

# **HOUSE OF GHOSTS**

Maxwell Grant

# Table of Contents

<u>HOUSE OF GHOSTS</u> .....	1
<u>Maxwell Grant</u> .....	1
<u>CHAPTER I. GHOST MANSION</u> .....	1
<u>CHAPTER II. TRAIL IN THE NIGHT</u> .....	5
<u>CHAPTER III. STABS IN THE DARK</u> .....	8
<u>CHAPTER IV. VANISHED PHANTASMS</u> .....	12
<u>CHAPTER V. THE GHOST HUNT</u> .....	16
<u>CHAPTER VI. AT THE MANOR</u> .....	20
<u>CHAPTER VII. HOUR OF GHOSTS</u> .....	23
<u>CHAPTER VIII. ONE GHOST LESS</u> .....	27
<u>CHAPTER IX. WHITE AND BLACK</u> .....	32
<u>CHAPTER X. THE NOTE FROM NOWHERE</u> .....	35
<u>CHAPTER XI. CRIME COMES HOME</u> .....	39
<u>CHAPTER XII. THE GHOST MAKERS</u> .....	43
<u>CHAPTER XIII. THE WRONG GHOST</u> .....	47
<u>CHAPTER XIV. THE GHOST TRAP</u> .....	52
<u>CHAPTER XV. INTO THE DARK</u> .....	56
<u>CHAPTER XVI. GHOSTS OF DEATH</u> .....	59
<u>CHAPTER XVII. THE WRONG TRAIL</u> .....	63
<u>CHAPTER XVIII. DOOM TO COME</u> .....	66

# HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Maxwell Grant

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

- [CHAPTER I. GHOST MANSION](#)
  - [CHAPTER II. TRAIL IN THE NIGHT](#)
  - [CHAPTER III. STABS IN THE DARK](#)
  - [CHAPTER IV. VANISHED PHANTASMS](#)
  - [CHAPTER V. THE GHOST HUNT](#)
  - [CHAPTER VI. AT THE MANOR](#)
  - [CHAPTER VII. HOUR OF GHOSTS](#)
  - [CHAPTER VIII. ONE GHOST LESS](#)
  - [CHAPTER IX. WHITE AND BLACK](#)
  - [CHAPTER X. THE NOTE FROM NOWHERE](#)
  - [CHAPTER XI. CRIME COMES HOME](#)
  - [CHAPTER XII. THE GHOST MAKERS](#)
  - [CHAPTER XIII. THE WRONG GHOST](#)
  - [CHAPTER XIV. THE GHOST TRAP](#)
  - [CHAPTER XV. INTO THE DARK](#)
  - [CHAPTER XVI. GHOSTS OF DEATH](#)
  - [CHAPTER XVII. THE WRONG TRAIL](#)
  - [CHAPTER XVIII. DOOM TO COME](#)
- 

## CHAPTER I. GHOST MANSION

CROUCHED like a monster awaiting human prey, Stanbridge Manor loomed ominously in the gathering night. The tower above the two-story mansion gave the effect of a watching head, while the wings of the wide-sprawled building had the look of mammoth arms, ready to close upon wayfarers with a deadly embrace.

On the slope that fronted the manor stood a wide stone gateway, yawning a welcome to hapless visitors. The Stygian gloom of that cavity defeated its greeting, at least by night. As a rule, cars that came along the hill road shied from those gates like frightened things.

There was good reason to shun Stanbridge Manor. It was known as a house of ghosts.

The place was a proper haunt for spirits of the dead. Not only did the giant trees behind the mansion form a weaving background of weird fantastic figures; beneath those trees dwelt the dead themselves. They were the members of the Stanbridge family, generations of them, interred in the graves of their own private cemetery. In that graveyard, a presiding figure among the congress of tombstones stood the whitened bulk of a mausoleum, which served as a temporary shelter for each new addition to the Stanbridge list of dead.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Forbidding as the mansion was to strangers, the mausoleum was equally so to dwellers in the house. For there were members of the Stanbridge clan still living in the mansion, amid an atmosphere of whispering ghosts that constantly reminded them of their awaiting fate.

As the fortunes of the Stanbridge family had shrunk, so had the size of the grounds surrounding the manor. In recent years, the great iron fence that formed the boundary had been shortened and its remnants sold for junk. No longer did the Stanbridge estate include the home of Wiggam, the old caretaker. It was well outside the fence, still standing only because Wiggam himself had bought it with his life's savings. Other houses had been built along the rising slope on ground that once was Stanbridge property, but they had stopped just short of Wiggam's cottage.

Wiggam's place was the final landmark. After that came the gates through which only Stanbridges passed, except for Wiggam and Dr. Torrance, who was still the Stanbridge family physician despite his more taxing duties as county coroner.

TONIGHT, a car was climbing the old road. From the confident way it nosed along, the car obviously belonged to Dr. Torrance. As it veered into the gateway, its sudden stop was not due to any fright on the physician's part. True, Torrance had sighted a figure on the driveway ahead, but he knew it wasn't any ghost.

It was only Wiggam, the faithful caretaker, paying his evening visit to the family that he still served, though he was no longer on the Stanbridge payroll.

Though it wasn't far up to the house, Wiggam accepted Torrance's invitation to ride with him. They sat together in the car, two gray haired men whose resemblance ended with that feature. Torrance was rugged, his eyes showing sharply through their glasses, a man whose vitality belied his years. Wiggam on the contrary looked tired, his face consisting chiefly of droops. Not worry, but disappointment had aged the old retainer, a thing which Torrance knew.

"How are things at the manor, Wiggam?" Torrance put the query in a cheery tone. "Has Roger brightened the family since he returned?"

"He should have, sir," replied Wiggam, seriously, "but I'm afraid the ghosts have been too much for him."

"Those ghosts!" Torrance gave a snort as he swung around the final turn in the driveway. "They're all right for Gustave and Jennifer who have lived here too long for their own good. But they shouldn't bother Roger."

"I'm afraid they do, sir –"

"I know. Roger said so himself. That's why I promised to drop in this evening. I simply want to assure him that strange things do not happen around Stanbridge Manor."

As Torrance spoke, a strange thing did occur. Under the shelter of the porte-cochere, the doctor was turning off the headlights. From the blackness past the wing of Stanbridge Manor, those lights blinked back, first one and then the other, like shining eyes from the night.

Noting the phenomenon, Wiggam clutched the physician's arm and whispered hoarsely:

"Those glimmers, sir! Did you see them?"

"Nothing but reflections," scoffed Torrance. "My eyes are sharper than yours, Wiggam. Come, come, man! You are more nervous than Roger was, when he called at my office this afternoon!"

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Dim was the glow from the deep windows of the mansion as Torrance and Wiggam ascended the front steps. Giving a loud knock, Torrance opened the door without ceremony and stepped into the house, with Wiggam close behind him. They came directly into a great hall that served as a living room. Leading from the hall were arched doorways into other rooms and passages, while at the right, a large staircase curved its way up to the second floor.

THREE people were seated at the large fireplace situated on the left. One was Gustave Stanbridge, present owner of the decadent manor, a man whose once florid face had lost all color and whose hair had thinned to slender streaks.

Opposite Gustave was his sister Jennifer, whose high-bridge nose and wide eyes marked her as a Stanbridge. She was older than Gustave, who was not past middle age, yet the woman looked younger than her brother. Not only did her face still show its color; her eyes were alive, whereas the man's were as dull as those of a death mask.

Third in the group was Roger Stanbridge, the recent arrival in the homestead. He was in his thirties, a handsome man, whose aristocratic features were offset by his friendly smile. Along with the Stanbridge nose, Roger owned a large shock of hair and his face had the fullness that Gustave's lacked. Perhaps it was the sight of Gustave that worried Roger, on the basis that he might some day come to resemble his shrunken elder brother.

It was Roger who arose and extended his hand to Torrance. The greeting was warm, yet the doctor noted that the hand itself was icy.

"I'm glad you came, doctor," said Roger. "You see –"

"You see nothing!" interrupted Jennifer in a sharp, but low-pitched tone. "In this house you only hear. The dead have not yet chosen to speak, though they give their messages to me!"

Ending with a stabbing laugh, Jennifer gestured to an instrument on the low table before her. The object was like a tiny table itself, a heart-shaped contrivance mounted on three small wheels. From its center, a pencil pointed downward to a sheet of paper that bore numerous scrawls. On one side were blank sheets, on the other a small stack of papers inscribed with scribbles.

"Yes, I've been hearing things," admitted Roger. "Footsteps upstairs and in the kitchen. Whispers through the doorways. Gustave noticed them, too, but won't admit he heard them. As for Jennifer, she claims she hears everything, but all the while she's been busy with that ouija board of hers."

Jennifer inserted a scoffing laugh.

"Ouija board!" The woman's voice was contemptuous. "Such things are for children. It is silly to push a pointer from one letter to another and have it spell out messages. This is a planchette."

She pointed to the heart-shaped thing. With an obliging nod, Dr. Torrance went over and placed his hands on one side of the roller device, while Jennifer pressed the other. The little stand began to twist between them, its pencil making new scribbles.

"You see, Jennifer?" Torrance raised his hands with a depreciating gesture. "Only scrawls, nothing more. The planchette does not work with me."

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"Because you are not psychic," snapped Jennifer. "Alone, I have received messages all evening. Messages from Donald."

Setting her eyes in a hard glare, Jennifer turned them directly upon Gustave, who shifted uneasily in his chair. Catching Torrance's glance, Gustave sprang to his feet and raised two scrawny hands, both clenched.

"As Heaven is my witness, doctor!" Gustave's voice rose to a scream. "I had nothing to do with Donald's death! I respected him as my older brother –"

"And you envied him," inserted Jennifer with her sharp cackle, "because he owned this mansion. Donald died because you wanted him to do so. He told me that, again tonight."

Waving the written papers from beside the planchette, Jennifer thrust them close to Gustave's face. Savagely, the dull-faced man snatched the papers and threw them in the fire. Instead of duplicating her brother's rage, Jennifer turned with a pleased chuckle as though she had won another argument.

SILENCE followed as Jennifer stalked across the frayed carpet and entered an arched passage under the stairs. Her footsteps sounded on the bare floor and dwindled into the hollow depths of the house. Gustave gave a troubled groan.

"She's going to get her cape," said Gustave. "She'll be back to tell us that she intends to visit Donald's grave. She goes there every night and always she looks for the figure in the tower. The figure that means death!"

"Easy, Gustave," soothed Roger. "Jennifer hasn't seen the figure yet. She's only heard things."

"And so have we!" blurted Gustave. "Yes, Roger, I'll admit it! I've heard those footsteps, too. Listen –"

Pausing dramatically, Gustave pointed upward. From somewhere on the second floor came creaks that were distinctly footsteps. Quickly, Dr. Torrance crossed the hall and looked along the passage that Jennifer had followed. He rubbed his head, puzzled, for it wasn't the direction to the back stairs, the only way by which Jennifer could have reached the second floor.

Footsteps ceased upstairs. They were followed by a more startling manifestation. Down from the second floor came a clatter of flying objects; rusted nails that bombarded the steps of the front stairway. Some scattered through the open banister, striking Torrance's shoulder as he turned to witness peppering objects which were so numerous they must have formed a huge fistful.

Starting toward the staircase, Roger Stanbridge halted, his face drawn like Gustave's. It was apparent that Roger must have witnessed similar manifestations recently and was hesitant about going upstairs. So Torrance rounded the bottom of the staircase and dashed to the second floor, with Wiggam following him.

They found the upper hallway deserted. Torrance gave a suspicious glance along a passage that led above the distant kitchen; then, bluffly, the physician called down to Roger:

"Where is Hector?"

Torrance was referring to the one remaining servant in the Stanbridge household. Roger gave a weary headshake.

"Hector has gone to bed," he said. "He always retires early, dog-tired after a full day's work. No, doctor, it wasn't Hector who threw those things."

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Still suspicious, Torrance surveyed the upper passage. To Wiggam, he remarked that Hector couldn't possibly have fled back to his room in time to avoid observation, a thing with which Wiggam quite agreed. Then, noting the doorway of the back stairs, Torrance had another idea.

"Hector could have slipped down to the kitchen!" exclaimed the physician. "Go down there and find him, Wiggam!"

Wiggam hesitated as though torn between dread of ghosts and fear of offending Hector. With a return of nonchalance, Roger lighted a cigarette and called up from below:

"I'll go around through the dining room and see if Hector is in the kitchen –"

At that moment, a terrific clatter intervened. It came from the kitchen, the crash of smashing chinaware hurled in heavy style. Waving to Wiggam, Dr. Torrance rushed to the back stairs and started down, while Roger, his boldness returned, made a dash around through the dining room. Seeing Wiggam go with Torrance, Gustave followed Roger.

The four men arrived in the kitchen, to stare aghast at a mass of ruined crockery that had tumbled from a table beside the sink, along with a candlestick that Hector used when washing dishes, which he hadn't done tonight.

Except for the smashed chinaware, the kitchen was empty!

"Listen!" Gustave's face was ashen, his voice frantic as he clutched Roger's arm. "Do you hear it?"

From the outside distance came a prolonged shriek, as eerie as a banshee's wail. As the sound trailed, Jennifer's cackling laugh intervened from the kitchen doorway.

"Only the evening train, Gustave," spoke Jennifer. "Stopping at Willow Glen, as it did the night when Donald died!"

"The night after Donald died," corrected Gustave in a wavering tone. "It was bringing the specialist from New York. He arrived too late to help poor Donald."

Throwing back her dark gray cape, Jennifer crossed her arms. Her voice tuned to the fading whistle, she declared:

"Donald will know which of us is right. I shall ask him to write his answer on the planchette!"

As Jennifer turned to go back to the great hall, Gustave followed, pleading vainly for his sister to believe him. Three people remained in the kitchen, staring at one another above the wreckage of smashed dishes and broken candles.

Dr. Torrance, man of fact, and Wiggam, the loyal family retainer, could understand, each by his own light, why Roger Stanbridge was willing to declare that the ghosts of the manor were real!

## CHAPTER II. TRAIL IN THE NIGHT

THE trail of a whistle.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Like the occupants of Stanbridge Manor, The Shadow heard that same long blare, as he sat in a parked car stopped by a crossroads where a sign pointed to the town of Coledale.

So far The Shadow had never heard of Stanbridge Manor, once the pride of Coledale. He was interested chiefly in checking the direction from which the whistle came, for by his calculations it indicated that the train must have stopped at some way station before reaching Coledale. So The Shadow added a timetable to the items that were lying on the seat beside him.

In a car illuminated only by a dashlight, The Shadow was invisible, as well he might be, considering that he was attired in his favorite regalia, consisting of a black cloak and a slouch hat. As for the objects on the seat beside him, they fully explained why The Shadow was in this vicinity.

The first exhibits were clippings and photographs. One batch concerned a sly-looking gentleman named Harvey Crispin, wanted for embezzlement of thirty thousand dollars from the funds of an insurance company. Next in order was Wallace Freer, a smug-faced individual who had turned the same trick on the wholesale diamond house for which he worked, the chief difference being that Freer had bettered Crispin's grab by about twenty thousand dollars.

On a road map beside The Shadow was a red line marking Crispin's trail. It stopped at a town not many miles from Coledale. A blue line traced the travels of Freer and it likewise ended in a nearby town. The inference was that both embezzlers were somewhere in this general neighborhood.

Ordinarily The Shadow would have left such cases to the law. There was an important reason why he considered them of unusual consequence. That reason was Carl Dorthan.

As an embezzler, Dorthan outmatched Crispin and Freer combined. In one blow, Dorthan had acquired a hundred thousand dollars from the bank where he worked; at least he had accumulated that sum by steadily favoring himself in the books. A few days ago, Dorthan had left the bank. Found there was a dead watchman; lost were the funds that Dorthan had appropriated.

The blame was on a teller named Goodwin, though the fault lay in Dorthan's books. The last man seen to leave the bank was Goodwin. In fact, he was the only man who seemingly could have slain the watchman; though he stoutly denied it. The only way to prove Goodwin's innocence was to find Dorthan.

Some people considered the quest impossible. They believed that Dorthan had been murdered like the watchman, his books falsified to place the blame upon him. But The Shadow did not hold that theory.

Looking up at The Shadow was a photograph of Carl Dorthan. It showed him as a sleek, handsome individual, whose eyes, even in the picture, had a natural shift. Their fixed stare was an acquired sort, like the slight but confident smile on Dorthan's lips. In short, Carl Dorthan was a man who tried to look too honest and even posed for photographs to back the false claim. The Shadow had long since learned to detect those symptoms the moment he observed them.

THE timetable listed a station called Willow Glen, a few miles short of Coledale. It was marked as a flag stop, but so were many of the other stations on this line. The Shadow decided to detour by the Glen on the chance that Dorthan had left the train at that station. If the embezzler had gone on to Coledale, he would be likely to stop at the local hotel, where his trail could be picked up later. So Willow Glen was temporarily of more importance.

By the road map, The Shadow picked the only route that led to Willow Glen. It was a drive of a few miles over a dirt road. Reaching the turn that led to the station, The Shadow turned off the headlights and coasted



## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

the car down the final slope. There was brilliant moonlight, temporarily clear of passing clouds and the glow showed The Shadow a perfect path.

Yet the car itself was obscured as it glided between the banks of trees that skirted the moonlit road and the sudden arrival of a cloud favored the finish of The Shadow's coast. As if timed to the exact second, the scene went dark, just as the cloaked driver veered the car in beside a structure that would have been mistaken for anything but a railroad station, except for the track that ran beside it.

Soon a flashlight began to glimmer around the boxlike station. The place was nothing but a tiny waiting room, lacking even a stove for cold weather. The platform beside the single track was only a path of cinders mixed with gravel. Why there was even a station at Willow Glen remained unexplained until The Shadow crossed the track and turned his flashlight on a sign that was nailed against a tree.

The sign pointed to Willow Glen and stated that picnics were permitted. This wasn't the season for picnics, hence it was odd that the train had stopped. It couldn't have picked up a picnic party, so it was likely that the train had let off a passenger instead. Such a person couldn't have come along the road or The Shadow would have seen him. That left only the path to the Glen, so The Shadow followed it.

Along the path there was no moonlight, even when the clouds went by, because the route went through a deep ravine, rimmed with many trees. Whenever The Shadow's tiny flashlight blinked, it confined itself to the hard dry path above the bank of the tiny stream that tumbled through the ravine.

Instead of looking for footprints, which weren't likely to show, The Shadow kept watching well ahead, hoping to spot a light less guarded than his own. Though he saw no glimmers, he kept along his quest, on the chance that a man ahead had gained sufficient start to be beyond sight in the turns of the ravine.

Swift, silent were The Shadow's strides along the obscure path. Only once did he pause; that was when a faint clatter sounded briefly from farther up the path. Continuing his way, The Shadow came upon a rustic bridge where the path crossed the cascading brook. Though his own tread was silent, The Shadow recognized that previous footfalls could have caused the boards in the old bridge to rattle.

Evidence at last that someone was following the path ahead. Why a man like Carl Dorthan should have chosen such a place as Willow Glen for this secret visit, seemed plausible only on the basis that the embezzler intended to bury his money here. Yet that theory had flaws, considering how many more convenient spots Dorthan might have chosen. Rather it would seem that Dorthan was thinking of his own security as much as that of the funds he had embezzled.

When moonlight suddenly showed a wide opening in the ravine, The Shadow did not take it for granted that Dorthan had continued on to the space which formed the Glen. Still obscured in the darkness of the narrows, The Shadow looked for other landmarks and saw one.

Just short of the Glen was a rocky crag that towered above the defile, a monument left bare by winds and rains that had washed away the surrounding soil. Up to the crag were other steps of stone, each a dozen feet high, more like a succession of petrified waterfalls than a giant's staircase.

The knob at the top formed a protuberance above the highest step and the hollow beneath that inaccessible crag could have some merit as a hiding place if there was any way to reach it. The Shadow was looking toward the high cliff when he heard trickling sounds that ended with an abbreviated clatter, not from the face of rock, but from the slope beside it.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

The man ahead had not continued to the Glen. He had turned off by a side path, going up beside the cliff. Close to the ground, The Shadow's flashlight probed for the path in question and revealed the dry bed of a stony watercourse, coming from the direction of the sounds.

This was the path the fugitive had taken. He was following a steep but tiny gully that in rainy weather served to drain the heights above the Glen. Loose stones, farther up the improvised path, had given under the climber's feet to produce the sounds The Shadow heard.

SWIFTLY, The Shadow took the same route, keeping the flashlight in his cloak folds as he picked the path. He was gaining as he made the climb, for he could afford to do so. The man ahead would assume that any stones clattering down below were some that he himself had loosened. Hence The Shadow was shortening the distance between himself and the man who must be Dorthan.

Near the brow of the ravine, the path veered toward the crag. Pausing, The Shadow noted an iron post set in the ground and gripped it while he watched ahead. The post proved to be the end of a long, high picket fence that reared above the brow and continued along the higher ground.

It was the new dividing line of the grounds around Stanbridge Manor. It happened that the old family cemetery extended back toward the ravine, though there was a space between the graveyard and the brink. Tree boughs formed a high network beyond the top of the ravine, but the mansion was not visible from the sloping fence end.

What The Shadow did see was a figure pausing briefly against the gray, ghostly bulk of the crag. The man was looking for a path away from the ravine and in his hand he was clutching a sizable satchel. He was a muffled man, his hat drawn well down above his eyes; as The Shadow watched, the man straightened from a stoopish posture and hurried in the direction of the hidden manor.

It was undoubtedly Carl Dorthan. His manner, not his face, had given him away. In changing posture, he was becoming himself again, after a trip during which he had done his utmost to conceal his real identity. Add to that the satchel that Dorthan carried and the situation was summed.

A whispered laugh stirred the darkness. Its sibilance persisted as The Shadow, invisible in darkness, glided forward to take up the last stage of the trail. He himself was like a ghost, this being called The Shadow.

Strange that The Shadow should be venturing toward a place where persons were already keyed for visitors who purported to be from another world!

### **CHAPTER III. STABS IN THE DARK**

THREE huddled men were talking in undertones near the edge of the Stanbridge cemetery. They were watching the windows of the mansion, where they could see figures moving against the flicker of the fire in the great hall. Though human, those figures moved like ghosts, which worried two of the three watchers.

The man who didn't worry was Zeph Blaine.

"Are you going to quit?" queried Zeph, in a low twang. "All right, it's up to the two of you, only Doc Torrance won't like it when I tell him. He'll say he was mistook when he thought Herb Kiefer and Luke Morton wasn't fellows to be afeard."

There were mutters from Herb and Luke. One of the pair blinked a flashlight and Zeph made a grab at it.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"Douse that light!" snarled Zeph. "See what you've done? There's the old lady at the window, pointing right our way!"

Sight of Jennifer pointing from the window rather reassured Herb and Luke. Her action was one of human curiosity, nothing more. Apparently it was Jennifer who thought she had seen a ghost, evidenced by the blink from the cemetery and the idea brought low laughs from Herb and Luke.

