

Weird Tales



JULY, 1952

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D. McILWRAITH, Editor

Live Evil

BY EMIL PETAJA

SHUDDERING in the cold November rain, Jan Gormley rang the bell again. Again nothing but vibrating echoes inside. He mopped an anxious face and twisted the *Sunset Weekly* in his hands. Gormley, a thin sparrow of a man, looked just a little ludicrous in an overlarge black raincoat. But there was a fierce fire inside his brain. Gormley was mad, madder than he had ever been in his life before.

Finally. Finally the door opened.

A big man with a cigar in his face filled the opening. He looked down at his visitor and his thick lips curled. Then he shrugged and stepped aside. Gormley darted in gratefully. He followed the fat man down a dim hall and into a grimy but somehow important-scented office.

Lettering on an outside window proclaimed:

ALBERT FAST ENTERPRISES

Albert Fast grunted as he slid behind his big desk. He pretended to be busy for a moment. Gormley just sat, yearning to vent his mad, waiting for his cue.

"Well, Gormley," Fast provided it and a stock answer as well, "what is it? More money? The answer is no. Not a cent."

Gormley flushed. He knew Fast's games. Fast had tried to make people cringe ever since he was a slum kid in the San Francisco junk business. Often he had. Now as a respected enterpriser with greedy fingers

in many pies he indulged himself almost daily. This little East Bay suburb partially belonged to him. Symbolically, his half was built on a swamp. His real estate brochures referred to it as Aloha Lagoon.

Gormley plunged.

"Albert, why did you let them print this story? You know what my research means to me! I'm devoting my life to it. You advanced me money to keep going. We were in school together. I thought you understood, Albert. Why did you tell them things—allow them to misinterpret?"

Fast's smile was more gloating than reproachful as it purported to be.

"You're too serious about things, Gormley," he said. "Always were that way. As a scientist you hadn't ought to let a hick-weekly story bother you. A scientist has to be hard-headed, just like a business man. Practical. Never get rattled. That's the key to success."

Gormley's narrow face paled.

"Scientists have to be dreamers, too. Until their ideas are proven. That's what I'm trying to do, to prove my research is not only sound and practical but vital to the whole human race!"

The fat man puffed his cigar as in deep thought.

"Maybe. Let's have a look at what young Bill Higgins wrote. I haven't seen it yet."

He scanned the news story. His chins wobbled with amusement.

"Here we are. 'It would seem *Sunset* has



If one believes in jinxes, why not in zones of evil?

a genius in its midst. Dr. Jan Gormley, late of Atlantic University, has invented a deghosting machine. Are you troubled with goblins or poltergeists? If so, send for Gormley. He'll rout them out in jig-time. We neglected to find out his rates, but all interested should etc., etc.'" Albert Fast grinned.

"This article will make me a laughing stock. There is no mention of my extra-sensory-perception experiments in the East, theories which have since been proven to be sound. I told you I wanted no publicity of any kind. How could you do it, Albert?"

Fast mangled his cigar. A self-made man, he harbored a concealed respect for education and the science degrees Gormley was entitled to use after his name. But this respect frequently backfired.

"I owed Bill's father a favor," he justified himself, "so when Bill came around spouting about his new job, wanting a story, I mentioned you. It was off-hand, but he got interested, then I got carried away. How'd I know it would jell like this?" He made like Pontius Pilate.

"My creditors are on me like wolves," Gormley said. "I'll probably get thrown out in the street. Worst of all—my machine! My beautiful machine! I've worked ten years on it; got most of my parts from Dudley Smith at KLB Radio Station." He winced. "I had to prevaricate a little. I think Mr. Smith believes it to be something new for television. Otherwise he'd never have advanced me the electronic parts I needed."

FAST grinned. "I know Smith. Him and his two-bit radio station. Always trying to make a fast buck with some phoney advertising scheme. His angle is, the phonier it is, the more the public will eat it up. Yeah, he'll be onto you like a ton of bricks when he reads this." He chuckled. "He fell for your degrecs, just like me. Now, instead of a super-television set he expected to be in on, he's stuck with a deghosting machine." He gnawed his cigar gleefully, then scowled. "What am I laughing at? I'm in the same boat with Smith. You're into me for eight hundred." His eyes narrowed on the little man, as if speculating on how much his carcass was worth at present meat prices.

Gormley stood up.

"Won't you just help me once more—?"

"Not a cent."

