

Murder NOTE



The Trap Was All Set for Blaney—and He Walked Right Into It, But—

A Green Ghost Novelette

By

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CHAPTER I

PALLOR OF DEATH

STYGIAN blackness shrouded the end of the blind alley in the rear of the big apartment house; yet, only a short distance away, was the brilliantly-lighted street with its midnight traffic, its alert police officers, its somewhat questionable citizenry.

Crouching against a brick wall, Danny Blaney watched the alley's mouth. In this section of the city, midnight was not an hour of dull wits after a busy day. This was a district of denizens of the night, nocturnal birds of prey who arose in the early hours of afternoon and sought beds at dawn. He who clashed with them at this hour matched quick brains, tense nerves, swift violence—else went down to ignoble defeat.

A slight creaking sound reached Danny Blaney's ears. He crouched lower against the wall.

Two men passed him like shadows, whispering softly as they passed.

"Everything's set."

"And everything's settled."

They went toward the alley's mouth. There was no other manner of egress. Danny Blaney knew they had come through a small door which was supposed to be a service entrance. Soon, they were against the light, and Danny Blaney could see them.

But he was unable to make sure identification. They kept close to the building, awaited an opportunity, and darted out to the street. Danny Blaney could see nothing except that they were dressed in inconspicuous dark clothing. That was natural.

That made all of the gang—except Rod Rordan himself. Rod Rordan had sent forth his men, and had remained at home. Danny Blaney would have a chance he wished—to meet Rod Rordan alone. But not as Danny Blaney!

Like a shadow, he drifted along the wall. The squeaking sound came again as Danny Blaney got through the door and closed it behind him carefully. He went up a flight at steps to the basement level.

Swiftly, unseen, he ascended to the third floor of the building, using the rear stairs. He darted into a supply closet there, for a moment of rest.

He wanted quiet nerves, for he had work to do. He was going to face Rod Rordan alone in his den—Rod Rordan, the gang chief, the jewel thief supreme, the cold killer.

From beneath his coat, Danny Blaney took a garment of thin green silk. It was a hood, which, when slipped over his head, concealed his identity completely. He put on thin green silk gloves. He extracted from one pocket a bunch of keys, and from a shoulder holster an automatic pistol.

A moment longer he waited, listening for sounds in the corridor. And during that moment his nature changed. Cold hate surged through him—not the hot flush of hate that causes a man to do violent things, but cold hate, that makes a man plan and scheme to his enemy's undoing.

Rod Rordan! One of the group of crooks that had framed Danny Blaney, then a respected and hard-working member of the city detective force! Framed him, so that even his own comrades believed him guilty, though investigation had resulted in an acquittal! Wrecked his career, caused him to resign from the Force, because he could not endure the thrusts of his fellow-officers!

Danny Blaney hated crooks. He knew underworld secrets. Lone-handed, he fought the criminals of the upper order, pinning crimes upon them when the police could not, turning them in for justice.

Nobody guessed that Danny Blaney, discredited member of the police department of a year before, was the Green Ghost, a being crooks learned to fear.

IT was the Green Ghost who darted from the closet and went swiftly into a cross hall, to stop at the service door of Rod Rordan's apartment. He let himself in with a skeleton key. Not a sound reached his ears.

Like the ghost he impersonated, he went swiftly and silently along the hall, until he came to an archway through which he could peer into the living room.

Lavishly furnished, this apartment. Rod Rordan spent plenty of money, though not in the best of taste. The rugs were thick and expensive, for which the Green Ghost was glad. They muffled the slightest footfall.

Not a sound. He peered cautiously through the curtained archway. Then he saw the back of Rod Rordan's head. The gangster was sitting sprawl in an easy chair, his arms hanging loosely over the sides of it, sitting

before a fireplace in which there was a crackling log fire.

Either dozing, or planning some new crime, the Green Ghost thought. Rod Rordan was due for a shock. None knew better than the Green Ghost who had engineered the Barlow jewel robbery three nights before. Even the police thought Rod Rordan had, but they had been unable to connect the gang with the crime.

The Green Ghost had come to snatch the swag—and turn it and Rod Rordan over to the police.

Now he went forward slowly, automatic held ready, alert eyes shifting about the room, ears strained for any sound which might presage danger.

