

# WEIRD TALES *The Unique Magazine*

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# SHADES

## A Realistic Ghost Story

By BRYAN IRVINE

Author of "The Ghost Guard," Etc.



**I**T IS A plainly furnished room—almost squalid. Except for some black velvet tapestries here and there, it has the appearance of a living-room of a person who has little of the worldly goods.

Seated at a small table in the center of the room is a little old woman. Her head is bent forward, her eyes are closed. She is talking in a low, sometimes barely audible voice. Now the

words come clear and distinct; again they are an unintelligible mutter.

The woman is a spirit medium.

Two men sit near her and listen. They are prominent members of a psychological research society. Noted scientists they are, and cynical, skeptical. Now they glance at each other and smile superciliously as the woman's voice falters, halts and goes on again.

I, too, am in the room. I see every-

thing about me, I hear every spoken word. I move about, trying, ever trying, to make my presence known, to be seen.

Oh, why does not that conceited, skeptical ass look at me, see me? I stand directly before him and peer into his very soul. They are fools, these men who have studied so much, learned so much, and yet know so little!

*I am a ghost.*

The woman knows I am here. She is

endeavoring to get my story across, but the combined influence of two skeptic minds in the room continually breaks the subtle accord of her mind with my mind.

*My mind?* Why, of course I have a mind. In fact, *mind* is all I am. I am merely a continuation of thoughts, attributes, desires and emotions that for many years were born in my once material brain and permeated my material being.

I am but a personality detached from a material body and all earthly matter; an invisible, wandering tramp—a ghost! For such was the transformation at death.

My difficulty since death has been my inability, or, rather, my unwillingness, to depart from reality, even though reality has forsaken me. As a material being, I was an intense materialist. I literally swam in the gratification of earthly desires, whims and pleasures.

I am loath to depart from these things I loved, therefore I am being punished and I am my own punisher. For such is the law of life and death. My old friends on earth know me not, see me not, hear me not. Though I mingle with them, play with them, laugh and cry with them, they do not reciprocate. I am a lonely, homeless, friendless ghost.

This is hell!

My flesh and blood being was a criminal.

I know not how long I have been a ghost, because I know nothing of the passage of time. In my present state I will never grow old. I live in the ever present, accursed *now*. I am tireless; I never sleep; I simply wander about my old earthly haunts and wish, wish, *wish!* Also I regret. I long for a material smile, a flesh-and-blood handclasp. I am denied these things.

Yet, in my present state, I have been seen by mortals. Terry Dolson saw me one night at the old swimming pool on our farm where he and I as small boys spent many happy hours. Terry was my chum in our boyhood days. He was my chum still when we attended college. He was my pal when we renounced society and turned to a life of crime.

Daniel Griswold, the prison guard, saw me one night as I stood before the closed door of my old cell at the penitentiary.

Herman Damstead—poor old Herman!—saw me at the gang's old rendezvous at Mother Maldrene's place.

Marie saw me seated on the divan in her apartment. I loved Marie. Perhaps if I had not loved her I would not now be a ghost. She was one of the most beauti-

ful and accomplished members of America's criminal aristocracy.

I love Marie still. Curse my weakness! Why cannot I forsake reality as others do when they die? There is something better than this—somewhere.

Yes, as a ghost I have been seen by flesh-and-blood beings. These are not pleasant recollections, however; to see those of the flesh, whose friendship and love was my joy on earth, cringing in abject terror before me, a nameless fear showing in their eyes, their faces contorted with a horrible expression akin to mania. Indeed, they are not pleasant recollections.

The medium's voice is more distinct now, though those two skeptics continue to sneer. I remain directly in front of one of the men. I will continue to peer into his eyes and perhaps he will see me before the seance is closed.

There is another ghost in the room. Yes, I know this ghost.

**B**UT to my story:

Upon our graduation from college we, Terry and I, pooled our interests and established a newspaper. We selected as our field one of the most politically and morally corrupt cities in America. It was our aim to whitewash this city of sin. Our paper failed miserably in less than a year, leaving us almost penniless.

Our next venture was as dealers in real estate. Business was poor; it grew worse. We arrived at our office one morning to find a writ of attachment posted in a conspicuous place near the door. We were broke!