Still watching the window, Zeph saw Roger gesture to Jennifer. Roger was holding a cigarette lighter that he had just flicked. He was explaining to his sister that she had probably seen its flame reflected in the window. At last Jennifer turned away as though satisfied. The watchers saw her draw the gray cape across her shoulders.

"Afeared of ghosts, huh?" gibed Zeph. "That makes the two of you scared of yourselves. Why don't you run?"

Herb and Luke weren't running and declared so. Their morale fully restored, they were willing to go through with the deal for which Dr. Torrance had paid them five dollars each. That job was to remain outside the house and watch all that occurred outdoors while Torrance was visiting in the manor.

Hard-headed though he was, old Dr. Torrance had heard too many rumors of strange things happening around Stanbridge Manor. Even before this visit when he had personally heard ghosts fling nails and smash dishes, the physician had convinced himself that something more than ordinary was amiss. Roger's reports of singular manifestations had corroborated certain statements by Wiggam. As for Jennifer, she'd talked about ghosts for years, while Gustave's recent silence on the subject had impressed Torrance very forcibly.

So Torrance had sworn in three deputies to aid the ghost hunt, unbeknown to anyone at the manor. The local boys were making good, now that they had found their nerve. Zeph wasn't hearing any further talk of flight, not even when a distant door suddenly clattered open and a block of light revealed old Jennifer coming from the rear of the mansion, enshrouded in her cape.

"The old lady is crazy," assured Zeph. "Doc says he's certain on it. Of course maybe they're all crazy, but that only makes her worsen."

There were whispered queries from Herb and Luke, asking for further statistics on the sanity of the Stanbridge family.

"They've got what doc calls a complex," explained Zeph. "None of 'em wants to be buried until they're sure they're dead. That's why they stick 'em in that thing over in the middle of the graveyard."

Zeph gestured toward the mausoleum, then looked for Jennifer. It was Zeph's turn to clamber to his legs, ready to run, for the lady in gray had disappeared a short way from the mansion. At that moment the others saw her against the white side of the mausoleum, as she picked her way among the tombstones.

Old Jennifer was the perfect replica of a wandering ghost, but sight of her eased Zeph's qualms, since he had already classed her as something human. Rather than have his companions turn the laugh on him, Zeph began to order them about.

"She's hunting for Donald's grave," explained Zeph, keeping his undertone below the quaver point. "Doc wants to know why. So sneak around, you fellows, and see where she goes and what she does."

By way of example, Zeph skirted toward the rear of the cemetery and then cut in toward Jennifer's path. Herb took the more conservative course of moving in the direction of the house before venturing among the

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

tombstones. Not to be outdone, Luke decided to circuit the cemetery on the house side and come back from the other direction, hoping that by then his services wouldn't be needed.

THEY were like the points of an irregular triangle, these three, with Jennifer wandering somewhere in the center. Of the three, Zeph was proving himself the boldest, considering that he had chosen the deep end of the cemetery. The fact that he was cutting back among the graves made Zeph appear all the braver; actually it was because he wasn't anxious to wander too far afield.

Straining his eyes to find Jennifer, Zeph failed to see another figure that was creeping forward, its course coming at an angle toward his own. Nor did the other man see Zeph; he was too busy looking for some landmark as he worked his way among the silent tombstones, which were all large, but very much alike.

The stranger in the cemetery was Carl Dorthan, still some distance ahead of The Shadow. Dorthan was having more trouble than Zeph, though both were on unfamiliar ground. Dorthan's difficulty was occasioned by the bag he carried.

Above, the grinding trees made ghoulish sounds and their branches were so thick they cut off most of the moonlight that was struggling through a heavy cloud. This was certainly death's setting, these grounds that Jennifer roamed each evening. Of all who stalked these forgotten preserves, the old lady was most oblivious to things that passed about her.

That fact was proven when Zeph Blaine stopped short and listened for a sound close by. It was the scrunch of grass that formed a mound up to a broad pedestal supporting an ancient tombstone. Locating the sound, Zeph looked and thought he saw a figure that suddenly crouched apelike in the gloom.

It was Carl Dorthan resuming his earlier pose. He had heard the dry grass rattle as Zeph moved forward. Dorthan made a shift for shelter and Zeph did the same. In that tense moment, both forgot all thoughts of ghosts.

They were primitive creatures, each stalking the unknown, yet imbued with an urge for shelter. A fresh trickle of moonlight added just enough visibility for each to make out the other's crouched form; then, as they shifted, something solid intervened. It was Dorthan who first recognized the object as a tombstone.

Shoving himself forward, Dorthan reached the tombstone and deposited the bag beside it. Climbing the base, he gripped the shaft with both hands and lifted his head and shoulders above it. At that moment, Zeph made out the bulky object clearly, not as a gravestone, but as the head and shoulders of a man.

With a bellow, Zeph charged, thrusting his own hands for the man's neck. Half poised above the stone, Dorthan hadn't time to drop away. He swung frantically to beat off Zeph's clutch and managed to drive down the grabbing hands. Zeph's big fists clamped on what he thought were shoulders, but proved instead to be the curved corners of the tombstone.

Zeph tilted backward, the tombstone coming with him. As Dorthan swung a hard fist, Zeph took a hard grip on the wrist above it. Briefly, the strugglers were locked across the canted stone, Dorthan's lips voicing a snarl as Zeph's delivered a triumphant shout. Then, as Zeph swung a big fist, Dorthan slugged with something hard.

Figures reeled into a mutual disappearance. Next, one was looping madly from the tombstone, carrying something that it snatched up from the ground. In itself, this human struggle was ghostly, but the weird laugh that quivered beneath the trees was more so.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

It was the laugh of The Shadow, grim, sinister, a challenge to all fighters, a terror to men who tried to escape its author's justice. Wildly, two shots stabbed from near the tombstone where Dorthan and Zeph had struggled. Then, a human blackout trained in ways of vengeance, The Shadow was springing to find his fleeing prey.

All that saved Dorthan was misguided intervention, supplied by Herb and Luke. Hearing Zeph's shout, confident that he had encountered something substantial, the two were coming from different directions, hoping to grab Zeph's foe. Only by luck did Dorthan dodge them; his method was a sprawl that he didn't intend to take. Converging past the man they sought, Herb and Luke encountered The Shadow.

They found him tangible enough to be classed as a human fighter, but that impression existed only shortly. At the sound of gunfire, The Shadow had whipped out an automatic, but he did not aim it at these bungling foemen. Instead, he gave Luke the benefit of a weighted fist that met the fellow's jaw with a wide sweep, knocking him some five feet out of combat. Herb, charging forward, found nothing where he thought a figure was.

Seemingly, The Shadow had dissolved ahead of his attacker's grasp. Actually, the cloaked fighter had dropped into the thick-tufted grass. Lunging beyond his vanished target, Herb received a lifted foot that seemed to crop out of the ground. It met the fellow's chest and turned his drive into a bouncing somersault that left Herb sitting back against a tombstone, quite as bewildered as Luke.

BY this time, flashlights were sweeping from the mansion. Into their glows dashed Dr. Torrance, waving back at Gustave and Roger, who were armed with a shotgun and revolver, respectively. Torrance was calling back a warning not to shoot.

"They're my men," shouted Torrance. "I told them to come here. If they're found a stranger, let them take care of him."

Wiggam stopped Gustave from raising the shotgun. At that moment a window clapped open above the kitchen, and Hector, the servant, thrust out a head that wore a nightcap. Torrance, dashing in search of Jennifer, saw a crouched figure against the side of the mausoleum.

It was Dorthan. He knew he had been seen, for he made a quick dart around the corner of the structure, carrying his precious satchel. What it was that Dorthan carried, Torrance could not tell, but the doctor knew that the darting man could not be one of the local tribe.

"There he goes!" howled Torrance. "He's taking something with him. Stop him, whoever he is!"

The doctor had reached the mausoleum, which was shining like alabaster in the full light of the freed moon. There was no sign of Dorthan, but Torrance knew which corner he had gone around, and wanted to complete the pursuit in these brief moments of brilliant light.

What halted Torrance was a shape that arrived in truly ghostly fashion from the other corner of the mausoleum.

It wasn't The Shadow. This shape was gray. With a bony hand it caught Torrance's arm. He heard the shrill voice of Jennifer, sharp in his ear:

"Look! The ghost in the tower! It means death!"

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Despite himself, Torrance turned and let his eyes follow Jennifer's point. He saw the thing she mentioned, a ghostly creature all in white, peering through the open work of the tower that topped Stanbridge Manor. The figure moved, as if to return the pointing gesture. Torrance saw a glint that he took for a ghostly eye. There was a flicker of the moonlight as Torrance stared.

From deep in the cemetery came another gun stab, its jabbing tongue directed toward the high and distant tower. Hard upon that shot followed a mocking peal of mirth, a challenge to all shrouded things that called themselves omens of death.

Ghostlier than the taunt of any ghost:

The laugh of The Shadow!

### CHAPTER IV. VANISHED PHANTASMS

WHILE The Shadow's strange mirth was still reaching its weird crescendo, the thing in the tower vanished. It wasn't that The Shadow's shot reached it; the range was too great, his gun stab far too hasty. Rather, The Shadow's thrust simply dispelled the ghost or forced it to a disappearance of its own.

Again, the moonlight was playing tricks. It had shown itself through the fleece of a patchwork cloud, only to dwindle immediately after The Shadow's gunshot. Now the glow was reappearing and from the ground near the mansion, Roger Stanbridge fired two shots at the tower to which his sister Jennifer had pointed. Moonlight unveiled itself, to show the tower empty.

Flooded with light, the tower left no doubt as to its present status. It was all openwork, like a bell tower, through which the eye could see from every side. Though it connected with the house, the door was known to be permanently shut. Unless the ghost were an optical illusion, stimulated by Jennifer's fancy, the whole thing passed the realm of credibility.

Naturally the effect was most marked upon the persons from the mansion, because they had only recently witnessed manifestations as unexplainable as the tower ghost itself. So they stood staring up into the moonlight, quite unable to make up their minds about the matter.

The Shadow was looking elsewhere.

Whatever the thing that he had so briefly glimpsed in the tower, it couldn't possibly be Dorthan. Not for a moment had The Shadow forgotten the embezzler, even though he had taken time out to fire at the tower.

Indeed, The Shadow wasn't sure that the phantasm had been real. To him, its glint indicated a gun, pointing at Torrance, rather than an eye as the doctor had thought. On the chance that the "ghost" might be a mortal, watching in Dorthan's behalf, The Shadow had fired the shot that made it disappear, solely to protect Torrance. The Shadow had succeeded, but so had the ghost.

Dorthan was gone, totally forgotten by Torrance, even though The Shadow remembered the fugitive who had ducked around the corner of the mausoleum.

Working forward, The Shadow neared the door of the mausoleum intending to have a look inside the bare-walled structure. He believed that everyone except Dorthan was too busy watching the tower to notice him and The Shadow was quite willing to meet the embezzler, should he bob into sight again.

But there were other exceptions in this case: Herb and Luke.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

They were on their feet again, those two, and they knew nothing of happenings inside the house. They hadn't even seen the phantasm in the tower, so briefly had it stayed. To these rustic fighters, there was only one ghost in the Stanbridge cemetery worthy of consideration and they considered it human enough to be conquered.

That ghost was The Shadow.

Under the full glare of the moon, the pair saw the blackness that glided toward the mausoleum. With one accord they surged and flung themselves upon The Shadow. Their shouts brought others full about to witness a most amazing struggle.

THE SHADOW had swung in time to meet his attackers. He was carrying them into a running fray that was impossible to follow. The Shadow deserved to be termed a phantasm, for his appearance was just such. He was blackness that thinned, faded, dwindled from the hands that tried to clutch him.

This was one issue that The Shadow did not care to cloud. Whatever the issue at Stanbridge Manor, whether Dorthan had arrived there by chance or design, The Shadow wanted the case to be studied on its own merits, not in the terms of a cloaked visitant who was not part of the basic situation.

There had been other shots from the dark before The Shadow's. Though his weird laugh had dispelled the ghost, it would be considered as part of the white figure's appearance in the supposedly empty tower. All provided that The Shadow could personally depart as mysteriously as he had arrived.

Such was The Shadow's present objective. To attain it, he took to what seemed flight as he zigzagged to the space beyond the graveyard and took an elusive course toward the crag above the Glen. Yet Herb and Luke persisted in keeping after him, though to them The Shadow had become no more than a streak of fleeting darkness.

Roger and the others had arrived beside the mausoleum. Staring through the clouding moonlight, they couldn't trace the living patch of blackness that still attracted the two yokels. Torrance was explaining who Herb and Luke were, at the same time attributing their mad dash to fright. Suddenly remembering that there was a third man in the local group, Torrance exclaimed:

"Where is Zeph Blaine?"

"There was another man over there." With a long finger, Jennifer pointed off among the tombstones, marking the exact spot of Zeph's encounter with Dorthan. "But he was not the one who came here."

By "here" Jennifer meant the mausoleum, which she indicated with a back sweep of her hand. Roger turned to Torrance.

"Take a look in the crypt, doc," said Roger. "Borrow Gustave's shotgun before he gets excited and lets it pop. I'll take Wiggam with me and hunt for Zeph. If you have any trouble, yell."

"But what about the others," queried Torrance. "If we don't stop them, they'll go off the edge of Lookout Rock."

"They'll stop soon enough," assured Roger. "They're just trying to get clear of ghosts."

Roger had it the wrong way about. The ghost that Herb and Luke were after was The Shadow and at that moment he was getting clear of them.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

The Shadow had reached the crag termed Lookout Rock. There he was turning, intending to speed back toward the mansion and lose himself in the darkness of the graveyard while Herb and Luke would wonder where the black phantasm had gone.

Like something disgorged by the darkness of the trees, The Shadow formed a swirling patch upon the rock's gray surface. He seemed no more than the black streaks cast by high-weaving tree boughs as he poised to pick an opening between the blundering pursuers whom he had purposely led to this dead end.

The pause was just too long.

With a sudden gush, the moon poured its full glow through the space between the trees. The cloud had passed and the mighty orb was spotted straight on Lookout Rock. Where two men should have seen nothing, they spied a form as real as it was grotesque, the shape of The Shadow, as amazing as if it had sprung from the rock itself.

Savagely, Zeph's pals hurled themselves upon their fantastic prey. Rather than let their unwise fury carry them across the brink, The Shadow wheeled to meet them. They locked in a sudden grapple from which The Shadow writhed; then, with the moonlight still persisting, the cloaked grappler performed a singular ruse.

Dropping from the combined clutch of Herb and Luke, The Shadow twisted in the other direction. Like something dislodged from the crag, he slid over its knobby edge, bound on a trip into the outer space where he seemingly belonged!

THE SHADOW was sliding feet foremost. Face toward the rock, he dug his fingers hard as he went beyond its bulging surface. Legs and body dangling clear, he gave himself a pendulum swing back under the brow. Had his grip been firm, he would have pitched himself into the convenient space below the crag, but his sliding fingers didn't quite suffice.

The Shadow's inward heave landed him just on the brink of the first sheer cliff. Down he went, unable to do more than slow his drop. He jolted as he struck the next stretch of the stone cascade and slid beyond, dropping down another of the giant steps.

Viewed from the Glen, The Shadow's spilling figure was a pygmy thing, descending the palisade in short, delayed drops, much like a beetle failing in its grip. He was still slipping when the trees of the gorge engulfed him, but as he left the moonlight, his forceful struggles were as evident as before.

Herb and Luke didn't view The Shadow's descent from that angle. In fact, they didn't see his drop at all. They were struggling on the top of Lookout Rock, each in the other's clutch. Simultaneously, they realized that the thing they fought was gone and they relaxed to stare in wonderment.

First they gazed at the rock itself; next they looked across the glade; finally, they craned from the brink and gazed below. They saw nothing; learned nothing.

The rock couldn't have swallowed The Shadow. There was no sign of him in midair. Nor was there any patch of blackness on the rocks below the great stepped cliff. The two men finally decided that a thing that had vanished so completely must have been an illusion in the first place.

It didn't occur to that pair that The Shadow's lingering fall had kept him so close to the bottom of the lowest step that he was short of the angle at which they gazed. To these observers, the cliff looked sheer. They couldn't imagine anyone descending it by degrees.



## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

BACK at the mausoleum, Dr. Torrance was standing with the leveled shotgun while Gustave turned a flashlight within the white-walled building. The glare showed vacancy; nothing more. The inner walls were the same stone as the outer. The floor consisted of solid granite, two feet thick.

Stamping about the place, Torrance was soon convinced that the foundations were permanent. Even the mortar between the granite blocks was as solid as the stonework. Suspiciously, Torrance looked upward, telling Gustave to raise the flashlight. The flat ceiling of the mausoleum was quite as convincing as the floor and walls.

A light was bobbing toward the mausoleum. Turning, Torrance lowered the shotgun as he saw Wiggam stumbling toward him.

"Over there, doctor!" panted Wiggam, gesturing, across his shoulder. "That man of yours – Zeph Blaine – he's dead. Mr. Roger will show you."

Old Jennifer supplied a cloak.

"The ghost in the tower!" she reminded. "When it appears, it means death. Never has the omen failed!"

Giving Wiggam the shotgun, Torrance told him to guard the mausoleum. Beckoned by Roger's flashlight, the doctor reached the spot where Zeph had struggled with Dorthan. Roger focused the light on a sight that wasn't pleasant.

Prone on the ground, Zeph was partly obscured by an overturned tombstone. Toppled from its base, the bulky block had landed on the man's head and shoulders, crushing his skull. Poked from beneath the stone was Zeph's hand, loosely clutching a revolver. Picking up the gun, Torrance cracked it open; found that two shots had been fired.

"So the shots were Zeph's," mused Torrance. "He must have seen something or imagined it."

Roger pointed to Zeph's left hand which was tightly clutched upon the side of the fallen tombstone.

"He must have grabbed the stone," observed Roger. "A bad thing to do when off balance. Most of these stones are wobbly."

He turned the light on another and Torrance thrust his hand against the upright specimen to find that the tombstone did tilt under pressure. Pocketing Zeph's revolver, Torrance told Roger to accompany him into the house. When they arrived there, the doctor went up to the second floor, where they found Hector at his window.

From the window, they could see the top of the mausoleum. No one was lying upon it, hence Torrance decided that no ghost could have disappeared in that vicinity. So Torrance decided to have a look at the tower. They went to the doorway leading to its stairs.

The door was not only nailed shut; it had a padlock so rusty that it couldn't have been unlocked in years. Smashing the lock with the butt of Zeph's gun, Torrance pulled the door wide and threw a flashlight up the stairs. At the top of the steep steps was another door also padlocked.

The upper door wasn't nailed. because it opened inward. Breaking the lock, Torrance pushed the barrier open, to disclose a small landing only a few feet square. The only thing ghostly was the grating of the door hinges, which ended suddenly as the door jammed to a halt against the warped floor, a few inches short of the side

wall.

The floor of the tower formed a five-foot square above the landing. Access could be gained there by a ladder up the far wall of the landing. Gun in hand, Torrance boldly climbed the ladder, gave a quick thrust to the hinged boards of the tower floor and turned his head and arms about as he pressed through the opened space. Roger and Hector were watching tensely, until they saw Torrance reach down and beckon.

They joined the doctor in the tower. There, all three stared about the open space, their eyes wandering, puzzled, to the gable roof that had no rafters, but which was amply supplied with cracks and holes from years of disrepair.

Again the question of a phantasm remained unsolved. Whatever the thing that had been seen in the tower, ghost or human, it had disappeared as completely as the cloaked creature that had vanished from the brink of Lookout Rock.

Weird were the visitants seen at Stanbridge Manor and The Shadow held no monopoly to that claim!

### **CHAPTER V. THE GHOST HUNT**

STANBRIDGE Manor had become famous.

The weird house gained that status almost overnight, thanks to Dr. Torrance.

As county coroner, Torrance was forced to deliver a verdict in the death of Zeph Blaine. After all the evidence was weighed and considered, Torrance pronounced it death through misadventure.

In itself, there wasn't much mysterious about a man clutching a tombstone in the dark and having it topple on him. Even the fact that the victim mistook the falling stone for something else and fired a few frantic shots, was understandable, considering Zeph's limited mental caliber and the fears that the cemetery had stimulated in his rustic mind.

What rendered it all so weird were further factors as witnessed by other persons. A stickler for detail, Dr. Torrance had included every ounce of data in his report and the whole summed to one simple answer:

Stanbridge Manor was haunted!

Reliable witnesses could testify regarding the manifestations in the strange old mansion. Things that had bothered the Stanbridge family for quite some time, had been repeated in the presence of other persons.

First: such things as footsteps and ghostly whispers heard from quarters where no person could possibly have been. Second: the crash of dishes in the empty kitchen. Like the Stanbridge brothers, Dr. Torrance and Wiggam were ready to swear that the phenomena had occurred under impossible conditions.

As a visible manifestation, the ghost in the watchtower rated tops. Torrance was willing to take oath that he had seen something up there after Jennifer pointed, though it was too vague to be defined. The term "a figure in white" about described it. Roger had caught a fleeting glimpse of the thing, as had Wiggam, though Gustave wasn't ready to admit the presence of the phantom.

Indeed, a controversy was on between two members of the Stanbridge family: Gustave and Jennifer. As owner of the manor, Gustave was ready to deny that it ever had been haunted, though he did admit to certain happenings that he couldn't personally explain. Jennifer contrarily claimed that ghosts had always been

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

around and always would be. She included her planchette writing as evidence in favor of the spirits.

As a comparative newcomer, Roger was quite at sea. The same applied to Wiggam, who seldom visited the manor at night, living as he did in the old gatekeeper's cottage. Neutral in the controversy was Hector, the house servant. Being hard of hearing, short of sight, he wasn't the sort to be annoyed by wandering ghosts.

As for happenings outdoors, those were charged largely to local imagination, as with Zeph's death. For years the villagers of Coledale had shunned the Stanbridge burying ground on the score that it was bewitched, if not actually haunted. Torrance conceded that he had made a bad mistake in sending three ghost-fearing natives to patrol the tabooed area.

The lights seen around the cemetery were probably those of the three men. The figure that Torrance saw when it ducked around the corner of the mausoleum, could have been either Herb or Luke, since it happened after Zeph's fatal accident with the tombstone. Supporting such an opinion was the fact that Herb and Luke had both gone chasing after an imaginary wanderer, only to find themselves locked in each other's grip on Lookout Rock.

At risk of his neck, The Shadow had won his point. He'd gone completely out of the picture, so completely that he wasn't supposed to have been around at all, which was exactly the impression that he wanted to produce.

But along with the elimination of The Shadow as a factor, human or ghostly, another person had totally slipped the scene. There wasn't the slightest hint that Carl Dorthan, embezzler wanted by the law, had come to Stanbridge Manor, there to join in the ghostly gambols and vanish with the stolen funds he brought.

This was something that only The Shadow knew!

