Barnabas, Quentin and the Avenging Ghost

Barnabas and Quentin join forces against Collinwood's ghostly killer
Could that be the answer? From the moment Carolyn’s friend Celia Dalton arrives at Collinwood, the Collins family is in danger. After each murder attempt, Celia is seen nearby, dazed and incoherent.

Celia’s father, a famous spiritualist, tells them his daughter is possessed by the vengeful spirit of a dead murderess. Carolyn can hardly believe her sweet, frail friend capable of such violent attacks . . . but if a demonic spirit lends her strength, can even Barnabas, with his own strange powers, save them?
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CHAPTER ONE

There was something diabolical about the suffocating August heat under which Collinwood sweltered. The northeast shore of Maine was normally cool and pleasant all through the summer, so this dry, hot spell was as unusual as it was unexpected. Carolyn felt there was something abnormal about it. In fact, it was her firm opinion that it was part of the curse hurled at her uncle, Roger Collins, some time before. The curse of a woman now dead who had come to hate the Collins family and all it stood for in the village... especially Roger.

Carolyn's mother, Elizabeth, was busy preparing the ancient forty-room mansion to receive guests—important, because they represented a link with the family over the years. Most of the work fell on Carolyn and her mother since the governess, Maggie Evans, had gone off with David and Amy to a mountain resort in New Hampshire. The youngsters had expressed a wish to visit the area and Elizabeth decided it might be wise to have them out of the mansion when their guests were there.

This seemed particularly desirable since one of the guests, a young woman not much older than Carolyn and a friend of hers from a short college session in Boston the previous summer, had suffered a nervous breakdown and was just on the mend from it. Her name was Celia Dalton and she was pretty in a fragile, China doll way—a petite brunette with large, luminous green eyes. Eyes which too often showed a tragic light in them.

Carolyn had first learned of the Dalton family's impending visit to Collinwood when Elizabeth had brought it up at the dinner table one evening in the spring of 1969.

"I've had a letter from Alice Dalton," she told them. "She'd like to visit us with her husband and daughter for a few weeks in August."
Roger Collins, handsome and blond, heard this with a frown. He managed the family fish-packing business though he owned it jointly with Elizabeth. And since his separation from his wife he had made his home with his older sister, bringing his son David with him. He was intelligent and not unkind, but in middle age given to a brusqueness that perhaps reflected his unhappy personal life. Active in the affairs of Collinsport, he had a strong sense of community service. His chief weaknesses, and these had cost him dearly, were a hasty temper and an inclination to drink too much.

As he sat at the head of the table in the paneled dining room of Collinwood, his flushed face showed that he'd been too generous with himself at the cocktail hour. With a look of annoyance he said, "Alice Dalton? Do you mean Alice Crawley?"

Elizabeth showed a tolerant smile on her attractive, matronly face. "Of course," she said. "I didn't think you could possibly ever forget her. She was here every summer when she was a girl. And you wanted to propose to her until you had that silly lovers' quarrel and she ran off and married Edward Dalton."

Roger gulped down a mouthful of ice water and frowned. "She was all right."

"All right?" Elizabeth raised her eyebrows. "You bored us all with your raving about her. I was sure it would be a match. And then, as usual, you had one of your temper bursts and it all ended."

Roger stared at his plate. "She was unreasonable."

"I doubt that," Carolyn's mother said lightly. "I'd be willing to bet it was you who caused the break. Anyway, judging from her letter, Alice still appears to adore you and she would like to come here as our guest."

At this point Carolyn had turned to Roger and said, "I don't think Mother mentioned that I met her daughter, Celia, at summer school in Boston last year. She's a marvelous girl. It would be fun to have her here for company."

Roger shrugged. "It's up to your mother. She's the
one who runs the house. If she feels she can cope with three demanding guests, she can go ahead."

Elizabeth smiled. "I don't see them as any bother. Alice and I were always good friends. And I'd enjoy meeting her husband. Edward Dalton has made a name for himself and I've liked his books."

Roger scowled. "Nonsensical spiritual stuff is what made him popular, if I'm not mistaken. Isn't he the one who wrote all those books of ghost stories?"

Carolyn spoke resentfully. "I think they're very good books. Celia gave me several of them. They were groovy! I mean, really spooky and all that!"

Her uncle gave her a cold glance. "I'm perfectly familiar with the type of book and I consider his theories of spiritualism a lot of nonsense."

"You've always been a skeptic," Elizabeth said to him, "but that doesn't mean you're right. I'm sure Edward Dalton must be an interesting person. And there's another reason I think it would be nice to have them here as our guests at Collinwood. Their daughter, Celia, has recently had a minor nervous breakdown. I think the restful atmosphere here would be good for her."

Roger looked grim. "No wonder the girl had a breakdown if she reads and believes in those books of her father's."

"It was brought on by studying too hard," Carolyn was quick to explain. "Celia wanted to get her degree in record time."

Elizabeth gave her brother another questioning glance. "Then I take it you have no objections to my inviting the Daltons here for the month of August? Maggie will be in New Hampshire with David and Amy. It's the ideal time for us to entertain guests."

"I leave it entirely up to you," Roger said gruffly.

Elizabeth looked troubled. "I hoped you would be pleased at the idea. You've had a difficult year and you were terribly fond of Alice. She still seems very interested in you."

"Alice is married and I'm past the romantic age."

Roger rose from the table. "But I'll be hospitable to
them if they come." And he left the room abruptly.

Carolyn had not been surprised too much at her uncle’s attitude. He was always cold and aloof in such matters. But she was glad he had at least agreed to the Daltons coming. She looked forward to renewing her friendship with Celia again. She had a younger girl’s crush on Celia, who was several years older, and she hoped her friend’s illness hadn’t changed her greatly.

Now she asked her mother about this. “Did Mrs. Dalton say much about Celia being ill in her letter?”

“Not much,” her mother said, “though I do know the girl was under a psychiatrist’s care and in the hospital for some weeks. She doesn’t plan to return to her studies until next fall.”

“That’s probably wise.”

“I would have liked to have seen Roger a bit more enthusiastic about their coming,” Elizabeth said.

“What makes him so bitter?”

Elizabeth smiled sadly. “I think Alice is the one girl he truly loved, and he still is hurt at losing her to Edward Dalton. Perhaps if the two men get along well when they meet it will change things. It might be very good for Roger.”

“Uncle Roger has been depressed more since the trial,” Carolyn suggested. “You don’t suppose Edward Dalton is coming here to investigate the case and write it up? He could be using his wife’s friendship as an excuse.”

This brought a troubled expression to her mother’s face. “I certainly hope there isn’t anything like that. If there’s any more talk about the Harriet Barnes thing, it will be dreadful for us all.”

Carolyn thought about this after she’d left the table and gone up to her own room. It was one of those nights when ghostly swirls of fog rolled in heavily from the Atlantic. The entire view from her windows was shut off by the spectral gray stuff. And as darkness came she stood by the window and stared out into the thick mist.

She was thinking of Harriet Barnes and her murder trial. Carolyn had first heard that Harriet Barnes was arrested one night last winter. The police were accusing
her of having murdered her three ex-husbands, all older men, for their insurance.

Carolyn had gone to her mother in the sewing room where Elizabeth was finishing a dress for her. And seating herself by her, she'd asked with a trace of incredulity, "It isn't true, is it? Do you really think Harriet murdered her husbands?"

Elizabeth had halted in placing the dress under the needle of the sewing machine. "I don't know what to believe. Harriet has always seemed a quiet, good-living woman. But those husbands of hers did die conveniently. And the police have exhumed the body of the last one and found quantities of arsenic in it. You see, Harriet worked for years in her father's drugstore and so would have had no trouble getting her hands on poisons. After her father died and she sold the store, she probably just put them aside to use as she needed them."

Carolyn had been shocked. "You make it sound so possible!"

"I'm afraid it is. The police rarely go to such lengths without strong evidence."

Carolyn had visualized the prim, gray-haired woman who invariably dressed in black. The village had always regarded Harriet as mildly eccentric and there had been sly jokes about her three marriages within ten years to one elderly man after another. But no one could have ever pictured her as a murderess, though she'd benefited financially by the deaths. Inevitably the insurance people must have become suspicious and initiated an investigation.

"What will happen to her now?" Carolyn had asked her mother.

"She'll stand trial in Ellsworth," Elizabeth had replied. "It's going to be a nasty business for everyone."

And so it had been. Roger Collins, drafted for jury duty, had wound up as foreman of the jury. He'd not really wanted to serve but they'd left him no choice.

Carolyn had followed the trial proceedings with excitement. The case went on for a number of days. And as the prosecution produced piece after piece of evidence, it
became sickeningly evident that the meek little perennial widow in black had been a mass murderess for insurance money. The link between her having the required supplies of poison and the fact she'd been a clerk in her father's drugstore had been clearly established. It appeared she had made these long-range plans and hoarded the poisons until the exact moment came to make use of them.

Harriet Barnes, who had never been an admirer of Roger Collins, came to believe during the trial that he was against her and swaying the jury to believe the worst about her. And when the verdict of guilty was returned, she burst into a screaming frenzy, blaming Roger Collins for what had happened. She had to be forcibly removed from the court.

While she was waiting for her lawyer to make an appeal, she killed herself.

The jail authorities claimed she had been thoroughly searched, but she had somehow managed to get the poison into her cell without their knowledge. She left a note filled with claims of her innocence and threats against Roger Collins and the whole Collins family.

Roger had returned home in a bad frame of mind the evening after the dead body of the murderess had been found along with her letter. He'd poured himself an extra heavy before-dinner drink and paced up and down in the living room impatiently.

"The woman had the audacity to blame me!" he raged.

Elizabeth had tried to calm him. "You mustn't let it worry you," she'd advised him. "That poor mad creature was bound to have reacted as she did."

"She hated me from the start," Roger maintained, still pacing. "And in her note she extended her hatred to all of you here at Collinwood."

"We must try just to forget it."

"That won't be easy," Roger warned her. "The contents of the note have leaked among the villagers. And you know how they thrive on grisly legends about Collinwood. Now they'll be saying we're under a fresh curse from that murderess."
Elizabeth’s lovely face had mirrored brief annoyance. “That’s ridiculous!”

“No more so than many of the other legends that have sprung up about the estate.”

Carolyn was forced to agree with her uncle, who, as it turned out, was right. In the following weeks, whispers began that Harriet Barnes’ ghost had been seen at Collinwood. One of the fishing boats was lost in a storm and this was at once put down to the curse, as was the death of a handyman who fell from one of the upper windows of the old mansion by the sea when he leaned out too far and lost his balance while repairing a shutter.

There had been a bitter exchange between Roger and the physician from the village, Dr. Ernest Moore, when he’d come out to attend to the injuries of the handyman and pronounced him dead. It had begun in the living room of the old mansion with Carolyn and her mother standing by as Dr. Moore came down to inform Roger of the man’s death.

In a sense Dr. Moore’s comment had been innocent enough. He’d said, “It seems you people at Collinwood are suddenly having a run of bad luck.”

Roger Collins had faced him with clenched fists and florid face. “I’ll thank you not to perpetuate the rumor that we’re under a curse from Harriet Barnes.”

Dr. Moore, a large, sandy-haired man whose thick glasses sheltered sleepy blue eyes, gave him a lazy smile. “I don’t know why you’d suggest I’d do such a thing.”

“What you said just now is typical of the whisperings behind our backs,” Roger said in a rage. “And I can’t forget that you tried to get Harriet Barnes off by insisting she was insane.”

“I still believe that she was,” Dr. Moore said quietly. “The prosecution’s medical witnesses proved differently,” Roger snapped.

“Not to my satisfaction,” Dr. Moore told him with a regretful look on his round, good-natured face. “And frankly, I don’t see why any of this should be brought up at this time. Our chief concern should be the death of your employee.”
"That is my chief concern," Roger said hotly. "But I will not have you going back to the village and spreading rumors that the curse of that murderess has been at work again."

"I had no intention of doing anything like that," Dr. Moore said, "and I fail to understand why you should think that I had."

Elizabeth had stepped in between the two men and told the doctor, "You mustn't mind my brother tonight. He is shocked and upset by this tragic accident. We deeply appreciate your coming out here so quickly."

"Any time, Mrs. Stoddard," the portly doctor had assured her. And then he left without any further conversation with Roger.

Through the living room windows, Roger stared scornfully at the vanishing red taillights of the doctor's car. "I don't like the fellow," he told them. "It's a pity he is the only doctor in the village and we have to depend on him. He knew Harriet Barnes had killed those three men yet he tried to get her off with a plea of insanity."

Elizabeth touched his shoulder placatingly. "I'm sure the doctor must have humanitarian motives. He probably felt sorry for her. And she couldn't have been normal or she wouldn't have done such a terrible thing."

Roger gave her a strange glance. "Do you know what I think?"

"No," she said. "What?"

"I think this fellow Moore may have done something criminal in the past. Perhaps even poisoned someone, accidentally or deliberately. And that is why he felt such sympathy for Harriet Barnes. No one here knows much about him or his history. He has no wife and he keeps to himself. I'd like to hire a private detective to delve into his past. I'll bet he'd come up with more than evil rumors."

Elizabeth looked reproachful. "Don't be so vindictive, Roger, just because Dr. Moore happened to disagree with you about that Barnes woman. It's all over and done with. And you'd be wise to forget it. I'm sure Dr. Moore is a quite ordinary man who has led a quite
ordinary life. If he has any vice, I'd say it is probably laziness."

And that had ended the discussion. The next thing to cause a rustle of dismay at Collinwood was the arrival of Barnabas Collins with his servant, Hare, to spend the summer at the old house toward the rear of the estate. Carolyn had been thrilled by this distant cousin who, in his Edwardian suits and caped coat, brought a taste of the mod English styling to the estate. She'd always found Barnabas fascinating from the time she was a little girl and he'd been charming and gentle with her.

Thus she found it hard to share Roger's antipathy toward Cousin Barnabas. But as usual, Roger found a good deal to complain about and was little more than civil to Barnabas when he appeared at the house. When Elizabeth reproved Roger for his cold behavior toward their cousin, Roger had an answer. "We're barely living down one nasty legend when he comes back to renew an old one."

Carolyn had responded indignantly, "Personally, I think Barnabas is one of the most interesting and friendly persons I've ever known."

Her uncle had sneered at this, "Then it is evident you don't know much about him. He's on his good behavior where you and your mother are concerned. But it's another story when he prowls about the estate and village at night!"

Her mother had intervened. "I'll not have you filling this child with a lot of macabre stories that can't be proven!"

"She's not a child; she's nearly twenty," Roger had said in anger. "And it's time she learned that there are those in the village who resent Barnabas. They think he is a vampire just as his ancestor was—that first Barnabas Collins who was driven off the estate in disgrace because of his attacks on innocent young women."

Carolyn turned to her mother with puzzled eyes. "What does he mean?"

"It's nothing," her mother had said. "Don't listen to him. None but the ignorant believe wild stories of vam-
pires stealing blood from the throats of young women. Some of the silly village girls have pretended to be victims in order to cover up their drunkenness and wanderings at night.”

“That’s your story!” Roger said. “I believe it’s the true one,” Elizabeth had assured him calmly. “And I will continue to welcome Barnabas on his visits here and not refuse Carolyn her friendship with him.”

“Then whatever happens is on your own head,” Roger had said darkly.

As Barnabas was forever working on some learned treatise or historical document, he never emerged from the old house in the daylight hours. But in the evenings he often walked the cliffs or went for a stroll to the old cemetery. Carolyn knew that the high spot along the cliffs known as Widow’s Hill was one of his favorite places. So she often went there around dusk and waited for him to come along.

On this particular August night there was hardly a breath of wind and the searing heat of the day lingered even though dusk had settled. She had come to wait for Barnabas, eager to tell him of the expected arrival of the Dalton family the following day. She stared out across the ocean and then let her eyes swing to the street lamps of Collinsport on the left. The village was on a jutting strip of land that formed one side of Collinsport Cove, while the lighthouse far out on a barren area to the right formed the other side.

Its sweeping beam of light flashed across the hot, black night in a regular fashion. She missed Maggie Evans and the youngsters, David and Amy. The big house seemed quiet and empty without them. And she was looking forward to a reunion with Celia and hoping the dark girl would not be too ill to enjoy her stay on the estate. There were so many things to do, so many places to explore.

She heard footsteps approaching on the parched path and turned to see the tall, erect figure of Barnabas coming towards her. She rose as he joined her. And looking
up into his melancholy, handsome face she said, "I was afraid you mightn't come this way tonight."

The sharp, deep-set eyes studied her. "I had a feeling you might be here," he said in his deep, pleasant voice. And he touched his lips to her cheek.

"Your lips are so cool!" she exclaimed. "The only cool things I've encountered on this awful night."

His smile was one of resignation. "I've been told that before," he said. "At times like this, a circulation problem can be an asset."

She said, "I especially wanted to see you tonight because the Daltons are coming in the morning."

"Oh, yes." He nodded. "I believe you've spoken of them before. The father is a noted author of books on spiritualism, the mother is a former sweetheart of Roger's and the girl, who you say is extremely pretty, is a friend of yours. Celia is her name, isn't it?"

Carolyn smiled. "You've certainly got a wonderful memory." She sat down on the bench.

Barnabas sat beside her and rested his hands on the silver wolf's head of his shining black cane which he planted on the ground before him. "I wonder that Roger isn't angry about their coming. He doesn't seem to enjoy visitors at the estate."

"He didn't really want them to come, but then, he's been in a rage about almost everything lately. The ugly talk about that Harriet Barnes putting a curse on Collinwood has bothered him and the heat seems to have made him more unreasonable and bad-tempered."

Barnabas smiled again. "I'm afraid the heat does that to most people. This could be a difficult summer."

"It has been already," she agreed. "So many awful things have happened in the last few months!" She gave a tiny shiver. "I'm almost willing to believe in the curse myself."

His deep-set brown eyes showed sympathy. "You mustn't let the atmosphere of this old place depress you," he said. "Collinwood was once a happy house and I hope one day it will be happy again."
Carolyn gave him a pouting look. "You're so nice and Uncle Roger says such terrible things about you."

Barnabas laughed softly. "That puts me in an illustrious group. Roger is quite broad in his hatreds."

"He makes sneering remarks about your remaining in the house all day."

"With heat such as we've been having, it is a wise practice," Barnabas said. "If that's the worst he can say about me, I'm fortunate."

She looked down shyly. "Oh, he says more. He claims that you pick up girls in the village and kiss them some strange way on the throats so they have scars and go wandering about in a daze. I don't understand what he means. It sounds ridiculous. And when I try to question him he merely puts me off."

"Don't listen to him. He's jealous because we are such close friends."

Carolyn looked up at him happily. "I believe that's the truth. And I do like you, Barnabas. I hope you and Celia don't fall in love with each other. I'd be jealous."

His eyes twinkled. "I'd say that was extremely unlikely."

"Don't be too sure. She's older than I am and very pretty. And you are the quiet, romantic type I know she prefers."

"Careful," he warned her, "or you'll be making a match between this Celia and me before we even meet."

It was her turn to laugh. "I hope the heat doesn't remain. It could spoil it for them here. We've never had such hot weather before. It's unhealthy and kind of creepy. I suppose the villagers will be saying that it's part of Harriet Barnes' curse."

"The lady poisoner who eliminated her three husbands for profit."

"Yes. And she was such an ordinary, prim person you'd never have guessed it."

"Evil is often cloaked in ordinary garb," Barnabas said.

"I'm frightened by the curse," Carolyn admitted with a shudder. "Sometimes when I close my eyes I can see
her angry face and I have the feeling she will try to
harm me. She said she’d come back and settle with
every one of us.”

He sighed. “You must try to fight against your fears.”
“It’s good to have you here,” she told him. “You’re the
only one I can seem to talk to.”

Barnabas reached out and placed a comforting arm
around her. “Always feel free to come to me for advice
or help,” he said. And then he stood up. “I must move
on. I have several other calls to make tonight.”

She was on her feet. “Will you walk as far as Collin-
wood with me? I know it’s silly, but I’m afraid now that
darkness has really set in.”

“Of course I’ll walk with you.” And he was as good
as his word, escorting her to the front entrance of the old
mansion.

Before she left him, she said, “May I introduce you
to Celia tomorrow night? Please come to the house and
meet them all. Roger is bound to behave before com-
pany.”

“I’ll think about it,” Barnabas promised. Then he
touched his cool lips to her forehead and turned and
walked off into the shadows of the hot night.

Inside, she found the old house silent and only the
night light on in the hallway. Elizabeth often went up
to her room early and read in bed, while it was custom-
ary for Roger to remain in his study until late working
at his papers and records, and quite often drinking
heavily.

She mounted the stairs feeling edgy again now that
Barnabas had left her. It was strange what a comforting
presence his was. None of this fear touched her when she
was with him. She moved along the shadowed hallway to
her room, haunted by the memory of Harriet Barnes’
hateful face. Was the curse as real as this hot summer
night?

She opened her door and was about to switch on the
light when her eyes caught a glowing, macabre horror
etched on the wall against the blackness of her room.
A hideous skull’s head, with staring black eye-sockets and grinning teeth, surmounted by the plain hat she’d so often seen the murderess, Harriet Barnes, wear. She let out a scream of sheer terror!

CHAPTER TWO

Still the grinning skull mocked her in the darkness. Carolyn was leaning weakly against the door frame when her mother came quickly in answer to her scream. Elizabeth touched her arm: “What is it?”

Carolyn pointed to the wall. “There!”

Her mother’s tone was scornful. “What a ninny you are! It’s nothing!” And she switched on the room lights.

“But there was something on the wall like a skeleton face,” she maintained.

Elizabeth gave her a sharp look and walked across to the window. “The drapes are open,” she said, “and what you saw was the new yard light reflecting through the trees. That created the illusion of a ghost face.”

At once Carolyn felt embarrassed, for she knew her mother was right. Roger had recently installed an extra light for the grounds on a thirty-foot pole, which was tall enough to cast a reflection even through her upper window.

She said, “I forgot about the new light.”

Elizabeth closed the drapes. “If you keep these closed it won’t bother you.” And coming across the room to her, she said with concern, “You must be in a very nervous state to let a small thing like that upset you.”

“I am a bit jumpy,” Carolyn admitted. “I have been ever since the talk about Harriet Barnes.”

“You’re surely not afraid of that madwoman’s curse?” Elizabeth asked her. “All these rumors of it bringing us bad luck are nonsense. Harriet Barnes is dead and can do us no harm.”

“I hope not.” Carolyn’s voice lacked conviction.
“Will you be all right now?”
“Yes. I’m sorry I bothered you.”
When her mother left, she slowly prepared for bed. Perhaps the new lamp wasn’t the only explanation for the spectral face. Had some supernatural force made the reflection take on that special grisly warning for her? A chill shot through her as she considered this.

The following morning it was sunny and blazing hot even at an early hour. She went down to breakfast in shorts and thin linen blouse. Roger was already at the table and looking surly. He raised his eyes as she entered the room.

“What’s this I heard about you having hysterics last night?” he demanded.
She was helping herself to orange juice and cereal at the sideboard. As she turned and came back to sit at the table, she said, “The yard light gave me a scare. My nerves aren’t very good.”

“It would seem not,” her uncle said with some sarcasm. “Well, perhaps the arrival of company today will cheer you up. It’s to be hoped so.”

“I am looking forward to seeing Celia,” she said. “And of course you knew her mother well.”
Roger looked uncomfortable at this mention of his youthful romance. “Yes, of course. I’m more concerned about her father. I don’t want Edward Dalton digging around here for ghost stories and making the place notorious in some Sunday supplement.”
She managed a small smile. “It might be very good for the tourist business in the village.”

“And send a rash of ghost hunters running all over the estate! No thanks!” Roger said with annoyance. “When I see that gentleman this evening I’m going to warn him to restrain himself to merely being a guest. He’ll not enjoy our hospitality and make newspaper copy of us at the same time.”

With that, Roger got up and left for his office at the fish-packing plant. Carolyn finished her breakfast and
then helped her mother put the finishing touches to the apartment at the rear of the second floor which they were turning over to their guests. It was complete with bedrooms, a small kitchen and dining room, though most of the time the Daltons would be joining them in the main dining room below. But they could prepare their own breakfasts if they wanted to get up late.

Elizabeth surveyed the master bedroom of the apartment with a nervous air. “I think I’ve taken care of everything,” she said. “Do you think it’s stuffy in here?”

“No,” Carolyn said. “It’s pleasant, considering the heat outside. If you open any more windows it will only let the heat in.”

“I suppose you’re right,” her mother said. “I do wish this miserable dry, hot spell would end. It’s spoiling everything.”

They had barely gotten downstairs when a smart blue hardtop drew up before the front entrance of the old mansion and Celia Dalton and her mother stepped out. Carolyn rushed out to greet them and was surprised at how thin and pale her friend was. Certainly Celia showed signs of her recent breakdown still. Her mother was an older, healthier version of the girl and still retained a great deal of charm. She was dark like Celia but more animated.

Alice Dalton said, “We have some bags. Should my husband take the car around to the rear or carry them up the front steps?”

“They can go up the front way,” Carolyn said. “And you needn’t worry about them or the car. We’ll have the handyman carry the bags up and park the car for you. Come in out of the heat. Mother is inside waiting for you.”

Alice Dalton relayed this message to her husband and a moment later he got out of the car. He was probably more than six feet tall and unusually thin. His face was lantern-jawed and he had black bushy eyebrows. His eyes were black and piercing and he walked with the slight stoop of the tall and aging. He offered Carolyn a nervous smile as they were introduced. And when he
removed his Panama hat, she saw that he was totally bald except for a narrow rim of black hair.

They went inside where Elizabeth greeted them in the living room. Her reception of Alice Dalton was that of one old friend welcoming another. She was warmly pleasant to Celia, who seemed edgy and not too happy at being there, and friendly with the tall, rather strange Edward Dalton.

He said, “I've been anticipating coming here. I understand that Collinwood is a house in which the supernatural has shown itself.”

The smile on Elizabeth's face froze. “I wouldn't say so. Not any more than in dozens of the old mansions in this part of New England. Legends do grow around ancient houses.”

“And none has more than Collinwood,” was his reply.

From her easy chair Celia gave her father a plaintive glance. “Dad, can't you restrain yourself until we at least get our luggage in the house?”

“Sorry,” he apologized. And to Elizabeth he offered, “It's just that I'm so keen on my research into the supernatural.”

“Of course,” Elizabeth said in a way which was in itself a reprimand. And then she turned to Celia. “Isn’t it wonderful that you two girls have met before?”

“Very nice,” Celia agreed. “I've looked forward to seeing Carolyn again, but the drive here from Boston was exhausting in the heat.”

“And of course you're still not fully returned to health,” Elizabeth said. “Let me show you to your rooms so you can settle in your things and rest.”

“I think that would be fine for the ladies,” Edward Dalton said in his polite, nervous manner. “I'd like to take a brief walk around the grounds.” And turning to Carolyn, he asked, “Would you mind terribly being my guide?”

His request caught her by surprise. She had hoped to go up to the apartment and chat with Celia. She said, “It's very warm out at midday. Wouldn't you like to wait until later?”
“I’d much prefer to go now,” he said. “When I get to a new place I like to sop up the atmosphere.”
Carolyn gave Celia a disappointed look. “I suppose we can talk later.”
“Of course. Right now I’d like to lie down and rest for a little.”
“Fine,” Elizabeth said. “I’ll take you two upstairs and Carolyn can show Mr. Dalton around.”
A few minutes later Carolyn, wearing a broad-brimmed white sun hat, found herself guiding Edward Dalton across the lawn. He had put on his Panama hat and with his coat unbuttoned and flapping as he walked, he didn’t seem to be minding the heat at all.
She was beginning to feel that she was dealing with an extremely alert if eccentric individual. Edward Dalton had a strange hint of power about him, a kind of domination in his deceptively mild manner that was somewhat sinister and frightening.
He said, “I have a confession to make. I’m not as innocent of what is going on here at Collinwood as I have pretended to be.”
She wasn’t really surprised. “Really?”
Dalton halted. Looking down at her, he said, “The Boston papers have carried several stories about Collinwood lately. Their interest was aroused by the Harriet Barnes murder case and the curse she is supposed to have placed against all the members of the family.”
“We don’t take that seriously.”
His heavy black eyebrows lifted high. “It is possible that is a bad mistake.”
She stared up at him. “Do you believe in such things?”
He nodded solemnly. “I am a student and recorder of the supernatural. And I have known many things that can’t be explained in a normal fashion. I also possess certain psychic powers, which I have lately discovered have been transmitted to my daughter.”
Carolyn was shocked. When she’d known Celia the previous summer she’d been a light-hearted, healthy girl, not the pale, sickly creature she’d seen a few
minutes ago. Was this change in the girl linked in some way with her father's dabbling in the spirit world?

She said, "How do you mean?"

He made a gesture with a long, skinny arm. "I began using Celia as a medium last winter. Just before her breakdown. And I had absolutely astonishing results. Spirits from the other side found her body receptive. And through her I was able to talk with a surprisingly varied group of the dead."

His words further upset her. "You mean you put Celia in a trance and these dead people spoke to you through her?"

Dalton nodded. "Yes. It was most thrilling. Unfortunately her mother objected to my experiments. There was some family tension. Then Celia had her breakdown and I was unable to go on with my work."

It struck Carolyn that it was probably his macabre experiments that had made Celia become ill and so changed. It filled her with uneasiness as she studied her friend's father.

She said, "I wouldn't think that kind of dabbling in the supernatural would be good for her."

