

Souls Enslaved

by Henry Treat Sperry, 1902-1938

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Three bodies Barton Mowrey had—and the last of them knew naught of the peace of death, but only eternal agony in that world of howling winds and screaming, tortured souls!

HOW shall I begin my tale? How can I tell it, when to write these words must create anew for me the horrors I have lived? Yet I must tell it, for to millions of suffering souls on this earth my message can bring hope of salvation. I alone can speak; and because I have lived these things, you must believe me...

It began a long time back, with my interest in the life after death. My interest, that became at last a powerful preoccupation of which I could not rid myself. After that, came my shuddering fear of ectoplasm...

If you have ever attended a genuine séance, then you know a little of ectoplasm, that weird manifestation for which no scientist has yet found an explanation. You can picture again that dim-lit room, the tense faces circled about the medium as she goes into her trance. Then the ectoplasm appears—a hideous, gelatinous substance that proceeds from the ears and eyes and mouth of the medium. Like a thing alive it projects its snakelike tentacles about the room, leaving behind it weird proof of its existence, perhaps the fingerprints of one long dead. It returns then to the place from whence it sprang. Yet the substance has never, upon autopsy, been discovered in the body of a medium!

If you have seen this, then perhaps you have felt a little of the terror and the nameless fear which always seized me in the presence of this phenomenon. I could never find reason for the fear, could never explain it logically; but because the thing called ectoplasm terrified me, it fascinated me as well. The study of things psychic became my hobby. And in time I came to know, as surely as if it were my destiny, that I must bring all the power of my scientific mind to bear upon this one problem. Somehow I must succeed in subjecting ectoplasm to laboratory analysis!

I thought I knew the dangers inherent in such a task. I knew that scientists had thus far refrained as much in fear of the ultimate effect upon the medium as for any other reason—that they had hesitated to sever a specimen of this living organism from a medium's body, knowing that it might result in death or hideous torture to the subject. Yet I knew not one-tenth of the horrors in store for me—my just recompense for meddling in matters that are not of this earth.

It was at the salon of Madame Fierbois that I first saw the phenomenon, and I went there again and again. She was a kindly, charming Frenchwoman, a truly honest medium, who exercised her powers only in the sincere hope that they might benefit humanity. I came to know her well; and it was she in the end who asked to serve as the subject for the experiment which had become my ruling passion. I demurred; but she was insistent, and at last the day was set.

That same week I met Jeanne Fierbois, the medium's daughter, who had just returned from a convent school in Europe—and thus the two threads of my life were interwoven. She was a fragile, fairy-like creature, as unreal as the life about her. I can truthfully say that the moment she entered the room my heart stopped beating. I had never beheld a more exquisite creature; in that moment I felt her delicate fingers entwined forever around my heart.

From that day I was constantly at Madame Fierbois' home. I loved Jeanne madly. In time I came to feel that she returned, in some measure, my love.

There was but one dark shadow to mar my happiness—the man Aubrey DeJonge. Jeanne had met him on her voyage home, and now he was a constant visitor. He was a strange, dark-haired fellow—obviously a foreigner, though he associated himself with no country—in fact, he seemed to have no past and no birthplace.

DeJonge, too, appeared interested in psychic matters. He discussed them at length with Madame Fierbois, and seemed to know whereof he spoke. But what maddened me was his interest in Jeanne. When I came hoping for a moment with her, I found him always present. Worst of all, I saw that his gracious ways were slowly winning her affection—winning her from me...

He loved Jeanne as much as I—that I could not doubt. But his interest in things psychic, in Madame Fierbois' ability to create ectoplasm, I felt to be affected. It was but a ruse, I thought, to ingratiate himself with Madame Fierbois, to bring himself closer to Jeanne.

I could not know that his interest masked something far more sinister. Nor could I know that my psychic meddling was to bring about my own horrible death.

