

An earlier story by Don Heck published in April 1961.

THE BLACK CLOCK!



IT WAS A CLOCK!
BUT WAS IT
ONLY A CLOCK?
OR WAS IT
SOMETHING
MORE...SOME-
THING STRANGE
AND FRIGHTEN-
ING?! LEARN
THE INCREDIBLE
ANSWER FOR
YOURSELF AS
YOU READ
THE GRIPPING
TALE OF...THE
BLACK CLOCK!

WHEN I GOT OUT OF PRISON,
I WAS FLAT BROKE... SO I
HAD TO TAKE A CHEAP ROOM
IN A DULL BOARDINGHOUSE...



ONE OF THE OTHER BOARDERS WAS AN OLD GEEZER
WHO ALWAYS LOCKED HIS DOOR WHEN HE WENT
OUT...



HE EVEN LOCKED THE DOOR WHEN HE WAS
IN THE ROOM!



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DON WECK

SURE, I WAS AN EX-CON, A TWO-TIME LOSER, AND I KNEW THAT ONE MORE CRIME, AND I'D BE SENT UP FOR LIFE! BUT THE OLD GUY LOCKING HIS ROOM, I COULDN'T STOP THINKIN' ABOUT HIM... HE WAS ON MY MIND ALL THE TIME...

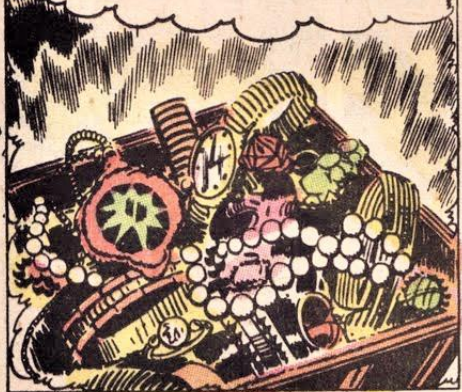


I'LL BET HE'S GOT A FORTUNE STASHED AWAY IN THAT ROOM!

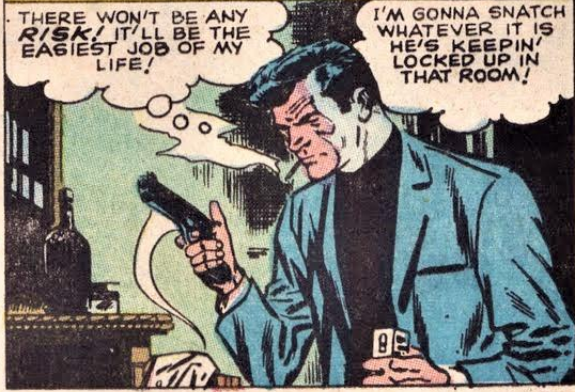
... ENOUGH FOR A GUY TO RETIRE ON AND LIVE IT UP FOR THE REST OF HIS DAYS!



...OR MAYBE HE'S GOT JEWELS! YEAH...PRECIOUS STONES...FAMILY GEMS...NECKLACES...BRACELETS...



THE MORE I THOUGHT, THE MORE TEMPTED I BECAME UNTIL FINALLY I KNEW THIS WAS A CAPER I JUST COULDN'T PASS UP!



THERE WON'T BE ANY RISK! IT'LL BE THE EASIEST JOB OF MY LIFE!

I'M GONNA SNATCH WHATEVER IT IS HE'S KEEPIN' LOCKED UP IN THAT ROOM!

I DECIDED TO PULL THE JOB THAT VERY NIGHT!



FOR A GUY WITH MY EXPERIENCE, THIS LOCK IS A CINCH TO PICK!

AS SOON AS I OPENED THE LOCK I PUT ON MY MASK, DREW MY GUN, AND STEPPED INTO THE PITCH-BLACK ROOM...



MADE IT!

I REACHED ALONG THE WALL UNTIL I FOUND THE LIGHT SWITCH...



WHA-WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHO ARE YOU?? WHAT DO YOU WANT???

NEVER MIND WHO I AM! JUST TELL ME WHERE YOU KEEP YOUR MONEY, YOUR VALUABLES.. AND YOU WON'T GET HURT! OTHERWISE, I CAN PLAY MIGHTY ROUGH!



THE OLD MAN WAS OUT COLD! AND HE'D STAY THAT WAY FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS-- PLENTY OF TIME FOR ME TO GET AWAY!



SO LONG, POPS!

SINCE THE OLD MAN KNEW WHO I WAS, I COULDN'T GO BACK TO MY ROOM! I HAD TO HIDE SOMEWHERE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN...



