

Satan's Faceless Henchmen

By Steve Fisher



Those hideous, faceless monks stole corpses and brought them back to life. And when Enid Spencer's sweetheart could not meet their impossible demands for the return of her brother's living corpse, they both were fated to share his hellish doom.

THE fetid room in the crumbling mansion was lit with only a ghastly blue globe which gave it a dire, deathly effect. Cobwebs climbed slitheringly about the ceiling. A chilled, clammy atmosphere hung about the place. The floor beneath was ground that was covered with moss and slime and squirming little bugs.

But I could think not of the room, nor where I was standing. I was thinking of the horror that I felt creeping into my soul just now—the horror of hearing the voice of a man I had seen die a few hours before!

I shouted: "Damn you, you swine!"

It sent wild, shuddery chills racing crazily up and down my spine. But it was all too true—all too maddeningly ghastly. The dead man was Enid's brother. She had hold of my arm; was gripping it with terror that was uncontrollable. I glanced into her gray eyes and saw them staring as if she had suddenly gone insane. The milky white of her beautiful complexion was drawn, greenish.

"Bill," she gasped, "it *can't* be true!"

What was there for me to say? We both knew that such a thing as a dead man returning to life is not possible in a world of realities; yet, here was the real thing in front of our eyes. I could only hold Enid closer to me.

We were to have been married yesterday; but yesterday her brother had died after a sudden, mysterious illness. We had postponed the wedding ceremony. But one short hour after his death, the corpse had been kidnapped. We were given instructions for finding it—instructions signed by "The Monks" that had led us up this mountainside and into this creepy old mansion, to see Harry Spencer *return to life!*

When Enid and her other brother George, who was standing with us now, had read the "Monks's" note, we had disbelieved its contents. We'd had to enter this ancient house to fully appreciate the terror of the situation. Each word that was penned in that note was still burning across my mind. I saw it the same as I had the hour the corpse had disappeared:

To the Relatives of Harry Spencer:

We, who are gifted with powers uncanny to most humans, realize that you love your dead relation deeply. Though we do not pretend to bring such endless joy to all who are unfortunately visited by death, we have decided to bring *your* dead relative back to life.

Had we come to you with such a proposition you would have doubted our powers. We have therefore taken the liberty of removing the corpse to our mountain laboratory. Follow the enclosed instructions and you will *see Harry Spencer alive*. You will then return to the village and draw from the bank a financial token of thanks for our work. When you return with it, we will return Mr. Spencer to you.

Police interference will cancel these plans. Come alone. Other details will be discussed when you reach the laboratory.

THE MONKS

WE were now actually staring at Harry. How yellow and pasty his face looked as he sat there in that chair. How drawn and weak too. But he was smiling. Did you ever see a corpse smile? I hope I never do again. It's hideous. It makes you sick to your stomach; makes you want to run.

Poor George, staring at his corpse-brother, felt that way too. His hands were shaking, and his eyes were bulging. George, Enid and I had been instructed to go no closer than ten feet from Harry. Harry's dead, colorless lips were moving. A flat, eerie tone issued forth:

"I—I don't know how they did it—" his throat caught, his words were raspy— "but I *do* know that I'm alive. You must believe that I am." He looked at me, his eyes pleading. "You'll tell them that I am, won't you, Bill?"

"But I—" I became hopelessly confused. "How do you feel?" I blurted at last.

"Weak. Awfully damn' weak," Harry Spencer muttered, "but I've returned from the place where men never return—and I'm sound and normal. I can think. I can feel. But my heart—" his words began trailing— "my heart is beating awfully fast. Too fast, I think. Later, they say, it'll slow to a regular speed." He went on talking but his tone dropped to a whisper which I couldn't quite catch.

George looked at me, then stared back at his brother. George's hair and eyes were dark; he was broad, had a muscular build.

"You're—you're *really* alive, Harry?" he asked breathlessly.

"Sure," a husky, throaty voice came from Harry Spencer this time. He moved his lifeless-looking face toward us, and kept smiling that terrorizing smile. "Sure I am. Go get the money they ask you to get; take me out of here. A few days in bed and—"

I nodded. "We'll do that, all right."

Enid moved closer to me. "I don't know what to say, Bill," she whispered. "It's horrible, and yet if he's alive—"

To see the girl I loved worked up in this frenzied pitch, drove me almost mad. Even in this awful situation, she was as radiantly beautiful as a blushing rose in the dawn. Large eyes—clear and penetrating. A neat, cleanly cut figure, her brown, silky hair hung in a cluster about her neck.