ON the day set for the experiment which was to realize my ambition, I could hardly contain myself for my excitement. Excitement—and fear. There were five of us present at Madame Fierbois' salon—the medium, Jeanne, myself and DeJonge, who had come at Jeanne's request, bringing with him a strange lad in his teens who, he explained, was also a medium and much interested in the experiment. DeJonge smiled condescendingly as I rushed nervously about, preparing my instruments.

Then Madame Fierbois slowly entered the trance state. I waited, breathless. After another ten minutes, the ectoplasm began to appear from her eyes and nose and mouth.

I think I stood, frozen, unable to move, for minutes. My first sight of the weird white flow seemed to fill me with a dread and a horror greater than I had ever before known in its presence. I could not force myself to do my task.

Yet at last, somehow, I managed to go forward with my scalpel. I cut off a small segment of the ectoplasm. I dropped it into a test-tube which I had ready, and which I carefully sealed.

I turned then to an examination of Madame Fierbois. She was breathing easily. The remaining ectoplasm had disappeared at my excision, but no blood had flowed. We were all confident that she would soon come out of her trance, with no untoward effects whatsoever from the slight operation.

When I was assured that this was so, I could wait no longer. With my specimen, I hurried from the house. I did not seek to fathom DeJonge's enigmatic smile; I must reach my laboratory and complete my experiment...

I was there ten minutes later. Everything had been arranged in advance, and quickly, now, I set in place the slide bearing my specimen, and adjusted the microscope. With a sharp intake of breath, I bent to look...

But at that moment, a sound jangled through the stillness of the laboratory. It was the telephone on my desk. I whirled, startled.

Ordinarily in such a moment I would have ignored all sound. Yet now I did not. For to my over-tense nerves, that simple ringing of the bell was as the clap of doom.

All thought of my experiment for the moment gone, I rushed across the room, picked up the receiver.

It was Jeanne. I could tell even as she spoke that she was sobbing—sobbing hysterically.

"Barton!" she cried. "Mother is dead!" Then the accusing words tumbled out in torrents: "You killed her, Barton Mowrey!"

For a moment I was too stunned to answer. Somehow I must have known that this would happen—for it was not really surprise that I felt, but only a stunned helplessness.

"Good God" I said at last. "I'll be over at once. Perhaps—"

Her cold words cut in before I had finished. "It isn't necessary. Aubrey is here. He'll—attend to everything. He—*he* is not a murderer." I heard a click as she broke the connection.

Wearily I replaced the receiver on the hook and stood staring about me. Then, abruptly, I remembered. My specimen! The loss of that had killed Madame Fierbois. Her sacrifice must not be in vain. Now, more than ever, I must learn its weird secret.

I rushed back to the microscope. I bent over it and looked down...

I never really saw what the specimen looked like. For in that instant a flash of blinding light seemed to strike at the base of my brain. The whole world and the mystic truth behind it burst before my eyes, was whirling in my head. In that moment before I ceased to know, I understood without the words to tell it all the reason for my fear of ectoplasm...

Time was no more; it seemed but an instant later that awareness returned to me. It was a strange awareness too; I seemed to be light as air, to float in infinite space with all sounds a humming nothingness about me.

I looked around. I was still in my laboratory—felt as if I were above the level to which my height should take me. I looked down...

What I saw seemed to send over me a physical chill; yet it could not have been physical. For below me, sprawled on the floor of the laboratory, was the mass that had been my body! I was dead...

WHAT happened to me from that moment on cannot be accurately told in words, for no words of the human language can express the eerie quality of life after the soul has been freed from the body. I saw without eyes; I felt without the body to mirror my feelings; I heard and yet I did not hear, for I had no ears with which to receive the waves of sound. Yet since there is no other way, the pitiable words we know must suffice to tell the agonies of that moment and of those which followed.

For a time I hovered over my body, sick with horror. I did not feel that my time had come, and I wanted very much to live. Without knowing why, I felt that some dread human agency had been acting against me, that I *must* live again to *fight* that agency. Frantically I tried to reenter my body, thinking that I might in some way stir it back to life. But always I came upon a blank, impassable wall the nature of which I could not fathom.

