

# Have You Seen Me?

by Robert Vardon, 1918-1944

Published: 1943  
in »Fantastic Adventures«



*The psychiatrist had a field holiday with the actor who had been advised to "be yourself".*

At bars, parties, or social gatherings of any sort, when the subject of psychiatry is brought up I generally keep my yap shut. This in itself is unusual, inasmuch as I am scarcely the type to be described as the Silent Thinker. And it becomes more than unusual in view of the fact that psychiatry is one of the few subjects about which I have considerably better than a man-on-the-street knowledge. You see, damned few of my friends are aware of it, but I was once a novitiate student in the then little practiced field of mental behavior. I had an ambition to be a great psychiatrist way back in the days when the field was looked

on by all other sciences as a grazing ground for crackpots and charlatans and pensioned witch doctors.

Why, I remember that during my brief period as the eager young student of psychology, my family begged me to keep my ambitions and pursuits a secret, for fear of the embarrassment they'd suffer among their friends should it be learned that young Richard had gone so drastically off the deep end.

In those days—and they were a long time ago, don't forget—I had to tote my textbooks on psychiatry around as furtively as if they'd been copies of *Nasty Stories*. People just didn't understand.

Now, of course, it's different. Like I said, at bars and at parties, and at every kind of social gathering, psychiatry is as fashionable a topic of conversation as war, or crime, or even adultery. And, also like I said, while this conversational ball is being booted merrily back and forth, I have to find a quiet seat in a dark corner and keep my mouth shut.

Maybe you want to know why this is so. Maybe you want to know why I'm not in the thick of such discussions, waving my arms and spitting psychological terminology and identifying myself as one of the small, grim band of undaunted, far-sighted Thinkers who pioneered the subject of psychiatry to its present popularity. You want to know why?

It's because the entire subject of psychology is nauseating to me. It's because, personally and unshakably, I think psychiatry stinks.

NOW wait a minute. Don't get me wrong. I think there was something to the idea of a study of the human mind and human thought patterns when it first started. I think the first philosopher started chipping away at the right stone when he sat down one day and decided to figure himself and the rest of his chums out. I think, too, that the guy who first got the idea that philosophy itself wasn't enough to do the job of cracking the nut of human motivation had a pretty good idea.

The *idea* underlining psychology is solid. I have no quarrel with it. Humanity must, sooner or later, find out something more than a mere physical knowledge of what makes it tick. But it isn't going to find it out through psychology. Never in a million years. Because the psychologists themselves, the guys who rolled up their sleeves to do a strip tease with the human mind, have long since tied themselves up in a hundred thousand knots because of the limitations of their own mental behavior patterns. They have equipped themselves with hundreds of charts. On the charts they write thousands of words. The words are long and hard to pronounce, and the psychologists are pleased with them. For every screwy-looie they slap into a nut house, the psychologists have a word, sometimes lots of words.

Every time some poor devil pops up with some queer quirk of behavior that his fellow human beings find incomprehensible, he's hustled off to the nearest booby hatch where a bunch of psychiatrists find any one of a thousand words to explain his condition and shove him into a loony bin.

Say somebody suddenly starts talking to people who aren't there. He keeps it up until he finds himself whipped off to a neat white room where psychiatrists with pencils and charts and a lot of time to waste ask him endless foolish questions. By the time the poor devil leaves that neat white room his entire life has been

methodically recorded, and the psychologists have found a name for him and an explanation for his behavior.

"He's a dementia such-and-such," the psychiatrists explain smugly, "and his habit of talking to people who don't exist can be traced to the fact that he swallowed a basketball when he was four years old."

It would never occur to the psychiatrists, of course, to consider for an instant that the loony they'd just hustled away might actually have been talking to people visible only to him. That explanation would be far too simple to suit their highly complicated minds. In a universe where the surface of knowledge has scarcely been scratched, they smugly and confidently write off such an explanation as an absurd impossibility.