Rod Rordan did not move. The man in the easy chair seemed oblivious of the nearness of a foe.

Suddenly, the Green Ghost spoke. His voice was a low, tense monotone charged with menace:

“Don’t move, Rordan, except to lift your hands straight up! Make a break, and I’ll let you have it!” Rod Rordan did not move his head, did not even lift his hands as commanded.

“You can’t think your way out of this, so don’t stall for time,” the tense voice continued. “Up with ‘em, or I’ll blast you!”

The man in the chair remained motionless. The Green Ghost did not underestimate Rod Rordan’s cleverness. He was not foolish enough to go up to that chair and get within grasping distance. Walking slowly, watching alertly, he circled, the automatic held ready.

“I’m not a fool, Rordan. This it the Green Ghost! Might as well put up your hands. We’ve got some talkin’ to do.”

THE Green Ghost made a quick movement—got around in front of the man in the chair, automatic menacing the crook he had come to face.

A cry of surprise escaped him.

The eyes of Rod Rordan were open, fixed. His countenance bore the pallor of death. From his breast protruded the hilt of a knife which had been plunged through his expensive dressing gown and into his heart.

CHAPTER II

BETWEEN TWO FIRES

THE Green Ghost did some swift thinking. He had seen men leave by the little alley door, and had supposed them to be members of Rordan’s mob. Had Rod Rordan been executed by his own men? Or had Sam Dorrich done it?

The Green Ghost, informed well as to movements in the underworld, knew that the city was not big enough for both the Rordan and Dorrich gangs. Even the police knew that, and had been expecting a clash. But they had expected a battle royal, with gunfire ripping through the night. And this was simple murder.

It flashed upon the Green Ghost that here he was alone with the body of a murdered man. If caught there, he would be unable to prove his innocence of the murder. No doubt the hilt of that knife was clean of fingerprints—and the Green Ghost wore gloves!

He would get out immediately, he decided, without searching for the stolen Barlow jewels. One of his objects—handing Rod Rordan over to the police with evidence to convict him of crime—was impossible now of attainment.

He stepped nearer, looked at the dead man more closely. He had been stabbed, the Green Ghost decided, while sitting in the chair. That meant he had been killed by somebody he did not fear, somebody able to get near enough to deliver the thrust unexpectedly. Possibly one of Rordan’s own gang—one of the last two men the Green Ghost had seen leave the building.

He whirled to retrace his steps through the hall, and came to an abrupt stop. On the end of the long table, directly before his eyes, was a large square envelope, propped against a book rack. Across it, in large and sprawling handwriting, was: "For the Green Ghost."

An exclamation of surprise escaped the Green Ghost. He picked up the envelope and ripped it open. From it, he took a folded sheet of paper, and unfolded it to find a note in handwriting plainly disguised:

It you are reading this, Green Ghost, it means the end of you. You poor sap! We planted tips for you to pick up—that Rordan did the Barlow jewel job. A good chance to be rid of you and Rordan both. Now we'll learn who the Green Ghost is, when you're juggled for murder.

We're watching. When we know you're in the apartment, we'll tip the cops. They'll find you there, for you'll not be able to get out. Maybe you think this letter will clear you of the murder charge. Watch it a few minutes, Green Ghost.

A tumult of thoughts raced through the Green Ghost's brain. Here was a trap! He had got a dozen tips that the Rordan gang had pulled off the Barlow job. Too many, and too easy, now that he came to think of it.

Somebody had scattered that misinformation, thinking the Green Ghost would pick it up and act on it. They had even spread the report that tonight at a late hour the swag was to be split in Rordan's apartment.

It was plain enough now. They expected the Green Ghost to act on the tip. Rod Rordan had been executed. If the police caught the Ghost there—

BUT, how could they be watching! How could they prevent his leaving, now that he saw the trap? He could fight his way out, if necessary. And why couldn't the letter be used to clear him?

He glanced at the letter again—and understood. The writing was fading already. Trick ink, which would disappear in a few minutes after being exposed to the open air; a

schoolboy trick—but it menaced the Green Ghost.

He stuffed the letter and envelope into his pocket, and glanced swiftly around the room. Perhaps they expected to face him as he sought to leave, drive him back and hold him there until the police came. Perhaps some watcher had telephoned for the police already.

