

# The Creeping Man

by Frances Shelley Wees

YESTERDAY, The same rainy night, Gordon Deane is severely wounded, and the perpetrators passed. Duncan is arrested.

## Chapter 44

### The Case Against Duncan

BY THE time Michael was feeling almost well the doctor was able to say positively that Gordon would live—live, and quite possibly be himself again within a month or two. By the merest fraction of a chance he would have fallen to be fatal. Gordon was not yet conscious and the doctor would not in any event allow him to be questioned for many days.

Later that day Michael, with his father and the Commissioner, were back at the Forrester house. Tuck and Bunny were still in bed at the Deanes'.

The District Attorney was very angry. There was a spot of brilliant red in either cheek, and his shaggy brows were bent in such a ferocious frown that his eyes never became visible.

"The devil!" he was saying over and over to himself. "The devil!" "Donovan's swearing mad," the Commissioner said.

"He didn't seem to mind about you, Michael, and the three women being at the point of death. But he's ready to strangle with his own hands the man who hit a defenseless and innocent lad."

Michael smiled wryly. "Gordon isn't quite as defenseless and innocent as he appears," he replied. "Apparently our murderer's found it out. I tell you—Gordon's been keeping watch for me."

"Michael," his father broke in brusquely, "the girls are safe at the Deanes'."

"They couldn't be safer, dad." "No. Perhaps not. But I thought," he puffed angrily at his pipe.

"Michael, I'm all completely razzle-dazzled. You told me that stuff about the vivisection and you hinted at a man... a certain man... and I've been suspecting him all along, waiting for you to pile up the evidence. And now—"

"Michael, the worst man in the world would not attack his own son so it's impossible, lad! And on top of that you have another man arrested that seems as innocent as the day."

Michael twisted the signet ring on his finger in a slow contemplation. "It's not a man we're dealing with, dad," he said at last. "It's what you called him in the beginning. I think. A devil. At least, a madman. But—I never named him to you, did I?"

"No." "I wasn't sure, then. I'm sure now. But how in the name of Heaven can I prove it?"

"You say you're sure now," the Commissioner put in. "I issued a warrant for young Murchison's arrest, Michael, without knowing upon what grounds you based your certainty. Will you give them to me?"

"He's in custody?" "Yes. But acting like a lion. Crazy mad at us. Insists that he's got to be released immediately... and I don't know how to answer him."

"Donovan's not back yet?" Michael queried.

"Not yet. Where is he?" "I sent him on a little errand. He'll be here any moment. He'll have the final proofs for you—and I'll give you the rest of the dope. I've said I can't prove my case, remember, but we had to do something. We'll prove it later."

'Unbelievable'

HE sat at the big desk and propped his head on one hand. "First," he said, "what about that letter from Chicago? We know it was a fake, in this way—that it was sent from here by someone, held in Chicago a few days, and then sent back. But—the expert testified that Murchison himself wrote it. Until Smith came with his frantic story a few days back, that seemed utterly impossible, although the expert does not make mistakes. I told myself then that the only way in which he could have made a mistake was in the case of two handwritings, belonging to members of the same family, alike in temperament and upbringing. Therefore, I decided that it was quite possible that Duncan could have written the letter. I discovered that the handwritings were very similar by looking up lab reports at the University. No one there can tell them apart. So that point might be settled so."

His father looked at him curiously, but Michael went straight on. "Second, Duncan's story about the diamonds sounded remarkably unbelievable. He wanted the diamonds. The very fact that his brother put pebbles where Duncan thought the diamonds were to be points to some misunderstanding. I know Duncan said it was to deceive the wife, but that needn't be true. And, if you remember the speech Duncan made to Marie on the sun porch, about not being able to stand it any longer—stand what? And the threat to kill someone—it looks as if he wanted more than the diamonds, doesn't it? It seems that they have had a quarrel later, perhaps. It may be that Duncan knows the truth about Jared Devoe now. But we could interpret the situation at that time as we have interpreted it. There have been Duncan's motives. Third, he has no proven alibi for the night of the murder. He says he was at the theater, but he can't prove it. We know that Marie Murchison—rather Mr. Deane says so—got out of a car behind the men's residence, where Duncan lives, at midnight. Had they been somewhere together in a car?"