Gormley swallowed. "I know it has taken me a long time. These things do. It's been trial and error, with no precedent to go on. I've made mistakes. But I'm on the right track now, Albert! I've discovered just where my error was. It wasn't in the machine at all. It was—"

"Save your breath, Gormley. I got taken. Forget it."

"But—my machine! They'll take it away from me an—"

"Scrap it for parts. That's what they'll do. Likely Smith will give me the job. I'll make a little on it, anyway. We'll tear it to pieces and put them where they'll do some real good."

Gormley's knuckles whitened on the arms of his chair. He leaned forward urgently. "Good! What could do more good than my machine! To save the world from the horrors that leak into it from evil dimensions—every night, every hour. Albert, those leakages of evil must be stopped up before it is too late. Evil influences are taking possession of men. It's getting worse all the time. Don't you see? If nothing is done these dimensional faults will widen and widen until—can't you see the world is doomed without my machine?"

"Gormley," the fat man's voice was cold and contemptuous, "maybe I didn't have your education. Maybe I did drag myself up from the gutter. But I know what gives. I know the world is in a tight spot. But we'll get out of it without any crackpot deghosting machine." He rose ponderously. "Now, if you don't mind. Time's money to me. I've wasted too much of both on you."

GORMLEY, beaten, was closing the office door behind him when Fast called him back. It seemed an impulse. He sank back wondering in his chair while the fat man tramped the floor. Once he tried to plead his case further but Fast shushed him. Finally Fast parked his elephantine bulk right in front of him on the desk. His eyes burned with lethal acid, and a desperate kind of greed.

"You think it's that important, eh, Gormley?"

The little man nodded hopefully. "May I explain?"

Fast glanced at his watch. "Make it snappy."

"I will. Here is my basic theory. I believe that 'good' is a tangible living force. It exists strongly in certain places, leaking in from higher dimensions. All who come within its influences are affected to some extent. But there's one thing I overlooked. It seems—"

"Don't ramble," Fast warned.

"No-o. If one is religious my theory is fairly obvious. Take Lourdes, and other 'miraculous' places. Zones of good. Leakage of force for good from dimensions of light. The religious application comes when one asks, are these leakages purposeful or just random.

"At the opposite pole is evil. I believe there are also leakages of evil from dark dimensions. Certain old houses, rocky caverns, or lonely wastes on the surface of the ocean. Things happen in these places. Evil things which cannot be accounted for entirely. Often nothing can be seen, or heard, or detected by other senses. Suicide. Murder. I believe that each so-called haunted house contains a fault, a leakage where malignant tangible entities of pure evil slip through and when they find a suitable outlet for their desires cause misery and death."

The look of introspective boredom on Albert Fast's face changed suddenly. His ears perked.

"Haunted houses, eh? You know, I had a hunch when I called you back, Gormley. You know me. I don't just let eight hundred bucks fly out of the window without putting up a scrap. My hunch told me there might be something in all this malarky after all."

Gormley glowed. "We might save the world—"

"Forget it," Fast snapped.

"It's only theory," Gormley admitted. "But if one just could trace back and locate the exact origin of the evil in certain men. Hitler, for example, or—"

"Forget it! What hit me was what you said about haunted houses. You mean, like houses where everything goes wrong. Families bump each other off and then when somebody else moves in they lose all their

money or go nuts. Finally the house gets a jinx on it and nobody'll touch it with a ten-foot pole."

Now Gormley understood. He pushed his advantage.

"Exactly like that, Albert. Think of the practical side. If we could stop up these leakages of evil. Make these houses habitable."

"I'm way ahead of you." The fat man paced again, then whirled. "Mind you, I don't want anybody to get wind of this. Can't afford to have my name connected with any fiddle-faddle. I'm a practical man, Gormley. What I want first is proof. Proof positive, like the ads say."

"Certainly," Gormley assured him. "And I'm now in the position to offer you proof, providing we have access to one of these authentic zones of evil."

Fast flicked his cigar and stared out at the pouring rain. "Do you know the old Castongua Mansion in the ravine?"

Gormley nodded. The lumbering old frame structure had once belonged to a *nouveau riche* French-Canadian. His name still adhered to it in spite of Fast's glib real estate maneuvering. It had, in fact, been suspect in Gormley's lists for a long time. Sinister things had happened in that dark house in the ravine.

FAST owned Castongua Mansion, evidently. It was obvious he had been unable to dispose of this valuable property. And herein lay the fat man's mounting enthusiasm. The core of his interest lay, as always, in self-gain, not in any desire to help humanity.

