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A NIGHT OF TERROR

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TATTOO OF HOOFS HEARD IN STREET

Grant Wood, local artist, looking back over the early years of his life in Cedar Rapids recalls an incident which as a revelation of the supernatural had a great many bizarre details attributed to such happenings by the old New England housewives, the fraus of the Germany of another century, and various imaginative authors.

To a large number, even today, the night is made mysterious by the activities of invisible beings and spirits. Every cemetery is a rendezvous for spectres, and in desolate places ghouls assemble for council.

A Trying Period

When Grant was a boy of about 14 years, his grandmother became dangerously ill, and her death was expected almost any moment. The immediate family, which included Grant, his mother, an aunt, his brother and wife, were in a state of nervous exhaustion for days.

A re-arrangement of sleeping quarters to accommodate a visiting relative, placed Grant's mother in his room. One night while the grandmother was in a critical condition, Grant was awakened by his mother speaking his name.

"Listen," she whispered.

He did so, and heard sounds which he thought were hoof-beats in the street in front of the house. Grant conjured the vision of a strange and terrifying horseman galloping up and down the street. He heard the horseman approach the house, pause for a moment, and ride

on. This was repeated for what seemed to be an endless length of time, but with each ride the pause in front of the house became longer.

The crescendo of fright was reached when the boy and his mother heard a clock strike the hour of two, immediately after which the horseman stopped in front of the house, and an irregular image appeared in the sleeping room.

A strange, misty light shone through the window and moved the length of the room as if searching for something. It paused and shone on a varnished door, giving to it the appearance of a transparent figure. Then it melted into the blackness of the room. Boy and mother slept but little the remainder of the night.

The next morning Grant heard his mother explain the occurrence to the other members of the family, and in spite of the fact that only such exclamations as "Listen" and "What's that?" had passed between the boy and his mother during the night, the details she gave were exactly as he had heard and seen them. This had a creepy effect on him, but being an unbeliever in ghosts, he decided to investigate thoroughly.

House Is Explored

The sleeping rooms were on the second floor, and to that part of the house he went, searching everywhere for a daylight explanation of a nocturnal mystery. For a long time his efforts were in vain. He began to believe his mother was right, and a new respect for phantoms took possession of him. But still he looked for a reasonable set of circumstances.

In his brother's room he found a traveling clock resting against the black walnut box that covered the mechanism of a sewing machine. He was about to pass it by when he noticed the clock was stopped at the hour of two. He wound it and returned the timepiece to its former place beside the box. Immediately he heard the noises which had resembled the beating of horse's hoofs on the street. The ticking of the clock was accented by the cover which acted as a sounding box.

He rushed downstairs to inform the family of his discovery, and in the discussion which followed, Grant's brother explained that due to a fault of the works of the clock, the timepiece would often stop for a few moments until a wheel had described one revolution or more, and then resume its function. This accounted for the "horseman's" pauses in front of the house.

Mystery Made Clear

A demonstration of the working of the clock against the box partially convinced Grant's mother that there was nothing supernatural about the post-midnight noises, but she insisted on an explanation of the strange light and image. Grant was forced to admit temporary defeat in that element of the affair.

About a month later, shortly after he had retired to bed, Grant witnessed the same phenomenon and in a moment was out of bed and by the window. Down the street, about a block from the house, he saw an automobile—one of the early kind—making a turn, which threw the glare from the headlights into the sleeping room, and gave to the light in the chamber the appearance of a transparent image.—R. C. L.

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