Dalton smiled in his overbearing way. "There is no question of it being good or bad for her. If she offers an avenue for the spirits to contact us, they will use her."

Carolyn frowned. "You think she may act as a medium again?"

"I'm positive she will," he said. "Even though her mother will not let me induce a proper trance in her, I maintain when a spirit with sufficient power presents itself it will take over Celia's body."

"That's frightening!"

His hollow-cheeked face was mocking. "Only to you and others not sophisticated in the techniques of the spirit medium. I'm happy that my daughter has this great gift."

"I can't think of it as a great gift if it has made her this ill," Carolyn protested.

"We lose to gain. It is perhaps a matter of balance"
that she lose some of her physical health to gain spiritual and supernatural powers."

Carolyn stared up at his ecstatic face and began to fear that he might be insane. "How can you feel so lightly about your daughter's health? She should be having fun at her age. She should be thinking of romance and marriage, not ghosts!"

"She is my daughter," he said. "And I am conceited enough to believe that because of that she is a rather special girl, destined to become a famous medium. That is, frankly, why I agreed to this vacation here—to test out her sensitivity in an environment that is heavy with the unseen influence of invisible spirit hands."

She listened to his callous statement with a rising panic, feeling that she should somehow defend her friend. "Does your wife and Celia know your reason for agreeing to come here?"

"No," he said with another of his mocking smiles. "Celia thinks I generously brought her here to visit with you and let the sea air restore her health. My wife also thinks that and she was anxious to come for another reason. Despite our years of marriage, I believe she is still in love with Roger Collins."

His cold, calculating tone again brought fear and disgust to her. She said, "I'm sure you are making too much of their long-ago friendship."

"Oh, I don't expect anything to come of it. Alice would never consider destroying our marriage, if only because she wants to protect Celia. But I have taken advantage of her romantic dreaming. And here we all are at Collinwood." He gazed back at the sprawling dark mansion with its tall chimneys, then looked out toward the ocean reflecting the sun in its silver waves. "I'd like to walk as far as the old cemetery."

"It will take at least fifteen minutes each way," she warned him.

"I don't mind."

"It's this way." She began leading him toward the outbuildings and the path that went by the old house where Barnabas and his servant were staying. This path even-
ually led to the sloping field and the ancient cemetery at the bottom of it adjacent to the forest.

He strode beside her, his long legs covering the ground so rapidly that she had to hurry. “This must be the route taken by the funeral parties each time they headed for the cemetery,” he said.

“It is,” she agreed, trying to hide her dislike of him. And then she made a decision. “I think I should warn you about something.”

He glanced at her. “Oh?”

“Uncle Roger does not want you dabbling in spiritualism while you are our guest or writing anything about your experiences here after you leave.”

Edward Dalton came to a halt with an expression of surprise on his gaunt face. “That’s a most extraordinary statement. Why do you tell me this?”

“Because you seem to be doing exactly the opposite of what he wishes.”

“And I will go on doing so,” he assured her. “I have only come to Collinwood to investigate its ghosts.”

“That is something you will have to settle with my uncle,” she said, starting to walk again.

He walked along with her. “I haven’t the slightest intention of changing my plans,” was his calm reply.

As they came abreast of the old house Hare suddenly came out the front door and glared at them from the steps. “There’s a surly fellow,” Dalton said.

She glanced nervously in the direction of Hare—squat, his face covered with a gray stubble of beard, his dark suit shabby and unpressed, his felt hat battered. She said, “He’s not friendly but he won’t bother you if you don’t bother him.”

“Indeed?”

“He’s the servant of our cousin, Barnabas, who visits here every so often. Barnabas works in the daytime and Hare guards the house to be certain he is not disturbed.”

They had passed the old house with Hare still out on the steps. Edward Dalton glanced back over his shoulder at him and then said to her, “A most amazing character. And of course this Barnabas Collins would be a great-
grandson of the Barnabas who was driven away from here because he was rumored to be one of the living dead. A vampire!"

She glanced up at the tall man uneasily. "You're very familiar with our history."

"Indeed I am," he said. "The original Barnabas was bitten by a vampire bat. The curse of a woman from the Indies caused that. And so he lost his true love and became a wanderer of the earth. One of the half-dead, who appear only after dark." He gave her another of his mocking smiles. "Odd that this Barnabas should follow his ancestor's habits simply through industry."

"I haven't given it any thought," she said in a tense voice as they came to the sloping field. "The graveyard is down there."

Edward Dalton stalked among the ancient and slanting gravestones of the quiet cemetery like some grim shadow in the heat of the warm midday. It was a little cooler in the family burial place because the adjoining forest gave sections of it some shade. Carolyn, whose distaste for her friend's father was growing every minute, allowed him to take his own way.

And he circled about and walked back and forth, checking and rechecking the lettering on the worn tombstones like someone in a frenzy. She had no doubt that he was more than a little mad on the subject of the supernatural. But what really frightened and disgusted her was the damage she felt he had done to his daughter. The Celia she'd met today was only a dull shadow of the lively girl she'd known in Boston. It was tragic.

Dalton came back to her and removing his straw hat, mopped his bald dome with a handkerchief. "This place must really have atmosphere after dark," he said triumphantly. "Even at this time of day I can feel the tug of spirit hands."

"I rarely come here after dark." Before she could stop herself, she added, "I was here once in the moonlight with Barnabas."

He seized on this with a mocking smile as he replaced his hat. "With Barnabas, of course! I must meet this
interesting cousin of yours. It is possible he can tell me something of his ancestor."

"Barnabas doesn’t like to discuss the past."

"But he does have a taste for cemeteries after dark," Edward Dalton said slyly.

She blushed. "We just happened to walk this way."

"I understand," he said. "This has been most rewarding. Now we can go back."

On the way back to Collinwood he asked her countless questions. And while none of them seemed to have any great importance she had the uneasy feeling he was still getting information he wanted from her—but so slyly that she didn’t fully realize the importance of her revelations.

As they entered the old mansion they met Elizabeth coming down the stairs. As soon as Carolyn saw her mother’s worried face she knew something was wrong. Hurrying to the foot of the stairway, she asked, "What’s the matter?"

Her mother looked from her to Edward Dalton and said, "Celia seems very unwell. She fainted as we entered the apartment. We have her in bed now and I’ve phoned Dr. Moore in the village and asked him to come out as soon as he can."

"Couldn’t he come right away?" Carolyn asked.

"He has office hours in the afternoon," her mother said. "He asked me some questions about her condition and gave some suggestions about making her comfortable. He didn’t appear to think it urgent enough to come at once."

Edward Dalton moved his lanky body to the bottom of the stairs and said, "The doctor was quite right not to become unduly excited. I’m positive the forces that are troubling her are nothing a medical man can hope to cure."

Elizabeth gave him a questioning glance. "I’m not sure I follow you."

Carolyn said, "What he’s telling you, Mother, is that he believes it is the supernatural that is working on Celia."
He thinks Collinwood is filled with ghosts and Celia is sensitive to them."

Elizabeth looked startled. She came down the steps further and said, "You're really not serious in what you told Carolyn, Mr. Dalton?"

"I have never been more serious, Mrs. Stoddard," was his reply.

She gave Carolyn a glance of concern and then told Dalton, "I beg you not to talk so openly about spiritualism here. My brother is opposed to any belief in the supernatural. And I'm afraid he might make it awkward for you if you go on as you have been doing now."

"Please don't worry about me," Edward Dalton said. "I'm sure I can make your brother see my point of view. The real concern is Celia and her getting control of her powers as a medium once again. I must go up and see her. And talk to my wife." He went up the stairs without a parting word for Carolyn or a further glance in her mother's direction.

When he was out of sight Elizabeth came on down the rest of the stairs to stand with Carolyn. "What an extraordinary man in both appearance and manner."

"I don't like him!"

"You mustn't jump to rash conclusions," her mother lectured her. "He's probably very nice."

Carolyn shook her head stubbornly. "I can't believe that. I say he's come here to cause trouble."

"Not at all. Alice is one of my dearest friends. And she's still very fond of Roger. You can be sure she'll make her husband behave properly while they are here."

"I'm not sure of that," Carolyn warned her. "I think it was his spirit experiments that caused Celia's breakdown. And in spite of his wife he still intends to use the poor girl as spirit medium."

Elizabeth frowned. "Those are only suppositions on your part. It's a waste of time to discuss them. Let's hope Dr. Moore gets here soon."

Carolyn was going to tell her mother that Edward Dalton also appeared to have an unhealthy interest in Barnabas and his doings but she decided against this.

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There was enough tension in the old house as it was. She waited for the doctor to come and the warm afternoon dragged on. Alice Dalton came down a little later looking troubled.

She joined Elizabeth and Carolyn in the living room and told them, “My husband has offered to remain with Celia until the doctor gets here. He somehow seems better able to calm her than I can.”

Carolyn asked her, “How does she seem now?”

“Feverish. And restless,” Celia’s mother said worriedly. “I do hope it’s not a return of her breakdown. If that should happen we’d have to go back to Boston and put her in a hospital again.”

“What sort of hospital?” Carolyn asked rather awkwardly.

Alice Dalton gave her a strange look. “A hospital for the mentally ill.” She turned away.

The three women went on waiting. They had no desire to discuss what was an embarrassing subject and so they kept silent for the most part or talked in bland generalities. As it turned out, Roger got home before the doctor arrived. He seemed genuinely pleased to see Alice, and alarmed by the news her daughter was ill. He turned angrily to Elizabeth.

“What’s the meaning of this?” he demanded. “Dr. Moore should be here by now.”

“I would guess he had a heavy office schedule and that’s why he is late.”

Roger was on the point of calling the doctor’s office again when his car appeared in the driveway. The big man emerged from it and lumbered up the front steps. Elizabeth went to greet him, no doubt because she feared there might be an immediate quarrel between the easy-going doctor and Roger.

She told Dr. Moore, “The patient is upstairs in the apartment.”

“Fine,” he said. “You can show me the way.”

Elizabeth led him to the stairs, introduced him to Alice Dalton, and then the three of them started up to the second floor apartment. Meanwhile Roger stood in
the doorway of the living room, his hands clasped angrily behind his neck.

"I hate to have that fellow in the house," he said to Carolyn.

"We need him badly," she said.

They waited for word concerning the sick girl, their tension growing. Then Carolyn heard someone on the stairs and when she looked up she was surprised to see it was Edward Dalton.

He came down and joined her. "The ladies felt I was making it more difficult for the doctor to diagnose Celia so I have come down to leave them in privacy. Though I still say I know what is wrong."

Roger Collins had come out to the hallway and now offered his hand to the thin man who towered more than a head above him. "I'm Roger Collins," he observed dryly. "I guess you must be Edward Dalton."

"No one else," Dalton said amiably enough as he shook hands with Roger. "I'm extremely interested in being here at Collinwood. And I may tell you that this illness of my daughter's has no physical basis. It is the result of her being extremely sensitive to the supernatural. This house is a haven of ghosts."

Roger looked outraged. "I do not understand you."

"But I've said it in so many words. Collinwood is haunted by a number of unhappy ghosts."

Roger's face took on a purple shade. "I will have no more of that kind of talk."

"Sorry," Edward Dalton said with a mocking lack of respect.

Carolyn was relieved at that moment to see Dr. Moore coming down the stairway with her mother. When they reached the bottom of the stairs Roger Collins strode over and confronted the doctor. "Just what is the condition of this girl?"

"She's in an agitated condition," Dr. Moore said carefully with an odd look in the sleepy eyes behind those thick glasses. "But I can't seem to pinpoint it physically."

"Do you have to get in touch with the Ellsworth doctors then?" Roger demanded.
The stout doctor shrugged. "You may if you wish, though I doubt if he'll be able to help her more than I have. I've given her a sedative." He paused to glance at them all. "It's very odd!"

"What is odd?" Roger persisted.

"Just now when she was murmuring in her fever up there, she kept repeating the name Alvah over and over. She kept fretting about Alvah and whether he was ill. I asked her mother if she knew any Alvah and she said no. She'd never heard the name before."

"Well?" Roger said.

The portly doctor sighed. "You won't like this, I'm sure. But I happen to know that Alvah was the middle name of Harriet Barnes' third husband. It was his middle name and he never used it. She was the only one who knew it and she told me she often called him Alvah when they were alone. It was a pet name between them." He hesitated a moment. "Alvah is no common name. Why is this girl, a stranger here, so familiar with it?"

Carolyn couldn't help glancing at Edward Dalton and noting the triumphant smile on his thin face.

CHAPTER THREE

"My daughter is subject to psychic influences," Dalton said. "No doubt her mention of Alvah is an expression of this."

Dr. Ernest Moore gave him a probing glance. "It's hard for me to find any other explanation for her murmurings."

"Rubbish!" Roger exclaimed.

The portly doctor ignored him and turned to Elizabeth. "If you decide to retain me as doctor for the girl, there are certain procedures I should like you to follow."

Elizabeth turned to Edward Dalton. "How do you feel about this?"
“I would be happier to have my daughter under medical care and since Dr. Moore resides in the village he would seem to be the logical person. I’m sure my wife will feel the same way.”

“Very well then,” Elizabeth said. “What are your suggestions, Doctor?”

He sighed. “It is my opinion this young woman’s trouble is of a mental nature. I’m going to initiate a complicated treatment by tranquilizers and would prefer to have a nurse in attendance. I know of a good psychiatric nurse available in Portland. I can have her here tomorrow.”

Dalton said, “By all means. Perhaps we can in this way prevent having to return to Boston with Celia.”

“I would hope so,” the doctor said cautiously. “Don’t be surprised if she responds almost at once to treatment. But don’t be deceived into thinking her improvement means a nurse is not required. It will take time to bring this young lady back to health.”

“Thank you for your interest in the case,” Elizabeth said. “When shall we expect the nurse?”

“I’ll bring her here myself and introduce her to the patient,” he said. “It will be no earlier than tomorrow afternoon. I’ll also have the schedule of medications arranged by then.”

Elizabeth smiled. “We will expect you tomorrow afternoon, Dr. Moore.”

Behind his thick glasses the doctor blinked nervously. “If you have any problems before then do not hesitate to phone me.”

Elizabeth saw him to the door while Roger and Edward Dalton stood glaring at each other. There was an uneasy silence and Carolyn hesitated to break it until her mother returned.

Joining the group again, Elizabeth offered the two men a small smile. “I’m sure that was settled as well as could be expected.”

“I’m by no means sure of it,” Roger rasped. “I do not like having that Moore running here regularly. Nor do I look forward to having a nurse in the house.”
“Celia is ill and she is our guest,” Elizabeth reproved him.

“I take exception to your statement, Mrs. Stoddard,” Dalton said. “I do not consider my daughter ill, but rather tormented by the uneasy spirits clamoring for her attention in this old house.”

Carolyn’s mother opened her eyes wide. “I find that a most unusual theory, Mr. Dalton.”

Edward Dalton’s bony face glowed with a perverse pride. “I am the only one who truly understands my daughter. I know she has the power to become a great medium. And it is her stifling of this power that is torturing her. Thus she requires sedation and other medical care to quiet what is a natural urge on her part.”

Roger had been standing by silently with the air of one whose rage was gradually increasing. Now he came close to Dalton, who towered above him, and in a tone of exasperation warned him, “I do not want to hear any more of that kind of talk while you are in this house.”

The tall man took a step back in surprise. He inquired sarcastically, “Are you so terrified by the spirit world, Mr. Collins?”

Roger looked as if he might strike him. “I am in no way terrified by the spirit world. In fact I make no admission that it exists. But I am upset at the thought that through your superstition and greed you may cause more scandal about Collinwood and infringe on our privacy.”

Roger wheeled around and strode down the corridor to his study. As he slammed the door behind him they all stood there with somewhat stunned expressions.

It was Elizabeth who came to Dalton’s aid. “You mustn’t take my brother too seriously,” she soothed him. “Let him get over this rage and you’ll find him easy enough to get along with.”

“There is no suggestion of that in his manner now.”

Carolyn gave him a reproving look. “I told you my uncle wouldn’t want to hear your views on spiritualism.”

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"True. You did warn me," he admitted. "But I had no idea anyone could be so narrow in their thinking."

At this juncture in the conversation Alice Dalton came down the stairs, looking less harried. "My daughter is feeling much better," she said. "The doctor gave her something which eased her tension. I think what she had was just a kind of weak spell."

Elizabeth gave her a smile of reassurance. "I sincerely hope so. You and Edward must come into the living room and rest for a little before dinner." And she shepherded the attractive dark woman and her husband into the living room. Carolyn, glad to be relieved of the difficult task of coping with the tall man, hurried upstairs to change for the evening meal.

She was filled with a number of troubled impressions of the Dalton family. And in spite of the fact she'd looked forward to seeing Celia again and spending some time in her company she now began to doubt the wisdom of having these guests. Maybe Roger was right. Certainly Edward Dalton was a very weird and menacing person. Perhaps he was even on the brink of madness and he had succeeded in undermining his daughter's mental health. Alice Dalton was the most balanced of the trio; Carolyn felt sorry for her.

As Carolyn opened the door of her room and stepped inside, a gasp of surprise escaped her lips. There, staring out the window, was Celia!

"Celia! I didn't expect to find you here," she said, going across to the dark girl.

Celia turned with a wan smile on her lovely face. "One of the maids told me this was your room. I didn't think you'd mind my coming here."

"Of course I don't," she said, happily. "It's just that I didn't think you were well enough."

Celia's brown eyes had an exceptional brightness. "I feel so much better. Whatever the doctor gave me helped clear up that awful headache that struck me almost the minute I stepped inside this house."

She studied her with concern. "Have you been attacked by such headaches before?"
The other girl hesitated, then quietly said, "Only when I was so ill last spring."

"Dr. Moore is an excellent doctor," Carolyn said. "He's been here a number of years and has many friends. Un fortunately he and my uncle do not get along too well."

Celia smiled at her. "What a lovely old house this is."

"It's much too large for us in this modern day," Carolyn said. "We find it hard to get help and keep them."

"I have so looked forward to coming down here and seeing you again," Celia said.

Carolyn nodded. "And I've been anticipating your visit. I'm only sorry you've been so ill."

"I'm all right now."

"Dr. Moore is bringing you some medicine tomorrow," she said. "And he wants you to have a nurse to supervise taking the pills he's giving you. At least for a few days."

Celia's lovely face shadowed. "I suppose my father is responsible for that."

"Not really."

Celia had suddenly become tense. "You musn't believe all that my father tells you," she warned Carolyn. "He has become very strange lately. I think his dwelling and writing on the supernatural for so many years has troubled his mind."

Carolyn felt she should be very careful in what she said. "It might be possible," she ventured.

Celia looked at her with fear in her eyes. "And he has pushed me into this spiritualism thing. I think that is what caused my breakdown last year. This business of ghosts terrifies me."

"Then you should refuse to have anything more to do with his seances."

"I mean to," Cecila assured her. "Let him find another medium for his contacts with the dead." She gave a tiny shudder. "From the very start I felt harboring those spirits in me defiled my body."

Carolyn was concerned for the dark girl, who she could see was not all that well yet. "You must get your mind off that unpleasantness. It is lovely country here and it will
help you. After dinner we'll take a stroll and perhaps meet my cousin, Barnabas."

Celia lost some of her frightened look. "Who is this Barnabas?"

She smiled. "Someone you'll like a great deal. He's very charming. He dresses in the mod fashion and he is gentle and kind."

Celia looked impressed. "You sound very fond of him."

"I am," Carolyn said sincerely. "I think if he weren't my cousin I could easily fall in love with him."

The dark girl laughed. "Everything you tell me makes me want to meet him. I've felt so hedged in lately, living at home with only mother and father for company."

"You've not been to college since the spring?"

"No. Not since I was in the hospital."

"Did you make friends there?"

Celia shook her head. "No. It was an awful place, privately operated by a friend of my father's. And this doctor is also a fanatic about spiritualism. He hounded me about it every chance he had. After a while I felt I was really losing my mind."

"You should never have been sent there!"

"It was a poor choice. And I can't tell you of the things that went on there!" Celia shuddered. "If I thought my parents had any idea of sending me back to that place I'd kill myself."

Shocked, Carolyn hastily touched the girl's arm. "You mustn't say such things."

"I mean it," Celia said fiercely. "I really do."

"There'll be no need of that," Carolyn told her. "Dr. Moore will treat you while you are here. And I'm sure he's finding you an excellent nurse. And you'll have me. By the time you leave you're bound to be your old self."

A faint smile played about the corner of Celia's lips. "You make me believe it's possible," she said. But her eyes were still too bright.

"I'm sure it is," Carolyn said.

Celia moved away from the window and sat down on the arm of the high-backed chair near it. A conspiratorial
smile crossed her pretty face as she said, "I do want to tell you a secret."

"Yes?"

"There is a young man whom I met at college who was very nice to me. His name is Martin Wainwright and he was very kind to me while I was recovering from my illness. He still writes to me and I let him know I was coming down here with my parents. There is a just a chance that he may come to visit Collinsport."

"That would be wonderful."

"It's only a chance," the dark girl said quickly, "I don't count on it. I've had so many disappointments. And I haven't said anything about him to mother or father, so please don't tell them."

"I won't," she promised.

Celia looked at her happily. "I like to think he will come."

"He very well may," she said. "And if he doesn't, there's Barnabas. I know you'll find him romantic."

"You make him sound so," the other girl agreed. A look as if she had suddenly remembered something crossed her face. She felt in the pocket of her linen dress and produced a gold locket on a chain. "I nearly forgot about this."

"What is it?"

"Isn't it yours? I found it on the floor in front of your dresser when I came into this room."

Puzzled, Carolyn took the locket and examined it. It had a tiny diamond mounted on its face. "I can't imagine how it got here. I'll have to ask the maids. But it isn't mine."

"That's strange," Celia said.

"It is, very."

And then Carolyn found the tiny catch on the locket and managed to open it. She gave a small gasp. For inside the locket was a rather blurred snapshot of Harriet Barnes' face. It had been taken years ago when she was a young woman, but there was no mistaking the features of the murderess.

"What's wrong?" Celia asked.
Trying to hide her distress, she said quietly, "I think I know who it belongs to now."

"I'm glad," Celia said, rising from the arm of the chair. "I'd better go back to my room and get ready for dinner."

Carolyn walked to the door with her friend. "I'll see you downstairs then."

"Yes." Celia stepped out into the shadows of the hall. "One thing," Carolyn said. "Do you happen to know someone named Alvah?"

The dark girl stared at her blankly. "Alvah?" she repeated the name. "No. Why do you ask?"

"Dr. Moore thought you murmured that name while you were ill a little while ago. He probably didn't hear you clearly."

"He couldn't have," Celia said. "I've never known there was such a name."

"Don't worry about it," Carolyn said with a wan smile. Celia went on down the corridor and Carolyn returned to her room with a troubled expression on her attractive face. She studied the gold locket which she still held and debated what it all meant. If Edward Dalton's spiritualistic views were to be taken seriously, the avenging spirit of the dead murderess must be hovering within the walls of Collinwood.

Could the ghostly voice of Harriet have whispered Alvah's name into the ear of her ailing friend? And had a specter's invisible hand left the locket in her room where she would be sure to find it? Staring at the yellow locket with its single diamond, she found herself still skeptical. She preferred to think that Dr. Moore had heard Celia wrong and that there was some reasonable explanation for the locket suddenly turning up.

The trouble was she couldn't think of any at the moment, and she felt ill-prepared to cope with the problem. She decided to secrete the locket in a corner of her dresser for a time and later try to discover the truth about it. But even after showering and dressing for the evening meal, she still felt totally bewildered as she went downstairs.

Roger had been drinking a good deal before dinner.
This was often the case when something upset him. But as a result he was in a better humor at the table, though his jolly mood was slightly disconcerting. Every now and then, he tended to chuckle to himself about nothing.

The Dalton family took their places and for the most part fitted in well. Alice Dalton kept up a vivacious chatter and flirted a little with her old beau, Roger. Celia addressed most of her conversation to Carolyn. And Elizabeth cleverly kept Edward Dalton engaged in talking to her and so not bothering Roger. In this way dinner passed fairly pleasantly.

As they left the table Celia fretted, “I don’t think I need medicine or a nurse. I’m feeling very well again. I’m going to tell the doctor that when he returns tomorrow.”

Carolyn knew Celia was not as well as she thought. And she felt it would be best if she did let Dr. Moore carry through his plan of treatment for her. She said, “Having the nurse and taking the medicine can’t do you any harm. Why not try it?”

The dark girl sighed. “I suppose I will. But it does seem a kind of put on.”

“You mustn’t think of it that way,” Carolyn protested.

The others had gone into the living room. She and Celia were still in the hallway, so she took her over to admire the gold-framed painting of the first Barnabas Collins. She always had the feeling it was of the Barnabas she knew, since the melancholy face and brooding eyes of the portrait were much like those of the present-day Barnabas. Yet she found it hard to imagine that this other Barnabas could have had the same charm.

She pointed to the portrait. “That is a study of an ancestor of the Barnabas you’re going to meet. And my Barnabas looks much like this painting.”

Celia seemed impressed. “Then he is extremely handsome.”

“He is.”

The dark girl glanced at her with a troubled expression. “I get a strange, sad feeling from studying this painting. Is there some tragic story associated with it?”

“How odd that you should sense that!”
“My father insists I have the sensitivity of a medium. I hope he’s wrong. But occasionally I do feel things strongly.”

“The story of the original Barnabas is one of the legends of the estate,” Carolyn told her friend. “I never mention it to Cousin Barnabas, as he seems to resent it. But according to the story, this man was placed under the curse of the vampire. He became one of the living dead and the villagers drove him away from Collingsport—or at least made it so unpleasant for him here that he had to leave under cover of the night.”

“Why?”

“He was preying on village girls for the blood he needed. The marks of his teeth were found on their throats. And many of them complained of his attacks on them.”

“What an utterly fantastic tale!” Celia exclaimed. She smiled thinly. “There are many others connected with this place. The Phantom Mariner with a skull face is supposed to haunt Widows’ Hill but I have never seen him, though I’ve been there many times at night. I think your father knows a lot about these ghost stories.”

“No doubt,” Celia said with a sigh. “He has devoted his entire life to studying and writing about ghosts. I’m sure as a result he’s a little mad.”

Carolyn preferred to make no comment on this. She glanced at her wristwatch and said, “I think we might meet Barnabas if we began walking toward the old house now.”

“Let’s go, then.”

They slipped out the front door without attracting any attention. Carolyn was enjoying this harmless conspiracy with her friend. It brought back the pleasant times they’d had in their short session at the Boston college. The sun had gone down and dusk was settling over the estate, but it was still very warm.

As they walked slowly across the lawn, Celia asked, “Is it always as hot as this here?”

“No, this is unusual. And I can’t imagine that the
spell can last. Maine becomes cold at night toward the end of August."

“It surely isn’t cold now,” her friend marveled. “It’s almost as bad as it was in the city.”

“I know. It’s strange. It makes Collinwood seem different.”

They were strolling by the barns. Ahead on the left the old house stood out against the grayness of the approaching night. There was something menacing about its dark hulk outlined against the sky. Most of the time it was empty. Only when Barnabas came was the house opened and some activity going on within its walls.

“Is this where Barnabas is staying?” Celia asked, as they halted before the steps of the shuttered old house.

“Yes.”

She gave a tiny shiver. “It’s a strange old place. Why doesn’t he open the shutters?”

“I have no idea. Perhaps it’s because of the hot spell. He can keep the house cooler if he doesn’t let the sun in.”

“It could be,” Celia agreed. “But their being closed gives the place such a deserted, macabre appearance.”

“It is empty when Barnabas isn’t here,” Carolyn said. “We can try the knocker. Either Barnabas or his servant, Hare, will come to the door if they’re at home.” She gave Celia a smile as they mounted the steps. “You mustn’t mind Hare’s appearance. He’s unkempt and ugly but he’s a trustworthy servant and Barnabas wouldn’t dream of dismissing him in spite of his faults.”

She tried the brass knocker and then waited. It was at least two or three minutes before the door creaked open to reveal Barnabas standing there in his usual caped coat. When he saw them he smiled, revealing his perfect white teeth.

“Well,” he said, “you are bringing me a visitor.”

“This is Celia, the girl I told you about,” she said quickly, then gave the two a formal introduction. Barnabas was his usual charming self and she could tell that Celia was impressed and liked him.

“Won’t you come in a moment?” he invited them. “You’re sure we’re not intruding?” Carolyn worried.
“Not at all,” he said with a friendly smile. “No doubt Celia will be interested in seeing the interior of this house. It is very old. It predates Collinwood by many years.”

He showed them into the living room with its elegant furnishings and they were delighted by how cool it was in there compared to outside. Carolyn said, “You’ve been wise to keep the shutters closed. You’d think this house was air-conditioned.”

The handsome, brown-haired man nodded. “I like it this way.”

Celia, who had been wandering about the room, stopped before the portrait of a brunette with a wild, arrogant kind of beauty. She was pictured in a low cut crimson gown and there was a string of pearls at her throat. Celia remained gazing at the painting as if she were mesmerized by it.

“Those eyes!” she said. “They seem to leap from the painting and pierce through me.”

Barnabas looked slightly startled. Because the old house had not been wired for electricity, he still used candles for illumination. Picking up a nearby candelabrum, he went over and stood by the dark girl so the flickering of the candles reflected on the painting giving the face a more vivid touch of life.

There was an odd expression on his face now as he also gazed at the portrait. “You find her interesting?”

Celia was staring at the lovely yet cruel face. “Yes,” she said in a voice only a little above a whisper. “I feel she is alive.”

“Indeed,” Barnabas commented dryly, still holding the candelabrum aloft.