"I'm so terribly afraid," she went on, moving closer to me.

George, a panic seemingly taking him, was

violating the rule we had been given, and was going toward Harry. I stepped forward to stop him when a door at the other end of the room suddenly creaked open.

Talk of horror and hideous humans! The man who entered was garbed in black monk's robes. He didn't look particularly old, but his face was awful. It was snarled with searing scars; they looked like burns. Just a mass of breathtaking ugliness. A slit for a mouth; blotches for eyes; and a nose that was just a stump of a thing. There wasn't a visible hair or whisker on him.

"Be quiet, please," he said.

He came further into the room, his brown robes sweeping across the dusty floor. The heavy oak door behind him started to creak shut, when there was a shrill screaming noise. A small monkey leaped in after him. The little animal was gibbering madly. It ran into a corner and sat there, its beady eyes leveled on us, and its little fingers in its mouth. The robed figure spoke again:

"You three are no doubt convinced that Mr. Harry Spencer is alive. It is necessary that we charge for this resurrection. We can not allow you to take him until you have paid."

George was glaring at the man. Harry, his face still a horrible yellow pallor, moved in his chair and tried to speak, but he choked on his words. Enid had lost control of her voice. It was up to me.

"You mean that you're holding him for ransom?"

The monk shook his head. The little monkey in the corner started squealing.

"We will return him to you in the same state he was in when we took him—dead—if you wish that. We charge only for our operation." He shrugged. It appeared that he had no control over his facial muscles. Only the movement of his slit-like mouth indicated whatever feeling he might have had.

"I think that if all you tell us—" I glanced back at poor Harry. He was still sitting, slumped, in his chair, taking everything in— "is true, we are willing to meet your cash demand. What is it?"

I RECEIVED no immediate answer. The man with the twisted, snarled face was staring at Enid. Her body a rigid statue, she stood staring back at him.

"Stop looking at her that way!" I shouted furiously.

The monk turned his eyes back to me; but he

did it with a slow, mocking resentment. "Yes—you were saying?"

"I asked how much money you wanted!"

Again he looked at Enid. Tears came into her eyes; she was quivering with terror. "Take me out of here. I can't stand the sight of him!"

The thin slit that was his mouth twitched downward. At last he turned back to me.

"We want—" he hesitated— "two hundred and fifty thousand dollars!"

For a moment I was too stunned to speak.

George shot a quick glance to his dead-looking corpse of a brother, then jerked out:

"A quarter of a million! What do you mean?"

"You perhaps understand only too well what we mean," the monk replied.

Harry moved from side to side in his chair: "I think George is—my death—"

"We can't pay a quarter of a million," George broke in.

"Keep still!" I snapped. "What did you want to say, Harry?"

"That—that," the revived corpse gasped out, "somehow George can get the money. You must get it. Don't leave me here any longer than you have to!"

George's eyes were shifty. "I don't know *how* you think I can get it," he barked; then tenderly: "But we'll try, Harry. We'll try."

It was time to get out of this evil den, and I knew it. Somehow I resented George's flat statements about not being able to obtain the money. It seemed to me that he should have had more consideration for his brother.

"Bring the money by midnight," the monk said in a brittle tone, "in currency. Then you may have Harry Spencer."

I wanted to say a lot, but Enid was clinging to me and shaking so badly that I felt it best to get her out. "We'll bring it," I said.

The words were no sooner out of my mouth than the huge door at the entrance of the mansion swung back. The open road and daylight lay outside. It was a welcome sight. The monk with the seared face gazed at the light of day as if he were displeased. He had had no control over the door's movement; some one listening had operated it when I spoke.

A voice issued from a hidden loud speaker. It was the same voice we had heard when we entered:

"Go now. Return with the money."

“Before midnight,” the monk with the burned face added.

As we were departing Harry tried to get up from his chair. I was guiding Enid through the door when I heard him call after us; his voice was so faint that I couldn’t be sure, but it sounded like:

“Hurry back! I can’t stand to stay with these monsters any longer. Hurry. . . .”

A shudder jolted through my body. Enid was too horrified to even be able to hear. I was glad for that.

My last glimpse into the ghastly blue room revealed the awful, snarl-faced figure in the black robes, standing in the middle of the dirt floor with his arms crossed, and the gibbering monkey perched on his shoulder. His thin mouth was drawn back in a hideous, toothless grin.

THE way Enid sat, the light shone directly in her face; though blanched white from the horror of the afternoon, she had regained her composure. Her pretty lips were firm and even, her eyes darkly somber.

