

# L. RON HUBBARD



*Dead  
Men  
Kill*

**GALAXY**  
P R E S S

## *Death from the Grave*

**I**N a voice which held the icy tones of death, the dark-clothed man in the open doorway rasped, "I have come to kill you, Gordon! *I have come to kill you!*"

Gordon stiffened in his massive chair. His ruddy face went ashen; his thick fingers clutched at the corners of his desk. "Jackson!" he shrieked.

The killer's eyes were glassy. His hands reached out before him, grasping, talonlike. The pallor of the dead was on his wasted face. He was clothed in the garments of the grave! Silently, relentlessly, he walked forward.

"Stop!" screamed Gordon. "My God, Jackson, what have I ever done to you?"

The answer was toneless, harsh. "I have come to kill you, Gordon!"

The clutching hands came closer. Gordon covered his face, tried to cower away. Beside him was a telephone. Furtively he reached out for it.

If Jackson saw, he gave no heed. Blindly he came against the outer edge of the desk. Slowly he skirted the obstruction and came on.

"Police!" cried Gordon into the receiver.

If Jackson heard, he gave no sign. His hard, glassy eyes, sunken and horrible, were fixed on his victim's throat. Gordon

stared up and caught the odor which had assailed him from the first. It was the smell of moist earth mingled with the perfumes of the undertaking parlor. The stench of the grave!

"I have come to kill you, Gordon!" repeated the murderer. It was as though this phrase was all that remained in the man's mind.

"My God, Jackson! Get away!" Too late, Gordon tried to scramble out from behind his desk.

Jackson lunged, hands convulsing. When the sunken eyes were a foot away from Gordon's, the fingers snapped down on the victim's throat. There was a shriek and the crash of the overturned chair. Gordon whipped about, writhing under the maniacal strength of the hands.

Shuddering sobs were coming from the victim's distorted mouth. Slowly the body under the hands relaxed and lay still. Jackson's fingers still clutched the throat.

Seconds ticked by before the murderer moved. Then, with his expressionless face turned toward the door, he walked slowly from the room.

The toneless phrase came again. "I have come to kill you, Gordon!" And the man who was dressed for the grave disappeared into the corridor.

Inspector Leonard rushed from his desk into the squad room and spotted Detective-Sergeant Terry Lane. "Lane! Snap into it. Gordon's been murdered and I think it's a clue on your Burnham killing. The man on the switchboard heard Gordon shout 'My God, Jackson, get away!' into the phone. Get out there right away!"



*Terry Lane*

Detective-Sergeant Terrence Lane needed no further word. Like a shot, his wiry figure hurtled through the door, plunged down a flight of steps and swung aboard the scout car at the curb.

"The Gordon residence!" shouted Lane to Monahan at the wheel. "And step on it!"

The car roared up the street, Lane hanging to the running board, his blue eyes flashing, the wind tearing at his raven black hair. Monahan had given the wild figure a brief glance, decided that Terry Lane meant what he said, and the squad car ripped past a red light, lanced up a traffic-jammed avenue, screamed around a curve and then came to a stop before the imposing mansion which was the home of the late Ralph Gordon, a well-known wealthy sportsman.

If Detective Lane was disheveled, he had good reason to be. For a week he had been on the trail of a killer he could never reasonably expect to apprehend. The papers were blatant in their denouncement of the police force in general and Terry Lane in particular.

Since that fatal day seven days before when Edward Burnham, head of a power trust, had been found dead in his home, Lane's life had been a nightmare. He had not known which way to turn, since the only conceivable clue had pointed the guilt to Hamilton, secretary to Burnham. And that was impossible. For Hamilton had been dead and buried for two weeks!

Lane sprinted up the steps, kicked open the front door and stepped inside. Then, undecided, he stopped and stared about him. In the hall of that great home, in spite of the clamor of traffic outside its door, silence reigned. It was the sinister, clammy silence of death. An odor came to him oppressively.

Worry flicked across Lane's lean, nervous face and he looked down at his feet. There, in the center of the hallway, lay a blue gray cotton glove. When he picked it up, Lane again smelled that faint odor. Suddenly he recognized it.

It was a pallbearer's glove that he had found and from it came the stench of moist earth and sickening perfume. The odor of the grave!

Jamming his first clue into his pocket, Lane ran into the room at his right and then stopped abruptly.

