

## *Under the Cloak of Darkness, Murder Stalked*

# Enter Death

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THE WIND wailed dismally as it blew about the old stone house that brooded in the darkness of the cloudy night. The man hesitated at the porch steps. He glanced about him anxiously, peering into the shadows. He felt a sense of security as his fingers gripped the sword cane he held in his right hand. He had always hated guns—and that sword cane might prove useful before the night was over.

He mounted the steps and rang the bell, his cane swinging idly in his hand. In a moment the door opened and the sinister-looking figure of a Hindu stood glaring at him. A jewel glittered on the turban of the Hindu as he scowled at the new arrival.

"Mr. Baytell is expecting me, my name's Sinton. I'm the detective he sent for."

The Hindu bowed ungraciously and stepped aside so that Sinton might enter the musty, dimly-lighted hall.

"Wait here," said the Hindu. "I'll tell Mr. Baytell you have arrived."

Sinton frowned as the servant turned and moved silently down the hall. The Hindu spoke English with hardly a trace of accent. Evidently he was a most unusual servant.

The Hindu returned in a few moments and led Sinton into the presence of Thomas Baytell. The elderly retired millionaire was seated in a comfortable chair in his luxuriously furnished library. He was clad in evening clothes and he rose to his feet as Sinton and the Hindu appeared.

"Sinton is my name," said the new arrival. "You sent for me, Mr. Baytell?"

"Yes, glad you got here so promptly," said Baytell as he extended his hand and the other man

took it. "I hoped you'd be able to make it." The millionaire glanced at the Hindu who was standing passively in the doorway. "Take Mr. Sinton's hat and stick, Rahma."

"I'll keep my cane, if you don't mind," said Sinton quickly. "I'm just a bit lame."

The Hindu took Sinton's hat and left the room, closing the door behind him.

"Now tell me what's wrong," said Sinton when he found himself alone with Baytell. He placed his cane on a table. "You didn't go into much detail over the phone."

"I didn't dare." The elderly millionaire looked around the room nervously. "My life is threatened!" Baytell drew a folded paper from a book lying on the library table. "Look at this—it is the second message that I've received. The first arrived a week ago, but I merely thought it was the work of some crank so I did nothing about it then. Now I'm afraid—that's why I sent for a detective."

Sinton unfolded the paper and glanced at the typewritten message.

Died April 6th, 1936, Thomas Baytell,  
retired millionaire.

That was all there was on the paper. There was no signature, no murder threat, merely the cold, ruthless statement. Sinton glanced at Baytell as he finished examining the message.

"Today is the sixth of April," exclaimed Baytell with fear in his voice. "It—it might happen yet! I may be murdered tonight."

"But the motive?" demanded Sinton. "Why should someone wish your death, Mr. Baytell?"

"I don't know," Baytell frowned as he spoke. "Unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Two years ago I ordered my nephew out of the house. I had discovered that he was stealing money from the business in which I had established him. He was a rotter—spending everything he could steal or borrow on wild living."

"I see," remarked Sinton, "But what would this nephew gain by your death?"

"In some way he may have discovered that I've never changed my will. He still remains my only heir," Baytell shook his head sadly. "After all, Dean Mistling is my sister's boy and I feel that I owe her memory all the consideration for her son that is possible."

**“W**HY haven't you changed your will, now that you know it may mean your death?" demanded Sinton.

"I have been afraid to leave the house. Of course I could make a will here myself, but I wanted to be sure that it was absolutely legal in every way. I have waited, but my attorney will arrive in the morning."

"Then your present will still leaves everything to your nephew?" Sinton rose to his feet and silently moved to the closed door of the room.

"That's right," said Baytell. "Dean Mistling is still my heir."

Sinton suddenly drew the door open. The Hindu was standing in the hall. His dark face expressionless.

"I thought you'd be listening!" snapped Sinton. "What's the idea?"

"If one heeds the words of others, one may gain in wisdom," said Rahma.

He turned and moved back along the hall. Sinton glanced at the elderly millionaire.

"How long has that man been with you, Mr. Baytell?" Sinton demanded.