And therein lies the trouble with psychology, *plus* the reason for my having deserted my youthful ambitions to make a name for myself as a nutcracker. It took just one instance in the beginning of those youthful aspirations to bring them to an end; just one instance to bring me to the opinion I now hold on the matter.

Here's how it happened...

OLD Doctor Farbsund, under whom I was studying, had decided that it was about time I began a little psychiatric analysis on my own hook. He equipped me with a short, explanatory note to a friend of his who was in charge of a mental sanitarium several miles out in the country.

The sanitarium was one of those big, sprawling ex-mansions which had been converted into a loony roost for the nutty limbs of wealthy family trees. It was the sort of place where Mr. Got-rocks could board crazy Sister Sue when she started rattling too loudly in the family closet.

The doctor in charge of the sanitarium, a short, bearded, solemn little man named Hovlock, received me gravely in his office, accepted the letter I'd brought from old Doctor Farbsund, read it several times to make certain it wasn't a clever ruse designed to commit me into his hands, and cleared his throat.

I remember that I sat there nervously on the edge of my chair while bearded little Doctor Hovlock peered appraisingly at me over the top of his be-ribboned specs.

"So you are a pupil of Doctor Farbsund?" he said, after a minute of silence.

I didn't realize it then, but there was evidence—as long ago as it was—of the psychiatrist mistrusting the obvious.

"Yes, sir," I said.

"And you wish the opportunity to make your own analysis of one of my patients?"

I nodded. "Yes, sir."

"Ahhh," said little Doctor Hovlock, tugging at his small beard.

"It will be my first attempt at such an analysis alone," I said shakily.

"Of course," said Doctor Hovlock. "Of course."

"Doctor Farbsund said that you are to give me no data whatsoever on the patient you permit me to interview," I said. "He wants to see how closely—in a rough way, of course—I can come to your own conclusions on the case."

"I understand that," said Doctor Hovlock. "I was just deciding which patient would be best suited for the purpose."

I waited breathlessly, while the little psychiatrist closed his eyes and thought. At last he opened them again.

"I think the patient in Room Ten might be interesting to you," he said. "His case is peculiar, and yet comparatively simple. He is a former actor—the son of a wealthy banking family, oddly enough—who gained some small prestige on the stage during the eight or ten years of his career. He was brought here by his family shortly after he started running advertisements in the newspapers."

"Advertisements?" I blinked. "What sort of advertisements?"

"Just a moment," said Doctor Hovlock, "and I shall show you one of them."

He rose from his desk and walked over to a small file case. For a minute or more he thumbed through its contents until he found what he wanted.

"Ah!" He turned away from the case, a small scrap of paper torn from a newspaper in his hand. He resumed his seat behind his desk, handing me the scrap of newsprint as he did so. "Advertisements of this nature," he explained.

I LOOKED down at a section obviously taken from the personal column of a daily newspaper. Circled with a red pencil was one advertisement.

**Have You Seen Me?  
I cannot find myself.  
Is there a me?  
Do you know?  
Please communicate with  
Guy Dawlis, Embassy Theater,  
at once, if you have seen me.  
This is urgent!  
Guy Dawlis.**

I had to read it over a second time. I couldn't believe it. It was one of the craziest items I'd ever seen in a personal column in my life.

"Was this some publicity stunt?" I asked, adding, "I mean, something to do with his being an actor?"

Doctor Hovlock shook his head.

"Not at all. The advertisements, it soon developed, were not any publicity stunt. They were the actual manifestations of the young man's mental condition. This was proved when he started asking his friends and family the same questions."

"You mean he actually thought he had lost himself?" I demanded.

Doctor Hovlock nodded. "Exactly."

"But what did he mean? What brought on that condition? How was—"

The bearded little psychiatrist raised his hand, cutting me off in mid-stride.

"Those are questions which I will leave you to determine in your interview with young Dawlis," he said. "His case, I repeat, although unusual, is really rather simple. See how close you come in your analysis of it."