As many times as the detective had witnessed death, his stomach retched at the sight before him. Gordon was sprawled on the floor, rigid and staring. His once-dapper clothes were ripped about the throat. The flesh beneath his jaw was blue and swollen. But it was the face which held Lane's gaze. Surprise, horror and disbelief were mirrored there so strongly that even death had not erased them.

Lane stepped forward with a shudder. He looked quickly

about for some telltale bit of evidence, but nothing untoward rewarded him.

From the street came the noise of sirens and screeching brakes, heralding the arrival of the wagon and the coroner. With them, Lane knew, would come the newshawks and cameramen. He dreaded their arrival more than he did the prospects of solving this second murder. It was certain that a few more scathing articles such as those which had recently appeared would ruin Terry Lane's promising career.

The coroner was the first man in the door. He was small and wizened, with a military mustache adding an incongruous note of jauntness.

Dr. Charles Reynolds was entirely too professional to be awed by the sight of a corpse.

"Hello," said Coroner Reynolds. "I don't need my stethoscope to tell that bird's stone dead." He knelt quickly beside Gordon. "Deader'n hell. Strangled. The fellow that did that must have been a maniac."

He glanced at the detective. "Just the same thing as we found in the Burnham case. Any clue?"



*Dr. Reynolds*

“Nothing definite,” snapped Lane. “I wish there was.”

He looked up to see that four bluecoats had come in. “Go through your routine, boys, but I’m afraid it won’t mean a thing.”

Monahan came in, herding a scared butler in front of him.

“This egg says he ain’t seen nothin’, Sergeant.”

Lane gave the butler a brief scrutiny. “Who was Jackson?”

“I don’t know anything about it, sir,” quaked the butler.

“Jackson, sir, he was Mr. Gordon’s secretary. He was buried last week, sir.”

“Oh, cripes!” exclaimed Lane. “Another of those things! What did Jackson die of?”

“I don’t rightly know, sir, but it was some sort of fever.” The butler’s knees were shaking. “There wasn’t nothing between Jackson and Mr. Gordon, sir. Jackson was a mighty fine young man. When he died, sir, we felt very bad.”

“And we’re supposed to believe Jackson rose from the grave and killed Gordon,” Dr. Reynolds scowled. “Zombies—the walking dead—like they’re supposed to have in Haiti? Rot! I’ve been there—and I never saw any.”

“I’ll handle this, Reynolds.” Lane drew the pallbearer’s glove out of his pocket and thumped it in front of the butler’s nose. “Ever see this before?”

The butler moaned and then nodded his head dumbly.

“Yes, sir. That is, I think so, sir. I bought those gloves very special for Mr. Jackson’s funeral!”

“Then you wore this glove as a pallbearer?” Lane demanded.

“No, sir!” Again the butler moaned. “I bought it for Mr.

Jackson, sir. He had a very small hand, he did. That was on him when we lowered him into the grave, sir.”

“What?” exclaimed Reynolds. “Well, I’ll say this much, Lane. The man that strangled Gordon had very small hands. The thumb prints say so.” The coroner shrugged his shoulders. “Nothing else I can do here now.”

He picked up his black bag, and the door closed after him as he disappeared in the hall.

“You say that Gordon liked Jackson?” Lane glared at the butler.

“Yes, sir,” the butler nodded. “All of us did, sir.”

The door opened again and a tall, severely dressed gentleman came in. His reserve matched the quietness of his clothes. He was Dr. Anton Kaler, who sometimes interested himself in crime—though his chosen professions were chemistry and traveling. “Hello, Kaler,” said Lane. “How did you get in?”

“Told the officer at the door I was a friend of yours,” Dr. Kaler smiled.

“I’m glad you happened along,” said the detective-sergeant. “Maybe you can give me a hand on this thing.”



*Dr. Anton Kaler*



"But certainly," remarked Kaler, leaning on his cane. "I was ambling down the street, saw the police cars and thought I might be of help. You see, I know Gordon quite well." His eyes swept over the still figure on the floor. "Or, rather, I did know him well."

There was a step outside, and Reynolds stepped briskly back into the room.

"Forgot my gloves," he said. He leaned beside the body and picked up a pair of gloves. The light from the windows made dancing lights on the odd snake-shaped emerald in the ring he wore.