THE newspapers went to town with the Stanbridge Manor story. Ghost stuff was always good "copy" and this exceeded all expectations. Famed cases of the past dwindled into oblivion, compared to this instance where an avenging ghost had lived up to its reputation of manifesting itself at a time of sudden death.

Lamont Cranston found the newspapers very interesting reading, as he sat in the library of New York's exclusive Cobalt Club, with one leg propped on another chair beside which leaned a cane. Cranston had wrenched his knee in a fall from a polo pony, which was one of his favorite habits.

That pony business often came in handy. It frequently happened after The Shadow had fared severely during one of his daring exploits. For the quiet, calm-mannered club man who called himself Lamont Cranston was actually The Shadow. His wrenched knee represented a cascading fall of a hundred feet and more, down the step-cliff below Lookout Rock.

And now, in armchair style, the taciturn Mr. Cranston was learning a lot of facts that he hadn't gathered during his excursion to Stanbridge Manor.

There was a legend, of course, to account for the Stanbridge ghost. The house itself dated back before the Revolution and had figured in feuds of that day. The Coledale area had then been disputed territory, claimed by two different groups of settlers, each from a separate colony.

When the colonies became states, the situation had not changed. There had been pitched battles, even massacres, on the part of the warring factions. The original Stanbridge had played a large share in such strife, showing himself a very clever warrior.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Several times, the Stanbridge ancestor had been trapped in the manor, only to escape and return with members of his own faction, thus turning the tables on the invaders. He had personally slain a few of his archenemies when they entered the manor and there was a rumor that the ghosts might be theirs.

Another school of thought made the original Stanbridge the haunter of his own premises, there being good reason to consider him the one and only ghost. First, the watchtower had been his favorite spot when he was on the alert for enemies; again, he had often sworn that he would protect all Stanbridges to come. Thus he had become a legendary figure in the minds of his descendants.

The original Stanbridge might even be expiating some of his own dark deeds, of which there had been many!

Still, no one knew exactly when the ghost had first appeared. A later legend involved another Stanbridge, grandson of the first, who had participated in the famous "underground railway" that aided escaping slaves. This later Stanbridge had used the old watchtower, along with Lookout Rock, and had shown himself amazingly skillful at smuggling fugitives in and out of his premises, without a single capture. He was a more benign character than his grandfather; therefore better suited to rate as a ghostly protector of his clan, ready to warn them of approaching death whenever it was due.

The Stanbridges had a habit of dying suddenly, which was why they dreaded death. Generally heart failure was the cause, though some had recuperated from strokes that left them seemingly dead. There was a trace of insanity in the family; how serious, no one knew, for details had always been avoided, even by the Wiggams.

Always, there had been a Wiggam attached to the Stanbridge family and each current Wiggam was invariably loyal to the head of Stanbridge Manor. The present Wiggam was no exception; his purchase of his own cottage had been purely to aid the failing Stanbridge fortune and preserve some of the property.

HAVING brought the Stanbridge history up to date, Cranston began to study the status of the present dwellers in the manor. Gustave had inherited the hollow fortune after the death of his elder brother Donald, several years ago. Long-ailing, weakened in mind and memory, Donald had gone out in typical Stanbridge style, from a stroke that totally paralyzed him.

Even since, Donald's sister Jennifer had been communicating with his spirit by means of the planchette. Always she hinted that Gustave was responsible for Donald's death, but there wasn't a shred of evidence to prove the claim. Indeed, Gustave had called in some very fine physicians to study Donald's case.

The real reason for Jennifer's antagonism to Gustave could lie in the fact that the present owner of Stanbridge Manor was selling the premises piecemeal, something that no previous Stanbridge had done in half a dozen generations. Perhaps Gustave needed money, but that didn't square it with Jennifer.

However, all that was over. Roger, the youngest brother, had returned after striking it rich in a Mexican mine. Having cash to spare, he was spending it to preserve the homestead that would some day be his. But much though he honored the family tradition, Roger was having a hard time with the ghosts.

Reporters cagily intimated that Gustave secretly believed in the ghosts and dreaded them, his argument to the contrary being to offset Jennifer's exaggerated faith in the family specters. As for Roger, he was admittedly puzzled, wishfully wanting the situation to be cleared.

There was to be a ghost hunt.

Reading that fact, Cranston laid the newspaper aside, picked up his cane and limped from the club to a waiting limousine. Riding to an apartment house, Cranston turned on the radio while the chauffeur was

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

entering the building to ring a bell.

Soon a girl arrived. She was an attractive brunette, keen of eye and manner. Her name was Margo Lane and she had known Lamont Cranston long enough to understand his moods. Seeing him concerned with the radio news, Margo simply entered the car and listened as the chauffeur started to some destination.

Over the air came startling news.

Gustave Stanbridge had yielded to the combined persuasion of his brother Roger and Dr. Torrance. Stanbridge Manor was to become the ground for a ghost hunt, with reporters present during the weird quest. The hunt was to be handled by a psychic investigator named Dunninger, long famous as a ghost breaker.

Margo gave an exclamation as this word came through.

"I've heard of Dunninger!" expressed Margo. "Why, he's the man who has offered a huge award for any spirit phenomena that he cannot explain or duplicate!" (ED. NOTE: – This offer of Joe Dunninger's still stands. No one, to date, has been able to meet this challenge.)

"An award that no one has ever collected," added Cranston with a calm smile, "and probably never will."

"You mean that the ghosts of Stanbridge Manor aren't real?"

"They could hardly be, Margo" – Cranston's smile had become cryptic – "because if they were, I would certainly not be sending you to visit them."

"Sending – me?"

Margo's query was split by a gasp that combined amazement with horror. In reply, Cranston nodded.

"Clyde Burke is covering for the Classic," he explained. "They're letting him include a secretary's services on his expense sheet. You're elected, Margo.

The car was stopping in front of the Classic building. Looking up at the offices of New York's most sensational newspaper, Margo repressed a brief attack of jitters. Since Clyde was going to Stanbridge Manor, Margo couldn't very well refuse. Both Clyde and Margo happened to be agents of The Shadow; what went for one, went for all.

Lips tightened, Margo stepped from the limousine. As the door swung shut, she turned and let her face relax into a smile, as she queried:

"What about you, Lamont? You'll be there, won't you?"

From the moving car came a strange, suppressed tone, the echo of a weird, sinister laugh that didn't seem to issue from Cranston's immobile lips, though it could have come from nowhere else. The limousine had turned the corner before Margo Lane realized the full significance of that sibilant token.

It meant that if Stanbridge Manor proved lacking in family ghosts, it would none the less receive a spectral visitant.

The Shadow!

## CHAPTER VI. AT THE MANOR

BY daylight, Stanbridge Manor looked decrepit rather than fearsome, yet Margo Lane disliked the place the moment she saw it. The house was ugly, its sprawly wings out of proportion to its low two stories. Rather than improving the architecture, the watchtower made it look worse, for the tower itself appeared to be something that had been stuck in place as an afterthought.

Even when Clyde Burke drove his car under the porte-cochere, Margo felt no sensation of dread. She thought she would experience it when they went into the house, but the interior proved to be quite pleasant. In the afternoon, the great hall caught the full sunlight and looked very cheery, while the burning logs in the fireplace added a cozy effect.

Clyde was affably received by some fellow reporters, who promptly introduced him to Dr. Torrance. Next came the members of the Stanbridge family and to Margo they were somewhat disappointing. Gustave looked like a man who was only slightly worried; Jennifer seemed a kindly old lady; while Roger was quite as affable as the reporters. Certainly there was nothing sinister about any of the three, at this first meeting.

As for Wiggam, the former caretaker showed every mark of integrity, while Hector, attired in a fresh white coat, was all that a family servant should be. Margo was beginning to take the ghost hunt very lightly, when Clyde introduced her to the chief participant, the celebrated Dunninger.

Instantly Margo was impressed.

There was something about Dunninger that promised results. He was a tall man, with dark eyes that fixed steadily on everyone he met. He seemed to be weighing this house in terms of people, as a preliminary to his search for ghosts. When he spoke, his tone was firm, direct. He was asking questions concerning the house, its history, and the reported manifestations, as though such queries were vital to the coming probe.

Finished with questions, Dunninger opened his investigator's kit and everyone crowded up to view its contents. Dunninger explained the purpose of various items as he placed them on a table.

FIRST there was a steel measuring tape, for checking the exact dimensions of rooms and passages, the initial step for uncovering secret hiding places in old houses. Along with the tape went balls of string and sticks of varicolored chalk, to aid the same general purpose, since measurements could be made with string, particularly around corners, and chalk marks used to identify the points of measurement.

There were some heavy fish weights, by which the string could be transformed into a plumb line, for vertical measurements. Another very useful item was a carpenter's level, Dunninger explaining that in certain houses, a slight tilt of a floor could account for a considerable space at the other side of the house.

To illustrate this, Dunninger used a pencil and a sketch pad, also part of his equipment, to make a long V lying on its side, one arm of the V representing a down-slanting ceiling, the other an uptilted floor above it. He had run across just such an arrangement in another old house that he had investigated.

Next, Dunninger produced a flask of mercury and poured the silvery liquid into a small bowl. Apparently the mercury was to serve as another agent for determining levels, but Dunninger explained that it had an added purpose. Placed anywhere in the house, the mercury could be watched for tremors. Should it show any, it would indicate that someone was moving along the floor in that vicinity, thus making the mercury vibrate.

It was evident from Dunninger's accent on the word "someone" that he was thinking in terms of something more substantial than a ghost. This was proven when Dunninger brought out three pairs of huge felt slippers,

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

large enough to slide over a person's shoes. He stated that should occasion demand, he would let some of the reporters put on the slippers and move to certain portions of the house.

Travel in such slippers being absolutely noiseless, this would be a perfect way to trap a "ghost" that happened to be a human prowler.

There were many other things in Dunninger's kit: brush and graphite for developing fingerprints; movie cameras geared for remote control; other cameras for still pictures, fitted with odd gadgets; all the materials, even to black curtains, needed for dark-room development; also packages containing films of special type.

If any ghost, living or dead, hoped to slip past Dunninger, it would be living up to its spooky reputation and more.

About ready to set up his equipment, Dunninger took time out to draw a rough floor plan of Stanbridge Manor. Having already gone over the premises with Dr. Torrance, he was able to make a very satisfactory sketch.

On the ground floor, the great hall was the central apartment, serving as a living room. Entering from the front, there was a stairway directly to the right, going up to the second floor. In the deep left corner of the living hall was the doorway leading into the dining room. Around through the dining room was a door leading into the kitchen, which was directly behind the hall, but not connected with it. From a corner of the kitchen, back stairs went up to the second floor.

So much for the left wing of the house. To the right of the hall, a passage went under the stairs and ran directly into a much longer passage, set at right angles to the first. This long passage ran the full length of the house, from front to back. Starting from the front, there was a door on the right, leading into an overstuffed parlor, seldom used.

Near the rear of the passage, on the left, was a door into a storeroom, which had once connected with the kitchen, but which had been partitioned off, with a very solid and permanent wall. Farther back was a doorway on the right, leading into a music room behind the parlor.

Both parlor and music room had been living quarters when the Stanbridge family was larger.

At the very end of the passage was another doorway on the left. This led outside and it was the back door that Jennifer used when she made her pilgrimages to the cemetery.

Now the important feature of all this was that no one entering the back door could possibly reach the second floor except by coming through the great hall, either to reach the front stairway or take the long trip around through the kitchen to gain the back stairs. In brief, the entire wing on the right was isolated from the rest of the ground floor.

ON the second floor, the stairs coming up struck right into a passage, except for a little hallway just to the left of the stairs, where there was a small writing table and a cloak rack. This passage ran above the rear of the great hall below.

There were two doorways on the left, opening into bedrooms above the great hall. There were two on the right, one into a bedroom over the storeroom, another into a bedroom over the kitchen. At the end was a door into a small bedroom above the front half of the dining room. The passage took a turn and led to an isolated bedroom, reached through a door on the left, at the very end of the passage. This was Hector's room, over the back half of the dining room.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

A few other features were important. First, the back stairs came up between the two bedrooms over the kitchen and storeroom respectively. Above the passage of the ground-floor right wing was the stairway leading up to the tower. Also, there was a room above the ground-floor parlor, covering the front half of the passage as well.

There was no rear room upstairs, where the right wing was concerned. Instead, there was a second-floor veranda, reached from the rear windows of the front room. Only it was impossible to reach the veranda by that route, because all of the windows were barred, as with the rest of the house.

This was called the Green Room and it was a guest room, as was the Blue Room at the other end of the passage. The two front rooms belonged to Gustave and Roger respectively. The room above the kitchen was Jennifer's. The room just over the storeroom was a show place. It was called the Colonial Room because it had belonged to the original Stanbridge and was still furnished in its original style.

HAVING pointed out every feature of the floor plans, Dunninger stated that he would next check the dimensions, with the reporters aiding him. He first inquired if any of the residents knew of any secret places in the house, only to receive emphatic headshakes from Gustave and Jennifer.

The only Stanbridge who looked doubtful was Roger. He remarked that he had left the manor at the tender age of twelve, when sent to boarding school, and had not returned until recently. But Roger had always believed that the old mansion must have possessed its quota of secret rooms or passages. Unconvinced to the contrary, Roger stared hard at his brother and sister as he commented that he believed there were such hiding spots.

"An old wives tale," snapped Gustave, testily. "As the owner of Stanbridge Manor, I should know!"

"Say rather an old nurse's tale," inserted Jennifer. "I remember your old nurse, Roger. She feared the ghosts of this manor and tried to convince herself that they did not exist. So she blamed it on the house, making the absurd claim that people could sneak around through the walls."

Roger looked at old Hector, who shook his head as if he believed neither in ghosts nor passages. That left only Wiggam to whom Roger turned appealingly.

"What do you think, Wiggam?"

"I really don't know, sir," replied the old caretaker. "Whatever we Wiggams know or believe, always comes directly from the head of the Stanbridge household."

"And I happen to be the head of the family," stormed Gustave. "Did I ever mention ghosts or passages to you, Wiggam?"

"Never, sir," returned Wiggam. "I can take oath to it."

Gustave looked around the group triumphantly. Turning on his heel, Roger went through the arch under the front stairs to reach the passage leading to the storeroom. When he returned, the reporters had finished measuring the great hall, under Dunninger's supervision.

Roger was carrying a hammer and chisel, while lesser tools were poking from his pockets. Giving Gustave a sharp look that included Jennifer, Roger addressed the group.



## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"If you find any suspicious spot," declared Roger, "you are welcome to tear it open, in wall, floor or ceiling. I have already spent money in repairing the mansion and I am willing to stand any further expense."

Handing the tools to Wiggam, Roger suggested that the reporters continue with their measurements, to which Dunninger agreed. He was busy at present marking chalk lines along the fireplace, so Roger turned around and conducted the reporters to the right wing of the house.

Margo went with them to write down the measurement. They started with the passage, where Roger asked Clyde for a piece of chalk, to mark the floor at each length of the tape. The chalk proved unnecessary, because the tape stretched the entire way, registering the length of the passage as forty feet, six inches.

Returning the chalk to Clyde, Roger took the tape into the parlor and placed the tape end against the front wall. Clyde drew the tape box to the rear of the room and checked the distance at exactly twenty feet. Eagerly Roger suggested that they measure the music room, to learn how the two tallied.

They tallied exactly. The music room was just twenty feet from front to back. The extra six inches of the passage accounted for the wall between them.

"Nothing wrong there," decided Clyde, while Margo was writing down the data. "What comes next, the storeroom?"

Nodding, Roger stepped into the storeroom, only to turn back and plant the coiled tape in Clyde's hand.

"You measure the storeroom, Burke," suggested Roger, "while I go around to the kitchen and tap the wall. The two rooms used to connect, years ago. Gustave said they were walled up so the house could be heated more easily. I want to know if he is right."

Clyde had just finished measuring the storeroom when Roger began to thump the kitchen wall, which sounded solid enough. The next step was to measure the kitchen and check the combined length by the breadth of the great hall. Seeing the tool box in the storeroom, Clyde looked for another tape, but there wasn't any, so he decided to continue the measurements one by one.

It was a slow process, but Dunninger didn't seem to mind. He was busy, not only with chalk and tape, but with other items that he intended to place about the house. As they went through the mansion, making careful measurements, they kept crossing Dunninger's path, and Margo gained the idea that the psychic investigator preferred to keep the others occupied while he was preparing special arrangements of his own.

Something special would certainly be needed. Storeroom and kitchen had checked properly with the great hall, less another six inches for an intervening wall. Upstairs, the measurements were clicking in the same exact style. Dusk was approaching and so far there wasn't a thing wrong with Stanbridge Manor.

It seemed that Dunninger, the ghost hunter, would have to wait until the spooks appeared, before he could begin to track them. Ghosts weren't apt to arrive until after dark, a thought that gave Margo a trifling shudder.

What repressed the shudder was Margo's recollection that The Shadow, too, would visit Stanbridge Manor after dark!

## CHAPTER VII. HOUR OF GHOSTS

THE conductor of the evening train stared at the ticket which bore the name "Willow Glen." Next, he took a close look at the man who had given him the ticket. The man was calm-faced, distinguished in appearance,

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

even to evening clothes.

The conductor decided that this passenger must have come from New York and changed to his present attire in a drawing room on board the limited before he transferred to the branch train at the junction. This supposition was justified by the fact that the passenger carried a sizable suitcase with him.

Noting the conductor's stare, the passenger lifted his eyebrows in slightly questioning fashion.

"Excuse me, mister," said the conductor. "I was just wondering if you'd picked the right station. Willow Glen is a picnic grounds. People don't go there in evening clothes, even in the picnic season."

The calm passenger smiled.

"Don't you ever have passengers to Willow Glen at this time of the year?"

"Had one the other night," admitted the conductor. "Only he was an old fellow with shaggy hair. Looked like he was going over the hill to the poorhouse. That's where the road from Willow Glen does lead, come to think of it."

Lamont Cranston let his lips straighten.

"I know," he declared calmly. "That is where I am going, too."

It didn't sound logical to the conductor, considering that Cranston represented wealth, both in manner and attire. As if to change the subject, Cranston suggested:

"Tell me some more about the old man."

The conductor gave a better description than he realized. Not for a moment did he suspect that the old man of the other night could have been Carl Dorthan, whose picture had appeared in many newspapers.

Like most everyone else, the conductor believed that Dorthan was dead, so cleverly had the embezzler covered up his tracks, leaving a scapegoat named Goodwin to take the blame for his crimes. Yet the conductor, despite himself, was describing Dorthan, at least to Cranston's satisfaction.

Shaggy hair stood for a wig, in The Shadow's language. A muffler would suffice to cover Dorthan's rather conspicuous chin. The crouch was just another symbol of faked age on Dorthan's part. Most important, however, was the conductor's statement that the "poor old fellow" kept gripping his satchel like everything he owned was in it.

That stood for the hundred thousand dollars that Dorthan had carried with him to his rendezvous at Stanbridge Manor, the place where The Shadow hoped to also uncover a couple of other swindlers named Crispin and Freer.

"I'm glad to hear about the old man," declared Cranston, with a solemn nod. "He happens to be my uncle."

The conductor gawked.

"Your uncle!"

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"That's right," assured Cranston. "An independent old chap. Doesn't like it because I've been supporting him. So every few months he packs up and scuds for a poorhouse. Clever, the way he chooses them, but I always find him.

"My office keeps contact with all the poorhouses in the country. We notify them whenever my uncle disappears. When we locate him, I have to call personally to collect him. He won't go home with anyone but myself."

The locomotive was whistling for Willow Glen. The conductor shook his head as he pulled the bell cord for the stop. Picking up his suitcase, Cranston clapped a hand on the conductor's shoulder.

"Next time you see my uncle," suggested Cranston, "just say to him: 'Ebenezer Throckmorton, your nephew, Clarence, won't like it when he learns you've run away. Go right home or I'll have to tell him where you are.' That will send him."

The conductor was still nodding, when the train stopped. He saw Cranston alight, look about, then lay his suitcase aside to light a cigarette as though expecting a car to come for him from the poorhouse.

As soon as the train pulled out, Cranston opened his suitcase and disappeared into the cloaked personality of The Shadow. A low laugh stirred the darkness, as The Shadow put the suitcase under the station platform. Then, with only a slight swish to mark his departure, The Shadow started along the path that led to Willow Glen, with a by-route to Stanbridge Manor.

MEANWHILE, Dunninger had completed his preparations at the mansion. The last place examined was the watchtower, where the alleged ghost had appeared. But there wasn't anything wrong about the tower. The landing at the head of the stairs was solid under foot and the tower itself was innocent. After drawing the landing door shut, Dunninger examined it and agreed that it had probably been properly barred.

The same applied to the door at the bottom of the stairs. After closing it and sealing it with special tape that formed part of his equipment kit, Dunninger stepped into the old Colonial Room, to examine the antique furniture.

Wondering what the furniture had to do with ghosts, Margo soon learned that the answer was nothing. It merely happened that Dunninger was interested in antiques and was taking a short recess from his ghost-hunting activities. Having mentioned the fact, Dunninger looked about the room itself.

The room had a closet in the rear corner, directly under the stairs leading up to the tower. The top of the closet was flat to start, but it sloped down frontward, to match the angle of the stairs. Clyde and another reporter had measured the closet and found its proportions quite large. Checking the figures, Dunninger found them satisfactory and led the way from the Colonial Room.

Downstairs they found Gustave chatting with Roger, both politely avoiding any controversy regarding the mansion or its ghosts. Dr. Torrance was talking to Wiggam, while Hector, wearing his customary white coat, was bringing a cup of tea to Jennifer. Seeing Margo, the old lady invited the girl to have a cup of tea; seating herself at the table near the fire, Margo saw something that roused her curiosity.

It was Jennifer's planchette.

"Why, I've seen one of those," began Margo. "Only it was different –"

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"You saw a ouija board, my dear," inserted Jennifer. "This is a planchette. With it, the spirits write messages. Come Miss Lane, let us place our hands upon the planchette and learn if Mr. Dunninger can explain whatever happens."

As she spoke, Jennifer threw a challenging side glance at Dunninger, who spoke in reply.

"I can explain what happens beforehand," declared Dunninger. "Whatever the planchette writes will be the expression of your subconscious thought. Without realizing it, you will let your hand guide the wheeled pencil."

"Nonsense," retorted Jennifer. "I shall be very careful to press my fingers lightly, while Miss Lane does the same. We shall ask the spirits to tell us what causes strange things to happen in Stanbridge Manor."

"There is no need to ask the spirits," said Dunninger. "All we need to do is examine all possible causes one by one. To begin with, noises in old houses are often produced by some —"

Abruptly, Dunninger paused. He was looking straight at Margo, who was gazing back to prove that she, at least, would not cheat with the planchette. At that moment, the heart-shaped board began to move, and Jennifer raised one hand from it to wag her finger at Dunninger, while she queried:

"You see?"

The planchette stopped. For the first time, Margo looked at the paper beneath it expecting to see nothing but a scrawl. A gasp left her lips as she observed a word upon the paper.

The word was: "Rats."