"Yes, sir," I said in a voice that trembled with eagerness.

Little Doctor Hovlock rose.

"Come along," he said.

We went out into a corridor where the bearded little doctor signalled a white coated male attendant who had been sitting at the far end reading a magazine.

"Take this gentleman to see Mr. Dawlis in Room Ten, Robert," said Doctor Hovlock. "He is to be permitted an uninterrupted interview of half an hour. When he has finished, escort him back here."

Robert, the male attendant, was a big, red-necked, muscular giant whose prime utility around the institution was obvious at a glance.

"Another psychiatry student?" he asked, a trifle derisively, when Doctor Hovlock had gone back into his office.

I admitted that I was, and self-consciously shifted my blank form papers into my other hand.

"Come on, then," said Robert, belching ungently. "I'll introduce you to Shakespeare."

"Shakespeare?" I asked. "Does he think he's Shakespeare?"

Robert shook his head. "Naw. But he's the damnedest ham I ever seen in all my life."

Robert marched on ahead of me, and I hurried after him down the hall. At the end of the corridor we came to some stairs up which Robert guided me to the second floor. Then he led me down a heavily carpeted hallway until we came to a room door marked, 10. Robert knocked with surprising gentleness on this door.

It opened an instant later, although there had been no sound from inside the room.

A TALL, rather handsome young man in his early thirties stood in the doorway. He was wearing an expensively tailored silk lounging robe and his black, uncut, wavy hair was uncombed.

He stared at us in surprise for an instant, then a flicker of swift hope flashed through his blue eyes.

"Hove I been found?" he demanded.

I started to answer, but Robert beat me to the punch.

"Naw," he said. "But this here gentleman has come here to talk to you about your trouble."

The hope died in the young man's eyes as quickly as it had been born. He ran one hand dramatically through his wild black hair.

"When sorrows come," he said, "they come not single spies!" He stepped back from the door, and with a sweep of his hand, added: "I bid thee, stranger, enter!"

I looked uncertainly at Robert. The massive attendant was turning away to get back to his magazine, and I knew that asking him to hang around would be useless. I stepped into the room.

The young man closed the door behind us as I was looking around the place. It was a sitting room, I saw, comfortably furnished. Through a door at one end I caught a glimpse of a more than ample bedroom, mentally checking the fact that his parents evidently had plenty of money to hide their family skeleton in such style.

"Be seated; pray be seated," said the young man.

I SAW a comfortable armchair near a window and went quickly over to it, glad to relieve my watery knees. My first solo venture into psychiatric analysis had me more jittery than I'd imagined it would.

"My name—" I began, sitting down.

Young Dawlis cut me off with a vague wave of his hand.

"Of what matter is it to me?" he asked. "I know you are one of them."

"One of them?" I repeated uncertainly.

"One of the curious," he said. "On those papers in your hand you will jot down curious facts concerning the curious pattern that has been my life until now. From those facts you will try to determine what ails me."

"I, uh, want only to try to help you," I said.

"Only by finding me can you help me," my subject declared bitterly. Suddenly he sighed. "But what matter that you cannot? It will do no harm to tell my tale to you."

"If you would let me ask you—" I began.

Young Dawlis cut me off with another gesture of his hand.

"You need ask me nothing. I will tell you the story of my life. I will tell it to you from the beginning, and you can make your jottings as I go along."

I knew that I'd gotten off to a poor start, but I figured that I might as well let him run with the ball a bit until I could hit on a way of getting it back in my own hands.

"Please do," I said.

"I was born an actor," he began.

"But your parents—" I broke in, in spite of myself.

The young man glared at me. "My father is a banker, my parents had no theatrical background in either of their families. I am very well aware of that. But I repeat, I was born an actor. I must have been. Undoubtedly, with my first cries I sought attention and hurled myself into the role of sweet and helpless infancy."

The train had suddenly jumped the tracks for me. I showed my bewilderment in my expression.