"Fourth, what did Miss Lissey say to Duncan on that Sunday afternoon of the day she was killed? Was she threatening him with exposure? It seems strange that she should have died—and by poison—immediately afterward, particularly when you realize that Duncan, as a chemist, can buy poisons in any amounts he desires, without creating suspicion. Keeping that fact in mind, who had a better opportunity to put the poison in the meat that came here intended for us? I tell you, gentlemen, the whole business is a very carefully planned and carried out bit of villainy." He held up his hand as his father started to interrupt. "Just a minute," he said. "You are going to say that I should have traced the strange stuff that killed the dog and cat by now. I have. It is a gaseous poison, which was made by Dr. Murchison and Dr. Murchison only in the process of some of his experiments, and the remainder of the supply stands at the present moment in a blue glass bottle in his own cabinet."

John Forrester broke out. "Are you trying to palm that rigmare off on us as reasonable?" he demanded indignantly.

"Dad, do you think it's nice to doubt my word so obviously?" Michael asked. His tone was sorrowful, but his eyes twinkled.

"Why the devil don't you find out where the woman was the night her husband was killed, instead of hinting that she might have been with Duncan? Fourth—you can't tell me the lad intended to poison the girls, even if he did think you'd be better disposed with his poisoned meat. Indeed! Fifth—why couldn't the Lissey woman have passed on some of her slanderous tales to Duncan the afternoon she died, and told him it was time he did something about his brother's death, for instance? Why? It's what she would have done. And sixth—my son, how did it happen that he had the poison on him to kill her with before he knew that she was going to blow up and threaten him with something? Answer me that!"

The Proof

"DAD," Michael said critically. "I can see now why you were a good defense lawyer. You are positively eloquent, man, although you do get a bit mixed. However—he paused—"well, in case anybody happens to ask you'd at least have a case sufficient to issue the warrant, wouldn't you?"

"No," said John Forrester decidedly.

There was a rap at the door. Michael jumped to open it. Donovan stood on the threshold with a small package in his hand. He said nothing. Michael took the parcel.

"Here's your proof," he said. "Donovan, I'll show you where you found the contents of this parcel."

"In the bottom drawer of Duncan Murchison's dresser, sir."

Michael tore off the paper. He held out a bunch of keys and a small gray box. "With my compliments," he said. "Edgar Murchison's key ring, and the little gray box back, and slid it open. 'Ten of the tablets of the poison that killed Miss Lissey. How about that, dad?'"

Higgins gulped. "Swelp me, Mr. Forrester, I was 'ome in bed."

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"Can you prove that?" "That I can, sir. I was with one of the under-gardeners, sir."

"Were you rooming with him on the night of the murder?" Higgins' little eyes darted to his face, and fell. "You mean Miss Lissey's murder, Mr. Forrester?"

"No."

"You mean—Professor Murchison's murder, sir?" "You've got it now. Were you?"

"Yes, sir, I was. But it's no use, he ain't got brains enough to remember back that far." There was despair in his tone.

"It looks very bad for you, Higgins."

The narrow shoulders drooped. Michael leaned forward. "How did you know the necklace was hidden here on the campust?" he asked.

"Didn't know nothink about it." "Oh, piffle. Come clean. You were hunting for it, and you expected to get several thousand dollars—five thousand preferably—reward for finding it. And you pinched the key to the study, and gave it to Gordon, who was in cahoots with you."

Higgins swallowed. "I 'eard the Professor quarrelin' with his wife, and 'e told 'er as 'ow 'e'd 'idden the necklace where she'd never lay 'er. And that was what was the day 'e disappeared like. I figured as 'ow I might as well 'ave a look for it as anybody else. 'Er and that Mr. Devoe dug up 'alf me flower beds diggin' for it. A blind man would 'a' known what was up."

"You seem to have overheard a number of important things, Higgins, do you know where Professor Murchison's body is?"

The question destroyed the little poise the gardener had regained. He stared at Michael with terrified eyes.

"No, sir, I ain't got no idea, sir."

Higgins went out and Michael laughed lightly.

Continued tomorrow

Lives Up to Name

Painville, O. (U)—F. G. Haskins and Charles St. Clair named their 19-foot sailboat, equipped with outboard motor, "Gone With the Wind." The name proved appropriate, for one day the two found their boat gone.

Fishermen on Probation.

Honolulu, Dec. 27.—(P)—Ten fishermen arrested by the U. S. navy recently for trespassing the restricted area at the entrance to Pearl harbor pleaded guilty in federal court today. They were placed on probation for five years.