Automatic held ready, the Green Ghost started slowly back across the room toward the hallway. He intended to leave as he had entered, if he had to shoot his way through.

He heard no sound, saw nothing to alarm him. It was hot in the room, he thought. Perspiration was streaming from him, and his heart was pumping wildly. He berated himself mentally for letting this situation get him so excited. This was time to keep cool, to think logically and act without hesitation.

He seemed to be choking, and his eyes were smarting, his vision becoming blurred. It was as though some gas—

Gas!

From a large vase on a table in a corner, he saw a wisp of smoke curling up. It had a sweetish, sickening odor. So that was it! They had left chemicals burning, to poison the air in the room, to send the Green Ghost into the realm of unconsciousness, so the police would find him there.

A FEELING of terror came to him. He lurched across the room toward a window. He was growing weaker rapidly, tried to keep from breathing. He fumbled at the window, and found it locked. The catch had been fastened in some manner so he could not turn it.

His heart was pounding, his breath coming in little gasps, his senses were reeling. He opened his smarting eyes an instant, saw another vase on a table, grasped it and smashed wildly at the window pane.

Glass crashed. Cool, fresh air rushed in. He drank it greedily. Far below, glass tinkled as it struck the walk. A whiff of that sickening

gas brushed past him, trailed into the night. His vision cleared.

Now, if he could narrow his eyes to slits, and hold his breath until he could get through the rear hall and to the kitchen, and let himself through the service door—

An imperative knock on the front door of the apartment! A stern voice:

“Open up! Anybody in there?”

The Green Ghost knew that voice. It belonged to Detective-Sergeant Tim O’Hara, an officer who could not be taken lightly.

CHAPTER III

BOLDNESS DOES THE TRICK

CHOKING, gasping, eyes smarting, the Green Ghost hurried on across the big living room. He could hear O’Hara giving orders, so the sergeant must have some of his squad with him. The Green Ghost knew that some officer was hurrying to the service entrance, so escape that way would be cut off. And they were at the front door also.

There was no fire escape outside any of the windows of this apartment, no standpipe or ledge to offer a precarious means of exit. And O’Hara was pounding on the front door again. The Green Ghost heard him speak to another man, evidently the manager of the apartment house.

“Get busy with that master key. If the door’s bolted on the inside, we’ll smash it in.”

Trapped! Caught in this apartment, disguised, with the dead body of Rod Rordan there in the chair before the fireplace. If captured, the Green Ghost would be revealed as Danny Blaney. The police knew that the Rordan gang had helped frame Blaney. It would be assumed that Danny Blaney had come there to settle outstanding accounts, and had settled them.

He fled into the rear hall as he heard them fumbling at the front door. He did not doubt that the officers sent to the service door had

instructions to enter there and come on into the apartment.

THE Green Ghost got as far as the pantry. There was a high, small closet, for brooms and cleaning apparatus, and the Green Ghost wedged himself into it quickly, leaving the door open a fraction of an inch, so he could get air, and could peer out. Sounds told him entrance had been made to the living room. He heard O’Hara’s ejaculation as he found the body of Rordan, his swift orders, heard another officer talking monotonously over the telephone, notifying Headquarters of the find. Other sounds told the Green Ghost that policemen had come in through the service entrance.

Through the crack in the door he saw an officer, weapon held ready, pass through the pantry and into the hall. More orders were barked by O’Hara:

“Search the joint from one end to the other.”

They had noticed the gas, and some of them were coughing. But the draft created between the open corridor and the window the Green Ghost had smashed was clearing out the gas rapidly. It was safe for them in there now.

The Green Ghost was not so safe. They were starting to search the apartment. He knew O’Hara—an officer who was thorough in everything. His squad members would not overlook even this small closet.

The Green Ghost opened the door wider, slipped into the pantry and to the kitchen door. The kitchen was dark. Into it the Green Ghost hurried, and on to the outside service door, which was standing open a few inches.

Peering into the side hall, the Green Ghost saw a policeman standing a few feet away. He was looking down the corridor toward the front door of the apartment. The Green Ghost went through the door silently, crept forward. The policeman turned.

There was a startled cry, a quick rush, the explosion of a gun, and a blow that thudded

home against the side of the policeman's head. The shot the officer had fired cracked into the ceiling. The Green Ghost was past him and racing along the corridor.

