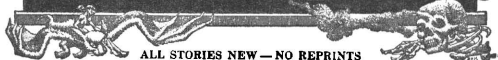


Weird Tales



ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

NOVEMBER, 1950

Cover by Frank Kelly Freas

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*... no such thing as a ghost
anyway, and how could one see
part of something that wasn't.*

ADA MORTON refilled her husband's cup. "Drink it up, Alan, and I'll try to squeeze you out a third."

She gestured towards a Sunday newspaper on the sideboard. "If only we could win a big prize in a radio contest. The Stanmores down the road won over a thousand dollars the other week, and—"

Alan did not reply. Ada looked at him sharply.

They Worked the Oracle

BY H. S. W. CHIBBETT

"Why, Alan—what's the matter? Are you ill?"

Her apprehensions were justified, for her husband was staring in stupefaction at something he had just seen over and beyond the ample form of his wife. Above the mantelpiece in fact. His mouth fell open, and his unfolded evening paper fell from his nerveless fingers.

"I—I . . . look there . . . behind you!"

His whispered words barely made themselves articulate.

His spouse whipped round with unaccustomed celerity, for Alan's facial expression had been sufficiently alarming.

"Why—what—" She turned again to her husband. Are you trying to be funny? Because if so, it doesn't suit you. There's nothing there, and you're acting as though you saw a ghost—"

"I d-did," stuttered Alan, "at least—not a ghost; only part of one!" he added unhelpfully.

Ada eyed him exasperatedly. "What d'you mean—a *part* of one! You either see a ghost, or you don't! Anyway, there aren't any such things as ghosts, so how you could see part of nothing, beats me!"

Alan rose from his seat at the table and retreated to the scullery, his face the color of green cheese. He opened the door, and left it slightly ajar. His wife watched his maneuvers in silence for a moment, then she spoke.

"Seems to me you'd better not have Welsh rarebit again, if that's how it affects you." She followed him into the scullery and sniffed suspiciously. "Hmph! You haven't been drinking. You know better

than to attempt that sort of thing after all these years, Alan Morton! Then what's been ailing you?"

An expression of puzzlement flitted across her features as she reentered the dining room and commenced to clear the table. A clatter of crockery mingled with the lesser tinkle of knives and forks ensued as Mrs. Morton piled them on the trolley.

Then there was a hiatus—a gap of complete silence in the medley of domestic sounds, followed by a loud female scream. Alan gave a longing glance at the half-open door, as though meditating flight; but, surprisingly, moved to his wife's assistance instead. Only to be swept back to the scullery on the tide of his spouse's frenzied retreat. The narrow exit to the garden creaked as it protested against the sudden intrusion of two bodies into a space intended for the passage of only one at a time.

THE Mortons warily approached the threshold of their dining room and looked in. The cool night air had made even a haunted dining room appear desirable by contrast; and besides, fancy being frightened by a—

"You're sure it was a dog's ear you saw?" whispered Ada.

"Absolutely certain! Besides, it wagged at me," returned her husband.

"I saw two—both wagging!" said Ada, a trifle proudly, as though it gave her precedence in the social scale of ear-waggers.

Alan considered the point gravely.

"At least, it proves there was something there to see! Well, it's gone now—"

His gaze wandered across the room. "What's that package in the corner?"

"Oh, *that!*" said Ada, her fears temporarily allayed by the distraction. "It came by parcel post this morning. I opened it in case it might be something important. It looks like part of a broken statue to me. There's a letter, which I haven't had time to read yet—"

Alan took a cursory glance at the curious object, and then looked at the correspondence.

"From Uncle Robert, I see!" He read

the letter through in silence. "He's been digging ruins in Denmark, of all places!"

Uncle Robert was an archaeologist by profession. A man of private means, he spent much of his time pottering around in any old ruins he could find. Every now and then he remembered the existence of his nephew, and celebrated the fact by sending odds and ends of packages containing the most diverse material.

Ada lifted the curio on to the table with some difficulty and examined it intently. It seemed to be made of polished black marble, was about two feet in height, and rather heavy. It was mounted on a flat stone base.

"I wonder what it represents?" she murmured.

Alan looked up from the letter in his hand.