Angrily, Jennifer seized the planchette and the loose papers and stormed upstairs. She must have left the items on the table in the little hall, for she came downstairs immediately, though she ignored the group by the fireplace. Dunninger had turned away and Margo was speaking in an amazed undertone to Clyde.

"I must have written it," confessed Margo. "When Dunninger started to say what could cause noises in old houses, I thought of rats. I must have guided the planchette without knowing that I did it."

"Which is exactly what Dunninger said," reminded Clyde. "Old Jennifer has been cheating herself for years, but doesn't know it."

If anything, the planchette incident was helpful. At first it didn't seem so, because Jennifer suddenly announced that she would have nothing more to do with persons that doubted the existence of the spirits. She was going to her room, without the usual ceremony of visiting Donald's grave.

Promptly, Dunninger turned Jennifer's decision to advantage. He said that every person present was free to do exactly as desired; that the more normally the household conducted itself, the more likely the manifestations were to occur.

This proved helpful to old Hector. The servant quavered that he was very tired, because of serving supper to so many guests. So Dunninger agreed that Hector could retire when it so pleased him.

As for the rest, Dunninger suggested that a few should get some early sleep in order to relieve others later. His plan was to have a committee on hand during the entire night, with headquarters in the great hall.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Though he had been given the Blue Room at the left of the second floor, Dunninger intended to stay up all night. That didn't apply to Margo, who was to sleep in the Green Room above the old parlor where the reporters had taken over. So Margo decided to turn in early, on the theory that things probably wouldn't happen until later.

GOING up to the Green Room, Margo gained a real surprise. She expected the room to be spooky, but it wasn't. For one thing, it had electric lights, which didn't apply to the dining room or kitchen, though there were a few in the great hall. So Margo decided to go to bed and gain a proper sleep before her turn came to keep watch.

After all, the room was very homey, with the drawn shades hiding the barred windows. While she undressed, Margo kept pretending that she was somewhere other than Stanbridge Manor, the reputed haunt of ghosts. About to get into bed, she placed her slippers and dressing gown on a handy chair; then, extinguishing the floor lamp, she decided to raise a window.

The bars weren't visible outside the window, because the cloudy night was almost pitch-black. That situation changed when two lights suddenly flashed long beams from the outer corners of the house. At first the effect was frightening; then Margo realized that the beams were from flashlights, carried by men who had gone outside to look for prowlers, a process that formed part of Dunninger's plan.

What Margo really didn't like was the prolonged wail that followed the appearance of the flashlights, a whine that was definitely spooky. It took the girl a full minute to realize that the sound wasn't the anguished cry of a protesting ghost. It was merely the night wind, swooping about the old mansion and whistling through the weaving trees.

That question settled, Margo managed to scoff at other sounds. She heard a muffled thump that she decided could be nothing more than a banging shutter. Creeps that seemed to vaguely approach and dwindle, were evidence of creaky beams throughout the old house, since Margo was unable to locate the sounds exactly. Such noises always accompanied a tumultuous wind.

Watching the flashlights, Margo saw them focus at a spot away from the house. Apparently the two men had spotted something, for they kept the lights fixed. Gazing from her high vantage point, Margo was sure she saw an elusive shape weave away from the combined glow.

It was the hour of ghosts, the exact time at which manifestations had formerly occurred in Stanbridge Manor. Yet Margo Lane was smiling to herself as she blithely left the window and slid into the comfortable old-fashioned bed.

Margo was sure that the wandering figure of the darkness was The Shadow, the living antidote for ghosts as well as crime!

### **CHAPTER VIII. ONE GHOST LESS**

IT was fortunate for The Shadow's plans that only Margo was looking from the level of the second floor. The sudden blaze of the flashlights, sweeping away from the house, caught him as he was making a circuit through the cemetery, and only the handy shelter of a tombstone saved him from being observed.

As he swung behind the stone, The Shadow grabbed its sides. The lights were wavering uncertainly as though their owners mistook the tall grass for a moving figure, so The Shadow decided to maintain his present vantage spot.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

There was only one flaw, which The Shadow should have remembered. The tombstone tilted when he gripped it, exactly as one had with Zeph Blaine.

The difference was that this tombstone didn't topple. It went back less than a foot, then stopped as though a brake had been applied to it. Not that The Shadow had removed his weight; there wasn't time for him to do so. The stone stopped of its own accord, holding The Shadow with it.

Flashlights found the tombstone. Even at that distance, the men could see that the monument was canted. But they didn't move away from the house; instead, they let the flashlights spread, then come slowly together, again, so there wouldn't be a possible chance for anyone to sidle away from the tilted stone.

The Shadow foresaw exactly what they were about. The moment that the lights spread, he left his perch and moved straight back through the darkness. So swiftly did he go that when the lights converged again, he was beyond their range.

Keeping the lights on the tombstone, the two men approached it. By then, The Shadow was far enough away to circle around them. He was right behind them when they reached the tilted stone; though their voices were low and puzzled, The Shadow recognized them as belonging to Roger and Wiggam.

"Odd about that tombstone, Wiggam," observed Roger. "Do you suppose the wind could have tipped it?"

"Possibly, sir," replied Wiggam. "But may I remind you that we have used the time allotted for our inspection?"

"That's right, Wiggam. We were to go all the way around the house and return by the front door. Very well, let us continue. We can report the matter of this tombstone for the record."

Since Roger and Wiggam were going around by the kitchen, The Shadow took the path by the other wing. He kept close to the wall of the house, feeling his way along it by the shingles of which it was constructed. In the shelter of the porte-cochere, The Shadow waited until Roger and Wiggam arrived. When they went into the house, he followed by the door.

As a mode of entry, The Shadow personally preferred the front door, because it gave access to all the house. He was simply awaiting an opportunity to use this ideal route.

In the great hall, Dunninger and the reporters were hearing what Roger and Wiggam had to say. The tombstone was possible evidence of prowlers and would therefore nullify any manifestations outside the house, but that was unimportant. Tonight, Dunninger was concentrating upon events indoors.

Not only had Dunninger taped the door that led to the tower; he had done the same with the back door that Jennifer so frequently used. To make sure that all was intact, Dunninger sent the reporters to examine the doors in question. Those who went upstairs were to continue down through the kitchen and around through the dining room.

Roger and Wiggam decided to go along, one with each group, but Gustave preferred to remain by the fire and debate the subject of ghosts with Torrance. While the pair were thus engaged, Dunninger stood before the fire, glancing occasionally from one man to the other.

It was during this interlude that The Shadow tried the front door. Finding it unlatched, he opened it. Outer blackness seemed to filter through space too narrow for a human figure to navigate. As softly as it had opened, the door closed behind The Shadow.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Neither Gustave nor Torrance noted the motion of the door, though they were in positions where they could have. As for Dunninger, his back was toward the door, making it impossible for him to observe what happened. Nevertheless, the door had hardly closed before Dunninger turned about.

Whether the investigator possessed some psychic power of his own, or had detected a faint breeze from the door, was a debatable question. The important thing was that Dunninger turned, not in the direction of the door, but toward the higher portion of the stairway. From there his eye ran down the steps, viewing them through the rails of the banister, spaces that received light from a lamp in the little upstairs hall.

Had The Shadow gone up those stairs, Dunninger would have glimpsed the passing blackness, thus detecting an unidentified presence without the aid of a mercury bowl. But The Shadow did not ascend the stairs. He stopped at their turn, only a few steps above the ground floor. There, shrouded by thick darkness beyond the range of light, he remained so motionless that he was in effect invisible.

The others were returning, some from the arch beneath the stairs, the others from the dining room. Both reported that the doors were still sealed, but the group that came through the kitchen remarked that Hector had forgotten to wash the dishes. The oversight pleased Dunninger, since it placed everything in the same status as the night when the last manifestations occurred.

"We have three possibilities to consider," declared Dunninger. "The first, which I reject, is that paranormal entities broke the dishes in the kitchen and threw nails down those stairs."

As he said "stairs" Dunninger gestured in the direction mentioned. Not once had his gaze left the upper steps.

"By paranormal entities," inquired Torrance, "do you mean ghosts?"

"In a sense, yes," replied Dunninger, "though the term is hardly apt, since it applies to nonexistent creatures."

"But those nails!" exclaimed Gustave, suddenly. "Only a ghost could have tossed them!"

"Only a ghost?"

There wasn't a change in Dunninger's expression as he put the question. He was standing with his hands behind him, his back to the fire. He didn't budge from his position nor move a muscle, yet at that moment something skimmed down from the ceiling and struck the floor in the center of the room.

Clyde picked up the object. It proved to be a fair-sized bolt. While Gustave stared, Clyde looked inquiringly at Dunninger. Unquestionably the investigator had just demonstrated his ability at duplicating spirit phenomena, but there was no way of explaining how Dunninger had done it.

"Another possibility, and a real one," continued Dunninger, "is that persons living in this house are responsible for the supposed phenomena. If they are" – his eyes were still fixed on the stair top, as though he pictured Jennifer and Hector as the persons in question – "it is quite unlikely that they are guilty of conscious fraud. Sometimes a long residence in a house like this produces a hypnotic effect upon the occupants."

The Shadow saw Roger glance at Gustave, who winced. There wasn't a doubt that the elder of the two Stanbridge brothers was showing the effects of too long a stay in the weird mansion.

"The final possibility," concluded Dunninger, "is equally acceptable. It is simply that certain unknown outsiders have been entering the house in order to play the ghost."

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"But that's impossible!" expressed Roger. "I'll admit that I believed it until this afternoon, but we have thoroughly measured the house for secret passages without result. There is no way anyone could enter – except by the front door."

As Dunninger repeated the phrase, he seemed to nod agreement. The reason was that he was letting his gaze travel down the stairs until it reached the lower turn where darkness still obscured The Shadow. Then:

"The front door would be a good mode of entry," decided Dunninger, "but I can assure you that if anyone did come in that way, he could not yet have reached the second floor, which is also the only way by which he could travel to the kitchen."

Inasmuch as Dunninger's position blocked off the door to the dining room, the statement held weight. But no one, not even Clyde, suspected that Dunninger was treating the front door question seriously.

Only The Shadow knew.

TO a degree, the situation pleased The Shadow. Dunninger was keeping it static, almost as though he recognized that a hidden presence could represent a fellow investigator using tactics different than his own. All that The Shadow hoped was that something would soon break the deadlock.

Something did.

Down from the second floor came a rattle of unexpected objects. Not nails this time, but stones; small ones, but of various colors and shapes. As they hit, they bounced, making such a racket that there seemed a much greater quantity than a mere handful.

Nevertheless, a single hand had flung them.

Human or ghostly, that hand betrayed itself to The Shadow. He was located where he could see the top of the stairs, though he himself was invisible. At the first clatter, The Shadow looked up in time to catch a glimpse of the hand as it whipped from sight.

Naturally, The Shadow did not budge from his position, nor did Dunninger.

Everyone else in the great hall was excited, ready to dash for the front stairs. Dunninger raised a hand to restrain them and at the same time glanced toward a shelf at the extreme rear of the hall. On that shelf was the mercury bowl.

The silvery liquid was registering a vibration. It meant that someone more bodily than a ghost was moving in the upper passage, the slight jar carrying down through the wall. Then, as the mercury jiggled slightly, Dunninger interpreted its action with the words:

"We shall hear from the kitchen next."

Hear from the kitchen they did, when the whole table load of dishes perished with a mighty crash. The huge smash was the one thing Dunninger awaited. Though he suspected The Shadow's presence, he knew that it did not account for either of the manifestations. Therefore Dunninger welcomed the presence of the cloaked figure on the stairs.

It meant that The Shadow would have a head start toward trapping the ghost. So instead of starting for the front stairs, Dunninger waved others in that direction, while he turned to lead the rest around through the



## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

dining room.

Dunninger's gesture was as good as a cue. With silent speed, The Shadow started up the front stairs knowing he could reach the top before the others gained the lower landing. Should anyone be coming up the back stairs from the kitchen, The Shadow would certainly be in time to block him.

Unfortunately, The Shadow encountered opposition.

As he reached the stair top, he saw Jennifer coming toward him. To avoid complications, The Shadow wheeled into the little hallway just to the left of the stairs. There was a coat rack beside the writing table and Jennifer's cape was hanging on it. Since the little hall was lighted, The Shadow made a quick twist behind the rack.

From that position, The Shadow could still spot anyone who might pass the little hall. He saw Jennifer come by, to meet the herd that thundered up the front stairs.

"It's Hector's work!" stormed Jennifer. "I saw him go down the back stairs to the kitchen!"

As she turned to point, Jennifer gave a stare. Hector was coming along the upstairs passage from the direction of his own room. Irked by the accusation he was wheezing that he had heard Jennifer leave her own room earlier.

At that moment, Margo stepped from the Green Room, opening its door outward. She was wearing her slippers and dressing gown, but the latter was merely wrapped around her, because in her haste, she had been unable to find the second sleeve.

Swinging the door shut behind her, Margo stared as Jennifer faced the group anew. Forgetting her brief charge against Hector, old Jennifer pronounced in sepulchral tone:

"Then it was the ghost! And it must have gone through there!"

Crazily, the old lady pointed to the door past Margo. Despite herself, Margo turned. As she did, a vague white figure loomed from the depths of the Green Room, to lunge at her through the doorway!

As Margo shrieked, The Shadow made a quick swoop from beside the stairs, not to reach Margo, but to stop Gustave, who was arriving with the shotgun. Catching the weapon by a reach across the man's shoulders, The Shadow diverted it above Margo's head, which wasn't difficult, for Margo, with a backward step, had tripped over her trailing dressing gown and was landing hard upon the floor.

Gustave pulled the trigger.

From where she sat, Margo heard the gun roar above her head. The report was followed by a smash that resembled the breaking dishes.

There was one ghost less in Stanbridge Manor. One ghost less, because it wasn't a ghost at all.

What Margo had seen was her own reflection in a full length mirror that formed that front of the door. In his excitement, Gustave had aimed at the same image.

Of course the ghost had dropped away when Margo sat down in the opposite direction. Accordingly, Gustave would have lowered his aim if The Shadow hadn't driven the gun upward.

Thanks to The Shadow, the ghost was banished, and Margo Lane was still alive!

### CHAPTER IX. WHITE AND BLACK

As the gun recoiled, The Shadow added a quick tripping action to help it carry Gustave backward. Hitting the floor, Gustave attracted so much attention that The Shadow escaped notice. He was at the head of the front stairs, which the rest had passed, and by a quick side twist, he dropped below the upper steps.

From there, The Shadow caught a glimpse of Hector's white coat, moving toward the door of the Colonial Room, which was open. Hector must have closed the door, for a few moments later, he was visible again, this time near the head of the back stairs.

Beyond the clustered persons in the upstairs passage, Hector was beckoning to Dunninger and the rest who had gone through the kitchen. Finding nothing there except broken dishes, they had completed their roundabout trail by coming up the back stairs. While the first arrivals were explaining matters to the newcomers, The Shadow glided down the front stairs and out the front door, latching it behind him to prevent the entry of any rival intruders.

While Dunninger was investigating matters indoors, The Shadow intended to patrol the outside of the house.

SINCE tragedy had been averted, the mirror door provided some comic relief to an otherwise tense situation. A good many of the doors in the mansion had mirrors, on one side or the other, but Margo hadn't happened to notice this one.

The door was open when Margo had been shown into the Green Room, hence its mirror was against the passage wall. In closing the door behind her, Margo, naturally, couldn't have seen the mirror, because it was on the outside.

As for Gustave, he had forgotten all about the mirror, at least so he claimed. Though he really owed apologies to Margo, he was extending them to every one else. Margo was just as glad, because it gave her a chance to rise from her sprawl and get her arms into the sleeves of the dressing gown.

Rather ruefully, Margo felt that the fault was her own. If she'd waited longer in the first place, she could have put the gown on properly. In that case, it would have fully covered the white nightie that had shown enough of itself to make Margo mistake her own reflection for a ghost.

Having regained her composure, Margo found that she needed her notebook. Though everyone agreed that Gustave had blasted the mirror with his shot gun, testimony conflicted on all other points, so it was necessary to record whatever each witness had to say. The person who had the most to say was Gustave, so Dunninger questioned him first.

Haggard of face, quavering of tone, Gustave insisted that a ghost had figured in the case. He wasn't thinking of the stones that had rattled down the stairs, nor the dishes that broke in the kitchen. What bothered Gustave was the fact that something had grabbed his shotgun when he tried to fire.

From Gustave's description, the thing was a cross between an octopus and a gorilla, having the grip of the former and the strength of the latter. But the hybrid creature was a ghost as well, because it had disappeared as suddenly as it had materialized.

No one agreed with Gustave's statement. The rest simply felt that he had exaggerated the kick he received from the shotgun.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

In contrast to Gustave, Jennifer supplied some remarkably accurate testimony. Though she had lapsed briefly into her favorite theme of ghosts, she was willing to forgo it. Having forgotten that Margo was in the Green Room, Jennifer thought in terms of ghosts when she saw the door swing open, but she was now inclined to revert to a former opinion.

There had been no ghosts tonight.

Ghosts were impossible, according to Jennifer, when a disturbing presence like Dunninger was on hand. Jennifer declared that Hector had played the ghost and she didn't exactly blame him. In fact, it was only right that the servant should have tried to maintain the family tradition under trying circumstances.

Stoutly, Jennifer declared that she had seen Hector go down to the kitchen. Returning, he must have thrown the stones and hurried back to his room. There was one flaw to Jennifer's theory: the crash in the kitchen had come after the throwing of the stones. Letting that pass, Dunninger asked Hector to state his case.

Instead of mentioning Jennifer's mistake, Hector simply denied all culpability on the ground that Jennifer had done the things herself. Considering that Jennifer justified the deeds, Hector did not feel that she would resent the impeachment. He believed that Jennifer had thrown the stones, gone down to the kitchen, dumped the dishes, and come up the back stairs again.

The flaw in this case was that Jennifer was not spry enough for such rapid action. The business of her speedy trip upstairs was something very difficult to credit.

Both Roger and Torrance had gone with Dunninger, but Clyde and Wiggam were among the few who had used the front stairs. None of them told stories exactly alike, but they did correspond satisfactorily. All remembered seeing Jennifer point down the passage as Hector arrived.

They'd looked the other way when the old lady indicated Margo's door. Margo's screech and Gustave's discharge of the shotgun were both described, along with the sprawls the two had taken, but nobody could agree on how much time those incidents had taken.

Dunninger gestured to the door of the Colonial Room and queried:

"Wasn't this open?"

SINCE nobody could remember, Dunninger opened the door himself and went into the ancient room. It proved quite empty, closet and all, so Dunninger suggested that they go down to the great hall and examine the geological specimens that some force had projected.

The stones looked like odd pebbles that might have been gathered anywhere. When Dunninger spread the collection on the table where Jennifer usually kept the planchette, Gustave eyed them closely and suddenly exclaimed:

"They're Donald's!"

Hardly had he blurted those words, before his face went haggard, for Gustave suddenly remembered that he was chiming in with Jennifer's pet claim that Donald's spirit was responsible for things that happened around the manor.

"They do look like Donald's," remarked Roger. "He used to ramble all over the country, collecting odd minerals. Whatever became of them, Gustave?"

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"Jennifer has them!" Gustave's eyes glared through his death-mask face. "She keeps them locked away somewhere."

For a moment, Jennifer frowned. Her eyes gave an accusing glance toward Hector.

"Don't look at Hector," sneered Gustave. "He couldn't have dug up these. It's your work, Jennifer. You wanted us to think that Donald's spirit was around, even though it couldn't be. So you chucked these stones and now that you're afraid we've found you out, you deny it."

Haughtily, Jennifer turned to the stairs, stating that she would soon return. She came back, bringing a square box and handed the key to Dunninger, who unlocked the box. It proved to be nearly full of odd stones resembling those that had spattered down the stairs. When Dunninger asked if he could keep the box a while, Jennifer nodded.

"Donald's spirit would not have taken those," asserted Jennifer. "He is no longer of this world, hence he is not interested in material things. That is all I have to say. Good night."

When Jennifer had gone, Hector began to shift uneasily, fearing that he would have to bear the brunt of all remaining accusations. To even the score, Dunninger told the servant he could retire. Then, in brief style, Dunninger summed the existing evidence.

Reminding the listeners that his business was to explain or duplicate any phenomena, Dunninger declared that nothing had occurred beyond such limits. Either Jennifer or Hector could have been responsible for everything that had happened tonight, thus their mutual accusations were in order.

Everyone seemed willing to agree until Dr. Torrance brought up the question of the dishes, insisting that Jennifer couldn't have reached the second floor in time to alibi herself and that Hector couldn't have gone clear to his own room. In reply, Dunninger invited everyone to the kitchen.

AS on a previous night, the candlestick was lying on the floor, its candle broken like the dishes. Pointing to the table, Dunninger called attention to the fact that its edge was dabbed with thick grease, evidently drippings from candles. Torrance remembered that the candle grease had been there the other night.

Picking up a candle, Dunninger lighted it and applied the flaming wick to the wax on the table edge. After the wax softened, he set the candle there, fixing it firmly. Picking up some larger fragments of chinaware, Dunninger set them in overlapping fashion so that their weight rested against the burning candle. He left the candlestick on the table and told everyone to watch.

After a few minutes, the burning candle began to weaken. Suddenly it yielded and the flock of dishes took a slide, carrying the candle with them. Slanted as they were, the dishes continued right to the floor, smashing what remained of them. To all appearances the candlestick had been dumped with the chinaware.

"So that was it!" exclaimed Roger. "I'd never have guessed the trick myself. Still, the wax on the table edge proved it. Now the question is: who did it, Jennifer or Hector? This stunt would have allowed either of them time to get upstairs and chuck the stones. Of course Jennifer had the box, but Hector might have found the key."

Dunninger simply shrugged as though it didn't matter. Having proven the existence of fraud, his work was done. He was willing to let Jennifer and Hector each have their out at the expense of the other.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"Suppose we go outside," suggested Roger, "and see what we can learn about the tower ghost. That's the only thing that is still unexplained."

The clouds were clearing, bringing a fair show of moonlight, when the group came out by the front door and went beyond the porte-cochere. As they moved back and forth across the dawn, Wiggam pointed suddenly and exclaimed:

"There's the ghost!"

The others joined the caretaker. Wiggam was right; the tower did show a curious shape in white, stooping oddly amid the open work. The thing wavered, but as witnesses watched, they noted that its action was somewhat mechanical.

An increase of the moonlight banished the illusion. From this angle, the trees of the cemetery formed a background behind the tower. Wiggam had chanced upon a spot where the one tree directly behind the tower was a white birch. A long bough sloping up behind the tower was responsible for the ghostly form.

Margo hadn't gone outdoors, because it was too chilly. She heard the facts from Clyde when he returned and set them down in the notebook along with the other data. That done, Margo went back to her room, quite relieved that all was solved.

There was just one thing that brought a brief return of Margo's worry.

