making deep gulping sounds; a tingling of joy ran through his whole body. He was like a man out of jail, feeling the sunshine for the first time in years. He wanted to shout with relief.

For if Judy did not come to the track he could not kill her. The dream had shown him killing her and if he didn't, then the dream was wrong. But always, like a minor chord in a symphony scarce-

ly heard under the heavier music, yet eternally present, was his fear. He had tried to avoid the first dream and it had come true. If these things were predestined, could anything change them?

At the track the next day Jack Fellows commented on the haggard look in Wilman's face. Fellows was giving odds of fifteen to one against him. "I wouldn't race if I were you," Fellows said. "You look like the devil."

Wilman said, "I'm well enough to drive," and walked off.

Behind him he heard Victori saying: "He looks like he's been seeing a ghost every night since he cracked up." The Italian laughed. "Probably turned yellow after the crash."

Wilman paid no attention. He was remembering the dream, the vision of Judy's upturned face as the chariot crashed down on her. But Judy would not be here today. He couldn't possibly kill her.

During the early stages of the race he drove carefully. His wrist was still weak and he favored it as much as possible. When he had lapped fifty miles he was well back in the ruck with Victori and another man fighting for the lead and both driving like wildfire. "I'll hold on where I am," Wilman thought. "A steady race is all I'm after."

But gradually the lust for speed, the born instinct to get out in front, arose in him. He opened his throttle wider, felt the car stretch itself like a running horse. The song of the slipstream grew shrill and high, the throbbing of the motor rose through his body, setting his blood quivering. When he had lapped a hundred miles he was still well back, but driving like a man gone mad and with every thought blown from his mind except the instinctive thought of the racer: *to win!* There was sweat on his forehead but he didn't know the cause of it. His body was tensely waiting for

something which he knew was going to happen, but what it was he had forgotten.

Steadily during that last hundred miles he came to the front. At one fifty he was driving in third place, but Victori and Peterson, the other leading driver, would not be overtaken. The attention of the crowd had centered on these three, forgetful of the others. Peterson was in the lead with Victori fifty feet back and Wilman trailing by a quarter of a mile. But Wilman was outriving both the others and in a car that had a slightly higher topspeed on the straightaways. He pulled toward them, slowly, steadily. And at the same time Victori moved up on Peterson.

It was an unbelievably close finish. With two laps to go they were in the same order, but there was less than thirty feet dividing the three. Then, turning into the straightaway, Wilman gave his car an open throttle and made his bid.

It happened on the next curve, exactly as it had been in the dream.

THE three cars were bunched and Wilman was crowded up the embankment, but still running safely. Then his car went into the skid with a front rubber blown—and at the same instant he saw her.

Judy, right against the barrier looking at him, and dressed in the Roman costume of the dream!

It did not seem strange to him that she should be in the costume. Nothing seemed strange. It was all hideously familiar. It was the vision he had seen, a re-enactment of what he had done in the hidden past and of what had to be done again! It seemed to him he had known all along there could be no escape.

Time hung like a bird with wings wide spread, hovering, waiting to plunge but not moving for a death-long second as the heavy racing machine skidded toward the barrier and Judy. It seemed to

Wilman that for hours he sat frozen, making no effort to control the car, feeling nothing but the coldness of horror inside him, seeing nothing but Judy's white face as he skidded toward her. They were back in the Rome of Claudius, and Wilman with horses and chariot was crashing into the barrier to kill his wife. Her death was as certain as though it had already happened.

And then he saw Paul Able. He was beside Judy, but turning to run, his mouth open in a scream.

Perhaps it was that which snatched Wilman's mind back to the present. *He was going to kill Judy!* The muscles in his throat contracted on a scream. His hands moved with the skill and speed of a man born to his job. He slapped on his brakes and pulled the wheel hard around. He was going to be killed, but if he could miss Judy . . .

There was the rending crash as he struck the barrier. The heavy car leaped like a horse, rising high, rolling. Below him he saw Judy's face.

Then he was dropping down. Judy had raised her hands as though to hold off the terrific weight about to smash into her. He was coming straight at her, still jerking the wheel. And even in that last second which merged into eternity, Don Wilman felt the love of his wife and the terror of what he was doing.

Then the car struck.

DON WILMAN was out of the hospital but still swathed in bandages when Judy explained fully what had happened. "Paul Able told me before he died," she said. "He wanted to marry me and he knew I loved you. He wanted you out of the way and he'd decided to make some money at the same time. He bet with various bookies, on very good odds, more than eighty thousand dollars that you'd either definitely retire from racing

or be killed within four months. Then he set out to either frighten you into quitting or kill you. He preferred to kill you because he—he wanted me."

"I can understand that," Wilman said. "But what about those dreams, the man at the circus?"

"He had a mask of your face and paid the circus driver to wear it. Whether he bribed another one to force the wreck or that one to wreck himself he didn't tell me. He was dying when we talked. He knew that you naturally associated yourself with racers and he thought the accident, killing children, would prey on your nerves. He'd doped the food we ate that night and it made us both dream. Of course we dreamed about the accident because that was on our minds. After your first wreck Paul was always around. He had no trouble doping your food and he kept talking about the dream to keep you thinking about it. Once the fear was started it naturally ate into your mind, got worse and worse. But he actually caused that last dream. You remember how weak you were after it, you couldn't sit up? He'd doped you so heavily you didn't know what was happening, then flashed a picture on the dark wall of your room. He caused the accidents by having your tires shot at a certain spot by a marksman. And he'd got an actress made up to look like me. She didn't know, of course, that you were going to wreck. But the marksman was to get your tire on the last trip round. He shot too early and you crashed on Paul as well as the actress."

Wilman took a long breath. "And I was beginning, in fact, I *was* believing, in predestination."

Judy said, "There's one thing predestined because of your promise."

"And that?"

She leaned and kissed him. "You've driven your last race," she said.