

The Creeping Man

by Frances Shelley Wees

YESTERDAY, After discovery of the \$50,000 diamonds, Mr. Forrester and Michael try to persuade the girl to leave the University. They insist on staying. The next morning, Jared Devoe drops in at breakfast time.

Chapter 21 Casting Seeds

"YOUR mother is upset . . . because of bad news!" inquired Tuck.

"Yes. That is it. Bad news—strange, perturbing news. News that we do not understand. But I do not make myself clear. I wonder if you have been told just where Professor Murchison, my cousin's husband, is at the present moment?" His brown eyes darted to each face.

"Why no, we haven't," Michael replied. "I had an idea he was away on a business trip."

"Yes. Someone told you that?" Tuck spoke up. "Mrs. Deane told me that," she said.

"Yes. I see. Well—we, too, think he is away on a business trip. But we are not sure just what this business is—or when he is coming back."

"I will tell you the whole story," said Devoe evenly. "He went away one night, and did not tell anyone where he was going—not even his wife. Until last night, and you can imagine the suspense, the wonder, the fears—until last week we heard nothing from him. The police had attempted to trace him and had failed. Then we had a letter from Chicago saying that he was not to worry. It was a very short letter, indicating that he is perhaps absorbed in pressing work of his own, but it gave no indication of his exact whereabouts or the time of his returning. As a matter of fact, it was most unsatisfactory, but it reassured his wife to a certain extent. However . . ." he paused, and then went on: "Our private affairs are not what trouble us. It is that others, with malicious tongues, are attempting to cause us trouble. It is worrying my mother greatly, and Mrs. Murchison too."

"I don't quite understand, Mr. Devoe," Michael looked up from the little pile of crumbled toast on the table before him.

Devoe's face darkened. "No, I hesitate—but I must speak of the matter. You ladies will undoubtedly hear of this, be subjected to these rumors—I must guard you against them. The woman who lives next door to you—Miss Lissey—has a most uncontrollable tongue, and a strange mind. For no reason at all she will manufacture ugly stories out of whole cloth, and repeat them everywhere. It seems that she has discovered that the Professor's absence has caused us great worry—that we have not been sure of his exact whereabouts. And she is telling . . . she frowned angrily—she is telling that we are away with another woman and has left his wife for good. It is jealousy, of course, which you will be able to understand. She hates youth and beauty. She hates my cousin because she is young and beautiful. But it is most unkind, and most annoying."

"Mrs. Murchison does not believe that?"

"Certainly not. Nothing could be further from her mind."

"And you?"

"He was taken by surprise. He looked at Michael queerly. 'I, too, am convinced that she is very wrong,' he said gravely."

"Then your point is that Miss Lissey is telling lies, and stories and must be stopped?"

"That is it exactly," he paused. "It seems best to give you two ladies the facts. You may have noticed the marks of strain on my mother and Mrs. Murchison at the Deane's the other night?" He looked at Bunny squarely.

'Predicament'

"NO," Tuck answered him. "Of course we wouldn't be looking for any such thing."

"No, of course not, unless Miss Lissey had drawn it to your attention previously." He frowned, then looked at Michael. "What would you advise me to do?" he asked. "You understand our predicament. We cannot possibly afford to have ill-chosen rumors and reports carried about the University. It is damaging to Dr. Murchison's professional reputation, and it makes the situation very difficult for his wife."

Michael considered his head lowered. The sun glinted over his thick black hair. "Other people are familiar with Miss Lissey's mania for gossip, are they not? With her abilities to manufacture unpleasant stories?"

"They could not possibly be unaware of her tendencies."

"Then, I should think you have nothing to worry about. After all, it is only a temporary affair. When Dr. Murchison comes back with a satisfactory explanation of his journeyings, people will forget all about what she has been telling." He lifted his head and looked out of the window.

"There was another long silence. Devoe was rubbing thoughtfully at the handle of his spoon. Finally he spoke in a low voice.

"That is just it," he said. "How do we know he will ever return?"

"I beg your pardon?" said Michael as if his ears were deceiving him.

"We do not know where he is, nor why he went. We do not know his plans. He said nothing about returning. In fact," he hesitated—"the tone of the letter made us believe that he meant it as a final farewell. Supposing he never returns? What then?"

Michael laughed. "You are anticipating an event which will scarcely come to pass," he said lightly.

Devoe stirred restlessly. "It is in our minds, that worry," he insisted. "We feel that we must take it into account."

"Was he the type of man to leave his home and his wife with no more ceremony than he has shown?"

"No, emphatically not."

"There is nothing to suggest that Miss Lissey may be speaking from some knowledge she may have in her possession rather than fancy?"

