

STAGE

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The

PHANTOM

of

EL MOROCCO

By DR. SEUSS

I am no believer in the supernatural. I am a practical American business man—voted for Hoover and would do so again. And if you were to tell me that *you* saw what *I* have been seeing, I'd hotly retort, "Rubbish!"

Yet I did see it, and here are the facts. I record them all, hoping to shed some light on this enigma that is shaking science to its very foundations.

On the afternoon of February twenty-fourth, my secretary, Miss Fetzter, had a permanent wave that refused to jell. On the twenty-fifth, -sixth, and -seventh she tried again. At noon on the twenty-seventh her coiffeur, Mr. Max Anschault, brought her back to my office, her hair still straight and her poor little body a bundle of nerves.

"There's something downright uncanny about this," he gasped, and left abruptly.

To get her mind off her hair, I coaxed her over to the Grand Central Palace where we took in the Gusset Show. A few quick gussets-and-sodas and Miss Fetzter felt better.

At one-thirty a.m., I met an old college chum, now a big Gusseteer. He suggested we repair to El Morocco for one of their juicy T-bone zebra steaks. An incident that I mention for what it may be worth occurred in the cab. When we started, Miss Fetzter was on my lap. But when we reached El Morocco, on my lap was Frank Sullivan. Miss Fetzter, evidently, had gone home to Flatbush.

Time passed, and then it was exactly twenty-nine. Somewhere out in the night a cock crowed . . . and the *awful thing* happened! The snout of every seltzer bottle in the place was blowing green smoke rings. They formed platoons directly above us. Then a big smoke ring emerged from the trombone and barked a brisk order. The platoons changed to building blocks, buckets, locomotives, and men, pile upon pile right over our heads. Terror curdled the roots of our hair.

PHANTOM

"Do something!" I gasped. Sullivan offered it a potato chip and the phantom vanished. We fled, hysterical, into the dawn.

The next day I phoned both the Gusseteer and Sullivan. Both, shaken to the core, agreed they had seen the apparition. *Yet, each denied the presence of the other.*

I vowed, shuddering, never to go back, yet for the next two weeks, every night about midnight, my feet would march, as if in mesmerized boots, back to Morocco. And at exactly two-twenty-nine I would see it again.

Today the place is a beehive of scientists. Foreign steamships are offering El Morocco excursions to psychology students. Bearded physics professors from Heidelberg, scouts from the *Scientific American*, spies sent from Harlem by Father Divine, all arguing, theorizing, conjecturing as they dance.

Even the servants are split into factions. One group, headed by the bus boy, doesn't believe I've seen it at all. The hat-check girl is more sympathetic. "Sure I believe in omens," she says. "Don't a green Christmas mean a full graveyard? Hell! That's what killed Looie."

But the most plausible solution came from Fradkin, my chauffeur.

"You know, sir," he said, driving me home one dawn. "If you ask *me*, sir, you're intercepting the spirit of a Mr. Bhekari Lal, a late Brahmin of Kamalpur, who's attempting to break through the veil and communicate with John Perona."

"Fradkin," I said finally, "is there a good *guru* in the East Fifties?"

"I know a corker, sir," answered Fradkin. "Pandit Sri Krishnakari, and if I may say so, sir, he radiates Power and Peace. Now, if you would seek *Jnana Yoga* (the mystic path to wisdom), I shall take you to where he is sitting in a *dhoti* (napkin), exuding cosmic comprehension."

Well, to make a long story short, I have found comfort in Yogi. I perform the breathing rites faithfully, and, *dhoti*-clad, stand on my head by the hour. And I think I'm on the track of an answer. Recently, standing on my head at the Aquarium, it came to me in the form of a parable:

"Oh salt not the clam of old Abraham,
Post not thy bullion by mail.
Rend not the fig from thy grandmother's wig,
For Gussie is taking the veil."