

The Creeping Man

by Frances Shelley Wees

Chapter 45
Twilight

TUCK, lying alone on the big hammock on the sun porch, was puzzled. She had a strange feeling that she had been sick and out of the world for days, that many things had happened during that time that she did not know of. There were queer gaps in her knowledge; and yet it had been only yesterday that they had arrested Duncan Murchison.

Michael, she reflected, hadn't been quite himself throughout this mystery. She knew there were a great many things he hadn't told her. For instance, what had he been doing that day on the river with Gordon, drifting along the bank in the gray boat? He'd been looking for something. Why did this murderer—Duncan, of course, but the real murderer—why did he want to kill them? Was it because Michael really knew the truth, and the murderer guessed? If Michael did know the truth, it was certain he'd found a great many things he hadn't told her.

What could he have found out? Perhaps he knew at last where Murchison's body had been taken. Perhaps that's what he was looking for in the boat—a weighted body that had been dropped from the cliff above.

And Michael was so strange tonight. He had sat all through dinner awfully preoccupied, not answering when he was spoken to at all. Finally he had looked over at Bunny and said, without warning, "Do you believe he's guilty?"

Bunny was pale with great black rings around her eyes. She had been pretty sick after the gas. She had looked up and said, "Don't ask me, Michael. How can I tell? I don't feel that it's possible he's guilty, if that's what you mean."

"That'll do," Michael had said gravely. Then, after a minute, "It's lonely in prison, I've heard. We won't let him out on bail. How'd you like to come down and tell him you think he's innocent?"

Bunny had been sort of frozen at this question and she had stared at him. "What do you mean, Michael?"

"Do you remember exactly what I said to you about Duncan? That if you knew as much as I do about this case you would never speak to him again?"

"Well... can't you imagine what that means, Bunny?"

Tuck's head hurt again. It had been swimming at dinner, and she herself simply couldn't imagine what that meant, except what it said. Evidently it didn't mean that Bunny saw. She jumped up from the table, her hand at her throat, and said, "Michael! Is that it?"

"That's it. Will you go?"

"Must we wait for dessert?" Michael got up too. He came over to Tuck, sitting at the foot of the table, picked her up and carried her to the porch hammock. Then he kissed her. "You're still sick, honey," he had said. "Lie here in the fresh air until we come back, and we'll explain."

Charlotte Jean had brought an aspirin, then, and Tuck had taken it. Perhaps that's what made her head feel fuzzy. The cool twilight air was wonderful... it made one sleepy.

There was a rap at the door. "Mrs. Forrester," Mr. Deane's querulous squeaky voice said. "Is your husband in?"

"No, he isn't," she answered, trying to rouse herself. "Can I do something?"

"Gordon's consoling. I don't think you can. He is trying to tell your husband something, and we can't understand him."

and... then he hit me... Oh, Gordon sighed. Then he sat up in bed, and pointed his finger straight before him. "Will tell!" he shouted. "I'll tell... we'll get you... Freddie... he sank back.

The doctor lifted his wrist. "You'll have to go," he said to Tuck imperatively. "I must give him a sedative. This can't go on."

Tuck turned and made her way from the room. What had she learned? Nothing except that the Creeping Man really existed... but if that were so, if it had been he who hit Gordon... then Duncan was innocent! Duncan had been with Bunny when they saw the Creeping Man. Out along the cliffs... then perhaps Michael and Gordon had been searching for him that day... certainly they had. And that meant that Michael knew Duncan wasn't the fiend he was looking for.

She stood on the path behind the Deane house and thought. Her brain raced. To find him! But she would never dare do that there alone. It was foolhardy... and she wouldn't dare. The Creeping Man! He might come up behind her, and do what he had done to Gordon... or to old Mrs. Devoe.

There were cautious footsteps out in the wood. She looked up. Out in the darkness of the trees stood a tall figure with the short policeman's cape that told its identity. He did not move, but waved a reassuring hand.

Tuck waved back, and started for her own gate. Agamemnon came racing to meet her, and walked by her side, brushing and arching himself against her skirt.

She did not notice him. What was it Gordon had said? "Came up out of the ground." How?

And then Tuck stopped short in her walk. She had remembered the hairpin... the hairpin she and Bunny had found that day, out by the stump. Mrs. Devoe's hairpin. Supposing... why had that hairpin lain there if it didn't supposing it lay there because old Mrs. Devoe had fallen there? And supposing... supposing she had been murdered... because she had been standing right there when the Creeping Man came up out of the ground! That was why he had murdered her.

"I've Found Something!" Tuck glanced up at the sky swiftly. Another half hour before dark. It would still be light out on the cliffs. Her mind was made up. She couldn't wait until tomorrow to know.

She turned toward that dark figure out in the wood, leaning there against a tree, and called out softly. "Mr. Donovan," she said. "I'm going out along the cliffs. Will you come with me in the trees, and see that nothing happens to me?"

He raised his billy, and straightened up. She went up the path on flying feet, and looked his way only occasionally to see that he followed. Agamemnon came too, dashing her head rapidly.

They reached the fork of the path, and Tuck raced madly through the darkness.