"There was the smallest hesitation on Devoe's part. "Nothing," he said.

Michael looked straight at him. "What is your own personal explanation of Dr. Murchison's action, Mr. Devoe?"

For a moment Devoe did not answer. Then, "I cannot explain it," he said heavily. "I have gone over every possibility again and again in my mind. I have given those possibilities to the Police Commissioner and he has worked on them. Nothing answers. Until he comes back to explain it himself—if he chooses to come back—the mystery is still a mystery to me."

"I see," Michael said thoughtfully. "Perhaps then, you had better go to the Commissioner with this story about Miss Lissey. There is a chance that she knows something she isn't telling—something she's only hinting at. Since you've talked it all over with him previously, I should think that would be your wisest move."

'Dyed-In-The-Wool'

DEVOE started up and stared at Michael. "What could she know?" he demanded. "What is there for her to know?"

Michael shook his head. "She may answer that and she may not. By the way, what about Dr. Murchison's brother? He seems a level-headed sort of chap. He was living here in the house, was he not? Can't he throw any light on his brother's movements?"

Devoe's face was dark again. "He says he had gone to the theater that night. He seems to know nothing whatever of his brother's disappearance—of his action."

Michael rose. "What does he think of this idea of Miss Lissey's? About another woman?"

Devoe looked straight at Michael as he answered.

"Duncan is very sullen and ill-tempered. We have little talk together on the matter. I do not know his opinion."

"Well, what about Miss Lissey herself? Where was she at the time he left? Did she see him go? It might be worth your while to find that out."

"I might suggest that to the Police Commissioner," Devoe said doubtfully. He turned to Tuck.

"You will pardon my uneasiness, Mrs. Forrester, I am sure," he said politely. "Perhaps this matter will be cleared up soon, and then we shall have freer minds. In the meantime, you will understand why my mother . . . and Mrs. Murchison . . ."

"Certainly," Tuck interrupted him. "I can understand perfectly."

"And perhaps . . ." he hesitated again. "It might be better . . . in case you do not either of them . . . if they did not know that you are in possession of this information."

He made his adieux when Tuck had assured him that she and Bunny were silent on the matter. He was effusive in his thanks. Michael watched his retreating figure from the window.

"Very distinctly," he said. "I hear church bells, far, far in the distance. Or is it a mouse I smell?"

"It looks more like a herring," Bunny answered contemptuously. "Isn't he a horrible creature? I was simply dying to shake salt all over him."

Michael wrinkled his nose. "Proof," he exclaimed. "What a nasty idea, Bunny. What a nasty idea!"

"I thought he was rather sweet," said Tuck dreamily. "He did so want to get his little idea across, and he had such a dreadful time doing it, poor thing."

"His idea, Tuck?"

"Umhm. That Duncan Murchison is a double-dyed-in-the-wool villain, and knows a lot more than he wants to tell. Wasn't that it?"

Michael laughed. "So fathered, honey. Apparently, since it got to both of us, that was what he was trying to do. Strike you that way, Bunny?"

"Yes," she said loftily and turned suddenly to a faint pink under Tuck's scrutiny.

Michael coughed. "That letter," he said, "is a swell little stopper. I think we will endeavor to pull it out. The soup will then splash on the floor and murder will be out."

"But Miss Lissey, Michael? What has she up her sleeve?"

"Oh, her arm, probably. You never can tell."

Continued tomorrow

On the RADIO CHAINS

Where to Find Them on the Dial:

Kex, Portland, 1180; KFI, 640; Los Angeles, KGA, 1470; Spokane, KGO, 780; San Francisco, KGW, 620; Portland, KJR, 970; Seattle, KXN, 1030; Los Angeles, KOA, 830; Denver, KOIN, 940; Portland, KOMO, 926; Seattle, KPO, 630; San Francisco, KSL, 1180; Salt Lake, KSL, 1180; Salt Lake, KSL, 1180.

Monday

5:00—Party, KPO, KFI, Frank and Archie, KEX, KJR.

5:30—Time and Tempo, KGW, KFI, Kelsey's Orch., KGO, KJR; Master Singers, KPO.

6:00—Radio Theater, KSL, KXN, KOIN; Quiz Program, KPO, KGW, KFI.

6:30—Templeton Time, KPO, KGW, KFI; Drama, KGO, KEX, KJR.

7:00—Hall of Fun, KGO, KEX; Hour, KPO, KGW, KFI; Lombardo's Orch., KSL, KXN, KOIN; News, KJR.

7:30—Blondie, KXN, KSL, KOIN; Sensations and Swing, KPO, KGW, KFI; Radio Forum, KGO, KJR.