"If you will hear me further, you will understand," said young Dawlis. "In saying that I acted as a baby, I mean merely that I acted as much as could be possible for an unthinking infant."

I decided to humor him. "I see," I said. "I understand perfectly."

A strange gleam came into his eyes. "The hell you do," he snapped. "But that doesn't make any difference. You will soon enough. We will skip ray early infancy, since it is beyond your comprehension. We'll pick up my life at the age of five years, if that will be more simple for you."

I didn't say anything to that. There wasn't much I could say.

"You are undoubtedly aware that children at the age of five play with toys, make up games, live in worlds of fancy?" young Dawlis asked sarcastically.

"At even earlier ages—" I began defensively, forgetting my role momentarily.

Dawlis cut me off with a wave of his hand. "We are starting my history at that age," he said. "Let us not go back any farther. The point is this: As a child of five, playing the games of a child of five, the first full forces of my imagination began to be evident."

"I, ah, don't quite understand," I said.

"In my games," said the actor, "I went much farther in my flights of fancy than other children. I played a war game, for example, with a little boy next door. I *became a soldier*. Only the intervention of my governess saved me from killing that boy with one of my father's guns."

HE STOOD there, eyes flashing, arms crossed, staring at me to see that that point sank in. On my blank form I jotted: "*At age of five homicidal urge evident. Reason?*"

"At the age of six," Dawlis continued, after giving me time to make my note, "I became interested in Indians. At every opportunity I took to the woods until my family was sick with worry from running after me. One night I scalped my father."

"Scalped your father?" I exclaimed.

Dawlis smiled reflectively. "I *was* an Indian, don't you see? Of course I did a clumsy job. I only gave the old boy a few minor gashes in his skull."

I made another note. "*Homicidal tendency still pronounced at six. Reason?*"

Dawlis had watched me scribble the notation. He smiled, in a sort of grimly satisfied way. Then he resumed his narration.

"It was pretty much the same during the next two or three years that followed. I wanted to be a cowboy. I *was* a cowboy for almost a year. I tried to brand a policeman's horse, and the animal gave me a kick that put me in the hospital for three weeks."

I leaned forward excitedly. Maybe there was something here.

"A concussion perhaps?" I asked.

"I wasn't kicked where you can get a concussion," Dawlis answered. "But the kick is of no importance. I am merely trying to highlight for you some of the incidents indicating the strength of my growing ability to project myself headlong into whatever characterization interested my childish fancy. And I am merely trying to point out to you that there was no time during my childhood when I wasn't acting a part."

"But surely there were times when these childish dream-wishes of yours were absent," I said. "Undoubtedly, like many normal children, you lived adventurous little roles in your mind. But normally, you were a growing boy and nothing more, weren't you?"

"That," said Dawlis, "is the point I am stressing. I was never a normal child. Even when being punished by my parents I was playing a role. When sent to bed without supper I was *Oliver Twist* and my father was *Fagin*. When I got my hand caught in the kitchen drain pipe I was the boy with his thumb in the dyke, saving all *Holland*."

I made another notation. "*Perhaps unusually pronounced dream-flights. Delusions of grandeur unusually pronounced. Reason?*"

"It was about that time that I began noticing people," Dawlis went on. "Noticing their habits and mannerisms and smallest gestures. I began to mimic what I observed, and to put my new skill to use in playing the roles I chose. I was reading a lot, too. Everything I could get my hands on. The books I read gave me hundreds of new roles to play. The infinite variety gave me a chance never to be without some characterization other than my own. I was never myself, do you understand? I was always in a role."

I made a note about environmental effects and couldn't think of anything sensible to draw from it.

"At twelve and thirteen," Dawlis went on, "I became young Jack Strong-heart, a clean-living young chap who won his letter in sports at Rutgers. I carried this role to such perfection that my grammar school team awarded me the sportsmanship prizes in every contest."

*"Marked change in behavior pattern and attitude. Social consciousness appears. Reason?"* That was my notation when he paused again.