# On the RADIO CHAINS

## STATIONS

Where to Find Them or the Dial  
Kex, Portland, 1180; KFI, 640  
Los Angeles; KGA, 1470. Spokane:  
KGO, 790, San Francisco; KGW,  
620, Portland; KJR, 970, Seattle;  
KNX, 1050, Los Angeles; KOA, 530,  
Denver; KOIN, 940, KOMO, 630, San  
Francisco; KSL, 1180, Salt Lake.

## Wednesday

5:00—Frank and Archie, KJR;  
Waring's Orch., KPO, KGW, KFI.  
5:30—Kelsey's Orch., KPO; We  
Present, KGO, KJR.

6:00—Beyond Reasonable Doubt,  
KGO, KEX, KJR; Star Theater, KSL,  
KOIN, KNX; Drama, KOMO.

6:30—Horse and Buggy Days, KGO;  
Hollywood Playhouse, KPO, KFI,  
KGW.

7:00—Sketch, KNX, KSL, KOIN;  
Kyer's Prgm., KPO, KGW, KFI;  
Shields' Orch., KGO, KJR, KEX.

7:30—Burns and Allen, KNX,  
KOIN, KSL; Adventures in Photog-  
raphy, KGO, KJR.

8:00—Waring's Orch., KPO; John-  
ny Presents, KGO, KJR, KEX; Amos  
and Andy, KNX, KOIN, KSL.

8:15—I Love a Mystery, KPO,  
KGO, KFI; Lum and Abner, KSL,  
KOIN, KNX.

8:30—Miller's Orch., KNX, KSL,  
KOIN; Quiz Pzgm., KGO, KJR, KEX;

9:00—Rhythm Factory, KPO, KGW,  
Frank and Archie, KJR.

9:30—Stringings at Sundown, KGO,  
KEX, KJR; Army Band, KPO, KGW.

9:50—Major Bowes, KOIN, KSL;  
Good News of 1940, KPO, KFI,  
KGO, KEX, KJR.

10:00—America's Town Meeting,  
KGO, KEX, KJR.

10:30—Columbia Workshop, KOIN;  
Music Hall, KPO, KFI.

11:00—Sports Huddle, KNX, KOIN;  
News, KSL.

11:15—Duchin's Orch., KNX;  
Kruppa's Orch., KGO, I Love a Mys-  
tery, KPO, KGW, KFI.

11:30—Symphony Hour, KPO, KGW,  
KFI; Ask-It-Basket, KNX, KOIN,  
KSL; Radio Guild, KGO.

11:50—Strange As It Seems, KNX.

## Avallon Time, KPO, KFI, KGW.

9:00—Pearce's Gang, KNX, KSL,  
KOIN; Fred Allen, KPO, KGW, KFI;  
Marriage Club, KGO.

9:30—Noble's Orch., KGO, KEX;  
News, KJR.

10:00—Martin's Orch., KGO, KEX;  
News, KNX, KSL; News Reporter,  
KPO, KFI, KGW; News, KOIN.

10:30—Heidt's Orch., KGO, KJR,  
KEX; Ravazza's Orch., KPO, KGW,  
KFI.

11:00—Gray's Orch., KOIN, KJR,  
KSL; Nottingham's Orch., KPO, KFI;  
This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News,  
KGO, KGW, KNX.

11:30—America's Town Meeting,  
KGO, KEX, KJR.

12:00—Columbia Workshop, KOIN;  
Music Hall, KPO, KFI.

12:30—Sports Huddle, KNX, KOIN;  
News, KSL.

1:00—Fred Waring, KPO, KGW,  
KFI; Krupa's Orch., KEX; Aloha  
Land, KGO; Amos and Andy, KNX,  
KSL, KOIN.

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## KSL, KOIN; Sketch, KGO, KJR, KEX.

9:30—Those We Love, KPO, KFI,  
KGO; Auld's Orch., KGW; Heidt's  
Orch., KGO; Operetta Series, KNX,  
KOIN; News, KJR.

10:00—News Reporter, KPO, KGW,  
KFI; Poster's Orch., KGO, KJR; Paul  
Sullivan, KSL, KOIN, KNX; News,  
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KEX, KJR; Army Band, KPO, KGW.

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## KEL, KOIN; Sketch, KGO, KJR, KEX.

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KGO; Auld's Orch., KGW; Heidt's  
Orch., KGO; Operetta Series, KNX,  
KOIN; News, KJR.

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