Behind him was a chorus of yells. Guns cracked, and bullets whistled down the corridor. Doors were being jerked open by tenants curious to learn what was happening. They put out their heads, saw the police and heard the bullets zipping, and jerked their heads quickly back again.

THE Green Ghost made the rear stairs and started racing down them. Behind him was the pursuit. On the ground floor of the apartment, he darted into a closet and swiftly removed hood and gloves, to hide them away beneath his coat. He did not try escape by the blind alley. He stepped from the closet and walked boldly forward, through the little foyer of the building. The Green Ghost was gone, and Danny Blaney was himself for the moment.

He was a little excited in manner as he passed close to the desk and spoke to the night clerk from the corner of his mouth:

"Raidin' a poker game upstairs."

"Hell!" the clerk said. "Noticed the dicks go up. Can't let the boys have their little game, huh?"

Danny Blaney went on to the street and along it rapidly. The raid story had satisfied the clerk for an instant. Things like that always were happening in that section of the city. Poker game raids were but subterfuges of the police to haul in suspects, excuses to see whether known criminals from other cities were visiting here. The personnel of a poker party often gave detectives inklings of partnerships in the underworld.

Danny Blaney went to a drug store on the corner and got into a telephone booth. He called the apartment building he had just left, and asked to be connected with Rod Rordan's apartment. He wanted to speak to Detective-Sergeant O'Hara, he said.

There was a short wait, for O'Hara had to be summoned from the corridor. He barked his identity into the phone and demanded to know what was wanted.

"Listen carefully, O'Hara. This is the Green Ghost. If you stand by, I'll call again shortly, and let you know who killed Rod Rordan and where you can grab the Barlow jewels and the men who stole 'em."

"Say, you—" O'Hara began.

"Just stand by," Blaney interrupted. "No more talk now, O'Hara. I'm not being stalled here till you can trace this call. And say, O'Hara—your men are rotten shots."

THE receiver was snapped back upon its hook, and Danny Blaney walked out to the street. He turned a corner and walked a couple of blocks before he beckoned the chauffeur of a cruising taxicab. He did not want to take a cab from a stand. That phone call might be traced, and the cab chauffeurs in the neighborhood questioned.

Danny Blaney left the cab twelve blocks from where he had engaged it. There was a dance hall half a block down the street, and he started toward it, as though that had been his destination. But he passed the dance hall and went on.

SAM DORRICH, rival and ancient foe of Rod Rordan, had a large apartment, but did not run to lavish furnishings. Dorrich was more of the type known as "roughneck." He disliked anything that hinted at beauty or the effeminate. He had called Rordan a "perfume-stinkin' dude."

Rordan had been clever, and Sam Dorrich depended on violence almost entirely. Danny Blaney knew well the sort of man with whom he had to deal. Nor did he expect to find Sam Dorrich alone.

Preliminary investigation had acquainted Danny Blaney with the place. Dorrich's rooms were on the second floor, rear, with a fire-escape landing at one of the windows. Other

means of swift egress were the rear stairs, by which a person could hurry to the basement.

There were two entrances to the basement from outside—an alley door and a service door opening into the side street.

Danny Blaney opened the latter calmly and entered. He found himself in a basement hall dimly lighted, and nobody in sight. He hurried to the stairs, stood back against the wall, donned green hood and gloves again, and got his pistol ready.

There was risk ascending to the second floor dressed like that, for his unusual garb would attract the instant attention of any who saw him, even from a distance. And, this district being full of crooks, the Green Ghost was not unknown.

But boldness would do the trick this time, he thought. So he skipped up the stairs without being seen, reached the landing on the second floor, and stopped there an instant in a niche in the wall to collect himself and get his breath back.

Like a shadow, he drifted along the hall until he came to the front door of Sam Dorrich's apartment. There, he listened. A hum of voices came to him—he could make out three distinct ones. He had three with whom to deal then—and possibly more.

The Green Ghost touched the bell button, jabbed at it so the distant bell made three short, jerky rings. Then, holding his automatic ready, he waited, standing to one side of the door. He guessed there was a chain on that door. He stood so he could not be seen unless the chain was removed and the door opened wider.

