

fantastic

ADVENTURES

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VOLUME 3
NUMBER 6

Mr. Murchison's GHOST

“OH!” Mrs. Murchison squealed. “Look, John.”

Mr. Murchison, startled, jerked the morning paper from the special place where he had propped it on the breakfast table, and stared across at his wife to see what had come over her.

“What is it, Lucy?” he demanded. “What’s wrong?”

“There. In the paper. Oh, you’ve lost the place. Open it up again, to the want-ad section.”

Mr. Murchison, perceiving that while he had been reading the closing prices on the stock exchange, Mrs. Murchison had been reading the other side of the paper; understood that she had seen something to which she wanted to call his attention. It was probably a hat sale, he thought resignedly; or a special bargain of some kind. Just as long as it wasn’t another piece of antique furniture, he had no objection.

He opened the paper and started to look for the ad that his wife had seen, but not knowing what it was, he did not know what to look for, and Mrs. Murchison, impatient with his fumbling progress, snatched the paper away from him. She immediately applied her full attention to it, uttering little gurgles and puffs of joy.

“Oh, how wonderful! Oh, this is simply divine! Just what we need.”

“What is simply divine?” Mr. Murchison inquired. He was only slightly annoyed. After all it was his paper and his inalienable right to read it at the breakfast table.

His wife seemed not to notice him. The little gurgles of joy continued to emerge from her.

“Oh, this is priceless, simply priceless.”

Mr. Murchison felt a slight chill come over him. He had not as yet seen the ad, but after listening to his wife’s gurgles, he did not need to see it.

“No,” he said.

His wife looked quickly up at him. She had a remarkably beautiful pair of blue eyes and she knew, from long experience, exactly how to use them. She meditated, debating to herself whether to use her eyes or to try some

other feminine weapon first, and seemingly decided to hold the eyes in reserve.

“Why, John! You don’t even know what I’m looking at.”

“I don’t need to know. I want you to understand, here and now—”

He planned to say that under no circumstances was there going to be another stick of antique furniture brought into this house, unless it was over his

by Robert Moore Williams

Mrs. Murchison usually had her way, and in spite of her husband, bought the antique dressing cabinet. But she didn't know that a ghost went with it



A grinning skull whirled about the room, shrieking and moaning

dead body. The whole place, in his opinion, was cluttered up with such junk now. Every corner had some special knick-knack in it. A man couldn't turn around without stumbling over some damned antique or other.

Mrs. Murchison, having lived with Mr. Murchison for many years, knew what he was going to say before he said it. It would not, as a matter of domestic policy, do to let him forbid her to buy something before he knew what she was going to buy.

"I want you to understand, here and now—" Mr. Murchison said.

"But this is something extra special, John," Mrs. Murchison quickly interrupted. "It's unique, really. Just listen to the ad. 'For Sale, reasonable: genuine Early American Wardrobe. Solid Walnut. A museum piece. Must sell. Private party. Tel. Normal 9-3007'."

Mr. Murchison turned brick red. He appeared to struggle with himself, his cheeks puffing out from the effects of the profanity he was restraining.

"NO!" he said. There was thunder in his voice. He was the lord and master of the household, handing down the law.

"But, John—"

"No!"

"It's solid walnut, John, a genuine Early American piece."

"I don't give a damn if it's solid sycamore and came over on the Mayflower. We are not going to have another piece of junk in this house, and that's final!"

Mrs. Murchison perceived that she had been wise to hold a powerful force in reserve. She brought the eyes into action now, in a frontal attack designed to hit the enemy in the center of his line. Tremulously dropping her gaze, she permitted little puckering lines to run upward from the corners of her mouth. She began to twist her

napkin. A subdued, muffled sob echoed through the breakfast nook. She raised her eyes, with a "How can you treat me in this cruel manner?" look in them. A tear ran glistening down her cheek and splashed into her coffee cup.

"J—John," she whispered.

But Mr. Murchison had hastily gulped the last of his coffee and was on his feet. He knew what those eyes would do to him if he tried to meet their attack. He went out of the breakfast nook on the run, and grabbing his hat from the hall tree (Genuine Colonial), continued out of the house.

"No!" he flung back over his shoulder as he slammed the door behind him.

