

fantastic

SUMMER 1952
VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1

Contents

SIX AND TEN ARE JOHNNY By Walter M. Miller, Jr.	4
FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE By Sam Martinez.	40
"SOMEDAY THEY'LL GIVE US GUNS" By Paul W. Fairman.	54
FULL CIRCLE By H. B. Hickey.	62
THE RUNAWAY By Louise Lee Outlaw.	64
THE OPAL NECKLACE By Kris Neville.	76
THE SMILE By Ray Bradbury.	90
AND THREE TO GET READY By H. L. Gold.	96
WHAT IF By Isaac Asimov.	106

A classic novel:

PROFESSOR BINGO'S SNUFF By Raymond Chandler.	119
---	-----

Front Cover: Barye Phillips and L. R. Summers

Back Cover: Color Photograph by Frank Lerner

Editor
HOWARD BROWNE

Art Editor
L. R. SUMMERS

Managing Editor
L. E. SHAFFER

Associate Art Editor
ED VALIGURSKY

Chairman of the Board
and Publisher
WILLIAM B. ZIFF
President
B. G. DAVIS

Vice Presidents —
MICHAEL H. FROELICH
H. J. MORGANROTH
Production Director
LYNN PHILLIPS, JR.
Advertising Director
H. G. STRONG
Circulation Director
LOUIS ZARA
Associate Editorial Director

Secretary-Treasurer
G. E. CARNEY
Color Art Director
HERMAN R. BOLLIN



EDITORIAL AND EXECUTIVE OFFICES, 366 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK 17, NEW YORK.

FANTASTIC is published quarterly by the Ziff-Davis Publishing Company at 185 North Wabash Avenue, Chicago 1, Illinois. All rights reserved. Application for second-class entry pending at Post Office, Chicago, Illinois. Copyright 1952 by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company.

THE *RUNAWAY*

By

Louise Lee Outlaw

What's inside us? Good red blood, a pile of bones, the necessary plumbing and a soupçon of brains? Is that all? (All right: the soul — but we're talking about tangibles.)

*Louise Lee Outlaw, whose stories have appeared in such magazines as *Cosmopolitan* and *Today's Woman*, says there can be more, and goes on to prove as much with the taut drama of a young woman who could see, when the light was right, the head and shoulders of a strange man growing out of her husband's back. Obviously she couldn't tell her husband to go out and play with trains to cure himself — but that's exactly what she did!*



WHY won't you believe me?" The pretty, prematurely grey woman leaned close to the police sergeant's desk. Her thin hands twined and untwined in a tireless ballet. "I murdered a boy — ten years old — and I murdered my husband! Both of them. Please believe me!"

The police sergeant shook his head. "Now, May, you just be a good girl and go on home. You know you didn't kill nobody."

The woman stared at him with large, tormented eyes. Slowly, like a chastened child, she turned and

illustrator:
Robert Kay



walked out of the police station.

The sergeant glanced at the tall, redheaded foot patrolman who was lounging near the telephone. "Think she'll ever give up?" he said. He shook his head, flicked cigar ash to the floor. "Every day she's in here — every day since last August. Always with the same crazy story: she murdered a boy and her husband. Makes you wonder — how does a woman get that way?"

The psychiatrist's voice went rolling on, velvety, imperturbable — suggesting, hinting, seeking — and May Barton, sitting at the other side of the bare oak desk, heard her answers falling like stones from her lips.

"Does your husband resemble your father?" the psychiatrist said. "When you look at your husband in a certain light, do you sometimes feel you're looking at your father?"

"No!" May Barton's voice seemed to explode from her throat. "No! That isn't it at all!" She stared at the psychiatrist's face, at the pink and white serenity of it. "It's nothing like that. It's something crazy. *I told you —*"

"Mrs. Barton, with your cooperation and with patience *and* with time, I'm sure we'll find a sensible explanation for your experiences," the psychiatrist said. "Patients often come in here believing they have tangled with

some supernatural manifestation. Then, after a time, we discover there wasn't anything so supernatural about it after all. If you'll just think over my questions. Take your time. . . ." The white, calm hand touched the desk calendar. "Suppose you visit me next Wednesday — say about ten o'clock? Would that fit in with your schedule?"