Then, breaking in upon the fearful silence of my thoughts, there came the sound of footsteps. They were outside the room, dashing up the steps. Now they were at the door. Someone pounded wildly on it.

When there was no answer, a voice cried out to me. It was Jeanne —come to face me with her accusations!

Good God! I thought. She must not see me there! I must find some way to stop her, to bar the door. With all the force of my will I tried then to give myself being, to endow myself with some physical power, however faint.

But all my strivings were of no more avail than a wisp of wind on a mountain-top. I was less even than the faintest breeze.

The door flung open. Jeanne, her dark eyes bright with sorrow, burst into the room. And just behind her, with measured certain tread, walked Aubrey DeJonge.

At sight of my body lying on the floor, Jeanne started backward, clapped her hands to her mouth in horror. For an instant she stood thus, stock-still. Then she rushed forward, bent over my body. She put her arms around it; and with tears streaming down her pale cheeks, she kissed it again and again.

New happiness swept over me as I realized that it was I, not DeJonge, whom she truly loved. For a moment I forgot that her love had come too late—that I was dead, beyond all mortal love...!

DeJonge came forward slowly, a half smile upon his thin lips. He bent down, pushed Jeanne a little away—rather rudely, it seemed to me. He examined the body carefully.

"Yes," he said as he rose—and now I knew there was a note of triumph in his voice. "He is quite dead. Suicide, without a doubt. He couldn't stand the responsibility of your mother's death. Come..." He took one of Jeanne's hands. "This is a matter for the police. There is no need to involve ourselves. We'll leave him as we found him..."

Anger flamed in Jeanne's eyes at his words. She drew her hand sharply away. "Leave him?" she cried. "At such a time? Never!" She clung to me fiercely.

There was more than anger in DeJonge's eyes then; there was glittering menace and malevolence such as I had never seen before. "So..." he said. "You love him still"

"I love him!" Jeanne cried. "I have always loved him—I know that now."

"And you do not love me?"

There was no slightest tinge of doubt in Jeanne's voice as she answered: "No!"

Even in death, the stark hatred that flared in DeJonge's eyes at her answer horrified me. "In that case," he said, "we shall remain here as you wish. For if you do not love me, I have other uses for you..."

Jeanne started back from him at his words. "What do you mean?" she cried. "I hate you! Go away and leave me here—with Barton..."

DeJonge stepped over to the door, locked it, and placed the key in his pocket. Then he turned about and walked slowly toward Jeanne.

"You do not understand," he said coolly. "You see, I killed your friend the good Doctor Mowrey. I also killed your mother. I need not explain just how... It is enough to tell you that because I killed them as I did their souls are doomed to wander lost through all eternity. Now I know that I can do the same to others—and because of that I can possess the world!"

Slowly as he spoke he moved toward her, and slowly Jeanne moved away in terror. Good God! Was the man mad? And yet that was no light of madness in his eyes...

"So you, my lovely Jeanne," he said, "since you do not love me—shall serve as my next experiment. And when I have done with your soul, who knows—perhaps I can find uses for your lovely body...!"

Jeanne screamed, backed further away. But DeJonge only laughed.

"Cry out if you wish," he said. "You see, we have an excellent laboratory for our—experiment. The doctor very kindly saw to it that the walls were

soundproofed. There are no windows. No cry that you make will be heard in the streets below..." He laughed again.

Jeanne had reached the further corner of the room in her retreat. She too had looked into DeJonge's eyes—and terror was upon her. The blood had left her face; her eyes were wide with fear. Yet she bore up gamely. Knowing that she could retreat no further, she seized a tiny scalpel from the nearby table and held it firmly before her—determined to keep up the futile struggle to the end.

I cried out madly—and my cry was a whisper lost in the depths of space. Frantically my bodiless soul swooped down upon DeJonge, tried as it would have in life to fight with him, to throttle him, to stop his sure advance. But he was not even aware of my presence. He moved forward, smiling...