"Oh, fie!" said Mrs. Murchison. Miraculously, her tears vanished. She nibbled a bite of toast. "Oh, damn!" she said. She was a determined woman, accustomed to having her way. She got resolutely to her feet.

MR. MURCHISON, returning from a hard day at the office, was pleased to find his wife coming down the walk to meet him. Usually she met him in the house, but tonight she was seemingly so anxious to see him that she couldn't wait until he got inside. This was flattering to Mr. Murchison's ego. It made him feel good. Then he saw that his wife was wearing her hat and gloves. He didn't feel quite so good.

"Oh, dear," Mrs. Murchison greeted him. "I simply have to run. It's a dinner meeting. The League for the Preservation of Early American Customs. I simply have to attend. You don't mind having dinner alone, do you?"

The way she said it, Mr. Murchison instantly knew that he was not supposed to mind having dinner alone. In point of fact, he did mind it. He hated

it. It was his theory that if he provided the food, his wife ought to at least be present while he ate it.

"Humph," he said. "Listen, Lucy—"

"The cook has dinner waiting for you," Mrs. Murchison continued. "Everything you like. Steak and French fries. It's all ready. Good-bye, dear. I simply have to hurry." Waving at him, she went down the walk.

"Damn!" her husband said. He went into the house, grumbling to himself, and because he could feel a bad humor coming on, went directly to the sideboard and poured himself a stiff Scotch. It made him feel a little better. Going to the bedroom, he discovered that one Scotch was entirely inadequate.

There, in the bedroom, stood a solid walnut wardrobe, undeniably Early American.

Mr. Murchison stared at this piece of furniture. Heavy rumbling sounds began to issue from his throat.

"By gad!" the sounds said. "She defied me."

Mrs. Murchison's strategy had been simple. After purchasing the wardrobe, she knew it would be unwise to be around when her husband got his first look at it. He would be angry, and in the first flush of anger likely to say things that he would regret later. In order to save him from the embarrassment of apologizing, Mrs. Murchison had wisely decided to absent herself.

"By gad!" said Mr. Murchison again.

"Youh dinnah is served," the cook announced, appearing at that moment.

"Get the hell out of here," he answered.

"But youh dinnah. It's gonna get cold—"

"I'll drink my dinner," Mr. Murchison said.

The cook discreetly went away. She had worked in this household for several years and knew when to talk and when not to. This was one of the times not to.

Mr. Murchison poured himself another drink and drank it straight. Then he mixed himself a highball to use as a chaser.

"By gad!" he said.

AN hour later, he was still saying "By gad!" The Scotch was well down in the bottle and the cook, after having hurriedly put away the things intended for dinner, had taken her departure.

Mr. Murchison felt he had been misused. He had been treated unfairly. He had been defied, and defiance is not the sort of thing to soothe the male ego. If his wife had bought anything else, his protest would have been mild. But this—this *antique!*

"By gad!" he said, choking.

"You said that before," a voice observed.

Mr. Murchison was in the living room, sitting on the sofa, the bottle of Scotch, ice, and pitcher of water on the coffee table in front of him. He was slightly startled to hear a voice speaking to him. Until that moment he had been under the impression that he was alone in the house. Apparently he wasn't. He looked up. A man was standing in the arch between the living and dining rooms.

He was not such a man as Mr. Murchison had ever seen before. Thinnish to the point of emaciation, gaunt and hungry looking, he seemed actually unsubstantial. He was clad in a three-cornered hat, a great coat with a row of shining pearl buttons down the front, and knee length trousers that were skin tight.

"I'll say it again if I want to," Mr.

Murchison answered hotly. "This is my house, by gad! and I'll say by gad in it as often as I please. Who the devil are you?"

"Me? I'm a ghost."

"What kind of nonsense is this?"

Mr. Murchison snapped. "A ghost. Indeed!"

"I am a ghost," the man contended. "Ain'tcha scared?"

Mr. Murchison gave this question some thought. If this was a ghost—which he doubted—he was probably supposed to be scared. But he wasn't scared.

"No," he answered impatiently. "I'm not. Why should I be?"

Apparently the man—if it was a man—found this a puzzler. He scratched his head.

"Folks generally are," he observed, staring doubtfully at Mr. Murchison. "And you oughta be," he decided. "Boo!"

