

SPICY MYSTERY

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STORIES
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SUMMONS
for **SATAN**

by C. A. M. Donne

SPICY MYSTERY STORIES

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Larry saw the gaunt figure of a masked man bending over Sandra.

By
C. A. M. DONNE

*He met her on a ferry boat. It was love at first sight
... a love that drove him on to find out what mysterious
terror lurked behind her lovely eyes*

SMOKY fog filled the harbor that warm night, hiding Manhattan's spectral skyline behind an impene-

trable veil, muffling the mournful sirens of tugs and freighters, walling the Staten Island ferry boat away from all

SUMMONS FOR SATAN

the rest of the world. Its fleecy tendrils curled caressingly like ghostly arms around the slim figure of the lone girl at the rail.

Len Larrimore, slanting his seventy inches of lean youth against the side of the cabin not a dozen feet away, watched her out of intent gray eyes that hungered, seeing how the breeze whipped her sheer frock snug against the sculptured firmness of hips and the enticing fullness of softly rounded breasts.

Her small figure was lithe and erect and her oval face, framed in dusky hair that seemed as insubstantial as the mist itself, peered eagerly toward the murmuring water, nostrils distended to sniff



the wet sea-smells. Her skin was old ivory under the yellow lamps, her eyes fathomless pools of blackness beneath sweeping lashes, her lips lush and red. She was lovely and alluring and exotic.

In his loneliness—for he had met few people in New York except those connected with the business of publishing his prize-winning novel, written out West—Larrimore had looked with something akin to longing at many girls who had pretty faces and tempting figures. But never had any woman electrified him with the kind of thrill that came ten minutes ago, when this girl had brushed casually against him on the gangplank.

He hadn't seen her before that. His elbow had felt the gentle inadvertent pressure of a cushioned bosom and then his hand, swinging at his side, had made accidental contact with the yielding softness of a shapely thigh. Probably a dozen women had brushed against him in the same manner that day, on the street and in subway trains, but not with the same result. This time a warm shiver ran through all his nerves, and as he turned to look at the girl he was almost surprised to see that she was clothed. He'd had the amazing feeling that she was not when he had touched her!

THEN he experienced his second heady shock. Her dark eyes laughed up at him and it was as if powerful magnets held him rigid and motionless. There was a mysterious quality in her glance that was new to him. He felt that the spell lasted for hours, although it could not have been more than a second until she said throatily, "I'm sorry!" and passed on, leaving him gazing at the rippling contours of her body beneath the flowered frock.

Even so, the spell lingered—for with-

out consciously willing it he followed her through the cabin to the damp upper deck. They were alone there, but he would not have noticed if they had been the center of a gaping crowd. He saw nothing, thought of nothing, excepting her.

Suddenly the whistle above them gave forth a jarring, ragged blast that would have startled any person less rapt than Larrimore. It startled the girl. She stiffened with a jerk and said, "Oh!" Then she looked around to see if anyone had noticed, and caught Larrimore's eye and smiled a second time.

This time her magnetism was irresistible. He moved toward her, forgetting his natural shyness, and with every step it seemed his heart quickened its tempo, until his pulse was a roaring tumult in his ears as he stood at her side. He put his hands on the rail and grasped it tightly.

"It's a spooky kind of night," he said, striving to sound natural.

She accepted his presence as though she had known him for years. "It's a spooky world," her vibrant voice replied, "filled with forces stronger than people." And he sensed in her words something prophetic, vaguely disturbing.

IT TAKES approximately half an hour for the night ferry to cross the harbor from Manhattan to Staten Island, largest and most sparsely inhabited of the five boroughs of the metropolis, and sometimes longer when fog lies heavily over the water. But this passage was timeless for Larrimore. It was like a dream, whose action may embrace years in a space of seconds, and whose details are forever afterward fuzzy and elusive. An enchanted dream in which things that could never happen in real life become matter-of-fact.