"Make that house saleable and I'll talk turkey!" he cried.

"I understand the paneling was imported from France," Gormley murmured. "And the parquet floors are solid mahogany."

Fast wiped a wet tongue over his wide lips. "I've owned that house for the best part of twenty years. Sold it once. Writer from Denver. Committed suicide. Bought it back from the estate, they owed me money. Tried to strip it. But damn it, every time I sent workmen there something went wrong. One fell out of a third floor window and broke his neck. Another went home and choked his wife with a curtain sash he'd

taken from one of the windows, I kept them at it until another of my men was caught peddling heroin that he kept stashed up there. He got sent up.

"Finally I gave up. My workers wouldn't go in the place. And damned if the only load of paneling we got out of it didn't catch fire at the warehouse before I could sell it. I lost money all along the line, and I'm sick of it. The house is jinxed. Finally had to admit it."

"You believe in jinxes," Gormley said softly.

"Sure."

"But not in zones of evil."

"I believe in what I see," Fast blustered. "Show me what you got and I'll buy it. Maybe there are other houses—houses I could buy for a song. Yeah. We might do business after all. But I want an exclusive, mind you!"

Gormley nodded ironically. By an effort he kept repugnance from his face when the fat man massaged his shoulder, beaming in the midst of his expanding dreams.

"When would you like to start?"

"Tonight!" Fast exclaimed. "You get your gadget moved down there this afternoon. No, this evening. I'll send one of my truckers to help you. I'll meet you there—say, eleven or eleven-thirty. Okay?"

"Evil is strongest in the dark hours."

"Huh? Okay, see you there at eleven or so. Have everything all set. Can't waste time, eh? Busy day tomorrow. You get everything ready there and wait for me."

It was a dismissal. At the door Gormley turned. "What about Dudley Smith?"

"Smith. Yeah. If he bothers you, send him around to me. I'll head him off. The big thing is to get that mansion cleaned up. Means a lot to both of us, eh, Gormley? I'll play along. But remember, I'm a practical guy. Never bought a pig in a poke yet. None of this sight unseen hokey-pokey for me. I got to have proof. Proof!"

THE rain soon had him wet through, but Gormley could be philosophical now. Albert Fast was not an ideal partner for such an important undertaking, but better than none at all. At least his beloved machine was safe.

He climbed the three creaky flights to his

loft in the miasmatic clam flats district and, having reassured himself that the machine was safe, he broke up an orange crate and built a fire. This served to dry him off and to heat up a can of soup.

While he waited for the soup to heat he thumbed through his mass of notes regarding so-called haunted localities. He found a lengthy page on Castongua Mansion. Skimming up a ladle of soup from time to time, he went over it.

"Built in 1881 by Victor Castongua for his pretty young wife and her two daughters. He married late in life and left Canada when he received an unexpected inheritance. The inheritance preceded his marriage, significantly. Tempered his own reclusive bent with his wife's inclination for society. The mansion was built in the ravine some distance from the coach road to Martinez, but was still near enough to San Francisco to please his wife.

"A great oak tree shadows the east wing. Said to have been a hang-tree in road agent days. At least one hanging verified. A reckless boy of sixteen was suspected of stealing gold. An oldster interviewed about it in 1911, who attended the lynching, believed the boy to be innocent. Vicious mob. Haunting spectacle of brute violence. . . ."

Thus the very ground on which the mansion was built was steeped in terror and tragedy. The evilness pre-dated its erection.

The soup began to simmer so Gormley gave his attention to it, musing in a cursory way on Victor Castongua's troubles. One might expect him to have troubles, marrying a wife half his age. And yet what happened to the Castongua family was unnaturally villainous. Double murder, suicide. Insanity. The papers of the day made much of the sordid love aspects of the affair, so Gormley had no difficulty in tracing his material.

The malefic influences which haunted the mansion persisted after the last of the Castonguas had left it. A mild little Englishman named Carter, a writer of semi-religious matter, took it over. Within a year he unexpectedly began writing vicious slanderous articles about persons well known in the Bay Area. He was challenged to a duel and shot.

The house was empty for a decade, then

Albert Fast took it over. His difficulties brought forth a flare-up of the ghost legends that surrounded it, and now it lurked in that dark ravine with only an errant seagull and that old hang-tree to keep it company.