What next? Never for an instant did we consider parting and trying our luck in different fields. It seemed to have been tacitly agreed that we should remain pals, partners and friends, whether fortune smiled or adversity crushed.

Ours was a friendship—aye, love!—in which the test of time had failed to find a flaw. Twenty years we had been chums, sympathetic and understanding. We remained so until—until . . . But that will be told later.

Broke and discouraged, Terry and I returned to our modest bachelor quarters. I well remember the day; how I endeavored to make light of our difficulties; how Terry sat hunched in a chair reading the "help wanted" column in the morning paper.

Suddenly he tossed the paper aside and rose with an exclamation of disgust.

"Hal, listen to me," he said, standing over me as I lay on the davenport. "I can name not less than one hundred wealthy men in this city who amassed

their fortunes through systematic, 'legalized' robbery. The police system of this city as well as many other municipalities in this country is corrupt—rotten to the core.

"Our penitentiaries are full of men who took big chances for small stakes. The real criminals—the big fellows—walk our streets unmolested. It isn't fair. Would it be more criminal to rob these big criminals systematically of their ill-gotten gains than for the big fellows to rob the masses under their camouflage of legitimate business, or under the purchased protection of the law?"

I rose to a sitting posture and looked my pal in the eye. He had evidently read the thoughts that had been passing through my brain for many days.

"It would not, Terry," I answered emphatically.

"Then why should we remain penniless puppets of circumstance?" Terry asked. His chin had advanced belligerently, and the tense lines of his rather boyish face indicated the tenseness of his thoughts. "We have brains, Hal, and—er—well, if robbing criminals is crime, why not be criminals?" he finished.

"All of which means, I infer," I replied, "that you propose we forsake the path of law and order to pit our wits against the rich criminals—rob them?"

"Exactly."

"You have voiced my own thoughts and inclinations to a whisper, Terry."

We shook hands and discussed our plans.

Four hours later we, Terrance Garlock and Haldine Steadman, were men with a purpose—a criminal purpose. We were criminals.

And what a life of crime we led!

**I**T REQUIRED TIME, caution, patience and money to perfect our organization; but in one year from the day Terry and I turned our brains to crime, the "Black Hawks" met in the basement of Mother Maldrene's resort for our first business session.

Twenty-three of America's shrewdest criminals were present. Among them were four women, including Marie Galtier. Marie was a native of France, though she had chosen America as a field for her criminal operations.

Terry and I had experienced great difficulty in persuading her to become a member of our organization. Many were the human vultures and money fiends of America who had gone down to defeat under beautiful Marie's smiles.

The first meeting of the Black Hawks was devoted to the drafting of the oath of allegiance and the by-laws. Next came the election of officers and a general dis-

ussion of the gang's purpose. I was elected leader of the gang. Then came the administering of the oath to each member. No oath was ever more solemn or binding.

Each member of the gang was a specialist. There was Tony Zellerton, whose knowledge of safes of every description and his ability to open them was almost uncanny. Zip Brinton, New York's cleverest pickpocket, was with us. Sandy Dunnlund, whose reputation as a confidence man was the envy of many crooks, unhesitatingly took the oath. The noted Charles ("Doc") Hanks, ex-lawyer and detective, but now a super-criminal, enthusiastically lined up with us.

And Marie—beautiful Marie!—who had yet to find a sample of handwriting that she could not imitate perfectly; whose wonderful dark eyes had lured many a money leech to his financial doom; whose utterly clueless criminal operations had astounded a nation and completely baffled the police and detectives! Ah, yes, every member of the Black Hawks was an expert in his line—a criminal genius.

In two weeks every detail of organization was completed. No secret order in existence was more closely united; no organization of men and women was so intent on a common purpose.

Our first victim was Malcom Nisson, the near millionaire who had become wealthy through "legalized" crime. We spread our net carefully, twenty-three keen criminal brains against the brain of Nisson. Slowly, cautiously we gathered him in. In six months Malcolm Nisson was practically penniless. I have seen his ghost, the ghost of a suicide—ugh!

