

# THE CREEPING THING

By  
**CORA JEAN  
MOTEN**

friend from Haiti, the sheikish and immaculate Mr. Selwyn Garland, had a finger in this. Maybe two fingers and both hands. Don't ask me why. That would stump me, as yet. But—people don't go snooping around morgues with automatics and cock and bull tales of their assignments to guard suspicious cadavers,

for nothing. Besides the honorable Mr. Selwyn will have to do a tall lot of explaining to me to make me understand why he told me he 'ad orders from YOU when you don't seem to know anything about them." I turned and looked at Al keenly. His eyes were suspiciously red. I knew Al; I had known him since we were both boys.

"Say, Al," I shot the question at him abruptly; something was beginning to dawn in my mind as a possibility, "how did it happen that you overslept this morning?"

Al looked sheepish. "I had a few drinks with Doc Varrant and this guy Selwyn after we left the ice box. You know how it is, Tom. My work sort of gets a man. All the excitement and the nature of it—well, a fellow must naturally take a drink after he's through. And this thing was getting me anyway." Al didn't look at me as he spoke.

"Um-hum." I nodded my head and moved toward the door leading into the front. We had closed the alley entrance and locked it securely from within as was the usual custom. Al followed me almost apologetically.

"When we were in his office I turned to him briefly and spoke rather curtly. "Now, Al, I don't know whether or not I've got the right hunch, but I'm going to follow it. Maybe doctor Varrant and Garland Selwyn aren't working together. Maybe they didn't tank you up on purpose and get you to promise any fool thing like letting one of them stay on guard there last night or—rather this morning. Maybe you did or maybe you didn't have so much you didn't know what you were doing and least of all what you were saying but—I'm going to act on the hunch that all those things are so

and I want you to get out from under and give me a hand and a free rein. Will you?" I paused and looked straightly at him.

"Yeah, sure I will, Tom. You know me. I don't know a damn thing I said or did after about the sixth glass. This thing looks phony to me and it sets toward alotta trouble for yours truly if we can't produce this dame's stiff when it's called for, specially since it got outa that damned lop-sided room; and the old snake can't be crawlin' all over town, that's a cinch. I know I ain't been entertainin' him down here, leastwise if he only comes on invitation. Go to it old man and count me in to do anything I can to help you." There was actual relief in Al Jarton's voice and in his expressive brown face as he looked up at me.

"All right then," I said. "Do you know where this bird, Selwyn hangs out here in town?"

"N-no, now I come to think of it, I don't. Never heard and don't recall that I have heard anyone else saying. But—" a sudden light of half knowledge dawned in his eyes—"Old Diaron might know something about him."

"Come on and drive me out to Selwyn house, then, Al; we'll interview Diaron. Meanwhile we'll keep it under our hats about what's happened back there." I pointed with my thumb back toward the morgue. "The less said, the sooner mended. And the fewer people in a secret keeps it better. Just tell Ben not to let anybody else back there until you come back. He will keep his promise if he makes one."

Al nodded and together we stepped out into the main room. Ben was sweeping out the little lobby entrance. He looked up as we came into view.

A Telephone Call  
"They was a call for you las' night Mistah Jahton—sed it was zinda portant but nevah mind botherin' you till you come down this mawnin'."

was careless. Calls were common things with him. He had something of the reputation of a gay fellow, Al had. Some dame—probably.

"I don't jes rightly know what it was about, Mr. Jahton but it come from out at that hanted house thet's causin all this rumpus round hereabouts. It was thet old heathenish Haytee man a callin'."

"What did he say, Ben? Quick, tell us. Mr. Jarton and I are just start-

ing out there now and it is—it may be very important to know, EXACTLY what Dia—the old heathen—wanted with him." I broke in eagerly not waiting for Al.

Ben looked from one to the other of us. The look of acquiescence on his employer's face satisfied him. He turned to me.

"He says, the old heathen did, thet they was somethin' he thought he ort to tell Mr. Jahton. Bumpin'"

(Continued on page six)

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