“So you see, Mr. Jason, we just must have the money. We can’t leave Harry with those men any longer.” She sucked in her breath. “You will loan it to us, won’t you?”

“It’s an awful lot to ask for,” George Spencer said huskily, “and it’s not a very good loan for your bank; but I’m sure you understand, don’t you?”

I watched Charles Jason’s face as he cleared his throat to speak. He was a large man, over fifty years of age; his hair was gray; lines of worry had creased his rugged face. There was a kindly yet sad expression about his thick lips.

“I don’t know what you people are going to think of me,” he said, “but the bank’s money is tied up. That is, though I am president, I haven’t the authority to invest in a personal loan of this kind. Nor, since my misfortune of two years past, have I even half that amount in my own name.” He seemed nervous; kept glancing down at his fingernails.

“I think we understand,” I said.

Relief flushed across his countenance, yet some hidden anxiety within him appeared to be growing.

“Thank you,” he answered tersely, his voice hushed to a whisper. “I’d like to help you. God knows I would—but—but I can’t.” This time his eyes dropped and remained staring downward.

I looked at Enid. Her face was without

expression. George was bewildered. Glancing back at banker Jason, I said:

“There’s something on your mind—something you aren’t telling us?”

“I—I,” he faltered.

“If it has something to do with Harry,” Enid interposed, “you must speak.”

HE gazed at her intently, then suddenly he broke down. “It’s about those monks,” he explained. “I lied to you when I said I hadn’t heard of them. I have.” He held his hands to his temples and rocked dramatically on his heels. “After my daughter Barbara died of scarlet fever, two years ago, they stole her corpse. They wrote me the same sort of letter, told me to bring the money before midnight and I could have her back—alive.”

He cleared his throat, continued: “I was frantic. I thought of getting in touch with the police, but realized it would be useless. I had that much money then, so I took it, put it in a suitcase and arrived at the mansion at half an hour after midnight. An accident had delayed me on the road. They relieved me of the currency and told me Barbara would be home in the morning.”

His face turned ashen. He looked away, spoke bitterly: “She returned all right—in the same coffin she had been in when they took her. She was dead.”

For a moment there was heavy silence. I thought I saw a tear trickle across Charles Jason’s cheek. George was embarrassed. I knew that Enid was at a loss as to what to do or say. I felt that it was my place to change the subject, but was uneasy about doing so.

“So—” I hesitated— “it would be impossible for you to let us have the money?”

He nodded, said in a low tone: “Yes. I’m sorry.”

There was nothing to do but go. We left the room as quietly as possible. I felt a cloak of doom descend over us. Jason had been our last hope for the ransom money. Closing my eyes, I saw again that leering monk with the seared face and I saw, too, his little monkey running about the room, screaming. I heard Harry’s hoarse, pleading voice— “I can’t stay with these monsters any longer. . . .”

When we were on the street Enid turned to me; her voice was frantic. “What are we going to do? We must do something!”

“It’s after nine,” George said. “If we started driving now, we would just about make it there by

midnight.”

I steeled myself. “It means only,” I said, “that you and I, George, will have to return for Harry without the money.”

“But you can’t do that,” Enid protested. “They—”

“It’s all we can do,” George told her, agreeing with me, though in speaking the words I was aware that he wasn’t too anxious.

Enid was trembling. “What about the police?”

“The monks would kill Harry if we brought them,” I said. “And since he was dead when they kidnapped him, the only crime would be corpse-snatching.”

“Then we’ll all three have to go back,” Enid declared decisively. “Remember, Mr. Jason arrived a half an hour late, and they killed Barbara.”

“But Enid,” I cried in alarm, “*you* can’t go!”

She looked at me with an expression which signified her decision was final. From past experience I knew the uselessness of trying to dissuade her from an idea. George argued, but to no avail. As she put it:

“He is my brother!”

We stood, awkwardly silent for a moment. Suddenly an idea struck me. There was *some* answer to this hideous riddle, and if I could find what it was before we returned, perhaps we could bluff and have a better chance.

“George,” I said excitedly, “we can start in a half hour, and if we drive like hell, we’ll still make it in time.”

“Sure, but—”

“I’ve got to go some place. You and Enid fill the car with gas and pick me up in front of the newspaper office in thirty minutes.”

I waved away their protests, and started off in a run. The office of the *Clarion* was only a block down. Roger Symes, the editor, lived next door.