"Uncle says here that it is the remnant of a statue which he recovered from some ruins just outside Odense, which is a few miles from Copenhagen. At one time there was a temple erected on a site overlooking the river of that name—I suppose he means Odensa—but he learned from ancient Danish records that there had been a number of floods in the early part of the nineteenth century which had caused the river to overflow its banks and demolish the buildings almost entirely. Later excavation disclosed the fact that beneath this temple had been a large crypt of unusual design, divided into three rooms or caverns of moderate size. The floor was sandy, and had apparently at one time been part of a sea or river bed. No attempt had been made to lay a permanent flooring."

"Yes. But why *did* Uncle Robert send this to us?" said Ada impatiently, indicating the statue.

Alan referred to the letter again. "He says that the building had been known as the Temple of Canes, and had been used as a place of worship by an obscure sect of Dog Worshipers, who removed elsewhere when their shrine had been demolished, leaving naught behind but this." He indicated the package in the corner.

"He goes on to say that according to the ancient document he has inspected, there

was a legend extant at one time which said that the crypt had contained vast amounts of treasure, and that this had been guarded by three enormous dogs, which had been created magically for just that purpose. He says also that the decamping Sect of Canes must have taken all the treasures with them, because not a sou could he find to help pay for his excavation expenses."

Alan paused, his brow wrinkled in thought. "That bit about the three dogs seems to strike a chord of memory somewhere, though I can't quite bring anything to mind at the moment."

He inspected the letter again.

"There's a postscript! It says that according to the legend, anyone who could get past the Guardian Dogs and touch this statue would be very lucky, and so, as he thinks we can do with some of that commodity he has sent it to us."

"The old miser!" commented Ada vindictively. "If he feels so sorry for us it wouldn't have hurt him to send a check instead."

ALAN studied the curious monstrosity thoughtfully. The crumbling mass resembled the lower portion of an erect animal-like form whose *three* paws or claws were firmly implanted on the stone base. Around the body were interlaced long serpent-like tubes or tails, whose extremities reached down as far as the pedestal. What sort of a head the statue had possessed at one time Alan could hardly conjecture from the evidence of the torso. Certainly no animal alive in the world today.

"Perhaps it was a dog?" speculated Ada, helpfully.

"Have *you* ever seen an upright dog with three legs?" gibed Alan.

"Well . . . no . . ." admitted his wife, "but it might have lost one, same as it lost its head!"

Alan shook his head. "I don't agree. *This* part of the statue is perfect, as you can see. There is no place where another leg could have been broken off."

He grinned at his wife. "Anyway, there's no reason why we shouldn't comply with the conditions laid down, and touch it—for luck!"

He approached the statue, and prodded it in the ribs, ungently.

"Ouch!"

Alan looked at Ada enquiringly. "What was that?"

His wife looked puzzled. "Sounded to me like—like a distant howl! Perhaps a dog in the street—"

"Sounded nearer than that to me!" commented Alan, doubtfully. "Maybe it was the statue!"

"Don't be silly," said Ada, "how can a lifeless piece of stone feel?"

She approached a hand to its base. "Let's tickle its feet," she said playfully, and suited the action to the word.

The result was alarming. "Hey—stop that!" growled a gruff voice.

"Aye indeed!" snapped another.

"Wot's the game!" said a third.

Alan backed to the windowsill, which he clutched fearfully with both hands. Ada executed a strategic retreat to the open kitchen door.

"Wha—what—who spoke?" said Alan, his eyes darting hither and thither about the room.

"I—we did!" said a gruff voice, proceeding from somewhere near the ceiling.

"Wh-where are you?" Alan demanded. "You—you've no right to frighten us like that. Besides—" as a measure of self-confidence returned—"this is private property! Leave this house at once!"

"Dinna fash yersel!—we're not in your house—yet!" replied "Snappy." "Leastways, only our voices—"

"An' part of our ears!" interjected another voice. "Mine got stuck, and I can't get it back!"

"Oh, *you're* always in trouble!" commented Gruff a trifle tartly. "Dogsbody here wouldn't have been aware of our presence if you hadn't advertised yourself all over the place!"

"Well! 'Ow did I know 'e was goin' to look up just at that moment?" said Stuck Ear, rather plaintively.

Alan had been putting two and two together.

"Are you referring to me as 'Dogsbody'?" he said.

"Och, yes," said Snappy impatiently. "We heard you called just that by the man next door! Now I've got my eye through I see we were mistaken." Two bloodshot eyes had appeared over the table.

Alan made his way to the settee and sat down. His hand searched nervily for a cigarette. "Ada," he called, "come along in! We've got some—er—visitors!"