"The role grew tiresome, of course," Dawlis went on. "And the Arsène Lupin influence resulted in my next role of gentleman thief. I pilfered here and there through my first several years of high school, never getting caught, until my father at last surprised me in an attempt to crack his wall safe. I was Jimmy Valentine for months after that, going straight. It was in my third year of high school that I found my interest in school plays. I joined the dramatic club, and from that association, assumed the role of the Great Actor. This determined my choice of a career. By becoming an actor, you see, I could insure myself against ever having to be anything like myself. My business would be such that it could not interfere with my borrowed characterizations, and off the stage I would be able to live in varying roles as they happened to fit my private life. It was perfect."

HE PAUSED long enough to give me time to make another notation. But for the life of me, I couldn't think of anything to jot down. I was getting far too confused.

"I was in college only long enough to act in several freshman dramatic productions," Dawlis went on. "My role then was of impatient genius chafing 'neath the chains of convention and family wishes. You see, my father still expected me to be a banker, like himself. In the middle of my first year at college I left school and set out on my own to become a great actor on the legitimate stage. The struggle that lay ahead did not deter me, for it presented the fascinating role of impoverished young man of ambition sleeping on park benches and fighting fate—a part straight from fiction. I played it to the hilt during the years that followed."

Dawlis ran a hand dramatically over his eyes.

"Ah, struggle," he murmured softly. Then he went on. "Eventually, I began to rise in my chosen profession. Small parts at first, then more sizable ones. Off the stage I continued to change my characterizations like neckties. There was a girl to whom I became engaged while enthralled with the role of earnest young lover. The engagement was broken purposely by me when I desired to don the characterization of a young man embittered by a shattered heart and thus left with only ambition. This self-chosen part, I feel sure, did much to aid in my rise toward minor prominence in the theater."

"But surely—" I began.

"Wait—don't interrupt," Dawlis said. "After several more years I married. Don't you see why? I was the young husband with a wife awaiting him in a vine-covered cottage. Even the tender affection I bestowed upon my bride was a characterization, not my own. And then, quite suddenly, my bride grew ill. During the months that followed I was a grief-crazed Poe, do you understand? It was a



magnificently emotional part, and I let no gesture of it escape me. When my wife died I walked from the church with shoulders bowed and a world shattered. The pathos of the characterization had been donned like an overcoat, even though I played it splendidly."

Dawlis paused again, running his hand through his wild black hair.

"And a wind came out of the sea," he whispered. He held the pose a minute, then resumed his narration.

"After that I was Sidney Carton, straight from the *Tale of Two Cities*. I was the brilliant drunkard, an excellent part, drowning the grief and the frustration of love inside me with liquor, going to seed and damnation with a bitterly sardonic smile." He paused to smile reminiscently. "I had always wanted to play Sidney Carton, and that was an excellent chance. I could not resist it."

The smile left his face and his eyes grew shining and noble.

"It is a far better thing I do than I have ever done before," he murmured. Then he sighed, spreading his hands expressively. "There was exquisite poignancy in the role, but it couldn't last forever. I snapped out of it, and became a fallen man rising once more from the degradation brought on him by tragedy. That was a good part, too."

I WASN'T making any more notations. I was just sitting there gaping wordlessly at him.

"My rise back to prominence started a little over a year ago," young Dawlis said. "I returned to the stage, and in a short time was given a decent part in a prominent play. On opening night this play went over tremendously. After the last curtain the producer rushed up to me, pounded me on the back and shook my hand and spoke the fatal words."

Now I was really puzzled. "The fatal words?" I echoed.

Dawlis nodded slowly. "Yes. The producer said: 'Dawlis, you've proved yourself. Your comeback is assured. *From now on you'll be yourself again!*'"

The young actor paused there dramatically, to let the words sink in. But I didn't get them. They didn't sink. Dawlis saw this on my face.