May Barton's shoulders slumped against the leather chair. "Yes . . . Yes — that's fine — Wednesday. . . ." She stood up, a slender, dark-haired, pretty woman in her middle twenties, the agitation of her face in marked contrast to the tidy compactness of her figure, the restrained cut of her sharkskin suit. She started toward the door. Suddenly she swept around, stared back at him. "Dr. Seymour — you don't think —? I'm not mentally unbalanced, am I?" She waited, almost willing him to say: *Yes, I'm afraid so, I'm afraid you are.* It would be an end to the riddle, at least, an explanation. . . .

But there was only the placid smile, the toneless voice: "Mrs. Barton, if you are mentally unbalanced, I'm a very, very incompetent psychiatrist."

She groped back to the door — walked into the outer office, and then down the brownstone steps to the street. On the corner she turned, glanced back at the psychiatrist's dull brass nameplate. I won't go back, she thought.

He doesn't understand — doesn't want to understand. He wants it to fit a pattern, some recognizable Freudian pattern.

Sickness churned in her. What would she do now? Where would she go — what would she do?

It must be three o'clock, she thought. She closed her eyes against the sun's glare. Ten blocks away the apartment waited, cool, familiar. She thought of taking ice cubes from the refrigerator; their clinking in a glass — the electric fan — the chair by the window. For a moment the vision smiled at her, beguiling. And then, in a wave of panic, she knew its falseness — knew even the smallest comforts were no longer to be found in the apartment. If she went home it would be to sit rigid, waiting for five-thirty, waiting for Jim's bounding step on the stairs —

No! The word shrieked in her mind. She stared at the sidewalk — small flickering white lights seemed to sweep across her eyeballs — small white dancing lights. The heat, she told herself, and then all at once another thought came, leaped, pranced, fluttered ribbons of hope.

Her eyes! Why hadn't she thought of it before? All of it — the whole crazy business — it could be just her eyes! Eye strain — simple eye strain! She read a lot — and now she needed glasses. That was all there was to it!

She almost smiled. Paying

twenty dollars to that pink and white Buddha. Going through that humiliating mumbo-jumbo. She didn't need a psychiatrist; she needed an eye doctor. An eye doctor. There was one right here on Spruce Street. She'd gone to him that time she'd gotten a cinder in her eye.

She began to walk quickly, lightly — immune now to the somber, relentless August heat. She saw herself smiling at the eye doctor, taking a prescription. Yes, Doctor, I *thought* maybe it was my eyes. After all, seeing double . . .

"Seeing double, eh?" Dr. Witkin was young; he had a new sunburn; in the after-glow of a vacation he was unremittingly happy and hummed as he led her to another chair. He took up a white rod about ten inches long; at the end of the rod there was an oval of red glass. "We call this the red glass test," he said enthusiastically. "If you're seeing double, we'll be able to tell in a minute." He projected a slender flashlight behind the oval of the red glass, held them both close to her right eye. "Now, tell me: what do you see?"

"I see a horizontal red line," May Barton said eagerly.

"Nothing else? No white line?"

"No — just a red line."

Dr. Witkin's eyebrows rose. "Sure?"

"Yes — just a red line."

He put the red glass and the flashlight back on his tray. "Mrs. Barton, you're not seeing double. You're seeing just what people with normal sight see. Now, if you'd said you saw a red line *and* a white line, I'd think you had a paralysis of the eye muscles. But apparently you don't. Feel better now?"

She stared at him, her throat dry. "But — but I *do* see double. I told you —"

"Just *what* do you see double, Mrs. Barton? Do you see me double? Right now? Do you see anything in this room double?"

"No — no. . . ." She glanced away from him — swept her eyes around the antiseptic walls — stared at the reading chart, the brown metal cabinets, hoping, willing the horrible thing to be simple, soluble in this instant. But the room gave off no twin images — no shadows. "At home," she mumbled sickly. "It happens at home. . . ."

"What do you see double at home?"

"My — my husband. I mean — his shoulders — sometimes his head or his hands —" Her voice grew loud, the syllables tremulous. "When he sits in his chair . . . It's seeing double, it *must* be! It's as if he — as if he were two people — as if something were going to come *out* of him — walk around the room!"