From her darkened window, the girl saw figures moving along beside the house. The men weren't carrying flashlights, probably because they didn't need them, now that the moonlight had begun to glow. Turning the corner, the figures went in the direction of the old mausoleum.

Margo decided that they must be some of the reporters, having a look around the grounds. Still, when Clyde returned, the reporters had all been out front, viewing the birch tree ghost.

Then, off in the distant moonlight, Margo saw a figure that should have worried her, though it didn't. It was a fleeting form, so briefly visible that it answered the description of a ghost. But it wasn't white; it was black.

That satisfied Margo. She could even fancy that the whine of the wind was carrying the echoes of an eerie laugh. Such mirth produced shudders from most persons who heard it, but Margo was exempt. To her that weird tone, whether real or imaginary, was a symbol of reassurance.

Margo was sure that The Shadow was still on the scene, ready to solve the remaining shreds of the ghostly manifestations that had suffered so severe a setback.

## CHAPTER X. THE NOTE FROM NOWHERE

THE next day, Dunninger began to collect the apparatus that he had stationed around Stanbridge Manor. The appliances proved to be more varied than anyone had supposed. Among other things, Dunninger gathered in long lengths of wire connected to micrometer devices.

His cameras, too, were all about, hidden in some very surprising places. A small one, for instance, was under the table in the little upstairs hallway where Jennifer had put the planchette and its pad of loose papers. Another was neatly perched within an old grandfather's clock in the Colonial Room.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Only Clyde and Margo witnessed this assembling of Dunninger's devices. It almost seemed that the psychic investigator had marked them as privileged persons among the visitors at Stanbridge Manor. After removing tapes from various doors, Dunninger went over Margo's notes and asked her to type them in duplicate.

Part of the day, Dunninger was busy developing photographs, while Clyde saw to it that nobody disturbed him. In the dark room, he spent some time examining the stones that had bounced down the stairs. He finally returned the box and its contents to Jennifer, but politely kept the other specimens, because Jennifer denied that they were Donald's.

In going over Margo's notes, Dunninger made a few additions, mostly in the form of underlined statements. There was just one point upon which he specially insisted.

"Include the three possibilities," stated Dunninger. "First, that paranormal entities, otherwise ghosts, are accepted in certain circles as a plausible cause of manifestations."

"But not in your circle," put in Margo, with a smile. "Shall I include that statement?"

"Of course," replied Dunninger, "because they have been satisfactorily disproven in this case. Next, emphasize the explanation that I did give; that of persons in the household playing the ghost."

"I'll keep it neutral," nodded Margo. "Shall I mention that it could have been unconscious fraud?"

"Certainly. It could apply to either Jennifer or Hector, especially if both were involved in it. But don't forget the third point; that of outside interference."

Margo added the third point, wondering how much inkling Dunninger had regarding The Shadow's presence. Personally, Margo was convinced that The Shadow must have been the octorilla that had ruined Gustave's aim with the shotgun, but she couldn't understand how Dunninger knew it, considering that he had still been in the kitchen when the gun kicked Gustave about three times as far as it should have.

Late that afternoon, Lamont Cranston arrived in a car, to find if Margo intended to return to New York. It turned out that Margo didn't, because Dunninger planned to stay another evening, through the hour when ghosts were accustomed to appear. The reporters were staying, too, on the hope that something new might happen, so Margo felt that she ought to remain and complete her notes.

Leaving at dusk, Cranston complimented Margo on her fortitude at remaining another night in Stanbridge Manor. In reply, she said that she wouldn't stay unless Clyde did; if he left, she would go along.

AFTER supper, everyone waited for something to happen. Even though Dunninger had removed all of his special equipment, nothing did happen, because tonight the human element was being considered. The human element was divided between Jennifer and Hector. Both remained in the great hall along with the rest.

The ghost hour over, Jennifer announced that she was going to pay a visit to Donald's grave, something that she had neglected on the previous evening. She went upstairs and returned wearing her gray cape. The reporters looked hopefully at Dunninger, thinking he might let them trail Jennifer out through the cemetery, but he shook his head.

When Jennifer returned, Dunninger politely took her cape and carried it upstairs. When he returned, he announced that the ghost hunt was over. He asked Margo to bring down her notes so the reporters could go over them. It was when Margo was coming from the Green Room that she saw something which startled her.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

A door was opening across the hall. It was the door of the Colonial Room and it stopped the moment that Margo observed it. The thing was uncanny, even though Margo could hear laughing voices coming from the floor below. Going over to the door, Margo gripped it and drew it slowly shut. The door continued its motion for a few inches on smooth, silent hinges.

There was a slight breeze in the passage, coming from the Green Room window that Margo had forgotten to close. She decided that it explained the motion of the door, so she went downstairs, and joined the others. When somebody asked jocularly if she had met with any ghosts, Margo mentioned the breeze and said that it had startled her until she realized what caused it. But she said nothing about the moving door.

The door was moving again, though Margo did not know it. Out from the darkened room emerged the most spectral figure that had ever appeared in Stanbridge Manor. The cloaked shape of The Shadow was again at large on these preserves that ghosts no longer haunted!

PAUSING briefly, The Shadow felt the breeze that Margo had noted. Silently, he continued to the little hallway beside the stairs. There, in the glow of the night lamp, he took a sheet of paper from Jennifer's pad and wrote a message on it, in ink from a fountain pen that The Shadow personally carried.

Folding the paper, The Shadow kept it tightly pressed. Advancing to the stair top, he leaned forward and peered below. He could see the group in the great hall, but at his angle above the balcony rail, The Shadow could have remained totally invisible. However, he preferred to reveal his presence, for any who chose to notice it.

The Shadow did it with his eyes. Fixed on the scene below, those optics caught the gleam of the upstairs lamp and reflected it like orbs from outer space. Singular eyes those, fiery spots in blotting blackness, which almost any observer would have classed as token of a ghost.

There was much of the magnetic in The Shadow's burning gaze. Again, the man who sensed the proximity of a strange presence was Dunninger. Over by the fireplace, Dunninger looked upward with a roving glance that ended at the stair top and casually drifted away.

The reason for the drift was that The Shadow's eyes had gone. Instead, his hand momentarily appeared beside the newel post at the stair top. Being gloved in black, the hand revealed itself only as a passing blur that momentarily clouded the rail from which The Shadow's cloaked form had already faded. But the object that the hand released was very visible.

Again, it was a contrast of black and white. The thing that caught Dunninger's gaze was the folded sheet of paper as The Shadow let it flutter from the stair top.

There was something deft in The Shadow's toss. A neat twist of his wrist caused the paper to flip away from the stairs under the ceiling below. There it hovered as though supported by an invisible hand until it drifted toward the center of the room, where it slipped free from the air currents and came downward.

Two persons suddenly saw it: Margo and Jennifer.

Perhaps Dunninger's roving gaze had carried theirs along, but neither realized it. To Margo it seemed that the fluttering paper must have come right through the solid ceiling, while Jennifer thought it had materialized in midair. Both were quite astonished and showed it by their gasps, which attracted the attention of the other persons present.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Men came to their feet to reach excitedly for the mysterious whirligig. Roger was moving from one direction, Wiggam from another, while Clyde and Torrance also had the same idea. Gustave remained seated, shrinking as though from something fearful, while Hector took some backward steps toward the dining room door.

Dunninger, alone, appeared to be indifferent to the paper's arrival. He simply turned and strolled to the rear of the great hall, near the shelf where he had once placed the mercury bowl. There, he turned again, straight toward the fireplace, where the men who sought the fluttering paper had followed it and were stretching like basketball players around a goal, while Gustave shied from their midst.

Flippantly the paper winged upward, away from the seeking hands. It took a long, sideward skim that ended with a final flutter right into Dunninger's waiting hand.

THE effect was uncanny; it seemed that Dunninger had magnetized the winged message. Then the real explanation dawned on Margo as she was leaving her place by the fireplace.

The paper had simply dipped into the warm air rising from the hearth and had shied upward and away. Gauging its probable course, Dunninger had stepped to the proper place to receive it. Now he was unfolding the paper and scanning its blue-inked lines which no one else was in a position to glimpse.

That writing began to vanish word by word, which was the way with messages that The Shadow inscribed in his special ink. Dunninger was stepping toward the group and they all felt sure that he was reading something until he neared them. By then Dunninger was showing the paper openly, since it had gone quite blank, but he was also easing one action into another.

Instead of reading the paper, Dunninger was scrutinizing it against the firelight. He beckoned to others so they could look across—his shoulder and observe the watermark that showed through the paper against the glare of the fire.

"One of the planchette papers," remarked Dunninger. "I examined the loose ones on the pad. The watermark tallies."

"Now will you believe in spirits?" croaked Jennifer. "Only Donald's unseen hand could have folded that paper and sent it down here!"

"Hardly Donald's hand," corrected Dunninger. "He would certainly have favored us with some planchette writing. Here, Burke, take this paper and place it on the rail at the top of the stairs, with the open fold toward the Green Room."

Clyde did as requested. Hardly had he come downstairs again before the paper caught a passing breeze and performed another pirouette down into the great hall. It didn't gyrate as it had before, for its flutter ended short of the fireplace; but the point was proven that the thing could have happened without the assistance of a spirit agency.

Some thought that Dunninger had arranged the trick himself, to show how easily such things could be done. Then, remembering how amazingly he had projected a bolt into the great hall, they decided that Jennifer or Hector had placed the paper. Dunninger could have noticed it when he took the cape upstairs and thus been ready for the paper's fluttering arrival.

Only Margo had a sudden inkling that The Shadow had arranged the ruse. She recalled the mysterious motion of the door on the second floor.



But how could The Shadow have reached the Colonial Room in the first place?

Margo was still debating mentally when people began to leave. The reporters were pleased because they could add the matter of the fluttering paper to their stories. Margo, too, was about to leave, when she caught a glance from Clyde, which meant he was coming back. So Margo announced that she was going to spend another night in Standridge Manor in order to complete her notes.

There would certainly be some further data, for Margo observed that Dunninger was writing something in pencil on the slip of paper that had winged down from the second floor. As he bowed out through the front door, Dunninger laid his hand on Margo's palm, closed her fingers in what seemed to be a modified handshake and undertoned in parting:

"Give this to your friend the ghost."

Cars were pulling away out front when Margo turned to go up to her room. Halfway upstairs, she wondered why she was keeping her hand clenched. Opening it, she found to her surprise that it contained a tightly folded wad of paper.

Dunninger had placed it there during his farewell gesture. It was his reply to the secret message from The Shadow!

### **CHAPTER XI. CRIME COMES HOME**

DURING the hour while she awaited Clyde's return, Margo went over the batch of notes. From them she gained an idea that had not struck her earlier. Though Dunninger had proved his second theory plausible; namely that persons living in the mansion could have produced the manifestations, the real answer might lie elsewhere.

It added to that other theory of persons unknown entering the house and springing the ghost stuff.

Margo was personally sure that The Shadow had dropped the fluttering note from upstairs. He couldn't have arrived there except by some secret way. Whatever the route, it was obvious that other persons could have used it, too.

Where the route was located, proved as puzzling to Margo as why outsiders would want to mingle in the Stanbridge affairs at all. As she studied a copy of the floor plan, Margo could not pick a possible flaw, hence secret entry seemed impossible. As for the outsiders, it seemed utter folly for them to come into the house unless they had something definite to gain.

That thought gave Margo a sudden inspiration.

Perhaps there was treasure in Stanbridge Manor and interlopers were seeking it. In that case, the ghost business would simply be a cover-up for crime!

The treasure idea dwindled as Margo thought it over. If the mansion lacked hiding places, there couldn't be any secret treasure. But the crime angle still seemed plausible, even though Margo racked her mind to find a motive.

Dunninger's departure was an indication. His business was hunting ghosts, not crooks. It struck Margo that the psychic investigator could have scented what was really wrong in Stanbridge Manor and therewith left the rest to The Shadow.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Knowing about The Shadow's remarkable ink, because she herself had received messages written in it, Margo decided that there had originally been a note on the paper. Dunninger must have read it before it faded; hence his reply to The Shadow.

Margo was almost tempted to open the folded paper and learn what it said. Then, deciding against it, she poked the note in a pocket of her dress and went downstairs.

DR. TORRANCE had left for Coledale and Wiggam had gone back to his cottage. Only Gustave and Roger were in the great hall. They were talking over the ghost business, since Jennifer wasn't around to cloud it with absurdities, though in the course of things, the brothers mentioned their sister and her theories.

"It's all very plausible," argued Gustave. "I mean Dunninger's explanation. What happened while he was here could have been done the way he says it was. But Dunninger wasn't with us the other night."

"Neither were Jennifer and Hector," reminded Roger. "Either of them could have been faking then, just as they did last night."

"You think both of them are in it?"

"I don't think it matters. One or the other, it's all the same. If they both want to keep up the silly game, it's all right with me."

Gustave didn't take it as lightly as Roger.

"There were other things," spoke Gustave, hoarsely. "Things I never mentioned. Strange whispers upstairs; footsteps that I followed but couldn't trace. Odd raps, too."

Roger merely shrugged.

"I know that Jennifer and Hector were in their rooms when these things happened," persisted Gustave. "You were in your room, too, Roger, because I looked and found you asleep."

"Your nerves are slipping," argued Roger. "Mine would, too, if I lived too long in this place. Why don't you take a trip, Gustave?"

"And leave Jennifer here?"

"She could go, too. I'd pension Hector off and get some new servants. If I found the place worrying me, I'd close it outright. The ghosts could have it permanently."

Gustave began rubbing his hands as though they were chilly, which was odd because he was very close to the fire and it was crackling brightly. Apparently Gustave was considering Roger's suggestions, but after a while, the elder brother shook his head. He didn't seem to relish leaving Stanbridge Manor.

A sudden thump at the front door caused a quick change in Gustave's expression. He sprang half from his chair as though reverting to his fear of ghosts. Smilingly, Roger opened the door and admitted Clyde. Giving the reporter a welcoming nod, Roger told him he could have the Blue Room.

"Smart of you to come back, Burke," commended Roger. "If anything new happens, you'll have the edge on the other reporters. But I don't think anything is going to happen, so what say we all turn in for the night?"

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

GOING to the Green Room, Margo changed to her dressing gown and waited intently for a knock at the door, since she was sure that Clyde would be anxious to compare notes. At last the tap came, very muffled, and Margo opened the door.

She could scarcely see Clyde because the passage was very black, and Margo wondered why the night lamp wasn't burning in the little hallway beside the stairs where Jennifer always left her cape. Then, as Clyde stepped into the Green Room, the blackness followed him and the light suddenly appeared. A moment later the door was closing as if of its own accord.

Clyde hadn't come alone; The Shadow was with him. Removing his hat and dropping his cloak, he revealed himself as Lamont Cranston.

Margo didn't ask what mode of entry The Shadow had used for this visit. She simply gave him the note from Dunninger. Opening the note, The Shadow read it. An approving laugh whispered from the lips that wore Cranston's slight smile.

The Shadow reached for Margo's notes and went through them very carefully. Margo could see a keen glow in his eyes as he scanned certain paragraphs that the girl had underlined at Dunninger's request

"Our conclusions tally," remarked The Shadow. "My outside observations conform to those that Dunninger recorded indoors. We both checked three ghosts, even though so many were unnecessary."

Clyde stared in wonderment.

"Three ghosts?"

"Call them three men," replied The Shadow, in Cranston's calm tone. "Crispin, Freer and Dorthan. I suppose they all wanted to have their share of the fun, though Crispin and Freer managed it themselves, the night when Dorthan came here."

It still had Clyde wondering.

"Last night they managed their sneak about the time I reached the cemetery," The Shadow continued. "I didn't see them enter, but I gained an inkling. Anyway, the manifestations began immediately afterward. I watched for their exit and observed it."

"But you were outside," remarked Clyde. "How did Dunninger learn anything in here?"

The Shadow pointed to a list of figures among Margo's notes. Some had to do with photographs; others with micrometer recordings, but the figures themselves were unintelligible to Margo.

"Dunninger placed cameras at three salient spots," explained The Shadow, "each had a special timer, as did the micrometers planted with them. One spot was the kitchen; the second, the little hall above the front stairs; the third spot was the tower. The cameras contained films sensitive to infrared rays. Even in darkness, they registered the outlines of human forms."

"Maybe there was only one man," argued Clyde. "He could have moved around."

"The recordings were simultaneous," replied The Shadow. "The timing devices on the cameras recorded it. So did the charts that registered the vibrations picked up by the micrometers."

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Clyde sat back convinced.

"Ordinarily one man could have placed the candle and then gone upstairs to toss the stones," The Shadow stated. "Last night things had to happen fast. One man threw the stones and was immediately away, because the exit is on the second floor.

"The chap downstairs had to dump the dishes if the candle failed. The delay was serious. Actually the man should have been trapped when he reached the second floor. A lucky circumstance aided him."

"Jennifer, of course!" exclaimed Margo. "She pointed to me and called me a ghost!"

"Hector may have had a hand in it," put in Clyde. "He started quite an argument."

"It was Gustave who fired the shotgun," reminded The Shadow. "Whether or not he merely let his excitement overwhelm him, he was the one who really diverted full attention. Of one thing, however, we can be quite sure. Someone in this house is backing the ghost play, otherwise the crooks would never have come here."

Clyde and Margo began to weigh the possible demerits of Gustave and Jennifer, having by this time decided that Hector could be eliminated. Suddenly Clyde questioned:

"Why was there someone in the tower?"

"To attract attention," replied The Shadow. "He was to wait until someone came in line with the birch tree as Wiggam did. The crooks wanted to explode the ghost myth because they had gone too far with it. The birch tree worked, but it didn't fully qualify. The night I first saw the figure in the tower, I was behind the house, and there are no tall trees out front."

PERHAPS The Shadow would have proceeded further with his discussion, but for the fact that his keen ears caught a sound from the hallway beyond Margo's door, which was somewhat thinned now that it had lost its mirror facing. Lifting his hand for silence, The Shadow waited; when the noise ended, he took a glance at Dunninger's note and placed it beneath his cloak.

Turning out the light, The Shadow became invisible as he stepped to the rear window. For that matter, Clyde and Margo remained unseen, even after The Shadow raised the shade, for thickening clouds had completely blocked off the moon.

"Someone has just left the house," declared The Shadow. "That person is about to join the confederates who played the ghosts. Watch!"

As they watched across the flat porch behind Margo's room, a phantom figure suddenly appeared beyond the house. Of all the shapes seen at Stanbridge Manor, this was the most ghostly. It seemed to have a glowing face that squinted back through the darkness as it moved away. To Margo's strained eyes, the thing looked like a decapitated head, floating off through the night.

The weird thing reached a bulky block of whiteness which promptly swallowed it. The ghost, or whatever it was, had gone into the old mausoleum. It was as if some master of the dead had returned to his own stronghold.

Margo's gasp was heartfelt:

"What was it?"

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"Whoever it was," replied The Shadow, "that person is wearing Jennifer's cape. Since Jennifer is the only member of the household who visits the cemetery, our ghost was wearing the cape purely to avoid suspicion."

"But I didn't see the cape," began Margo. "How could I see it in the dark? I saw a face –"

"A face that Dunninger mentioned in the note he sent me," interposed The Shadow. "He took Jennifer's cape upstairs a short while before he left. He outlined the face on the back of the cape, using luminous paint that shows only in the dark."

Motioning his companions out to the passage, The Shadow pointed to the little hallway. By the glow of the night lamp, Clyde and Margo saw that the cape was gone. Dunninger's ruse had worked; he had left a sure clue by which The Shadow could track down the real ghost of Stanbridge Manor.

The Shadow pointed to the doorway along the passage. Clyde went to Gustave's door and listened. He eliminated Gustave by the latter's snores. Meanwhile, Margo softly opened the opposite door and viewed old Jennifer sound asleep in bed.

Sneaking along the passage, Clyde was bound for Hector's room, confident that the old servant must be the missing person. As a matter of mere routine, Clyde opened Roger's room and took a glance inside. Roger's bed was directly in the path of light that crossed Clyde's shoulder from the hallway.

The bed was empty!

Amazed, Clyde turned about. Margo saw his face and knew from its expression that Roger was gone.

Margo's own face reflected Clyde's amazement. Of all persons in the mansion, Roger was the one they had least suspected!

Along the passage came a whispered laugh, weirdly expressive, as though The Shadow had foreseen this climax. The sibilant tone faded, leaving the passage empty.

The Shadow, too, had gone, along the ghostly trail of Roger Stanbridge, the real menace of the manor!

## CHAPTER XII. THE GHOST MAKERS

UNDER the black sky, Stanbridge Manor showed a few flickers of light from its windows, rendering it visible in the night. The flickers, particularly those from the downstairs fire, could be mistaken for ghostly lights, but at least the manor could be seen.

In turn, that was probably the reason why the mansion held such a weird reputation, yet when considered logically, Stanbridge Manor was not the most sinister house in this neighborhood. That title belonged to a little building so seldom noticed that it was invariably overlooked; namely, the cottage owned by Wiggam.

The Shadow was discovering this fact.

Finding no trace of Roger in the mausoleum, The Shadow had begun a zigzag rove toward Wiggam's. Nowhere did he find a path leading from the crypt, but that did not surprise him. Others than Roger had vanished after entering the mausoleum and The Shadow was convinced that their route was underground.

What The Shadow wanted were traces of that particular fact, and he found them.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

There were deep ditches leading from the Stanbridge property, some of them much like gullies, worn by years of drainage. Though much neglected, these ditches showed some signs of repair. Always it was to one purpose, to veer them away from each other, leaving a path between. At no spot did a ditch cross the straight line that led from the mausoleum to Wiggam's house

An old road did cross that imaginary line. It had a curious hump that showed in the roving glare of The Shadow's well guarded flashlight. Though years of disuse had smothered the fact, there were still a few indications that the hump was artificial. Digging into the dirt, The Shadow found chunks of gravel and pebbles that were common only to this brief section of the road.

As chance had it, The Shadow made another find. Something glistened silvery deep in the dried grass that nearly covered the old road. Something that someone had dropped, as The Shadow learned when he examined the article. Pocketing it, The Shadow continued on to Wiggam's, to discover more than he expected.

Despite its trifling size, Wiggam's cottage was more formidable than the manor. From a distance it looked flimsy, but at close range its strength was apparent. Enough light was filtering from the returning moon for The Shadow to observe patches of brick through the stucco facing of the cottage walls. Closed shutters were backed with sheets of steel, that glistened through the slats when viewed from a close angle.

Even the chimney was topped by an ornamental grating and The Shadow could tell from the slight projection of the doors that they were but concealing surfaces for heavier barriers behind them. Yet even by daylight, no one had ever before suspected the truth about Wiggam's stronghold.

The caretaker was regarded simply as a recluse who had spent his life's earnings in buying and improving a cottage which he preferred to keep tight shut because he lived there alone. Indeed, people pitied Wiggam, never realizing that he was better deserving of their dread.

Noting the strength of the well-faked cottage, The Shadow glided off into the night, his whispered laugh a promise of future invasion by a route whereby Wiggam would never expect intruders.