They said things he could never after-

ward remember, except that he learned her name was Sandra and was conscious that she deliberately avoided telling much about her life. They stood close together and he felt her shiver against him, and it seemed natural that he should put his arm around her shoulders. And their lips met and his veins throbbed with liquid fire, and there was no remonstrance on her part, no pushing him away.

Larrimore thought of things he had read about Destiny—about a force greater than human life that brings soul-mates together across the width of the world—about lovers pledged in the beginning of time, who recognize one another suddenly in chance meetings, even though neither had suspected the other's existence. Such things had seemed ridiculous at one time. Now he believed in them.

He had boarded the ferry simply for the ride, intending to return to Manhattan immediately, but that was all forgotten. When the clumsy craft bumped into its slip they went down the gang-plank together, threaded their way through the docks and took a street that climbed steeply up a hill, out of the low-hanging mist. They passed through other side streets, deserted at this late hour, and through a wooded park. At the edge of the park she stopped.

"I'll have to leave you here," she whispered. And even in the shadows he could see that the laughter had vanished from her eyes as they lifted toward the dark mass of a huge house, turreted like an ancient castle, topping the hill above them. It was a gloomy, forbidding spectacle, stirring an unbidden chill that slithered like a snake along his spine.

Larrimore put both his arms around her. "You can't leave me, here or anywhere," he panted. "I've got to keep you always."

"I want you too," she said. "I knew it the moment I saw you. But not for a little while. We'll meet again sometime—"

"Tonight!" he insisted. He bent his head, seeking her lips. His arms tightened, crushing her against him, molding her soft shapeliness to his angular frame. And all at once she responded with an ardor that took his breath away.

Her arms went around his neck in an embrace that stopped just short of being strangling. Her lips were pressed to his mouth; her perfumed breath was a madness against his face. Her body trembled ecstatically and delicious shivers rippled through it. From her throat came little, moaning whimpers of love.

The thumping of his own heart staggered him with its violence. His arms tightened spasmodically around her yielding length and the depths of his emotion held him in a grip that he couldn't break.

He lifted her in his arms as though she had been a child, and the hand that was beneath her knees touched burning skin above the tops of silken hose as her skirt billowed. Again his mouth sought out the soft hollows of her throat. . . .

MANY minutes later, when the tornado of their embrace had passed over, she remembered suddenly that she had been in a hurry. She straightened up, patting her tangled hair into some semblance of order and smoothing her frock. With an effort she disengaged herself from his clinging arms. There was a note of fear in her voice as she said: "I should have returned long before this. He may need me. Saturday night, at the same time, I'll be on the ferry, if you care to meet me."

He had no chance to protest. She kissed him swiftly and was gone. By

the time he had turned to follow she was a fast-moving blur in the dusk, speeding up the hill toward the grim pile of masonry that perched on its summit like a sorcerer's castle against the sky.

Heavy feet crunched in gravel and a cop appeared in the park. Larrimore lighted a cigarette, inhaled deeply, and waited till the cop came close and began eyeing him.

"It's a swell night for a stroll," he said to the cop, "and that's a swell-looking place." He pointed toward the castle. "Who lives in it?"

The cop laughed shortly. "A swell guy to stay away from," he growled. "Maybe ye've heard of the nut that calls himself the Great Zastro?"

Larrimore frowned, trying to think where he had heard that name before. Of course! The Great Zastro—most famed stage magician of all time until two or three years before! Then there had been tragic stories in the newspapers. The master charlatan had suffered a nervous breakdown, had been forced to retire. It was said he had come to believe in his own tricks, had come to think he was really a magician, drawing supernatural powers from the devil.

With his great fortune he had bought an old mansion on Staten Island, had remodeled it to resemble a medieval castle and had equipped it with all the paraphernalia of the mystery stage—sliding panels, trap doors, false walls. His neighbors had petitioned to have him placed in an institution, but nothing had come of it. . . .