Next came Dixon Denner, the profiteering sugar king, whose indiscriminate and heartless machinations had been felt in every home in America. Although he was not entirely crushed, many thousands of his ill-gotten dollars went into the coffers of the Black Hawks.

Others fell hard under our subtle attacks, and we prospered exceedingly.

And through it all I loved Marie Galtier. I had loved her from the moment I looked into the liquid depths of her dark eyes, though as yet I feared to tell her of it. And, too, Terry loved her. The situation was becoming strained.

It was Terry, good, old chum Terry, who relieved it. We had never ceased to be roommates and pals.

"Pal of mine," he said one evening in his usual direct way, "you are hopelessly in love with Marie. Now don't try to dodge the issue," he went on hurriedly, as I attempted to cut in. "You

love Marie, but darn your old carcass, you don't love her a whit more than I do. Now here, Hal,"—he stood before me and placed his hands on my shoulders—"we must be rivals in love because we both love Marie; our rivalry in that respect is inevitable, irrevocable. But let's play the game square. If you win, I drop out gracefully, no matter how bitter the pill, and remain your pal. If I win will you do the same?"

"That proposition is characteristic of you, Terry," I replied, "and it has greatly relieved my mind. I certainly promise to play my cards in this little game of hearts as a gentleman and a pal should. If you win Marie, I remain your friend and chum. In fact, Terry, as much as I love Marie, I would give her up rather than lose your friendship."

### I WON Marie.

What a race it was! Terry, though naturally glum over the outcome, smiled bravely and gave me the hand of friendship.

"I am glad for you, old man," he said, and I knew he spoke from his heart.

Marie and I waited patiently until all the gang were in the city before we were married. Then came the nuptial festivities in the rendezvous of the Black Hawks. We made our home in a sumptuous three-room suite at Mother Maldrene's.

Our landlady's house, though the home of some of America's most notorious criminals, was exclusive in that only real, aristocratic criminals were admitted. And, too, Mother Maldrene's power reached far into police circles. She purchased and paid well for protection.

Terry was always given a hearty welcome in our home and he conducted himself as merely an old friend of the family, though I knew his heart ached.

A year passed; a prosperous, strenuous year for the Black Hawks and not without its dark days. Big Bill Silwert, one of our best gunmen, had been killed in a running fight with operatives of the Bixler Detective Agency. Sam Alvers died in the same skirmish. Jesse Delmere, our witty little electrician and locksmith, was captured while in the performance of his duties on the famous Micheau art job. He died in prison. Zane Baldwin turned informer, but before he had done much damage he—well, he became a ghost.

It was while directing the activities of the Black Hawks on the Helwig Oil Company job that my troubles began. Being a materialist, I scoffed at hunches,

forebodings and the like. Marie, who was as temperamental and superstitious as she was beautiful, implored me to give up the Helwig job.

"I feel, Hal," she persisted in telling me, "that all will not go well on this case."

She invariably used the word "case" instead of my more indelicate term, "job."

I patted her shoulder and laughed lightly.

"Why, little girl," I patiently assured her, "the gang has discussed every detail of the venture. Every possible flaw in the chain of our intended movements on the job has been considered minutely. It is very simple. I have volunteered to get the papers from the safe in the company's office. The gang will take care of the policeman on the beat and the watchman in the building, and any one else who happens to be near the place. Once we have the incriminating papers in our possession, we will force Helwig and his associates to refund at par every cent squeezed from fools all over the country. Then will come our five hundred thousand for silence. Don't worry, it will be an easy haul."

"Nevertheless, I have a—a—oh, a premonition that all is not well." She looked pleadingly into my eyes. "Why did you volunteer to get the papers from the safe, Hal? That's Tony Zellerton's work."

"Because," I answered, "Tony has taught me much about safes in the past year, and I feel that it is up to me to do some real work once."

How our plans miscarried and how I alone was captured is another story. Enough to say that the situation resolved itself into a question of the capture of the entire gang and I alone escaping, or I giving warning to the gang and thereby being captured alone.