WITHIN the cottage, Wiggam was seated at a table in a room with heavy curtains that blocked off any chance of escaping light. The curious thing was that even in his fortified home, Wiggam still looked the part of the faithful old retainer, a man to whom integrity was law. There was no brightness in his tired face; it still showed its full quota of droops.

Wiggam's honest manner was in no way lessened by the fact that he was harboring three men of crime. They were seated about the table, helping themselves to drinks while they bragged of their recent exploits. All that Wiggam drank was the chatter of his guests, accepting it without the slightest grimace.

Most talkative of the group was Carl Dorthan, the heavy-jawed embezzler who had reached Stanbridge Manor just ahead of The Shadow's first visit. To Dorthan's left sat Harvey Crispin, whose pointed face and quick eyes gave him a foxlike expression. On the right was Wallace Freer, a poker-faced man with a straight-chopped forehead that almost hid the eyes between his equally vertical nose.

Lifting a glass, Dorthan looked between the other embezzlers and gave Wiggam an approving stare.

"To Wiggam!" toasted Dorthan. "A great fellow, Wiggam. We're for him, all of us, and soon there'll be more of us."

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Rising politely Wiggam bowed as the others drank. As the droop-faced man seated himself, Dorthan leaned forward and questioned sharply:

"How come you're in this racket, Wiggam?"

Crispin and Freer shifted uneasily as they glanced toward a door that led down into the cellar. They were afraid that Dorthan was bearing too heavily on Wiggam and they wondered what Roger would have to say about it. But Wiggam remained quite unruffled. When he spoke, his tone was matter of fact.

"I am a Wiggam, sir," declared the old retainer. "My family has always served the master of Stanbridge Manor. Whatever he may order, we obey."

"The good old rule," approved Dorthan. "The king can do no wrong. Is that it, Wiggam?"

"Precisely, sir."

There was a short silence, then Wiggam cleared his throat and proceeded with a further explanation:

"You see, gentlemen, the secrets of Stanbridge Manor belong only to the head of the family. But each master has always entrusted those secrets to a Wiggam. So whenever the head of the Stanbridge family dies, it is a Wiggam who tells those facts to the next master. Never has a Wiggam failed."

Dorthan supplied a puzzled frown. He nudged his thumb in the general direction of the manor.

"But what about Gustave, who owns the place at present? He doesn't know anything, does he?"

As Wiggam hesitated in replying, the door from the cellar opened and Roger entered. He was just in time to catch Dorthan's question. With a bland smile, Roger answered it, saying:

"That's where I come in."

HELPING himself to a drink, Roger finished it and promptly poured a second. Gesturing occasionally with his glass, he picked up from Wiggam's breaking point.

"Gustave is a stinker," declared Roger. "We all know it, including Wiggam. But the man who knew it most was my eldest brother Donald. Trouble was, he couldn't throw Gustave out. No Stanbridge ever did throw a relative out of the manor. The original will left by my great-great grandfather, provides against it."

Roger's gestures were making the glass spill, so he finished half his drink before he continued.

"Donald told Wiggam all about the mansion," said Roger. "But he told him something else. He said that Gustave was hounding him and that if he should die suddenly, it would be Gustave's fault. Wasn't that the way Donald put it, Wiggam?"

"Exactly, sir," replied Wiggam earnestly. "Mr. Donald used to leave the manor by the secret passage and come here through the tunnel from the mausoleum, so Mr. Gustave wouldn't know where he had gone. Mr. Donald said that some day I might have to protect him, so I strengthened the cottage on that account. Then, when Mr. Donald died –"

Wiggam choked and tears filled his eyes. Roger finished his drink and laid a friendly hand upon the old retainer's shoulder.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"I know," nodded Roger. "You just couldn't recognize Gustave as head of the family, so you told him nothing. You interpreted the tradition and remained true to it."

"Hoping you'd come back, Mr. Roger. I knew that you were the one to take Mr. Donald's place. I was waiting for you –"

"That's right, Wiggam, and we're waiting for another round of drinks. Slide down to the cellar and bring up another crock of applejack."

As soon as Wiggam had gone down the stairs, Dorthan leaned forward and undertoned to Roger:

"Did Gustave really croak Donald?"

"You haven't seen Gustave," snorted Roger. "He's a coward like every other stinker. He won't leave the manor because he owns it, but he's so scared he doesn't want to stay. You should have seen him let fly with that shotgun last night. Too bad he didn't clip the Lane girl. Doc Torrance might have sent him away."

Roger looked toward the cellar to make sure that Wiggam wasn't coming up.

"Donald was nuts," confided Roger. "He had a persecution complex, though Wiggam was too dumb to know it. When Donald passed out from a heart attack, Jennifer blamed it on Gustave and Wiggam took it for granted she was right. I wish I'd known about it at the time. I could have started this racket sooner."

"Anyway, after the mining dodge got too hot, I came home. I figured the manor would be a swell place for a wholesale hide-out, with fellows like you paying the freight. I thought I might be able to buy the house from Gustave, so to be smart, I called on Wiggam first. Did I walk into something swell!"

Laying down his glass, Roger tapped his chest with both hands and swelled proudly.

"I was the real master of Stanbridge Manor," he declared. "Wiggam told me all about the joint, things I hadn't even guessed. Why, you could smuggle a regiment in and out of that house if you wanted. I guess my original ancestors used to dodge the Indians that way. And my dopey grandfather, who was afraid of being buried alive, had gotten some Wiggams to run a secret tunnel from the mausoleum to here, so they could look in on him and see if he was still dead. Wiggam showed me that set-up, too."

Wiggam was bringing up the applejack. Roger went to the stairs to help him with the crock. Dorthan gave a sweeping gesture to denote a pleasure that both Crispin and Freer already felt. Roger hadn't added the final point in this perfect set-up, namely that Wiggam's house, fortified at Donald's crack-brained wish, was an excellent hide-out in itself.

As a result, Roger had started his racket of hiding out crooks, without delay. In fact, he'd gone even further. All three of the embezzlers could tell the same story; they had been approached by Roger in advance. It was at his suggestion, coupled with a promise of absolute security, that they had delved into crime.

THE thing was a straight percentage deal. They were each paying a share to live at Wiggam's and when Roger took over the manor, they would become his guests in more elaborate quarters, leaving Wiggam's diggings to newcomers. Both places were so suited to in-and-out activities that the law would never catch up with any of the residents in these made-to-order refuges.

As liquor gurgled from the fresh crock, Roger began a brief review of his current campaign.



## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"We're going to scare Gustave right out of his pants," asserted Roger, "and mail them to him after he runs from the manor. Which reminds me, Wiggam, I have a letter I want you to mail tomorrow."

Wiggam smiled as he received the letter. He was filled with childish delight at Roger's desire to get rid of Gustave.

"The ghost stuff is a sure bet," added Roger. "The trouble was, we played it too strong. At least you fellows did" – he gestured from Crispin to Freer – "and Dorthan had the bad luck to run into Zeph Blaine. Anyway, I fixed that yokel."

"Like I fixed that bank watchman," put in Dorthan. "Permanently. Only you blamed your job on a ghost, while I picked a dope named Goodwin."

"Doc Torrance fell for everything," continued Roger. "I used my head, planting my own gun on Zeph, after I'd fired two shots wide of the tower. That accounted for the two shots you fired, Dorthan. The only trouble was, doc couldn't keep his big mouth shut. The papers picked up his jabber and brought Dunninger here. It wasn't easy last night, faking ghost stuff to make it look like fake."

"We made out all right, sir," put in Wiggam. "Under the circumstances it was quite fair to make Miss Jennifer and Hector take the blame."

Roger gave a sidewink at the embezzlers. The Wiggam proposition was working better than ever. It hadn't taken Roger long to realize that Wiggam's loyalty would stand any strain; indeed he had adopted the policy of pressing it, on the correct theory that Wiggam's long starved fealty to the proper master of Stanbridge Manor would increase, the more than was required of it.

Nevertheless, it was good to keep playing on Wiggam's personal animosities as well, so Roger added a subtle point while he was throwing Jennifer's cape across his shoulders.

"Now that the ghost stuff is disproven," said Roger, "we'll start working it again. Gustave will fall for it, if nobody else does. I'll keep working him into the mood, but we must be careful when strangers are around. Too many believers will hurt the game."

Roger was stepping to the cellar door. As he went through, he turned to close it. Neither Wiggam nor the embezzlers caught a glimpse of the luminous face that glowed only in darkness, for it didn't show until the door was closed.

Though he didn't realize it, Roger Stanbridge was playing the ghost role personally. No matter how cleverly he stalked through the darkness, he would automatically bring The Shadow on his trail.

### CHAPTER XIII. THE WRONG GHOST

CLOSE by the mausoleum, The Shadow listened.

So slight was the sound that came from within, that it could easily have been mistaken for the grind of tree boughs above the ancient crypt.

The Shadow did not make that error.

By this time he had accustomed himself to every wayward sound in this vicinity. This noise was necessarily from the mausoleum, since no other source could produce it. Black as the night itself, The Shadow edged

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

through the door of the vault.

The stone floor was sliding when The Shadow stepped upon it. Before he could remove his foot, it stopped.

Next, footsteps, creeping up from below. Roger was emerging from beneath the inner end of the mausoleum. As he reached the top, he stepped to a corner. The Shadow heard a very slight click.

The floor went backward, very smoothly and The Shadow traveled with it. Roger was evidently standing on a stone ledge that skirted the inner walls. As soon as the faint grinding ended, the floor stopped moving. Roger made a stealthy creep to the door.

Meanwhile The Shadow was moving deeper, knowing that his more skillful footfalls would be drowned by Roger's. Hearing the door creak after Roger's exit, The Shadow focused his flashlight on the important inner corner. Finding a loose piece in the tiled wall, The Shadow tested it, with no result.

Apparently the sliding floor had locked automatically. To operate, it would first have to be released from below. Probably Wiggam took care of that detail whenever visitors were expected, a good point for future reference. Turning, The Shadow moved from the mausoleum.

Roger wasn't very far ahead. The combined result of darkness, tombstones and applejack was making his course a stumbly one. The ghostly face that blinked from the back of Jennifer's cloak kept dipping and sidling in a rather ludicrous fashion.

There was no special point in following Roger further. From his direction The Shadow knew that he was going to a spot along the eaved wall of the mansion, just short of Margo's room. Last night, The Shadow had suspected that wall when Roger and Wiggam kept blazing their flashlights away from it. At that time they had been loading in their ghosts and wanted to blind any prowlers who might be on hand.

Later, The Shadow had seen the ghosts return, while everyone else was out front. He had watched the three men hurry to the mausoleum and file inside it. It would be useless to trap Roger in the course of a prowl unless his three stooges were along.

Nevertheless, The Shadow was keeping fairly close to Roger when two chance circumstances combined to produce some startling results. Just as the dull moonlight gained an increase through the open walls of the old watchtower, a wayward wind rattled a cluster of thick grass.

The ghost face vanished.

Worried by the moonlight, startled by the rustle, Roger had turned around. The ground was too dark to reveal The Shadow, even if Roger had been less befogged, but in turning, Roger swung the back of the ghostly deathhead toward the house. Unwittingly he was revealing his location to an observer other than The Shadow.

A WINDOW flew open on the middle of the second floor. At the sound, Roger wheeled and ran for the corner of the mansion. His mere act of turning caused another vanish of the luminous ghost mark that Roger unwittingly carried. To the man at the window, the effect was uncanny.

The Shadow made one guess regarding the man at the window and sprang for the shelter of the nearest tombstone, grabbing it as he had done before. Having been left squarely in the path that the ghost face indicated, The Shadow had good reason to take cover.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

A shotgun blasted, not once, but twice, its loads spreading wide enough to include the tombstone. Gustave was giving both barrels from a new shotgun, aiming at the spot where the glowing face had disappeared.

No damage was done.

Roger was away in time and The Shadow was ensconced behind the tombstone, which was tilting backward in the usual style. Yet The Shadow did not release his weight, for he knew the stone would stop, which it did. Clinging to it, The Shadow waited to learn if Gustave intended to unload more firearms from his arsenal, but the shooting was over, for the window clattered shut.

In her room, Margo heard the double roar and hurried to the door. She saw old Jennifer poke her head in sight as Clyde hurried past. Farther footsteps proclaimed Hector's arrival as the servant appeared from the far turn in the passage.

The arrivals were met by Gustave, who stepped from the door of the Colonial Room, shaking so badly that he could scarcely hold his shotgun.

"I just saw a ghost!" Gustave might have been referring to himself, his face was so pale. "I fired at it twice and I think I wounded it!"

"Donald's ghost, of course," returned Jennifer. "But you can't harm Donald. He belongs to the dead."

"I wouldn't hurt Donald," protested Gustave. "Really, if he came back, I'd welcome him!"

"The dead do return," reminded Jennifer. "Perhaps that is the reason for your fear, Gustave."

Tightening his grip on the shot-gun, Gustave steadied.

"I meant if Donald returned to the living," he said. "But that would be too much to hope. Only I'm worried –"

"About the ghost?" sneered Jennifer. "Come with me, Gustave and we shall view your victim. I am not afraid to visit the graves where our loved ones sleep."

Gustave looked appealingly to Clyde who nodded for Hector to come along. Margo decided to sit this one out, preferring her window to a trip to the weird cemetery. However, she had scarcely reached the window before she regretted her choice. From the passage that the others had just left, came footsteps that to Margo's overstrained imagination were very, very ghostly!

Huddled by the window, Margo hoped that the creeping sound would go another direction. Briefly, they seemed to approach; then Margo heard them turn. As they started down the stairs, they suddenly become louder, making a very human clatter.

Her courage restored, Margo hurried to the door to see a figure turn the bottom of the stairway. Looking past the lamp in the little upstairs hall, Margo saw Jennifer's cape back on its hook.

Roger had returned!

FORTUNATELY for Roger's game, Jennifer had forgotten to look for her cloak because of her desire to reach the cemetery. So Roger was playing it still further by becoming himself again and chasing after the others to pretend that he had been slower in responding to the excitement that the shotgun caused.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

The thing that troubled Margo was how Roger had returned. The Shadow had spoken of an exit on the second floor, but he hadn't mentioned where it was.

Back at her window, Margo saw Roger overtake the rest behind the house. Then the moonlight became too blurred to distinguish their further progress. Relaxing, Margo decided to let Clyde bring her further details.

The group reached the tilted tombstone.

Fixing her eyes downward, Jennifer murmured:

"Poor Donald!"

Gripping his sister's arm, Gustave demanded excitedly:

"What do you mean! I don't see Donald! Where –"

Jennifer was pointing to the tombstone. On it was carved the name of Donald Stanbridge with the dates of his birth and death.

"This is Donald's grave," reminded Jennifer. "I have visited it too often to forget it. Strange that you should have forgotten, Gustave. You buried Donald here."

Gustave muttered as though talking to himself. Turning away he ran squarely into Roger who placed a steadying hand upon his shoulder.

"Steady, Gustave."

"I wonder if I did see Donald!" Gustave's speech was suddenly coherent. "Would he – could he return to look at his own tombstone?"

Eyeing his brother narrowly, Roger decided to make the most of the situation.

"Strange things can happen, Gustave," said Roger solemnly. "You are beginning to convince me, despite the explanations that we heard last night."

Examining the tombstone, Clyde saw the scars of buckshot. He was standing beside the slanted slab when the others left, testing it to learn how easy it would wobble. It seemed probable that the charge from the shotgun had jarred it loose, but it was odd that the stone hadn't toppled farther.

Clyde was wondering about something else.

Since Roger had escaped intact, Gustave might have fired at some other person. Clyde drew a flashlight intending to spread its gleam along the ground. A cloaked figure glided swiftly from beside a tree, its gloved hand gripped Clyde's arm. Clyde swallowed so hard that he seemed to rise in the air, but he returned to earth with a pleasant jolt when he heard the tone that whispered in his ear.

The arrival was The Shadow.

Noting that the rest had gone, The Shadow told Clyde to grip the tombstone and let his weight go with it. Gingerly Clyde did so, but the sickening sensation ended with a quick stop. Drawing Clyde toward him, The Shadow used his own tiny flashlight to disclose the crack between the stone and its base.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

There Clyde saw the answer.

The upright stone had two stone dowels that fitted into holes in the base. The holes were large and somewhat worn, enough so to allow considerable play. But the tombstone could not topple further, because the two stone points were strong enough to stop it when they reached the limit of the sockets.

A sudden question popped to Clyde's mind. He expressed it.

"What about the stone that Zeph grabbed?"

"They are all alike," replied The Shadow. "One man's weight cannot haul them over. But if two men shoved hard from the other side, they could break those heavy pins."

"Two men found Zeph's body," recalled Clyde. "The two were Roger and Wiggam. Then they must have –"

"He was still alive when they found him," interposed The Shadow, "but dead when they reported their discovery. Zeph had met Dorthan, who probably stunned him. Roger preferred to make it permanent."

As capably as if he had heard Roger's own statements, The Shadow had called the turn. There was more about Roger that The Shadow wanted Clyde to know. Leading his agent to the left wing of the house, The Shadow stopped midway along the wall and stooped to grip the lowest shingles.

As The Shadow lifted it, a section of the wall hinged upward, disclosing an entrance almost four feet wide!

THERE was enough moonlight now for Clyde to see how cleverly the entrance was concealed. It fitted the edges of the shingles, which formed right angled zigzags up the wall to the horizontal line where the hinges were. When The Shadow eased the trapdoor downward, it settled squarely in place.

"Between the parlor and the music room!" exclaimed Clyde. "But we measured them both and the total tallied with the passage in the wing!"

"It was Roger who helped you measure them," reminded The Shadow. "That fact was underlined in Dunninger's report sheet."

"But how did Roger get away with it?"

"With this." The Shadow placed a metal measuring tape in Clyde's hand. "I found it where Roger tossed it in the grass. He switched it for the regular tape, Burke, but only while you were measuring those two rooms."

The Shadow's tiny flashlight glimmered as Clyde pulled out the tape. Under the glow, the trick disclosed itself. The tape had the first twenty-four inches clipped off. In checking the length at the other end, Clyde had measured two feet short in both rooms!

The Shadow hadn't needed to find the tape, for he had already spotted the hidden entrance to the mansion. But his find had exposed the clever method by which Roger had veiled the presence of the narrow secret room that lay between the larger ones. Having already explored the unknown room, The Shadow gave Clyde further details, to which the reporter listened, quite amazed.

During the telling, they were walking toward the back door. There, The Shadow gestured his agent into the mansion. The door closed and Clyde found himself alone, but he caught the whispered laugh that denoted the departure of his chief.

The ways of crime were known to The Shadow. His whispered laugh was a promise that crooks would soon be coaxed to their deserved disaster!

### CHAPTER XIV. THE GHOST TRAP

THE next morning, Wiggam mailed Roger's letter. Always meticulous, Wiggam carefully affixed the stamp that he bought at the post office window and made sure the envelope was sealed before dropping it in the mail chute.

Wiggam was nodding pleasantly as he left the little post office. Everybody in Coedale knew Wiggam by sight, so he was always cordial, though most of the people were strangers to him. But there was one stranger who did more than return Wiggam's nod. He greeted Wiggam and when the caretaker looked closely, he recognized the gentleman as Lamont Cranston, a recent visitor at Stanbridge Manor.

Cranston was driving up to the mansion, so Wiggam accepted his invitation to ride along. But not for a moment did Wiggam suspect that he had been right behind him in the line at the post office window. There, Cranston had read name and address on the letter. It was addressed to a man in Cleveland named Ralph Putney.

At the mansion, Cranston inquired if Margo intended to leave. She glanced at Clyde, who shook his head.

"We thought we saw a ghost last night," said Clyde. "It turned out to be only a tombstone, still it made a good story that I sent to the Classic. It all belongs in the record, so I think Miss Lane ought to stay as long as I do."

Roger was approaching as Clyde finished. He gave a routine nod to Wiggam, then spoke to Cranston.

"All guests are welcome here," declared Roger. "Welcome to stay as long as they wish."

Cranston glanced from Margo to Clyde and asked:

"How many days do you two intend to remain in the manor?" So slightly did Cranston stress certain words, that neither Roger nor Wiggam noticed it. But Clyde caught the emphasis and promptly took the cue.

"Two days more," responded Clyde. "That will give us a double chance to watch for ghosts."

"And to disprove their existence," added Roger. "I'm anxious to clear up these matters because poor Gustave is taking them too seriously."

In expressing concern for his brother, Roger overdid it. A short while later, Cranston and Clyde found a chance to chat alone, out by the porte-cochere. Cranston promptly referred to Roger's final statement, which pieced in with all previous deductions.

"They're working on Gustave," assured Cranston. "This means the ghost stuff again, with all its trimmings. Only Roger will take care that neither you nor Margo see too much."

"When will it hit?" inquired Clyde.

"Probably late tomorrow night," Cranston replied. "There's one special angle to these hauntings, Burke. They time them whenever another embezzler arrives here, so that if anyone sees him, he will be mistaken for a ghost. It happened that way with Dorthan; it will happen with Putney."

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"But who is Putney?"

"You'll hear of Ralph Putney by tomorrow. He is doing some crooked work in Cleveland, or Roger wouldn't have bothered to write him. I saw the letter when Wiggam mailed it."

Cranston was turning away with one of his slightly cryptic smiles, which meant that Clyde would later learn what was in his chief's mind. Cranston was starting his car when he added:

"I shall return tomorrow night."

ALL that day, Clyde had a problem with Margo. The Shadow had told Clyde to keep the details of the secret room to himself, so as not to worry Margo with facts she didn't need to know just yet. But Margo was worried anyway and kept telling Clyde so. She was sure that Clyde had learned something special and she wanted to know what it was.

Finally, Clyde calmed Margo's curiosity by telling her about the stones that had bounced down the front stairs. First he referred her to the report sheets that she had typed for Dunninger.

"Look at this, Margo," said Clyde. "It states: 'Ultraviolet test negative.' Do you know what that means?"

Margo shook her head.

"It means that under ultraviolet light, the stones from the stairs didn't show the mineral traces found in the specimens from Donald's collection," explained Clyde. "They were just a lot of odd pebbles that Roger or Wiggam picked up from a pile of old gravel. The Shadow found the place they came from, last night."

"But maybe Donald did collect them," argued Margo. "He might have thought they were minerals, too."

"Here's another proof he didn't," said Clyde, pointing to the report. "It says 'Cubic content, ten percent minus.' That means that when Dunninger added the extra stones to the box, there were too many of them. They filled it with ten percent over."

Having duly impressed Margo, Clyde acted as though he had told all he knew. Then, as reassurance, Clyde simply added that Margo could relax, since no ghosts would be about tonight.

There, Clyde guessed wrong.

Roger was pushing a whispering campaign that reached a peak that evening, though Clyde, in viewing the results, wasn't sure how many of the three confederates were involved. The reason Clyde could not guess, was because the campaign was concentrated on Gustave.

By midnight Gustave was nearly crazy.