Ada seated herself beside him, gazing as if she couldn't believe her eyes at several long ears, three eyes, and half a muzzle which protruded from blank space a yard above the package in the corner.

"Now—" said Alan, lighting his cigarette, "do you mind telling us exactly who you are, and what you are doing in my house?"

"Not at all!" replied Gruff. "We're Cerberus!"

"You're *what*?" Alan queried, puzzledly.

"Ye heard!" said Snappy. "We're Cerberus, the three-headed dog. Only we've lost our heads!"

"Cerebros?" interjected Ada, "but surely, that's some sort of salt—"

"Nah, nah!" said Stuck Ear, wagging that appendage frantically—"we're Cerberus, the dog wot used ter guard the gates of 'Ades—'Eil to you."

"Don't confuse the lady," said Gruff. "Let *me* explain, and you two shut up." The moist black muzzle turned towards Ada.

"You see, Madam, we're—kind of—attached to that thing on the kind. Wherever it goes, *we* have to go too!"

"I've heard about you," interrupted Alan suddenly, "surely there was something in Greek or Roman legends about a fierce dog with three heads, and snakes intertwined round its body, which was charmed to sleep by Orpheus."

"Hhuh!" said Gruff voice. "Charmed, did you say? We were bored stiff! If you'd had to listen to that fellow playing his lyre for hours on end, you'd have gone to sleep too. But we were always reasonable, on occasion, you know. I remember when Aeneas gave us meat and cakes. Came in very handy, that did—" The jaws champed reminiscently. "Pluto (our boss, you know)

was rather tight on the rations, and a little under the counter work was very acceptable at times. But we overdid it at last, and Pluto had us transferred to another Department. Black markets weren't due for thousands of years, he said, and Hades hadn't sunk as low as that yet."

"T'was a good job while it lasted," interjected Stuck Ear, who had by now succeeded in introducing a black and white snout in addition to his aural appendage. "Cripes, the drachmas we used to make on the side by selling bones to the Grecian soap factories. That's 'ow Greece got its name—" he added reflectively. "You understand, of course, that as the guardian, we were just outside the Gate of Hades, Hades proper was elsewhere—"

"Where did you get the bones?" asked Ada, her tone suggesting that she knew the answer, yet seeking confirmation of her worst fears, in the manner of a person who runs a tongue over a decayed tooth to see if it still aches.

"From the corpses, of course!" supplied Snappy. "We only let the ghosts of humans through to Hades, and their bodies were always reckoned to be our personal perquisites."

ALAN gave a shudder. "Quite up to date, aren't you?" he observed. "If you belong to Denmark now, how comes it you all speak English?"

"Well, we're English dogs, ain't we?" said Stuck Ear. "It don't matter nuffin *where* we are. If you was in China, would you, as an Englishman, be expected to talk Chinese? Nah, of course not. Now we English dogs—"

"British!" snarled Snappy at his colleague. "As a Scottish collie I resent that remark!"

"Come, come!" said Gruff, "We cannot allow national pride to affect our unity. I'm a bull-dog, and the third of our trio is a fox-terrier, and *we* don't quarrel—"

"No! Ye're both English!" retorted Snappy aggrievedly. "Just because of that ye think ye rule the kennel—but ye don't, ye ken!"

"When you've finished the family argu-

ment—" interrupted Alan suavely, "perhaps you will be good enough to attend to the question at issue, which is—what do you want with us?"

"Och aye," said Snappy, "we've tould ye—wherever that statue goes—so hae we to go."

"But what is the purpose of the statue—is it an idol, an oracle, or what?"

"Ye've said it, laddie," replied Snappy, "we're an oracle! Or rather, we *were*, until the idol's heads were knocked off. Now we're like a radio without a loudspeaker, unless there happens to be someone present—like your missus there, ye ken—from whom we can draw sufficient life essence to show ourselves and speak."

ALAN thought quickly. So these dog-gish intruders could only manifest if his wife were present. That was useful to know. It provided a helpful means of defence if his unwanted guests became obstreperous. Moreover, if they were in fact attached in some obscure way to the idol, surely he could, by disposing of *that*, rid himself of an encumbrance which might be undesirable. On second thought, however, there had been a hint of certain treasure, and he and Ada could do with a share if there was any going spare.

His silent speculations were interrupted by Gruff. "I should warn you," he said, "that your thoughts are not exactly a closed book to us. We are certainly compelled by the natural laws of association to remain in the vicinity of our idol; but now that we have linked up with the power-house that is your wife, she also must remain with us, until we see fit to let her go. If you should attempt to destroy the idol, or send your wife away, you will be responsible for an unfortunate accident."