Frowning, Dr. Witkin stepped

a little away from her. He looked injured, jolted from his holiday memories. Then his forehead cleared abruptly. "You know what I think? I think you need a vacation, a nice little trip to the beach. Maybe you've been working too hard — maybe the kids are wearing you down —"

"I don't have any children."

"Well, if you wish I can give you eyedrops — just to double-check. But there's nothing wrong with your eyes — nothing wrong with the retina, nothing wrong with the vision. Your chart reading's 20-20."

"All right — all right." She fumbled in her bag, thrust a ten-dollar bill at him. He's young, she thought desperately. Maybe he's wrong — maybe another doctor —

"Say," — Dr. Witkin's voice was high, jovial — "Maybe you went to a little cocktail party. Maybe you were having a good time. Now, that's when you *can* see double."

She tried to smile, tried not to disappoint him. Over her shoulder she saw the chart — even from the door the smallest letters were quite clear and firm-bodied — and in that instant she knew he was right: there was nothing wrong with her eyes. Except when she saw Jim. It was only Jim she saw double. Only Jim . . .

She walked rigidly back to the bus stop, boarded the bus, huddled close to the window. She

tried not to think of the night ahead of her, the horrible thing that was bound to happen. A vacation, she thought feebly, and tried to think of a sunny beach, bright umbrellas, wide horizons. But she knew she needed no vacation. There had never been enough to fill her day — nothing to tire her. The three-room apartment was easy to keep clean; in it she had long hours of leisure, and they had never weighed on her. It had been a happy, lazy life — shopping, cooking for Jim, listening to the radio. Nothing to tire her — nothing to strain the mind, set off sparks of fantasy.

It *must* be a fantasy, she told herself fiercely. Just a fantasy and she had let it grow, let it possess her. She'd never mentioned it to Jim, and maybe that was the trouble.

I ought to tell him, she thought. He'd laugh, laugh the crazy thing away.

The thought of Jim's laugh, that wonderful, untrammelled boy's laugh, loosened her. Her hands relaxed in the circle of sunlight on her lap. Tell Jim. . . . Tell Jim. . . . She should have done it long ago — a month ago — the first time she'd noticed it.

The bicycle was still in the foyer when she turned the key in the downstairs door. She smiled, remembering last night — Jim's sudden whim to ride the bike down Henley Street. "The neigh-

bors will think we're crazy, two grown people on a bike," she'd protested, but she'd gone with him, squeezed uncomfortably on the steel bar behind the seat.

Glancing over her shoulder, seeing Jim there, she had felt almost shaken with her love for him. He had looked like a small boy — his light brown hair rumpled by the breeze. And his cheek resting against hers had been smooth, so smooth. . . . It was hard to believe this bike-rider was the same man who left her in the mornings, business-like in his tropical worsted, his cocoanut-straw hat. It was hard to believe he was Jim Barton, a rewrite man for the *Inquirer*. It was hard to connect the bike-riding Jim with the Jim who pounded out those fast-moving, page-one stories. When he was working on a story, his eyes were skeptical, adult.

She opened the door of the apartment. Immediately she felt it, the aura of dread. She remembered what had happened last night after the bike ride, remembered Jim sitting in the chair by the window. Jim, completely unaware of her staring eyes — completely unaware of the thing she saw emanating from him — the strange, shadowy double that drifted from him like a ghost.

Don't think about it, she told herself. Tonight it's going to be settled, you're going to tell Jim. She was slicing the roast beef

when she heard him running up the stairs. Running. He never walks when he can run, even in this heat, she thought.

"Hi, sweet." He was in the room, grabbing her around the waist — a tall, awkward, rangy man. They called him "Legs" at the office.

"Hi," May said. She looked at him, deliberately searching for the thing, the fantasy, the crazy puzzle.

Nothing happened. Had she exorcised it? Was it gone for good? In a flurry of excitement, she piled food on Jim's plate, sat and watched him eat, watched his every movement. She saw nothing — nothing but Jim. No shadows, no fantasies.

I'm cured, she thought, and wanted to laugh. Maybe she wouldn't have to tell him — confess her silliness — after all.

They had cleared away the dishes and she was about to turn on the radio when Jim snapped his fingers, hurried to the chair where he'd draped his jacket. "I forgot to show you what I found today," he said. "A new stamp — a beautiful new Portuguese issue."

