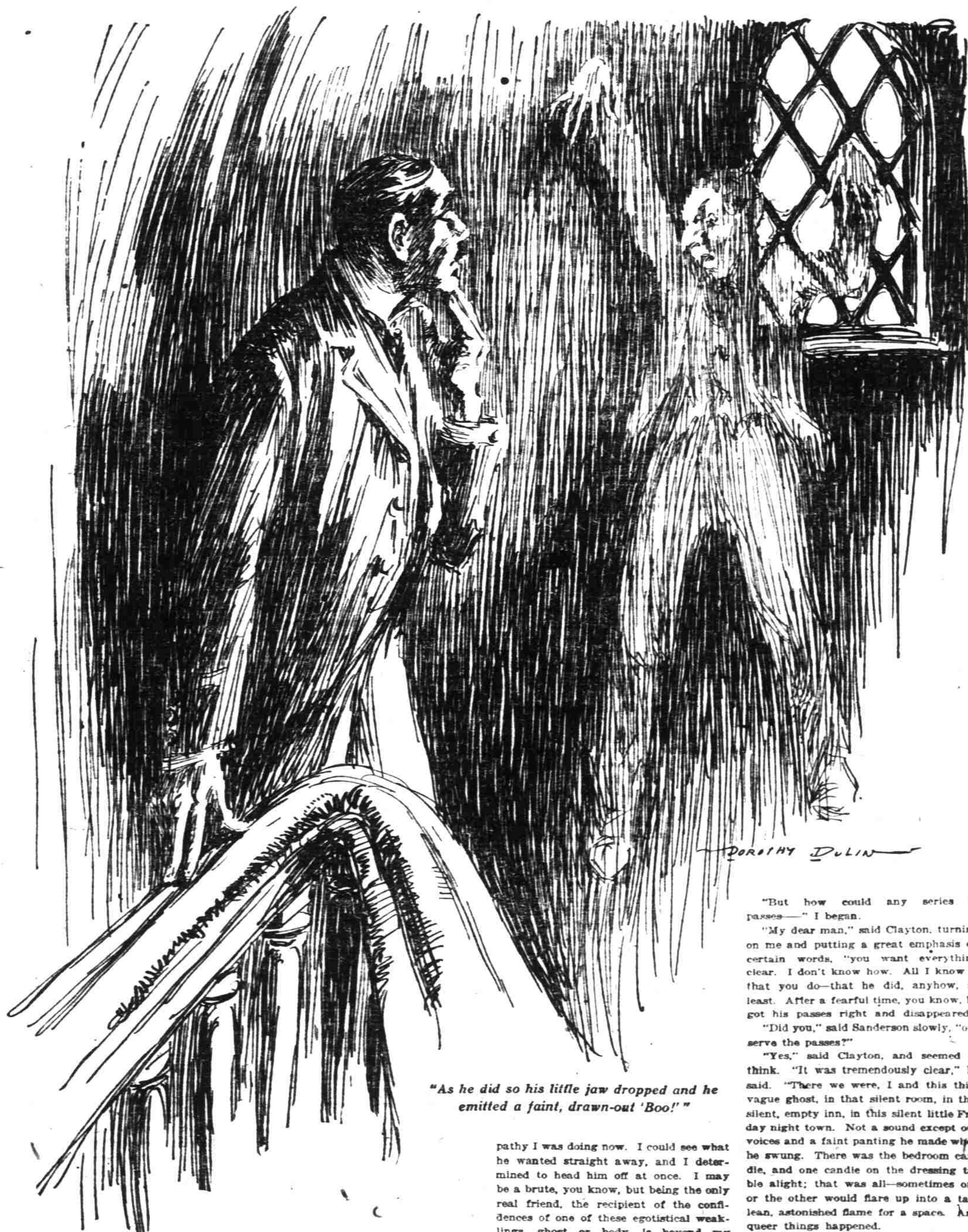




DOROTHY DULIN

*"As he did so his little jaw dropped and he emitted a faint, drawn-out 'Boo!'"*

background he gave to himself. He kept flitting up and down, with his thin voice going—talking, talking about his wretched self, and never a word of clear, firm statement from first to last. He was thinner and sillier and more pointless than if he had been real and alive. Only then, you know, he would not have been in my bedroom here—if he had been alive. I should have kicked him out."

"Of course," said Evans, "there are poor mortals like that."

"And there's just as much chance of their being ghosts as the rest of us," I admitted.

"What gave a sort of point to him,

you know, was the fact that he did seem within limits to have found himself out. The mess he had made of haunting had depressed him terribly. He had been told it would be a 'lark,' and here it was, nothing but another failure added to his record! He said, and I can quite believe it, that he had never tried to do anything in all his life that he hadn't made a perfect mess of—and through all the wastes of eternity he never would. If he had had sympathy, perhaps— He paused at that and stood regarding me. He remarked that, strange as it might seem to me, nobody, not anyone, ever had given him the amount of sym-

pathy I was doing now. I could see what he wanted straight away, and I determined to head him off at once. I may be a brute, you know, but being the only real friend, the recipient of the confidences of one of these egotistical weaklings, ghost or body, is beyond my physical endurance. I got up briskly. 'Don't you brood on these things too much,' I said. 'The thing you've got to do is to get out of this—get out of this sharp. You pull yourself together and try.'

"I can't," he said.

"You try," I said, and try he did."

"Try!" said Sanderson. "How?"

"Passes," said Clayton.

"Passes?"

"Complicated series of gestures and passes with the hands. That's how he had come in and that's how he had to get out again. Lord! what a business I had!"

"But how could any series of passes—" I began.

"My dear man," said Clayton, turning on me and putting a great emphasis on certain words, "you want everything clear. I don't know how. All I know is that you do—that he did, anyhow, at least. After a fearful time, you know, he got his passes right and disappeared."

"Did you," said Sanderson slowly, "observe the passes?"

"Yes," said Clayton, and seemed to think. "It was tremendously clear," he said. "There we were, I and this thin, vague ghost, in that silent room, in this silent, empty inn, in this silent little Friday night town. Not a sound except our voices and a faint panting he made when he swung. There was the bedroom candle, and one candle on the dressing table alight; that was all—sometimes one or the other would flare up into a tall, lean, astonished flame for a space. And queer things happened."

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"I can't," he said; "I shall never—!" And suddenly he sat down on a little chair at the foot of the bed and began to sob and sob. Lord! what a harrowing, whimpering thing he seemed!

"You pull yourself together," I said, and tried to pat him on the back, and my confounded hand went through him! By that time, you know, I wasn't nearly so massive as I had been on the landing. I got the queerness of it full. I remember snatching back my hand out of him, as it were, with a little thrill, and walking over to the dressing table. "You pull yourself together," I said to him, "and