An icy hand seemed to grip Alan by the throat. He shuddered. So these ghostly dogs were not so friendly as they had seemed.

"Our friendship depends on the degree of cooperation ye're willing to give, ye ken," said Snappy. "Now wull ye listen to me? While we were held to the confines of the temple at Odensa, we had no means

of providing our idol with new heads. Naebody came near us with sufficient life force to enable us to show ourselves; but now that we have arrived in a ceivilised community, ye ken—"

"But that's ridiculous," interrupted Alan crossly. "What do you expect us to do about it?"

"Have patience, mon," went on Snappy, "and I will tell ye. Now, that man next door is an amateur sculptor—"

"How d'you know that?" said Ada, quickly.

"We've had a look!" retorted Snappy. "Hoots mon! He outdoes Epstein, I tell ye. But we're not particular, as long as he can make new heads for us. A suggestion has just been implanted in his mind that he should call here. He will arrive in a moment or so. When he does, ye will be well advised to explain the situation. Meanwhile we will disappear from sight for the time being—but have no fear, we'll be back."

"COME on in, Tom," invited Alan, "what brings you away from your fireside this time o'night?"

Tom looked bewildered. "I don't rightly know," he said, "an' that's a fact. The thought entered my mind that I was wanted here, and almost before I knew what I was doing I found myself on your doorstep, an' the knocker in me hand!"

Ada looked at her husband apprehensively. "Looks as though what they said was right!"

Alan gave a wry laugh at Tom's obvious puzzlement. "We have—had . . . visitors a short while ago," he explained.

"Oh!" replied Tom. "Anyone I know?"

"Hardly. Unless you've heard of Cerberus?"

Tom wrinkled his brow. "Cerberus—who's he when he's at home?"

Alan motioned his neighbor to an armchair.

"He's . . . are . . . three dogs!"

"Huh?" Tom looked at his friend sharply, trying to detect signs of a practical joke.

"Three dogs, you say?" He looked from Ada to Alan uncertainly. "You mean—"

this 'ere Cerberus fellow brought three dogs with him?"

Alan explained the situation at some length, while Tom's eyes grew round with astonishment and a certain amount of disbelief, despite Ada's insistent and confirmatory remarks.

Finally Alan said, "Well, we've done our best to explain, Tom. This—Cerberus . . . wants you to sculp three dogs' heads for this idol, and that's all there is to it!"

"B-but I still don't understand? Are you sure you're not pulling my leg?" muttered the astounded Tom. "Anyhow, 'ow can I make a cast of three dogs' 'eads I hain't seen without models?"

"We will provide those," said Gruff.

"They're here again!" quavered Ada, pointing to the corner of the room.

"We've never left," retorted Stuck Ear, twitching that organ spasmodically.

"Pon my soul," said Tom, mopping his brow with a large handkerchief. "It's true, then! You ain't been kidding me, after all."

"KEEP still!" growled Tom, busy with frame and plaster. "'Ow can I make a cast if you *will* keep wriggling about?"

"Sorry." Snappy cocked a bright eye in the direction of the other casts, already hardening. "Ye've made a guid job of those, I must say. Weel done! But ye had better fairget those ideas ye have of strangling me while I'm in your power as ye think. Ye canna do it, ye ken. All I need do is dematerialize, an' where *are* ye?"

"Where are *you*, you mean!" said Alan, watching the workings of his friend's nimble fingers.

"Nowhere where ye can follow—yet!" replied Snappy. "This artist's model business is hungry wurrk. Where've those bones got to?"

Ada pointed to a mat by the scullery door.

"Och aye! I'll call t' others!"

Within a moment or so the human on-lookers were regaled with the rare spectacle of three disembodied dogs' heads gnawing busily at a large plateful of bones, while a

his memory. He saw himself reading a redbacked volume entitled "Andersen's Fairy Stories." How beloved they had been to his childish mind. He remembered some of his favorite titles. There was "The Snow Queen," "Great Clause and Little Clause," "The Wild Swans," "The Tinder Box," "Ole Luckie, the Dustman" . . . oh, dozens of them. By Jimini, if only he could get hold of a copy, he'd enjoy reading them now. . . .

He was recalled to the present by a cynical chuckle from Snappy. "Reet under your nose, an' ye canna see the connection? But perhaps ye will when I tell ye that Andersen was born at Odense?"