I rushed back to my cooling body. I summoned all the struggling power of my horror-stricken soul to fight my way back into it. I *must* get back to it—I *must* come back to life! I knew not what fearful fate it was that menaced my beloved, yet I knew that death could be as nothing in comparison. Her soul—lost through all eternity!

But as before my struggles were futile. Yet there must be some way that still escaped my thought. And even as I struggled I felt myself in the grip of a power stronger than myself. I felt my soul being drawn slowly but irresistibly away from the girl I loved. In her moment of greatest need I moved, struggling, away toward darkness, toward a timeless, whirling space. This truly must be death.

I looked back once before blackness swept over me. DeJonge held Jeanne's wrists in his lean dark hands. He had twisted the scalpel, her last defense, from her hand. Slowly he drew her toward him, stilling her struggles.

My dreams will never be free from the memory of the stark terror and fear of the hideous unknown that I saw then on Jeanne's face.

OUT of nowhere, the wind came to howl mournfully, and returned to nothingness. I could see nothing, feel nothing in the blackness, yet I knew that all about me was bleak, hard barrenness. And there dinned upon my soul weird shrieks, howling, cries that were foul blasphemies. And still I rushed onward, impelled by an unknown force, as if I were an integral part of this dark river.

I was on the barren plain of timeless space, alone with the howling of the wind and the shrieks of the damned in pain!

Yet even now I sensed a lessened pressure on me, a gradual slowing of my onward movement. The howl of the wind was dying, had fallen to mere whisperings. The cries of the damned swept away into silence. I stopped, floated aimlessly about. Now I was truly alone...

But the darkness seemed almost at once to lose its intensity. Then I sensed another presence near me. I could not see it, and I think it had no form; yet I knew at once, with a rush of joy and hope, that it was the spirit of the kindly Madame Fierbois, Jeanne's mother! At least I was no longer alone in space; perhaps she could help me, help Jeanne...

Then we were speaking to one another. Speaking is not the term, for we voiced no words; yet only by words can I hope to convey, and then but poorly, the meaning of the things which Madame Fierbois communicated to me.

"I have come back from far beyond this place to help you," she said, "because I know you are not ready for death—and because I know the fearful fate in store for Jeanne. You only can possibly save her. For no living person can reach her in time..."

I tried to tell her that both she and I had been condemned to the same fate as Jeanne: that even now Jeanne was struggling to save her very soul and that we must hurry back. But she seemed already to know all these things.

"For us," she said, "there is no need to hurry—for to us there is no time. We shall be able to reach Jeanne quickly enough, though I fear we cannot save her. We must try—but first you must know these things that I know. Had you not died before your time, you would at once have known them..."

"Yes," she said, "Aubrey DeJonge, while still alive, has learned the secret of the second body—of ectoplasm! And he has learned more. With the aid of the boy medium who is in his power, he has succeeded in robbing us of our ectoplasm. That killed us—not your experiment. He chose me because he knew me to be peculiarly susceptible when in the trance state—you because he hated you. But he knows now that he can do the same to others. He can thus attack the world—enslave humanity with the threat of the fearful fate in store for them—of their death at his command, and worse. And this is what he means to do..."

She explained to me, then, that all humans have three bodies—the first, the material body that we know in life; the second, or transitional body by which the soul, after death, makes its way to the life beyond; and the third, which is the soul.

"The second body," she told me, "is composed of what we call ectoplasm. It leaves the body after death—though only in the case of mediums in the trance state is it ever discernible. Only by means of it can the soul enter or leave the material body.

"For me this is not true, for I was a medium. I had friends beyond, was always close to the dead; I can still pass through to the true Beyond. But to other humans it spells unnameable horror. For them the loss of the transitional body at the instant of death means eternal agony!

"Because you died thus, Barton Mowrey, unless you can return to life you are forever lost! You will stay for all eternity in this fearful darkness. You can never go beyond this howling black nothingness!

"Jeanne will be lost here too—yet you can never meet. A million others will be alone forever in the darkness. The threat of this fate hangs over all humanity in DeJonge's strange power..."