No wonder the place had looked to Larrimore like a sorcerer's castle! No wonder the girl Sandra had not wanted to talk about her private life! What could she have to do with a fantastic maniac who believed himself in league with Satan? And what was the strange

power she had exerted over Larrimore—and still seemed to exert?

For he found himself walking swiftly up the hill toward the dark turrets, with no definite idea of what he intended to do when he reached them. He caught himself, hesitated, knew that he should return to the ferry dock and go back to Manhattan and his hotel.

He had already taken a step backward when the scream knifed through the blackness above him. It was horrid and piercing, freighted with agony and nameless fear, rising to a crescendo of madness and gurgling into shuddery silence. It froze Larrimore into a motionless statue and drenched him suddenly with cold, clammy sweat.

LARRIMORE began to run toward the house after that first ghastly moment of surprise. He could not have gone back if his life had depended upon it. Whatever doubts about Sandra had begun to rear their heads vanished instantly at the thought that she might be in danger.

She had disappeared, but he had watched her long enough to know that she had not entered the front door. She had veered from the flagstone walk and crossed the lawn toward the squat tower that flanked the main building on the right. Larrimore went that way, too, and found a narrow door at the base of the tower, open an inch to show a feeble light that filtered from somewhere above.

Cautiously he pushed the door inward and entered a low-ceilinged, circular room floored and walled with rough stone and bare of furniture. A stone stairway, railed with wrought iron, scaled the wall, and the dim light straggled downward along it. The air in the room was dank and stale, as if it had been bottled up for centuries, or had



"Put up your hands," a crisp voice behind him snapped.

been contaminated by something too ancient to belong in the modern world.

Not a sound reached him as he stood holding his breath and straining his ears—not a sound save the faint *drip-drip* of water not far away, as though a faucet were leaking. He tiptoed to the foot of the stairs and stood listening again for a moment. The sound of the dripping ceased and something wet and lukewarm fell upon the back of his hand.

He looked at his hand as a second drop struck it, and jerked it back instantly. Horror surged through him, for the drops were red and sticky and shining. They came from between the wide planks that formed the ceiling, where a dark stain had spread over the wood.

Weaponless, without even a pocket knife, Larrimore started up the winding steps. Before he reached their top, he could see into the room above, which

was loftier and better finished and lit by a wavering radiance that could only have come from candles. His head rose above the floor and he discovered with relief that no living person awaited him there. He saw three lighted tapers in a tall holder, bookshelves, and a table and chairs—and a corpse.

It was a man's corpse. It lay near the wall upon a worn carpet, it wore no clothes, and it had been treated abominably. The man had been very old. The

hair was silver, the contorted face was the color of parchment and false teeth had fallen back from the thin lips, so that they sagged loosely inward.

Larrimore knew the scream he had heard must have come from that scrawny throat, for the man had been dead only a few minutes and he had died under unspeakable torture. Blood still streamed sluggishly from dozens of knife wounds in his chest, stomach and thighs. A keen blade had sliced his body everywhere, had gouged deep in tender parts, had cut away big chunks of flesh. No sacrificial victim had ever departed life more painfully for the glory of the gods of the nether world.

SHUDDERING, Larrimore remembered many things. The Great Zastro had come to believe he held supernatural powers through the generosity of Satan! Since earliest times, people had supposed Satan must be propitiated by human sacrifices of bodies and souls! Sandra had said cryptically: "It's a spooky world, filled with forces stronger than people." Toward the last she had shown an unaccountable eagerness to return to the ugly castle because "he may need me."

Was *he* the man who lay here dead—perhaps the great and pitiful Zastro himself, gone to explore the final mysteries—or was she speaking of someone else, too dreadful to call by name? And—it was not yet a half-hour past midnight—was it because of the supposed significance of the "witching hour" that she was in such a hurry?