He'd heard voices in his room, in the kitchen, by the fireside. Wherever he went, voices followed him and Gustave had even felt the brush of ghostly hands. Most startling of all, Gustave had chased ghostly footsteps up the back stairs and into the Colonial Room, only to find that whatever the thing was, it had vanished.

These weird occurrences always began when nobody else was around, which proved to Clyde that some of Roger's playmates were on the job and handling it quite neatly. They were working on Jennifer, too, but only to improve the effect on Gustave.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Nobody had to whisper to Jennifer. She was always hearing voices anyway. But tonight she reported that she had seen the ghost in the watchtower, while she was visiting Donald's grave. It had waved to her and she waved back.

"Death will visit this house again," assured Jennifer, in a confident croak that made Gustave writhe. "Not tonight, for the ghost was too friendly. But death will strike soon – very soon."

It was Roger who finally managed to soothe Gustave, by going around the house with him, to learn if weird things really could be heard. This time, Clyde and Margo were invited along, and nothing happened. Roger had naturally postponed the excursion until his helpers had left the premises and gone back to Wiggam's.

The tour convinced Gustave that the ghosts were seeking him alone, thus adding to his feverish fears.

So Roger suggested that Gustave sleep in the great hall, promising to stay there also. As before, Roger was working the game by steps, knowing it would be the best way to alibi himself when Gustave really cracked.

NEXT morning, though Clyde had no story for the Classic, he read one that interested him. The current wave of embezzlement was still on the go. The cashier of a Midwestern insurance company had decamped with funds exceeding one hundred thousand dollars.

The man's name was Ralph Putney and his long, thin face poked its picture from the front page. Putney had narrow eyes, broad nose and rounded chin. His eyebrows were almost straight as was the line of the hair that topped his forehead. Under the photo was the caption: "Watch For This Man," followed by the statement that ten thousand dollars would be the reward for Putney's apprehension.

Embezzlers didn't interest Gustave. He was worried about ghosts. That afternoon Gustave went to see Dr. Torrance. In one mad outpour, Gustave released his tide of fear. Stanbridge Manor was haunted; Gustave was the target of its invisible dwellers.

Though Wiggam had never acquainted Gustave with the most important of the family secrets, the present master of the manor was well-informed on family history. He blurted facts that even Torrance had never heard: how insanity, catalepsy and other hideous ailments had been the misfortune of the Stanbridges.

"If I dropped dead this minute," insisted Gustave, "you couldn't be sure of it, doctor. Not for a week – or a month. I might be in a trance, like... like, well, like my grandfather was, the first time they thought he died.

"I might go crazy, and still you wouldn't know it, not for a year or more. When you found it out, I'd probably be well again. But when insanity strikes us permanently, our minds go a complete blank. It was that way with my grand-uncle and with – well, with some other ancestor, further back."

While he listened, Dr. Torrance kept jotting notes on a pad. Finally he questioned:

"Why don't you leave Stanbridge Manor?"

"Because the place belongs to me!" blurted Gustave. "It's my heritage, that house! I'll stay there, just to defy them! Jennifer and –"

"And Roger?" queried Torrance, puzzled by Gustave's sudden pause. "Surely, he has never disputed your heritage. You couldn't mean Hector, or Wiggam."

Calming, Gustave shook his head.



## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"I don't mean any of those," he declared. "I mean the ghosts. They're helping Jennifer. She sees them."

Torrance referred to his notes.

"This streak of insanity you mention. Perhaps it applies to Jennifer. Have you thought of that, Gustave?"

"Yes, but it works in reverse, as I told you. When Jennifer acts insane, I know she isn't. It's the safety valve of our family, such eccentric behavior. Perhaps if I let myself loose, it might help me."

"Why don't you try it?"

At the question, Gustave drew himself erect. His haggard expression dwindled. Staring about the coroner's office as though viewing imaginary faces, Gustave declared:

"I shall! One more night in Stanbridge Manor will be the end of the ghosts" – there Gustave paused and with a reversion to his shaky mood, he added – "or myself."

Clapping Gustave on the shoulder, Torrance steered him from the office. As family physician, he advised Gustave to visit him again the next day and report how he felt. But as soon as Gustave was gone, Torrance reverted to his business of being county coroner. He picked up the phone and made a brief call.

While he waited, Torrance studied a letter that he had received that morning. He was still reading it over when Herb and Luke appeared. They were the men that Torrance had phoned.

"That night on Lookout Rock," said Torrance. "Do you two still believe that you struggled with someone who slipped you?"

Herb and Luke looked at each other; slowly, but cagily they began to nod. Torrance smiled.

"There was someone," said the coroner. "I have just received a letter from him. He says that Zeph's death was murder and that he can name the guilty persons. He intends to trap them at the manor tonight."

Torrance's two listeners showed doubt. They were inclined to blame Zeph's death on the cloaked phantasm himself.

"We'll need more men," declared Torrance, "and we'll all keep in the offing, unless I personally decide to enter the manor. If I do, the rest will still keep back until summoned. They will stay in pairs, so that no one will suffer Zeph's fate."

LIKE Torrance, Clyde Burke had also heard from The Shadow, but Clyde's letter was coded because of the important information that it contained. It came in an envelope with the name of the New York Classic in the corner, so it would look like a letter from Clyde's office.

The inked writing faded after Clyde read it, but he remembered the full instructions and passed some along to Margo. Tonight, Clyde informed, The Shadow was going to end the ghost racket. Clyde was to stay with the family, in the great hall, but Margo was to go to the Green Room on the pretext that she had typing to do.

"You're to watch the door of the Colonial Room," added Clyde. "That's where the ghosts come and go. Never mind how. Just keep check on them and record the time as well as everything else. The Shadow will disclose the rest after it's all over."

Margo smiled as she nodded. The Shadow knew that curiosity always increased Margo's efficiency and the girl herself realized the fact. In fact, never before had her interest been so keyed as it was regarding this ghost business.

How far Margo's curiosity would carry her and what it might produce, were matters far from her mind as she waited for night to arrive. Great surprises were in store this evening.

Even for The Shadow!

### CHAPTER XV. INTO THE DARK

SEATED at his kitchen table, old Wiggam embraced the crock of applejack and smiled. Not that Wiggam had been imbibing the liquid lightning; he reserved it only for his guests. At present, he was keeping the applejack from them, until after they finished their coming task.

Wiggam was smiling because he was watching Dorthan. The man who combined murder with embezzlement was displaying another of his talents. Dorthan was making up in front of a mirror; for his pattern, he was using a framed life-sized portrait that hung on the wall close by.

"I used to be a character actor," bragged Dorthan. "Under another name, of course. Impersonations were one of my specialties. It came in handy when I grabbed the bank dough. What I did was make up as Goodwin. I knew I'd have to croak the watchman, so I figured Goodie ought to take the rap.

"I let people spot me when I left the place. That made Goodwin the last man out. It not only gave me an alibi, it started the theory that Goodwin knocked me off to boot. Afterward I switched to the old man character, a part I often played, and came here on the rattler."

A few more dabs and Dorthan's make-up was finished. He turned around and let the others compare him with the portrait. Crispin and Freer were amazed at the resemblance, but they looked to Wiggam for the final verdict.

His face wreathed with smiles, Wiggam declared:

"Mr. Roger will be pleased."

There was an excellent reason why Roger would be pleased. Dorthan's new face had the aristocratic Stanbridge nose and wide eyes. An elderly countenance, like Gustave's, but without the haggard effect. Shocky hair, like Roger's, but very gray, the result of powder that Dorthan had applied.

It was the face of Donald Stanbridge, eldest of the three brothers, whose death Gustave pretended to mourn and whose ghost formed the fabric of Jennifer's imagination.

"Give me a few pointers, Wiggam," suggested Dorthan. "What did Donald do with this face of his?"

"He used to stare very hard, sir," recalled Wiggam. "So much that it would begin to worry you. Then he'd smile and it would relieve you, except that he put a little twitch to one corner of his mouth."

Dorthan copied the actions until they won Wiggam's approval. Having gotten them pat, he kept practicing them until Wiggam gave way to enthused admiration. According to Wiggam, he would personally be deceived by the impersonation if uninformed of it.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"That's going to knock Gustave right out of the saddle," affirmed Crispin. "He'll think you're Donald's ghost turned solid."

"And old Jennifer will play it to the limit," added Freer. "She won't have to do any imagining tonight."

Dorthan turned to Wiggam.

"What about Hector?"

"You might let him glimpse you," suggested Wiggam. "Of course, Mr. Roger and I will see you, too, but we'll stare right through you. There will be no trouble from Mr. Gustave. He has reached the state where the mere thought of a ghost horrifies him."

Wiggam arose and picked up his coat and hat. It was after dusk, the time that he was to go to the manor to help Roger handle any problems there. Before leaving, Wiggam gave instructions.

"Mr. Roger says the tower ghost is important," declared Wiggam, handing a package to Crispin. "So you are to play it at the right time."

"Easy enough," responded Crispin. "I've done it before."

"You must go along, too, sir," Wiggam told Freer. "Watch from the mausoleum and if you see anything suspicious, hurry to the house and come in by the secret way. You will have only to warn one of us. He will inform the others."

Freer nodded.

"But remember," added Wiggam, "the floor of the mausoleum must stay open, so do not leave it long. We are expecting our new guest, Mr. Putney."

With that reminder, Wiggam unlocked the double door of his cottage and went out into the dark.

As Wiggam left, the others heard the wail of a locomotive whistle, announcing that the evening local was making another stop at Willow Glen.

"It's Putney!" exclaimed Crispin, when Wiggam had gone. "He's taking a risk, coming here by train!"

"I didn't," retorted Dorthan. "Maybe Putney is smart, too. Let's all be smart and sample this new crock of apple while we're giving Wiggam time to waddle up to the manor."

HAVING left Willow Glen, the local went on to Coledale. It was pulling out from that station before Wiggam reached the mansion. Still more minutes passed, before a sleek car purred up the hill road. Though it had only parking lights, its driver guided it partly by dim moonlight, partly by memory, into the old forgotten road that ran between Wiggam's cottage and the manor.

Leaving his car, the mystery driver glided away, so ghostlike that he could represent but one living being: The Shadow.

Off through the dark, The Shadow spied tiny twinkles, which were both good and bad. Good, because they meant that Torrance's men were keeping well away from the mansion; bad, because they shouldn't be using lights at all.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

For one thing, though, they weren't in back of the cemetery. Even Herb and Luke were still doubtful about approaching Lookout Rock.

Invisibly, The Shadow traced a course to the very shelter of the mansion. He stopped at the rear of the right wing and there began an upward journey. Tonight, The Shadow had no desire to use the secret route. He was leaving it to the men he planned to trap. The Shadow was choosing his own mode of entry into Stanbridge Manor, the house of many windows, all barred. He was picking the one inlet that everyone had overlooked, the open-work watchtower.

No longer were the doors to the tower locked; the investigation at Stanbridge Manor was over. Thus the tower offered access to the house itself, and more. The Shadow happened to know that the tower, too, connected with the hidden passages within the manor. From the tower, The Shadow could control all.

Using special suction cups, The Shadow reached the porch above the music room. Diverting his course, he again applied the rubber suckers to the shingled wall and reached the top of the second floor, to continue up the sheer wall of the tower itself. The only sounds the disks gave were soft squidges, heard by The Shadow alone.

Nevertheless, the cloaked climber halted. Keeping a four-point grip on the wall, thanks to the suction cups that he wore on hands and feet, The Shadow looked below.

Two figures were stealing from the mausoleum. They represented Dorthan and Crispin, though The Shadow identified them only as two of the three embezzlers. Reaching the side of the mansion, they disappeared, in by the secret passage. Placing his ear against the wall, The Shadow listened.

He could tell by the sounds he heard that one ghost was stopping off at Colonial Room. That man happened to be Dorthan, alias Donald, specially geared to appear as a person back from the dead. The other, namely Crispin, was climbing up inside the wall where The Shadow clung outside, to play the tower ghost.

Again, The Shadow looked below. He saw another man move from the mausoleum, hesitate, and continue to the house. It was Freer, and from the fellow's actions, The Shadow knew that he had spotted some of the long-range twinkles that Torrance's men were unwisely giving with their flashlights.

Almost at the house, Freer halted and looked straight upward. Against the straggly moonlight, he saw the outline of The Shadow's clinging form, but it was gone too soon for Freer to identify it as anything actual. The Shadow went from sight by the simple expedient of shifting his body around the corner of the tower.

A warning from Freer would spoil the entire show, but The Shadow felt sure the fellow would withhold it. Lights were too distant, The Shadow's shape too vague, for Freer to sound a real alarm. Besides, he was too late to overtake the others. Probably he'd wait for them in the secret passage between the parlor and the music room.

THERE was just one feature of the situation that The Shadow did not recognize. It was the Donald angle. What tricks the ghosts intended, was an unimportant phase, according to The Shadow's analysis. He knew the crooks were here to terrorize Gustave, but violence was the one thing they would most avoid.

It would be The Shadow's business to supply it when the time came, but in a swift, certain way. The right course was to overpower these fakes one by one, beginning with the tower ghost, so that the law could find the criminals on its own.

But there was still that unknown factor, Dorthan's impersonation of Donald!

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

It was Margo Lane who first saw the long-forgotten face. She was watching through a perfect peek hole, a slit that Clyde Burke had obligingly cut through the thin backing of the Green Room door. Already damaged by Gustave's shotgun, the door had enough chinks to camouflage the one that Clyde had widened.

Familiar with the pictures of the three embezzlers, Margo was sure she could identify any of them. But the girl gave a repressed gasp when she saw the man who did appear.

Donald Stanbridge!

The manor contained several pictures of its former master. At sight of Donald's unique face, Margo felt positive that here was a ghost, at last. Too transfixed to move, she kept watching and her dread suddenly passed.

Donald's actions were too human. He kept peering into rooms along the passage, as though expecting to find someone. Finally he turned and came toward Margo's door. Shrinking away, Margo decided to hide beyond the bed, on the chance that the man would only glance into the Green Room. Then Donald's footsteps paused.

Looking again, Margo saw that the passage was empty. She thought at first that Donald had gone down the back stairs. Then suddenly he reappeared from the door of the Colonial Room. Why he had gone back there, Margo couldn't understand, but ghost or human, he had certainly picked up confidence. His eyes no longer stared, nor did his lips twitch in a fashion that Margo had first noticed.

This time Donald stole directly to the back stairs and began a slow descent. Seized with the spirit of emergency, Margo felt she ought to inform Clyde of the trick that was being played. All it would take, would be a quick trip down the front stairs, to show Clyde a batch of notes.

Opening her own door, Margo stepped out into the passage. She was scrawling some notations on a pad she carried, and feeling very bold in her capacity as a legitimate guest, Margo went a few steps farther and peered through the open door of the Colonial Room. What she saw, opened her eyes.

Until now, Margo had been much in the dark, regarding the secret of Stanbridge Manor. All that was over, for from what she saw, Margo could picture the rest.

Mentally, Margo Lane was no longer in the dark. Physically, she was going deep into it, much faster than she'd ever traveled before!

### **CHAPTER XVI. GHOSTS OF DEATH**

THE thing that caught Margo's attention was the closet in the Colonial Room. Its door was open and so was the ceiling of the closet. Hanging down from that ceiling was a broad, hinged board, crossed with cleats that enabled it to serve as a ladder.

Entering the closet, Margo looked upward. Instead of a shallow space above the hanging ceiling, she saw a vertical shaft, also equipped with ladder rungs. At the top, a trapdoor was closing; in fact, Margo could hear it thump into place. That trap was the landing at the top of the tower stairs.

Even when the trapdoor was closed, Margo could see enough to tell her more. Just above the open ceiling of the closet, a narrow chute went down at an angle, beneath the tower stairs. It meant that those stairs were double, the space beneath them leading down to the secret passage on the ground floor, between the parlor and the music room.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Despite her fascination, Margo couldn't resist sketching the arrangement, which she did quite swiftly, intending to add it to her notes, to show Lamont that she could find out things on her own.

Studying the rough drawing, Margo realized that the ground floor passage must run at right angles to the slanted hole that came up beneath the tower stairs, so she added a little drawing to cover that point.

During the process, Margo was thinking about the crooks. Obviously one, impersonating Donald, had dropped down into the Colonial Room and was going down through the kitchen, to sneak around and frighten Gustave.

Another had gone up into the tower, a fact proven by the closing trapdoor. He would use the ladder that went up from the landing at the stair top and put on something white to pass as the tower ghost.

Where the third man was, Margo didn't care. Even if he happened to be lurking in the secret passage below, he could do no harm there. At least, so Margo supposed, as she finished her added sketch.

All Margo wanted was a look down into the chute that ran beneath the tower stairs. To gain that look, she put the notebook in the pocket of her dress and placed her foot upon the lowest cleat of the hanging ceiling, grabbing higher with her hands.

It happened in a flash.

The ceiling was automatic, geared with huge springs that Margo hadn't noticed. It flew up like a springboard, carrying Margo with it. Her attempt to drop away was so slow that it didn't even start until the ceiling clacked shut. Then, since she was lying flat, her wild wiggle started Margo right down the chute beneath the stairs.

The chute had no cleats. Evidently the ghosts worked up and down it by squeezing against the side walls, but Margo didn't have time to figure that one out. She was still clawing at the sliding board when she reached the hole above the secret room. There she dropped through, grabbing at the rungs of a ladder that slightly broke her fall.

However, the jolt was enough to stun Margo quite thoroughly. This time, her senses, like herself, were completely in the dark. Lying limp, Margo didn't see the flashlight that sprayed across her face, nor hear the angry snarl that came from Freer. Starting up the ladder, the reserve ghost was on his way to summon Crispin, the specter of the tower.

DOWN in the great hall, Gustave was brooding by the fire, while Jennifer kept watching him across the planchette, which she was guiding with her fingers. Outside, the wind was whistling, bringing thumps from shutters, sounds that drowned the muffled finish of Margo's plunge into the secret room.

"The train stopped again tonight, Gustave," spoke Jennifer, solemnly. "Perhaps it is bringing Donald."

"Ghosts don't ride on trains," retorted Gustave savagely. "What things you do think up, Jennifer!"

Jennifer clucked happily.

"So at last you admit there are ghosts," she toned. "With your new wisdom, you think you can speak for their habits. You are wrong, Gustave. Ghosts can go anywhere, do anything!"

The planchette was beginning to scrawl. Jennifer gave an eager glance at the wheeled pencil table. From his corner, Clyde saw Roger and Wiggam exchange the slightest of nods. The time was ripe for their great hoax.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Stepping over to Clyde, Roger drew him to the front door and started to open it.

"Take a look for Torrance's car, Burke," suggested Roger. "Doc said he might drop in later. I'd rather you brought him in quietly so he can see how Jennifer is baiting poor Gustave. I hope he comes soon, though. I'm afraid Gustave is going to crack."

Something ghostly was due, though just what, Clyde didn't know. He decided the best thing was to play dumb, rather than spoil it. Once outside, he could look through a window and witness the thing that he wasn't supposed to see. But before Clyde could open the front door, the thing happened.

Though Dorthan's cue was to come from Wiggam, apparently the impersonator decided to jump it. Except for Clyde's presence, the deed was justified, for Jennifer was unwittingly giving a better cue than any that Roger and Wiggam could have planned.

"Read this message, Gustave!" exclaimed Jennifer, ripping the paper from beneath the planchette and waving it at her brother. "It says: 'I am with you.' Only Donald's spirit could have given us that message. He is with us, Gustave! Donald is home again!"

As she finished, Jennifer was staring at Gustave's frozen face. His eyes were fixed beyond her shoulder, so Jennifer turned in the same direction, toward the door of the dining room.

There, to all appearances, stood Donald Stanbridge in the flesh!

How Dorthan was to act at this dramatic juncture, was something that Roger had left to the impersonator, though Dorthan had been coached on some family facts that he could spiel at Gustave by way of convincers. But the best they expected from Dorthan was small compared to the delivery that came.

"Hello, Gussie," spoke the ghost. "This all looks very cheerful, so much like the night I died. You don't look as cheerful as you did, though. Are you surprised to see me back?"

"I am not surprised," put in Jennifer. "I have seen you often, Donald. You have been here all the time."

"In spirit, yes," agreed Donald, placing his hand upon Jennifer's shoulder. "But not as I am at present. My mind was here, I suppose, because it was not with me. But when it returned, I came back. The Stanbridges always return."

"Even from the dead!" echoed Jennifer triumphantly.

"Take Roger for instance." The ghost's lips twitched a characteristic smile, as he gestured a hand toward the youngest Stanbridge. "He is staring as though he can't believe I'm here. Why should he believe it, Gussie, after what you did?"

Roger shot a quick look at Wiggam, who was stepping forward as though to meet the ghost. Wiggam's fault, this, coaching Dorthan so well that he was playing the game too strongly. Not that Roger minded Dorthan using the nickname Gussie which Gustave hadn't heard since boyhood, nor even the business of a hand on Jennifer's shoulder, which she would probably claim brushed her anyway.

What bothered Roger was the reference to himself, along with Wiggam's mistake of seeing the ghost. Both Roger and Wiggam were supposed to stare right through the imitation Donald, so later they could declare they hadn't seen him. It wouldn't have mattered so much, with only Gustave and Jennifer present, since both were looking straight at Donald, and noticing no one else. But Clyde's presence made the situation untenable.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

IT would take some convincing to make the reporter think he hadn't seen anything, and to make matters even worse, the front door swept open at that trying moment, to admit Dr. Torrance, arriving far earlier than Roger had expected him.

Two witnesses to declare the ghost was real! Men whose testimony would nullify the whole act.

In that dilemma, Roger showed how he could use the wits that rated him a top man among criminals. Deeming that Clyde and Torrance were sold on the idea that fraud existed in the manor itself, Roger played a clever stroke.

"It's only Hector!" shouted Roger. "Grab him, Wiggam, so we can prove the fakery this time!"

Rising to the situation, Wiggam made a quick halt and looked toward the front door. Seeing Clyde and Torrance, Wiggam turned as though to obey Roger's command. Of course all that hesitation was a perfect opportunity for Dorthan to make a quick departure.

The man who stopped such flight was Gustave.

All this time, Gustave had been proving that Stanbridges thrived on the unexpected. Though he had been speechless while listening to the ghost, Gustave had not shrunk from sight of his dead brother Donald. Now Gustave was on his feet, charging for the gray-haired man who faced him. As he drove forward, Gustave bellowed:

"You're not Hector! They can't fool me with this trick. You're trying to make me confess to a murder that never happened. I'll end this sham –"

By then, Gustave had reached the man who passed as Donald. They locked in a struggle wherein Gustave showed the murderous fury that he had only a moment ago denied. Jennifer shrieked real fears for Donald, as Gustave reeled him back against the wall. There, in a corner near the dining room, they encountered the loaded shotgun and Gustave snatched it as Donald madly squirmed for the doorway.

Roused by the emergency, Wiggam dashed after them, his figure disappearing in the gable beyond the door. There was a crash as the dining room table overturned under the force of spilling bodies. The shotgun spoke with a fiery roar. Hard upon that burst came the quick stabs of a revolver.