"Don't you see?" he demanded. "The producer told me to be *myself!* He told me that, and the word, *yourself* stunned me with its implication. I suddenly realized that I had never been myself. I don't know how or why it was that that was the first time I realized that fact. The important thing is that I became suddenly, terrifyingly aware that I had never been myself."

I was holding tight to the sled as he rounded those turns. It was all I could do to keep my grip as he continued.

"I went back to my dressing room in a daze," Dawlis said. "The daze was undoubtedly an act, a characterization, taken from some long forgotten part. Through my mind again and again ran the realization that I wasn't real, *that I had never been real*, that I had always been the personification of something which was a million miles from being *actually me*."

I could sense a sharp curve coming up, so I grabbed the sides of the conversational sled even tighter than before.

"And if I hadn't been real, had never been myself," Davis went on excitedly, voice rising, "how did I know if there actually was a me?" He paused. "How did I know

that there had ever been a me?" His voice fell to a stage whisper. "I sat down in my dressing room and tried to be myself. Nothing happened. I had no success. I knew that, even as I tried desperately to be myself, I was nothing but a conglomeration of a thousand parts, a thousand emotions, gestures, postures and poses. I couldn't find myself in that maze of characterizations. Somewhere back in the maelstrom of a thousand roles there might be me, the real me. But how was I to know? How was I ever to find myself? It was terrifying, sitting there and realizing that I was not real, that I was nothing but the product of a suddenly terrifying dream world."

"What did you do?" a voice croaked hoarsely. It was my own.

"At first I grew frantic," Dawlis declared. "And the knowledge that my frantic behavior was in itself a role made me even worse. At last I calmed down enough to rationalize. It was then that I hit on the plan of a slow, careful search. The idea of advertising seemed my only chance to ascertain if there was anyone who could realize my plight and aid me in finding myself. It proved not only futile, but the action which resulted in my ending up here, in this sanitarium, pleading my case to you and others like you." Dawlis sighed, dropping his outspread hands to his side. His shoulders slumped wearily. "I have lost myself," he said quietly. "I am not real. I have never been real."

THERE was a silence of fully a minute. Finally I cleared my throat. Swiftly, I was searching for something to say. In the spell of the young thespian's eloquence and dramatic delivery I had temporarily quite forgotten I was listening to a loony. Now, of course, that fact returned crystal clear. And half an instant later, another idea crystallized an exciting idea.

"Mr. Dawlis!" I exclaimed. "Do you realize what has been happening while you've been talking?"

The young actor stared moodily at me.

"No," he said. "But it can be of no consequence."

"Of no consequence?" I yelped. "Why, man, it's of tremendous consequence. While you were talking, while you were telling me the story of your life, you were being yourself! You were looking objectively at yourself, *as yourself!* Mr. Dawlis—look no further, you have at last found the real you!"

There was no change of expression on Dawlis' face nor in his moody eyes. Slowly, he shook his head.

"How little you know," he said. Now his expression changed, and a zany smirk touched the corners of his handsome mouth.

"I was not standing off, being myself, as you say," he declared. "I was playing, in case you were not aware of it, young Hamlet in the throes of madness. It is a role to which I have become particularly attached since my confinement here. You and the others who come snooping around with your paper and pencils and questions give me an opportunity to polish it."

From my momentary crest of elation I dropped to low level flying. Desperately, I tried one last stab.

"Mr. Dawlis," I begged him, "isn't there anything you can do to rid yourself of those poses? If you could eliminate them completely, you'd be bound to be left as your true self."

"You think so?" Dawlis inquired sardonically.

"It's logical, at any rate," I urged him. "Can't you try?"

Dawlis smiled a peculiarly sardonic smile. Maybe he was playing Sidney Carton.

"I've tried that," he said. "Don't think I haven't."

"And nothing happened?" I asked.

"When I dropped my conglomeration of roles completely—forced them out of my mind utterly?" he asked.

"Yes, of course. That's what I mean," I said patiently. "You say you've tried it. Well—if you did, what happened?"