Ten minutes later Roger and I had the lights on in the office. The editor was an obliging old fellow, and showed me his files concerning fires and explosions. I had an idea which seemed entirely sane and reasonable.

I found the dates I wanted on yellowed clippings. My trembling fingers were thumbing through them; my eyes swept quickly over the captions: “STUDENTS KILLED IN TRAIN EXPLOSION” read one, “HOSPITAL FIRE CAUSES PANIC, NINE DEAD” another said. I went through them rapidly. Then I came across one

which read: “UNIVERSITY LABORATORY EXPLODES; FAMOUS SCIENTISTS KILLED!” I commenced to read further, but at that moment the shrill tooting of an automobile horn outside announced that the half hour had flown only too swiftly. I hesitated, then the horn blasted again.

Thanking Roger Symes for his trouble, I made a hurried exit.

THE road that went up the mountainside was a long, winding one. It had rained recently and the wheels of our machine made a low, swishing sound as they drove through the slush and clay. A thick fog was settling down over the mountain, so that objects were only vague outlines shrouded in a gray cloak.

I drove. Enid was between George and me. She couldn’t have been very cold with the warmth of our bodies on either side of her, but I felt her shivering. Every few minutes she sucked in her breath and sat straight, as if steeling herself against the terror that was ahead.

We had a difficult time. At each turn branches of weeping willows reached out at us, as if wanting to pull us into their treacherous bosoms. Even before our arrival at the mansion the atmosphere seemed pressing in on us. The closer we came the more eerie it was.

My hands froze to the wheel as the crumbled abode hove into view. High in a tower of it, a gruesome blue light was glowing. It gave ghastly illumination to the entire front of the place: silhouetted it in sharp, ugly shadows. I turned off the motor and put on the brakes.

For a moment we sat there. George was the first to move. He opened the door and got out. His voice was thick.

“Coming?”

Our arrival had been watched, for we were not within fifteen feet of the broad front door when it swung slowly open, scraping and creaking. And the monstrous sight that was revealed in the archway made me go cold with horror.

It was another monk. He was taller than the one we had met this afternoon, and his ugliness was twice that of his brother corpse-worker. He had no nose at all. Huge, hideous gray eyes; no hair on his head. There was really no way of telling his features, for they were all one blot of scars. A white monkey, on a chain, was beside him, staring at us.

“You’ve brought the money?” the tall figure

inquired.

“I—I—”

“Give it to me,” the monk demanded, “and Harry Spencer will be returned in the morning.”

“Yes, returned—” Enid blurted, unable to control herself— “like Barbara Jason was. Dead! Where is my brother? Show him to us!”

“Indeed,” the monk said. We were still walking forward. He halted us at the entrance. “But where is the money?”

George was tense. He could hold off no longer. “We haven’t got it.”

The words were no sooner out of his mouth than the automatic I had brought was in my hand. I leaped forward and jammed it into the monk’s stomach. His monkey jumped to his shoulder, squealing.

“Where is Harry Spencer?” I demanded. “We want him. And we want him alive. One false move, and—”

The hideous, satanic figure glared into my face.

“So this is your appreciation for returning him to life, is it?” he demanded in a voice that was more like the snarl of an ape. “Follow me, then; you shall have Harry Spencer.”

HE turned. I kept the gun in his back and followed him. Enid stayed by my side, and George followed her. We entered the same dank, eerily lighted room that we had been in before.

Suddenly, the tall monk stopped, cocked his head. Slowly, he began chanting:

“Twelve o’clock, and the dead shall return to life.” He said it in a strange, faraway voice. As he did so, chimes began to ring—a slow, ominous stroke that echoed throughout the tumbledown mansion. “Twelve o’clock, and the dead rise from their graves.”

Enid screamed: “Look out!” Her piercing cry filled the room; split the dense atmosphere of gloom.

George leaped forward. A flash of orange; a roaring explosion. I saw George crumple to the floor, a hole in his head, and the blue light suddenly dimmed. I could no longer see the monk, but I shot blindly at the place he had been.

For a moment, after I had wasted my third shot, there was a pause of silence. I felt Enid close to me. Putting my arm about her waist, we slowly began backing.

“They’ve—they’ve killed George,” she

whispered.

“They’re ruthless,” I told her. “We didn’t dream it’d be like this; expected a scuffle, but—well, cold-blooded murder is another thing.”

The last of the midnight chimes rang. A hoarse voice called out:

“*Twelve o’clock is past. The dead have risen!*”

I fired at the sound. The hollow noise made by the bullet told me that I had cracked the loud speaker. Enid and I backed to the wall.

