DEPUTY of the DEVIL

By Ben Ames Williams

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SYNOPSIS

Dr. Greeding, a wealthy and talented middle aged surgeon, is possessed of seemingly supernatural powers. Occasionally he can wish for something extraordinary to happen and have the wish fulfilled. Greeding meets Ira Jerrell, a wealthy business friend of his own age, who tells him he loves his daughter Nancy and would like to marry her. Dr. Greeding is pleased and tells Jerrell he has a clear field. Nancy, however, is in love with Dan Carlisle, an assistant professor at the University who has little means. They discuss marriage, but decide to delay talking to her father about it. Nancy, who has been playing tennis with Dan that afternoon, tells her father she had been playing with a girl friend. Greeding knows this is untrue and is secretly enraged. Stepping into his wife's room, his eye falls on a marble statuette which he dislikes. He picks it up, wishing he could smash it to bits. Suddenly it is snatched from his grasp as by an invisible force and burst asunder. Mrs. Greeding is greatly disturbed over the mysterious destruction of the statuette. The doctor reveals that Ira Jerrell wants to marry Nancy. On the way to a dinner party a car cuts in front of Greeding's. He angrily expresses the wish that the driver would break his neck. An instant later an accident occurs in which this very thing happens. At the dinner the Greedings meet Prof. Carlisle, Dan's father, and his daughter Mary Ann. Dr. Greeding is intrigued by Mary Ann, who is a surgical nurse. Mrs. Greeding tells Prof. Carlisle about the destruction of the statuette and he indicates it might have been caused by a "poltergeist," a "racketing, mischievous spirit."

CHAPTER II—Continued

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He said quizzically: "That's not the same Judith Plank with whom you played tennis this afternoon."

"Judith?" she repeated in astonishment, forgetting her mendacity; and then suddenly she remembered, and her cheeks were crimson. She retreated from him, white and startled; turned and ran up the stairs. He had only meant to tease her; but by her flight his almost-forgotten anger was a little revived.

"Nancy!" he called. She stopped, half turning. "You mustn't ever lie to me, Nancy," he said sternly.

She hesitated, facing him doubtfully; but after a moment she descended to meet him ascending. On the step above him, she said appealingly:

"I'm sorry, Father. I—a girl—" She laughed in confused dismay. "Well, a girl instinctively wants to keep some things secret," she confessed happily.

And before he could speak, she added: "You're right. It wasn't Judith, this afternoon. It was Dan Carlisle. When you asked me who was here, we'd only just found out that we love each other! That was why I—fibbed to you!"

Doctor Greeding touched her shoulder affectionately, guarding his tones. "No reason why you shouldn't tell me and your mother, is there?" he asked quietly.

"I was afraid you wouldn't—"

"Never be afraid of me, Nancy," he urged. "You'll always find me on your side."

"Then you don't mind my—loving Dan!"

"I mind your being afraid of me." He kissed her again, and he added judicially: "As for Dan, I hardly know him, Nancy. Bring him around more often. Let your mother and me get acquainted with that young man." And he suggested: "After all, there's no hurry. You and he will want to treasure this new happiness in secret for a while."

Then, before she could either assent or demur, he said: "Good night. It's late, my dear."

She hugged him warmly. "You're sweet!" she whispered. "Good night, Father!" And ran up the stairs.

He followed more slowly; and in his own room, the door closed behind him, he stood fixed and rigid, frowning. But in the end he dismissed Nancy for the present from his mind, and opened the volume he had brought upstairs.

CHAPTER III

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Next day Doctor Greeding was not his usual self while in the operating-room. Ordinarily he worked without conscious effort, smoothly and swiftly; but today each procedure required a conscious concentration.

Doctor Mayhew, his assistant, observed this; and Miss Rimes, the surgical nurse, likewise felt it, and reacted to Doctor Greeding's tension by a definite failure in her usual efficiency. Once when without looking toward her he reached for dissecting scissors, she offered him the knife instead, and the point punctured his glove, so that he had to change.

Such accidents had occurred before; but today Doctor Greeding was in no case to meet the incident equably and calmly. Fortunately the skin was not even pricked; yet many a surgeon had lost a finger, or a hand or an arm as easily as this; and he told Miss Rimes so, in dry, cutting tones.