"What the hell are you saying, 'Boo!' for?"

The man looked embarrassed.

"I was trying to scare you," he admitted.

"Scare me by saying, 'Boo!' Don't talk nonsense!"

"I kin do other things," the man observed threateningly. It was obvious that he considered it his sacred duty to scare Mr. Murchison. The latter, perceiving this, was determined that he was not going to be scared.

"Yeah?" he said sarcastically. "Trot 'em out."

"You mean you actually want me—"

"Do your worst," said Mr. Murchison, firmly taking a grip on the bottle of Scotch. "I don't believe you're a ghost and I don't believe you can scare me."

"All right, bud," the man said. "You brought this on yourself."

He vanished.

MR. MURCHISON was at that moment taking a drink straight from the bottle and in consequence he failed to see the man vanish. He looked doubtfully around, failed to see his visitor, muttered, "Where the devil did that fellow go?" and applied himself again to the Scotch. He was momentarily startled by the sound of stealthy footsteps crossing the rug. Following that, a grinning skull came floating into the room. It glowed with a ghastly white light, and approaching Mr. Murchison, gnashed its teeth.

"You got a molar there that needs filling," Mr. Murchison observed, laughing. He felt like a perfect daredevil. Considering the quantity of Scotch he had consumed—and on an empty stomach too—it was astonishing that he could feel at all. Settling himself back on the sofa, he prepared to enjoy the show.

The grinning skull began to turn somersaults. It spun in circles, gyrating on a corkscrew path. Mr. Murchison laughed. His laughter seemed to sting the skull to greater efforts. It began to groan. Mr. Murchison promptly groaned with it. Gnashing its teeth, it backed across the room, then made a screaming dive straight at its audience.

Mr. Murchison waved it away. Unfortunately, in waving, he forgot to take the bottle of Scotch out of his hand. The bottle and the skull collided sharply.

"Ouch!" a voice said from the empty air.

The man appeared again. He was sitting on the floor, rubbing his head, and looking reproachfully at his host.

"Why can't you be a little careful?" he demanded.

"So sorry, old man," Mr. Murchison apologized. "It was an accident. Now sit up and tell me how you managed

that skull business. It was as clever as anything I ever saw on the stage."

"Didn't manage it," the man sullenly answered. "I was it. Don't you believe I'm a ghost now?"

"Frankly, no."

"I am a ghost. I am a ghost. I tell you I am a ghost." The man seemed on the verge of hysterics.

"Tut, tut, old man. You must have been drinking before you came. Try and pull yourself together."

The man began to cry. Mr. Murchison observed the tears with callous indifference. He was conditioned to react to his wife's tears, but the sight of anyone else crying left him utterly cold.

"Do try and pull yourself together," he said.

"I am a ghost," the man wailed, between sobs. "I can prove it too."

"Got some more tricks?" Mr. Murchison asked, with quickened interest. "Can you make a skeleton walk into the room, or the banshee wail, or anything like that?"

"Y—yes, but you wouldn't believe 'em, either," the man said, starting to cry again. "You're the most stubborn, heartless person I ever met."

"OH come now," Mr. Murchison said, moved in spite of himself. "I'm not all of that. If it will make you happy, I'll admit you are a ghost. But you've got to be the ghost of something. What are you the ghost of?"

"I'm the ghost of the man who made that w—wardrobe your wife bought today."

"Oh, come now— Huh? What's that?"

The man—if it was a man—stubbornly repeated his statement.

"I made it," he said, wiping his eyes. "For my sins, I was condemned to haunt it."

Mr. Murchison sat up. For the first time that evening, he looked happy.

"By gad!" he said. "So that's it. In that case, all I can say is you deserved what you got. By gad, this does me good. The man who made that damned thing has to haunt it. There is some justice in this world, after all!"

There was profound satisfaction in his voice.

"I was only a poor apprentice," the ghost wailed. "I didn't know what I was doing. My wife wanted something to put in the bedroom and—"

This touched Mr. Murchison. He perceived that this poor ghost—he now admitted that it was a ghost—was a fellow sufferer in the wiles of domestic thralldom. His wife had wanted something to put in the bedroom. Mr. Murchison knew how much good it did to attempt to resist wives.

"It really wasn't my fault," the ghost blubbered.