God, there was no time to debate her guilt or innocence, now that it was certain something unholy stalked the gloomy corridors of this madman's retreat! Perhaps there was not even time to save her life, if Larrimore should race out into the night again to summon

the police. He thought of that as he turned again toward the stairway, and paused. When he remembered her loveliness, her body straining against him, the glow of her dark eyes when he had kissed her, he could not bear the thought of harm befalling her.

There was a curtained doorway in the room where the corpse lay. Larrimore peered past the curtains into a dark corridor and saw light streaming from a door at its end and from another door, halfway along it. Not even the *drip-drip* of blood came now to break the utter stillness of the castle. He entered the corridor and moved soundlessly to the first door.

The gruesome spectacle of the mutilated corpse had not immunized him to horror. His brain reeled and the hackles of his spine lifted at the sight that met his incredulous eyes in this other room. At first he thought he was looking at a woman hanging there, but a second look showed him it was a man—or had been—an old man whose wavy white hair hung to his naked shoulders and concealed his lowered face.

The man was suspended by thin cords tied to his thumbs and to spikes driven into a heavy ceiling beam. The only garment upon his emaciated body was a pair of trousers of some flimsy material, such as that used for pajamas. His feet dangled six inches above the floor and—merciful heavens!—not a single toe was left upon them! Where the toes had been were crimson wounds from which blood ran in glistening lines, forming a great puddle upon the bare floor of the room, which was furnished only with a bed, a chair and a dresser.

The ease with which the blood flowed suggested to Larrimore that the man might still be alive, and he was about to enter the room to cut the cords that

suspended the pitiful figure. A voice arrested him—a woman's voice!

"Who are you?" it asked softly behind him.

LARRIMORE whirled, his surprise so sharp it almost amounted to terror. He faced a tall, slim girl standing in the lighted doorway at the end of the corridor opposite the turret room. He had a hasty impression of pale yellow hair making golden billows at either side of a milk-white face in which the only features that seemed alive were glittering green eyes and vivid scarlet lips. That first impression told him the girl was exquisitely beautiful, but with a strange, unearthly beauty that boded more evil than good.

He hardly recognized his own voice, so hoarse had it become with the burden of his emotion. He rasped: "It doesn't matter who I am. What's been going on here?"

The scarlet lips did not smile. There was no expression in the face at all. The girl's voice was even caressing as she answered: "You mustn't let yourself be upset. Remember, you are in the house of a magician, where things are not necessarily what they seem."

He grasped at the fantastic notion, anxious to purge his mind of the revolting pictures that filled it. After all, he had seen some pretty startling things on the stage. Lesser magicians than Zastro had appeared to saw pretty girls in two pieces and had pretended to lop the heads from their assistants with swords. They hadn't been so damnably realistic about it as Zastro—if, indeed, the bloody sights in those rooms were illusions—but that didn't prove anything.

"I hope you're right," he told the girl hesitantly, and added, to explain his presence: "I'm looking for a girl named Sandra, who lives here. I found

the door open, saw what looked like blood dripping from the ceiling and came in."

"Sandra?" The blonde girl's penciled eyebrows lifted. "In this house?"

"Don't tell me she's an illusion, too. I know better."

"She might have been here at one time or another, or she might still come occasionally," the girl said. "Zastro has many girls calling on him."

He did not miss the sturring implications of her tone. They hurt him. Sandra hadn't been *that* kind of girl. If that were the case, she couldn't have been the way she was. She couldn't have made him love her so completely in a few magic moments.

And yet, there had been the mist and his own loneliness. . . . Other men, hungry for love, had let themselves be fooled by women who could never have appealed to them normally. Perhaps, after all, he had only been a fool. . . .

Instantly he became angry with himself for his thoughts. He said: "I'd better be going. Only I wish you'd prove to me first that the two men I apparently saw dead or dying are really all right. I don't want to say anything to the police if it isn't necessary, but it all seemed so real."