I heard the gibbering of a monkey in one corner of the room. Thinking it possible that the animal could be on the shoulder of one of the monks, I fired. I heard a blood-chilling squeal. I was furious with myself, for I had been too good a shot. I had killed only the monkey!

Five shots gone—one bullet left. “Enid,” I gasped, “is the door open?”

“No,” she whispered breathlessly, “they have closed it.”

“Then we’re trapped,” I told her.

Suddenly the blue light began to glow again. I saw a figure in black at the doorway that led farther into the mansion. It was hooded. Though it was still in the flickering shadows of the blue light, I fired. The hooded figure fell forward.

Quickly I ran to where it had fallen; jerked off the hood. Enid saw at the same time as I did. She screamed. It had been a ruse to get our last bullet, for the hooded figure was only the corpse of poor George. They had picked him up, thrown the robes over him, and propped him where I would see him when the lights went on.

The door where George’s body had been propped began to open. I held Enid close to me and waited. Several monkeys rushed into the room. They were all gibbering like mad; none of them touched us.

Presently the tall monk returned. A snub-nosed black automatic was gripped in his right hand. He stood silently, holding us under threat of the gun. In a moment two other monks came up behind him. They went past him and came toward us. I recognized one of them as the younger monk whom we had seen during the afternoon. He stared at Enid when he got close to her. Then his talon fingers reached out and touched her shoulder.

“Keep away from her!” I barked.

He laughed; it was a deep, burned-out laughter that made me shudder. Enid could scarcely stand, even with me to support her. Her body shook

convulsively.

The young monk put his other hand toward Enid. I jerked toward him. At that moment something landed on the back of my head. Blackness—a sinking pool of it—drenched my mind.

WHEN I opened my eyes I was strangely enough standing on my feet. My wrists were tied behind me, and I was strapped to a large brace in the corner of a room in the tower of the mansion. I knew that, for I could see out the wide, French windows.

Unlike the rest of the rooms, this one was fairly clean. It resembled a modern operating ward in a hospital. There were basins, various kinds of doctor's tools lying on a white-clothed table, and a bowl with running-water faucets. I had been conscious only a few minutes when the door opened and the youngest monk entered.

"Do you want to save your sweetheart?" he demanded suddenly.

"Of course," I gasped.

"They want to kill her, then bring her back to life for ransom. Tell them you won't pay unless they let her live."

For a moment I was too horrified to speak, then it was unnecessary. The second monk appeared in the door. The snub-nosed automatic was still in his hand.

"Just as I thought, Adler," he said tonelessly. "Allowing sentiment to mix with business again. Because you think the girl is beautiful and want her for yourself, you betray us to this stranger."

"You lie, Hopkins," the young monk raged, moving across the room.

"We've put up with enough from you," Hopkins said. "This is the last."

A gunshot roared out. The young monk clutched his breast, then fell forward. Hopkins, his robes swishing, walked over to the French windows, opened them, then rolled the dead monk's corpse over and pushed it out. He turned to me, his scarred face horrible.

"There's quick-lime down there. Remember it in case you think of doublecrossing us."

He turned then, and clapped his hands. One of those hideous monks dragged Enid's limp figure into the room. Then I saw the rose-tinted body of the girl who was to become my wife tied to an operating table. She was unconscious. The other

monk was pushing it.

"Enid—Enid!" I shouted, straining at the ropes that held me. Then: "Damn you, you swine!"

"We are going to kill her in front of you," Hopkins said grimly. His twisted face contained a look of sheer madness. "Then we are going to demonstrate how to bring her to life. After that—"

The other monk took up the message. He was medium built, chunkier than Hopkins, but his face was also seared and burned.

". . . we shall release you to get the money. Perhaps you won't doublecross and return without it this time. If you do, we'll kill her."

I shouted in fury: "Don't touch her. Don't kill her. I'll never bring you money!"

"Won't you?" Hopkins said, "I wonder."

The names of Hopkins and Adler were burning in my mind. I remembered the headline: FAMOUS SCIENTISTS KILLED, and I thought I saw through the whole scheme now; knew the reason for the monkeys and how the corpses could return to life.

Hopkins went to a shelf and picked up a long, gleaming knife.

"Blood will flow; warm, young blood. That of your sweetheart. And next time you go for money—"

I jerked, strained. Sweat was pouring down my face. My heart was pounding madly. Terror jerked through my veins. They were going to kill Enid. Kill the girl that I loved. How helpless she lay there in this tower of terror, her figure so perfect; like a statue, each curving line the essence of loveliness. They were going to mar that!