The door was opened promptly, and there was a chain, as the Green Ghost had supposed. He heard somebody grunt in surprise to find nobody there.

"Some comedian, huh?" the man at the door growled.

The Green Ghost heard him undo the chain, and slid closer along the wall. A head protruded. The Green Ghost struck with the

weapon he held. The blow did nothing more than disconcert the victim a moment, but that was all the Green Ghost wished. As the other gave a cry of pain and surprise, the Green Ghost hurled himself forward and through the door, tossed the man aside, and slammed the door behind him.

"WHAT the devil—" he heard somebody say in the living room. "Hey, Stubby—what's wrong?"

Quick feet shuffled over the floor. The Green Ghost sent his victim reeling, sprawling into the room from the entry with another blow. He straddled the body and held his pistol ready. Sam Dorrich and two other men were hurrying toward him.

"Up with 'em!" the Green Ghost barked. "Quick!"

CHAPTER IV

THE BARLOW HAUL

SAM DORRICH and his two companions recoiled before this unexpected apparition. The man at the feet of the Green Ghost groaned and started crawling toward the others.

"Don't do anything foolish," the Green Ghost warned. "Better wait till you know why I'm here. Back up, gents, and sit down, but keep your hands above your heads."

They backed slowly before him, did as he ordered. Dorrich's face was working with rage. The others waited for him to deal with the situation. So far, this mysterious Green Ghost never had stepped on the toes of any of the Sam Dorrich crowd. Possibly he was an ally instead of an enemy.

"Pardon this melodramatic entrance, gents," the Green Ghost said. "But you understand I had to be in the position of the boss for a moment, till we understand each other."

"Who are you, and what the devil do you

want?" Dorrich demanded. "Bustin' in here, and crackin' Stubby on the head—"

"Stubby should be careful how he opens a door," the Green Ghost replied. "I came to thank you, Dorrich, for bumpin' off Rod Rordan."

"What's that? Rordan blasted?"

"You can't act worth a damn," the Green Ghost told him. "He's not blasted, and you know it. He was stabbed. The last two men with him tonight were one of his gang, that man right there beside you, and one of yours who was pretending to turn against you for Rordan's benefit. A real traitor and a fake one."

"You seem to know a lot."

"Your little effort to pin the thing on me failed. Oh, I got your charming note! And I escaped the gas; and Tim O'Hara broke in—after you'd notified him some way. But I managed to dodge O'Hara, too. And now I'm here!"

The Green Ghost walked toward them a couple of steps. His eyes were glittering through the slits in his mask. His automatic was held menacingly.

"You got the Barlow jewels, too, didn't you, Dorrich? The dumb cops were sure Rod Rordan got 'em. I'm not in love with the cops, understand. Nor with anybody who tries to frame me. So I think we'll square the books."

"Yeah?" Sam Dorrich snarled. "Just how are you goin' to do that?"

"Plug the lot of you, and stage it here so it'll look like you'd got into a row about dividin' the swag and gunned one another. Then take some of the loot and get away—and telephone the cops to come and pick up what's left."

"What'd we ever do to you?" Dorrich demanded.

"Why did you try to frame me tonight?"

"We wanted Rordan bumped, and we wanted to hang it on somebody else, naturally. You've been handlin' guns pretty rough, so we thought—"

"Thought you'd kill two birds with one stab, huh?" the Green Ghost asked. "Well, you slipped, Dorrich. It doesn't pay to slip, you know."

Dorrich was sitting beside a long table, upon which a scarf had been tossed carelessly over a heap of something. One of the men sat opposite him, and one directly behind. The man the Green Ghost had struck at the door was sitting on the floor at the end of the table, and all had their hands up.

"Splittin' the Barlow jewels, were you?" the Green Ghost asked. "Got 'em all handy for me, I see."

"You'll never touch 'em," Dorrich said. "You'll never get out of here alive, Ghost. You're goin' to be found sometime in the mornin', down by the river, with about fifty slugs in your body."

"Do tell!"

"Before you can make a move against us—blast him, Jim!"

As Dorrich shouted that last, he sprang to his feet and to one side. The others were on their feet instantly, too. Dorrich had looked past the Green Ghost, toward the door of a bedchamber. But the Green Ghost did not indulge in the folly of turning his head to see "Jim."