"All the great men in the world collect stamps, did you know that, Mr. Barton?" she said, laughing, glancing at him over her shoulder.

Then it happened.

It was as if something were detaching itself from Jim. It was

almost like the shadow of another person. She could see it: the double shoulders, the double arms, wavering, seeming to struggle —

She screamed. The scream arched over her — pounded at the walls. She saw Jim turn, still holding the stamp. Saw his eyes widen.

"What is it? What is it, darling?" he said, hurrying close, putting his arm around her.

She buried her head wildly in his shoulder. She felt the shudder of her body, but she couldn't stop it. "Jim . . . Jim . . . there's something wrong with me. Something wrong . . ."

"What is it? What's the matter?"

"Oh, it's silly. I know it's silly." The fear was leaving her but her voice was still ragged. She could still feel the heavy thumping of her heart. "I went to a doctor today, Jim. A psychiatrist. I thought I was seeing double. I thought it just now when I saw you —" She stared up at him, waiting for his laugh.

"Double?" His eyes flickered away from her. "What do you mean?"

Why didn't he laugh? Why were his eyes escaping her?

"You. I keep seeing you double, Jim. Just you, nothing else. Isn't that crazy? Did you ever hear of anything so crazy?"

"May — May, what do you see?" The words were slow, carefully spaced. She'd never heard

him speak in that manner. His voice was usually quick, a little breathless, as if every particle of life excited him.

"Well, I see a sort of shadow coming from you," she struggled. "As if you have two sets of shoulders. As if —" She shook her head hard. "Oh Jim, what's the matter with me? It's making me sick. I can't think of anything else. Lately I haven't even wanted you to come *home!*" The last word broke apart. She felt the hot tears crowding her eyeballs.

"I — I — you're just imagining things, honey. I —"

She met his eyes.

He looked away. With a convulsive movement, his hands went to his face. "No, I'm lying to you, May. Never did that. . . ." His voice was muffled. "You're the only person who's ever seen it. But I knew it was there. I can feel it; feel it moving around in me. It's as real as — as flesh."

She stared up at him, felt her lips move. But no words came.

"I didn't think anyone could *see* it," he went on hoarsely. "It's been going on for years, but the psychiatrists wouldn't believe me."

"You went to psychiatrists?"

He nodded. "Three of them. They all refused to believe. . . ." He stared at the floor. "Not all the time. I don't feel it all the time. Karl was the only one who believed it. I told him."

"Karl?"

"Karl Weil. He's a . . . a mentalist," Jim said, as if he didn't like the sound of the word. "A crazy, eccentric mentalist. I — I interviewed him once. A feature — you know, kind of sarcastic, something to make the readers laugh. I told him about this — this — I was worrying about it, just before we were married."

"And he believed you?"

"Yeah — sure. That's his business." He looked at her, wanting to seem mocking. "He had a theory — something crazy. I didn't pay much attention —"

"Maybe we — maybe we ought to go to see him. I mean . . . if the psychiatrists won't believe . . ." She didn't know why she was making the suggestion. A mentalist. Sensible people didn't believe in mentalists. She thought of a dark room, a man staring into a crystal ball. . . .

Jim covered his face with his hands. "I wouldn't care for myself. But for you —"

"Oh darling, I don't mind. It doesn't bother me!" She moved toward him. But in that moment, as his arms reached for her, she saw the double line of his shoulders, the double line of his arms. Saw the thing that seemed to want to leap from him. Without thinking she backed away, drew her hands protectively across her breast — and then, meeting Jim's eyes, she knew he had seen her horror.

Karl Weil was a thin brown man in white shorts and a white sweat shirt.

"Oh, my friend from the Inquirer," he said. "More publicity? Or is this a *personal* call?" He smiled, waved toward the room. "Come in, come in and sit down." He preceded them, walking with pointed toes like a ballerina. His legs were hairy but thin, unbelievably delicate. May, holding onto Jim's arm, wanted to run back to the door. The man's pleasure at seeing them, his thick, gloating pleasure, sickened her.

There were two chairs in the room, dark brown, sagging. There was a desk piled with paper-backed books. Tracts, May thought, and closed her fingers over Jim's. Let's go — let's get out of here, she wanted to say. But she stifled the words. If there was a chance, if this strange creature could help them . . .