"Like to stick around?" suggested Lane. "Dr. Kaler may be able to give us a different slant on this thing. Dr. Kaler, this is Dr. Reynolds, the coroner."

The two men bowed. Reynolds walked over to a window, looked out at the setting sun.

"This is another of those cases," Lane told Kaler. "A fellow by the name of Jackson murdered Gordon. Did you know his secretary, Jackson?"

"Why, yes," returned Dr. Kaler. "He was quite a personable young chap. He died last week, you know. I attended his funeral."

He looked down at the sprawled corpse and then, with an expression of sadness, knelt beside Gordon. "Poor devil. You certainly didn't deserve this."

The detective-sergeant took a turn about the room and then came back to the door. There, beside the wall, was a scrap of paper which had escaped his first examination. He picked it up idly, read the printing and writing on it.

“What the devil!” he ejaculated. “Here’s a pharmacy bill from Port-au-Prince, Haiti! What could this be doing here?”

Reynolds came quickly across the room and read over Lane’s shoulder.

“Hmmm! It says it hereby renders the account of Dr. Leroux to date,” stated the coroner. “My lord! That thing’s made out for fifty thousand gourdes! Why, that’s ten thousand dollars in our money.”

“Ten thousand dollars?” cried Lane. “Who ever heard of pharmacies charging ten thousand smackers for anything? Dr. Leroux, eh? Well, if Leroux’s got anything to do with this killing, he’ll be spilling me the beans by dark.”

“Never heard of a Dr. Leroux in this city,” muttered Reynolds.

“May I see it for a moment?” asked Kaler. “I’ve spent considerable time in Haiti, you know.” He examined the bill intently.

“Well, if you want my opinion, Lane, I don’t think this has much connection with the murder. This pharmacy is a pretty reliable one in Port-au-Prince. Probably Gordon had some dealings with the man there. You know he’s traveled—or rather did travel—quite a little.”

“I may be funny,” said Lane absently, “but I’ve got a hunch that this has some bearing on the case.” He turned toward the door. “I’m going to spot this doc.”

He walked quickly to the entrance of the room and then stopped as though he had been smashed in the face. His eyes opened wide and his jaw sagged.

There, on the inside of the door, where he could not have

seen it before, was a note. The envelope was addressed in green ink to Terrence Lane. But worse than that—the paper was held up by a knife driven through its flap. The hilt of the weapon was also green and was carved—in the semblance of a snake!

Lane ripped it down, shoved the knife in his pocket, and read the message. It was simple and to the point.

Terry Lane:

You will leave this case immediately and resign from the force. If not, you will be killed as suddenly, as unexpectedly, and as horribly as either Burnham or Gordon.

The signature was also in green. The two words at the bottom left no clue to the writer's identity: "*Loup-garou.*" The detective choked and whirled to see that the policemen, Reynolds and Kaler were all staring at him. He smiled thinly, shrugged and went out of the house with the missive in his coat pocket.

On the steps were newspapermen, and at Lane's appearance a barrage of questions ripped through the air.

"Was it the same as Burnham?"

"If Jackson's been dead a week, how could he possibly murder Gordon?"

"Who do you suspect?"

"C'mon, give us a break! We gotta print somethin'."

"Okay by us, flatfoot, it ain't our funeral."

Lane was on the sidewalk, trying to worm his way through the gathering crowd. Hands tore at him, people stared in his

direction, cameras snapped hungrily. One hand in particular was insistent. Lane gazed back at its owner with annoyance.

And then his annoyance faded, for the owner of the white hand was a vividly beautiful girl. In spite of his worries, Lane stopped abruptly, satisfied for the moment just to fill his eyes with this vision. About him people snickered and he quickly plunged on, dragging the girl with him until they stood a good hundred feet away from the nearest of the morbid crowd.

“You had something to say to me?” asked Lane.

“Yes, but this isn’t the place,” she said. Her voice seemed to vibrate with excitement—or perhaps fear.

“Come on up to Headquarters with me.” He turned quickly to hail a cruising cab and when it had stopped Lane said, “Let’s get going, miss.”

He reached back for the girl’s arm to help her into the machine, and then he stopped and stared quickly about him. There was a second taxi further along the street, but it was unoccupied. The girl had no time to walk away. No one had come near them in that brief instant. But the girl was gone! Completely and mysteriously!