Carolyn joined them and said, “It is a lifelike study. But she must have died years ago.” She turned to Barnabas. “I don’t recall seeing this here before.”

He smiled sadly. “It was stored in the cellar. I came upon it this evening. I brought it up here on a whim and hung it in place of a landscape.”

“Do you know who the girl was?” Carolyn asked.

“Yes,” he said. “Her name was Angelique.”
Carolyn felt the name was familiar. And then it struck her that was what the evil beauty in the legend had been called. It was Angelique who was said to have placed the vampire curse on the first Barnabas, she was sure. But she didn’t mention this because she knew Barnabas disliked hearing about the legend.

Still studying the portrait raptly, Celia said, “It’s strange, but I feel that girl wants to tell me something.”

“Indeed,” Barnabas said. “That is an interesting reaction. I have no idea what she would say. Perhaps she’d tell you what life was like here a century or more ago. When I discovered her down below, her lovely face was a mess of cobwebs. They covered her features like a veil.”

“I don’t like to hear that!” Celia exclaimed, her face suddenly pale. She turned away from the painting. “It makes me think of the grave and all kinds of unpleasant things.”

“I’m sorry,” Barnabas apologized. “I had no intention of inducing repulsive associations.” He moved away from the painting and placed the candelabrum on the table again.

Celia was staring at him. “Surely you know more about this Angelique than you have told us.”

“Why do you say that?” Barnabas asked with one of his charming smiles.

She shrugged. “I have a strong impression,” she said. “Don’t ask me to explain. I do.”

“I gather that in her day she was believed to be a kind of witch,” he said.

At that moment there was a loud knocking on the door of the old house. Looking surprised, Barnabas left them to answer it. A moment later as he opened the door they heard the voice of Celia’s father.

Are my daughter and Carolyn here?” Edward Dalton was asking.

“Yes,” Barnabas replied.

“May I see them?”

“Certainly,” came Barnabas’ calm reply.

Carolyn and her friend exchanged uneasy glances.
moment later Barnabas returned leading Edward Dalton into the candlelit room. It struck Carolyn that Celia’s father resembled one of the ghosts he dedicated so much of his time to.

The thin, tall man took a big step forward and with his hat in hand glanced around the room. Then he addressed Celia. “You must never come here again!”

Celia protested. “Please, father!”

“You heard what I said,” Edward Dalton said sternly. And then with a look of fear on his bony face he turned to Barnabas. Hastily, almost imperceptibly, he bowed to him. “You will excuse us, Mr. Collins,” he said with nervous apology.

Then he shepherded the two girls from the shadowed room and out of the old house. Carolyn’s last glimpse of Barnabas was of him standing there with a veiled smile on his sallow, handsome face.

CHAPTER FOUR

No sooner had they stepped out into the warm darkness of the night than Celia turned on her father. “What a dreadful thing for you to do!”

“You don’t understand what you’re talking about,” he told her.

“Barnabas is Carolyn’s friend,” Celia said angrily. “And I hope he will be a friend of mine!”

“I don’t care what Carolyn does,” Edward Dalton said sternly. “But I will not have you going there again. It is not safe for you.”

“Why?” Celia demanded.

Her father hesitated. “It is a house of evil,” he said. “Surely you must have been aware of that.”

“You’ve shamed us to satisfy your crazy superstitious beliefs,” Carolyn said angrily. “I won’t know how to face him again.”
“It will be better if you don’t,” her father said. “Come along.”

Celia turned to her, “Please go back and apologize to your friend for me.”

“If you like,” Carolyn said. And turning to Edward Dalton, whom she was more and more coming to dislike, she added, “I think you behaved very foolishly just now, Mr. Dalton.”

“I am not interested in your opinions,” he said coldly. And he started back towards the house with Celia.

Carolyn watched until they vanished in the darkness, feeling sorry for Celia. Then she turned and started up the steps of the old house. Before she could go in Barnabas came to meet her in the doorway. He joined her on the steps.

“Have they gone?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“I find your friend Celia both attractive and perceptive.”

“She is,” Carolyn agreed. “I don’t know what to think about her father. He was incredibly rude to you just now. I think he must be insane.”

“A strange man,” Barnabas agreed.

He came down the steps and they began strolling toward Widow’s Hill. A slim, pale arc of moon glimmered in the sky. She always enjoyed these times with Barnabas and was sorry that Celia’s father had come along to spoil her evening.

She said, “Celia hasn’t been well, and I blame her father for it. She suffered a breakdown last spring after he’d forced her to act as a medium in some experiments he was making in spiritualism.”

“She’s an extremely sensitive girl,” Barnabas said. “Such experiments could be dangerous for her. If her father is experienced in spiritualism he should be aware of that.”

“I don’t think he cares as long as he can use her,” Carolyn said bitterly. “I can notice a great change in Celia. And she collapsed after she arrived here today.
Had a weird kind of spell.” And she proceeded to tell Barnabas all that had gone on.

By this time they were at the cliffs and the high point where a bench was set out. They sat down together and Barnabas listened with apparent concern to what she had to say.

When she finished he eyed her shrewdly and said, “So Dr. Moore is going to treat her and provide a nurse for her.”

“Yes. Do you suppose there is such a thing as ghostly influence? And that Harriet Barnes made Celia mention her husband Alvah’s name?”

“That’s difficult to say,” Barnabas observed. “I’m more puzzled by the discovery of her locket in your room. And, of course, by Edward Dalton’s actions. Perhaps he is the evil genius behind all this. He has learned many of the facts about Collinwood. It is quite possible he found out the name of Harriet’s husband.”

Carolyn realized Barnabas could very well be right. Edward Dalton might be staging these supposedly ghostly happenings for his own benefit. They could make a thrilling magazine article and he would vouch for their authenticity. It wouldn’t be hard for him to impress the name of Alvah on Celia’s mind so that she repeated it when she had her migraine spell. And he might even have gotten his hands on that locket in a secondhand store in Collinsport and left it in her room.

She gave Barnabas an excited look. “I’ll bet that’s it! He’s manufacturing a ghost story to sell to the press.”

“It’s entirely possible,” Barnabas said with a frown. “These professional ghost hunters are usually a very mercenary lot.”

“It is her father Celia must be protected from,” she said angrily.

“Could you discuss this with Celia’s mother?”

“I doubt it. She gives me the impression of being a pleasant but shallow woman, completely subservient to her husband’s wishes.”

“Probably,” Barnabas agreed.

“So we must try and help Celia directly,” she worried.
“And of course this nurse Dr. Moore is sending could be a great help.”

Barnabas smiled in his grim fashion. “I’m rather surprised that Roger was willing to let Dr. Moore in the house, let alone treat this girl. There has been a lot of bad blood between them because of the Harriet Barnes trial and her subsequent suicide.”

“Dr. Moore is still just as convinced she was innocent as Uncle Roger is she was guilty. What do you think?”

Barnabas stared out at the ocean now dimly reflecting the pale new moon. “She was a murderer. The evidence was reasonably strong in spite of her protests of innocence.”

“What makes it so bad is that letter she left accusing Uncle Roger of swaying the jury against her and threatening everyone at Collinwood with a curse. The village people really believe in that curse.”

“They are willing to believe many things,” Barnabas said with a grim look.

“Do you think there could be anything in it? That an evil person like Harriet Barnes might have an influence over us from the spirit world?”

“Evil spirits have threatened Collinwood in other times,” he said. “I believe such a danger could exist. But I have confidence in all of you not to be panicked by such a possibility.”

“Uncle Roger has become very upset. He won’t even allow us to mention ghosts. He and Mr. Dalton had an awful row.”

“That doesn’t surprise me.”

“Uncle Roger warned him to not write any ghost stories about Collinwood.”

“The warning won’t stop him. He’ll wait until he leaves and do as he likes.”

“I suppose so,” she worried. “And Roger is unreasonable. He was even upset when you returned.”

“Indeed?” Barnabas lifted his eyebrows.

She smiled. “He felt it would remind people of the original Barnabas and the fact he left here under a curse. It’s all mixed up in his mind.”
“So it would seem.”
“I’m more nervous than I ever was after dark,” she admitted. “And finding that locket with the likeness of Harriet in it has made me doubly afraid.”
“I put that down to an act of the living,” Barnabas said. “Not that of a ghost.”
“I hope you’re right.”
“At the same time I must warn you to be very careful,” Barnabas told her. “Lock your door at night. Don’t wander on the grounds alone after dark.”
Carolyn stared at him with fear in her eyes. “Then you really believe something is going to happen? Something dreadful?”
He shook his head. “It doesn’t have to. But I want you to be on your guard. Especially against Edward Dalton. I don’t trust him.”
Barnabas saw her to the entrance of Collinwood as was his custom and kissed her goodnight. He left with a mention that he was going into the village to stop by the Blue Whale. She knew this was one of his few diversions. And she felt he was certainly entitled to this mild recreation after the long hours he spent shut up in the old house in the daytime.
She went inside and upstairs to her own room. Silence and shadow filled the mansion. She quickly prepared for bed, not forgetting to lock her door as Barnabas had warned. She was about to get into bed and had already turned off the lights in her room when she decided to go over and open the window a bit more. It was hot still.
As she was raising the sash to its full extent she happened to glance out across the lawn and saw something that made her start. Near the path that ran along the edge of the cliff stood Barnabas Collins and with him was a figure so tall and spindly that it could only be Edward Dalton. The two were facing each other as if in some serious discussion.
She was shocked to see them together after the scene of earlier in the evening, and she worried for Barnabas’ safety. There was no telling what wicked motive Dalton had in seeking him out. As she watched the two parted.
Barnabas walked off toward the road leading to the village and Edward Dalton seemed to be striding back in the direction of Collinwood. Frowning, she left the window and got into bed. What had the confrontation meant? Would Barnabas tell her about it?

Witnessing this strange scene left her unsettled, and she dreamed wildly all through the night. The tight, cruel face of the prim murderess Harriet Barnes, haunted her. She tossed and moaned as the woman in black pursued her. Once she awoke with a scream, drenched in perspiration, and she sat up in bed staring into the surrounding darkness for a warning stir, fearful that the venomous features of the dead Harriet might suddenly thrust at her from the shadows.

When she finally awoke to another warm day she felt as if she hadn't gotten any rest at all. She was further disturbed when she encountered Celia's mother in the hallway and was informed that her friend was suffering from one of her strange spells again.

Alice Dalton's attractive face was lined with worry. "I do hope Dr. Moore gets here soon and brings that nurse. Otherwise we'll have to leave and take Celia back to Boston."

"If he said he'd be here, I'm sure he'll come," Carolyn said. "Is there anything I can do in the meanwhile?"

Celia's mother sighed. "I think not. You might disturb her if you went in there now. She seems to have a high fever and she talks in a disjointed, incoherent manner. I left Edward to sit with her. They are sending up some breakfast for them, though I doubt if Celia will take anything."

Carolyn went on downstairs to have her own breakfast. Roger had left for the plant but Elizabeth was at the table. Looking concerned, she asked Carolyn, "You've heard that Celia has had another attack?"

"Yes."

"It's dreadful for Alice and for Edward Dalton as well."

"I don't like him."

"Celia's father?"
“Yes.”
Elizabeth looked uncertain. “He is a strange man but I can’t believe he is a wicked person.”
Carolyn looked at her mother directly. “I think it possible.”
“That’s distressing,” Elizabeth worried. “Especially so when Alice is his wife and Celia his only child. Surely he wouldn’t harm them.”
“He has already harmed Celia by forcing her to take part in his weird spiritualistic rites. And Alice Dalton seems a rather unthinking person or she’d be aware of this.”
“She has become a different person,” Elizabeth said. “When she was a girl she was very light-hearted and full of fun. If I get a chance I must question her. She may tell me something.”
“The best thing will be to have a nurse here. With Dr. Moore treating Celia and a nurse on hand to watch over her she may have a chance.”
Her mother regarded her with alarm. “You make it sound so serious!”
“I’m positive it is for Celia. Her father has bullied her and harassed her into the state she’s in.”
“Well, I hope you are wrong,” Elizabeth said dismally. “All this has created a good many problems for me. Roger is in a rage because I let Dr. Moore take on the case. You know how he is about the doctor.”
“But we need Dr. Moore’s help now.”
“Exactly what I tried to tell Roger,” Elizabeth said. “But you know how stubborn he can be. I sometimes think I should leave Collinwood and let him stay here!”
Carolyn grimaced. “I don’t think he’d manage well. And there is David to consider. And Amy.”
“If only Maggie Evans were here it would be better,” Elizabeth said. “With her away I have to pay much closer attention to the household affairs. And I think the children keep Roger in better humor.”
“Not always,” Carolyn said.
Her mother gave her a meaningful glance. “And when-
ever he gets in a rage he always starts to complain about Barnabas."

“What possible bother can Barnabas be to him?”

“You know what Roger is like,” her mother said with a sigh.

Carolyn did. She went upstairs after breakfast and checked to see if Celia was feeling any better. This time Mr. Dalton came to the door of the apartment and refused to let her see his daughter.

“Celia still is running a high fever,” he said “She’s not well enough to talk to anyone.”

“Is there anything I can do?”

“Nothing,” the thin man said bleakly. “The doctor should get here soon.”

Because of the heat Carolyn decided to go down to the shore and take a quick dip in the ocean. While she was down there she saw the doctor’s car come along the road from the village and head for Collinwood. She hastily toweled herself and climbed up the bank to the level of the lawn. By the time she reached the house, Dr. Moore and the nurse had gone up to the apartment.

In her room she changed to a cotton print dress and then went downstairs again to hear the doctor’s verdict. She found her mother waiting alone in the living room, and they exchanged a few words before the portly, sandy-haired Dr. Ernest Moore came down the stairway with his medical bag in hand.

Her mother went out to meet him. “How is she, Doctor?”

The eyes behind his thick glasses had a serious look. “Miss Dalton is in a highly excited state. Something is disturbing her. I’m trying a combination of tranquilizers which I hope will help.”

Elizabeth said, “Then I’m to understand her condition is caused by a type of mental illness.”

He frowned. “Yes and no. The mental illness is present. But I believe it is being induced by some outside pressure, some factor unknown to us as yet.”

“You’ll be keeping a close contact with her, Doctor?” Carolyn’s mother asked.
“Yes. If the girl doesn’t show some response to treatment within a reasonable time I suggest she be taken to Boston.”

As he finished speaking a large woman in a white nurse’s uniform came down the stairs to join them. Carolyn couldn’t help staring at her. The woman was powerfully built and had short graying hair. Her face had a sullen look and she wore horn-rimmed glasses. Carolyn guessed by her bearing she was a domineering type.

She addressed Dr. Moore. “I’ll need some extra hypodermic needles, Doctor.”

“I’ll have them sent out to you,” he said. Turning to the others, he smiled and said, “This is Mrs. Marie Bell. She’s an accomplished psychiatric nurse and ideal to look after Miss Dalton.”

When they were introduced the big woman was coldly polite. And after a few more words with the doctor she excused herself and went back up to rejoin her patient.

Carolyn’s mother smiled wanly at Dr. Moore. “She seems to have a good deal of assurance.”

“She is a thoroughly dedicated person,” he agreed. “I’ll try to drop by at least once a day until our patient shows some improvement.”

He left after that. And Carolyn found herself wondering what sort of person the nurse would turn out to be. At least she looked powerful enough to stand up to any nonsense from Mr. Dalton.

She soon had a report from Dalton himself. “That nurse has put me out of my daughter’s room,” he exclaimed with annoyance. “I can’t imagine what Dr. Moore was thinking of, hiring such a woman!”

Carolyn put aside the paper she’d been reading. Getting up from her easy chair, she told him, “I hear she is excellent for cases like Celia’s.”

“And I disagree,” he said emphatically. “First she asks Alice to leave the bedroom and then me. You’d think we were trying to harm our own flesh and blood.”

“Perhaps you are, without meaning to,” she said in a quiet voice.

“I am not a child, Carolyn,” the tall, thin man snapped.
“I know how to behave.”
“You insist on dabbling in spiritualism and dragging Celia into it.”
He looked angry. “That is what is wrong with her now. Evil spirits are pressing in on her.”
“That wouldn’t be accepted as a medical explanation.”
Edward Dalton gave a deep sigh and turned away from her. “I still say that is what is wrong.”
She felt this was as good a time as any to ask him about the previous night. So she said, “Last night I saw you at the cliff’s edge talking to Barnabas.”
He wheeled on her. “You saw what?”
“You and Barnabas Collins having a long talk after everyone else had gone to bed. Then he left for town and you came back here.”
He looked at her uneasily. “I’m afraid you’re in error. I was nowhere near the cliffs last night. In fact, I went straight up to the apartment after I brought Celia home.”
“But I know that I saw you.”
“You made an error.”
“Then I apologize.” But she knew that he was lying and couldn’t fathom why.
Edward Dalton’s gaunt face showed annoyance. “I do not have a high enough opinion of your friend Barnabas, to want any secret meetings with him.”
She gave Celia’s father a defiant look. “What have you got against him?”
He glared at her. “I don’t think I need to explain that,” he said, and he stalked off. The last she saw of him he was walking in the direction of Widows’ Hill—a bizarre caricature of a man, his lanky black figure outlined against the cloudless summer sky.
She slept during the late part of the afternoon, attempting to make up for her lost sleep of the previous night. And when she got up to dress for dinner she felt much better. By the time she went downstairs Roger was at home and giving her mother a lecture in the living room as he had his pre-dinner martinis. Seeing Carolyn come into the room, he became silent.
Carolyn eyed them both with a bitter smile. “I know
you were having a battle royal,” she told them. “Don’t stop just because I’m here.”

Roger glowered at her over his half-empty martini glass. “I don’t suppose you’d be interested anyway. But you may as well know a girl was attacked in Collinsport last night and found collapsed on the dock near the plant. According to all that I hear, she was seen leaving the Blue Whale with Barnabas around midnight.”

Carolyn said, “That doesn’t mean Barnabas should be blamed for what happened.”

Her mother spoke up. “Just what I have been telling Roger. The girl might have seen a half-dozen other people after she said goodnight to Barnabas.”

Roger Collins smiled at them nastily. “I prefer to think that Barnabas was the one who said goodnight to her and in his own peculiar way. There happened to be a strange red mark on the girl’s throat. And she had no memory of what had happened. She was also weak. It sounds too much like what happened when Barnabas was visiting here not so long ago.”

“You’re being unfair,” Elizabeth protested.

“When I say that Barnabas is a recluse who finds an outlet by attacking pretty girls in the night and biting them on the throats?” he demanded.

“Barnabas would never do such a mad thing,” Carolyn defended him.

Roger turned his full anger on her. “Then why have such incidents occurred when Barnabas is here as a visitor and only then?”

“I don’t know that they have,” she protested.

“I do,” Roger assured her. “I have kept a careful record. It is my opinion Barnabas is a psychotic who imagines himself a reincarnation of his ancestor, the one cursed as a vampire. And he acts out the part as best he can. It won’t be long until the villagers are whispering about him again. And then the police will catch him one night and we’ll all be disgraced!”

“You’re being melodramatic, Roger,” Elizabeth admonished him. “Nothing like that is going to happen.”

“Young assurance is not sufficient to allay my fears,”
Roger said in his most sarcastic fashion. “And if that is not enough, we have this mad girl and her impossible family upstairs as guests. I sometimes think you actively plot to torment me!”

Elizabeth was on her feet. “I will not have you discuss our guests or Cousin Barnabas in the way you have. And I warn you, much more of this and I’ll move out of Collinwood and leave the village altogether. My share of the company profits will look after my family’s needs wherever we decide to go.”

Roger cooled down instantly at this. He put down his glass and in a tone close to apologetic, he said, “Don’t think of anything like that, Elizabeth. And forgive me for allowing my temper to get the better of me.”

Elizabeth said, “It’s been happening much too often lately.”

Roger nodded. “I realize that and I’m sorry. I have had a lot to carry on my shoulders these last few months—the problems of the business and then this Harriet Barnes affair. That woman’s unjust accusation that I was responsible for her conviction and suicide has been hard to bear.”

“I’ve tried to keep that in mind,” Elizabeth said. “Otherwise I’d have reprimanded you long ago.”

Roger gave Carolyn and her mother a despairing look. “I’ll try to control myself better in the future. I still am concerned about Barnabas and this other matter. But I’ll say nothing. I couldn’t manage here without you and you must know it.”

Having humbled himself to this extent he turned and slowly left the room. Carolyn did not see him again until they were all at the dinner table; he was very subdued then and said little. As soon as dusk came she left the house and went out in search of Barnabas. She wanted to question him about a number of things, including his conversation with Edward Dalton and the details of his visit to the Blue Whale. She didn’t think he had attacked the unfortunate girl, but others might. He should go into the village and clear himself.

She walked straight to the old house and when she
arrived there the night shadows were deepening. She tried the knocker and waited. Then she heard heavy footsteps approaching and the door was cautiously opened a little. Hare's face with its stubble of gray beard peered out at her.

"I'd like to speak to Barnabas," she said.

His reply was a snarling sound. And he slammed the door in her face. She stood there stunned for a moment, then realized that Barnabas must have already gone off somewhere. The mute servant was alone in the house and not receiving visitors. She would now have to make her way back to Collinwood through the darkness alone. She hesitated for a moment before she turned and went back down the steps.

In the distance she could see the lighted windows of Collinwood, but it was a long walk to the security of the old mansion. Barnabas had warned her against going out alone after dark.

Taking a deep breath and holding her head high, she fixed her eyes on the yellow glow of Collinwood's windows and began walking briskly towards the sprawling mansion. Her footsteps sounded loud on the dry earth and the night was oppressively warm. Frightening visions came to her mind. Chief among them the hate-filled face of the murderess, Harriet Barnes. Lately that bitter face seemed to literally haunt her.

Once she thought she heard a movement to her right and her heart began to beat wildly. She increased her pace until she was breathless and at last she was close to the big mansion. Now that her fears for herself moved into the background she began worrying about Barnabas. Where had he gone so early in the evening?

When she entered the mansion, her mother, Alice Dalton and the thin Edward Dalton were seated in a group in the living room having some serious discussion. She didn’t feel like being dragged into it so she quietly made her way across the hall and up the stairs. At the head of the stairs she passed the formidable Nurse Marie Bell, who was on her way to the Dalton's apartment
with a glass of orange juice on a tray. She was going to ask how Celia was, but the nurse went by quickly and with the slightest of curt nods. So she was discouraged from attempting any conversation.

She read for a short time in her bedroom before preparing for bed. It seemed hours later when she was abruptly wakened by the eerie screams. Actually it turned out to be only a little past midnight. She sat up in bed with a terrified expression as the frantic cries continued from the corridor outside her room.

CHAPTER FIVE

Carolyn swung out of bed, thrust her feet into her slippers and threw on her dressing gown as she rushed to the locked door of her bedroom. Throwing it open, she ventured out into the shadowed hallway with slow, frightened steps. Her heart was pounding as she strained to see in the near darkness. The screaming had ended and there was a silence now.

Then she saw the slumped body in the middle of the hall about six or seven feet from her. At the same time Roger appeared out of his room in his robe. "What's going on here?" he demanded.

"There!" She pointed to the form stretched out on the floor.

Her uncle rushed forward and knelt down, then looked back at her over his shoulder. "It's your mother!"

"Oh, no!" she protested, joining him by the motionless form.

"She's alive," he said grimly. "There's something knotted around her throat. Somebody's tried to strangle her."

Before he finished speaking there was an eerie wailing, keening sound from further down the hallway. Carolyn glanced in the direction from which the ghostly sound had come and saw a wraithlike figure moving slowly
towards them out of the shadows. She gasped aloud in fear.

Roger was on his feet now, ready to protect the injured Elizabeth as well as Carolyn. He stood there tensely as this phantom approached, moaning and staggering slightly.

Carolyn saw who it was and cried out, “Celia!”

Her answer was a mad, high-pitched shriek of laughter. Then Celia staggered and leaned against the wall and began to moan again. Carolyn was about to go to her when she was roughly shoved to one side by Nurse Bell.

“I have her,” the nurse said in her coarse voice as she grasped the unfortunate girl. “I fell asleep for a moment and she got out of her room.”

“Shouldn’t we call Dr. Moore?” Roger demanded.

“Not unless you need him for Mrs. Stoddard,” the nurse said, holding Celia tightly. “The girl is suffering from a reaction to the drugs. The doctor warned me to expect it. She’ll be better in the morning.”

“Very well,” Roger said. “Get her back to bed. I’ll discuss this with her parents later.” And he turned to aid Elizabeth again as the nurse went down the hall forcing Celia, still babbling, ahead of her.

Carolyn was horrified. What had made the girl attack her mother in this crazy manner?

Roger lifted Elizabeth in his arms and carried her back into her own room. By the time he stretched her out on the bed she was moaning and regaining consciousness. As Carolyn and Roger anxiously tried to help her, Elizabeth opened her eyes and stared up at them with sheer terror. “Celia!” she gasped.

“We know,” Roger said. “It’s over and you’re safe.”

Elizabeth raised herself frantically on an elbow. Still staring wild-eyed at them, she went on, “That girl! She tried to choke me!”

Carolyn said. “We heard you and found you in the hall.”

Her mother nodded. “She came in here babbling crazy things. She had something in her hands. I got up and
tried to persuade her to return to her room. She didn’t listen. I knew she was mad. So I ran out into the hall to scream for help. She followed me. Something looped around my throat and tightened. I couldn’t get myself free. Everything seemed to end!"

“We reached you barely in time,” Roger said. “The medicine the doctor gave Celia caused her to hallucinate. She attacked you in her nightmare.”

Carolyn’s mother fell back on the pillow, seeming thoroughly exhausted. In a weak voice she asked, “Where is the girl now?”

Carolyn said, “The nurse took her back to her room.”

“Poor thing!” Elizabeth said.

“I can’t be that generous with my sympathy,” Roger said with some anger. “It’s only good luck that she didn’t really harm you.”

“She mustn’t be blamed,” Elizabeth said. “She’s ill.”

Roger said, “Should we call Dr. Moore?”

“No,” Elizabeth replied with more vigor. “I’ll be perfectly all right. When I feel better in a few minutes I’ll bathe my throat and then get some rest. I’ll be fine in the morning.”

Carolyn told her, “You rest there quietly. I’ll get a basin and take care of your throat for you.” And she did.

When she left her mother’s room a quarter-hour later she gently closed the door after her. Elizabeth was already drifting into a deep sleep. In the hall she found Roger waiting in the light of his open doorway.

“I want to speak to you for a moment,” he said in an odd tone.

She went to him. “What is it?”

“Come into the light,” he said. “I have something to show you.”

“What?”

He went over to the dresser and then returned with a long, green scarf in his hands. His face was solemn. “I found this in the hall. It was what Celia used to try and strangle your mother.”

She stared at it. “I wonder where she got it.”
“Maybe this will make you wonder even more,” her uncle said tensely, and held up the fringed end of the scarf so she could see two large initials embroidered boldly on it.

Carolyn experienced a chill of fear. “H.B.,” she said in an awed whisper.

Roger’s eyes met hers. He seemed to have aged in the brief period since she’d seen him at dinner. “I was sure those initials would interest you. They stand for Harriet Barnes, of course.”

“But how could it get here?”

“An interesting question,” he said with irony. “I’ve been standing here asking that myself.”

Then she remembered. “The other day when Celia came to my room she gave me a locket she said she’d found on the floor there.”

“Well?” Roger’s question was sharp.

She swallowed hard. “When I opened this tiny gold locket there was a blurred snapshot of Harriet Barnes inside it.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I didn’t know what to do. I talked it over with Barnabas and he suggested that Edward Dalton might have done it as a trick. I mean, deliberately planted the locket for Celia to find.”

“Why?”

“To build up a ghost story,” she said. “He’s read all about Harriet Barnes committing suicide and placing a curse on us. He could quite easily pick up some of her possessions knowing they were coming here for a visit. By placing them discreetly he could lay the groundwork for a feature ghost story. With our reactions to the various items playing a big part in it.”

Roger was staring at her incredulously. “That’s fantastic!” he exclaimed. “But after meeting Dalton, I don’t think it’s beyond the weird beanpole. Surely he wouldn’t implicate his sick daughter in this as well?”

“I’m afraid he could be that heartless,” Carolyn said. “He made her act as a medium until she had the breakdown.”
Her uncle wound the shawl up in his hands angrily. "If this is some slick plan of his, he’s gone too far with the attack on your mother."

"Celia’s attacking mother may have nothing to do with him," she pointed out. "She might have happened on the scarf by accident and used it without his knowledge."

Roger’s manner was grim. "Edward Dalton still will have to do some explaining before I’m satisfied. You’ll notice neither he nor Alice have shown up to apologize for their daughter’s actions."

"They may have slept through it all."

"I doubt that."

"The apartment is some distance away and there are two doors to shut off any screams from here."

"They must have heard the nurse and that girl’s babbling," he went on obstinately.

"It’s hard to say."

He frowned. "Before we settle down for the night I’d like to have a look at that gold locket."

She hesitated. "Can’t it wait until morning?"

"No," he said. "Where is it?"

"I hid it in a corner of my dresser drawer. If you’ll come to my room I’ll give it to you."

"Excellent," Roger said. "I’m going to hold a council of war in the morning instead of leaving directly for the office. I want to show Dalton this scarf and the locket and study his face."

She led him down the dark hallway to her own room. There she turned on the wall switch and went directly to the dresser drawer where she’d hidden the locket. She lifted up the carefully piled sweaters and blouses and felt for the small oval piece. Then a look of surprise crossed her face, followed by one of disbelief. She had everything out of the drawer now. "The locket has vanished."