MARIE—poor girl!—was the only member of the gang present at my trial, it having been previously agreed at the meetings of the Black Hawks that when a member was in the toils of the law the others should not endanger the organization by being present at his trial. Neither should they correspond with a member during his incarceration. Marie, however, was not known by the police and was granted permission by a majority of votes of the gang to attend my trial and correspond with me if I were convicted.

I was found guilty and sentenced to serve not less than ten years nor more than twenty years in the state prison. Marie, after being thoroughly searched

by the matron at the county jail, was permitted to visit me alone for fifteen minutes in my cell.

It was a heart-rending fifteen minutes. It was not Marie, the notorious female crook, who wept on my shoulder; it was Marie my heart-broken wife.

The promises and vows we made would fill a chapter, but at last the relentless hand of the law wrested her from me, and several hours later I was alone in a cell at the state prison.

Ah, those interminable days of monotony! Idleness, the horrible spectre that kills the spirit of prisoners, was my daily lot. Only the favored ones and short-termers were given work in that prison. Doing time!

My only relief from the awful drag was Marie's weekly letters. I counted the hours between them; I read them daily until another one came. For two years Marie's letters came every week. Then came intervals of two weeks, three weeks, sometimes a month between them. It was hell, and worse, when they ceased to come at all.

What was wrong? Had the Black Hawks disbanded? Or, worse still, had they been captured? I watched and expected daily to see some of the old gang's familiar faces in the large mess hall at the prison. They did not come.

Several months passed with no word from Marie. I was almost crazed with anxiety. Then, quite unexpectedly, something happened one quiet morning.

The warden was making his weekly tour of inspection through the buildings. He merely glanced into my cell as he passed down the gallery. A second later another figure darted past the cell door.

I recognized the second figure as Angelio Sigari, a life-termer, whose cell was next to mine and who was said to be mentally unbalanced. I caught the glint of steel in the Italian's hand as he flitted by the open door.

In an instant I was after him. I was not a second too soon. The unsuspecting warden had halted to look into a cell. Sigari was standing at the official's back, and in his upraised hand he clutched a case knife which had been whetted to a sharp point on the cement floor of his cell. Just as several guards shouted a tardy warning to the warden I struck Sigari on the jaw and he dropped unconscious, the knife falling from his hand to clatter on the cement corridor twenty feet below.

There was very little said. The warden merely took my name and told me to return to my cell. Guards carried the unconscious Italian away.

A week later I was called into the warden's office and informed that I had been pardoned by the governor and prison board.

It seemed a century—in reality it was two hours—before I was on a train and speeding back to the city. Free, Free! Free to return to Marie, the Black Hawks, Terry!

It was night when I arrived in the city. Several hours before arriving, however, I became extremely restless. What had happened during my time in prison? Marie's failure to write for several months before my release worried me. Had something terrible happened?

A sickening thought suddenly entered my mind: Was Marie, my Marie, dead? Her vows, her promises to me—surely, all was not well.

I hurried through the station and emerged upon one of the main thoroughfares of the city. I had walked only several blocks when I became vaguely conscious that I was being followed.

Turning abruptly into a side street, I walked a block, turned into an alley and waited. A moment later a man entered the alley and halted directly before me. Even in the semi-darkness I recognized him as Zip Brinton, the Black Hawks' clever pickpocket.

"How in the world did you get out of the pen so soon, Hal?" he asked, advancing and grasping my hand.

"Pardoned," I explained briefly. "Where is the gang? How are Terry and Marie? Hurry, Zip, I am worried half to death."

Zip dropped my hand and looked at me in surprise. "You haven't heard?" he asked sympathetically.

"I've heard nothing from Marie for several months."

Zip turned his head away and was silent for a full half minute.

"I don't know how things are with the gang right now," he finally said. "You see, I haven't been a member of the B. H. for the past two months."

"You—you quit them?" I demanded, half angrily.

"Yes, by request of the gang's present leader, Terry Garlock."

"Terry asked you to quit?"

"Not asked—demanded. Terry and I had some heated words. I told him what I thought of him for the dirty deal he handed you."

"Handed me?"

"Why, yes. Terry, you know, married Marie on the very day she was divorced from you."

**M**ARIE divorced me!—married Terry!

The enormity of Zip's statement had struck me like a blow in the face.