He was startled from his musings by the sharp rattle of bony fingers on the door. He put down the soup-pan with a sigh, and lagged to the door.

"Oh, Mr. Smith."

"How are you, my dear Gormley?" The radio station owner was tall and pale, with mild gray eyes, and always a smile on his thin lips. He sidled in, those gray eyes wandering casually about the room while his aquiline nose quivered in distaste at the stale atmosphere.

"I don't like to have to say this, Gormley, but—ah! There it is! There's my machine!"

"Your machine?"

Dudley Smith went over to it. "Of course. This and this and this—" He pointed a long finger at various parts of the heavy oblong object, which Gormley had encased for portability in a metal foot locker. "All these parts came from my electronic supplies. Even the case is mine. I remember now. I thought it was for tools or something. The whole thing is mine, Dr. Gormley. I'll take it with me, if you don't mind."

He snapped the lid shut and started away with it.

"You can't!" Gormley cried. "You're to go and see Albert Fast. He is my—partner."

Smith looked hurt. "I thought I was your partner."

"Yes-s. But you don't seem to understand, either of you. I don't care anything about the money. I'm a scientist. I want to help humanity. If there is money to be had out of my machine, keep it. You and Albert may have it all. I only want to continue my research. To—"

"To help humanity," Smith said drily. "You said that before. Very noble, I'm sure. But what about my parts? The papers are calling you a crackpot. I can't afford to wait forever. I thought you were engaged in something reasonable, not a ghost-trap."

"Just let me explain—"

"Sorry. I've no time, Gormley. I knew that Fast was helping you and I was im-

pressed by that, too. Now it looks like you were playing us against each other. I ask you, is that nice for a man with your educational background?"

"I didn't mean to do that." Gormley was appalled.

"Perhaps not. But now that Fast has dropped you—"

"But he hasn't! Ask him!"

Smith turned. "Eh?"

"No. Albert is meeting me tonight at the old Castongua Mansion. We intend to culminate all my research there, at midnight. What is more, he believes there is money in my machine. If he can make the mansion habitable—"

"So that's it." Smith smiled wolfishly and sat down on the locker. "So Albert Fast actually thinks—wait a minute. So it is a phoney. So what. A little judicious advertising. Some scientific claptrap, with your name to back it up. Yes. Maybe there is money in it. The world is full of gullible idiots. We could use the old 'are you sure you are safe' routine. Why, there might be millions in it. And I'm your partner!"

Gormley gasped. Not only was he hopelessly involved with an avaricious real estate man but now—fakery! Under Dudley Smith's patronage, with his penchant for phoney advertising, his machine was to be used to mulct people who had no need for it. Fake hauntings fake cures. And his standing in the world of science was to be the lure. . . .

"At least wait," he begged. "Don't take it now."

"All right." Dudley Smith unstraddled the case and looked down at the little man with a possessive smirk. "Have your experiment at the Castongua house. Only I'll be there, too. I've a share in this. If Albert Fast sells the house, I get my cut. We'll work it out. I'll draw up a contract. Everything nice and legal. Then I'll take my machine to see there's no hanky-panky. See you at midnight."

And the door snapped shut behind him.

PROMPTLY at nine a Fast Enterprises pick-up truck braked in front of Gormley's. He had been peering anxiously down for it for some time, with the rain drizzling off the eaves and down his neck. He didn't

wait. He hoisted up the heavy machine in both hands and groped awkwardly down the many ill-lit flights.

Grumbling about special favors for the boss and why hadn't Joe taken this run, the burly driver grabbed the foot locker out of Gormley's hand and swung it up in back. The pick-up careened over the soaked streets out of Sunset and presently into the mouth of the lonely ravine. The sky was deadly black, like the black Bay unseen to the left of the narrow byroad. Only the vaguest silhouette of bulky monstrosity was visible beyond the iron gates. The great oak tree loomed like a cloak of evil above it. Gormley's memory supplied the details—turreted gables, and all the intricate gingerbread which was so lavishly expended on the prodigious wooden horrors of the period.

The driver unlocked the gate. Then, hurrying with the box up to the veranda, he yelled over his shoulder, "Where do you want it?"

Gormley panted up behind him.

"Second room off the hall. Just under the oak. It was once the master library, I believe."

"You go ahead with the light," the driver told him, kicking the door open.