The red lips bent in a seductive smile. The green eyes glinted like the eyes of a cat in the dark. "Certainly," the girl said. "If you will just come here."

SSOME inner instinct warned him to beware of her. She was all at once too ingratiating, too eager to please. He stood his ground, watching her.

Her eyes hardened and brightened. She said again, her voice just above a whisper: "Come here."

He was tempted to turn away from her entirely. As if she sensed his indecision, she lifted her hand to the

throat of the long, white robe she wore. With a single wrench she flung it open to her waist, and he saw that beneath it she only wore a sheer, clinging chemise.

He had hardly been aware of her figure before. Now he looked upon creamy shoulders and a generous, perfectly modeled bosom, that sagged just a trifle of its own weight. Farther down her waist was satin-smooth and slender, and still farther down her hips began to flare in luscious, flowing lines. Not even Sandra's beauty affected him this way, for he caught his breath sharply as he looked upon her and realized that probably never again in a single night would he look upon two girls so exquisite.

"Come here," she whispered for the third time.

He clenched his hands and unclenched them again. The palms were moist with sweat. He felt his heart begin the familiar trip-hammer rhythm. Why not? he asked himself. She was beautiful and she had called to him. Such opportunities for adventure did not come every evening, and why should he forego this one?

Her gown parted where one rounded knee pushed forward. It was half open now from top to bottom and her slender body was almost completely unveiled. So sheer was her brief chemise that it seemed like a fleecy cloud.

He felt as he had felt in the park, when he had refused to let Sandra leave him. He took a step toward this other girl.

She stretched out her arms to him. Her lips parted and the green eyes seemed to swoon in anticipation of his kisses. This crazy fellow Zastro certainly picked his feminine companions with an eye to beauty, Larrimore thought. He took another step.

"Put your hands up!" snapped a crisp voice behind him.

LARRIMORE managed a bitter sneer as he saw the green-eyed girl's inviting smile change to a mocking grin. He turned his head and looked over his shoulder. Approaching him along the corridor with stealthy tread was a tall, gaunt man in black trousers and shirt, a black skull cap on his head and his face wholly hidden by a mask of black cloth. The man held an automatic pistol in a gnarled fist. Larrimore lifted his hands.

His heart sank. A chunk of ice seemed to settle in the pit of his stomach as he recalled what had happened to the two men he had seen. He was convinced now that there had been nothing illusory about their fate. Convinced, too, that his own fate would be no better.

He said to the girl furiously: "Damn you! I should have known you were rotten—"

The floor opened beneath his feet. He dropped through it, dazed and gasping for breath. He heard the blasting roar of the pistol and felt the stinging tug of a bullet at the base of his neck. His feet thudded against something thick and soft, like a mattress, and he pitched to one side and struck his head against boards. Strong hands grasped him beneath the arms and dragged him. A door opened, letting in the moist smell of the night. He struggled to his feet, clinging to the side of the door.

A whisper, so faint as to be barely audible, reached him: "Run as fast as you can. Bring help!" Then he was left alone.

HE took half a dozen steps into the night. With every movement searing pain crossed the line of Larrimore's neck where it met his shoulder. The bul-

let had passed just beneath the skin, causing no serious damage, but his whole side was soggy with blood. His head still throbbed from his fall, but the air cleared it.

One person, at least, in that hideous house was friendly to him—the one who had helped him to the door. He wondered if it had been Sandra; the whisper



The pistol thundered, the girl slumped down, as scarlet stained her breast.

had been too faint to be identified. And he wondered why that person had not fled with him.

Surely, unless she was in league with the murderers, she was in unthinkable danger. For the second time he realized there was no time to seek policemen or telephones, no time for anything but fast, sure action. He squared his shoulders, flexed his muscles and felt strong enough for anything.

He groped his way to the turret and found the door still ajar. The circular

room was exactly as he had first seen it, save that no more blood dripped from the planks of the ceiling. The corpse was still lying in the room above, however, its ghastly wounds darkening with thickening gore in the wavering light of the tapers.