Even while he spoke, he realized suddenly that he disliked Miss Rimes intensely. She was an efficient nurse; but he recognized now that she was a dark, unlovely woman. He had never before thought of her except as an automaton; and his physical distaste for her lent an unintended heat to his rebuke.

She made no defense; but afterward in the corridor he saw her talking with Doctor Mayhew; and there was a hint of tears, of hysteria, in her manner. So Doctor Greeding belatedly repented his heat; and back in his office, he summoned Doctor Mayhew and by way of amends bade him grant Miss Rimes a month's full-pay vacation.

Doctor Mayhew suggested doubtfully: "I'm afraid, after her mistake this morning, she may feel this is a reproof!"

"Not at all," Doctor Greeding insisted. "It is simply that I think she is overworked, tired."

But the other man persisted in his view; and Doctor Greeding reluctantly summoned Miss Rimes and in Doctor Mayhew's presence made amends.

"I owe you an apology, Miss Rimes," he confessed. "I was tired this morning, nervous; and I blew off steam at your expense. I'm sorry."

She assured him, eagerly: "I was clumsy!" But when he spoke of the vacation he proposed that she should take, she protested: "Oh, I can't just now! With Miss Johnson ill, there's no one to handle the work; and I'm not tired, really."

"Nonsense!" he said in fraternal kindliness. "We'll manage!"

After she had left the office, Dr. Mayhew asked: "Who will you use in her place? Miss Ryan?"

Doctor Greeding hesitated. He had not considered this problem; but now he smiled in swift appreciation of the fact that luck once more had played his game. But he only said guardedly:

"I have some one in mind. Let it rest for now."

But when Doctor Mayhew was gone, he rang for his secretary. "Will you phone Miss Mary Ann Carlisle," he directed, and gave Professor Carlisle's name and address. "Ask her to come in and see me, if she can; say I may have some work for her."

An hour later, Miss Carlisle was announced. "Our meeting last night may have been fortunate for us both, Miss Carlisle," he said to her. "I don't know if my secretary told you why I wished to see you?" She shook her head, and he explained: "My surgical nurse, Miss Rimes, has been working too hard. I've given her a vacation, and that leaves us short-handed. Naturally, I thought of you. I believe you said you've had some experience in assisting?"

"Yes," she agreed. "I worked with Doctor Homans."

"His specialty was the brain, of course," Doctor Greeding commented, in no hurry, content to watch her, to go slowly. "My work is more general." He added: "However, a few days will give you the routine, I'm sure." And he smiled. "I'm proposing, you understand, that you come in and work with me."

She said: "I've been doing special nursing; but—I should be glad of a more steady income." She smiled faintly. "As you may imagine, with two rather improvident professors in the family—"

He chuckled. "Naturally." They discussed finances. "Then suppose we try it," he suggested. "If we are both satisfied, there is no reason why you should not stay on indefinitely. Even after Miss Rimes returns. You can alternate with her, and there are a lot of details outside the operating-room which you can divide between you."

She asked calmly: "Shall I start now? Or report in the morning?"

And thus swiftly the matter was arranged. Doctor Greeding drove home that afternoon in his usual easy mind. The tragedy of the day before, he began to dismiss as the coincidence it had appeared to be; he could ignore the formless, terrifying shapes that floated in the background of his thoughts.

So soon as he came home, he asked for Nancy.

"She's gone into the country with Dan," Mrs. Greeding explained. "To some little inn for dinner." She watched her husband doubtfully; but he said, in a disarming tone:

"I saw her for a moment last night when she came home. We had a little talk, Myra. Probably I was wrong to be—dogmatic, yesterday, to play the angry parent. Dan's all right, I expect." He hesitated, conscious of a faint confusion. "As a matter of fact," he said, smiling at his own thoughts, "I think better of the Carlisles than I did yesterday. I even engaged Miss Carlisle to take Miss Rimes' place, this afternoon."

She stared at him, frank doubt in her eyes. "Ned, was that wise?" she wondered. "After all, while she may be a charming dinner partner—"

"Oh, I sha'n't keep her on unless she does her work," he said casually.