I cried out to her in shuddering horror at the thought. Must we not then hurry to save Jeanne? Was there even now any hope that I might leave this fearful place and live again?

"I think there is hope," she said. "But you must do each thing I tell you to do. Come, we shall go together..."

OUT of the night we came, swifter than light, leaving that fearful nothingness behind us. We were in my laboratory once again.

Jeanne's struggles had ceased. Her clothes half torn from her young body, she lay, bound and helpless, on a table. Above her bent DeJonge, a fiendish light in

his eyes as he anointed her head and breasts with the devil's brew which would further his designs. Beside him sat the boy, his medium, summoned there for his devilish work. My useless body still lay upon the floor; none save these three, it seemed, yet knew that I had died.

I knew now, without knowing how I knew, just what DeJonge would do to Jeanne—just what his methods, compound of sorcery and psychic science, were. This anointing oil he used—a little of which he had managed to spill upon Madame Fierbois and myself without our knowledge—had the strange effect of stilling for a moment the functions of the body as if in death. Soul and ectoplasm then would leave the body—but at the moment of their leaving DeJonge would act. In that instant when the ties that bound soul and ectoplasm were weakened, he would direct the second body of the boy medium to seize upon the ectoplasm of the one attacked, severing it from the soul and uniting it with DeJonge's own!

And with Jeanne he would do more than this. With her second body imprisoned and her soul left to wander in blackness, he would make use of her material body as he wished! Through the power of her ectoplasm which he had seized, and by a swift counter-application to minimize the effect of the anointing oil, he meant to bring her body back to life! The soulless body of the white-faced girl who lay there helpless would be his slave to do with as he desired.

Already DeJonge's plans were nearing completion. The boy was in a trance, and as I watched, the loathsome ectoplasm began to pour from his eyes and mouth. DeJonge touched this, then began to speak. He spoke in Latin, calling on the evil shades of the outer air for aid in what he meant to do. And I knew that the end of that exhortation would spell a dread eternity of horror for the girl I loved!

If a bodiless soul can go mad, then I was in that moment a raving madman. Always Madame Fierbois told me the things I must do, yet it was as if she directed me without my knowledge, so mad was I with the lust to kill the body and the soul of Aubrey DeJonge.

To gain the first shred of material existence. I must identify my soul with the ectoplasm of the boy—I must gain it over the desires of his own soul, which controlled his second body! I swooped down, like the madman I was, to do so. Yet even in death my soul recoiled from the horrible substance. I felt myself being driven away...

But Jeanne's terrified face was still before me—the fate in store for her a burning thing in my memory. I summoned all my will-power. Shuddering, I forced my soul into the hideous mass. And I knew again, dimly, the feel of living as I had not when my soul roamed alone.

Only now could this have been accomplished. Only when the boy was in a trance, his second body pouring forth and the ties that bound soul and body weakened, could I have found this haven for my soul. Yet the struggle was not done.

His soul, weakened though it was still battled against me. It fought as one when the last hope is gone—yet it fought.

I mustered all my strength and courage. I tried to feel *alive*—to force it to submission by the very fact that I had being again and would not be put aside.

But it was Madame Fierbois who won for me. Somehow, in that moment her soul seemed to convince the soul of the boy that I was no enemy despite my fierce

struggle—that its true enemy was Aubrey DeJonge, my real antagonist. It realized in time, as the boy could not have realized when conscious, that I sought its aid and not its enmity.

With that knowledge the boy's soul lay dormant. It could not assist me, but its acquiescence was enough. I knew now that I controlled the boy's ectoplasm as if it were my own...

Abruptly then, I rushed upon DeJonge. At first I fought him as if this second body were the first. I wrapped the ectoplasm about him. I saw stark horror in his eyes as I sought to throttle him with the snakelike tentacles.

Yet even then he seemed to be breaking free, and I knew this way would not suffice. To save Jeanne—I realized now—*I must get at the soul of the man...*

Thinking this, I caused the ectoplasm to enter DeJonge's body. At a word of direction from Madame Fierbois, I was able to find and come in contact with his own second body.

