

THE FINGER OF GOD

A Dramatic Reading

by
Percival Wilde



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On a bitter cold night in winter, Strickland kneels before the grate fire in his living room burning some papers.

STRICKLAND: Don't forget a heavy overcoat, Benson.

BENSON: I've put it in already. What train do we take, sir?

STRICK.: I take the midnight. But we mustn't be seen leaving town together. When I want you I'll let you know--Have you money?

BEN.: Not enough, sir.

Strickland goes into the next room to get the money. Benson waits an instant. Then goes to the telephone.

BEN.: (Quietly) Hello: Finley? This is Benson--He's taking the midnight train. Pennsylvania. Better arrest him at the station. And, Finley--I want five thousand dollars.--He's got almost three hundred thousand on him, and you won't turn in all of that to Headquarters. Yes, it's cash.

Benson hangs up as Strickland enters.

STRICK.: Here's your money, Benson.

BEN.: Thank you, sir. Shall I go now?

STRICK.: No, wait. (At phone) Hello, Pennsylvania? I want a stateroom for Chicago, midnight train.

BEN.: Don't give your own name, sir.

STRICK.: (Into phone) The name is Alfred Stevens--You have one reserved in that name?--Then give me another stateroom--What? You haven't any other--Never mind, then. (Hangs up) Benson, go down and get that stateroom before the other man does. Wait for me at the train gate.

Benson leaves, and presently there is a knock. A girl enters.

STRICK.: Who are you?

GIRL: Why, don't you remember me, sir? I'm from your office. I'm one of your personal stenographers, sir. There were some letters which came late this afternoon--

STRICK.: (Harshly) And you're bothering me with them now?

GIRL: (Timidly) I thought you'd want to see these letters, and you won't be here tomorrow, will you?

STRICK.: (Starting violently) Won't be here? What do you mean?

GIRL: You're taking the train to Chicago tonight.

STRICK.: How did you know--(Stops himself. Then, with forced ease.) Taking a train to Chicago? Of course not! What put that in your head?

GIRL: Why, you told me, sir. You said so this afternoon.

STRICK.: I told you? I didn't see you this afternoon!

GIRL: No, sir? Then I found this timetable. (Holds it out)

--- END OF FREE PREVIEW ---