Gormley smiled sympathetically in the darkness. Yes, this great galoot of a man was afraid. Of what he didn't know. But he was familiar with at least some of the evil that this house had spawned. And besides that, he had the simple man's instinctive primal fear of what cannot be seen or heard, only vaguely felt.

And his fear was right. It could save him. Fear is the symptom of evil. . . .

They stepped warily across the great hall. The ring of light danced.

"Whew! What a stink!" The driver talked loudly. "I've smelled lots of old houses. Damp rot. Termites. But this! What d'you think it is, Professor?"

"Perhaps it is the odor of evil itself."

"Hey, I just thought of something. What are you gonna use for light in this weird old joint? No lights, you know."

"My machine will provide me with light," Gormley murmured. "Light is an excellent dispenser of surface evil in itself."

"Yeah? Well, here we are. Put your light to working, Professor. I'm scrambling."

Then the dwindling footsteps and the driver's dark-whistling was gone and Gormley was alone. But not quite alone. . . .

The light pouring from his machine dazzled the eyes to look at it. Actually, it was many lights in one. Light rays and other rays, visible and invisible. These other rays did more than repel surface evil. They were calculated to destroy evil or at least to send it howling back to the dark dimensions that gave it life.

He looked around him at the musty paneling, the empty bookcases. In one corner the paneling was torn. That was where Albert Fast's strippers had admitted defeat. In this room.

THIS room had to its evil credit three murders, two suicides. In a cache behind these bookcases malignant drugs had been hidden. A sash from those rotting drapes had been used to strangle a woman. Just above this room, in the odd rambling way the house had to be built if the tree was to be saved, was the great gibbet-branch itself.

Gormley busied his mind with a theory about oak trees. He made notes on it. Oaks were sacred to the ancient Druids. Or were they? Was it not rather their parasitic companion, mistletoe? He remembered the first scene in the opera *Norma*, where the high-priestess of the Druids is seen gathering mistletoe for an important ritual. Mistletoe, symbol of love and happy times. Why? Because it kept evil at bay—evil which the oaks attracted? On this oak tree no mistletoe would grow. . . .

Anyway, it was not this house itself that attracted evil. The evil that had happened in it had strengthened itself, fed on it. But the evil was there before. It was not houses themselves, but something elemental in nature. Oak trees, perhaps. Or perhaps just *places*, invisible faults in the dimensional shield where evilness could come through. They could be on land, or in the middle of the ocean, or high in the air.

Partially the evil things that happened here were man's responsibility. But only partially. The dark creeping evil from the dark dimensions had saturated and fed it. For evil loves evil. Evil begets evil. . . .

An impatient clatter at the front door told him Albert Fast had arrived. The

door had been left unlocked so Gormley waited for the big man to burst in. It was patent to Fast's character to announce his arrival by noise. He blinked in the library doorway.

"Trying to blind a man?" he grumbled.

He looked for a chair and, as there was none, pulled up a packing box and lowered his overdressed carcass on it with an expression of annoyance at its hardness.

"Everything set?" he demanded.

"Everything."

"Good. Let's get going. This joint is like a wet tomb." He shivered, his narrow eyes flicking around him with distaste and active fear.

Gormley told him about Dudley Smith.

The big man exploded into profanity.

"Who does he think he is? Muscling in on my preserve!"

"He is in, Albert, just a little. After all, he did give me the parts. You kept me going. But never mind. I don't want much of anything. It's between you two."

Fast's rage mounted. "I'll wait just five minutes. After we get through the machine goes home with me. I'll put that two-bit faker in his place!"

To keep peace Gormley began to tell him about the machine.

"Lights," Fast grunted. "If that's all there is to it, I'll install five-hundred-watt lights all over this house. What's more, I'm beginning to think there's nothing to this ghost stuff. Why doesn't something show itself?"

"The reason we feel no manifestation of evil is proof that my machine does work. If I were to switch it off here—"

Fast blinked down at the lights, twitching his flabby shoulders in mounting impatience. "Maybe. Or maybe you just don't want to turn the lights off because then I would know it was a fake. Like I told you before, I'm from Missouri. You got to prove to me there is something wrong with this house. Otherwise I don't need you and your machine." His eyes narrowed on the little scientist. "All right, go ahead. Prove it!"

Gormley stood over the machine protectively.

"I'm going to have to confess something, Albert."

"So it is a phoney."

"No, no! I've tried it before. Many times. But every time I was alone. I didn't like to think of anyone else coming to harm. When I was alone in the presence of an evil force I felt its power, and yet there was no overt demonstration because—"

Smith's yell from the front hall interrupted.