Like a flash she ran up to the big stump where she and Bunny had seen the hairpin. She scanned the ground all about it, with careful searching, to distinguish perhaps a tran door set into the earth. It seemed a little ridiculous, now that she was here. Trap doors do not open into the earth.

The earth was perfectly solid as far as she could see. Agamemnon nosed around her, sniffing. It was getting dark rapidly. It seemed, it was strange, eerie, out here, with the sun dropping out of sight over the rim of the hills ahead, with the water surging along so blackly... not a bird was singing. She turned swiftly to look for Donovan, and he was standing tall and straight under the edge of the trees. He was keeping her safe.

Then she looked at the stump, and her eye was caught and held by the straight line of a cut running around it very near the bottom. She caught her breath, and moved closer. She bent over and looked. She saw one cut running half round the stump on the river side and another transversing it across the top, and running down both sides. It was as if half of it had been sawed loose and never removed.

An idea came to her. She stood up and beckoned to Donovan. He was already coming toward her. "I think I've found something," she said, and stopped.

She stared at him. This was not Donovan... this was Gordon. He was laughing, a dark, sneering laugh. He came straight on toward her. She was paralyzed.

On the RADIO CHAINS

STATIONS Where to Find Them on the Dial: Kex, Portland, 1180; KFI, 640; Los Angeles: KGA, 1470; Spokane: KGO, 790; San Francisco: KGW, 620; Portland: KJR, 970; Seattle: KNN, 1050; Los Angeles: KOA, 830; Denver: KOIN, 940; Portland: KOMO, 926; Seattle: KPO, 630; San Francisco: KSL, 1180; Salt Lake.

Thursday, 6:00—Rhythm Factory, KPO, KGW, Frank and Archie, KJR.

8:30—Stringing at Sundown, KGO, KEX, KJR; Army Band, KPO, KGW.

9:00—Major Bowes, KOIN, KSL; Good News of 1940, KPO, KFI, KGW; Beyond Reasonable Doubt, KGO, KEX, KJR.

9:30—America's Town Meeting, KGO, KEX, KJR.

7:00—Columbia Workshop, KOIN; Music Hall, KPO, KFI.

7:30—Sports Huddle, KNX, KOIN; News, KSL.

8:00—Fred Waring, KPO, KGW, KFI; Krupa's Orch., KEX; Aloha Land, KGO; Amos and Andy, KNX, KSL, KOIN.

8:15—Duchin's Orch., KNX; Krupa's Orch., KGO; I Love a Mystery, KPO, KGW, KFI.

8:30—Symphony Hour, KPO, KGW, KFI; Ask-It-Basket, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Radio Guild, KGO.

9:00—Strange As It Seems, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Sketch, KGO, KJR, KEX.

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

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

10:30—Ravanna's Orch., KPO, KGW, KFI; Nottingham's Orch., KGO, KEX; Ted Pio-Rito's Orch., KSL, KOIN.

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

Friday, 5:00—Frank and Archie, KJR; Sunset Shadows, KGO; Melody Time, KPO; Don't Forget, KOMO.

5:30—Etchings in Brass, KGO, KJR; Musical Vignettes, KFI.

6:00—Plantation Party, KGO, KEX, KJR; Waltz Time, KPO, KFI, KGW; Prof. Quiz, KNX, KSL, KOIN.

6:30—Cavalcade of Hits, KGO; First Nighter, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Jessel's Variety Program, KPO, KFI, KGW.

7:00—Drama, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Lombardo's Orch., KPO, KFI, KGW; 7:30—Story Behind the Headlines, KGO; Olsen's Orch., KGO, KJR, KEX; Drama, KPO.

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

8:15—I Love a Mystery, KPO, KFI.

8:30—Himber's Orch., KEX; Death Valley Days, KPO, KGW, KFI; Johnny Presents, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Aloha Land, KGO.

9:00—Tucker's Orch., KGO, KJR; Heidi's Orch., KOMO; Kate Smith, KNX, KOIN; London Letter, KPO.

9:30—Quizzical Musicale, KGO, KEX; University Explorer, KPO, News, KJR.

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

10:30—Heidi's Orch., KPO, KGW, KFI; Highlanders, KGO; Deutch's Orch., KSL; Owen's Orch., KNX.

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

SERVICE

12-29

IS ABSORBED IN HIS BOOK WHEN MOTHER ASKS HIM TO GET HER SPOOL OF THREAD FROM THE TABLE



ROLLS HIMSELF OVER TOWARDS TABLE



STILL READING GRAPES WITH ONE HAND ON TABLE TOP



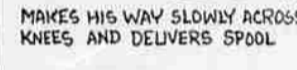
KNOCKS OFF AN ASH TRAY, A MAGAZINE AND A BOX OF MATCHES BEFORE REACHING THE SPOOL OF THREAD



MAKES HIS WAY SLOWLY ACROSS ROOM ON HIS KNEES AND DELIVERS SPOOL



GOES ON READING, TOTALLY OBLIVIOUS TO LECTURE BEING DELIVERED BY MOTHER.