Zip placed his arm about my shoulders. "Come with me, old man," he said gently. "You are all unstrung, and heaven knows you have been given a pretty rough deal. You need a bracer, then I'll tell you all about it."

Utterly crushed, I silently accompanied Zip through alleys and side streets, and in fifteen minutes I sprawled dejectedly in an easy chair in his room.

He produced some wine and glasses. My system, long free of alcohol, became fired as I gulped down several glasses of wine in quick succession. The stimulating effect of the liquor also brought with it a consuming rage, which, however, I successfully concealed from Zip.

I remained silent as he related all that had transpired with the Black Hawks during my absence. The gang, it appears, all but Zip, had accepted my downfall in Marie's heart and her acceptance of Terry as one of the many unfortunate vicissitudes peculiar to a temperamental woman. But—Terry a betrayer!

It was almost unbelievable. And Marie, the wife who wept on my shoulder and told me that every day away from me would be an eternity, false!

"Will you return to the Black Hawks now?" Zip asked.

"I don't know what to do, Zip," I answered wearily, though in reality I had already determined on a course of action.

"Better turn in and sleep over it," Zip suggested. "I have several prosperous-looking prospects on my list for tonight and may not return before morning. Make yourself comfortable here, old man. And remember, Hal, I'm your friend."

A moment later he was gone. I waited several minutes to allow him ample time to get out of the building, then I proceeded to business. I went through the dresser drawers, a suitcase, and finally found what I wanted in Zip's trunk—a revolver fully loaded.

Twenty minutes later I rang the front door bell at Mother Maldrene's place. The landlady herself came to the door.

"Why, Hal Steadman!" she exclaimed effusively. Where—come in quick. Did you escape?"

"No; pardoned. Any of the gang here?"

"Yes, they are in session now in the basement. I'll go and tell them you are here. Sit down."

"No, wait, Mother," I hastily said. "I want to surprise them."

She accompanied me toward the stairway leading to the basement, firing all manner of interrogations and exclamations. Suddenly she halted and placed a detaining hand on my sleeve.

"You have heard about Marie and Terry?" she queried, giving me a close scrutiny.

"Yes, I have heard," I replied, simulating well a shrug of resignation. "I cannot blame them, I suppose."

My reply evidently satisfied her.

"Please let me go down alone," I requested.

"Sure," she agreed with a giggle. "And I'll bet they will be a some surprised bunch."

Very softly I descended to the basement door. I could hear voices beyond. I cautiously turned the knob and opened the door about two inches. The Black Hawks were all there except Zip Brinton and Marie.

I was disappointed in not seeing Marie in the room. She, I had determined, was to play an important part in the scene I had planned. Well, I would see her later; she would not escape me!

The gang was seated about a long table. Drinks were being served and toasts given, as per custom of the Black Hawks preceding the opening of a business discussion. Terry sat near the head of the table, but not in my accustomed place. My chair, the leader's chair, was not occupied.

Jimmy Delphraue rose.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, holding high a glass of wine, "Let's drink to the health of the comrade who unhesitatingly sacrificed his liberty that the Black Hawks might live on in freedom and plenty; to good old Hal Steadman, whose vacant chair there at the head of our board is a mute though eloquent symbol of his loyalty and devotion to the Black Hawks."

As Jimmy talked on I watched Terry, my one-time pal and friend. He had risen with the others, but his head hung and Jimmy's words were evidently cutting into his heart.

"Let's drink to Hal, mates," Jimmy went on. "May he return to us again—"

I threw the door wide open and strode into the room, revolver in hand. As one man, the Black Hawks turned and stared at me in speechless amazement.

"YOU SNEAK!" I hissed, leveling the revolver at Terry.

I felt my finger tighten on the trigger; I saw the hammer rise; I saw Terry make a quick movement toward his hip

pocket. My revolver snapped—merely a sharp, metallic *click*.

I saw something flash in Terry's hand. A roar. I felt no pain. I remained in the same posture, arm extended toward Terry. But—

*At my feet lay Hal Steadman, a lifeless mass of clay!*

I was a ghost! Where a moment before I stood, a living, breathing man, with murder in my heart, was now an invisible shadow; only the mind, desires, passions, weaknesses—the personality—of Haldine Steadman.