Karl Weil sat on the floor. There was a bowl of vegetables beside him. "I'm a vegetarian," he said. "Do you mind?" He picked up a carrot, munched it, then looked at Jim. "How is your double, Mr. Barton?"

May shivered. She was afraid of Karl Weil, afraid of the room, afraid even to touch the arm of the desiccated brown chair.

"Your wife is worried?" Karl said. "She has seen it?"

Jim nodded.

The mentalist smiled know-

ingly. "It sometimes happens. When there is great love, great closeness, there is acute psychic perception." He put the carrot down, put away his smile. He was suddenly ferret-faced, sharp-eyed. "We talked about this at length the last time. We said we could find the answer in your boyhood. Have you thought about it?"

"Yes, yes, I've thought about it," Jim said thickly.

"And was there, as I suggested, a thing you wanted to do and never did?" Karl said, still with the lifted chin, the narrowed eyes.

"There was something," Jim said. "I — I wanted to run away once, when I was a kid. You know, run away from home. I didn't have to try hard to remember. It — it was a big disappointment. I guess I never really got over it."

"Yes." Karl's voice was a hiss. "You never ran away from home — is that it? Something stopped you?"

"My old man — my father." Jim forced a laugh. "I tried three times — you know, wanted to hop a freight train. He always caught me, brought me back. What a walloping he'd give me!"

Karl's shoulders moved impatiently. "And this has bothered you for how long?"

"Bothered me?" Jim said. "Well, yeah, I guess it *has* bothered me. I know, I sometimes still feel like —" Sheepishly, he cut the words off. "Oh, that was all

twenty years ago. I was only ten years old."

Karl picked up another carrot. "It's not so difficult after all. We contain many selves; they are all imprisoned in here." He slapped his chest. "Most of them have lived their lives and they are now only memories." He smiled in May's direction. "But Mr. Barton's boyhood self — it did not live completely — did not finish its cycle. It is in him, wanting to get out, wanting to complete its life.

"He wanted to run away. Perhaps he was meant to run away. Perhaps we could say running away was the finale, the curtain scene of his boyhood. But he didn't run away; the curtain never went down. In a sense, you might say Mr. Barton contains an uncompleted boyhood inside of him. I am very sensitive to these things."

May stared at the brown, smiling face, the hairy, delicate body. She looked away, looked at Jim. Uncompleted boy. She felt dizzy, felt the room revolve. . . .

"May — May — are you all right?" Jim's arm closed around her shoulders, his cheek touched hers — his smooth, boyish cheek.

They ordered sandwiches in a nearby restaurant, but neither of them ate anything. Jim's face was pale. He kept repeating his protest: "The whole thing's crazy. I

don't believe it — not for a moment."

"Jim, did you mean it — what you told Weil about still wanting to run away? Do you really feel that sometimes — that you want to —"

"That part's true enough. But heck, it's just a boyhood frustration. Everyone has one —"

"Jim!" She was suddenly excited. "That's just it! Remember that day I bought the doll — the doll with red hair — and you laughed at me. Remember?"

"Sure — sure. But nobody sees you double!"

"But — but I *bought* the doll! I'd always wanted a red-headed doll and so I bought one. When I was twenty-four years old! Maybe I was sort of . . . sort of belatedly finishing my girlhood! Maybe what Karl said is true: maybe you've never done the one thing that would finish your boyhood!"

"Funny thing," Jim said. "How clearly I remember that day — the last time I tried to run away. It was just about this time of year. I remember because my birthday was coming up. I went down to the railroad station and I almost made the twelve-o-five. She was puffing along the tracks and I was just about to climb aboard when my old man showed up. Chased me out and dragged me home. I didn't get any birthday present that year." He smiled reminis-

cently. "Gosh, that was twenty years ago."

May straightened. "And for twenty years you've been wanting to hop that train. Darling, there's only one thing for you to do: try it."

"What?" Jim stared at her. "You mean . . . run away? *Now?*"

"Well . . . well, you could *try*. I mean, just for a day. Maybe it would ring down that curtain Weil was talking about."

"But I'm a grown man . . ." Jim's voice trailed off. There was a leaping light in his eyes — a light like excitement, like eagerness.