Alan thought quickly. "You mean—he had something to do with the temple of Canes—he was a member—?"

"Nae, mon—not a member! The temple was demolished lang before his time—"

"Then how—" Alan broke off short, and snapped his fingers. "I have it! The tale of the witch's Tinder Box and the three dogs; one with eyes as big as saucers, one with eyes as big as mill-wheels, and the third—"

"Bravo, cocky—you've got it!" Stuck Ear had managed at last to make a facial appearance at the side of Gruff, and his alert, intelligent expression contrasted favorably with the more forbidding countenance of the bull-dog. "Those were us, d'ye see? Hans stumbled on the temple ruins by accident, just like your uncle did; an' 'e gave us lashings of bones in exchange for the story which 'as brought 'im fame an' fortune, so to speak."

"There *were* other stories too, don't forget—" said Alan mildly.

"Yus! Well, I s'pose so. But look where 'e put our title—right at the front of 'is collection! Mind you, 'e *did* exaggerate somewot—about the size of our eyes 'rinstance; but in the main 'e wos accurate enough."

"You dogs are the limit!" grumbled Ada, sweeping up an assorted collection of gnawed bones. "You're worse than cats! Why can't you keep your bones on the mat, instead of dragging them halfway across the scullery?"

"Hoots, wooman! Hae ye ever tried to

foot or so behind, three stubby tails wagged in discrete harmony.

"What the butcher thinks of these large orders for bones, I *don't* know!" said Ada disconsolately. "He must think we run a vet's business!"

"Never mind about him," said Gruff, licking his chops reminiscently, and taking up a position in mid-air two feet above their heads. "Still, I must say, those bones are very welcome after all these years. Must be nearly a hundred years ago since Hans Andersen gave us a similar offering."

"Hans Andersen?" queried Alan quickly. "What's *he* got to do with it?"

As he asked the question, scenes from his childhood flashed across the screen of

eat a meal wi'oot hands?" admonished Snappy. "Maybe ye wouldn't find it so easy."

"I'll be off now," said Tom, who had finished washing his hands in the sink. "Tomorrow should see the finish of the job, and then—"

"Then all your troubles will be over," said Snappy.

ALAN confronted his unwanted guests as the dogs' heads hung in a row above his mantelpiece, like living trophies of the chase. "Tom will be along presently with the completed models. But see here, Ada and I have been thinking over your story. You told us yesterday about Hans Andersen, and it simply doesn't hold water!"

"And why not, my guid mon?" said Snappy.

Alan nearly choked. "I'm not your good man!" He raised his fist. "For two pins. . ."

Three menacing jaws snarled in unison. "I shouldn't if I were you," said Gruff. "Remember what we told you about your wife. Her fate is bound up with ours. If you strike *us*, you also strike her, and you don't look like a man who beats his wife. *But*—" Gruff barked to emphasize his "if you collaborate with us, you will get what you most desire *when* the oracle is completed."

"We've only got your word for it," said Ada, "and you have made a lot of conflicting statements. For example, you said at first that you were Cerberus, the three-headed dog of Hades. Now it turns out that you were *three* dogs in some temple at Odense." She snorted indignantly. "Next, I suppose, you will be half-a-dozen racing greyhounds!"

The three dogs' heads looked puzzled.

"We get around, sairtainly," said Snappy uncertainly, "But as for your remarks—we tould ye some time since that Pluto had us transferred from the Gate of Hades to anither department. Ye ken—Hades was not situated in Greece, as many believe, but was—and is—located in the Canary Islands, in the North Atlantic. D'ye get me? The

real name of the Islands is 'Canaria' or the home of 'Dogs of Great Size.' Us—and our progeny—in fact."

STUCK EAR took up the tale. "S'right! An' Pluto—'e ups and transfers us to Odense for our sins. "Watch-dog!" 'e ses, 'I've seen yer grow! I'll teach yer to give this 'ere Island a bad name! I'll separate you three-in-one, an' make yer one-and-three.' And lumme, 'e wos as good as 'is word. He no sooner sed it, than Hey Presto, there we wos, nearly two thousand years in the future, wiv three large stone bodies, one in each of three caverns; and in the inner court was a black marble model of our original self, with three 'eads."

Stuck Ear panted dog-fashion, his great red tongue protruding from his open jaws.