"There, there, old man," Mr. Murchison said sympathetically. "I know exactly how it happened. Have a drink." He extended the bottle toward his visitor.

"Huh?" the ghost seemed startled.

"Have a drink."

"You—you really mean it?"

"Of course."

The ghost grabbed the bottle.

"First time anything like this has ever happened to me," he observed. Mr. Murchison, with real interest, watched the contents of the bottle diminish. He wasn't exactly certain where the whiskey was going. It went somewhere, though, and as it went, the ghost seemed to become more solid.

"By gad, you're a fine fellow," the ghost said, taking the bottle from his lips and staring fondly at Mr. Murchison. "Yes sir, you're a prince. Mind if I sit down beside you? It's kind of hard on the floor."

"Not at all," Mr. Murchison said, making room on the sofa. "Tell me about yourself. What's your name. This is the first time I ever had a chance to talk to a ghost."

"Hank," the ghost said. "That's my name. First chance I've had to talk to a mortal in a long time myself. I've tried to, but when I start talkin' the mortal just turns white and goes *swish!*"

Mr. Murchison nodded sympathetically.

"A ghost must lead a lonely life."

Sadly, Hank shook his head.

"You don't know the half of it. Of course, there are a few compensations." He grinned rather lewdly, his host thought.

"Such as?"

"Well," Hank said, "It's worse with some ghosts. They gotta haunt graveyards and places where guys have got themselves knocked off, places where nothing much ever happens. They get lonely as hell. With me, now, it's a little different. I haunt a wardrobe."

MR. MURCHISON tried to concentrate on this difference. From Hank's manner, he gathered that the wardrobe was responsible for things being different, but he couldn't see the connection. He expressed his difficulty.

"Wardrobes," the ghost said, grinning, "are usually important pieces of furniture."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Murchison, goggling. "You mean you—"

Hank nodded emphatically.

"Yep. That's the only thing that's kept me from goin' nuts. I tell you, it's been a sight at times. Why once, I remember a young couple bought my wardrobe—me going along with it, of course. You know," he said, "I got so interested in their quarrels and prob-

lems that I completely forgot my duty and it was months and months before I emitted a single groan, or rattled a bone, or anything. Afraid they'd sell my wardrobe, I was." The thought seemed to agitate him. "Where's that drinking whiskey?"

"Oops! Don't ever grab a bottle out of a man's mouth!" Mr. Murchison said angrily. "Here, you take this one. I'll go get another bottle."

Giving the bottle to the ghost, he went to the dining room and secured another bottle for himself. He was thinking hard. There was one thing about this situation that didn't suit him at all. Not at all.

"Look here," he said. "That damned wardrobe of yours is in my bedroom. Does that mean that you—"

"Yep. It sure does," Hank nodded. "Oh, you needn't worry none about it. You're a good fellow. I won't ever let on that I'm around. You won't hear a groan out of me."

"But you'll be there!"

"Well," Hank shrugged. "It don't matter none. Nobody but me and you will know I'm there."

"But I don't want you to be there!" Mr. Murchison's voice was becoming shrill. "It's not—I won't have it."

"Don't see anything wrong with it," Hank defended. "Anyhow I gotta do it. I'm doomed to haunt that danged wardrobe as long as it lasts."

Mr. Murchison was already pacing the floor. This was terrible. Mrs. Murchison would weep rivers of tears if he ordered her to get rid of the wardrobe. And if he didn't get rid of it, he would have the soul-shaking knowledge that every night a damned ghost was sitting in it, watching him. And probably grinning. It was terrible. It was something no man could stand.

"By gad, I won't have it!" he said suddenly.

"By gad—oops! You've got me saying it now—there ain't anything you can do about it. Don't see any reason why you should take on so much anyhow."

"Well, I see a reason," Mr. Murchison fiercely said.

MR. MURCHISON continued pacing the floor. The more he thought about the situation, the worse it seemed. A damned ghost sitting in the wardrobe grinning at a man all night long. It was more than a man could stand.

Mr. Murchison began to weep.

Hank observed the tears with callous indifference.

"You must have a crying jag," he sneered.

"You haven't an ounce of compassion in your whole body."

"I don't have a body," Hank pointed out. "I'm a ghost, you know."