THE monster in the black robe swung the knife down close to Enid's throat. Closer the knife came—within an inch of her loveliness. Then the blade touched. A stream of warm blood trickled down the hollow of her bosom.

"Wait!" I screamed hoarsely. Mad desperation had inspired a wild idea; wild, yet feasible. My only hope to save Enid.

Hopkins hesitated. The other monk looked up.

"Let me—" my throat was raw— "kiss her, before— At least you can do that."

Hopkins shook his head. The knife started down again.

"Please!" I pleaded.

The medium-sized monk was at the far end of the cart, his back to the French doors. "Shall I push

it forward and let him have one kiss?" A sadistic smile was on his lips. "He'll be missing more then—"

Hopkins lifted his knife for a moment. "All right," he said, "push it up there. He can't use his hands." To me: "Just bend over and kiss her forehead."

I nodded my thanks. I was straining, pulling, jerking at the cords that were about my wrists. Yet I knew that in the moment I had, I wouldn't be able to get them loose. I had my trick. My one little trick, and if it failed . . . There was a window just to the right of my back. I tried to edge toward it.

The cart came up even with my chest. I bent forward, stared up a moment at the medium-sized monk at the other end; then to Hopkins who was standing by the side.

Suddenly I kicked the operating cart. It slid forward with all the force that I could muster. It crashed through the French doors, pushing the little monk out with it. Hopkins grabbed it before it fell. He struggled to pull it back into the room. But his brother monk had already gone—to the quick-lime . . .

However, Hopkins struggled with the car. I had known he would do that. But risking the chance of Enid's falling out into that lime had been my only chance. I punched my wrists through the window that was behind me. Jagged cuts spurting blood in my arms; but I was beyond caring about anything.

Sweating, my heart pounding, I pulled and twisted until the ropes were free. I turned toward Hopkins just as he finished getting the cart safely back in the room. He had dropped his knife in the excitement. I scooped it up and rushed at him.

He backed, his snarled face writhing with hatred. "Back—keep back!" I shouted at him. "I am going to kill you."

He hit the wall and half-turned. In that moment I rushed him. Dropping the knife, I swung his shoulders about. I lifted my foot—kicked him out through the broken glass of the French doors.

His shrill scream resounded back up into the room as he fell toward the quick-lime.

I went to Enid, picked her up into my arms. Tears streaming down my face, I pressed her to me, kissing her face. I left her then to get a cloth from the shelf. I applied water to her forehead. In a few minutes she was showing signs of consciousness.

She opened her eyes, staring timidly about. Then she saw me. "Oh, Bill," she called. I held her and kissed her again.

"We'll have to get out of here," I told her. "I don't like the place. First, though, we've got to find Harry. I'm afraid he won't be alive," I added.

Enid was too weak to walk. I carried her out of the ominous room in the tower, and down the steps to the second floor. Here we searched the various decrepit rooms together. They were fetid with the smell of fresh corpses. Sick at heart, we stared into one dead face after another. We found Harry Spencer in a room by himself. He was in the coffin we had put him in when he died. He was dead.

Enid could stand no more. "Take me out of here," she said.

WINDING down the narrow road of the mountain I explained what I had learned. Enid sat in the car listening to me, her eyes staring at the bleak landscape ahead, moving uncomfortably under some rough sacking with which I had covered her before leaving that loathsome stone mansion.

"Adler, Hopkins and Smith," I told her, "were three scientists who were caught in a fire of the laboratory of a large university; people thought they were dead. Somehow they escaped, and I guess it was because their faces were so horrible that they never reported themselves alive. At the time of the fire, they had been experimenting with monkeys; bringing them back to life—after death. Together they schemed a way to make money by operating on humans.

"They stole a corpse immediately after death, wrote a note to the family, and then before the family's arrival, plunged the heart stimulant into the body. This revived the victim for about an hour. The elated family would return with the money demanded, but like Jason, get only a corpse. The three monks, as they called themselves, could not keep a human being alive more than an hour, but they made use of that hour in a grim way."

Enid spoke softly: "They kept the monkeys for experiments?"

I nodded, drawing her close to me and slipping my arm about her. "But the monkeys will probably run free now. And there won't be any more corpses coming back to life, at midnight or any other time."

She sucked in a breath of fresh air. The fog had lifted, there were stars in the sky, and the night was beautifully clear. But I couldn't shake the terror that was in my heart, because the mad monkeys were still seeming to gibber and squeal in my ears.