DUDLEY SMITH blinked owlishly as he stepped within the argent rays of the machine. Fast glared at him. He greeted the big man with a nod and a supercilious smile. Gormley didn't matter. It was between them.

Suddenly Fast laughed loudly.

"You wouldn't want it anyway, Smith. It's a fake."

"Really?" The tall man brushed some dust from his sleeve elegantly. "I don't think that matters particularly, not to me. I've been making some telephone calls since I left you, Dr. Gormley. I think we're in business."

"But if the machine is a *fake*—"

Fast stopped suddenly. He looked at Gormley suspiciously. Maybe he had been a little hasty. He scowled at them both.

Dudley Smith put a cigarette in a jeweled holder and paced the room while he smoked, casting possessive glances at the machine.

"Just a minute!" Fast blustered. "Gormley, you're into me for eight hundred bucks. I started you out before you even saw Dudley Smith. I fed you, kept you going while you were building it. Anybody else has claims on your work, I'll buy them off!"

"Dr. Gormley," Smith put in smoothly, "I am prepared to set you up for life in any kind of a laboratory you wish. All I ask in return is your signature on certain publicity documents from time to time."

Gormley only stared. Fast reared up like an angered bull.

"I'll go one better," he bellowed. "Look here!" He pulled out his wallet and removed a check from it. "Here is my certified check made out to you. Five thousand dollars. This is yours, Gormley. To set you up, keep you quiet, and to deghost this house."

Dudley Smith laughed. Fast didn't like it. He got up heavily and grabbed the tall man

by the arm. Smith stopped laughing. His hand snaked toward an inner pocket.

"Don't!" Gormley cried. "Don't you see what you're doing—both of you?"

They looked across the machine at him. Their looks said, keep out of this. Fast held out the check. "Take it." It was a command.

"All you got to do is prove to me that this evil of yours exists here in this house, and that your machine can destroy it. How long will it take for your machine to clean it up?"

"I—I don't know," Gormley said. "The evil is strong. It has had much to feed on—"

"You're hedging again," Fast warned. "I got to have proof there's anything to all this. Shut it off!"

"No-o!"

"Do what I tell you," Fast gritted. "Shut it off."

GORMLEY shook his head in terror. "Go ahead," Smith sneered. "Show him it's a fake so you and I can get down to business."

Gormley brushed his hand over his eyes. This was getting way out of hand. He was just beginning to realize what he had started. But in that instant Albert Fast's hand whipped down and flicked off the switch.

Darkness invaded.

The room vanished. They were no longer there. They were in limbo, in black nothingness. This was the natural habitat of live evil. The odor of evil smote them heavily. For a moment Gormley was faint from it, and from the swirling aura of despair and sadistic triumph.

He tried to cry out. First he couldn't. Then came his whimper of protest.

"No. No!" he wailed.

His cry was directed at the low animal noises that came from across the machine. He stood frozen. Something unseen held

him trapped, powerless to move. The animal sounds thickened. It was as if a wild pig had attacked a hyena.

Something thin and sharp swished the black air.

Unseen forms writhed in terrible embrace.

At last he could move. He fell to the floor, groping for the machine switch. Then he found it and flooded the roiling air with light. The living evil bounded back to its lair, faster than sight or sound.

They lay atop one another on the floor. Albert Fast's blunt fingers were deep in the radio station owner's neck. Fast's body was slashed in many places by the thin sharp blade Smith still clutched. Their heads drooped, eyes glazing as he stared.

When at last he could tear his eyes from this horror, he stumbled away from Castongua Mansion, with his machine. He should have warned them. He had tried to. Evil loves evil. *Evil begets evil*. There had been no sudden evidence of evil in those other houses because Gormley was not of himself evil, nor receptive to evil. But when it encountered Fast and Smith, with their insatiable greed and hatred for those who stood in its way. . . .

Back in his frigid loft he shivered and started to light the fire. It was then he noticed the check, Albert Fast's certified check, clutched in his fist. His heart leapt. How he could use it in his research! For the sake of humanity. And yet—

He uttered a cry and dropped it in the stove. He set a match to it, watched it curl and blacken and become nothing. No. He couldn't ever use that money for the sake of humanity. He hadn't taken it from Albert Fast. Back in that evil-saturated room, he had not voluntarily taken it and clutched it in his fist as if it meant more than life to him.

No.

Something had put it there.