Mr. Murchison, seeing he was getting nowhere, changed his tactics.

"Look here, as man to man, do you think it's the proper thing to sit there in that wardrobe all night long and snoop?"

"I gotta snoop or I gotta groan," Hank insisted.

"Isn't there anything I can do?" Mr. Murchison pled. "I'm a good fellow. You said so yourself. Isn't there any way I can get rid of you?"

"Nope. Only way to get rid of me is to destroy that wardrobe. That will release me."

"Huh? Will you let me destroy it? Will you let me chop it to kindling and shove it in the furnace?"

"Let you!" the ghost gulped. "Murchie, old man, I'll help you. If you tear that thing up, I'll be free to go to the land where the good ghosts go."

"You really mean it?"

"Mean it! Sir, on the honor of a ghost, that is the very thing I want most."

Mr. Murchison sighed with vast relief. His problem was solved. All he had to do was destroy the wardrobe. After that, everything would be lovely.

"Come on," he said. "I'll get an axe—"

Hank didn't move.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Murchison gasped, suddenly apprehensive. "Have you changed your mind?"

"Nope," said Hank. "I'm more than willing. But I feel it is my duty to warn you."

"Warn me? What about? Is it wrong to chop up a haunted wardrobe?"

"Your wife," the ghost said. "I've seen her. If you chop up that wardrobe, you'll have to reckon with her. I'm willing, Murchie, old pal; but the question remains—is your wife willing? You gotta live with her, you know, and if you destroy that wardrobe without her consent, she'll probably take some living with!"

MR. MURCHISON, in his delight at discovering a way to rid himself of this watching ghost, had completely forgotten his wife. He remembered her now. He knew what would happen if he went ahead without her permission.

"Within fifteen minutes after she gets back and finds the wardrobe gone, she'll have me feeling like the meanest hound dog this side of hell," he groaned. "She'll cry, and everything that I've done wrong in my whole life, she'll remind me of it. Then she'll adopt that 'I am a poor, suffering martyr' pose, and every time I speak to her, she'll just sniffle. Hank, we're licked. I just can't chop up that wardrobe."

He sat down on the sofa and poured himself another drink. But even that didn't improve the outlook. Which-ever way he looked, the future was black. If he destroyed the wardrobe, his wife would snatch him baldheaded. If he didn't destroy it, Hank would sit in it every night and grin at him.

The ghost suddenly sat up.

"We ain't licked yet, Murchie, old man!" he shouted. "I've just had an idea."

Swiftly, he explained his idea to Mr. Murchison. The latter blinked, then began to beam.

"Hank, old man," he exclaimed. "You're a genius. That's what you are—a positive genius!" He slapped the ghost fondly on the back. "A genius! That's what you are."

The ghost grinned in the manner of a person deprecating his own admitted abilities.

"It's really nothing," he said modestly. "Nothing at all. Here's how we'll work it."

In great detail, he outlined his plan. Mr. Murchison nodded enthusiastic, if slightly drunken, agreement.

MRS. MURCHISON returned home in mid evening. She was pleased to discover the lights in the house were out. This meant that the second half of her strategy was working out perfectly.

One of her reasons for suddenly remembering the dinner meeting she just had to attend was to avoid what would unquestionably have been a painful scene when her husband discovered the wardrobe.

But she had another and even better reason for going out. If she went out Mr. Murchison would be annoyed and would probably go out too. He would congregate with convivial friends in taverns and roadhouses and become

tipsy. Then, if he gave her hell for buying the wardrobe, she could give him hell for going out and for getting drunk, especially for going out. She was greatly pleased to discover that her plan of putting temptation in the path of her husband was working perfectly.

Entering the house, she went directly to the bedroom, and discovered, to her shocked surprise, that Mr. Murchison was neatly tucked under the covers.

"The rat!" she thought furiously. "He deliberately stayed home, so I wouldn't have anything on him." He had, in her opinion, taken an unfair advantage of her. "The beast!" she thought.

Mr. Murchison stirred and muttered who was there.

"It's only me, dear," Mrs. Murchison quickly replied, hurrying to kiss him. Now that he had stayed at home, she knew her whole array of weapons would have to be brought into play, weapons that included all the wiles women have learned since the time of Eve.