"Did anyone else know where you hid it?"

"No."

"Then it must still be here," he said impatiently. "You’ve probably been looking in the wrong drawer. Try the others."
"But I know I put it in this one!"
"You may have forgotten."
"I'll look," she said with a feeling of hopelessness.
"But I know I won't find it."

Roger stood there scowling while she made a thorough search of all the other drawers at his insistence. He said, "Are you certain there was a locket? That this wasn't some wild dream?"

"No," she protested. "You can ask Celia."
"Did you think she seemed a credible witness when you saw her tonight?" he asked ironically.

"She'll be better in the morning," Carolyn insisted. "The nurse said she would."

Roger looked angry. "It seems we'll have to confront Dalton without the locket."

"I didn't lose it on purpose," she protested. "Someone must have rummaged in my dresser and stolen it."

"Who?"

"Any one of a number of people," she said. "The servants come and go on every floor."

He sighed. "Maybe it was a ghost locket. And it simply vanished. I'm sure Barnabas can supply you with a neat explanation. He seems to have given you one for everything else."

Carolyn looked at him unhappily. "I don't think you should drag Barnabas into this or blame me because the locket is gone. We shouldn't be quarreling this way."

He at once looked ashamed. "You're right," he said. "I'm sorry. Is your mother settled for the night?"

She nodded. "Yes. I think she's asleep now."

"Then I'll go and allow you to get some rest." He paused at the door to turn and say, "Let me handle things my way in the morning. I'd appreciate you playing the role of observer."

"If you like," she said.

"It will be best that way."

"You had better let mother know what you have in mind," she suggested.

"I'll see her and have a chat first thing in the morn-
ing," he agreed, then said goodnight and went on to his own room.

She closed and locked the door, feeling shaken and frustrated. She stared at the dresser drawers still open and ransacked—a mystifying ending to a night filled with terrors. With a sigh she began replacing her things in the proper drawers.

It took her more than a half-hour. And she saw that it was close to three o'clock. She got into bed and turned out the single remaining light by her bedside. Staring up into the darkness, she thought what a disaster it had been to invite the Daltons to Collinwood. Seeing Celia as she was tonight had shocked her into a realization that the unfortunate girl would perhaps require more medical care than Dr. Moore and this private nurse could offer.

Only good luck had saved her mother from being murdered. That was something that couldn't be overlooked or regarded lightly. She was sure that Roger would take steps because of what had happened, but she had no idea where it would all end. Her head was aching and she wished that Barnabas was at hand to confide in. But Barnabas had deserted her, it seemed. She wondered vaguely where he'd been earlier that evening when she'd gone to the old house.

Filled with this weary assortment of thoughts, her mind gradually gave way to sleep. And this time it was a dreamless deep slumber.

When she awoke it was morning. The sun blazing in her window and the stifling heat of her room warned her it was going to be another of the seemingly interminable round of scorching days. She had never known weather like this in Maine before. And it seemed to her the eerie happenings in the old mansion somehow reflected a madness associated with the unusual hot, dry days.

Before going downstairs, she tried her mother's door and discovered she had already risen and gone down to breakfast. She suspected that Roger had already con-
tacted her and told her what he had in mind. When Carolyn entered the dining room it was temporarily deserted and she had her breakfast alone.

On her way out she met her mother in the hall. Elizabeth looked none the worse for her close brush with death the previous night. But there was an air of tension about her.

Carolyn asked her, “Have you talked with Uncle Roger?”

“Yes,” her mother said. “I’ve just been in the study with him.”

“He’s discussed his plans with you?”

“He has,” her mother said. “We’re going to talk to the Daltons when they’ve had breakfast and come down.”

“I wonder how Celia is?”

Her mother said, “I spoke to the nurse for a moment. She said the girl was sleeping peacefully now.”

Carolyn frowned. “I can’t believe all this has happened.”

“It has been nightmarish,” her mother agreed with a sigh.

Carolyn decided to go out for a brief stroll before it became too hot. It was already oppressive; there didn’t seem to be any breeze at all from the ocean. She went as far as the spot on the cliffs where she’d seen Barnabas and Edward Dalton talking. Why had Dalton later denied it? Her mind filled with troublesome questions, she strolled back to the brooding old mansion.

When she entered Collinwood and the comparative coolness of the shadowed hall she heard voices from the living room. She went in and saw that the group had assembled. Her mother and Alice Dalton were seated on a divan while Edward Dalton stood firmly near his wife, a defiant expression on his pale, gaunt face. Roger stood a distance from the three, partly facing them. He turned as she came into the room.

“Ah, Carolyn,” he said. “You’re just in time to join us.” She made no reply but sat down in an easy chair so she would also be included in the group he seemed about to address.
Edward Dalton spoke up. “I’d like to say again that Alice and I are most upset about last night. However, the nurse assured us Celia is greatly improved this morning so I feel her fever has broken. It’s unfortunate we slept through the incident. We can only apologize and promise there will be no others like it.”

Roger’s face was grim. “That’s rather a large promise, isn’t it?”

Alice Dalton shifted nervously on the divan. “My husband means we will leave if Celia shows any sign of becoming more ill than she is now.”

Roger nodded. “I accept that. But there are a few aspects of all this that puzzles me. Your daughter’s attack on my sister, and the item she tried to throttle her with. It was a scarf that once belonged to a murderer in the village. A woman now dead.”

A crafty look had come over Edward Dalton’s face. “You mean Harriet Barnes, I assume.”

“I do. And I wonder how this scarf came into your daughter’s hands.”

Alice looked uneasy. “It must have been here in the house for her to find it.”

“It couldn’t have been,” Elizabeth contradicted. “To the best of my knowledge there is nothing belonging to that woman here.”

Roger eyed them cynically. “So you see we are presented with a strange situation. Carolyn also found a locket in her room which had belonged to the dead woman—a locket which has since vanished.”

Dalton raised one of his spidery hands. “May I correct you?”

“In what?” Roger demanded sharply.

“In your facts,” Dalton said, his pale face showing a malicious smile. He looked directly at Carolyn. “If I’m not mistaken, my daughter found this locket and later gave it to this young lady.”

Carolyn was forced to nod agreement. “That is the way it happened.”

Edward Dalton looked pleased. “I just wanted the record to be right.”
Roger frowned. "I fail to see that your correction is of any importance. The thing I wish to thresh out is why your daughter should so wantonly attack my sister last night and where she got the scarf that belonged to Harriet Barnes?"

Alice Dalton gazed at them all unhappily. "Surely you realize there can be no accounting for Celia’s actions. My daughter has not been fully competent since her breakdown last spring."

"One moment, Alice!" Edward Dalton moved forward a step. He had the air of one about to assume authority. Running a hand over his head he announced, "I have some things to tell Mr. Roger Collins." There was a biting air of contempt in his tone that startled Carolyn. She began to wonder just how unstable Celia’s father might be.

Roger stared at him. "I’m waiting."

Edward Dalton hesitated a moment as if he knew they were all tensely anxious to hear what he had to offer. He was extracting every ounce of importance from the situation. Then looking directly at Roger, he said, "Before we came here I made myself familiar with this house, the area, and the legends surrounding both through some exhaustive reading."

"Get to the point," Roger snapped.

"I will. Rightly or wrongly, you were accused by Harriet Barnes of causing her death."

"What has that to do with what we’re discussing?" Roger demanded.

"A good deal," the tall man replied. "This reputed murderess killed herself and in a letter indicated that she was placing a curse on you and all the Collins family."

Elizabeth said, "I don’t think any of that sensation is of interest to us. We’ve heard too much about it already." Carolyn felt that her mother thought Edward Dalton was being unfair in going over this unpleasant scandal and unduly annoying Roger.

Edward Dalton bowed to her mockingly. "I’m sure that you have," he agreed. "I disliked bringing it up but
I wished to establish a proper basis for what I'm about to tell you. Though none of you seem to want to recognize it, I am an eminent name in the field of spiritualism. My writings and research are printed and quoted all over the world.

Roger frowned. "Well?"

"I'm going to diagnose the situation here as an authority in the supernatural. Until we arrived here my daughter was in what might be termed a normal state. She was weak from her illness but mentally stable. Almost from the moment she entered Collinwood she became troubled. And I tell you she is what is known in spiritual circles as possessed!"

"Possessed!" Roger said incredulously.

"By the evil spirit of Harriet Barnes," the thin man in black said with grim authority. "It is Harriet Barnes who has been using my daughter in her vendetta against all of you!"

It was a startling statement delivered in a ringing voice. Carolyn reacted to it with a chill of fear. It was almost convincing. And as she looked at the others in turn she could read the same thought on their faces.

Roger recovered from the shock of the spiritualist's words first. With a scornful gesture he dismissed it as, "Preposterous!"

"Are you so certain?" Edward Dalton inquired in an icy tone. "How else do you explain my daughter's mention of Alvah? That was a name unknown to anyone but Harriet and her husband. And what else explains those items belonging to the dead woman showing up here? They were placed in my daughter's hands. And not placed there by any living person!"

Alice Dalton glanced up at her husband apprehensively. "You promised you'd not make Celia take part in any more seances."

"At the time I didn't expect her to come under the macabre influence of a dead murderess," her husband said patiently. "Now I must be allowed to manage this in my own way. We should hold a seance and try to reason with Harriet Barnes through my daughter. Per-
haps we can then exorcise her wicked spirit from Celia's body forever and halt this evil program directed against Collinwood and its people."

Roger looked dumfounded. His handsome face had paled and he said, "You're saying this is all the result of a psychic phenomena. A campaign against me initiated by Harriet Barnes using your daughter as a weapon?"

The tall man nodded. "That is what possession means. From time to time this Harriet will take control of my daughter unless we conduct a seance and attempt to destroy her evil power."

"Your explanation and your remedy smack of the Middle Ages," Roger said in disgust.

But support for the idea came from an unexpected source. Elizabeth rose from the divan and went over to her brother, saying quietly, "I agree that what Mr. Dalton says does sound wild and unlikely. But because of the strangeness of the situation, perhaps we shouldn't dismiss his suggestions too quickly."

Roger frowned. "You must be joking!"

"I'm not," she said firmly. "I think we should give ourselves at least twenty-four hours to consider what he has said. Celia is no longer in a violent state. There is no reason for us to be hasty."

Alice Dalton was also on her feet. "Perhaps the easiest and best solution would be for us to leave at once."

Her husband was scornful. "There is no easiest and best solution. If we leave now Celia may still be tortured by the malicious spirit of that murderess. It is an unfortunate fact that my daughter is so constituted as to make a perfect medium."

Elizabeth turned to him. "We have no wish to allow Celia to be permanently hurt by her visit here. I think we should give your suggestion of a seance further thought."

"Thank you," he said.

Elizabeth again turned to Roger. "Please go along with me in this."

Carolyn watched her uncle tensely, trying to anticipate
his reaction. She knew how furious this talk must be making him, and she wondered that he had controlled his temper so well.

At last he shrugged. "If that's the way you want it," he said. "But you all should understand that I believe in none of this spiritualism nonsense."

"Could it be that it frightens you, Mr. Collins?" Dalton taunted him.

Roger's reply was a contemptuous look. Then he turned and stalked out of the room. There was a moment of silence; then Elizabeth began to talk with Alice Dalton and Carolyn seized the opportunity to slip out of the room.

As she mounted the stairs a new feeling of horror seized her. Edward Dalton's insistence that his daughter was intermittently possessed by the demonic spirit of Harriet Barnes was a terrifying thought . . . perhaps because it seemed to fit the situation so aptly.

Yet it was fantastic! She knew very little about spiritualism, but she was sure the strange, tall man was on solid ground. He was, as he'd been careful to remind them, a recognized specialist in the supernatural. The fact he was also Celia's father was ironical. And he'd never had any compunctions about using his daughter in his experiments.

Now Celia could be in actual danger. So the experiments might at last be justified. Carolyn hesitated on the landing, knowing that Celia would be alone with her nurse. Suddenly she had an uncontrollable curiosity to see her friend and talk to her. She went directly to the apartment door and knocked.

The formidable Nurse Bell opened the door with a frown on her broad face. "Yes?" she asked in her man-nish voice.

"I hear Celia is much better," she said. "May I visit her for a few minutes?"

Surprisingly, the nurse said grudgingly, "If you promise not to stay too long."

"I won't."
The nurse opened the door a little further and gestured. “You’ll find her in her room.”

Somewhat hesitantly Carolyn went down the short hall, not knowing in what state she’d find her girl friend. But when she reached the open door of Celia’s room she was startled to discover her standing studying herself in the mirror.

“Good morning,” Carolyn said. Celia turned to greet her with a nervous smile. She looked pale but otherwise normal. “Good morning,” she said. “I’ve been taking a look in the mirror. I’m actually haggard. I didn’t sleep well at all last night.”

“That’s too bad.” It was plain Celia had no recollection of roaming through the house and attacking Elizabeth. Celia sighed and sat on the edge of her bed. “I should get out more. I’d like to visit the village.”

“We could go any time,” Carolyn said. “The only thing to spoil it is this awful hot spell we’re having.”

“The heat doesn’t bother me. I’d like to see all of the village. And the house at Harbor Point.”

Carolyn went rigid. “The house at Harbor Point. What made you mention that?”

Celia looked confused. She touched a hand to her temple. “I don’t know. Someone must have spoken about it. It just came to mind.”

Carolyn was silent as she fought to recover from the shock of her friend’s words. The house at Harbor Point had burned down years ago. And, more chilling, it was the house in which Harriet Barnes had been born!

CHAPTER SIX

In the early afternoon a slight breeze came up, and Carolyn decided to drive Celia into the village for a general look around. She was curious to find out what her reactions would be. The mention of Harbor Point
had created a grim fear in Carolyn. She was beginning to wonder if Edward Dalton's theory of his daughter suffering from a demonic possession was not true.

Then she had to win permission to take Celia out in the car. Edward Dalton was all against it at first, but Carolyn turned to Alice for permission. And as she'd hoped, Celia's mother took an opposite view to her husband.

"Celia has been confined too much," she told her husband. "I think Carolyn has an excellent idea in wanting to take her for a drive."

Mr. Dalton frowned. "It is only a matter of hours since she was in that insane state last night."

"She seems perfectly normal now," Alice said firmly. "And Nurse Bell can go with them."

Carolyn didn't enjoy the prospect of that. "I think it would be better for her if we went alone. If she shows any signs of becoming ill I can rush her to Doctor Moore in the village or, if I'm nearer the house, hurry back here."

Alice Dalton gave her an approving smile. "I'm sure you can manage very well."

There was a sigh from her husband. "This is against my wishes," he said. "But I'll not try to prevent her going."

The last battle Carolyn had to fight was with Nurse Bell. The big woman was grimly firm in her stand that Celia should not leave the apartment. Carolyn solved this by phoning Dr. Moore and arranging to take her friend in to see him rather than making him come all the way out for a private call. He asked Carolyn to put the nurse on the phone. Whatever he said to her made the formidable woman grudgingly agree to let her patient go for the proposed visit to the village.

Celia looked little like a sick young woman when she joined Carolyn in the station wagon. Because of the heat she was wearing only polka dot shorts and a halter in yellow and blue. She'd borrowed one of Carolyn's wide straw sun hats and was in a laughing, carefree
mood. Carolyn had on white shorts and top and a straw hat almost identical to the one she'd lent her friend.

Elizabeth and Alice, looking pleased to see them getting away from the old mansion, came out to see them off. And because they were all aware of Celia's innocence of what had gone on the night before, nothing was said of it.

Elizabeth asked, "Have you sun glasses?"

"No. I forgot them," Celia said and made a move to get out of the car. "I'll have to go back upstairs."

"That won't be necessary," Carolyn told her from behind the wheel. "I have an extra pair in the glove compartment." Leaning over, she opened the compartment and got them for her.

"Don't stay too long," Alice Dalton advised with a meaningful look. "You don't want us worrying."

"And pick up the mail," Elizabeth told Carolyn.

She drove the station wagon out to the road leading to Collinsport, with the two older women still standing on the lawn and waving goodbye. She gave Celia a conspiratorial smile. "It was touch and go with Nurse Bell. I thought she'd never let you come. But Dr. Moore settled her."

"It was you," Celia laughed. "It was an inspiration on your part to suggest I visit the doctor and save him coming out to Collinwood."

"At any rate it worked," Carolyn said as they drove along the road that skirted the cliff and then led through a light woods before joining the main highway.

Celia looked much less haggard than she had in the morning. She stared out at the ocean and in a wistful voice, said, "I'm sorry to have been such a drip since I arrived."

"It doesn't matter."

"I so looked forward to coming," Celia went on. "But the moment I got here I began to feel ill. It's all my nerves, of course."

"At least you're feeling better," Carolyn said, paying careful attention to her driving.

"I'd be fine if father didn't nag me," the girl continued.
“He’s so set on my being a medium for his seances. Honestly, I don’t think he cares about anything but that weird spiritualism.”

“He does seem obsessed by it,” she agreed.

“Of course I know it’s his life work,” Celia went on. “But he shouldn’t have dragged me into it. I became so mixed up I had to go to that awful mental hospital. And part of my trouble now is that I’m terrified of being ill again and having to go back there.”

“I’m sure you won’t,” Carolyn said, anxious to put the girl at ease.

Celia made no reply and they drove in silence for awhile. During this period of driving through the woods Carolyn again mulled over the situation at Collinwood. It struck her there could only be two explanations of what had happened. Edward Dalton could be right and his daughter might be every so often caught in the power of the evil Harriet Barnes’ avenging spirit. Or Edward Dalton was a charlatan out to cause a sensation at Collinwood and make a lot of money writing about it. He could be creating the impression that Celia was dominated by the ghost of the murderess through bringing those belongings of Harriet Barnes into the house and using his influence over the girl to instill the names of people and places in her mind. Either explanation was possible; at this point she could make no decision about it. But she was sure her uncle Roger would say he was an unscrupulous rogue. And he certainly looked the role.

They turned onto the main highway and began to see more houses and occasional billboards. It was now only a short distance to the village itself. Celia was staring out the window, taking it all in.

Then she turned to her and asked, “Have you seen Barnabas since the other night?”

“No. But we did talk then. After you left with your father.”

“I liked him. I hope he wasn’t angry because of what father said.”

“He understood,” Carolyn assured her. “And he
seemed very impressed by you. He said he thought you were sensitive and intelligent."

The dark girl smiled. "I must see him again."

"I missed him last night," she said. "So he should be around tonight." But she wondered if he would. The uproar caused by that girl being found in a faint on the wharf after being with him could cause him to keep out of the way for a little. She'd almost forgotten about that because of the calamity at the house.

They were now entering the village, which was built on a slope. The main street along which they were driving went down to the wharves and the fish-packing plant, which was the chief industry of the tiny Maine village and owned since the beginning by the Collins family. They passed the Collinsport Hotel on the right, a shabby two-story building with a veranda. Then there was the big general store on the left and the Blue Whale, the village tavern, on the corner below it.

Carolyn halted the station wagon in a parking space near the post office, an ancient three-story brick structure which also contained the town offices and the jail. She turned to Celia and was mildly startled to see that her friend was staring at the building with an uneasy look on her pretty face.

Alarmed that the girl might be going to slip into one of her strange spells, she spoke to her sharply. "Is anything wrong?"

Celia gave her a quick glance. "No," she said. "It's that building. I don't know why. The sight of it depresses me!"

She passed it off lightly. "Those dirty chipped red bricks are enough to depress anyone. But the taxpayers here are tightfisted and they won't vote the money for a new building until this one falls down."

In spite of the warm day, Celia was trembling. "It's ugly and frightening."

Carolyn hesitated. "Will you be all right here while I pick up the mail?"

"Of course."

Not too convinced, she quickly got out of the station
wagon and crossed the hot asphalt of the sidewalk to enter the post office. As she mounted the worn granite steps she recalled that it was in this very building that Harriet Barnes had been tried and in a cell on the third floor that she had committed suicide. And Celia had found the place terrifying. Wasn't this a startling affirmation of Edward Dalton's theory?

Carolyn got the mail and returned to the car. As she sat behind the wheel sorting out the letters, she saw that one of them was postmarked Boston and addressed to her friend. With a smile she passed the letter to Celia, who studied the envelope with pleasure. “It's from Martin Wainwright,” she said. “I recognized his handwriting.”

“Is he the young man you mentioned?”

Celia smiled. “Yes.” And she tore open the letter and scanned it quickly. “He is coming here,” she said. “He’ll be here in a few days and he’s staying at the hotel.”

“I'm glad,” Carolyn said.

Her friend sighed. “I hope father won’t be difficult. And what will he think if he finds me being taken care of by a nurse.”

“He knows you were ill,” Carolyn told her. “He’ll probably be glad that you’re getting good care.”

“I’ll want to spend some time with him, but I don’t know how I’ll manage it,” the pretty dark girl worried. She gave Carolyn an appealing look. “You really must help me.”

She smiled. “Of course I will.”

Celia’s face shadowed again and she sank back against the seat, crumpling the letter in her hand. “Please drive away from here,” she begged. “I can’t stand staring at that ugly building!”

Carolyn quickly turned on the ignition and backed out into the street. Then she drove off in the direction of the wharves and the road that went along the shore. “That’s where Uncle Roger has his office,” she said, indicating a new building with white metal siding that fringed on the largest wharf.

“I like him,” Celia said. And she stared around her
at the wharves and the fishing boats tied to them along with occasional pleasure craft. "It's strange," she said, "but all this seems familiar to me."

"It does?"

"Yes. And there's no reason why it should," she said pensively. She was still holding the crumpled letter in her hands.

As they left the main section of the village and the wharves for the winding shore road with its scattering of weathered gray fisherman's houses, Carolyn asked her friend. "What does Martin Wainwright look like?"

Celia smiled at once. "He's handsome. He has large brown eyes, a thoughtful, intelligent face. And he wears very heavy sideburns and has a heavy head of hair."

She listened with interest. "He sounds wonderful."

Celia's manner became more relaxed and almost dreamy. "We used to sit on the banks of the ponds in the Public Gardens and talk. We'd just go on and on."

"You enjoyed each other's company."

"We did! Martin has a lot of interesting opinions about things. And he likes to analyze people. I think we might have become engaged if I hadn't had my breakdown."

"Perhaps you still will be."

"I don't know," Celia said despondently. "I have these odd spells. And a lot of things happen that I can't remember. I suppose I really do need a nurse until I've recovered."

Carolyn was anxious to get off the subject. They had come to a dead end of the narrow shore road and she turned the car around. Near the beach was a public dump which the town fathers wanted cleared away. And to the other side of the dump was the cellar remains of a house that had been burned down. She brought the station wagon to a halt.

"That's the place you were asking me about," she said. Celia frowned. "What place?"

"Where the house used to be. This is Harbor Point. You mentioned it when we were talking back in your room."
The girl was staring at the gaping cellar and the ground gradually growing up with short bushes and showing every sign of neglect. "I don't remember." She went on staring in silence. "What happened to the people who lived there?"

"All gone," Carolyn said. "The last one died not long ago, though she hadn't lived here for some time. The fire was in 1964."

"I think ruined and abandoned houses are sad," Celia said. "All the days of lost living lingering to haunt them."

"There is a sadness about them," Carolyn agreed.

Now Celia was turning around and staring out towards the ocean. There was an odd, preoccupied expression on her face. "I feel it again," she said.

"What?"

"That I know this place. That I might have stood here on the shore many times and stared out at the sea."

Carolyn hid the strange feeling of fear this gave her, and tried to pass it off lightly, "I think views like this are much alike. You probably had a favorite shore place when you were a little girl."

Celia nodded. "Yes, I did. It was near Marblehead. My parents took me there every summer. Perhaps that's why all around here seems so familiar to me."

"That's likely it," she said in a quiet voice. "Since I promised to take you to the doctor's I suppose we'd better go and get it over with."

Celia looked forlorn. "Must we?"

"If we hope to get out by ourselves again," Carolyn told her. "And Martin Wainwright is coming. You'll want to be meeting him."

"You're right." As they drove on, she gave her a warm smile. "This has been grand, Carolyn. It's made me feel a lot better. I need to get away from my parents. My father especially."

"We'll do this a lot," Carolyn promised.

Celia's mood seemed to change and she looked back over her shoulder toward the ruins they had left far behind. In an odd, remote voice, she asked, "What was the person's name?"
She was caught off guard. "What person?"
"The last one who lived there," Celia said turning to her, strangely troubled. "The one who died not long ago."
"Oh, you mean in the old house." She hesitated, wondering if she should mention the name, but she saw no way of avoiding the truth. "It was a woman named Harriet Barnes."
Celia was staring at her. "What sort of person was she?"
She kept her eyes on the road. "There's a variety of opinions about that."
"The name seems one I've heard before," Celia said with a slight frown as if she were trying to recall where and when.
"It's possible you have," Carolyn said.
Within a few minutes they came to the one-story shingled building in which Dr. Ernest Moore had his office. It was on a quiet side street, not far from the hotel. Carolyn accompanied her friend into the waiting room. There were several patients seated around the room and the receptionist asked them to sit down for their turn.
Celia was very fidgety while they waited for the doctor. And when her name was called she went to the inner office alone. She had been gone quite a few minutes when the receptionist told Carolyn that the doctor would like to speak to her in his other office, which turned out to be an examining room. Dr. Moore came in and joined her.
In his white smock and with his stethoscope hung at his neck he looked more professional than in his usual unpressed tweed suits. He also looked older and weary under the strong lights of the examining room. The sleepy eyes behind his heavy glasses fixed on her with a worried look.
"I've had a bad report on Miss Dalton from the nurse in charge," he said. "I understand she roamed wildly about the house last night and attacked your mother."
"Yes," she agreed. "Nurse Bell seemed to think it was
the tranquilizers. She's much better today, as you can see.

“No question of that,” he said. “But I fear there could be a recurrence.”

Carolyn stared at him. “Is there no way of preventing it?”

“Miss Dalton is highly nervous. There's something about her condition I don't understand.”

Carolyn sighed. “Her father thinks he has an explanation.”

“Oh?”

“As you're probably aware, he's a well-known writer on spiritualism. It is his belief that because Celia is sensitive to spirit influence—he's used her in a number of seances—she has been taken over by the evil spirit of Harriet Barnes.”

Dr. Moore looked surprised. “Did he really say that?”

“Yes.”

“I find it quite fantastic,” Dr. Moore said grimly. “Especially since I don’t agree that Harriet was an evil woman. I think quite the opposite. She was a martyr to a lot of gossiping tongues and flimsy evidence.”

“I understand your feelings on the matter,” she said, impressed by his troubled defense of the dead woman.

“What about your uncle, Roger?” he asked, the sleepy eyes alert enough now as they studied her.

“Uncle Roger doesn’t believe in spirits,” she said. “But he does think Harriet Barnes was a murderess. It’s his belief evidence could still be turned up to prove it. The police have shown no interest since her suicide.”

“Not much wonder,” the doctor said bitterly. “It was the police and your uncle who drove her to the desperate act.”

“Uncle Roger is still making investigations on his own,” she said. “And he has hopes of one day finding out the true facts and proving that Harriet was guilty.”

“I wish him luck,” the portly doctor said sarcastically. “He’ll need it. I will always contend that Harriet’s only flaw was that she was mentally unstable. Not crazy, mind you. But of a nervous, forgetful temperament. She
was never capable of planning and committing one murder, let alone three."

"Could she have had an accomplice?"

He shook his head. "No name was turned up in the evidence. And no friends appeared to help her. As the only doctor in the village I felt it my duty to try and defend her on the grounds of mental instability. The specialists from Portland wouldn't listen to me and I won your Uncle Roger's enmity. But I had to do what I deemed right."

"No one can blame you for that."

"Roger Collins still does."

She gave him a small smile. "He hasn't the reputation of being a terribly reasonable man."

Dr. Moore nodded brusquely. "I know that only too well. At any rate we are getting away from our main problem, your friend Miss Dalton. I've instructed Nurse Bell to make some changes in her medication and keep a close eye on her at night."

"She's really a very nice girl," Carolyn said. "I'm worried that her father may insist on conducting a seance using her. It could make her worse."

"I'll surely not encourage it," Dr. Moore said.

"The drive today seemed to do her good."

"I'd say it was all right as long as she's feeling well enough. But if there is any hint of strangeness about her, don't take her out of Nurse Bell's sight."

Carolyn parted from the doctor without telling him of her friend's odd feeling that she'd been to Harbor Point before and her distress on seeing the jail building. It was a weird business. Dr. Moore told Carolyn not to mention they'd talked, and so she didn't.

Celia seemed in a better mood on the drive home. She confided, "I like Dr. Moore. I'm sure he's helping me."

"He's popular in the village," she said.

"What I need most is rest and to get out in the air."

Carolyn smiled. "That should be no problem at Collinwood."

When they reached the old mansion Alice Dalton was
on hand to greet them and escort her daughter upstairs for a rest. Carolyn drove the station wagon around to the back and then returned through the garden. The delicate fragrance of late summer blooms filled the air. The garden had thrived in spite of the drought and heat. Because it was so pleasant out there, she sat down on one of the stone benches.

She'd not been there more than a few minutes when Edward Dalton appeared, looking oddly macabre in his black suit and Panama hat. He was really so very tall and thin.

“So you have returned,” he said with a not-too-pleasant expression on his gaunt face.

“Yes.”

Grasping one hand in the other, he cracked his bony knuckles nervously. It made her cringe to watch him. He said, “I've been doing a lot of thinking and I'm convinced there is only one answer to curing my daughter.”