"She's entirely too attractive to be a nurse," Mrs. Greeding insisted. "Mary Ann is one of these independent young women, perfectly sure of herself and of everything else; resentful of—conventions."

"You make her sound dangerously fascinating," he said, amused, and touched her arm affectionately. "You've always had the notion some siren would carry me away, Myra. In spite of the fact that none has ever even tried!"

She smiled at him. "Nonsense, Ned. You know I never worry about you, my dear!"

"You never need to," he assured her gently.

So Mrs. Greeding was silenced; but there was not long any doubt in Doctor Greeding's mind that Mary Ann was competent. She was like a second pair of hands. At the operating-table she anticipated his desires before they took shape in his mind. She watched his fingers and the progress of the operation; and when he was ready for knife, scissors, snaps, retractors, he found the desired implement in her hand, awaiting his grasp. He found the morning's work left him fresh and free from fatigue; he thought his own technique improved, and told her so.

"Miss Rimes was excellent," he said. "But—I shall be tempted to overwork you, even after her return. You must protect yourself against my impositions."

She smiled and said: "I never saw anyone whose work was at

She Smiled and Said: "I Never Saw Anyone Whose Work Was at Once as Unhurried and as Swift as Yours."

once as unhurried and as swift as yours." And he was by her approval absurdly pleased.

They progressed by degrees from acquaintance to friendship. Doctor Greeding committed to her attention the matter of that man whose death he and Mrs. Greeding had witnessed.

"I saw the accident," he explained. "It—touched me. For no particular reason, I am inclined to do something for his family, if they need help of any kind."

He was not blind to the approval in her eyes as she promised to investigate.

Subsequently, Mary Ann reported that the man was an automobile mechanic; and he had been, on that particular evening, in haste to come to the hospital, where his wife was about to be delivered.

"But the accident has its compensations," she confessed. "He appears to have been a worthless sort. He used to be a chauffeur in a nice family; and the daughter of the house eloped with him. I went to see her, last night. She told me that after they were married, when her husband realized that her father would not support them, he was furious; and since then he has mistreated her abominably. Now that he's dead, she's going home, forgiven, happier than she could ever have been as long as her husband lived!"

Doctor Greeding found in this discovery a surprising satisfaction. He had since the tragedy moved warily, like a stranger in a great power-plant who avoids contact with the machinery about him, lest he loose forces beyond his understanding and control. But now, assured that this man for whose death he felt responsible was better out of the world than in it, a treacherous feeling of infallibility took lodgment in his mind.

Yet outwardly there was no change in the routine of his days, except that he saw more and more of Mary Ann. He no longer disturbed himself so much about Nancy and Dan. Nancy had agreed with him as to the wisdom of delaying for a while any formal announcement of her engagement, and—he had always banked on his luck. He did so now. Jerrell was seeing much of Nancy, for Dan had gone to Newfoundland to fish for salmon, and Nancy's time was free . . .

Doctor and Mrs. Greeding kept open house every Sunday afternoon and evening; and any number of people were apt to drop in, casually, without forewarning. Jerrell took advantage of one of these occasions; and after supper he and Nancy disappeared together. When later they returned, Jerrell joined Doctor Greeding in the library.

They spoke at first of casual things; Jerrell said presently:

"By the way, Nancy tells me she knows Dan Carlisle."

Doctor Greeding was instantly on guard. "You know him?" he asked.

"Only through his book," Jerrell said. "That is an able piece of work. A textbook not only for college classes, but for business men, and investors too."

The Doctor smiled. "I haven't read it," he confessed, and turned the conversation into safer channels. "I suppose you're as busy as usual?"

"Just now, yes," Jerrell assented; and after a moment's hesitation, he explained: "I'm taking an interest in a new outfit, Associated Cottons. We're proposing to cover the field from plantation to retailer, in one way or another. Of course I'm not personally connected with the technical end; only with the financing. We issued the stock privately at ten, and then had it listed. It's around eighteen now."

He looked at the ash on the end of his cigar. "It's apt to sell off a bit this month and next," he said. "But we expect it to hit fifty by the first of October."

"Your profession has always interested me," Greeding assented in an indifferent tone, but he was not indifferent. If Jerrell said Cottons would hit fifty, it was likely to do so. He filed the information in his mind. "I never speculate, myself," he added, unnecessarily.