MOOSE IN DEATH LOCK LIBERATED BY HUMANS IN ALASKA FASTNESS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

Fairbanks, Alaska, Dec. 28. (AP)—From the Kuskokwim river wilderness came a rare tale today of human hands releasing the "lock of death" in which two powerful bull moose

apparently had been battling for days. Pilot Don Glass reported first sighting the big animals with locked horns. He flew back to the spot two days later with wild life agent Jack Benson and two other men.

Nearing the battle scene, they heard a sharp crack as the younger bull went limp with a broken neck. They rushed in and hog-tied both animals.

With a small hand saw, Benson severed the entangled antlers of the victorious forest monarch. Released, it trotted away. The younger bull soon died. Death in bull moose battles is no rarity, but wild life authorities here said it was the first case in which they had heard of men freeing the combatants. In many instances the victor dies with the vanquished because he cannot free his horns.

As Others See Oklahoma City (AP)—Grover Guthrie, theater usher, got a glimpse of how other people see him when he surprised his own wardrobe walking away on a stranger. Guthrie called police and had the stranger arrested. The man admitted he had been into the usher's locker, in the basement of the theater building, while the usher was upstairs at work in his uniform.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

THREE-IN-ONE STAR!
Beta Capricorni -- third-magnitude star, is ACTUALLY 3 STARS!

RUNNING OSTRICH -- Natural wood formation found by Frank Dunn, Long Island, N.Y.

THE DEAD SHOT!
KIFFIN ROCKWELL -- American World War aviator SCORED THE FIRST OFFICIAL VICTORY OF THE LAFAYETTE ESCADRILLE BY SHOOTING DOWN A GERMAN SHIP WITH ONLY 5 BULLETS!
(May 18, 1916)

HANK GREENBERG -- Detroit, SCORED 5 RUNS IN 4 OFFICIAL TIMES AT BAT! vs. Philadelphia, July, 1939

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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Prisoners of War!

12-18-39

LEM AND CHUCK... DETERMINED TO SOLO AGAINST ORDERS, MANAGED TO GET A PLANE INTO THE AIR BEFORE TOMMY COULD STOP THEM... AND THE TOWN FOLK ARE NOW SEEING AN AERIAL SHOW, THE LIKES OF WHICH THEY NEVER SAW BEFORE!

DUNNO... KILL HIS SELF, MEBBE!
WHAT'S TH' CRAZY GALOOT TRYIN' TO DO?
C-CHUCK... I... I... THINK YEW GIVE IT TOO M-MUCH R-RUDDER
DON'T GET EXCITED, LEM! I'LL STRAIGHTEN IT OUT IN A SEC!

WHO IN BLAZES IS FLYING THAT SHIP? I'LL HAVE HIM GROUND FOR THIS!

IT'S LEM AND CHUCK! THEY WENT UP WITHOUT PERMISSION, CHIEF!

GREAT BALLS OF BLAZING FIRE! THOSE KIWEEES?!?! CALL THE AMBULANCE... AND... AND THE FIRE CARTS, QUICK!

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—

12-18-39

YOU DON'T MEAN THAT JIM CRANE'S RUN OUT ON US, BEN?
NOW, WAIT—A FELLOW NAMED JIM DONOHAN'S IN TOWN— WHO'S HE?
HE'S CONNECTED WITH THE LAND & SEA OIL COMPANY—
WHEW! BIGGEST IN THE WORLD!
ALL RIGHT, I'LL BITE—
WHERE DOES JIM CRANE COME IN?
GIVE ME A MINUTE AND I'LL TELL YOU—
—MRS. CRANE SAYS JIM HAS JUST BEEN MADE VICE PRESIDENT OF THEIR HAPPY VALLEY DEVELOPMENT!
BOYS, WE'RE LICKED BEFORE WE START!

THE NEBBS—Maybe Obie's Right?

SAY, HAVE YOU GOT MATTERS FIXED UP SO YOU CAN SELL ME A PIECE OF THAT POWER PILL BUSINESS?
NOT YET I HAVEN'T
I LOST MY HALF OF THIS FORTUNE—I CAN'T FIND THE HALF OF THE FORMULA HE GAVE ME—I LOST IT... WHAT A MERRY-LESS CHRISTMAS IT'S GOING TO BE FOR ME!!
YOU LOST IT... AND YOU ARE STILL SHOOTING DOUGH INTO IT?
AND YOU WANT TO SIT THERE AND TELL ME THAT THAT GUY SPENT HALF OF HIS LIFE PRODUCING THIS FORMULA AND CAN'T REMEMBER IT? HE MIGHT CONVINCE YOU OF THIS BUT NOT ME. I'VE GOT POWER TO THINK AND MISTRUST!

Plants Designated Toledo, O. (UP)—Fifteen manufacturing plants here have been listed by the ordnance department of the U. S. army as being ready to make equipment and parts for the war department in emergency.

Army Cante Broken London, (UP)—There are no "Officers Only" restaurants in London as there were during the World War. No distinction is made in serving colonels or privates.

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Closing time for Too Late to Classify

12-22

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Closing time for Too Late to Classify A.M. 1:30 p. m.