“Really?” She felt she knew what he was going to say. His too-bright eyes fixed on her. “Yes,” he said. “We must challenge the evil spirit at its own level. That is obvious.”

“Assuming her trouble is being caused by some psychic disturbance,” she countered.

He looked down at her with annoyance. “But we've all agreed that the ghost of Harriet Barnes has taken possession of her.”

“I don’t think so,” Carolyn said. “You suggested it and my mother agreed we should give it some thought.”

“The same thing,” he said with an impatient movement of his scarecrow arm.

“I wouldn’t say so,” she said. “And further, I think putting Celia through the ordeal of a seance could be the worst possible thing for her.”

He frowned. “She has acted as a medium before. She has a natural gift for it.”

“Then why did that series of seances drive her into a mental hospital?”

Dalton looked startled. “They had nothing to do with
it. It was her health. She was on the verge of a break-
down in any case."

“I wonder.”

“You would do well to cooperate with me in this,”
Edward Dalton told her angrily. “I’d think you’d be the
last one to be skeptical of spiritualism in this house,
considering how close you are to Barnabas Collins.”

She stood up. “Meaning what?”

His gaunt face showed a nasty smile. “I’ll let you
puzzle that out for yourself.” And he walked away to-
ward the front of the house.

His mention of Barnabas in connection with spiritual-
ism had upset her, since she knew he and Barnabas
had met secretly the other night. Was he hinting that
Barnabas had a guilty secret? Had he heard of the
rumors in the village that Barnabas, like his ancestor,
was tainted with the curse of the vampire? When the
gossip started, it spread like wildfire.

As soon as dusk began to settle that evening she left
Collinwood and headed for the old house. She had to
see Barnabas. So much had happened since they’d last
talked. And she wanted to find out what the link was
between him and Edward Dalton. Dalton had lied,
claimed he had never talked to Barnabas on the cliff.
But she was sure Barnabas would give her the true
version of what had gone on.

It was still twilight when she reached the old house,
the front door of which was open. She went up the steps
and was about to enter its dark hall when Hare material-
ized out of the shadows.

She was so desperate to see Barnabas she felt no fear
of the mute servant. “I must see Mr. Barnabas at once,”
she said with authority. “It is important! Do you under-
stand?”

The ugly face showed no expression. His bloodshot
eyes gazed at her sullenly. Then he raised a hairy hand
with long dirty fingernails that sent a wave of revulsion
through her and pointed in the direction of the cemetery.
At the same time he uttered a strange harsh grunting.
“Thank you.” And she quickly left him to hurry down the sloping field to the cemetery.

Ordinarily she would never have ventured so far on her own at this time when darkness was ready to suddenly envelop the countryside. But she felt she was bound to see Barnabas soon.

The light was fading fast but she could still see the cemetery at the bottom of the hill. Yet she couldn’t make out any sign of Barnabas there. Sometimes he wandered from one headstone to another, reading the inscriptions, so he could very well be far back in the iron-fenced burial ground and hidden from view.

She reached the open gate and stepped into the small empire of the dead. The well-rounded green mounds and the multi-shaped gravestones marked the resting places of many generations of her family. She peered into the gathering shadows for the familiar figure of Barnabas without any success. Then she moved on. Above her a night bird suddenly screeched and flew low so that she found herself crouching in fear. And all at once she knew that in a matter of minutes it would be completely dark and she was very likely alone in this isolated, haunted place!

CHAPTER SEVEN

Now she could only hope that somewhere in the murky depths of the cemetery grounds she would find Barnabas. And so though all her instincts urged her to flee back to Collinwood, she went on a step at a time. Her lovely face was shadowed with fear and her eyes searching frantically for the man in the caped coat.

In daylight the cemetery held a certain morbid fascination for her, but once darkness came it took on a different aspect. Each gravestone all at once seemed to be hiding some spectral horror!

Life at Collinwood had made her wary of ghosts and
this was surely a place for them. She paused by a tomb built above the ground to house the coffins of some long forgotten branch of the Collins family. And as she pictured what its grim interior might look like, a place of dust and bones, she had a vision of the evil face of Harriet Barnes!

Why had the features of the murderess suddenly impressed themselves on her mind? Was Edward Dalton right? Had the evil woman come to Collinwood to carry out her dying curse?

Suddenly in the shadows to her left she heard an odd kind of rustling movement. She turned and stared at the spot from which the sound had come. And to her utter horror there slowly took shape an enormous wolf! A creature of luminous eyes and slavering mouth! Its giant fangs showed and it moved towards her with a warning snarl.

Carolyn gave a wild scream of terror and turned and fled from the graveyard. She stumbled several times but did not slacken the pace of her flight. At last, gasping for breath, she reached the open gates and ran out into the field. She fell again and, sobbing, picked herself up and resumed her wild race from the fearful thing she'd seen amid the tombstones.

She'd only gone about twenty yards beyond the cemetery gates when a strong male voice rang out behind her. “One moment, miss!”

The sound of a human voice was so welcome that she almost fainted with relief. She halted in the darkness of the field and turned to see a shadowy form approaching her.

She called out nervously, “Who is it?” “A friend,” was the reply.

Carolyn was caught in a dilemma. She could not imagine who it would be, and yet it was too late now for her to escape. She had to reassure herself that he was probably speaking the truth and it was a friend.

Now the man was close to her and he said apologetically, “I'm sorry. I didn’t mean to frighten you.” “You didn’t,” she said. “I saw something in the grave-
yard that terrified me. Something moving in the shadows.”

“I was in the graveyard,” he said pleasantly. She could not see his face clearly but she could tell by his voice that he was a young man. “I went there to study the ancient gravestones. It’s a hobby of mine. And before I knew it darkness caught me. I hope I wasn’t the one who gave you such a scare.”

She shook her head. “It was some kind of animal. It looked like a wolf, but it couldn’t have been. There are no wolves here. And certainly not on a warm summer night.”

He laughed lightly. “I agree that the possibility of finding wolves in this part of Maine is slight. Couldn’t it have been some wild dog? In this August heat many of them are dangerous.”

“Probably you are right,” she said, wishing she could see his face.

“I didn’t see the animal myself, but that doesn’t mean it wasn’t there. It probably slunk off when you screamed.”

She felt ashamed. “You heard me scream.”

“Loudly.” There was a hint of amusement in his tone. “I didn’t mean to make such a fool of myself. But I was terrified.”

“It’s nothing to feel bad about,” he told her. “And if you hadn’t screamed I wouldn’t have known you were here. And I mightn’t have met you.”

She smiled at him in the darkness. “That is true,” she said. “My name is Carolyn Stoddard. I live here.”

“How do you do,” he said pleasantly. “I’m a visitor. I just arrived in the village late this afternoon. And rather than use the shore road I walked to the cemetery by the shortcut from the highway. I’m staying in a motel near the juncture of the roads.”

“Then you didn’t have far to walk,” she said. “That is a shortcut.”

“The motel owner told me about it,” he said. “My name is Martin Wainwright.”

“Martin Wainwright!”
"Does that surprise you?"
"Yes. A girl friend of mine told me you were coming here. She's a guest at my home, Celia Dalton."
"Of course," he said. "I should have recognized your name. She's told me about you and how much she looked forward to visiting you."
"Weren't you supposed to be staying at the hotel?"
"Yes. But I liked the look of this motel better so I changed my mind."
"Celia will be thrilled to know you've arrived."
"How is she?"
Carolyn hesitated, wondering what she should tell him. Then she decided the truth would be best. "I'm sorry, but since she arrived the other day she seems to have had a relapse."
"Her old illness again?" He sounded serious.
"It is her nerves," she said. "The local doctor is treating her and she has a nurse for a few days."
"That serious?" Martin Wainwright said and gave a low whistle. "Poor Celia!"
"She was much better this afternoon and I think she'll come around with rest and care."
"What about her parents? Are they with her?"
"Yes."
"I suppose you know about her father. That he is the one responsible for her breakdown?" His tone was angry now.
"I guessed that from what Celia told me," she said, "though he pretends using her as a medium had nothing to do with her illness."
"It had all to do with it," Martin said bitterly.
"I'm afraid he's still bothering her about spiritualism," Carolyn said. "She'd be much better off here without him."
"I know that. Will I have any trouble seeing her?"
"I hope not," she said. "In a way, it depends on her condition. She was well this afternoon and we went for a drive to the village. She got your letter at the post office and she was thrilled."
“I’ll depend on you to help us get together,” he said, sounding warm and friendly again.
“I’ll do all that I can.”
They were standing facing each other when the beam of a flashlight suddenly cut through the darkness to rest on them. And blinded by the strong light, she turned and tried to make out who had shone it on them. “Who is it?” she cried.
“Barnabas,” came the resonant reply.
“I came down here looking for you,” she said.
“So I learned from Hare. That is why I’m here,” he told her as he came up to them. He held the flashlight at a different angle now so that it was not so blinding.
She said, “I want you to meet Martin Wainwright. He’s a friend of Celia’s. He’s come down here to visit her.”
“Indeed,” Barnabas said with cool politeness.
“This is Barnabas Collins, a cousin of mine,” she explained to the young stranger.
Martin Wainwright smiled. “Happy to meet you, Mr. Collins.” She could see the young man’s features now and he was as handsome and intelligent-looking as Celia had described him. And he did have a thick head of hair and impressive sideburns.
Barnabas still wore a skeptical expression on his gaunt face. “Isn’t this rather an odd place for you two to meet?”
“Not really,” the young man said. And he went over the story of his staying in the motel near the short road to the cemetery and of becoming so interested in the ancient burial ground that he lost track of the time. He ended with, “It was dark before I realized it.”
“I see,” Barnabas said with just a hint of doubt. “At least you were company for Carolyn until I showed up.”
“I’m glad I was able to do that.”
“And now I suppose you’ll be going up to Collinwood to see Celia?”
Martin gave her an uneasy glance before he replied. “No, I think not. I hear she hasn’t been too well. It would be better to wait and call on her during the day.”
“I agree,” Carolyn said at once.
Barnabas smiled thinly. "I see you two understand each other very well."

She told him, "We were discussing Celia before you came along."

"So you'll be walking back to the motel," Barnabas said.

"If I can find my way," the young man said with a rueful laugh. "I came by daylight."

"I'll let you have this flashlight," Barnabas said at once.

"No, you need it," Martin protested.

"Not at all," Barnabas told him. "I prowl these grounds at night all the time. I only brought it along to find Carolyn. Now I've done that I've no further use for it."

And he passed the light to him.

"I'm extremely grateful," Martin Wainwright said. "And I've enjoyed meeting you both."

"I'll speak to Celia first thing in the morning and tell her you are here," she promised.

"Thank you," he said. "I'll get to the house to see her sometime during the afternoon."

Thanking them once more, he said goodnight and started back along the road leading to the main highway.

Barnabas stood thoughtfully as the young man walked off using the flashlight to guide him. He said, "A most interesting fellow. Strangely, he looks familiar to me."

"Not you, as well!" Carolyn exclaimed.

"Why do you say that?"

"I had Celia in the village today and she claimed it all seemed familiar to her. As if she'd been there before."

"Maybe she had," Barnabas said.

"Never. I asked her."

"I have a good memory for faces," Barnabas said.

"And his seems one I've seen before. But I don't connect the name Martin Wainwright with it."

"There are look-alikes," she reminded him.

"Yes," he said with a grim smile. "There are." And he took her by the arm. "Unless you want to visit the cemetery by night, I think we should start back."

With a tiny shudder she allowed him to lead her up
the sloping field in the direction of Collinwood. "Don't talk to me about the cemetery," she protested. "I had a dreadful experience there just before I met Martin Wainwright."

"Really?"

"Yes. I saw a kind of mad dog. A huge one!"

"I've never known dogs to wander there," Barnabas said with some skepticism.

"One was there tonight. Perhaps it took refuge there from the heat. It's been an awful day and the cemetery is always cool."

"I know," he said. "Tell me more about this dog."

"It was like a wolf," she said as they kept walking. "In fact, I thought it was a wolf when I saw it first. But later I realized I had to be wrong."

"Go on."

"It snarled at me. I was sure it was about to spring at my throat. I turned and ran. And it was then that Martin Wainwright came after me. He heard me scream."

"And you didn't see this wolflike dog again?"

"No. It must have fled when I cried out."

"That hardly seems likely if it was such a ferocious animal, does it?" Barnabas asked quietly.

"At least it didn't chase me," she said.

"Wainwright claimed to have been in the cemetery," Barnabas said. "When did you first see him?"

"Not until after I was so frightened by that animal. I was outside the cemetery and he called out to me. Then he joined me and introduced himself."

"Interesting," Barnabas commented as they neared the old house.

"I was glad to see him."

"Obviously."

"I had no idea where you were, and any company was welcome," she said.

"I can understand that," Barnabas said. "Did this Wainwright see the dog also?"

"No," she said. "And that does surprise me."

They were at the door of the old house now and Barnabas said, "Won't you come in for a glass of wine?"
You must have had enough of the night and darkness.”

She smiled forlornly. “It does sound pleasant. And I have so many things I want to discuss with you.”

He escorted her into the old house and down the dark hall to the living room. It was also in darkness but he at once lit the candles in two of the candelabra, placing one of them on the mantel above the fireplace and the other on a round mahogany table in the middle of the room. He poured out two glasses of sherry from a purple decanter and brought her one.

“It’s good to see you again,” he said, touching his lips to her temple.

She looked up at him happily. “I know. I missed you last night and I was in a panic. So many things have happened.” And they sat down on the divan as she gave him a running account of what had gone on at Collinwood.

Barnabas listened to her with obvious interest. He occasionally touched the sherry to his lips but as had happened before he drank little of it. The candlelight gave the room a warm, glowing appearance and enhanced the elegance of its fine furniture and other appointments. On the opposite wall the portrait of the arrogant, beautiful Angelique seemed to study them with a mocking smile.

“I have a good deal of sympathy for Celia,” Barnabas said when she’d finished.

“What worries me most is the attack on my mother. She might have been killed.”

“And there’s no doubt that Celia was to blame?”

“She was wandering in the hall nearby,” Carolyn said. “When she takes these spells she’s not responsible.”

Barnabas gave her a shrewd look with those deep-set eyes. “The big question is whether the spells originate from a combined physical and mental illness or whether they are brought on by an outside supernatural influence.”

She nodded. “Whether Harriet Barnes is carrying out her threat or not.”

“Of course Edward Dalton would naturally assume
his daughter is being controlled by an evil spirit. It's his way of thinking."

Carolyn put her empty sherry glass down on an end table and after a moment's hesitation told him, "There is one other thing."

"Yes?"

"There are some nasty rumors going around about you again. Roger is upset. Something to do with a village girl you were seen with and who later turned up on the docks in a state of collapse."

Barnabas got up and slowly walked over to the fireplace. He put his sherry glass on the mantel and then turned to her. The flickering candles near him gave his handsome face a romantic glow.

"That is something I would prefer not to discuss with you," he said with some dignity.

She rose quickly. "Barnabas, I'm your friend. Why can't you tell me about it?"

"If you are my friend you will trust me."

Studying his solemn expression, Carolyn knew she could not question him further. He was right. If he preferred to remain silent it amounted to a matter of trust between them. "Very well. I won't mention it again."

"Thank you," he said with deep sincerity. "There may come a time when I'll want to confide certain things in you. But let me select the time."

"If you will answer me only one question."

"What is it?"

"I saw you from my window the other night standing on the cliff, talking to Edward Dalton. I mentioned it to him and he denied it. Will you tell me why you had this meeting with him after he'd been so rude to you earlier?"

Barnabas offered her a melancholy smile. "Dalton is capable of many foolish things. He realized he'd made a mistake in following you two girls to the old house and interfering. He sought me out to apologize."

"I thought it might have been something like that."

"He also wanted some assistance from me in pursuing
his studies in spiritualism here. I felt I had to refuse
him any aid."

"You'd get no thanks for whatever you did," she
warned him. "I'm sure he's a very self-centered, selfish
man."

"I feel the same way about him," Barnabas told her.
"So I refused to cooperate in any way."

"That's why he doesn't like you," she said. "He's really
very shallow."

"True," Barnabas said with a smile. "We've had our
talk and now I'd better escort you safely back to Collin-
wood. It's getting late."

The time had passed so quickly she'd been scarcely
aware of the hour. Now she looked at her wristwatch
and saw that Barnabas was right. She moved across the
room to study the painting of Angelique.

"I think she was well worth rescuing from the cob¬
webs," she said, glancing over her shoulder at him with
a tiny smile.

Barnabas came over and stood beside her with a look
of grim humor on his melancholy face. "I wonder," he
said. "I have mixed feelings about that lady."

"She brightens the room. I'm sure she must have
been a charmer in her day."

"Without a doubt," Barnabas said lightly. And then
as if he wanted to change the subject, he asked her,
"What about Celia and this young man who has come
down to visit her? Is she seriously in love with this
Wainwright?"

Carolyn turned from the portrait to him. "I think not,
though it's hard to say what could develop. She needs
someone to care for her. She's very lonely."

"I realize that."

"Her parents are no help to her," she went on. "And so
it would be natural for her to look for love from the first
charming man who comes along."

"And Martin Wainwright could be that man?"

"I think so."

Barnabas frowned. "I wish you'd use any influence you
have with her to prevent her from getting too involved
with him for at least a while. I have certain suspicions about him. There are things I’d like to find out concerning his past.”

She was at once worried. “You don’t think he’s the nice young man he seems?”

“I don’t want to condemn him unjustly. Give me a few days.”

“Now you have me upset.”

“Don’t be,” Barnabas reassured her. “I may be completely wrong. But it would be wise for Celia to allow her friendship for the young man to develop slowly in any case.”

Carolyn gave him a teasing smile as they prepared to leave the elegant living room. “She has taken a great liking to you.”

His heavy, dark eyebrows raised. “Really?”

“Yes. She thinks you are charming.”

“I’m flattered.”

“With very little encouragement she might shift her affections from this Wainwright to you.”

Barnabas laughed quietly. “I assure you that is not what I have in mind.”

Carolyn shrugged. “She’s pretty and intelligent.”

“You’re right on both scores.”

They went on out and no more was said about Celia. There were plenty of stars and a moon. But the night had not cooled much. They talked of the long hot, dry spell and pondered on what it meant. Maine had never known such weather. At least not for weeks on end. And now September was only days away.

At the door Barnabas gave her a brotherly kiss of goodnight, and when Carolyn left him to go inside she felt much happier than she had in some time. She wished that Barnabas was not her cousin. It would be easy to fall in love with him. But then, he was such a distant cousin it would probably be all right in any case. Still, it was likely some older girl would catch his fancy before he ever considered her. Celia, maybe. She thought she would like to see Barnabas and Celia fall in love. Though,
in spite of Barnabas’ doubts, she’d found Martin Wainwright as nice as Celia had described him.

As she opened the door and entered the shadowed hallway of Collinwood, she almost gasped in surprise. Roger Collins stood there, glaring at her.

“That was a touching little scene you just played with Barnabas,” he said angrily.

It was her turn to become angry. “I take it you were spying on me?”

“I happened to look out and see you,” he replied stiffly.

“Why do you dislike Cousin Barnabas so?” she demanded. “I find him very nice.”

“Because I believe him to be a little mad,” her uncle said. “After what I’ve heard about that girl being attacked the other night, I have an idea he’s acting out the role of a vampire. He fancies himself the reincarnation of the first Barnabas Collins!”

“That’s nonsense!”

Roger looked grim. “I’m going to speak to your mother about you and Barnabas necking on the front steps. Perhaps she’ll be able to drive some reason into you.” And with a final scowl he went back down the corridor to his study.

Carolyn gazed after him in dismay and then started angrily up the broad stairway. How dare Roger lecture her in this fashion? And what right had he to say such things about Barnabas? It was bad enough for the villagers to whisper and gossip! Roger should be defending Barnabas, instead of making things worse.

In this mood she entered her room and prepared for bed. So upset was she that it was some time before she managed to get to sleep. She vowed to see Barnabas the following evening and warn him against Roger.

She was brought suddenly awake by a cry from outside—a strange cry, more like a wail of sorrow than anything else. She sat up and stared around her in the darkness. Now all was silence again. And she began to question whether the cry had come out of some night-
mare or if it had come from the lawn as she’d first thought. She sat there for several minutes, her heartbeat quickened by her uneasiness.

Then she decided to get out of bed and take a look from the window. Donning her slippers and robe, she crossed to the window fronting on the lawn and pulled aside the drapes. It was still bright out from the starry sky. She stared down at the lawn, straining to see some sign of movement.

Then she gasped! A distance away two shadowy figures were walking toward the house like phantoms of the night. She was sure one of them was Barnabas; there was no mistaking his erect figure and the head held high. The other was a female. But as yet she couldn’t guess who it might be.

All the frightening gossip about Barnabas’ vampire tendencies came back to her. She’d never allowed herself to listen to this talk, but now she wondered. What reasonable explanation could there be for his being out there with some girl at this hour?

Now the two had moved close to the house, and with a sense of shock she recognized the girl as Celia. Celia, clad only in a flimsy nightgown and strolling hand in hand with Barnabas! There was an ecstatic expression on the lovely dark girl’s face. They halted, and Barnabas took the girl in his arms for a long embrace. Afterward he seemed to be saying something urgent to her. Then he walked off into the shadows, leaving her standing there alone.

When her first surprise at witnessing this scene had passed, Carolyn at once began to feel concerned. How had Celia managed to escape Nurse Bell again? And why had Barnabas left her alone in this manner? She knew that she had to go to Celia’s assistance; she could not let her friend wander in the darkness. Without considering the possibility of danger to herself, Carolyn hurried from her room and went down the stairs to the front door.
CHAPTER EIGHT

When she stepped outside, Celia had vanished. Carolyn ventured down the steps, peering into the shadows. The only sound was the distant roar of the waves against the rocky beach. Deciding that Celia must have wandered around to the rear of the old mansion, she cautiously made her way in that direction.

But there was still no sign of her ... or of Barnabas. Both appeared to have vanished within a few minutes. Now she began to worry about her own safety and think she should go back inside. A sense of danger close at hand had suddenly come to her. She halted in the grass, which was damp with night moisture, and wondered why she should suddenly have this premonition.

Then she heard the footstep behind her. And in the next moment she was seized by the throat. She tried to call out, but couldn’t. The wickedly cruel hands crushed her until she was unable to breathe. After a brief, feeble attempt to free herself, she sank into unconsciousness.

When she opened her eyes she was in the house and Roger was bending over her, with Elizabeth at his side. He asked her, “Who did it?”

She stared up at him blankly. “I don’t know,” she said in a hoarse whisper. Her throat was aching terribly. “I saw Celia outside and went to get her.”

Roger frowned. “Yes. She was out there. We found her standing by you; she seemed to be in a daze. Perhaps she did attack you.”

“I didn’t see who it was.” Staring around, she realized she was in the one downstairs bedroom, which was situated at the rear of the hall.

Roger said, “We’ve sent for Dr. Moore. He ought to be here soon.”

She made a movement to get up. “You shouldn’t have!”
Now Elizabeth spoke. "We couldn't not do it. We thought you were dead or dying."

"What about Celia?"

Roger's face was grim. "Nurse Bell came down in search of her and found her standing next to you. You were stretched out on the grass. And she was babbling and there was a red scar on her throat."

"A red scar?"

"The same kind that was on the throat of the girl who was attacked in the village the other night." Roger's look was meaningful. "Do you have any idea if Barnabas remained around here after he left you?"

"I don't think so."

"I think Barnabas might be able to explain the mark on Celia's throat."

"I'm sure Barnabas had nothing to do with it," she protested weakly.

"How can you be?"

Elizabeth looked concerned. "She shouldn't be bothered about that now."

At the same moment the door opened and Edward Dalton, looking less than wide awake, came in to join the others at her bedside. He was wearing his trousers and coat over his pajamas, and he looked angry. "If all of you had listened to me, this never would have happened!"

Roger turned and gave him a disgusted look. "I'll discuss that with you later."

"No!" Dalton said loudly. "This girl has a right to know why she was almost killed. It's the same story as it was with you, Mrs. Stoddard."

Elizabeth stared at him in disbelief. "Are you saying that it was Celia who almost strangled my daughter?"

"It was Harriet Barnes," Dalton said, waving a bony forefinger at her. "The same evil spirit took possession of Celia again and she attacked this girl. Nurse Bell found her there and you took the chain from her neck."

Carolyn asked, "What chain?"

There was a bitter smile on the tall man's bony face. "The locket chain which Celia had slipped around your
throat and twisted until it bit into the flesh. The locket that was attached to it has a snapshot in it. A likeness of Harriet Barnes!"

“We need not go into all this until after the doctor comes,” Roger turned on him angrily. “You shouldn’t even be in here creating this disturbance.”

“My brother is right,” Elizabeth said. “I’d appreciate your leaving, Mr. Dalton.”

“Very well,” he said, with stiff dignity. “But I wanted Carolyn to know what had happened and why. I might have rid us of that evil woman if you’d allowed me to conduct a seance here.”

“Please go,” Elizabeth begged him, moving to the door to open it for him.

When the door closed behind him, Roger leaned over the bedside and told her, “You mustn’t let anything he said bother you.”

She stared up at him, thinking she might faint any minute. And her throat felt as if it was closing to the point where she could only manage a croaking whisper, while on the outside was the stinging pain of a deep welt.

She whispered, “Was it true about the chain and locket?”

Her uncle looked reluctant to answer. At last he said, “Yes.”

Fear showed on her pale face. “Then it must have been the ghost of that woman!”

“Someone wants us to think so,” Roger stormed. “And we mightn’t have to look far. It could be Cousin Barnabas!”

Too weak to argue, she closed her eyes and tried to reason it all out. From what she’d been able to grasp of their talk, the missing chain and locket had turned up again . . . wound about her throat. Could Celia be strong enough to have strangled her with those powerful hands and later twisted the chain about her throat to finish the job? It hardly seemed possible. And yet there was the strength of the insane to consider, or the possessed, whichever term you preferred to use.

She heard the familiar deep tone of Dr. Moore’s voice
and opened her eyes again to study his serious face. "I'm a terrible nuisance," she whispered apologetically.

His skilled fingers were examining her throat and the eyes behind the thick glasses showed concern. "This is a nasty business," he said. "Nurse Bell should be able to keep her patient under better control at night. I'm going to have a serious talk with her."

"I agree," Roger said. He was standing just behind the doctor.

"I'm going to give you something to relax you and make you sleep," Dr. Moore said. "You'll feel better in the morning. But don't expect that throat to clear up in a few hours or days. It is badly bruised and the skin is cut in some places on the outside. Don't strain to talk. As it is, you may lose your voice for a time."

She nodded to let him know she understood. He gave her some liquid mixture which she swallowed with difficulty. Then she lay back and closed her eyes. In a short time a wave of sleepiness swept through her and she sank into a drugged slumber.

It was daylight and probably fairly late in the morning when she awoke. She judged the time by the way the sun was showing in her window. Then she remembered she was not in her own bedroom and so all her suppositions could be wrong. She lay there without any desire to move for awhile.

Then the door opened and her mother came in. Elizabeth looked relieved to see that her eyes were open. She came over beside the bed and said, "I thought you'd never wake up. It's almost eleven o'clock."

Carolyn managed a hoarse whisper. "The drugs."

"I suppose so. I hope your throat isn't too painful?"

"It hurts."

"Yes, it's bound to," Elizabeth said with a distressed expression. "That choking I suffered gave me trouble for days, and wasn't nearly as bad. Dr. Moore says you are sure to have to talk in a whisper for a little."

"I'm sure of that," she managed hoarsely. "What about Celia?"

Her mother sighed. "As far as I know she's completely
herself again this morning. And extremely worried about you."

"Not her fault," Carolyn whispered earnestly.
"I don't know what to think," Elizabeth confessed.
Carolyn sat up weakly. The effort made the room seem to swim for a moment. She took a deep breath. "The evil spirit."

Elizabeth frowned. "If you believe all that Edward Dalton says, you'll wind up thinking that ghosts control our every move. I don't think that is true, though there may be something in it. But he carries it too far!"

She whispered, "The curse of that murderess."

"Roger goes in a rage whenever that is suggested," her mother said worriedly. "Don't dare mention it to him. What would you like for breakfast? Can you manage anything solid? I'll bring it to you."

"I want to get up," Carolyn whispered. "I'll see how I feel after I'm on my feet."

"I'm sure the doctor won't approve of your getting out of bed."

"I don't care. Can't stand it," she said hoarsely. And she threw back the bed clothes and swung her legs out over the side of the bed. "Want to go back to own room."

"Well, I don't blame you for that," Elizabeth said. "Just as long as you are sure you're able."

With her mother's help she washed and dressed. And then she had a breakfast—mostly liquid—out on the side sun porch. It was one of the pleasant spots in the morning and she luxuriated in a comfortable wicker armchair. She'd finished breakfast and was resting there when Alice Dalton came to sit by her.

"I don't want you to strain to talk," the older woman said. "But I do want to tell you some things. And please don't feel you have to answer me."

Carolyn nodded with a wan smile.

Alice Dalton was studying her with tragic eyes. "My husband insists that Celia did this awful thing to you. Of course he says she did it while under the control of the spirit of that evil woman. But I can't believe it to be true."
Carolyn sat back in the chair and spread her hands in a gesture of resignation. What could she say, when she hadn’t made up her mind on this point for herself!

The older woman went on worriedly, “Edward is nagging me to allow him to hold a seance, and to get your mother and uncle to agree to it. He thinks I could sway them, but I’m not sure. And I’m fearful for Celia. She has stood about all of Edward’s spiritualistic experiments that she can.”