Instead, he dropped prone to the floor, and with such speed that the shot one of Dorrich's men fired flew over him and thudded into the wall. Because nobody fired from behind, the Green Ghost knew that "Jim" had been mythical.

The Green Ghost's automatic barked, and the man who had fired dropped his gun and reeled backward, to sit down against the wall. The second man was getting out a gun also. The Green Ghost let him have it through the shoulder. He staggered aside. Sam Dorrich, his face livid, thrust his arms high in the air.

"So! Caught you without a rod on you, huh?" the Green Ghost said. "Sit down there, Dorrich. One more bad move, and I'll put a slug right between your eyes. Quick!"

Dorrich dropped into the chair. His momentary fear, which had been mirrored in his face, had left him. Rage was there again.

"Your men aren't dead," the Green Ghost said. "One has a shoulder wound. That traitor of the Rordan gang may be more seriously hurt—I shot a bit low. And this Stubby of yours, with a cracked head—sit up in that chair, Stubby!"

Dorrich glanced at Stubby, and the man obeyed the order. The Green Ghost, watching the two at the table carefully, walked around and collected the weapons dropped by the wounded men. Then he confronted Dorrich again.

At one o'clock in the afternoon, the shooting probably would have attracted attention. At one in the morning, in that district, few heard it. Radios were going full blast in most of the apartments. Wild parties were in progress. Windows were closed because of the nip in the air. Charging trucks in the street were backfiring constantly. .

The Green Ghost stepped back to the doorway, always alert and on guard, ripped down the portieres and got the heavy cords off them. He hurried back to the table.

"I'll feel safer with you gents tied to chairs," he said, as he ran a noose in one of the heavy cords.

"Ghost, I'm willin' to overlook what you've done, if we can make some kind of deal," Sam Dorrich told him.

"Afraid you can't offer anything good enough. I'm not forgettin' how you tried to frame me for the hot seat tonight."

"The Barlow jewels—"

"I've got them without makin' a deal."

"If you carry on, I'll get you if it takes me years!"

"You'll get a cell, then sit on the wires for killin' Rordan."

"I didn't kill him."

"You engineered it—admitted as much," the Green Ghost said.

He tossed the noose around Dorrich's body and the chair, and jerked tight. Working swiftly, and not relaxing vigilance for a moment, he bound Dorrich to the chair. Then he formed a noose in the other cord, and tied Stubby in the same manner.

"That'll hold you," the Green Ghost said. He glanced at the wounded men. The traitor of the Rordan gang was moaning, and seemed half unconscious. The other was clutching his wounded shoulder, from which blood oozed, and his face was white.

"You can give it, but can't take it," the Green Ghost commented. "Now we'll take a look at the loot."

He swept aside the scarf on the table. Jewels scintillated in the light.

"Some haul!" the Green Ghost said. "Your last one, Dorrich. It's a pity you can't profit by it. Might need all a fence would give you to pay off your mouthpiece. But it'd be a waste of money this time. The chair's waitin' for you, Dorrich."

Sam Dorrich volleyed curses. Behind his hood, the Green Ghost chuckled. He began making a close inspection of the jewels.

"I COULD use some of these baubles for expense money," the Ghost muttered, "but they're needed here for evidence. Even if you dodged the Rordan murder charge, Dorrich, how'd you explain the presence of these stolen jewels here in your apartment?"

Dorrich only cursed again. The Green Ghost picked up the telephone on the end of the table. He called the other apartment house.

"O'Hara?" he asked, presently. "This is the Green Ghost. Listen carefully, O'Hara, and I'll tell you some things you wish to know. The Dorrich gang pulled that Barlow job. The jewels are on the table in Dorrich's living room at his apartment. Know where it is? Good! You'll find Dorrich and one of his men tied up, and a couple more wounded. Dorrich engineered Rordan's murder, too, and

the actual killer is right here. Come and get 'em!"

He slapped back the receiver and looked swiftly around the room again. Seizing the scarf which had covered the jewels, he tore it into strips. He muffled Sam Dorrich's curses with a gag, gagged Stubby, and turned toward the wounded men.

The one by the wall was unconscious now. But the wound of the other was not serious. The first shock of it over, this man might be able to prove a menace.