Roger was rushing for the dining room with Clyde and Torrance behind him. On the way, Roger purposely blundered into Jennifer, tumbling with her, so that the doorway was blocked. Coming to his feet, Roger thrust Jennifer aside, and turned the other way. Drawing a revolver as he rushed for the front stairs, Roger called back:

"Get in and help Wiggam! I'll block off Hector before he gets upstairs!"

In the darkened dining room, a man was crawling out from beneath the overturned table. It was Wiggam; during his crawl, he encountered something that he picked up, stared at dumbly, and then handed to Dr. Torrance. The object was a revolver.

There was another figure lying under the table, beside it a shotgun. As Wiggam removed himself from the light, Clyde and Torrance saw the dead face of Gustave, staring upward. Below that face was a shirt front stained with blood. The shots from the revolver that Wiggam found, had been planted squarely in Gustave's heart.



As for the man who looked like Donald, he had disappeared so completely that Torrance, staring at Gustave's body, could almost have sworn that Gustave Stanbridge had been slain by a murderous ghost!

### CHAPTER XVII. THE WRONG TRAIL

AT the head of the stairs, Roger ran squarely into Dorthan, coming up from the kitchen. He was steering the stooge into the Colonial Room, when Dorthan suddenly pointed. Horror showed on the face that was made up to look like Donald's.

The ceiling trapdoor in the closet was closed!

Footsteps were pounding from below, some from the kitchen, others by the front stairs. There wasn't time to get the trapdoor open. Madly, Roger hauled Dorthan out toward the passage.

If ever crime had a great break, this was it.

Roger saw Wiggam arriving from the kitchen. Others hadn't quite gained the top of the front stairs. Motioning Wiggam aside, Roger chased Dorthan down the back way, hissing for him to grab one of Hector's coats that he would find in the kitchen.

Hardly had Dorthan gone, before Clyde arrived. He'd taken the front way in order to catch Roger. Spreading his hands in bewildered fashion, Roger looked about, as though amazed. Then, sighting someone coming along the hall, he exclaimed:

"There's Hector!"

It was Hector, coming from his room, where he had been sleeping when the gunfire awakened him. His bewildered look, plus the fact that his face was his own, were absolute proofs of his innocence. Hector stared, even more puzzled, as a whistle shrilled from below. It was Torrance at the front door, summoning men.

Hurrying up the front stairs, Torrance heard Clyde call down that the ghost wasn't Hector. As if to belie Clyde's shout, a figure scudded through the great hall and out the front door. It was Dorthan, dashing around by the dining room, but all Clyde saw of him was the back of his borrowed white coat.

Roger saw the fugitive, too, from the top of the stairs. Torrance didn't turn in time. Roger had another bright idea.

"This way, doc!" he called. "I just saw someone dash up to the tower!"

As Torrance hesitated, some of his men appeared at the front door. Torrance yelled for them to round up anyone they saw and to particularly watch the tower. With that double order, he started up the tower stairs behind Roger, while Clyde hurried down to the front door to stimulate the real chase outdoors.

AGAIN, Roger was playing a bold hand. He knew that Crispin was in the tower, but he was sure he could handle Torrance well enough to allow the escape of the second ghost. What Roger didn't know was that at that very moment, Crispin was about to meet with a surprise.

Nicely rigged in a white sheet, Crispin was weaving about the tower, waiting for someone to come from the house and spy him. He particularly hoped that Jennifer would be the observer, because he was doing a very nice ghost act.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Crispin didn't know what a ghost act could really be.

Up the side of the tower was coming a shape in black that looked like a mammoth vampire bat. The sounds that accompanied this thing from the unreal, merely made it all the more uncanny. The noises were The Shadow's suction cups, but Crispin, hearing them, mistook them for floor creaks from the weather-beaten tower.

One squidge ceased; then another. Over the rail of the tower, behind the fake ghost's back, came the cloaked shape of The Shadow. Reaching to his feet, The Shadow stacked the last two suction cups with the others, placing them beneath his cloak. His gloves stayed there, too. In their place, The Shadow produced a small tin box with two sections, dipping a thumb in one, his forefinger in the other.

All this was happening during the chase that followed the death of Gustave. Such trifling things as gunfire were too well muffled in the great sprawly mansion to be heard from so remote a spot as the old watchtower.

Having applied two pastes to his thumb and forefinger, The Shadow delivered a low laugh that was caught by the tower's broken rafters and echoed back in ghoulish style. That weird tone might have impressed a real ghost; its effect was certainly electric upon Crispin, the fake spook.

The shrouded man wheeled about. He saw the burning eyes of The Shadow. With a shrill, wild cry, Crispin lunged, hoping to hurl his rival from the tower.

The Shadow snapped his thumb and forefinger.

A burst like a reporting gun went off in Crispin's face, along with a flare of flame. Those special chemicals had served The Shadow often, but never more dramatically than this. (Because of the danger connected with this explosive formula, we do not give its components here. It is a device often used by The Shadow in his exploits against crime. – Ed.) The concussion scattered what was left of Crispin's dissipated wits. The man reeled back, his sheet falling from his shoulders.

Then The Shadow was upon him, about to complete as rapid a capture as could be desired. With Crispin settled, the way would be clear to bag the others of this crooked clan. At least it would have worked that way, but for a blaze of intervention.

Flashlights shone suddenly from all about the house. Torrance's men had heard the shout from upstairs. They were converging upon Dorthan, but they hadn't forgotten that they were to check the tower, too. Somebody aimed a searchlight from a car and gave it the switch.

The glow flooded the scene in the tower.

There, Torrance's men saw two ghosts instead of only one!

Curious ghosts, one white, the other black, that tangled in a grip that formed a swirling camouflage pattern. The Shadow was taking Crispin well in hand, despite the crook's last desperate struggle. But the men on the ground made no distinction between ghosts, good or bad.

Torrance's tribe let loose with a volley from guns of all description. Bullets battered the base of the tower and raked its pergola top. Slugs whistled over The Shadow's head and shoulders as he flung Crispin to the floor and made a twist of his own for the shelter below the rail.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

THE brief release wouldn't have helped Crispin if he'd been purely on his own. He was still dizzy from the chemical blast that had drawn so much attention to the tower. To Crispin, the rattle of the guns was just an echo of the explosion that had bewildered him. But to Freer, it meant new trouble, and Freer was here. He'd finished his climb up into the tower to warn Crispin of something that seemed very slight in comparison to present events.

One of Crispin's legs was dangling down the ladder. Grabbing it, Freer hauled Crispin right out of his sheet. Together, they were tumbling down the ladder, leaving The Shadow nothing but a shroud so empty that Crispin seemed to have really turned into a ghost. With bullets still whining through the openwork, The Shadow took the route by which Crispin disappeared.

The trap door was thudding in place before The Shadow reached the landing. A few seconds more and The Shadow would have wrenched it open, to follow the two ghosts down the chute to the secret room. But at that moment, the regular door of the tower slashed inward, admitting a three man surge.

It was a neat device, that door. Opening inward, it was stopped by the warped floor boards; Actually the floor was a trapdoor that hoisted upward, hence the door, when open, served as a lock to keep the trap shut. The landing was so small that people always left the door open when they examined the floor, and thereby defeated their own chances of discovering the trick.

In this case, the door prevented The Shadow from following the two fake ghosts. Before he could slam the door shut, the landing was crowded to its utmost capacity. The Shadow was squeezed among three men: Roger, Wiggam and Torrance.

It was a disadvantage, being a black ghost.

If Roger and Wiggam had found a white one, they'd have let him go, and muddled Torrance into the bargain. But a black one meant The Shadow and Roger was prompt to draw a gun. So was Torrance, who regarded any intruder as Gustave's murderer. So The Shadow's only course was to rip loose from his captors and plunge down the regular stairs.

He did it with such speed that when they began to fire at blackness down the stairs, they learned it was nothing but the slamming door below. Angry at the escape of the very material ghost, Torrance ordered an immediate chase.

REACHING the front stairs, The Shadow heard a pleased cackle from his right and saw old Jennifer at the door of her room. She was holding her arms folded as though standing guard and seemed very pleased because the searchers had discovered a real ghost in the tower. At the front door, The Shadow met a rush of Torrance's men and bowled right through them, to dash off into the dark.

All was quiet around the corner of the house. There, Crispin and Freer were coming from the hinged shingles, carrying Margo between them. Another man sprang up to aid them; it was Dorthan, still wearing Donald's face, but no longer encumbered with Hector's spare coat.

The three sped for the mausoleum and were nearly there with their burden, when The Shadow came around the corner of the house, followed by waving flashlights and wild shooting guns. He saw the fugitives near the mausoleum, but was unable to overtake them, because another batch of local fighters were dashing in to trap him.

Only when strong flashlights actually struck The Shadow, was he visible; then, only as a blot of weaving blackness that blocked off other objects beyond. So blurred was the situation that when Clyde called: "There

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

he goes!" he actually pointed in the right direction. Clyde's effort to help his chief resulted in flashlights picking up another whirl of black, but the hazy shape was gone when guns tongued its way.

Even though he'd seen Margo being carried by her captors, The Shadow had veered away from the mausoleum where the group had disappeared. His first task was to shake these ardent pursuers, summoned ironically enough, by The Shadow himself.

The Shadow dropped them, halfway to the sunken road where he had parked his car. By then they were spreading out, scouring the fringes of the cemetery for the cloaked ghost that they had followed when taking the wrong trail.

To men of crime, The Shadow's difficulties were regarded as a boon. While flashlights were moving along the fence that marked the new limit of the Stanbridge estate, all was quiet and dark in the midst of the old graveyard. It was then that a figure sidled in from the trees and entered the mausoleum.

The dull clatter of hasty footsteps brought results. The floor slid back suddenly and a beckoning hand called the arrival down the hidden steps. In the dim-lighted tunnel, Dorthan was waiting, his face still that of Donald Stanbridge.

Dorthan, however, was more interested in the arrival's features. He turned a flashlight on them, gave a grunt of satisfaction, and extended a welcoming hand. The man who had ducked in from the dark was the expected embezzler, Ralph Putney. The Cleveland gyp was carrying a satchel loaded with his loot.

Admiringly, Putney watched Dorthan pull a large lever that caused the great stone floor to slide back into place on its special, well-oiled rollers. The click that sounded when the floor closed, brought a chuckle from Dorthan, in which Putney joined.

With that formidable barrier bolted from the inside, no one, not even The Shadow, could hope to reach the lair where men of crime held sway!

### CHAPTER XVIII. DOOM TO COME

IT was half an hour before Roger Stanbridge arrived in the formidable hide-out where three ex-ghosts were toasting their new comrade. This time, Roger didn't come by way of the tunnel, because it was closed. He came with Wiggam, through the front door of the cottage. An excellent procedure, because it passed suspicion.

Indeed, Roger had a special right to accompany, Wiggam home. Rating as the new master of Stanbridge Manor, it was only natural that Roger should hold a conference with the faithful caretaker.

Roger was pleased to see Putney present. The man's long face, with its broad nose and narrow eyes, was the first that Roger noticed. Having been introduced to the visiting embezzler, Roger turned to look for Dorthan and saw him. Dorthan was himself again, having removed the last vestiges of Donald's make-up.

"A fine job you did," snapped Roger. "You nearly gave the whole works away."

"What else could I have done?" demanded Dorthan. "As soon as that shotgun went off, I had to lam for the back stairs."

"Except that you waited long enough to blast Gustave."

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"You mean I should have waited that long to save you the trouble."

Roger glowered at Dorthan's implication.

"What chance did I have to cut loose with that gat?" queried Roger, angrily. "I was out in the big hall."

"And I was in the kitchen!" retorted Dorthan. "Ask Wiggam who knocked off your brother."

Wiggam spoke for himself, but he addressed Roger, not Dorthan.

"I really couldn't say, sir," insisted Wiggam. "I was thrust under the table during the melee. I saw very little —"

"You mean you're saying very little," broke in Dorthan. "Naturally you'd stand up for your boss; don't blame you, Wiggam. For that matter" — Dorthan gave a generous shrug — "I don't blame you either, Roger. If you tried to lay it on Crispin or Freer, I wouldn't like it, but it doesn't matter with me. I knocked off a bank watchman, so why should another job matter?"

"Nice of you," said Roger, curtly, "but I'm quite willing to take the Gustave burden on myself. I would have disposed of him long ago, if there hadn't been a more sensible way. After going to all that ghost nuisance, it was a shame to spoil the thing.

"Anyway, they'll still think a ghost did it. Donald is dead, so how are they ever going to find the murderer? We'll stick to our story, Wiggam and I. We'll say it was Donald and we'll have Jennifer and Torrance to back us up. After I take over the manor, which I can do tomorrow, nobody will come within ten miles of the place. We're still the only people who know the ins and outs."

Crispin and Freer exchanged anxious glances. Neither wanted to break the news to Roger, so Dorthan did it for them.

"The girl got hep," said Dorthan. "She's the person who locked me out of the ceiling. The gaff gave her a ride down the chute, so Crispin and Freer brought her along."

Coming to his feet, Roger slapped his hand on the table and stared at Wiggam.

"So that's what was eating Burke!" exclaimed Roger. "He was looking all around for somebody. When he learns the Lane girl is really missing, he'll start a man hunt!"

"A woman hunt," corrected Dorthan, coolly, "and we might as well let them find her. Over the edge of that big cliff would be a good spot. They'd think she went haywire and ran when the ghosts began to walk."

"An Indian princess jumped off there once," recalled Roger. "It sounds good enough for this sweetie. Where did you put her?"

"In a room upstairs," said Crispin. "Bound and gagged so tight she won't get loose no matter how hard she tries."

Roger leaned back in his chair. He was grinning shrewdly as he poured himself a drink.

"Relax while I think it over," he decided. "Lookout Rock is a good idea, if those yaps don't search there first. We'll hope they don't."

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

MARGO was doing some hoping of her own, as she struggled with the bonds in the room upstairs. Crispin and Freer must have read the latest encyclopedia of knots and splices, because the harder Margo worked, the tighter the cords became. What irked her most was the fact that the ropes weren't heavy. It was just that they were tough.

As the cords tightened, Margo kept hoping that one would break. If that happened, the rest might yield in turn. Margo had more strength than her captors supposed, still it wasn't enough. But she knew quite definitely that this was one mess from which they couldn't afford to release her, so she continued her strenuous struggle, on the floor of the pitch-black room.

Something gave suddenly, with a twang. At first Margo thought it was her heart, then as its beating continued, she was thrilled by the thought that a cord had really broken. Again she writhed among the bonds and another snapped as sharply as if it had been cut.

Straining harder than ever, Margo was rewarded by the breaking of further ropes, until she felt like a Christmas package being opened in a hurry. Somehow the thing was fantastic, as though an invisible hand had begun to move ahead, cutting the succeeding cords with an unseen blade.

Completely free, Margo couldn't believe it. Cords actually seemed to haul her back as she staggered to her feet. She was slumping, when blackness caught her; solid blackness that spoke in a whispered tone.

"Move quietly," the voice commanded. "The tunnel is across the cellar. When you reach the end, pull the big lever. Leave the floor of the mausoleum open and find Burke. Tell him to bring others here through the tunnel."

Margo felt herself almost floating from the room and down the stairs. Blackness still seemed to smother her, and from its midst she could feel the grip of The Shadow's powerful hands. Somehow it all seemed very much a dream, particularly when Margo heard voices in the kitchen. She was actually in the room with her captors, being convoyed the few steps from a doorway to the cellar stairs. Surely they must notice the living blackness that was obscuring Margo!

They didn't.

Solid steps were under Margo's feet and Margo tiptoed down them. At the bottom, Margo looked back and saw complete blackness at the door above. This still might be a dream, but if it wasn't, that blackness was The Shadow, using his cloaked form to muffle Margo's footfalls as well as mask her departure!

AT the kitchen table, Roger was laying out his plan. Over in the corner, Dorthan was tuning in a radio, keeping its tone low. Like the others present, Dorthan listened when Roger spoke.

"I'll go scouting with Wiggam," said Roger. "When the way is clear, we'll tap on the floor of the mausoleum. Bring the girl out and if there's any trouble, stick tight. We'll blind people with flashlights; we'll even fire shots if needed. Do you have a gun, Wiggam?"

Wiggam shook his head. Dorthan pulled a gun from his pocket and tossed it to the caretaker. He gestured to the radio.

"Get a load of this news report," said Dorthan. "It's got something to do with Putney."

"Where is Putney?" queried Roger, as he glanced about.

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"He went up to his room," replied Wiggam. "He said he was going to count the money and bring it down here."

The radio suddenly took over.

"Flash!" announced the broadcaster. "Cleveland police have just discovered Ralph Putney, missing embezzler, bound and gagged in a hotel room. Whoever captured him overlooked the stolen money, which was found in a bag on the closet shelf –"

As Dorthan snapped off the radio, the others came to their feet. With one accord, they swung toward the cellar stairs, their full attention drawn by a sinister laugh that came from that direction. Staring in amazement, these ghost fakers saw something that really came up to the manifestations they had tried to imitate.

Blackness solidified itself with a swirl, into a cloaked form with burning eyes beneath the brim of a slouch hat. Beneath those eyes loomed two cold spots, the muzzles of automatics. A huge .45 in each gloved fist, The Shadow stepped across the room, pivoting from his gun muzzles, which stayed constantly trained on the clustered crooks, with the exception of Dorthan, who didn't matter, since he had given his revolver to Wiggam.

Again that weird laugh, complete in its accusation. With a slight tilt of his head, The Shadow let the crooks glimpse his disguised face. He, too, was a master of make-up. His were the features of Ralph Putney.

"All right, Shadow, you win," sneered Roger. "You must have seen my letter and intercepted Putney so the coppers could take him. I knew it was you that came from the tower. You went after Crispin and now you've bagged all of us."

All the while, Roger was edging, as though to reach the front door which The Shadow blocked. His action was drawing The Shadow away from Dorthan, who gave Roger a short, quick nod.

"I should have known that Putney wouldn't come in on the train," growled Roger, edging farther. "I guess it brought you, when it stopped at Willow Glen tonight."

The Shadow's laugh was strange. It seemed to speak of the unfathomable, as though providing a solution. In fact, Roger's mention of the train was just the link The Shadow needed, toward answering a most amazing problem.

It was Dorthan's answer, too. The Shadow had gone far enough. Barehanded, Dorthan lunged for The Shadow's guns. The others, like deserting rats, turned the other direction, toward the cellar stairs, exactly where The Shadow wanted them to go, knowing that by this time Margo must have brought Clyde and an armed crew to the mausoleum that was the final outlet.

SOMETHING stopped those wheeling crooks.

It wasn't The Shadow's laugh, though that mirth broke with new crescendo. Actually, The Shadow's tone was purely an accompaniment to the incredible thing the amazed men saw.

On the threshold stood another man with a leveled gun; behind him an old lady who cackled merrily.

The man with the gun was Donald Stanbridge!

## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

"Yes, Roger, I've come back," announced Donald, in a crisp tone. "I came back to claim my heritage from Gustave, to learn that you were trying to usurp it in my stead. You see, Roger, I never was dead. Instead, my mind went blank.

"Gustave knew the family symptoms. It was the first step to a trance condition. When that struck, Gustave was quick to have me pronounced dead, and summon specialists later. He had a corpse ready for burial in my stead. He shipped me away to an asylum under another name."

As Donald paused, Jennifer spoke across his shoulder.

"Through these years," she croaked, "Gustave has been living in mortal fear that Donald would regain his mind and come back. All the while something told me that Donald was not really dead. Tonight, Donald did return, and I knew the truth the moment that I saw him. When Gustave tried to kill him, he fled to my room. I found him there and kept him. We went to the mausoleum later."

Again, The Shadow laughed. He had analyzed Gustave's ways far further than had Jennifer. Tonight, the dispute between Roger and Dorthan had made it plain that another man must have figured Roger's mention of the stopping train linked with the story of Donald's real return.

Roger wheeled at The Shadow's laugh, to see the cloaked fighter holding Dorthan in a pretzel twist. The Shadow had been ready all along for that bare-handed lunge. Yet Dorthan, with his back-twisted arms, was forcing The Shadow's guns far out of aim. Roger shot a quick look at Crispin and Freer.

"Get The Shadow!" snapped Roger. "Wiggam and I will handle Donald."

With a fling, The Shadow sent Dorthan clear across the room, carrying the kitchen table with him. Hitting head-on, Dorthan landed senseless. So did Crispin and Freer, before they had their guns half drawn. The Shadow met them with hard, cold strokes from his heavy automatics.

This wasn't helping Donald. Slow with a gun, the eldest brother was falling away from Roger's charge. With a swing that avoided Donald's aim, Roger drove in from one side, with Wiggam from the other. There was a murderous gloat in Roger's eyes as he brought his gun to bear.

Another gun spoke first. Jolting, Roger twisted toward the wall, to see Wiggam facing him, with smoke curling from the gun that Dorthan had loaned him. As Roger sagged, Wiggam spoke slowly, sadly.

"I killed Mr. Gustave, there in the dining room," said Wiggam. "I, too, recognized Mr. Donald and I could not allow him to be harmed any more than I could now. You are no longer my master, Mr. Roger, now that your brother has returned. I aided your wrong deeds only because I acknowledged you as the real head of the Stanbridge family. But I was wrong –"

Roger's hand interrupted with a convulsive upward thrust which carried to its trigger finger. Neither The Shadow, free of his adversaries, nor Donald, springing from the other side, could reach Roger in time to stop the gun stab. With the effort, Roger slumped dead, while Wiggam, straight in the path of the gun's last aim, went to one knee, his hands clutching his side.

It was a mortal wound, as Wiggam's wince declared. Nevertheless, the caretaker forced his lips into a smile. As Donald reached him with supporting hands, Wiggam looked up and said:

"Do you remember my nephew, Mr. Donald? He's a true Wiggam... like the rest of us. He'll serve you... the way I did... the way all Wiggams serve the master of Stanbridge Manor –"



## HOUSE OF GHOSTS

Men were coming from the cellar stairs, with Clyde Burke in the lead. Dr. Torrance suddenly pushed past, to reach Wiggam. Seeing the coroner, Wiggam spoke again, repeating the confession he had made before, and adding that he had slain Roger in addition to Gustave.

It was only then that Torrance saw Donald and stared in profound amazement, until through his mind came recollections of Gustave's comments that very afternoon. As Torrance recalled them, they were veiled admissions that Donald was still alive.

Torrance's men were rounding up the stupefied embezzlers. They stopped and stared at one another as they caught the tone of a strange, departing laugh. Arrived at the top of the cellar steps, Margo looked beyond the group and saw that Wiggam's front door was open. It was from that outer darkness that the strange laugh came.

It was repeated, that triumphant mirth, in a car that coasted down the sunken road. Across his shoulder, The Shadow looked back at the gaunt, ancient building known as Stanbridge Manor, with its open tower pointing to the scudding clouds that fleeced the moonlight.

Stanbridge Manor had regained its rightful master, thanks to The Shadow's conquest over ghostly crime!

THE END