I was instantly adapted to my present state, undazed, unwondering. It seemed natural and fitting, this sudden leap into eternity. As in my material existence I could see, hear; but it seemed all wrong that those old pals of mine should stare aghast at the huddled heap on the floor and utterly ignore me.

Several wine glasses fell from shaking hands to shatter on the floor and table. The women gasped. Anne Stitt fainted. I was watching Terry. His face had gone white; he looked down upon the body with eyes that were wide and staring.

The revolver fell from his hand and clattered on the floor. Slowly he walked over to the thing that had once been and knelt down before it.

"Hal," he whispered brokenly, "Speak to me, Hal! Please, old pal! Why, I didn't want to hurt you, Hal!"

As he spoke, a scene of long ago came before me. He and I, little kids, were throwing snowballs at each other. One of his white missiles struck me. Though I was not hurt, I threw myself face downward in the snow and pretended I was dead. He had done then as he did now, knelt down near me, and spoke the words he now spoke:

"Hal! Speak to me, Hal! Please, old pal! Why, I didn't want to hurt you, Hal!"

It was Terry, my old chum, and he was in distress.

"Hal, please forgive me," he pleaded.

"Why, of course I'll forgive you, Terry," I responded; but it was the voice of the dead—a ghost's voice that the living could not hear.

"Listen, Hal," Terry went on plaintively, as if he expected my huddled remains to listen, "I was weak, old man; I could not resist her. She asked me to marry her only after she had divorced you. I even begged her not to divorce you. And, oh, I loved her, Hal, and she tempted me. I am only human. Hal—Hal—" He covered his face with his hands and sobbed convulsively.

Others had gathered around, seeing me not, hearing me not, as I stood over

Terry and endeavored vainly to comfort him.

"Come, Terry," said Doc Hanks, placing his hand on the young man's shoulder, "it was self defense pure and simple. Hal came here to kill you; and you killed him. Come on, you fellows."—turning to the others—"let's get the body out of the house. And remember, everybody, when the police find poor old Hal's body, we know nothing of his death. It will be a case of suicide."

I MUST see Marie. She was, I presumed, in her apartment.

Instantly I was upstairs and in the living-room of what was once my home. Where I wished to be I was there on the instant. I was a *mind*, nothing more.

There was no one in the room. I waited, sitting on the divan. Presently Terry entered, hair awry, face haggard and drawn. He sat down by my side on the divan, little knowing that I was there, and moaned in the anguish of a broken heart and a seared conscience.

Again I endeavored to tell him that I heard, I knew, I forgave, but it was no use. Again the door opened and Marie entered, beautiful as ever; more alluring even to me, a ghost, than ever.

"Why, Terry!" she exclaimed, halting abruptly just inside the door, "What in the world is the matter—"

Suddenly her face turned to a sickly gray color and into her eyes came an indescribable terror.

"Merciful Heaven!" she gasped. "Terry! Terry! There, sitting at your side! Terry, he has his arm on your shoulder! It is Hal! No, it is not Hal; Hal is dead! Oh, I know, I know; you have killed Hal! Terry!"

She slipped to the floor unconscious.

Terry bounded from the divan and stood now looking down upon me—me, the ghost that could not be seen by him.

I wished to leave them! to get away from Terry's anguish. Instantly I was in the street, an invisible thing to drift—and wish.

Other ghosts, many of them, I saw as I drifted aimlessly on through unrecorded time. I gave little heed to those of my kind; neither did they heed me. We were a silent, ghostly horde, who would not allow the natural scheme of things to carry us away to better things—away from reality.

Perhaps it was a week, perhaps it was a year later that I again attended a meeting of the Black Hawks. Others of them had died, but they were present. It seemed fitting that I should sit in my old chair at the head of the table.

Big Bill Silwert, who died in the fight with the detectives, sat in his usual

place. Sam Alvers, another shadow, was in his old place at the table. Nearly all the *dead* members of the Black Hawks were there. Some of those who had passed on had wrested themselves from things material upon their death and never returned.