Carolyn nodded vigorously. “I’m glad you agree. And I’m not sure that this Nurse Bell is doing Celia any good. She’s a strange woman and so sullen. She keeps to herself a lot of the time and if she’d been taking care of Celia properly I’m sure she wouldn’t have gotten out of the house last night.”

Carolyn nodded again. “I intend to speak to Dr. Moore about dismissing her.”

Carolyn frowned at this. She wanted to let Alice Dalton know she wasn’t sure it would be wise to dispense with the services of the nurse. Without her on hand, Celia might grow worse.

Mrs. Dalton stared out across the lawn. “We should never have come here. I realize that too late. Edward was the one who kept urging that it would be good for Celia and I believed him. And of course Celia was anxious to see you again. But Edward just wanted to get here and delve into the ghostly legends of this old house. He hopes to make a handsome profit on this visit. And there seems little I can do to stop him. You can be sure he’ll write and sell a lot of sensational articles for the press. He’ll make it seem Collinwood is a haven for ghosts. And he’s counting on this Harriet Barnes story as his main item.”

Carolyn nodded. “I’ll talk to Dr. Moore about taking Celia back to Boston when he returns this afternoon. If she’s well enough to travel, it could be a kind of solution to all this. Edward will be enraged at the idea of leaving when it is all working out so neatly for him. But if I insist we go, he’ll have no choice.”
Carolyn smiled bleakly.

“If we should leave, maybe these awful things won’t go on happening,” Alice Dalton said. “I’ve heard of houses and people suffering under a curse. And I know that sometimes it goes on for years.”

For the first time Carolyn whispered, “Did Celia mention Barnabas?”

“No,” Mrs. Dalton said with a frown. “She doesn’t seem to have any memory of what happened when she went out last night.”

Carolyn nodded. Perhaps it was just as well this way, she thought.

The older woman frowned. “Roger has been doing a lot of mumbling about Barnabas causing trouble, but I’ve hardly met the man since we’ve arrived. He seems rather a recluse.”

“He is,” she whispered.

“When Celia has spoken of him, she has described him as charming,” the older woman went on. “So I fail to understand why Roger is so bitter about him.”

Carolyn spread her hands again to express her feeling that Roger was not always fair.

Mrs. Dalton smiled sadly. “I know what you mean. Roger has a bad temper. And he’s apt to jump to conclusions far too quickly. If it hadn’t been for that he and I might have married. I was very fond of him.”

Carolyn smiled in sympathy.

The older woman sighed. “Not that Edward has been a bad husband. He is a very clever person. But his cleverness has become twisted over the years. He’s given a great deal of himself to the study of spiritualism. And he feels he has not been properly recognized. It is his bitterness that drives him to extremes.”

She nodded.

Alice Dalton stood up. “I mustn’t stay here bothering you too long. But I did want to tell you my feelings about all that is going on. And somehow I still can’t believe my poor Celia has been responsible for the violence against either your mother or you.”

“Don’t worry,” she whispered.
“I’m afraid it’s impossible for me not to worry,” Celia’s mother said. “I’ll see Dr. Moore when he calls and ask his advice about Celia. And you must be very careful. Who knows what other awful thing might happen here?”

Carolyn again nodded. She felt the conversation was getting nowhere; the older woman had said all she had to say.

“There is something else,” Alice Dalton said. “Celia’s been wanting to come down and see you. Do you have any objections?”

Carolyn shook her head.

“That’s very good of you,” Alice Dalton said. “I’ll tell her you said it was all right.” And she left the sun porch.

A sudden feeling of restlessness came over Carolyn and she decided to go out and sit in the garden for at least a short time. She felt the fresh air and the direct sun might do her good. She went out by the side door leading from the sun porch. The garden seemed deserted and she sat on her favorite bench which gave her a view of both the house and the ocean.

In the warm sunshine the events of the night seemed fantastic and unreal. She wished that Barnabas would see her in the daytime; she wanted to get the truth from him about Celia. She felt he would be frank in explaining why he’d been with the dark girl.

She was almost at the point of thinking they should allow Edward Dalton to hold at least one seance. That would at least silence his complaints. And if there was anything in his theory that Celia was possessed by Harriet Barnes, it would perhaps be confirmed around the seance table.

A shadow suddenly showed in front of her. She turned and saw the good-looking young man she’d met the previous night standing to her right and surveying her with a wise smile. He was wearing dark sun glasses that made him look rather different. He was a colorful figure in light blue slacks and a white polo shirt with a mock turtleneck.

He said, “We meet again.”

She nodded. In the embarrassing hoarse whisper that
was all the voice left to her, she told him, "I had an accident after I came back here. My throat was injured."

Martin said, "I hope it's nothing too serious."

"No," she whispered. "Better in a few days."

"That's good news," the young man said cheerfully. He glanced up at the house. "This is a pretty impressive place."

She nodded agreement.

He gave her a teasing smile. "Pretty large for the few people who live here, isn't it?"

Carolyn shrugged. "We have guests."

"Not that many," Martin Wainwright said. He turned his attention to the ocean. "But you do have a wonderful view from up here. I don't blame your people for wanting to hang on to the property."

"Family home for centuries," she whispered. "First the old house and then this one."

"The old house," he said. "That's where your cousin Barnabas is staying, isn't it?"

She nodded again.

"He's an odd type," Martin Wainwright went on blithely. "I heard some talk about him at the motel. They say he never shows his face around in the daytime. And in the evenings he divides his time between your family cemetery and the Blue Whale! I find that a delightful contrast. He's bound to be interesting."

"Fine," she whispered, thinking of the strong reservations Barnabas had voiced about this young man.

Martin smiled at her directly. "Surely screaming about that wild dog you saw in the cemetery didn't do all this damage to your voice?"

"No."

"Well, I won't be curious and ask a lot of questions. Is Celia around?"

"Upstairs."

"Will she be down soon?"

She nodded.

The young man in the large sun glasses laughed. "If I'm going to spend much time with you I'll have to get familiar with the sign language."
She grimaced. "Sorry."
He raised a friendly hand. "Don't worry about it. I find it amusing, trying to figure out what you mean." He glanced at the old mansion again rather impatiently. "I'd like to talk with Celia but I don't want to try the front door. Her mother and father don't exactly approve of me."
"Why?"
He looked at her again with his generous mouth showing a faint curl. "They don't consider me financially responsible."
"What do you do?"
He opened his palms. "Nothing. I met Celia at college. I was taking some non-credit courses. We had fun."
She whispered, "Haven't you any plans?"
"Just one important one," he said. "I'm not going to get hooked in the present nine-to-five rat race. I like my freedom too well. Most peoples' lives are dominated by their desire for money. It doesn't tempt me."
"Perhaps you have lots of money," she whispered.
"Hardly any," he said frankly. "And I'm always in debt. But I'd still make Celia a better husband than most of those serious young professional men."
She smiled. "Tell her." There was no question that he was likeable, if a little brash.
"I intend to." His hands were pushed in the pockets of his slacks and his feet were spread fairly widely apart on the gravel path.
She saw Celia first. The dark girl was wearing a yellow minidress and coming out of the house by the porch door on the side. When she saw Martin Wainwright she increased her pace to come running along the gravel path and throw herself in his arms.
"Martin!" she said ecstatically after they'd exchanged a kiss of greeting. And smiling at Carolyn, she said, "This is my best friend, Carolyn Collins, but you've already met."
An arm still around the girl he said, "Sure we've met. In fact I've left her speechless."
Celia gave him a reproving look. “That’s not too funny!”
“Sorry!”
“Carolyn had an unpleasant accident last night,” Celia said, coming close to her with a sympathetic expression on her own pretty face.
It was then she saw the mark on the dark girl’s throat. It was faint but still there. So this was the scar she’d heard so much talk about—the mark of the vampire that Barnabas was supposed to leave on the throats of the girls he attacked.
Carolyn managed a smile for her friend. “Better,” she whispered.
“I should hope so.” It was apparent Celia remembered nothing of her wanderings the previous night, nor of the attack. “When mother told me what had happened I couldn’t believe it.”
Martin asked Celia, “Just what did happen to make her lose her voice?”
The girl gave him a troubled look. “We don’t want to talk about it.”
He cocked his head to one side. “Playing it mysterious! That’s like you.”
Carolyn whispered, “You two want to talk. Go on. Don’t mind me.”
“Good advice,” Martin Wainwright said, giving a humorous imitation of her hoarse whisper. Arm in arm, the two walked toward the cliffs.
Carolyn watched them go, experiencing an odd feeling in seeing them together. She was happy for them and wished them well. At the same time she’d begun to detect a certain coldness behind the mocking humor of Martin Wainwright’s manner. She was by no means as certain that she liked him as she had been the previous night. She began to think Barnabas might have sound reasons for being doubtful about this young man from Boston.
She was becoming uncomfortably warm and decided to go back into the house. When she entered the sun
porch she found Nurse Marie Bell standing there, watching the two as they moved into the distance.

The mannish nurse scowled at her. "That one slipped away from me when I was talking to her mother."

Carolyn said, "All right. Boy friend."

Nurse Bell was still scowling. "I don't know what Dr. Moore would say about it. She'll be coming back all excited and have another one of her crazy spells."

"Last night?"

The big woman nodded. "Exactly like last night. I turned my back for just a minute and she was gone. I was out looking for her when she attacked you."

"Did you see her do it?" she whispered.

The eyes behind the heavy glasses blinked. "Not exactly. But I know she was the one. You were on the ground and she was standing staring at you and laughing like crazy."

"After it happened?"

The nurse looked uneasy. "I suppose so. But it must have only been a minute or two after."

"I see."

"I've handled all sorts of crazy people," the nurse went on, "but she's different from any of them. One time she'll be all nice and normal like now and then she slips into those spells before you know it."

Carolyn nodded.

Nurse Bell frowned. "And I wouldn't call her crazy in the way most of my patients have been. This one is different."

"How?"

The big woman leaned close to her and in a confidential tone said, "When she has these spells it isn't just wild raving. She talks like a different person. She's like somebody else. And she mentions names and places. Like that Harbor Point, for instance. She talks about it whenever she has a spell."

"What else?"

"The man named Alvah," Nurse Bell said. "She's always raving about what a fine person he is. And she can't understand what is making him ill. I tried slapping
her and telling her there was no such person as Alvah
and she only looked ugly at me and went right on with
the nonsense.”

“Anyone else?”

“You mean does she talk about anyone else?”

“Yes.”

“A flock of people. I'm going to ask the doctor about
it. It gives me a creepy feeling when she begins to wail
and say she's dead. I think she really believes it. She'll
cry a little and then say she's dead.”

The nurse's words gave Carolyn a weird sensation.
Was Celia really taking on the personality of Harriet
Barnes? All the references she'd been making were linked
with the dead murderess.

She whispered, "She really talks of being dead?

The nurse's pale blue eyes were fixed on her as she
said, "I wish you could hear her. As soon as she's in
one of those spells, she begins wailing, 'Harriet is dead!
Harriet is dead!' And she goes over it until I feel icy
fingers running down my spine!"

CHAPTER NINE

It was forty-eight hours before Carolyn's voice was
anywhere near normal. She was still slightly hoarse, but
she could talk without pain or strain. The few cuts on
her throat were also healing well. During these days
and nights she left the house only briefly, and so she
didn't have her usual meetings with Barnabas. For
reasons best known to himself he had shunned Collin-
wood.

The period had passed uneventfully at the old man-
sion. Celia had not had any further spells and seemed
much happier with Martin Wainwright coming by each
day to see her. Yet every meeting Carolyn found herself
liking him less. And she feared that Celia might be
allowing herself to become too fond of him.

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Carolyn invited her to her room one afternoon later in the week and when they were alone together asked her friend, "Just how serious is it between you and Martin?"

The dark girl was seated on the side of the bed with Carolyn. She blushed. "He's been wonderful for me."

"I know you're enjoying his company," she said. "And that's good. But I don't think you should allow yourself to fall in love with him."

Celia laughed. "He says he wants to marry me and live on my father's money."

"He may mean what he says. Better be careful."

"I'm sure he's just joking. And in any case it isn't my father who has money, but my mother. Her family is very wealthy."

Carolyn eyed her sharply. "Have you told him that?"

"I don't know." Celia looked surprised. "Would it be important if I had let it slip?"

"It would certainly give him encouragement if it's your money he's after."

Her friend looked baffled. "But I thought you liked Martin?"

"Not as well as I did."

"Why not?"

Carolyn stared down at the rag rug on her floor. "For one thing, he lacks sincerity. He's always talking nonsense and he often does this to evade serious questions. And for another, Barnabas didn't like him."

"So that's it," Celia said, pouncing on her last statement. "Barnabas is the one who turned you against him."

"I put a lot of confidence in what Barnabas says."

"You shouldn't in this case. Martin Wainwright is a fine young man."

Carolyn smiled sadly. "If that's what you want to believe, I suppose it's only making things worse to try to get you to see him as he really is."

"Barnabas is by no means perfect," Celia said with some defiance. "I know you're fond of him and he is
your cousin. But Martin says there is a lot of gossip about him in the village."

"The villagers haven't much to talk about. And when a nonconformist like Barnabas appears, he's bound to be a subject for their vicious tongues."

"This is different," the dark girl persisted. "Some people say that Barnabas attacks young women and bites them on the throat in some odd way. They are comparing him with an ancestor of his who was a vampire."

Carolyn glanced quickly at her friend's slim white throat. The large red scar that had marred it the night after she'd seen her with Barnabas had faded away.

She said, "Didn't you have a rendezvous with Barnabas one night?"

Celia looked stunned. "How do you know?"

"I saw you together," she said.

Her friend looked guilty. "It was before Martin came. I was out wandering alone in the darkness. And I accidentally met Barnabas."

"I suppose I'll have to believe that."

"It's true," Celia said.

"And what did you two talk about?"

"Many things," Celia said vaguely. "I'll admit he is very nice. To be truthful I don't really remember much about it, except that I enjoyed his company."

"I see," Carolyn said dryly. And she recalled that the village girls who were found with the same red mark on their throats always suffered a blackout of memory.

"It was only that once," Celia said. "So you needn't be jealous."

Carolyn smiled ruefully. "I promise you I'm not."

"And let's not quarrel about Martin," the dark girl begged her. "He's bringing me some happiness. Don't spoil it."

"I don't want to," she said. "I'm only concerned about protecting you."

"I'll manage," Celia smiled. "Dr. Moore thinks I'm much better and Nurse Bell hardly bothers me at all."

"Then we should be pleased." Carolyn stood up, feeling she shouldn't push the matter any further unless
she received some definite proof that Martin wasn’t all he pretended.

Celia was also on her feet now. She furrowed her pretty brow as she said, “I am worried about your being attacked the other night. Your uncle should do something about that.”

Carolyn was touched by her friend’s concern. They had so far successfully kept it from Celia that she’d been the one responsible for making the attacks. She said, “I think Uncle Roger is doing something. You mustn’t dwell on it. The main thing now is for you to get completely better.”

That evening Roger came home from the village with news of another girl having been attacked. The details of the story were almost the same as before and Roger paced angrily up and down in the study before her and Elizabeth. He paused to indicate the closed door with a wave.

“I have to bring you in here to get a little privacy in my own house,” he told them.

Elizabeth looked plaintive. “Now, Roger, we agreed on a waiting period and no more complaints about our guests.”

“I’ll say nothing but that it was a sorry day they arrived here.”

“Roger!” Her tone was reprimanding.

“In any case, that’s not what we’re here to discuss,” he went on. “This time it’s Barnabas again.”

“Another girl?” Carolyn asked.

“I’m afraid so,” Roger said. “Everything the same as before. He picked her up in the Blue Whale. And later she was found dazed and with a scar on her throat. Only this time she was wandering on a back street rather than the wharf.”

“And they think Barnabas did it?” Carolyn’s mother asked.

“Of course! They blamed him for the first attack. And we know that Celia had the same mark on her throat. I tell you Cousin Barnabas is getting out of hand.”
“He’s never admitted any of this to me,” Carolyn said. “And he never lies to me.”

“I still say he’s guilty,” Roger snapped. “And we’ll have to talk to him and persuade him to leave.”

“What if he won’t go?” Elizabeth worried.

“We’ll have to find a way to make him,” Roger said grimly. “I’m not going to wait until we’re all disgraced!”

Elizabeth turned to her. “Perhaps you can reason with him. He likes you.”

There was a silence in the room as both Roger and her mother waited for her answer. Carolyn felt embarrassed. She didn’t know what to say. At last she said, “I haven’t seen Barnabas for a few nights.”

“But you will be seeing him,” her uncle said. “I suppose so.”

“And you can make him understand it is for his own good as well as that of the family’s that he should leave,” Elizabeth added.

“I can’t say that,” she protested. “For one thing I think you’re making a lot of nothing. I can’t believe he would do such dreadful things.”

Roger groaned and rolled his eyes. “We’ve no time for that old argument, young woman. Either you’ll speak to him or I’ll pay a visit to the old house tonight.”

She could see a violent quarrel between Roger and Barnabas, and she didn’t want that. “I’ll talk to him,” she said in a dull tone. “But so far I’m on his side.”

“You’re as stubborn as that Edward Dalton!” Roger declared with annoyance. “And he is the most obstinate man I have ever met. When I got home tonight he was after me again to let him hold that seance.”

“I’ve decided that you should,” Elizabeth said.

“And I agree,” Carolyn echoed her mother’s decision. “Just so long as there is only one. Celia shouldn’t be made to go through a lot of them, as she was once before.”

Roger drew himself up to his full height. “If you two ladies don’t mind, I’ll do what I like about the seance when I make up my mind!”

Elizabeth gave Carolyn a despairing glance. “You
can see he's in one of his moods. There's no use arguing with him."

"None at all," was Roger's firm reply.

Taking him at his word, they went out, leaving him alone in the study.

Knowing what was expected of her kept Carolyn on edge all during the dinner hour. To make things more uncomfortable, both Roger and Edward Dalton were in their most annoying moods. Roger was sullen and the tall, thin man was attempting to be ingratiating in an effort to win their approval for a seance. His bony face bright with enthusiasm, he babbled on to Elizabeth about his adventures in spiritualism.

"I have seen many ghosts in my time," he said, looking like a grisly phantom himself in his somber dark suit. "And Collinwood is host to spirits, I'm sure. It was not until we arrived here that my daughter took on the evil spirit of Harriet Barnes! That demonic spirit was lurking here waiting for a suitable body to inhabit. And since Celia is a perfect medium it took possession of her."

Roger glared at him from his place at the head of the table. "I should think you'd take your daughter back to Boston then and remove her from the danger."

Dalton sat very erect and told Roger, "I would do that at once, Mr. Collins, except that we should still be plagued by the wicked spirit of that murderess. Only a proper seance will enable us to free my daughter of this burden."

Elizabeth spoke up placatingly. "Of course we are only assuming all this about the spirit of Harriet Barnes taking control of Celia at various moments."

"I have never accepted it," Alice Dalton said. This was her first contribution to the conversation.

Dalton bowed his pale bald head, apparently trying to get control of himself. Carolyn was grateful that Celia took her meals mostly in the apartment with Nurse Bell and so was spared hearing her parents argue.

Edward Dalton lifted his eyes to study them sadly.
"One of the deepest sorrows of my life," he said, "is that my wife does not have any belief in the voices of the dead."

"I have my own ideas on the subject," Alice Dalton said with annoyance on her attractive matronly face, "and they are not as far out as yours."

Roger made a clucking sound of approval. "You always had intelligence, Alice. I give you credit for that."

"To believe in spirits is not unintelligent," Edward Dalton said with a touch of anger. "The dead come back to help us. Our natural universe has a supernatural counterpart that exists beyond it and is inhabited by our disembodied spirits. As well as an earthly body, every living person has an etheric body or twin. This twin, which is normally invisible and weighs about two and a half pounds, is linked to the earthly body with a cord. Sometimes the spiritual body severs the cord and leaves the earthly body and this rare phenomenon is known as astral traveling. It happens mostly at times of crisis. But for most of us the cord between the earthly body and the spiritual is cut only at the moment of death."

"I never heard such rot!" Roger grumbled.

Edward Dalton frowned. "It is not rot. It is standard spiritualistic teaching. When the cord is cut the spiritual body lives on. And in this new existence the character of the individual does not change, though there is no longer need for food, sleep or exercise. But temperament remains the same as do habits formed on earth. Many spirits at first wear similar clothes to those worn in earthly life. Later they don spiritual robes for extra comfort. An evil or good nature remains unchanged. So the evil of Harriet Barnes remains constant."

Roger's face was purple as he snapped, "Harriet Barnes was not evil—she was a mad woman!"

"Then she remains a mad woman in her life after death," Edward Dalton said calmly, "and in the spirit world she is existing at a certain level. There is an ascending scale of spirit levels above the earth. And the
higher spirit forms are invisible to the lower ones. Harriet is still what we call earthbound, or at the lowest level. Only when we have freed her from her desire to wreak vengeance on the Collins family will she cease to trouble us. Then she will move on to the blissful celestial spheres and be at peace.”

Roger said, “All of which is your way of asking again that we allow you to hold a seance here!”

“That is true,” Edward Dalton said.

“My answer is that I consider everything you’ve said a lot of mumbo jumbo!”

Edward Dalton looked sad and made no reply. Most of the balance of the dinner passed in silence. As soon as the meal was over Carolyn detached herself from the others and went out to stroll in the garden. She was nervous, and the bickering and weird talk at the table had not helped her. She had to wait until dusk before going in search of Barnabas.

While she was strolling out there, she was joined by Alice Dalton, who looked distressed. She quickly broke the bad news to her. “Nurse Bell just came down and told us Celia has drifted off into another of her spells.”

“I’m sorry,” Carolyn said sincerely.

The older woman seemed on the edge of tears. “I don’t know what to do. I have no one to talk sensibly to. You heard my husband raving at the dinner table. I phoned Dr. Moore but he was out. I’ve left him a message to call back.”

“Is Celia very ill?”

Mrs. Dalton frowned. “Nurse Bell appeared to think so. She claimed she is rambling again. Talking in a fashion that makes no sense.”

“Perhaps your husband is right after all,” Carolyn suggested.

The older woman showed shock. “Can you believe that?”

“Nothing else seems to have helped her. Perhaps we should try the seance.”

“No,” Mrs. Dalton said unhappily. “We tried that once
in Boston. I think it made her worse. I'll wait and hear what the doctor advises.” And she left Carolyn to return to the house.

Carolyn found herself more confused than ever. The first shades of dusk began to appear and she knew that in a short time she could leave for the old house. She hoped Barnabas would be there.

A sound of footsteps in the gravel made her look up. Martin Wainwright was approaching her, looking smart and handsome in blue plaid sports coat, light blue slacks, and a dark blue shirt with a wide gray tie. He continued to wear sun glasses even though it was almost dark.

She rose on seeing him. “You don’t usually come here at night.”

“I missed this afternoon,” he said. “Will you tell Celia I’m here?”

“I can’t. She isn’t able to see you.”

The young man stared at her. “Why not?”

“She’s ill.”

Martin’s face showed suspicion. “I don’t believe it.”

“Believe it or not, it is true.”

“You’re deliberately lying because you don’t want me to see her,” he said angrily.

“And you’re badly wrong.”

Martin seemed to have lost his temper completely. “I know what’s going on,” he said. “I’ve been wise to it for quite a while. You’re trying to turn her against me.”

“Nonsense!”

“Haven’t you warned her against seeing me?”

She shrugged. “I may have told her not to get too romantically involved with you, but I’ve not gone as far as to advise her she shouldn’t see you.”

He took a step toward her and raised a hand. For a moment she thought he might be going to attack her. “You are my enemy,” he said coldly.

“You strike me as someone who must have his own way,” she told him. “You like having power over the people around you. I’m not sure that would be good for Celia.”

“I’ll be the judge of that!”
"I wasn't lying when I told you she is ill," Carolyn protested. "You can easily find out for yourself by going to the house and checking."

"You know I don't want to talk to her parents!"

"You'll have to sooner or later."

"It won't be now," he said angrily. "Thank you for all you've done!" And he turned and stalked off in a rage.

She watched as he vanished around a tall hedge, feeling even more certain he wasn't desirable for Celia. No matter how charming he might appear on the surface, there was a bad streak in him.

After a few minutes she left the garden. The warm summer night was turning a dark blue as dusk settled. She walked around the sprawling old mansion and by the outbuildings on her way to the original home of the Collins' family where Barnabas stayed while in the area.

She worried over what she was going to say to him. How would she make him understand her feeling? She didn't want to see him leave Collinwood and yet her mother and uncle, swayed by village gossip, insisted this was the only sensible course.

Suddenly it was dark, and the night seemed oddly silent. There wasn't the slightest breeze stirring. She was wearing a thin summer dress and still she was uncomfortably warm. She could barely make out the old house in the darkness ahead. And she wished that by good fortune she might meet Barnabas on the path before she reached there.

Perhaps as a result of all the tension at the dinner table and afterward, she felt nervous, jittery. As she continued along the dark path her fear increased although there was no obvious reason for this sudden and growing panic. She had walked this lonely path many times before. And yet she had never felt exactly this way.

About a hundred yards from the old house she halted. And as her terror grew she felt she could not go on. It was too ridiculous! But she stood rooted to the spot.
She couldn’t even summon the courage to turn and run back to Collinwood. A trembling came over her and she peered into the night, thinking she might catch a glimpse of Barnabas.

Then from nearby there came a low, ominous growl. The sound of an animal. An animal on the offensive. She gave a startled cry. The growling became louder, ending in a snarl, and from the shadows there sprang a fierce wolflike creature. She dodged and stumbled backwards as the thing sprang toward her, close enough for her to smell and feel the heat of its fetid breath!

She raced toward the old house with the snarling thing after her. It was hopeless! When the thing sprang again, it would be on her!

She was sobbing and stumbling forward, and the snarling at her heels was closer than before. Then from the darkness ahead she saw the figure of Barnabas looming.

“Barnabas!” she screamed, running toward him.

“Carolyn!” He cried out her name as if to let her know that he understood her plight.

As she came up to him he quickly shoved her behind him. His black cane had been unsheathed to become a glistening sword blade. And he now nimbly fought back the fierce animal with the weapon.

She remained safely behind him watching in terror the weird duel between animal and man. The wild thing became increasingly aggressive and came snarling and leaping higher with every attack. Barnabas wielded the sword to advantage and when the wolflike animal made a breathtakingly high spring for his throat he plunged the sword into it.

With a shrill, weird cry the creature turned and raced off into the darkness. Barnabas stood there breathless and triumphant, still on guard for the phantom animal to return.

At last he replaced the sword in the black cane and turned to her. “I don’t think it will come back.”

She was still breathless with fear. “It was the same wild dog I saw the other night.”
"Yes," he said dryly. "If it was a wild dog."
"What else could it be?"
"We'll talk about that later," he said. "Just now I think I should take you to the house."
A few minutes later she was seated in the candlelit living room of the old house sipping a glass of sherry. She told Barnabas, who was standing by gravely watching her, "I'm over my fright."
"I'm glad of that." His handsome face was shadowed with concern.
"What did it mean?" she asked.
He hesitated and then said, "If you'll remember, you first met Martin Wainwright the other night after seeing that creature in the cemetery."
She nodded, "Yes. And he hadn't seen it at all, which seemed odd. He was at the house tonight wanting to see Celia. I told him he couldn't, because she was ill. He wouldn't believe me."
Barnabas raised his heavy dark eyebrows. "And I suppose you two had a quarrel."
"How did you know?"
"It was easy to guess," he said enigmatically. "And it explains your encounter with the wolf again."
She frowned. "What do you mean?"
"Are you prepared for a story so preposterous you won't believe it?"
"If you say it is true, I'll believe it," she told him. "You have never lied to me."
"Thank you," Barnabas clasped his hands behind his back and stood by the fireplace where he was highlighted by the flickering candles on the mantel.
"Please go on," she said.
"Have you ever heard of a member of the family named Quentin Collins?"
She shook her head. "No."
"I'm not surprised," Barnabas said. "Because of his evil reputation, he is rarely mentioned. I wouldn't be surprised if Roger told you there was no such person."
"But there is?"
"Yes," Barnabas said. "He's in such bad repute with
the family just now that he wouldn't dare come here under his real name. I've met him casually on several occasions, so he is not entirely unknown to me."

"And?"

"The man you introduced me to in the cemetery the other night, the man who calls himself Martin Wainwright, looked enough like Quentin Collins to be his double."

She showed alarm. "I've grown to dislike him. But Celia is still infatuated with him."

"Tell her the truth. That he is an impostor."

"I'm sure she won't listen to me!"

Barnabas smiled strangely, the deep-set eyes seeming more sunken than ever in the soft candlelight. "It may be you won't have to worry about that now."

"What do you mean?"

"You wondered why this man whom I believe to be Quentin Collins didn't see the wolflike animal that threatened you. And my answer is that he was the wolflike animal."

Her eyes opened wide. "I can't believe it!"

His smile was mocking. "You see? I told you that you'd find it impossible to accept. But through the years there have been recorded accounts of men with the ability to make themselves seem like wolves. Quentin Collins is said to be one of these werewolves. That is why he is not welcome at Collinwood."

"Do you think it is true?"

His serious eyes met hers. "I know more of the supernatural than is good for me. I can only tell you that you should not close your mind to any possibility. A year ago, could you have pictured men from earth walking on the moon? Such a thing still escapes the minds of most people. They are not able to cope with such a fantastic happening. It is the same when you ask people to accept such things beyond the normal as werewolves."