He thrust aside the curtains and stepped into the corridor. A low, gloating laugh came from the room where he had seen the old man hanging from the ceiling by his thumbs, his life-blood pouring out at the ends of his feet.

Larrimore reached the door of that room, peered cautiously within.

The old man had been cut down. He sat helplessly in a chair, his feet still bleeding sluggishly, his long hair pushed back and his face the color of death. But he was not yet dead. Dark, glowing eyes, brimming with agony and apprehension, were fixed upon the bed.

And there Larrimore saw something that effected him more deeply than anything else—the white body of Sandra, almost entirely nude, sprawled upon the blankets, and the gaunt figure of the masked man bending over her.

The scrawny fingers of the man prodding the soft flesh of her arms and shoulders, pinching brutally, marring her skin's velvety softness.

And although Sandra's eyes were wide open and she was certainly conscious, she offered no resistance at all to the cruel caresses. It even seemed to Larrimore, watching jealously from the doorway, that she welcomed them.

The gloating laugh came again from behind the black mask and the man looked at the pitiful figure in the chair. "You have only to tell, Zastro," he said, "and I will leave her unharmed for you."

"There is—nothing to tell." The dying charlatan's voice was like a distant sigh. "I have said before—there is nothing. But if you let me live—"

Sandra spoke suddenly. "Yes, let him live!" she begged. "In the morning I can make arrangements—"

"No," said the gaunt masked man. "In the morning you would only call the police. I shall let the old fool die, and I shall kill you as I killed your susceptible boy friend a few minutes ago. Then Margot and I will have the whole night to search. But you are too pretty just to be left alone to die. Before I kill you, I shall show you how much I appreciate your loveliness. . . ."

He bent over her again. His caresses became more brutal. Through slits in the mask his eyes gleamed exultantly. . . .

LARRIMORE was about to spring at the fiend when he saw the green-eyed girl come silently through the doorway at the side of the room. She paused, watching the two figures, and her fingers curved into rigid talons.

"Jared, you cheater!" she cried. "You were only to try to frighten the old lunatic—not to make love to Sandra! I warned you what would happen if you tried to trick me!"

Suddenly she was upon him. Her long fingernails raked across his face, tearing away the mask, revealing thin, vicious features. Blood spurted from four parallel furrows in his cheek. Again her claws raked him, gashing his forehead, so that blood poured into his eyes.

He snarled in agony and struck out at the girl Margot blindly. His fist missed and she thrust up her knee, striking him in the groin. The snarl changed to a howl of rage and he fumbled at his hip and brought out the automatic. It was Margot's turn to shriek, but not for long. Three times the pistol thundered, and she slumped to the floor, hands clutched to her breast. Scarlet stained the white robe. Her legs thrashed spasmodically, their white perfection bared to the thigh as the robe fell apart, and then she was still.

"Now," said the killer, "it's your turn, baby." He went back to Sandra's side. Blood from his face splashed upon the ivory of her skin as he bent over her.

Larrimore leaped. The man who had been called Jared was at the opposite side of the bed, away from the door, and Larrimore launched himself in a flying tackle that cleared the bed and the twisting figure of Sandra. Jared

saw him coming and had time to fire once. The bullet plowed downward along Larrimore's shoulder blade, and then their bodies met and they both struck the wall and fell to the floor, stunned.

Jared was the first to recover. His right hand clutched at Larrimore's throat and his left groped for the pistol he had dropped. Larrimore fought to draw air into lungs collapsed by the force of his fall. His hands tore at the wrist pressing against his windpipe, but the other's muscles seemed made of steel.

The pistol came up, gripped in eager fingers. Larrimore's bulging eyes looked into its deadly muzzle. He felt darkness closing in upon him and thought dully that it would be as well to die by a bullet as by strangulation. His hand moved automatically toward the gun, but so slowly he knew he could never reach it before the trigger was pressed.