8:00—Amos and Andy, KXN, KOIN, KSL; Aloha Land, KGO; Doe's Music, KEX; Fred Waring, KPO, KGW, KFI.

8:15—Richard Crooks, KPO, KFI, KGW; Lyman's Orch., KEX; White-Man's Orch., KOMO; Model Minstrels, KXN, KSL, KOIN.

9:00—Sherlock Holmes, KPO, KFI, KGW; Tune Up Time, KXN, KOIN.

Tuesday

5:00—Aldrich Family, KPO, KFI, KGW; Frank and Archie, KEX, KJR; Sunset Shadows, KGO.

5:30—Sherlock Holmes, KGO, KEX, KJR; Haldi's Orch., KPO, KFI, KGW; Tuesday Night Party, KSL.

6:00—Hollywood, KGO, KEX; Music Room, KPO, KGW, KFI.

6:30—Phibber McGee, KPO, KFI, KGW; Crosby's Orch., KXN, KSL, KOIN; Human Side of Literature, KGO; News, KJR.

7:00—Address of Cordell Hull, KGO, KEX; Bob Hope, KPO, KGW, KFI; Calling All Cars, KXN.

7:30—Pop-Offs, KXN, KOIN; Drama KGO; Dog House, KPO, KFI, KGW.

8:00—Fred Waring, KPO, KFI, KGW; Amos and Andy, KXN, KOIN, KSL; Information Please, KGO, KEX, KJR.

8:15—Jimmy Fidler, KSL, KOIN; I Love a Mystery, KPO, KFI, KGW.

8:30—Aldrich Family, KGO, KEX, KJR; Johnny Presents, KPO, KFI, KGW; Big Town, KOIN, KXN.

9:00—Tuesday Night Party, KOIN.

Wednesday

5:00—Aldrich Family, KPO, KFI, KGW; Frank and Archie, KEX, KJR; Sunset Shadows, KGO.

5:30—Sherlock Holmes, KGO, KEX, KJR; Haldi's Orch., KPO, KFI, KGW; Tuesday Night Party, KSL.

6:00—Hollywood, KGO, KEX; Music Room, KPO, KGW, KFI.

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8:30—Aldrich Family, KGO, KEX, KJR; Johnny Presents, KPO, KFI, KGW; Big Town, KOIN, KXN.

9:00—Tuesday Night Party, KOIN.

Thursday

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5:30—Sherlock Holmes, KGO, KEX, KJR; Haldi's Orch., KPO, KFI, KGW; Tuesday Night Party, KSL.

6:00—Hollywood, KGO, KEX; Music Room, KPO, KGW, KFI.

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8:30—Aldrich Family, KGO, KEX, KJR; Johnny Presents, KPO, KFI, KGW; Big Town, KOIN, KXN.

9:00—Tuesday Night Party, KOIN.

Friday

5:00—Aldrich Family, KPO, KFI, KGW; Frank and Archie, KEX, KJR; Sunset Shadows, KGO.

5:30—Sherlock Holmes, KGO, KEX, KJR; Haldi's Orch., KPO, KFI, KGW; Tuesday Night Party, KSL.

6:00—Hollywood, KGO, KEX; Music Room, KPO, KGW, KFI.

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8:30—Aldrich Family, KGO, KEX, KJR; Johnny Presents, KPO, KFI, KGW; Big Town, KOIN, KXN.

9:00—Tuesday Night Party, KOIN.

Saturday

5:00—Aldrich Family, KPO, KFI, KGW; Frank and Archie, KEX, KJR; Sunset Shadows, KGO.

5:30—Sherlock Holmes, KGO, KEX, KJR; Haldi's Orch., KPO, KFI, KGW; Tuesday Night Party, KSL.

6:00—Hollywood, KGO, KEX; Music Room, KPO, KGW, KFI.

6:30—Phibber McGee, KPO, KFI, KGW; Crosby's Orch., KXN, KSL, KOIN; Human Side of Literature, KGO; News, KJR.

KSL, True or False, KGO, KJR.

9:30—Hawthorne House, KPO, KGW, KFI; Herbeck's Orch., KSL, KXN, News, KJR.

10:00—News Reporter, KPO, KFI, KGW; Maderiguera's Orch., KGO, KJR; Paul Sullivan, KSL, KXN; News, KOIN.

10:30—Music by Woodbury, KPO, KGW; Prima's Orch., KOIN, KSL, KXN; Posters' Orch., KGO, KJR, KEX, KFI.

11:00—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

11:30—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

12:00—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

12:30—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

1:00—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

1:30—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

2:00—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

2:30—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

3:00—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

3:30—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

4:00—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

4:30—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

5:00—Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KFI; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO, KXN, KGW.

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