"How can we know for certain Martin Wainwright is Quentin Collins and a werewolf?" she asked in an awed tone, willing to accept the possibility of it at last.
Barnabas sighed. "It shouldn't be too difficult. He's staying at the motel. If he's not there tomorrow or if he's there and suffering from a stab wound, we'll know that the wild thing I plunged my sword into was Quentin Collins!"

CHAPTER TEN

The revelation about Martin Wainwright had shocked her. And on top of this she suddenly recalled that she had to tell Barnabas that Roger wanted him to leave Collinwood. For a while she avoided the subject, talking of other things. And then, because it was time for her to leave, it could be put off no longer.

Rising, she went over to portrait of Angelique and said, "You have never told me about her."

Barnabas continued to stand before the fireplace rather than going to join her. "She was a lovely but wicked woman."

She turned from the arrogant, smiling beauty in the portrait to study him with wistful eyes. "Then you do know the truth about her."

"Yes."

"Can't you share it with me?"

His handsome but melancholy face showed a grim smile. "I find it too painful to discuss."

"Why? She must have lived ages ago. She can't have meant anything to you."

"It was she who caused my ancestor, the original Barnabas, to leave Collinwood in disgrace."

"I see," she said quietly.

His eyes met hers. "And in a way she has also affected my life. For it is the remembrance of what my ancestor was that has caused the villagers to doubt me."

It was the right moment for her to introduce the subject, she felt. "I know," she said. "I have heard the
rumors. And Uncle Roger seems to want to believe them."

"He and I have had words about that before," Barnabas said.

She frowned. "I know the things they are saying have to be untrue."

Barnabas looked pained. "Thank you," he said. "I want your respect. But perhaps I don't warrant it."

She went across to him quickly. Leaning close, she took the lapels of his caped coat in her hands and gently looked up into his weary face. "Of course you warrant my respect," she said reprovingly. "I think you're the finest man I've ever known. If I were older and not your cousin I'd be hoping you'd marry me!" It was a reckless but honest assertion of how she felt.

He smiled at her and touched his cold lips to her forehead. "Have you not ever wondered at my cold lips?" he asked.

"Not really," she said. "I no longer think of them."

"Or my hands?" He touched her hands with his and they were icy cold even on this warm late summer night.

Her brow furrowed. "What are you trying to say?"

He studied her with tender eyes. "I didn't hesitate to tell you the truth about Quentin. Now, if I'm to be honest, I must attempt to explain about myself."

"Nothing you may say could change my affection for you," she promised.

"I hope so," he said quietly. "Let us go and take another look at Angelique's portrait."

"If you like," she said, puzzled.

"When I brushed away the cobwebs from that painting and brought it up here to hang, I was reminded of a whole parade of family history. For I am that Barnabas who was doomed by her to wander down the years as one of the living dead—part of me in this world and part of me lost in the shadows. For brief periods I have been normal. I did not have to sleep in a coffin in a dark place during the day and roam city streets or country lanes in the quest of warm human blood to sustain my cold existence. But those times have been incredibly short.
Yet I live even now hoping that one day I will become a completely normal human once more. Then I will know the blessing of living and of dying.”

She stared at him. “If you are that first Barnabas you must be nearly two centuries old!”

“Counting my life span by the normal standard. But much of that time I have endured temporary death. Only at dusk do I revive to a semblance of life and under the vampire curse must roam until dawn. Then I enter my casket to return to the sleep of the dead.”

Carolyn frowned. “Then you must know secrets about the other side denied to us.”

He smiled sadly. “I know many things ordinary humans never learn.”

“And that is why you attacked those girls in the village. You needed blood from them?”

“Or else I would die myself,” he said. “I meant them no harm. And I did them no lasting harm.”

“You took blood from Celia as well?”

“One night only,” he said. “I was afraid they might be on the watch for me in the village. It saved my going there.”

“Why have you never taken blood from me?” Carolyn asked in wonder.

“My feelings for you would not allow it,” he said. “Even a lost soul like myself has limits beyond which there is no trespass.”

She shook her head. “This is all a fantastic story you’re making up! I don’t believe any of it!”

“Don’t if you’d prefer not to,” he said with a smile. “Would you feel better if I didn’t?”

Barnabas shrugged. “I’ve told you my story. Now I can leave it with you and have a clear conscience.”

“It’s no use,” she said. “I can’t think of you as someone close to two hundred years old. Nor can I see you as a monster stalking innocents in the night. As far as I’m concerned you’re my favorite person and all that you’ve told me has been pure fiction.”

Barnabas looked pleased. “You care for me that much?”
“Yes.”
“I’m very touched.”
She sighed. “But there are others at Collinwood who prefer to think the worst of you. My mother and Roger are upset about the gossip in the village and want you to leave.”
“And I fully intend to,” he promised her. “I know that I have stayed longer than I should. But there was the problem of Martin Wainwright, which I believe we’ve settled tonight. And that still leaves the Daltons and the ghost of Harriet Barnes.”
Carolyn studied him carefully. “Are you saying the ghost of Harriet Barnes does exist? And that is what makes Celia behave as she does?”
“I haven’t been able to fully understand the situation as yet,” Barnabas said. “And I would like to risk remaining here until I do. It is my belief there is more to Celia’s spells than we understand and we are dealing with a murderer who is using the ghost of Harriet Barnes as a scapegoat for attacks wantonly made on our family.”
“Dare you take the gamble of staying?” she asked anxiously.
“I’m hoping that things may develop at a faster pace now,” he said. “We will see. And now it is time to see you back to Collinwood safely.”
She said goodnight to him at Collinwood’s front door with reluctance. Whether what he had told her about himself was true or not, she knew that he was in danger as long as he remained in the area. When she entered the hallway she saw the lower corridor was still lighted and guessed that her Uncle Roger was working late in his study.
On impulse she decided to go down and see him for a moment before going to bed. She could at least tell him that Barnabas intended to leave soon, but was trying to remain long enough to clear up the mystery. Roger should be pleased that Barnabas, like himself, did not see the murderous assaults as the work of Harriet Barnes’ evil spirit controlling Celia.
Hoping that what she had to tell her uncle would
satisfy him, she hurried down the hallway to the door of his study. It was closed but a line of light under it indicated he was still there. She knocked and waited, but the answer did not come. Instead she heard what seemed like a choking sound!

Curiosity made her open the door, and the scene that met her eyes almost caused her to faint. Roger Collins was slumped over his desk with a rough-looking knife handle protruding from his back and a dark stain of blood spreading around it. Standing in the far corner of the book-lined study was a demented-looking Celia, giggling and sobbing alternately. Her eyes were blank and glassy. She was leaning against the bookshelves for support and seemed unaware of Roger or what had happened to him. She went on babbling without paying any attention to Carolyn in the doorway.

Carolyn saw all this in a fleeting second. Then she let out a scream of horror and raced back to the foot of the stairs and called out for help. Her mother came down the stairway, belting her robe about her, followed by a sputtering Nurse Bell, who was still in her uniform. She gave Carolyn a quick glance. “She’s gone again.”

“Down there,” Carolyn said, pointing to the hall. And to her mother, she said, “Get Dr. Moore on the phone. Tell him to come at once!”

Now Matt Morgan appeared from the rear of the big house and she told the handyman to turn on the driveway lights and be on the watch for the doctor’s car. Next, Edward Dalton came down the stairway in a bathrobe and was followed by his wife.

Edward Dalton asked Carolyn, “Is it Celia again?”

“How did you know?” she said.

He gave her an arrogant look. “I warned you. But none of you would listen to me.”

“We’ve no time for that talk,” Alice Dalton said in distress. “What has she done this time?”

“Uncle Roger,” she said. “Stabbed. He could be dead!”

Both the Daltons wheeled and rushed down the hall to the study. Still suffering from shock, Carolyn followed after them. When she reached the door of the study,
her mother had moved Roger down on the floor and was bending over him. Edward and Alice Dalton were standing on the other side of the wounded man, while Nurse Bell had taken Celia’s arm and was leading her out.

As the two passed Carolyn, there was no sign of recognition from Celia. Nurse Bell shot her a troubled look. “I’m taking her upstairs and giving her a hypo,” she said. “As soon as she quiets, I’ll be down to do anything I can to help the doctor.”

Carolyn nodded and Nurse Bell proceeded with her charge, scolding her along the way. Carolyn went on into the room and over to the others. Staring at the prostrate Roger, she asked, “Did she kill him?”

Elizabeth looked up. “No. I don’t think the wound is too deep or in a vital place. He’s breathing regularly enough, though he’s still in a faint.”

But as she spoke he groaned and began to stir. By the time Dr. Moore arrived, Roger was fully conscious though still stretched out on the floor.

The portly doctor worked over Roger. And a few minutes later Nurse Bell came to bustle around assisting him. The others stood near the doorway of the study, allowing the professionals to care for the injured man and waiting for a report on his condition. They could hear Roger murmuring feebly.

Dr. Moore left him to come over to them. His eyes were troubled. He said, “It’s actually only a superficial wound. Just luck, of course. He could have been killed if the wound had been inflicted in the right spot. Just now we must get him up to bed.” He glanced at Edward Dalton. “Can you help me support him?”

“Yes, of course.”

Carolyn suggested, “Perhaps Nurse Bell is more experienced.”

Dr. Moore gave her a grateful look. “An excellent suggestion.” And he told Edward Dalton, “We’ll be able to manage without you, sir.”

Elizabeth asked, “Would you like one of us to stay with him?”

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The doctor frowned. "That might be wise for a while, at least. I'm going to give him a sedative."

Carolyn stood by while a weak and stumbling Roger was removed from the study and taken up the stairway. Dr. Moore supported him on one side and the formidable Nurse Bell had no difficulty taking care of him on the other. She held a powerful arm around him so he was actually not using any of his own strength at all. Elizabeth followed them.

Edward Dalton was in a difficult mood. He gave his wife a dark look and said, "We should go up to our daughter. Celia is quite alone at this moment."

"Nurse Bell put her to sleep with a hypo," Alice Dalton said nervously. "But perhaps we should be there with her." And the two headed up the stairs.

Nervous exhaustion was setting in. Carolyn collapsed in a chair in the front hallway. She closed her eyes and she was still sitting there when Dr. Moore came down the stairs with black bag in hand followed by Nurse Bell. The stout, aging doctor paused in front of Carolyn's chair.

She got up immediately. "Is he resting comfortably now?"

"Yes," Dr. Moore said, a frown on his broad face. "Something very bad is going on here."

"I know that." Carolyn turned to Nurse Bell. "You knew she was having a sick spell. You told Mrs. Dalton early in the evening. How did you let her escape you?"

Nurse Bell's double chins bobbed with indignation. "She pretended to be asleep. I watched her for the longest while. Then I went to make myself some instant coffee. By the time I returned a few minutes later she was gone."

"Typical of that kind of patient," Dr. Moore said with a sigh. "I'm at the point now where I can only suggest she be institutionalized. It is much easier to cope with such mental cases in a hospital designed for that purpose."

Carolyn protested. "She was so well again until tonight. And she is terribly afraid of mental hospitals."
The doctor shrugged. "It's up to you. How much you people are prepared to stand? This is the third attack made on members of your family."

"I know," Carolyn worried. "Did Uncle Roger tell you how it happened?"

"He didn't see her at all. She came up behind him."

"He ought to have heard her," she protested.

"Apparently he didn't," the doctor said. "Just before it happened he'd been talking on the phone and making some notes. Apparently he was concentrating so hard he didn't hear any sounds at all. She could have come into the room then and waited until he put down the receiver to plunge the knife into him."

"That sounds logical," Carolyn agreed.

"She was probably completely silent until she stabbed him," Dr. Moore said. "Then the hysteria would break."

"When I arrived she was in a terrible state," Carolyn said.

"I had to give her a double shot to put her to sleep," Nurse Bell told the doctor.

He sighed. "It's a great pity. I agree with you that up until now I felt the young woman was on the road to recovery."

Carolyn said, "This could be only a temporary setback."

"You would be charitable indeed to take that view," Dr. Moore said bleakly. "If you decide to allow her to remain on as before, I'm willing to continue treating her. But I can make no promises."

"I understand that. I suppose it will be whatever my uncle decides."

"Yes," Dr. Moore agreed. "He should be well enough to discuss it in the morning. I'll be here early to see him. Ordinarily something like this should be reported to the police, but I assume you would prefer privacy."

Carolyn nodded. "I'm sure of that. After all, it's not a criminal case. At the worst Celia is a very ill girl. What about the knife?"

"I have it," Dr. Moore said. "I'll keep it until I can find out what action your uncle wishes to take." He
opened his medical bag and brought out the knife rolled in a tissue. He unrolled the tissue so she could examine the ugly little weapon with its bloodstains on blade and handle.

"It's a paring knife," she said. "I suppose she could have found it in the apartment. The kitchen is fully furnished."

"I don't know how she managed to get it behind my back," Nurse Bell said angrily. "I never let her in there alone."

"But she must have gotten in," Dr. Moore reprimanded her. "We have the knife as evidence of that."

While the two had been indulging in this exchange, Carolyn had been staring at the knife. Her eyes opened wide as she saw two initials carved in small letters on the brown wood of the handle. The initials were H.B.

She gasped. "Look!" And she pointed to the initials.

Dr. Moore frowned and studied them. "H.B.," he said. "Somebody wanted to mark this as their property."

"Can't you guess?" Carolyn asked him. "It all fits! H.B. has to stand for Harriet Barnes!"

There was a moment of shocked silence. The portly doctor gave her a stunned look. "Do you think this could actually have been Harriet's?"

"Why not?" she demanded. "The scarf and the locket used in the other murder attempts were. We'll have to assume that Celia has become a captive of Harriet's evil spirit. That woman has taken possession of her!"

Nurse Bell's broad face was a picture of dismay. "You could be right," she said in a hushed voice. "I can't think of anything but a ghost that would be able to play such tricks on me!"

Dr. Moore carefully wrapped the knife again and put it back in his bag. "I'd say this makes this piece of evidence all the more important. When I'm here in the morning I'll see if I can have Celia remember where she found it."

Carolyn's tone was mockingly bitter. "I can tell you in advance she won't know!"

He scowled. "You need something for your own nerves
tonight. Otherwise you wouldn’t be accepting this ghost theory so quickly.”

“What else can I believe?”

Dr. Moore shook his head. “I’ll admit the circumstances are eerie enough to make one think of phantoms. And Collinwood is the right place for them. But I’m far from convinced as yet.”

The doctor left and Nurse Bell went back to take care of Celia. Carolyn went up to Roger’s room where her mother was keeping vigil. She found her uncle sleeping and offered to take turns with her mother watching by his bed for the night.

“There’s no need,” Elizabeth said. “I’m going to stay here for the first two hours and then the housekeeper will spell me. We’ll make out fine. You look as if you might faint. Hurry to bed and get some rest.”

She did go to bed but sleep was slow in coming. It had been a night in which one frightening event had piled on another. What next? That was the question that haunted her. She believed that Roger would insist Celia be taken from the house and placed in a mental hospital. Her parents wouldn’t have any choice if Roger promised in turn not to take any legal action against the girl for her murder attempt. And she couldn’t blame her uncle if he insisted on this.

But a crisis like this changed one’s views a good deal. And because of her fondness for Celia, she felt she should agree to holding a seance. If it did no good, it could not harm Celia at this point. The big question would be whether she’d recover sufficiently to be able to take on the medium’s role.

With this thought Carolyn finally fell asleep. And when she woke up the next morning, the long, hot, dry spell had come to an end. It was as if even the weather had been affected by the startling events of the night before. It was a dark gray, stormy day. She sat up in bed staring at the downpour outside her window and was almost grateful for it. She hoped it might be an omen that things might also change for the better within the sprawling old mansion.
Her first call of the morning was at her Uncle Roger's room. And she was surprised to find him propped up by pillows, helping himself to some kind of steaming broth from a large bowl. Her mother was standing by his bedside with a thin smile on her weary face.

"You see what a remarkable recovery Roger is making," she said.

Carolyn was deeply impressed. She stood at the foot of the bed and told him, "You're simply marvelous!"

He gave her a mock-grumpy glance. "I thought you saved all those fine praises for Cousin Barnabas."

"Don't complain about Barnabas," she said. "He's leaving. I talked to him about it last night. I went down to the study to discuss it with you and found you'd been stabbed."

He put aside the empty bowl and leaned back against the pillows. "I guess I owe you something for finding me so soon," he said. "If you hadn't come when you did I might have died from loss of blood."

"You mustn't concern yourself about that."

"I'm not apt to forget it," he said sharply.

"It's raining hard," Carolyn said, changing the subject.

"I've noticed," he said with a strong hint of his old sarcasm. "I'm not that far gone."

"You're making too quick a recovery." Carolyn laughed. "We won't be able to stand you."

He frowned. "One thing is bothering me. Why did that girl do it?"

Elizabeth said, "Why did she attack me and Carolyn? The answer is clear. She's insane!"

"She came into that room so quietly I didn't see her at all."

"When it comes right down to it," Carolyn commented, "none of us saw her make an attack on us. She has always been present and kind of mad when the attacks take place—but no one has ever seen her lift a weapon."

"Who else could it be?" Elizabeth demanded. "She's always been at the scene of the attack; she has to be the one."

"Isn't that called circumstantial evidence?" Carolyn
said quietly. "And isn’t it often responsible for mistakes in justice?"

Roger frowned at her from the bed. "What is bothering you, young woman?"

She shrugged. "It all seems too pat. That scarf and locket turning up. And last night the knife used to stab you had Harriet Barnes’ initials on it. That makes the theory of ghostly possession cover all three attacks."

Her uncle seemed impressed. "Go on."

"I now think we should hold the seance, if Celia is well enough. Not to hunt down ghosts but in the hope that there is someone else here responsible for the murder attempts. Someone living. And they will expose themselves."

"Who gave you that idea?" Roger asked.

She smiled ruefully. "Barnabas."

Roger winced. "I might have known he’d turn up soon in this."

Elizabeth shook her head. "I don’t agree with that idea at all. I say we should have the Daltons leave here as soon as possible. I was the one most responsible for having them come here. And I’ll admit it was a dreadful error."

Carolyn looked at her very directly. "If we let them go as things are now it will always be a mystery. We’ll never find out the truth."

There was a silence in the room broken only by the falling rain outside. Then Roger Collins gave a deep sigh. "I dislike admitting it, but I believe Carolyn is right."

"I’m sure of it," she said eagerly.

He raised a hand for patience. "Give me a day or two to think it over. In the meantime, see that the Daltons stay here. They may be anxious to leave, after what Celia did last night."

"I can see we’re heading for more trouble," Elizabeth predicted gloomily. "Carolyn, you’re too given to childish enthusiasms."

"Who is given to childish enthusiasms? Surely not Roger." It was the portly Dr. Moore who had come strid-
ing into the room in time to pick up the last words of their conversation.

“We were talking about Carolyn,” Elizabeth explained.

“A fine girl,” Dr. Moore said, eyeing her approvingly, “and a smart one.” He approached Roger’s bedside. “And how are you this rainy day?”

“Better than I have any right to be,” Roger said with satisfaction. “How is that girl?”

“Celia?” Dr. Moore shook his head. “One of the oddest cases I have known. Her mind is completely clear this morning. No sign of hysteria. She’s very weak but beyond that as sane as anyone.”

“Considering the state of humanity these days, not a very high standard,” was Roger’s glum comment.

Dr. Moore laughed heartily. “Believe me, I enjoy you, Roger,” he said. “And there was a time right after Harriet Barnes’ trial that I thought we’d never be friends again. Now, if you’ll take off your pajama top, we’ll have a look at that wound.”

Carolyn quietly slipped out of the room, knowing she wasn’t needed and wouldn’t be missed. She made her way down the shadowed stairs with an urgent destination in mind. As soon as she put on her raincoat, kerchief and boots, she was going to drive to the motel where Martin Wainwright had been staying. She was eager to find out if he was still there.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

It was truly a miserable morning, as if the heavens had made up their mind to compensate for all the weeks of hot, dry weather in one day. Though she’d dressed for the heavy rain, Carolyn was drenched while hurrying to the station wagon. Getting behind the wheel, she turned on the windshield wipers and the engine and prepared for the short drive to the motel on the main highway.
It took her about ten minutes. The motel, a small one, seemed deserted. She got out of the station wagon and dodged to the door marked "Office" in rough black lettering. When she went inside, she found herself in a one-room general store with a desk in one corner. A thin, elderly man was seated glumly at the desk and glanced up at her with dull eyes.

"A really wet day," she said cheerfully.

"Yep," he said, not showing much interest. "Poor day for the road. You want to book a unit?"

"Not just this minute," she said cautiously.

He got up with arthritic slowness and straightened his bent body. "You want some groceries?" he asked, holding on to the small ray of hope that she was still a prospective customer.

She felt sorry for him. "Yes," she said, "I'd like a box of those cookies." She pointed to a popular mixture.

He nodded bleakly and went over to the shelf. Then, his hand poised above the box, he gave her a speculative look over his horn-rimmed glasses. "You only want one box?"

So this is a salesman, she thought. "Just one box." And she got out the change for it.

He sat the box of cookies on the worn counter, took the money, checked it and sighed. Then he put the change in the cash register.

"I'd like some information," she said.

"Village is straight ahead and then the second turn on the right," he said, looking glumly off into space. "The hotel there ain't as clean as my place and they charge more."

"I'm not looking for the village or the hotel," she said. "I want information about someone I think is staying here."

He squinted at her. "We ain't got any guests right this minute."

"Someone who has been staying here a few days and probably left this morning," she explained. "His name is Martin Wainwright."

The name sent an electric shock through the old man.
He almost ran around the counter. “You a friend of that Wainwright fella?”

“Not a friend. But I know him.”

“Dirty scoundrel!” He pounded his palm with a fist for emphasis. “Dirty scoundrel!”

She was embarrassed but had to go on questioning him. “Did he leave this morning?”

“I don’t know when the varmint left,” the old man said angrily. “He sure enough went without paying me a red cent for nearly a week’s stay!”

“I’m sorry.”

He eyed her suspiciously. “You ain’t his wife or girl friend, are you?”

“No.”

“If you was, you ought to pay his bill. Fella has no right to go around chargin’ up bills and not paying them. And you should see the mess he left his unit in!”

“Was he untidy?” She was getting more excited each minute but didn’t want him to realize it.

“Untidy? Let me show you!”

All vigor now, he grabbed a ring of keys and led her out into the rain to the door of one of the five or six modest units which were huddled together in a straight line.

He swung the door open and switched on a light to reveal a scene of utter confusion. It showed evidence of someone having hastily packed and left. The bed was a rumpled mess and a floor lamp had been overturned and broken.

“Drunks!” the old man said with contempt. “You never can trust them.” Now he pointed to the bed. “Look at them stains! Must have cut himself some way. I got me a set of sheets, pillows and a mattress ruined and nothing to show for it.”

The sight of the bloodstained bed clothes almost made her ill. She had a quick memory of Barnabas plunging the sword into the wolflike creature’s leaping body. Barnabas had said that by the morning Martin Wainwright would be gone. So it had been Quentin Collins after all!
She said, "I'm sorry. It's too bad."

The old man was peering down at the rug. "See them bloodstains there! He must have got drunk and beat up or cut up somewhere and come staggering in here. You can see the bloodstains where he came in the door, so it didn't happen here. Then when he sees what a mess he made he just runs off and pays me nothing."

"If I find out where he's gone I'll let you know," she promised, feeling nauseated as she turned her back on the messy confusion and made for the door.

"Would you do that, lady?" he asked eagerly.

"I promise."

"Mac Gilbert, General Delivery, Collinsport, will get me," he said, trailing after her. "Everyone knows me."

"I'll remember," she said, running for the station wagon. It was lucky he hadn't recognized her as a Collins. She'd never been in the place before nor seen him in the village. She was well on her way back to Collinwood before she realized she'd never picked up the box of cookies.

It was still raining hard when she parked the station wagon and ducked in the rear entrance of Collinwood. Her mother was in the kitchen talking to the cook and gave her a surprised look.

"Where have you been in this awful storm?" Elizabeth asked.

She was removing her raincoat and kerchief which had been soaked through. "I had an errand to do in the village."

Her mother looked suspicious. "It must have been important to make you drive in this rain."

"It really isn't so bad after you get in the car," she said. And she moved on out of the kitchen toward the front of the house, not wanting to be questioned further.

When she reached the front hallway she found Edward Dalton standing there staring out at the storm. He turned to her and she at once saw that he was in a good mood.

"So you're back, Carolyn," he said with unexpected warmth and familiarity. "I have good news. Roger has
finally given me permission to hold a seance here. I'm presently considering my plans."

She smiled thinly. "Well, it's been what you wanted."

"From the start," Edward Dalton said. "This house is rich in ghosts and no one is better equipped to thoroughly investigate the possibilities than myself. It can also mean freeing my daughter from these strange spells she has been plagued with."

"That would be the best dividend."

"I plan to hold the seance in the living room," he went on with enthusiasm. "There is a large round table that can be converted to our use and I'll select a representative group to join the circle. I may say that I count on you to be one of them."

"I'll warn you I'm a skeptic."

"We'll discuss that after the seance," the black-clad man said with a smile. "You may be more impressed than you anticipate."

"I'll approach it with an open mind," Carolyn promised.

"I can ask no more. Happily, Dr. Moore has agreed to join in the experiment—mainly because of his interest in my daughter's condition. And so I have asked Nurse Bell and your mother to sit at the table also."

"When do you plan to hold the seance?"

"As soon as Roger's health allows," he said. "And that could be soon. He is making a remarkably fast recovery."

She smiled. "That is typical of him."

Dalton looked embarrassed. "We owe you people here at Collinwood a great debt. Not only have we been treated lavishly as guests, but none of you have made any attempt to bring my daughter's unhappy mental state and criminal attacks against you to the attention of the authorities. Mrs. Dalton and I will always be grateful."

"I think what we have done is best for all."

Dalton eyed her solemnly. "Depend on it, I will use all my skill at the seance table to rid you of the evil spirit of Harriet Barnes."
“Thank you,” she said. “But what if the ghost of Harriet Barnes is not the culprit?”
“I don’t think that is possible,” he said, sincerely.
“How is Celia now?”
“Very well,” he said. “Why don’t you go up and see her? She has been asking for you.”
“I will,” she said.
She left him and went upstairs. The gray rainy day seemed appropriate to the occasion. She knew she would have to reveal the truth about Martin Wainwright to Celia. But how much truth? At least tell her that he was an impostor and had left suddenly in the night. The rest might be better forgotten.
Moving down the half to the door of the apartment she knocked on it. A moment later Alice Dalton opened the door, looking weary and drawn. She was showing the ravages of her ordeal, but she managed a smile. “How nice to see you!”
“May I have a few minutes with Celia?”
“I can see no reason why not,” the older woman said, standing aside so Carolyn could enter. “She’s ever so much better this morning. Completely rational. Nurse Bell is in the bedroom with her.”
Carolyn went on to the open bedroom door. Celia, looking haggard, was seated in an easy chair from which she could look out the window and watch the rain. Nurse Bell sat near the door knitting. She looked up with a frown on seeing Carolyn.
“I’d like to speak to Celia privately for a few minutes,” she said. “A personal matter.”
The nurse put her knitting aside with some reluctance. Then she rose, saying, “You mustn’t stay too long.”
Celia smiled at her wanly and told the nurse, “It’s all right. I’ve been wanting to talk with Carolyn.”
“You can call me when you’re leaving,” Nurse Bell said sullenly as she moved out of the room and closed the door after her.
Carolyn at once went over to Celia, who had made no attempt to get up from the easy chair. She kissed the
dark girl on the cheek and sat down beside her. “I hoped you’d be better today.”

Celia looked pathetic. “What is to become of me, Carolyn?”

She hesitated. “You’re going to get well. I’m sure of it.”

“Each time I have a spell I feel weaker afterward,” the pale dark girl said. “It seems all down hill.”

“Just concentrate on getting better.”

Celia’s troubled dark eyes searched her face. “You’ve been keeping a lot from me, haven’t you?”

Carolyn was caught by surprise. “What do you mean?”

“That in these so-called spells of mine I’ve attacked your mother, you, and just last night your uncle.”

She sighed. “I don’t think Dr. Moore wanted you told.”

“Stabbing your uncle last night has brought everything into the open,” she said bitterly. “Dr. Moore is changing his tactics. I know what happened and I feel terribly guilty.” She gave her a forlorn look. “I can no longer pretend I’m sane.”

“You’re completely sane or you wouldn’t be able to consider this all objectively as you are doing.”

“I’m sane at this minute,” Celia said. “But what about later? Who can say the moment when I’ll change?”

“You mustn’t worry about it.”

Celia was staring at her hopelessly. “Now Father is going to hold his seance. Even Dr. Moore and Nurse Bell are to be part of it.” She paused and looked out the window bleakly. “Can you think of a more striking proof of how desperate they are? This is the last hope. They’re willing to resort to spiritualism.”

Neither of them spoke for a moment as they sat in the somber gloom of the bedroom, the weird tattoo of the driving rain a background to their thoughts. Studying the wan, dark girl, Carolyn felt a deep pity for her.

Then she said, “Perhaps the seance is the answer. There are so many things we do not fully understand. Influences just on the other side of the unknown.”

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Celia’s face was a study in despair. “I can’t believe it is the evil spirit of Harriet Barnes that makes me do these awful things. I’m terrified it’s my own mind collapsing. I can’t forget the people I saw in that mental hospital this spring. And it terrifies me that I may soon be one of them.”

“Harriet Barnes did put a curse on us all,” Carolyn told her friend. “And then there were those items belonging to her that have turned up here.”