Something coiled around May's heart. She knew suddenly that she resented this boyishness in him, had always resented it. The way he would drop everything, even a luncheon date with her, to go watch a sandlot baseball game. The almost obsessed care he gave that bike. Perhaps if he went away, rid himself of his ghost, he would come back whole, a real adult. Perhaps she would feel a new richness in their love.

"I mean it, darling," she said. "I think you should go."

But in the morning, as they lay close together, he said: "We were crazy to talk about it. Let's just forget the whole thing."

For a moment, she was tempted to agree. But as she saw him move from the bed, saw the shadow

forming around his shoulders, saw how clear it was — almost palpable — she sat up and said: "We're not going to forget it, Jim. You're going. I insist." Her voice shook over the words. She saw the familiar small-boy touse of his hair and she reached into her imagination, trying to picture him as a disappointed little boy, his father dragging him home, thwarting his sense of adventure.

Why not? Why mightn't the mentalist be right? The mind was a strange, uncharted place, full of dark necessities, undivined hungers.

Jim wasn't arguing any more. He was putting his pearl-handled penknife in his pocket, taking out his rough plaid shirt. They'd planned it all the night before. They would act as if it were an ordinary day, as if he were going to the office. The pretense would make him feel as if he were really running away.

She made him a big breakfast. He would need it, hopping a freight, ending up in some town he'd never seen.

Crazy. Her husband — an uncompleted boy. Crazy . . . She forced herself to smile at him, forced herself to eat. She wouldn't cry, wouldn't weaken him. Something was sick in him, and they were trying a cure. That was all there was to it.

At the door he hesitated. "Oh, sweet, I don't think —"

"It's eleven-thirty. You'd better get started," she said firmly. He kissed her, held her close — and then he was bounding down the stairs.

She was frightened the moment she heard the front door close. Her hands shook as she plunged them in the dishwater. He'd be back tomorrow. "Just a hop into the next town," he'd said. Just one day. There was nothing to worry about.

Determinedly, she finished the dishes, took the vacuum cleaner from the closet. But the fear kept hanging over her, unreasoning, enveloping. She tried to defeat it with the vacuum's deafening drone. She went from room to room, but the fear followed, clung. . . . Suddenly she realized why. She and Jim had never been separated before, not even for a day. And now he was hopping a train, going somewhere without her, and she had the insane feeling that when he got on that train he might never come back! Maybe he wasn't supposed to hop a train. Maybe uncompleted acts were supposed to stay that way! He might just disappear; she might never see him again!

Frantically she ran to the kitchen, looked at the clock. 12:10. Maybe he hadn't caught a train yet; maybe she could still find him! She yanked off her apron, snatched up her keys. Her heart was pounding furiously as

she ran to the door. She took the steps two at a time.

The railroad tracks gleamed in the sun, stretched ahead of her. And no one walked along them, no familiar, long-legged figure. Only a bird's chirping broke the silence. He's left. It's too late, she thought weakly, and started to turn away.

And then, about fifty yards down the tracks, in a clump of sunflowers, she saw something sprawled, crumpled. She stood frozen for a moment, and then she was running — running and moaning. But even before she reached the body she knew what she was going to find.

"But the railroad must have some explanation!" May Barton said. "How could it happen, how could such a thing happen? Aren't there safeguards? He was such a careful man. How could your train run him down?"

The stationmaster shook his head wearily. "I'm telling you, lady, it didn't happen that way. We didn't kill your husband, we ain't got nothing to do with what happened to your husband."

"What do you mean?" May Barton's voice broke. "He was right there — right next to the tracks — crushed —"

"Look, lady, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but . . . sometimes people get killed and dumped

(Continued on page 160)

The Runaway

(Continued from page 75)

out here. Why blame the railroad?"

"But his body was crushed — *crushed* — everything — even his watch was smashed. You could tell what time it happened by his watch. It was stopped at twelve-o-five. It was the twelve-o-five train,

it must have been!"

"I don't know nothing about no watch, lady," the stationmaster said. "All I know is, it couldn't of been our train, because there ain't no twelve-o-five goes through this station." He reached in his desk drawer, drew out a yellowed timetable. "Look at this, lady — last time we had a twelve-o-five in August was twenty years ago."