The Green Ghost got another portiere cord and bound this man's arms and legs, and gagged him also. His work here was done, he decided. Time to go. It was up to Tim O'Hara to get evidence regarding the Rordan murder, and O'Hara was the man who could do it. O'Hara knew how to use violent methods on men such as these, who used violent methods themselves. As for the Barlow robbery—there were the jewels for evidence. And Dorrich was a two-time loser already.

The Green Ghost swept a glance over his victims again, looked at the jewels glittering under the light, and hurried toward the door. He stopped there to listen. Somebody stopped outside. The door bell sounded.

CHAPTER V

DESPERATE TAG

FROM the peculiar manner in which the bell rang, the Green Ghost guessed it was a signal, that one of Dorrich's mob had come to report. He glanced back, and caught a gleam in Dorrich's eyes. He slipped close to the door, and whispered hoarsely:

"Who is it?"

"Bert Baines."

"Who's with you!"

"Shorty."

"Lam! The bulls are on their way here."

The Ghost heard hurrying steps in the hall. He decided he would wait.

But there was a sudden tumult in the hall. Somebody bellowed a command to halt in stentorian tones. Scurrying feet—and the sound of a shot! A wild cry, muttering voices.

There had not been time for O'Hara and his squad to get there from the other apartment house. But somebody had been sent there anyhow, the Green Ghost judged, possibly to look in on Sam Dorrich and do some questioning. Any member of the police force was a potential danger for the Green Ghost.

Heavy feet in the hall—another ring at the doorbell. No signal this time, but a long ring that bespoke a determination to gain entrance.

The Green Ghost rushed through the living room to a window and looked out. He saw the fire-escape landing at the next window, and hurried to that. Swiftly, he raised the window, put out his head. He was just in time to see the beam of a flashlight on the pavement of the alley below.

Somebody was on guard there. No doubt, the police had come to drop in on Dorrich, and were taking precautions against the escape of him or any of his gang. They might have thought instantly that Dorrich had something to do with the killing of Rod Rordan.

They were pounding at the front door, and the bell was ringing continuously. Loud voices sounded in the hall. The Green Ghost was trapped in an apartment for the second time that night.

Dorrich's eyes were gleaming. Stubby betrayed excitement. The other conscious man seemed stunned by the turn of events.

The Green Ghost quickly turned the chairs in which the two bound men were sitting, so their faces were toward the wall; now they could not see where he went, and tell later. Then he dashed to the entry again.

Somebody was still pounding on the door and demanding that those inside open. Somebody crashed against it. The Green Ghost darted behind the thick curtains which masked a little coat room, and stood flat against the wall.

“Get that night clerk up here—tell him to bring his master key!” somebody outside was ordering.

More steps sounded in the hall, then O’Hara’s voice:

“What is it, Murphy?”

“They won’t open up. I’ve sent for the clerk.”

“Don’t wait! Smash the door in.”

Another crash! The door flew open. Officers sprawled into the entry, service revolvers held ready, rushed on into the living room.

There was a chorus of exclamations, then came O’Hara’s voice again:

“Eyes open, now! Take those gags off and untie ‘em! Ring for an ambulance—”

In the corridor, some policeman was demanding that the curious keep back. The corridor was filled with tenants and their guests of the evening. From open doors down the hall came blasts of radio music.

“Well, Dorrich?” O’Hara was asking.

“The Green Ghost—here a moment ago—planted those jewels and tied us up—shot those two—”

“Planted, hell!” O’Hara exploded. “You’re not talkin’ to a baby, Dorrich. Got the goods on you and your man this time. These jewels—and Rordan’s murder—”

“What’s that? Rordan killed?” Dorrich cried.

“And you know it! Your men made some mistakes—left a trail a blind man could follow.”

“I—I don’t know anything about it,” Dorrich cried. “You can’t frame me—”

“Oh, shut up!” O’Hara barked at him. “We nabbed a couple of your boys. One was a weak brother, and talked.”

Pure bluff, the Green Ghost guessed. But Sam Dorrich did not know for sure.

“I’m tellin’ you this is a frame. I think Rordan planned it. The Green Ghost—he’s around here. He was here when your men came to the door.”

“We’ll ‘tend to him,” O’Hara said. “But we’re handlin’ you now. One of this crowd has a chance—if he’ll talk. No danger for him afterward, ‘cause you and your gang won’t be in a position to harm him any.”