Detective Walter Bellden, who had been killed by Doc Hanks, leaned against the wall and watched proceedings with an amused expression on his astral face.

Terry, he of the living and he who had slain me, sat near me. But what a Terry! No longer the old-time cheering smile on his lips. His hair, once a dark brown and curly, was now thin and gray. I had been near him almost constantly since he killed me, but he would not see me, could not hear me. How I longed to tell him he was justified in what he did! How I longed to ease his stinging conscience!

Drinks were served. Terry nodded to Herman Damstead. Herman rose.

"Sister and brother Black Hawks," he began in his deep voice, holding high a glass of port, "shall we drink again tonight to the memory of Hal Steadman, our friend, our leader, who, though he alone was the cause of his death, is yet a friend and a Black Hawk in our memories? Would that he could sit in yonder chair again tonight and once more give us wise counsel. Ah, that we could only see him there again, smiling the old familiar smile, telling us again—*Gad!*"

The glass of port fell to the table, sending a shower of splintered glass over the white spread. The hand that held the glass now pointed directly at me.

"It is he—Hal!" Herman whispered hoarsely. "See, see, he is smiling up at me!"

Then I knew from the look of mingled surprise and terror on his face that I had faded from his vision. He remained in the same position, pointing a shaking finger at the chair.

Several of the men laughed nervously.

"Better go to bed, Herman," one of them advised. "This port plays the dickens sometimes with a man's imagination."

I noted, however, that every face in the room was pale. They led Herman, weak and trembling, from the room. I followed.

"I'm not drunk, boys," he protested huskily. "I saw him—*saw Hal!* He was smiling up at me. He sat in his chair as he used to sit in life, his legs crossed, his right elbow on the arm of the chair and his chin resting in the palm of his hand."

I left Mother Maldrene's again to drift, a bit of flotsam on a sea of discontent and regret. But I always drifted back to my old pal Terry.

Many strange things I saw. Ah, you mortals, what a world you live in! We ghosts know. We hear the promises that are made to be broken. We hear the vows of love made and see those vows shattered on the altar of greed and lust. And such was to be the lot of Terry.

Marie, whose heart and love was like the drifting sands of Sahara, or the changing monsoons of Eastern seas, was drifting away from Terry.

Doc Hanks it was who was successfully battering down the woman's weak fortresses of loyalty to her husband.

I was with Terry the night he returned to his home to find Marie gone. Pinned on the door on the inside was a sheet of writing paper, and written on the paper in a flourishing feminine hand was this:

*"Terry: As you once won me from Hal, so has Doc Hanks won me from you. We will be far away when you read this. Please do not attempt to find us, because—well, I do not hate you, Terry, nor wish you harm, and Doc, you know, never allows any one to get the drop on him. Forget me, Terry, if you can.  
"Marie"*

I followed the heart-broken man from the house. I was at his side when he left the city. I was with him still when he at last wandered through the woods in the darkness of the night and finally stood with bared head on the banks of the old swimming pool, where years ago we told each other our boyhood troubles and gave each other our boyhood sympathy.

Why would not Terry see me? Others had seen me. Perhaps this night he would. Perhaps—

"Hal," he whispered, holding out his arms toward the pool. "Hal, what shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?"

I stood before him, peering, peering into his eyes. *Why could he not see me?*

Then he saw, and he, like the others who had seen me, became terrified.

"Hal!" he screamed. "For Heaven's sake, have mercy on me, old man! Yes, yes, I know I killed you, but I'm sorry, so sorry. Don't haunt me, Hal! Please go away!"

As he backed away from me, holding up his arms as if to ward off a blow, I followed, ever trying to make him understand.

Then—

He screamed, the terrifying scream of a stricken soul, and, even before the echoes died away in the distant wood, he plunged into the pool.

All was still then. The surface of the water became calm as a soul detached itself from a material body.

It rose to the surface, a nebulous glow that drifted to me across the water. Terry it was, understanding now and unafraid.

"Come, pal of mine," I said, and we floated away, hand in hand.

THE little old woman's voice falters now. She is awakening from the trance. Those two skeptics sneer still.

"Come, Terry, old pal, let's leave these things of materialism. Let's go!"