Celia shook her head. “I can’t understand that. Nor the way I slip into these spells. I’ll be all right. Nurse Bell will give me my medications and I’ll feel perfectly normal. Then later my mind blurs and I don’t even know what is going on. And I wake up with terrible headaches and feeling ill.”

“We’ll have to be patient,” she said.

The dark girl glanced at her worriedly. “Have you spoken to Martin? I haven’t seen him in several days. I’d like him to know the reason is that I’ve been ill.”

Carolyn knew the moment had come for her to tell the sick girl at least part of the truth. She said, “I’m sorry. I have something to tell you about Martin Wainwright you’re not going to like.”

Celia looked stricken but in a small voice, she said, “Go on.”

She took a few seconds to prepare her thoughts. “Martin isn’t here any longer.”

“Did he leave any message for me?”

“Not that I know of.”

“But he couldn’t treat me like that!”

“He’s gone.”

“But why?” Celia seemed near tears.

She took a deep breath. “I think I told you once that Barnabas was suspicious of him.”

“I remember.”

“Last night he told me he was sure he recognized him,” she went on. “And he said his name wasn’t Martin Wainwright but Quentin Collins.”

“Quentin Collins!” Celia echoed. “But why should he pretend to be someone else?”

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He had good reason," Carolyn assured her. "He seems to be in bad repute with the family. They've disowned him."

"Why?"

"It's complicated," she said. "I can only tell you that he has a violent side to his nature. And he proved his instability by leaving here last night without even paying his motel bill."

Celia frowned. "That's hard to believe."

"I'm sorry," she said. "There may be some explanation. If so, he's bound to write you later."

"He will!"

"Don't count on it," Carolyn warned her. "I rely on Barnabas a good deal. And he doesn't think you'll ever see Martin again."

There were tears blurring Celia's eyes. "What a perfectly awful thing to happen on top of everything else!"

She reached out a hand to touch her friend's arm in comfort. "Consider it a good thing. Had you become further involved with him, it would have only led to more heartbreak. Barnabas knows him a lot better than we do."

Celia was staring out the window again at the downpour outside. "I don't care what happens now," she said in a choked voice. "I'm going ahead with the seance. Father can have his way."

Carolyn was on her feet. "At least it will settle it," she said quietly. A few minutes later she left her friend and went back downstairs.

She had felt terrible about breaking the news to Celia about Martin Wainwright. But she had spared her the most eerie and frightening details about the impostor, Quentin Collins. It seemed to her better that the ailing girl never found them out.

The dismal rain continued all day long. Toward evening it slackened to a drizzle. Darkness came early. The house was very quiet with Roger still confined to bed. And after dinner Carolyn found herself in the living
room with Edward Dalton as her sole companion. To offset the dampness, a log fire had been started in the fireplace at the far end of the living room. Dalton had insisted on her joining him in an after-dinner brandy. So now she sat in an easy chair before the blazing log fire while he stood before her with a glowing expression on his gaunt face. He was discoursing on spiritualism and witchcraft; she was finding him rather fascinating.

With a broad gesture of a bony hand, he told her, "Knowledge of spiritualism and belief in black magic is as old as man himself."

"It's only lately I've given much thought to it."

"And from a Biblical standpoint, witchcraft and black magic date back to Eden," he said. "Rocail, the younger brother of Seth, who was the son of Adam, dabbled in sorcery. The legend is that he built a palace and peopled it with statues that performed functions of human beings."

"My cousin Barnabas knows about such things."

Dalton's face above her in the shadows took on a wary expression. "Indeed," he said cautiously.

"Didn't you ask him to help you with your psychic research here?"

Dalton took a sip from the huge brandy snifter he held in his right hand. Then carefully, he said, "I may have. I've been so bothered since my arrival here I'm not sharp on every detail."

"Barnabas should sit in at your seance."

He frowned. "I doubt that he would consider it."

"Why not?" She was studying the reflections of the log fire flames on her brandy glass.

"He might have personal reasons for not doing so," he said. And his eyes fixed on hers. "How well do you know this Barnabas?"

She found herself somewhat resentful of his tone. "I like him better than any other of my relatives."

Edward Dalton smiled coldly. "He's a fortunate man to have your firm respect."

Their conversation was interrupted by the doorbell ringing and she went to answer it. And to her pleased
surprise it was Barnabas standing there in his caped coat with tiny rivulets of rain streaking down his sallow cheeks.

He gave her one of his melancholy smiles. "I doubted if you'd seek me out on such a night, so I decided to come to you."

"I'm glad," she said. "It's quiet here. I'm having a brandy with Mr. Dalton."

Barnabas nodded as he came in. "Hare informed me about Roger's stabbing."

"Then there's no need for me to tell you more about that."

"No."

"Come into the living room and join us," she said, leading the way.

The two men greeted each other with a careful formality that was not lost on her. She received the impression that Edward Dalton was in awe of Barnabas for some reason—no doubt because Barnabas possessed a great deal more knowledge of the supernatural than he, a specialist in the subject, could claim. The tall man offered Barnabas a brandy which he politely refused. They both took a stand before the fireplace while she stood facing them.

She said, "Mr. Dalton is going to have his seance after all. Roger has decided he should."

Barnabas raised his heavy arched brows. "Somewhat of a reverse on my cousin's part."

"It's because of last night." And she gave Dalton a passing smile. "I was asking Mr. Dalton if he mightn't get you to sit at the table with the rest of us for the seance. I'm sure you'd be a wonderful help."

Barnabas smiled bitterly. "I'm afraid not. I never dabble in such commercial examples of spiritualism."

Edward Dalton frowned. "I promise you there is nothing commercial about my experiments. I thirst for knowledge of the unknown. And this is one means of completing that knowledge."

Barnabas gave him a mocking glance. "I don't say
this isn't right for you, Mr. Dalton. I'm merely pointing out it is not right for me."

The tall man gulped down the tiny remainder of brandy in his glass. Then he bowed, stiffly to her and Barnabas. "I must say goodnight. I have a busy day tomorrow and I'm feeling rather weary." And he marched out of the living room and went upstairs.

When they were alone, she smiled at Barnabas. "You seem to make him uneasy."

"Perhaps because I regard him as an amateur in his chosen field."

"Really?"

Barnabas changed the subject. "How is Celia?"

She sighed. "I'm afraid she knows what she's been doing in her spells now. She's very unhappy. I'm sure she thinks she is drifting into complete insanity."

"Why didn't you warn her there may be a criminal element involved in what has happened? That it need have nothing to do with her."

Carolyn shrugged. "I'm not that well informed about it."

Barnabas looked troubled. "She's a fine girl. I'd like to help her. That's why I've remained here."

"I hope you are able to do something for her."

"What about Martin Wainwright?"

"I went to the motel where he was staying. He left in the night."

"I expected that," Barnabas said, glancing down at the silver-headed cane in his right hand which contained the sword he'd used to defend her.

"He didn't even pay what he owed the motel."

"That doesn't surprise me either."

Her eyes met his. "And there was blood all over the place. As if he'd wounded himself."

Barnabas nodded. "I also expected that," he said. "So you see, my story wasn't so fantastic."

"No," she agreed quietly.

"What about Celia? Have you broken the news to her that he is gone?"

"Yes."
"How did she take it?"

"She was badly hurt. But now that the worst shock is over I have the feeling she'll adjust to it. All I told her was that he was an impostor named Quentin Collins, a renegade member of the family."

"I'd call that enough," he said quietly.

She stood with him before the fireplace in the shadowed living room. Searching his face, she asked solemnly, "You don't approve of this seance being held, do you?"

He smiled. "What makes you so sure of that?"

"Because you refuse to be a part of it. And from what you said to Edward Dalton just now."

He stared down at the blazing logs. The reflection of their flames gave his normally sallow face a ruddy tint. He said, "Let's put it this way—Edward Dalton is not my favorite person. And he could be creating a dangerous atmosphere with this proposed seance."

"In what way?"

"I don't like this dabbling in spiritualism," Barnabas said seriously. "It is not a subject to play games about."

"Of course not."

"And I believe such a seance could invite more violence. There could be something very serious come out of it."

"I don't see how."

"Is Celia adjusted to the idea?"

"She's so full of despair she doesn't care what happens."

"Rather a poor mood for the medium through which your messages must come. Have you ever taken part in a seance before?"

"No."

"Then you really don't know what it means."

"That's true."

"I wish I could bring myself to assist Dalton," he said. "But my dislike of him makes it impossible."

She frowned. "You don't think he'd deliberately hurt his own daughter?"

"We both know he's already done that by forcing
her to be a medium on other occasions,” Barnabas reminded her.

“But this is different,” she said. “I think that murderess is conducting a vindictive campaign against us through the person of Celia. I finally accept the avenging spirit of Harriet Barnes as an actual force.”

Barnabas gave her a thoughtful look. “Even if you do feel that way, isn’t that likely to make the seance extremely dangerous for all of you? If Dalton invokes Harriet’s evil spirit into the darkness of the seance, who can tell what new violence will occur?”

CHAPTER TWELVE

The next day Roger Collins made his first appearance downstairs and insisted that the seance be held that evening. It was sooner than any of them had expected but Roger would not take no for an answer, and the seance was scheduled for eight that evening. He sat in dressing gown and pajamas while Edward Dalton supervised two of the maids in arranging the room. Elizabeth hovered by, occasionally making suggestions.

The big problem was centering the round table in the room and making sure the room would be able to be darkened completely. Chairs for those taking part in the seance would be grouped around the table.

The weather was not much improved. The rain had finally ended but now fog had set in and the Collinsport foghorn could be heard at regular intervals gloomily droning its message of warning. The thick mist gave the grounds of Collinwood an eerie appearance even in the daylight hours and she felt that by night it would be truly ghostly. It seemed an ideal time to hold the seance.

In the early afternoon she joined Roger and Mr. Dalton in the living room. Dalton stalked about the room making arrangements, obviously enjoying himself. She wondered if he really understood the forces he might
be about to unleash. As Barnabas had pointed out, if the evil influence from the other side of the grave had been strong enough to allow Harriet to dominate Celia thus far it was hard to say what might happen at the seance table.

Roger gave her a resigned look. “I find it hard to believe I’m encouraging this.”

“At least it will make an interesting experiment.”

“I wonder.”

By five o’clock Edward Dalton had the room arranged and curtained so that it could be completely blacked out. No light could penetrate from the grounds outside or from other areas of the house. All the doors would be closed; nothing should intrude on the seance.

Carolyn went up to visit Celia in the early evening and found the dark girl had already donned a black gown which made her look even paler than she actually was. “Everything is ready for tonight,” Carolyn told her. “So I hear,” Celia said listlessly. “I think nothing will come of it.”

“Your father seems very optimistic.”

Celia showed mild disgust. “Father likes to dabble in these things. And he takes advice from everyone. The doctor mentioned that in one spirit circle in which he took part, all the participants wore black gloves. Now father intends to use them tonight.”

She recalled Barnabas’ criticism of the tall man as an amateur, and she wondered if he wasn’t also impressionable and perhaps a little stupid. But she could say none of these things to Celia.

“It’s so spooky outside tonight I’m sort of in the mood for this,” she said. “And your father is probably wise to go ahead with it while Roger is still enthusiastic. He could change his mind at any time.”

“I can’t see the logic of including Dr. Moore and Nurse Bell in the circle in any case,” she said bitterly. “It seems to me my father is merely trying to get the good will of everyone.”

“He would need the doctor’s permission to use you as
a medium," she pointed out. "And it will do no harm to have Nurse Bell close at hand."

Celia's eyes flashed angrily. "Are you and the others expecting me to have another crazy spell?"

"Of course not," Carolyn reproved her. "You shouldn't say such things."

"I'll bet it's what you're all thinking."

"We're all hoping you'll be better after the seance," Carolyn said. "That some of the tension will leave you."

"I'm afraid that's too much to hope for," Celia said, losing her temporary bravado and becoming forlorn again. "I can't bear to face your uncle after what I did to him. He must hate me!"

"On the contrary, he wants to help you. Otherwise he'd never have suggested the seance go on."

Celia turned away from her. "I feel apart from everyone. A kind of freak. And all the time I'm wondering how long before I end up in that mental hospital again strait-jacketed and raving."

Carolyn was horrified. "You mustn't have such thoughts."

"I'm gradually sinking into insanity," Celia said. "Otherwise I wouldn't have done those awful things. And all your talk and my father's fanciful seances aren't going to help."

"You must get yourself out of this mood," Carolyn rebuked her. "Self-pity isn't going to make you better."

Celia wearily rubbed a hand across her eyes. "I'm sorry to say such things to you. But I have to talk to someone. Most of the time mother is too frightened to listen to me. Father doesn't hear a thing I say. And Nurse Bell is a clod. You can't communicate with her."

"It's all right," Carolyn said. "And you mustn't have any more of those morbid fancies. I'll see you downstairs." And she left her.

Dr. Moore arrived exactly on time for the seance which was an accomplishment—his calls usually kept him late. As Carolyn helped him off with his coat, he asked, "Do you think we'll gain anything by our efforts tonight?"
"I hope so," she said. "Mr. Dalton has gone to a lot of effort. You won't recognize the living room."

The big man sighed and frowned. "I've attended one or two of these things. And I must admit they've always sent a chill along my spine. But tonight is different. Dalton will be trying to invoke the spirit of a woman I knew well."

"Harriet Barnes."

"Yes, poor Harriet. Roger and most of the rest of you see her as an evil woman. So wicked that her spirit is returning from the dead and taking possession of an attractive girl to destroy you. But I see her with other eyes."

She nodded. "I know you and Uncle Roger disagreed at her trial."

"I believe Harriet was innocent. I further think she was a fine woman," the doctor said. "I tried to get her off at her trial with a suggestion she was insane."

"I remember."

"Of course it didn't help," the portly physician said bitterly as he took a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe the steam off his glasses. "She wasn't insane and the jury didn't want to accept that she was. The circumstantial evidence was too strong against her. And so she was convicted. But the case could have been appealed and she might have gotten off if she hadn't killed herself."

"That was a tragedy."

"I think so." He put on his glasses. "Do I go directly to the living room?"

"Yes," she said. "Everyone is supposed to gather around the table there."

He followed her into the shadowed room where most of the others were waiting. Only Celia and Alice Dalton had not yet appeared. Edward Dalton was welcoming everyone with a satisfied smile on his narrow face. There was a hushed atmosphere of tension in the room.

Roger, seated next to Nurse Bell, looked glum. Carolyn suspected that faced with the actual seance he was quickly returning to his original contempt for it. Then
an electric sensation went through the small group as Celia came into the room on her mother's arm. She was very pale and kept her eyes cast down to avoid looking directly at anyone.

Edward Dalton at once went to her. "Come, my dear." He led her to a place at the table directly opposite where he was going to sit. This put Carolyn on her friend's right. And when Celia sat down she gave her a reassuring smile.

With them all gathered, Edward Dalton passed out black cotton gloves for each of them. Then he turned out the lights except for one small bulb illuminating a crystal ball he had placed on the center of the black-clothed table. He stood up in his place to address them, seeming taller, thinner and more weird than ever.

"Within the next few minutes we are going to attempt to reach the other side," he intoned. Alice Dalton, seated next to Dr. Moore, was watching him with troubled eyes. Her husband went on, "Celia will be our medium. And through her we hope to make contact. In a moment I will turn out this remaining light. And then in the darkness I will ask you all to grasp the hand of the person next to you so we may have a complete ring. Do you understand?"

"I'd say so," Roger said grumpily. "Let's get on with it."

The tall man gazed down at him reprovingly. "You must keep an open mind, Mr. Collins. Attempt to put yourself in a receptive mood." He paused. "Are you ready, Celia?"

"Yes." Her reply was barely whispered.

"Very well," her father said. "I will put out the lights and we will grasp hands. And then you will invoke the spirit of the deceased, Harriet Barnes."

When the last light was turned out Carolyn began to feel frightened. She had never known an area so black; Edward Dalton had done his work well. She simply could not see anything. It gave her the strange experience of being in a closet lined with black velvet.
There was no point in straining; she couldn’t make out any person or object near her.

Carolyn obeyed Edward Dalton’s instructions and groped for Celia’s gloved hand on one side and then Nurse Bell’s on the other. The gloves added to the weirdness of it all. You had contact and yet it seemed an impersonal one. Feeling suspended in some macabre pit of blackness, she desperately held on to those hands as her one contact with reality.

Edward Dalton intoned some words that were unintelligible to her. And then a sweet smell of incense filled her nostrils. She had no idea of how Dalton had managed this but suspected it might have been arranged with one of the servants to deposit the incense bowl in the room quickly at some given signal. Yet she’d heard no sound of anyone entering.

“We all must concentrate,” the thin man directed. “We cannot have doubting minds among us.”

Carolyn could feel Celia trembling. Her hand was shaking noticeably. But Nurse Bell’s hand was like some inanimate object. She braced herself to wait for what would happen next.

“Are you ready, Celia?” Edward Dalton inquired tremulously of his daughter.

“Yes.” Celia’s voice was clear but tense.

“Do you feel the nearness of any spirit presence?” he intoned like a high priest leading a recitation.

Celia twisted in her chair so that Carolyn had difficulty holding on to her hand. As the girl writhed she began to groan and sob. It was terrifying to sit in the darkness and hear what was happening to her. Carolyn started to have real fears that the session might end with Celia violently insane once more. And she began to feel grateful that the doctor and nurse were also at the table. Nurse Bell’s hand was unmoving and stiff. The stolid woman was not touched by what was happening.

Edward Dalton asked again, “Do you feel a spirit presence?”

Celia screamed and groaned as she twisted in her chair. “Yes, yes, I think so!”

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“Concentrate! Everyone concentrate,” he went on. “Let us have no distracting thoughts.”

The smell of the incense was stronger and Carolyn began to feel just a little nauseated. The darkness remained impenetrable. She began to have a panic feeling that she couldn’t stand the atmosphere, that she must break free of the circle and flee from the room. But she knew she wouldn’t dare do this at such a vital moment of the experiment.

“Is it an evil spirit near you?” Edward Dalton said in his hollow, ghostly voice.

Celia was crying now. “I don’t know,” she wailed. “I can’t bear it! Stop! Please stop!”

“We must continue,” her father insisted. “We cannot stop now.”

Celia was straining at Carolyn’s hand now as she threw herself around in her chair. She was panting, groaning, mumbling odd-sounding words.

“I hear the spirit voice,” Edward Dalton said tensely. “What is it saying?”

“Hatred and pain!” Celia sobbed. “The black pit!”

Carolyn listened with revulsion. She began to hate herself for going on with the macabre business. She felt that Celia was not giving out any message from the spirit world, but merely voicing her reaction to the ordeal she was being put through, her fears of madness and the mental hospital.

“The black pit!” Edward Dalton said jubilantly. “Then you have known the terror of Hell!”

“Yes! Yes!” Celia screamed.

Carolyn could stand it no longer. She cried out in the darkness, “Don’t go on! Can’t you tell that you are tormenting her? She’s telling us of her own fears!”

“Silence!” Edward Dalton commanded angrily. “You will ruin everything.”

“Carolyn may be right. We should halt this,” Roger grumbled from a distance around the table.

“No!” Edward Dalton was almost wailing his protest. “We must not stop this at the critical moment.”

“Listen to her!” Carolyn begged them. And it was
true the girl whose trembling hand was in one of hers
was now hysterically sobbing, her speech a meaningless
jumble of words.

Dr. Moore spoke up in the utter blackness of the room.
"I will take responsibility for continuing," he said. "You
are wrong, Miss Collins, in thinking your friend tor-
mented. She is experiencing a condition common to
mediums. She is not aware of you or of any of us. I
have seen it before. It is all right to go on, Mr. Dalton."

Carolyn was stunned by the doctor's words. And then
she felt ashamed. As Barnabas had warned her, she had
no experience of seances and so had not been prepared
for this. The others must have reacted similarly for there
were no other murmurs of dissent from around the table.

"I will try again," Edward Dalton said in a pained
voice. "Celia!"

"Yes," she responded pitifully.
"Let the spirit presence flow over you again," he in-
toned, assuming his priestly tone.
"Father!" Celia cried out.
"I am here," he said reassuringly. "Do you feel the
evil of Harriet Barnes? Is she close to you, that wicked
woman?"

"I don't know!" the girl wailed.
"Don't let the interruption halt you in this good work,"
Edward Dalton begged her, forgetting his special in-
tonation. "Harriet is there and you shall speak for her!"
"Harriet! Harriet!" the girl wailed piteously in the
blackness.

"Let your evil be cleansed from you," Edward Dalton
commanded.

And now there were whimpers from somewhere else
at the table. Then Alice Dalton sobbed, "Edward! No!
I can't stand this!"

"The evil is at hand! Speak, Harriet Barnes! Let us
know you are in this room!"

"In this room!" Celia cried out after him and began
to laugh wildly.

Carolyn had again come to the breaking point. She
knew that she couldn't bear this madness any longer.
It was pointless. It was incredible that Dr. Moore should lend himself to such a shocking affair. She braced herself to jump up and shout out her angry denunciation of Edward Dalton when something she was in no way prepared for happened.

Hands from behind her seized her throat in that crushing grip she remembered only too well. In her frenzied attempt to loosen the choking hands she dropped the hands of Celia and Nurse Bell and desperately tried to free herself from the steel fingers that were gradually closing off her breath.

She couldn't move or cry for help. She could only battle in the jet blackness of the room—battle what she began to feel must surely be the evil phantom who had cursed all the Collins family. She pictured the sneering face of the prim Harriet Barnes and felt that the moment of her own death had come. The avenging spirit of Harriet had entered the room and was now destroying her!

"Carolyn!" It was the familiar voice of Barnabas. And in the next instant the lights were switched full on.

She was unable to reply, even though the cruel fingers had relinquished their grip on her throat. She was slumped back in her chair staring dazedly at Barnabas who was standing directly behind Edward Dalton.

"We have found your evil spirit." Barnabas pointed to the crouched figure of Nurse Marie Bell, who had been caught there behind Carolyn's chair when the lights came on suddenly.

The woman's broad face contorted with anger and she cried, "It's not me you want! It's him!" And she indicated Dr. Moore.

The portly man slowly got to his feet with an angry expression on his florid face. "You're surely not going to listen to that madwoman and would-be murderess!"

"You're the one who hired me to do it," Nurse Bell went on screaming at him. "You gave me the drugs and told me I had no choice!"

Dr. Moore looked distressed. "Surely you're not going to listen to her?"
Roger was scowling. "What she says doesn't sound so unlikely. I suggest you both relax until I call the Ellsworth police and let them decide."

"I'm not staying here another moment!" the doctor said angrily, starting for the doorway to the hall.

Barnabas blocked his way. "I don't think you have any choice about remaining," he said with quiet authority.

Alice Dalton had gone over to attend to her daughter who was still sobbing hysterically. Nurse Marie Bell was glaring at the doctor, looking more like a bulldog in nurse's uniform than ever. Roger was off to phone the police while Edward Dalton seemed to be standing there in a daze.

Barnabas asked Carolyn, "Are you all right?"

She was quickly recovering from the attack and shock. "I'm fine," she said weakly.

Barnabas faced the two miscreants with a grim look. "You almost managed it. I'm glad I decided to attend the seance after all."

Roger came back into the room briskly. "The police are coming." Then he asked Barnabas, "Since we were all seated at the table holding each other's hands, how was it possible for Nurse Bell to get up and attempt to throttle my niece?"

The handsome man in the caped coat said, "If you'll keep an eye on these two, I'll demonstrate."

Roger's lip curled in a grim smile. "I can do that very neatly, despite my knife wound." And he drew a menacing-looking gun from his dressing gown pocket. "I picked this up in my study when I made that phone call. Just in case they might get ideas."

"They already had them," Barnabas said. "It was expected that Dr. Moore would bring his medical bag to the table with him. After all, one of you might become suddenly ill and need his immediate attention. So he took his place here, his bag on the floor beside him."

Barnabas had circled the table to the spot where the doctor had been seated and now lifted up the bag. "You
will see that it is open. And if you think that odd, you have missed the entire point.”

“I don’t follow you,” Carolyn said. “I was still holding Nurse Bell’s hand when I felt those other hands at my throat.”

Barnabas smiled and shook his head. “No. You are wrong. You weren’t holding Nurse Bell’s hand. You were holding this.” And he moved around to where Nurse Bell had been seated and groped under the table to produce a stick with a dummy gloved hand mounted on it. Holding it out for her to examine the black glove, he said, “There were two of these. The moment the lights went out Dr. Moore opened his medical bag and passed them to Nurse Bell. She then offered you one of them and your uncle the other while she retained a hold on the end of the sticks. When the time came for her to get up and attack you, you were already used to the dummy hands and not liable to notice that she had moved.”

“It’s true,” Carolyn said. “Her hand didn’t seem normal.”

“It’s a trick used by many in the spiritualism racket to manage special effects. After she choked you to death she planned to sit down again, grasp the dummy hands by the sticks. When the lights came on and you were found dead in your chair she would have no trouble tossing them under the table before anyone noticed. Dr. Moore had his bag open ready to put them back in hiding. Then he’d go over and attempt to revive you.”

Roger gasped. “It would have been a perfect murder and we’d have blamed it on the spirit of Harriet Barnes.”

Barnabas nodded. “The seances could have been repeated until all three of you had been murdered. I don’t know what would have come into the insane minds of these two next. But Edward Dalton with his weakness for seances had certainly played into their hands.”

The coming of the police and the charging of Dr. Moore and Nurse Bell came almost as an anti-climax. It was a grim story. Nurse Bell was a drug addict completely enslaved to the wily doctor. And under his instructions she had been regularly giving Celia injec-
tions of LSD and other hallucinating drugs. When Celia was helpless in this drugged condition Nurse Bell planted her near the scene of the attacks on Elizabeth, Carolyn and Roger. But it was Nurse Bell who carried out the attacks, just as she'd tried to choke Carolyn at the seance.

The next evening Roger, Carolyn and Elizabeth were gathered in the living room with the three Daltons. Edward Dalton looked like a penitent scarecrow, while Alice Dalton seemed to have regained some authority in the family and appeared to know it. Celia, free of her fears of a mental breakdown, looked almost her normal self except for her paleness.

Dalton frowned. "Of course, I don't know as much as I thought about the local scene. But what was Dr. Moore's motive in trying to kill you all?"

Roger shrugged. "No mystery about that. Moore collaborated with Harriet Barnes in doing away with her husbands. He was in on the scheme to collect the insurance fraudulently. It was he who supplied the poisons to her and taught her how to use them. She didn't cabbage them from the stock of the pharmacy as we all believed. Moore was infatuated with Harriet and became a little mad when she was caught and convicted."

"What would have happened if she hadn't killed herself?" Alice Dalton asked.

"It's hard to say," Roger admitted. "The case would have been appealed and she might have gotten off, though I doubt it. If she had, Moore would not have tried to become a mass murderer. He felt he had to finish me off because he knew I was still investigating the case. I resented the shadow Harriet cast on me by blaming me for her suicide, and in an effort to relieve my conscience I was still having the authorities search for clues. He knew this. And so he decided to capitalize on the curse and make it seem the ghost of Harriet was the murderer. The arrival of you people gave him an opportunity to place Nurse Bell here at Collinwood and put his plan into action."

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Celia smiled wistfully. “I’m sorry we caused you so much trouble.”

“Better to bring it all out in the open,” Roger said in a friendly manner. “Otherwise he might have found another and more successful method to kill us off.”

Alice Dalton smiled. “Thank you, Roger. It’s nice of you to say that.”

“We’ll be leaving in the morning,” Edward Dalton said. “Would it be of any value to you for me to stage another short seance and see if we can really get in touch with the spirit of Harriet Barnes? She might have some valuable evidence to offer.”

Elizabeth looked dismayed. “We wouldn’t think of bothering you!”

Roger eyed him grimly. “We’ll have no more seances here. We have all the evidence we need, thank you.”

The tall man looked unhappy. “I just thought I’d offer.”

Carolyn and Celia escaped from the company of their elders right after that. In the hallway they looked at each other and began to laugh quietly. Carolyn was delighted to see her friend was more like herself again.

Celia said, “Father is impossible. He just can’t stop thinking about ghosts.”

“I know,” she said. “I’d have thought his stay here would have cured him.”

“It hasn’t,” Celia said. “But he’s lost a lot of face. I think mother and I will be able to manage him in the future.”

“I’m sure you will.” Carolyn glanced out the window by the front door. “Goodness! Now we must be having the rainy season! Fog and drizzle again tonight.”

“I sort of like it,” Celia said glancing out. And then she turned to her. “There is one other thing. I want to say goodbye to Barnabas and thank him. He left so suddenly last night.”

Carolyn said, “If you feel well enough we can put on our raincoats and walk over to the old house.”

“Of course I’m well enough.”

A few minutes later they started out in the foggy
night. The old house seemed as dark and deserted as usual. Carolyn knocked on the door and to her surprise she discovered it wasn't closed. It swung open easily.

A sudden uneasiness came over her, and she told Celia, "We'll go on in."

They went down the dark corridor but found the living room lighted by a single candelabrum on the round table by the door. Under it there was a single sheet of paper with some writing on it. Carolyn's throat tightened as she retrieved the note and fought back her tears until she had finished reading it. The note was short:

Dear Carolyn:

Once again the time has come for me to leave. Because I know you so well I expect you'll be here before the night is over. I trust you find this without delay. Always remember that I'm as fond of you as I am of Collinwood itself. Take good care until our paths cross again one day. And remember me to Celia.

Your loving cousin, Barnabas.

With tears blurring her eyes, she silently handed the note to her friend to read.
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