AND then Jared vanished from in front of him. The hand that had been squeezing Larrimore's windpipe was gone suddenly, letting sweet air rush into the tortured lungs. The hand that had held the pistol was flung up wildly, releasing the weapon. Jared dropped downward, through the floor, and Larrimore had a brief glimpse of a yawning hole. Then the trapdoor closed again.

Zastrow was chuckling feebly. "Some sense, after all, in my madness!" he wheezed. "Secret passages—trap doors in every room and hallway! Mystify guests—and murderers! There's a door—just under the window—"

Larrimore scrambled to his feet, snatched up the fallen pistol and rushed to the window. He threw the sash open just as a gaunt, black figure staggered

into view beneath him. Without pity he aimed the gun and triggered. Five shots crashed out before the hammer clicked on an empty chamber. The killer was a huddled, dark shape sprawled on the lawn below. . . .

Sandra had not moved from the bed, and now Larrimore discovered what he had not seen before. She could not very well have resisted Jared's advances, for her wrists were bound behind her with strips torn from the bedsheets and a twisted loop was around her throat, the free end fastened to the head of the bed. Jared could have strangled her had she fought, simply by tightening the noose. As it was, her face was purple from her efforts to get free and she had difficulty in breathing.

Larrimore ripped the sheets to shreds, untying her. He put his arms around her, thrillingly conscious of her near nudity, and held her close until she had recovered.

"Get a doctor!" she gasped as soon as she could speak. "Zastro is dying."

Feebly the old man shook his head. The hand he had stretched forth to the wall to press the button that had released the trap door had fallen limply to his side and his eyes were closed. The floor was almost completely covered with his blood and his body was so white it seemed transparent.

"No," he whispered. "No doctor can help now. I'm dying—and I'm well again. They tortured me to make me tell a secret that never existed—and made me sane. You have been good to me, Sandra. You will find my will leaves you everything—"

She was at his side, cradling his withered cheek against her own, when the death-shudder shook him. She lifted dark, tearfilled eyes to Larrimore.

(Continued on page 113)

SUMMONS FOR SATAN

[Continued from page 79]

"FOR seven years he was like a father to me," she murmured. "I was a homeless orphan when he found me and took me with him on his tours, and I became his assistant on the stage. When his studies of ancient magic unhinged his mind, I brought him here

and took care of him, humoring his whims. The trapdoors were one of them—he loved to surprise visitors by disappearing suddenly whenever he wished.

"I shouldn't have left him tonight. I had already suspected Margot, the maid we hired a few weeks ago. Her eyes were always greedy when he said things about an imaginary treasure he had hidden in the house. It was just one of his delusions; such money as he has is in banks and bonds.

"Jared was her sweetheart. He came here often to visit her. They must have plotted together to torture him and Wilkes, the old man who had been his servant for twenty years. He's dead, too."

"I know." Larrimore thought grimly

They felt the menace of the old castle as they sat together in the park.



of the lacerated body in the tower room. "God, what beasts they were!"

"I found him right after I left you," she said. "I wanted to run away then,

but I had to see whether I could help Zastro before it was too late. I found him, but Jared showed up and I had to hide. Then you came in, and that horrid woman was so pretty—”

“She was ugly,” he lied. “I was only pretending. I wanted to get my hands on her, to make her tell where you were.”

“Anyway, when I saw Jared was going to shoot you, I waited till you stepped on the trap door, then pressed the button that released it. That saved your life. And I dragged you outside so you could call the police. I thought you were too badly wounded to fight.”

“Just scratched.” But his whole body ached from the wounds and he fought off spells of dizziness. “And it’s a good thing I came back. I was just in time to stop that fiend from—”

She put a hand over his lips. “Don’t say it,” she warned. “Don’t even think it. All that is past. There are only you and I.”