But despite his disclaimer, he telephoned next day an order to Paul Master, who handled his investments, to buy a block of Cottons . . .

Jerrell continued to see Nancy frequently; and Doctor Greeding, watching his daughter without seeming so to do, thought that she was faintly ill at ease in the older man's company. When Dan came back from Newfoundland and brought a fourteen-pound salmon to Nancy, Doctor Greeding proposed to Mrs. Greeding:

"Why not invite the Carlisles over for dinner? We'll have the salmon!"

Mrs. Greeding said sensibly: "I expect Dan would rather have steak. After all, he must have eaten salmon in Newfoundland till he feels like one himself."

The Doctor chuckled. "He won't care what he eats, as long as he can be with Nancy," he pointed out.

Mrs. Greeding suggested: "Mr. Jerrell has been here so much while Dan was away. I think Nancy has—enjoyed seeing him."

"Give Dan a chance to repair his fences then," Doctor Greeding retorted. He saw her surprise, and said with a chuckle: "I'm not taking sides, Myra. I'm for a fair fight and let the best man win. Dan's probably all right. If he's anything like his sister, he's an able young man. Mary Ann has done very well with me. She's much the best nurse I ever had."

"You mean that we should invite Mary Ann too?" she asked doubtfully.

"Of course," he assured her. "And Professor Carlisle. Make it a family party!"

Mrs. Greeding in the end, although with a clear reluctance, agreed. Professor Carlisle and Dan and Mary Ann would come to dinner on Tuesday night.

Doctor Greeding had heretofore, save on the occasion of their first meeting, seen Mary Ann only in street clothes, or in her nurse's uniform; but tonight he thought he saw her for the first time. Her gown itself he could not have described, knew only that it was a harmonious part of her. Yet she seemed to him so radiant that it required a conscious effort on his part to control his tones and make them no more than casual.

He took refuge in jocosity. "Dan," he announced, "we've a special treat for you tonight. A friend of ours sent Nancy a salmon, and we're having it for dinner!"

It requires not much encouragement to lead a fisherman to talk about fishing, and Dan was full of reminiscences of his trip. The dinner-table conversation was almost a monologue. When Mrs. Greeding rose at last, she said:

"Ned, I expect Professor Carlisle and Dan would like a liqueur, and to smoke their cigars here."

She and Mary Ann and Nancy went into the other room; but Doctor Greeding saw Dan's eyes follow them, and he said amiably:

"No need of you staying with us, Dan. I think Nancy has some design on you. Go along and see."

So Dan grinned, and he too disappeared. Doctor Greeding sat at one end of the table, the Professor at the other; for Professor Carlisle had filled the pipe which he preferred to a cigar, and the Doctor had no desire to come near the source of that scent so offensive to his nostrils.

For a little, nothing was said. Then Doctor Greeding remembered certain matters almost forgotten; and he said, making his tone casual:

"Professor, Mrs. Greeding tells me that you gave her, that evening at the Jordans', quite a lecture on poltergeists. She had so much to say about it that I came home and read up on the subject myself. Do you seriously think there is any truth in these tales?"

Professor Carlisle smiled faintly. "I should hardly expect you to accept them," he confessed.

Doctor Greeding chuckled. "But I'm not completely incredulous," he protested. "I had a friend once who confessed to some personal experiences of the sort."

Professor Carlisle looked at him with a new interest. He said, at hazard: "It has often seemed to me that an open-minded physician must observe in his practice many things not easily explained by any medical formula."

Doctor Greeding nodded. "That is true," he said. "I do remember occasions when things seemed to go unusually well, in the course of an operation; when my fingers were successful without my mind's being fully conscious of the sources of that success. For instance, there was a man with a crushed and lacerated arm, necessitating amputation; it was during my days at the City, on relief work. An artery tore loose and retracted into the upper arm. Ordinarily, this means a swift and extensive dissection in order to catch the end of the vessel and check the hemorrhage. I did it in a matter of seconds; and even now, I don't know just how it was done. The artery seemed almost to thrust itself into my reach."