THE OLD CREEP... IMAGINE HIM TRYIN' TO TELL ME THIS CLOCK IS ENCHANTED WITH A MAGIC SPELL! HE MUSTA THOUGHT I'M SOME KINDA SAP, HANDING ME A LINE LIKE THAT!

BUT AFTER I CHECKED INTO A HOTEL ACROSS TOWN, I LEARNED THE AWFUL, HORRIBLE TRUTH...



I-I CAN'T OPEN THE CLOCK! NO MATTER WHAT I PRY IT WITH, IT WON'T OPEN!!

I BANGED ON THE CLOCK...I KICKED IT...I TRIED TO SMASH IT OPEN...BUT IT WAS NO USE!



NOTHIN' CAN OPEN THIS BLASTED CLOCK! NOTHIN'!

FINALLY I WAS EXHAUSTED! I WAS GONNA SIT A MINUTE AND REST... I PUT THE CLOCK DOWN BUT AS SOON AS I LET GO OF IT...



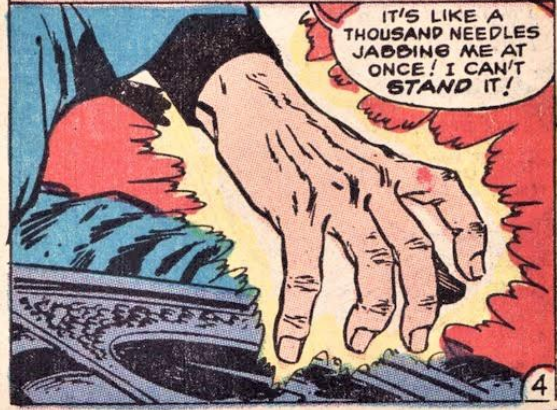
MY HAND-- IT HURTS!! THE PAIN--I CAN'T STAND IT! IT'S KILLIN' ME!

WITHOUT EVEN THINKING, I PUT MY HAND BACK ON THE CLOCK, AND AS SOON AS I DID...



THE PAIN'S GONE! IT-IT'S LIKE MAGIC! NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE! THAT OLD GUY COULDN'T HAVE BEEN TELLIN' THE TRUTH! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

BUT FOR THE NEXT HOUR, I KEPT TESTING... AND EACH TIME MY HAND HELD THE CLOCK, THERE WAS NO PAIN, BUT EVERY TIME I TOOK IT AWAY FROM THE CLOCK, MY HAND HURT MORE THAN I EVER THOUGHT ANYTHING COULD HURT!



IT'S LIKE A THOUSAND NEEDLES JABBING ME AT ONCE! I CAN'T STAND IT!

AND THEN... THEN I LEARNED THE REST OF IT...



AM I IMAGINING THINGS OR--
NO! I-I'M GETTING OLDER!
I LOOK AND FEEL LIKE I'VE
AGED A DOZEN YEARS
SINCE I STOLE THE CLOCK!

IT-- IT MUST BE PART OF THE SPELL!
AS LONG AS I KEEP TOUCHING THE
CLOCK, IT MAKES ME OLDER! EVERY
SECOND IT TICKS AGES ME! A-AND
IF I LET GO OF THE CLOCK, I'M
IN UNBEARABLE PAIN!



FRANTICALLY, I LOOKED AT THE CLOCK... I EXAMINED
IT... I TRIED TO FIND SOME WAY OF ENDING THE
HORRIBLE SPELL I WAS UNDER! AND THEN --
I SAW IT!



AN INSCRIPTION!
IT SAYS THE
ENCHANTMENT
STOPS WORKING
WHEN THE CLOCK
IS POSSESSED
BY ITS RIGHTFUL
OWNER!



THAT MEANS IF I
BRING THE CLOCK
BACK TO THE OLD
MAN, THE SPELL WILL
BE OFF ME! NO
AGING--NO PAIN--
BUT IF I DO THAT,
THE COPS'LL GET
ME! THE OLD MAN
MUST'VE CALLED 'EM
ALREADY! THEY'LL
BE WAITING TO
ARREST ME--AND
IF I GO TO PRISON
THIS TIME, IT'LL BE
FOR LIFE!

SO HERE I SIT NOW...
MISERABLE... CONFUSED...
NOT KNOWING WHAT TO
DO...



EVERY TICK
OF THE CLOCK
IS MAKING ME
OLDER...
OLDER...

BUT I CAN'T GIVE
THE CLOCK BACK...
CAN'T LET 'EM ARREST
ME AND SEND ME
UP FOR LIFE!



BUT, IF I HOLD THE
CLOCK, I'LL KEEP
GETTING OLDER--
AND OLDER...
UNTIL--



UNTIL
IT'S --
TOO
LATE!



THE END