“I’ll talk, O’Hara!” cried the man with the shoulder wound. He had been moaning and gulping since gag and bonds had been removed. Now he lurched to his feet. “Sam planned it. He had Dinky Lewis and—”

“Shut up, confound you!” Dorrich cried.

O’Hara grinned, motioned, and an officer yanked the wounded man toward the corridor.

But all this did not aid the Green Ghost. He remained in the coat room behind the thick curtains. O’Hara would search that apartment, without doubt. There was but one chance—a wild dash.

The Green Ghost made it. He darted from behind the curtains and rushed into the corridor. His automatic spoke once, the bullet crashing into the ceiling. His sudden appearance and the crack of the shot stampeded those in the wide hall.

They lurched and jostled to get out of the way. They bothered the officer stationed there, so that the Green Ghost got through the crowd before the policeman could recover himself and get into action. Behind him, as he fled, the crowd surged to the center of the hall again to look after him, thus coming between him and O’Hara and the others who came running. Things were working out as the Green Ghost expected.

He dashed around a corner and into a cross hall. Before him was the open door of an apartment. He ran into it, to find it empty. Those who had been enjoying themselves there were in the corridor.

Slamming the door behind him, locking it, the Green Ghost fled to a window. Another fire-escape landing was there. Quickly, he extinguished the lights, then raised the window and crawled through.

Down in the alley, men were shouting at one another. In the hall behind, there was

bedlam. The Green Ghost went swiftly down the fire-escape, but not to the bottom. He came to the window of a bathroom, lifted it, and crawled through.

He went forward, into the apartment. Nobody was at home, though the lights were burning. They too, had gone to see what the tumult was about, the Green Ghost supposed.

He hurried to the telephone.

“Hello! Connect me with the Dorrich apartment. This is an officer. I want to talk to my sergeant—quick.”

The connection was made

“O’Hara—quick!” the Green Ghost said to the man who answered.

Then he waited until O’Hara could be called in from the corridor. He listened intently, and knew that the line was not open, that the switchboard operator was not listening in.

“Well?” O’Hara’s voice boomed.

“Listen, O’Hara. This is the Green Ghost. I’m out and away, old boy. Don’t waste time lookin’ for me. Take care of Dorrich and his gang. Did you get the jewels?”

“Got ‘em, Ghost! Thanks. Murder evidence is weak, but maybe we can get enough out of one of ‘em to send Dorrich away to the hot seat. I want to tell you—”

But the Green Ghost cut the connection. He heard somebody outside the front door, and fled. In the bathroom, he got behind the curtains of the shower, and listened.

For an hour he stood. In the living room, six persons resumed their party. They drank, danced to radio music, played cards. It grew quiet in the building. The police had taken their prisoners away.

Finally, the Green Ghost left the shower, locked the door of the bathroom, and crawled

through the window again. He watched and listened, but nothing alarmed him. Down the fire-escape he went slowly.

He reached the bottom. The dark alley was a few feet below. Only a short distance away, it emptied into the street.

A slight sound attracted his attention. Below him, a match flared. The Green Ghost saw a uniformed policeman lighting a cigarette.

So, somebody had been left in the alley on guard. But not a detective, only a harness bull. He was between the Green Ghost and liberty.

The Ghost guessed direction, and dropped. He crashed against the man below. The surprise was complete, but that was not enough. Though he disliked to do it, the Green Ghost struck with his gun. The blow was true. The policeman groaned, muttered something, struggled weakly.

The Green Ghost sprang to his feet and ran, tearing off his hood and tossing it away, taking his cap from a coat pocket and putting it on, tossing away the green silk gloves last of all. He heard a weak shout behind him, as the policeman tried to call for help. But the Green Ghost gained the street, turned up it, and walked along in a natural manner, touching flaming match to a cigarette—

Half an hour later, Danny Blaney suddenly appeared in the corner cigar store he owned, and greeted the sleepy night clerk.

“Gosh, boss, you’re up at all hours!” the clerk said.

“Don’t worry, boy. I’m not checkin’ up on you. Just couldn’t sleep.”

“Pretty tame for you, after bein’ on the Force once, huh?” the clerk suggested.

“Yeah!” Danny Blaney said. “Pretty tame!”