"Just a minute," said Dawlis. He held up his hand, closing his eyes and knitting his brows in concentration. "I'm getting rid of all the poses," he whispered half a minute later. "I can do it, but it isn't easy. I have to try very hard. Very hard!"

"Try harder," I suggested.

DAWLIS had a beatific, out-of-this-world expression on his face now. He held up one hand dramatically for attention, as if he wasn't getting enough of it already.

"Now!" he hissed dramatically, "The hodge-podge of make believe that is my *unreal* self is leaving. One by one, I am driving my roles and my poses from my being."

If that was what he was doing, there was no physical manifestation of it. No shadowy, wavering, cloaked figures trooping out of his body or anything like that, I mean.

"An instant!" hissed Dawlis. "An instant and the last of them will be gone."

I shifted my weight from the right foot to the left, trying to be patient. And in that instant it happened.

He wasn't.

Wasn't. Yes, that's the word. Just wasn't. There wasn't a sign of Guy Dawlis anywhere in the room! My eyes had left him for the briefest flicker of a second, and when they returned to where he should have been standing—he was gone!

Of course I turned quickly around, expecting to see him whizzing out the door on me. But the door was closed, and hadn't been opened by anyone. There hadn't been time for that. No one could have been quick enough to dash around me in the flicker of an eye and get out the door without creating considerable attention. No one.

Slowly, very slowly, I looked around the room.

There was, of course, absolutely no sign of Guy Dawlis. I took a deep breath. A very deep breath. I also took a firm grasp on my sanity, or what I had considered to be my sanity.

"Dawlis!" I croaked. "Dawlis!"

There wasn't a sound. Not a single sound. I closed my eyes and tried again.

"Dawlis," I said, "you can come out, now. You've had your fun. You can come out from wherever you're hiding."

I was answered by a loud, laughing peal of silence.

Slowly, I toured the room, looking everywhere but under the carpets. Finally I was back where I started from. Uneasily, I began to be aware of an exceedingly

peculiar sensation. The sensation of being *watched*. Yes, watched by *unseen eyes*, if you want to use the old cliché.

I couldn't get rid of that feeling, and with every second it was growing stronger. Pretty soon I didn't feel I was being watched. I *knew* it.

Guy Dawlis was still in that room. And he was watching me. There was no question of it. Very nonchalantly—oh-so-casually—I gathered up my things and started for the door. I wasn't at all sure that my knees would hold me up long enough to reach it.

But they did. And they performed admirably as I started my mad dash out of there. Out of the house, I mean. No, I didn't stop downstairs to chat with the head of the booby hatch. I didn't take time to saunter up to his desk and remark in an offhand way:

"Thanks for the use of your star loony. You can have him back now, if you can find him."

No, I didn't do any of that. I was exceptionally rude, I guess, in my haste to get the hell away. I'm sure, of course, that my rudeness and strange behavior was reported to my instructor, and that that old quack told the other old quack that he couldn't imagine what had gotten into me. I'm sure of that, even though I never saw my dear, learned, cocksure psychological mentor again—ever.

THE papers, several days later, reported that a young man named Guy Dawlis had disappeared from a rest sanitarium, and that he was formerly an actor and that his people were worried about what had happened to him.

I watched the papers carefully for a long time after that. Watched the papers while beginning my instructions in a good, solid, substantial school of mechanical engineering. There was never anything more about young Dawlis.

So there you have it. The story, and the explanation for the story, without any attempts to tell or explain anything except exactly what happened.

Maybe my old professor could have explained it. He and his comrade in charlatanry, the head of the nut home, probably worked out a beautiful explanation for it all between them. And they probably tacked a big word on it that meant escapism or something similar, and thought that that took care of the explanation for Dawlis' running away from the rest home.

Of course they'd be sure he ran away. What else could he have done? I could have told them what else he could have done. I could have told them what he *had done*.

But I didn't want them thinking up a name to explain me. I'm very satisfied with the name I have.

It's Napoleon...