There was a blinding flash about me. Abruptly I knew that the ectoplasm of the boy was leaving me to return to its rightful owner. And I had entered DeJonge's ectoplasm, identified myself with it. Or rather I, who had been robbed of my second body, was finding it in DeJonge, confined in his own. It was that which I had entered. And having entered it, I began the struggle with the soul of DeJonge for the right to live!

Words alone cannot suffice to tell of that fearful struggle. All about me was blackness; yet in the evil thing I faced I saw stark terror mirrored as I swooped to the attack.

Before the fierceness of my first onrush, that other soul seemed to strive to vanish, withdraw into some dark nothingness of its own. But I followed, sought it out.

I forced it, calling on the dark powers of hell for aid, to come forth to battle. And I saw now that it was no longer the soul of Aubrey DeJonge, but burning hate itself, and all the evil of the world since time began, that fought with me. And now it was conquering me!

Frantically I struggled. My soul too, seemed almost to lose identity, to become cold fear and horror itself. Slowly I was slipping, was being forced from my second body. Slowly I felt myself moving backward—backward into that bleak waste of howling winds and damned souls from which I had but now returned.

I called on Madame Fierbois and her friends in the Beyond for help. I called on God Himself to save my soul. Yet still I went backward, and the thousand burning eyes of hate and evil were all about me, enveloping me.

But my cry had not gone unheeded. Abruptly my soul was no longer alone in darkness. Light and hope and courage were beside me, were fighting for me.

The burning eyes of hate went dim, slipped far away into the darkness of hell. Before me in the soul of Aubrey DeJonge was now only gibbering fear. Fear that struggled desperately for a moment, then too was gone. There was nothing there now save silent submission and despair.

I had won.

Now that the soul of DeJonge had for the moment ceased to have power to control his second body, I could truly become myself again. With a powerful effort of my will, with a prayer to God and the spirits of good about me, I brought my

own ectoplasm out from the thing which confined it—from DeJonge's ectoplasm, which now lay quiescent, masterless. And my soul and ectoplasm flowed out from DeJonge's body. With my soul as master, my second body flowed toward my own physical body, entered it.

There was a flash of blinding blackness. Abruptly, full human consciousness returned to me. My once-more living body was rising from the floor where it had lain! I had come back from the dead!

Again I saw through eyes, felt floor beneath my feet, and heard sounds about me. Across the room, the boy was slumped apathetically in his chair. Jeanne still lay bound upon the table, but I saw in her eyes new hope and joy.

Then I saw DeJonge. He stood, feet outspread, seemingly waiting for me...

Like the madman that I was, I was across the room and upon him. I struck out at him fiercely, disregarding the blows he rained on me in return. Once he seized a scalpel and slashed at me; I felt the sharp burn of steel in my chest, but I did not stop.

His blows weakened. He backed away from me, mumbling incoherently. I caught him in a corner and rained blows upon him again.

It was not until five minutes later, when police burst down the door of my laboratory, that I came to my full senses and realized that during that time I had been pummeling a witless thing...

SO I came back like Lazarus from the dead. Yet unlike Lazarus, I alone of the living know that I truly died. Not even Jeanne knows the whole truth. I do not dare to tell her, for she might think me mad.

No, it is best to keep my own thoughts hidden. For we are very happy, Jeanne and I. People say that they have never seen so ideally-mated a couple. It is best not to risk marring such happiness.

Buried in my scientific labors, I meddle no more with psychic things. But sometimes I can not help but think of them... and thinking, I remember, and a great fear comes over me...

The boy medium is a normal boy again, his own master. But Aubrey DeJonge has never regained his reason. He is known as a harmless lunatic, and people pity him.

Yet none pity him so much as I—for I know the fate in store for him. I know that somehow in my weird battle for freedom his second body was harmed, so that he cannot die as others die. His soul will wander for eternity in that bleak barren waste of howling wind and shrieking souls, never to find rest. His fate is that which he planned for Jeanne and for myself. And I pity him, with all the compassion in my heart...