Mr. Murchison was rather groggy. He perceived that he was being kissed. Then he perceived he was not being kissed. His wife was standing beside the bed, stamping her foot.

"You're drunk!" she was saying bitterly. "Every time I let you out of my sight, you sneak off and get drunk. You bum! Have you no respect for your wife at all?"

She had smelled her husband's breath. There was no mistaking that odor. It could only come from the consumption of copious quantities of whiskey.

This discovery pleased her immensely. She didn't know whether her husband had been out or not, but he had certainly been drinking, and she could accuse him of being a drunken bum with perfect safety. She was, in real-

ity, very fond of him. But in a world largely run by men, girls have to do the best they can, a procedure that frequently involves calling their beloved husband a drunken bum.

"Not so," said Mr. Murchison. "Just had two little drinks. No more. Just two. No more. Just two. No—"

"That record is worn out," she snapped. "From the way you smell, you must have drunk a quart at least."

"Not so. Just two. No—" Mr. Murchison went to sleep.

AT first this annoyed his wife. Then she realized that by going to sleep while she was talking, he had given her another advantage over him. Now, when he awakened in the morning, she could accuse him not only of being drunk but of being discourteous. With two such charges against him, he would not dare bring up the matter of the wardrobe. She smiled happily. Husbands only required a little management to make it possible for a girl to live with them.

While she undressed, she mapped her campaign for the next morning. She would be very forgiving about the drunkenness and the discourtesy. Oh, she wouldn't be easy; she would let him know how much in the wrong he really was. Then she would smile bravely through her tears and be forgiving. After that, he wouldn't dare bring up the matter of the wardrobe.

Thus, Mrs. Murchison as she donned her pajamas and got into bed had that feeling of spiritual satisfaction that comes from the achievement of a hard-fought victory.

Somewhere in the house a man groaned.

Mrs. Murchison sat up in bed. She looked suspiciously at her husband but he seemed to be sound asleep. Shaking him only resulted in a louder snore.

From the way he smelled, she knew he would not be easy to awaken.

Mrs. Murchison was a woman of courage and determination, not easily frightened. She decided she had been mistaken about the groan.

The man groaned again.

Mrs. Murchison got out of bed. It would not do to have men groaning around the house, certainly not strange men. She went to investigate. The sound had seemed to come from the living room.

A few minutes later Mr. Murchison found himself violently shaken. He opened one eye. His wife was standing beside the bed. He wondered vaguely what she wanted, then suddenly remembering, decided that Hank had probably gone into action.

"What is it, m'dear?" he muttered. "What is it?"

"One of your drinking comrades has passed out in the living room," Mrs. Murchison said. "Go get him and throw him out."

"H—huh?"

"I said to throw him out," Mrs. Murchison firmly repeated. "I won't have you cluttering up this house with drunken bums!"

WHEN she used that tone, her husband knew to move. He got promptly out of bed and staggered into the living room. Hank was lying on the floor. He looked very solid and real and the groan he emitted sounded very real. Mr. Murchison shook him.

"Look," he whispered, "this isn't going according to schedule at all. She thinks you're nothing but a drunk and she wants me to throw you out. You've got to think up something better than lying on the floor and groaning."

"I'm supposed to be dying," the ghost protested. "This is the act where I imitate a dying man."

"You don't have my wife convinced that you're supposed to be anything but drunk."

"Huh?" the ghost muttered. "Is that so? One of them cool babies, huh? One of them females that ain't scared of nothing or nobody! We'll show her a thing or two. You run back into the bedroom shouting I'm really a ghost. I'll follow behind you and put on an act that'll lift her right out of that bed, or my name ain't Hank. Swing into action, Murchie, old boy." The ghost gave Mr. Murchison a shove. Trembling in every limb, he dashed madly back to the bedroom.

"Lucy!" he shouted. "L—Lucy! That's not a man in there. That's a g—gh—ghost!"

"Indeed," said Mrs. Murchison coldly.

Her husband blinked.

"But I'm telling you it's a g—ghost."

In corroboration of his claim, there came stalking into the bedroom the most eye-rending skeleton that ever rattled a bone in any closet. Every rib showed, every bone gleamed with a ghastly white light that told a tale of foul abominations too horrible to mention. It clanked as it moved. *Clink-clank, clink-clank, clink-clank*, a sound that turned the hearer's heart to water.