"Just a few days," answered Baytell. "An old friend of mine sent Rahma to me. A friend that I trust. But my life is in danger, man. I don't feel safe even here. The door—the windows—one never knows how death may enter. Come," Baytell rose to his feet. "There is a room in the cellar—it is the only place I feel really secure."

Sinton followed as Baytell led the way through the old house and down a flight of stone steps leading into the cellar. Sinton had apparently

forgotten his cane. The millionaire paused when they reached a room at the foot of the stairs.

"Wait here," said Sinton, suddenly turning toward the stairs. "I want to have a talk with Rahma."

For at least ten minutes Baytell stood nervously waiting for Sinton's return. Suddenly the millionaire uttered a cry of surprise and terror as the light in the cellar room abruptly went out. In the darkness he heard someone moving toward him.

"Help!" he cried wildly. "I—"

His words died away in a ghastly gurgle as a sharp blade touched his chest. His body struck the floor with a thud. Then the dark house became grimly silent.

Later John Sinton crept cautiously down the stone steps that led to the dank cellar of the old house. The lights were again gleaming. Below he could hear a faint, rustling noise as someone moved about in the room at the foot of the stair. As he reached the bottom step he saw that the Hindu was leaning over the still form of Thomas Baytell. There was the steel blade of a sword cane sticking in the breast of the millionaire—a blade that had evidently pierced Baytell's heart. Rahma had an automatic in his right hand.

Silently Sinton crept across the room. He caught the Hindu's wrist with his left hand as he wrenched the automatic out of Rahma's hand, and then stepped back, still holding the servant by the wrist as he covered him with the gun.

"Don't move, Rahma!" snapped Sinton as he clutched the Hindu by the wrist even tighter. "You murdered Baytell—and I've got you."

"There is little to be gained in trying to resist an automatic," said Rahma.

He turned so that he faced Sinton as the other man released his clutch on the Hindu's wrist. Suddenly Rahma lifted his left foot and kicked the automatic out of Sinton's hand. Before Sinton could duck, the Hindu's fist smashed into his face and knocked him to the floor. Rahma leaped to the spot where the automatic had fallen and picked up the gun. "All right, you rotten murderer," he snapped. "You killed Baytell, but you won't get away with the crime, Mistling."

"What do you mean?" growled Sinton. "You murdered the old man with my sword cane. I forgot and left it upstairs. Your fingerprints are on

it as well as mine.”

“Oh, no they aren’t,” said the Hindu. He removed a close fitting brown glove from his hand; the flesh beneath was white. “These were part of my disguise—and I didn’t leave any fingerprints. You killed the old man, Mistling. You had to act fast when you were sure he hadn’t changed his will.”

“Who the devil are you?” demanded Sinton.

“The detective you pretended that you were when you came here tonight,” said the Hindu. “I have been with Baytell ever since he got the first murder threat. We knew that someone had tapped his telephone wire, and suspected you. So tonight Baytell phoned my office requesting me to come here. You listened in and came in my place, disguised, just as we expected. You walked right into our trap.”

The accused man sneered.

“If I’d killed Baytell here, why did I come back? I’d have gotten as far from this house as I could.”

“You said it, Mistling, when you said ‘come back.’ You *were* down in his cellar. You *did*

attack Baytell. You tried to get away up those stairs. But the door was locked. So you came back and tried to bluff it out by accusing me, until such time as you could escape!”

Mistling uttered a cry of horror as the corpse suddenly sat up. There was a smile upon the face of Thomas Baytell as he glanced at the detective disguised as a Hindu.

“Nice work,” said the millionaire as he pulled the sword out of his chest. “I must admit that I was frightened when he came after me in the dark with the sword. Good thing we were both sure that he would try to kill me with the sword or a knife and were ready for him. And we gave you your opportunity in this room. Sinton—the real Sinton—locked the door from above and came in by a secret door. That steel vest and the padding between it and my evening shirt protected me so that I’m not hurt. That little bag filled with red ink that the sword pierced was the master touch—it does look like blood.”

“All right, Mistling,” snapped the detective. “You’re under arrest!”