He continued: "But I wasn't referring to any experience of my own. This friend of mine—" He hesitated guardedly. "Well, you know the old belief, Professor, that to be born under a caul was lucky. This chap was born under a caul; and I think he was always secretly a little proud of the fact, feeling that he was set apart from other men by that circumstance."

The Professor smiled. "He wasn't also, by any chance, the seventh son of a seventh son?" he suggested in ironic amusement.

Doctor Greeding chuckled. "No. An only child," he admitted; and he went on:

"We grew up on adjoining farms, and if there are poltergeists, I suspect that he was one. I remember that when he was a boy, if he was left alone in a room, something was apt to fall and break. Of course, he was always blamed, and punished. His father used to say he whipped this youngster not for breaking the thing in question, but for lying about it afterward."

Professor Carlisle commented: "Boys have lied before, and will again."

"I know," Doctor Greeding admitted stubbornly. "But this boy always denied, even to me, that he had done the things for which he was blamed. I remember once we were haying, on a hot day in July; and they put us in the mow to stow the hay, and the hay caught fire. The barn, in fact, burned to the ground. Fortunately, it was a small hay-barn, across the road from the house, used only for storage, and the loss was not serious. But there again, he was blamed. They insisted that he had lighted a match, or done some other folly." He chuckled. "He bore the welts of that affair for days," he said; and he asked: "Isn't this the stuff poltergeists are made of?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Pronghorn Not Antelope; Mixture of Three Others

The pronghorn is not a true antelope; rather a cross between a deer, a goat and a giraffe, with a few characteristics of each. Zoologists say the Rocky Mountain goat is more nearly a true antelope.

The pronghorn is one of the swiftest animals on foot, declares a writer in the Washington Star. He clears prodigious lengths at a bound, but is a better broad jumper than high jumper. It is said that a 4-foot fence will retain him.

On their native plains pronghorns rely upon fleetness and alertness to protect them from enemies. The warning signal for a pronghorn stampede is the flash of some wary leader's white tail.

The pronghorn shares this warning signal with the cotton-tail rabbit.

Curiosity has cost the lives of many a pronghorn. The timid beasts will pause in full flight to examine an unexplained object.

Hunters often lure them within range by waving a rag on a stick while lying concealed in the grass.

The Mind Meter

By LOWELL HENDERSON

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Word Completion Test

In the following exercise there are ten skeleton words. That is, in each case some of the letters have been omitted. Study the letter given and try to fill in the missing letters to make a common word.

1. a-t--ct.
2. pu--ic.
3. a-az-ment.
4. c-u-t-y.
5. in--st-y.
6. pr-p--ty.
7. v-s-ble.
8. n-gl-ct.
9. su--or-.
10. sti--nd.

Answers

1. attract.
2. public.
3. amazement.
4. country.
5. industry.
6. property.
7. visible.
8. neglect.
9. support.
10. stipend.

Limiting Incomes

If all the personal incomes in this country were limited to $5,000 and all money earned in excess of this amount equally divided among those whose income is under $5,000, each beneficiary would receive less than $2 a week extra. In 1931 this excess amounted to $4,000,000,000 and the number of incomes under $5,000 was 40,000,000.—Collier's Weekly.

Here's that Fast "Phillips" Way

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On all sides, people are learning that the way to gain almost incredibly quick relief, from stomach condition arising from overacidity, is to alkalize the stomach quickly with Phillips' Milk of Magnesia.

You take either two teaspoons of the liquid Phillips' after meals; or two Phillips' Milk of Magnesia Tablets. Almost instantly "acid indigestion" goes, gas from hyperacidity, "acid - headaches" — from over-indulgence in food or smoking — and nausea are relieved.

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Miss REE LEEF says:

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Watch Your Kidneys!

Be Sure They Properly Cleanse the Blood

YOUR kidneys are constantly filtering waste matter from the blood stream. But kidneys sometimes lag in their work—do not act as nature intended—fail to remove impurities that poison the system when retained.

Then you may suffer nagging backache, dizziness, scanty or too frequent urination, getting up at night, puffiness under the eyes, feel nervous, miserable—all upset.

Don't delay? Use Doan's Pills. Doan's are especially for poorly functioning kidneys. They are recommended by grateful users the country over. Get them from any druggist.

DOAN'S PILLS