Hank, driven by the hope of nearing release from his long life as a ghost if he could frighten Mrs. Murchison into destroying the wardrobe, put on a truly stupendous show. Clinking and clanking, he shoved Mr. Murchison to one side and came marching into the room. Every joint creaking, he bowed to Mrs. Murchison.

"At your service, madam," he said, removing his head from his shoulders and holding it in his hand as he stood smartly at attention.

Even Mr. Murchison, strongly forti-

fied with Scotch as he still was, felt a thrill of horror at the sight. The spectacle, he felt, would drive a normal man to gibbering madness. Certainly it would induce Mrs. Murchison to part with her newly-bought wardrobe.

Mrs. Murchison sat straight up in bed. She pointed a finger straight at her husband.

"I told you to throw that drunken bum out," she said. "Well, go do it and quit putting on this dumb show."

At her tone, even the skeleton faded perceptibly.

MR. MURCHISON sighed. His hopes died. When his wife used that tone, there was nothing to be done.

"It's no use, Hank," he said. "She won't believe you're a ghost. You might just as well climb back into your wardrobe and try to make the best of things."

"What's this?" Mrs. Murchison inquired. "Is he really a ghost?"

"I sure am," Hank answered. "And up until now, I thought I was a good one, but after meeting you, madam, I got my doubts about how good I am."

He went on to explain the situation to her. He expected sympathy.

"Why how perfectly delicious," she said. "A real ghost. All my friends will turn perfectly green with envy. I'll have everybody over and we'll hold seances and you can do parlor tricks and things."

"My god!" the ghost gasped, vanishing precipitately.

"Where did he go?" Mrs. Murchison inquired.

"Back to his wardrobe, I suppose," Mr. Murchison gloomily answered. "That's his hideout."

His voice was thick with gloom. Every hope was lost, every chance gone. For the rest of his life he anticipated having a ghost sitting in the wardrobe

watching every move he made.

He saw his wife's mouth fall open.

"He really stays in there all the time?" she questioned.

"Yeah," Mr. Murchison replied.

"Can he see out?" Mrs. Murchison nervously questioned. "I mean—?"

"Yeah," a voice spoke from the wardrobe. "I can see, and I can hear. Why in my day, I've witnessed plenty! Family battles that would make Hitler's blitzkrieg look like a tea party; and, oh, lots of things even more interesting. It keeps me from my duties, sometime. I'm supposed to groan, you know."

Mrs. Murchison suddenly blushed to the roots of her hair. Her tongue clung to the roof of her mouth. Mr. Murchison observed her with real interest. It was the first time in his experience that she had ever been without words.

She was not long without them.

"Get that thing out of here!" she screamed. "Take it down to the basement and chop it up and throw it into the furnace." She blushed again, a deeper and more furious red. "*John! Did you hear me? Get that freak wardrobe out of this house this instant.*"

MR. MURCHISON fed the last of the splinters into the flame. The wood was old and thoroughly dry. It burned readily. Turning away from the furnace, he found the ghost standing there.

"Well, we put it over on her," the ghost said happily. "It took some doing, I admit, but we did it. Now both of us are rid of that danged wardrobe." He extended a spectral hand.

"So long," he said. "Got to be going now. Good luck to you, Murchie, old boy. If you ever need me for any little thing just put in a call and I'll be there a-clinkin' and a-clankin'."

"Good luck to you, Hank," Mr. Murchison said, shaking the ghost's hand. "'S been a pleasure knowing you, by gad. A real pleasure."

"The pleasure is all mutual," the ghost replied. Whereupon he vanished, and so far as is known, disappeared from mortal sight forever.

At breakfast the next morning, Mrs. Murchison was exceptionally pleasant, never once mentioning to her husband that he had been drinking the night before, or had been discourteous, or had been anything. Nor did she again mention the wardrobe, though Mr. Murchison, observing that she blushed frequently, knew she was thinking about it.

Shortly thereafter, the Murchisons, with singularly little reluctance on the part of Mrs. Murchison, disposed of every stick of antique furniture in their home, re-doing it throughout in furnishings so strictly modern that they could not under any circumstances be suspected of harboring a watchful ghost.