"And that is how we came to be at Odense," said Gruff. "Very soon a sect of your rather stupid humans turned us into an oracle and built a temple round us. Pluto had caused the idol in the inner chamber to be our only means of expression, and multitudes used to gather and listen to our words of wisdom. Yes—and pick up a bit on the side, too. Because, in front of the Cerberus idol was a pile of treasure which never lessened, no matter how much was taken from it. There were conditions, of course."

Ada and Alan were beginning to feel excited. All this talk of never-ending treasure had something to do with that damaged idol in the corner of their room, they were sure. Half repressed emotions of greed and cupidity showed in their eyes as they glanced once more at their visitors.

"Then—" suggested Alan, eagerly, "if that idol is repaired, the treasure will return—"

"Undoubtedly," confirmed Gruff, "whatever the heart desires, that treasure will be in abundance at the foot of the oracle, which will, at the same time, dispense words of—"

"We're not interested in those!" interrupted Alan rudely. "Hello, there goes the knocker. That must be Tom. Hope he's got those heads ready. 'Spect he'll want a share in the proceeds. Must draw up some sort

of an agreement, anyway. He can't expect to receive a full third share, especially as it's *our* house. . . ."

"THERE!" said Tom proudly, as he scraped off the last loose piece of putty. "A real artistic job, if I 'as to say it meself!" He rubbed his hands on a dirty apron. "My Sybil is greatly puzzled! Can't make out at all what I've been a-doing of. I told her she had better come on in and see for herself if she's so curious. I've left the front door slightly ajar—"

"Weel—" said Snappy, "that *does* begin to look more like our ould hame!" His eyes gleamed redly in the electric light.

"'E ain't arf proud o' hisself," commented Stuck Ear, winking at Alan, "betcher 'e'd like to live there, and work the oracle—"

"What about the treasure—?" began Alan, and bit his lip.

"Treasure?" said Tom, quickly. "*What* treasure?"

"He means," said Gruff, "that when the idol is inhabited once again, treasure of the kind most desired by the humans present will appear in quantities which cannot grow less, no matter how much is taken. There are conditions, of course—"

"You said that once before—" interjected Alan, "what *are* those conditions?"

"There are twa," said Snappy, resting his snout on the mantelpiece. "The first is simple—that the intending—ah—beneficiaries should not ask beforehand what the second condition is—"

"But that is unreasonable," said Ada fearfully, "surely we should know what *all* the requirements are before—"

"Oh, shut *up!*" interrupted Alan, rudely. "What does it matter as long as we get the treasure? If we have unlimited money we can buy anything necessary. They will probably want a temple or something, and even worshippers. We can hire—"

"Where do I come in with all this money?" said Tom aggrievedly. "After all, I made the heads, and supplied the material—"

"And whose *house* is this?" demanded Ada. "We hired you to do a job—"

"Oh, *you* did!" commented Tom. His lips pursed thinly together. "Let me tell *you*, I want a third share in whatever's coming, or else I smash these 'eads." He lifted a trowel threateningly.

"There's no need to do that," interposed Gruff. "We will see that you get your fair share. And now, to work the oracle—"

SYBIL NICHOLLS pushed open her neighbor's gate, and walked up the garden path. Her woman's curiosity had been aroused by her husband's apparently senseless descriptions, and she had decided to take advantage of his earlier suggestion that she should look in and see for herself what was going on.

She knocked once, and then remembered that Tom had said he would leave the door ajar. She pushed it open, and stood listening. A light streamed from beneath a door facing her, but she could hear no voices. Instead, she became aware of a curious snuffling noise.

Mrs. Nicholls closed the street door behind her, and approached the room. She tapped gently, and turned the handle. At the scene before her she gasped with amazement.

On their hands and knees, in front of an ugly black idol with three dogs' heads, crouched the forms of Ada and Alan Morton, and her own husband Tom. On the carpet beneath them was the largest assortment of meat bones of all sorts which Sybil had ever seen. A fleshy aroma filled the air. All three forms were munching and gnawing away contentedly at the feast before them. Which feast constituted treasure they could most desire.

Tom's form cocked a jaundiced eye at Sybil's entrance. The eye was reddish, and wary. It held no recognition of her. "Who's this woman?" he demanded, gruffly.

Ada sat up on her haunches. She snarled. "Och, aye, it's t'lady from next door. Get awa' wi' ye!"

And as Alan moved towards her on all fours, barking and biting at her heels, Sybil turned and ran screaming, into the night!
