

SEVEN KEYS TO BALDPATE 39

MARY. A ghost! A ghost!

MAGEE. (*Laughing*) I'll bet you four dollars that's the fellow whose wife ran away with a traveling man! (*Starts to come downstairs.*)

MARY and MRS. RHODES. (*They wave MAGEE back*) Ssh!

(*MAGEE snaps out lights. PETERS unlocks the door, enters, locks door, then throws the sheet over his arm and comes down stage, looking from MARY to MRS. RHODES, who both come forward a trifle. MAGEE comes to L. of PETERS at C.*)

start MAGEE. I beg your pardon; but have you any idea just how many keys there are to this flat?

PETERS. (*Ignores question*) What are these women doing here?

MAGEE. How's that?

PETERS. I don't like women.

(*MRS. RHODES and MARY scream and run to foot of stairs.*)

MAGEE. It's all right, ladies; he's not a regular ghost. I know all about him. He's in the picture-postcard business.

PETERS. (*Gruffly*) What!

MAGEE. (*To PETERS*) Just a minute, Bosco. (*To ladies*) If you ladies will kindly step upstairs into my room, I'll either kill it or cure it. (*Ladies go up and stand on balcony.*)

PETERS. (*Gruffly*) What?

MAGEE. (*To PETERS*) See here, that's the second time you've barked at me. Now don't do it again, do you hear? (*To ladies*) Go right in, ladies. (*They exit into room R., closing door. MAGEE down to PETERS.*) So you're the ghost of Baldpate, are you?

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PETERS. How'd you people get in here?

MAGEE. (*Laughs*) You're not going to pull that "only key in existence" speech on me, are you?

PETERS. What?

MAGEE. You know there are other keys besides yours.

PETERS. They're all imitations. Mine's the real key. The old man gave it to me the day before he died.

MAGEE. What old man?

PETERS. The father of that young scamp who wastes his time around those New York clubs. You know who I mean.

MAGEE. Then you're not particularly fond of the present owner of Baldpate?

PETERS. I hate him and all his men friends.

MAGEE. You don't like women either, you say.

PETERS. I despise them!

MAGEE. How do little girls and boys strike you?

PETERS. Bah!

MAGEE. (*Laughs*) I can understand your wife now—anything in preference to you, even a traveling man!

PETERS. Don't mention my wife's name, or I'll—
(*Raises lantern to strike MAGEE.*)

MAGEE. (*Pulls lantern out of PETERS' hand*)
Now, see here, old man, if you make any more bluffs at me I'll take that white sheet away from you and put you right out of the ghost business. Haven't you any better sense than to go about frightening little children this way? Why don't you stick to your own line of work? You're a hermit by trade, if I'm rightly informed.

PETERS. Yes, I'm a hermit, and proud of it.

MAGEE. Then why don't you cut out this ghost stuff and be a regular hermit?

PETERS. I play the ghost because I love to see the cowards run.

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MAGEE. Oh, they're all cowards—is that it?

PETERS. Cowards, yes! (*Laughs gruffly.*)

MAGEE. And you're a brave man. I suppose?

PETERS. A cave man is always a brave man.

(Pistol shots heard outside, then a woman's scream. PETERS laughs and dances up to door and peers through.)

PETERS. Ha, ha! They're shooting again! They're shooting again!

(MARY and MRS. RHODES have come out on balcony at shots.)

MAGEE. *(Up to door and peers through)* What's that?

MARY. What's happened?

MRS. RHODES. Is someone hurt? *(Both lean over balcony, looking down.)*

MAGEE. Did you hear a woman scream?

MARY. *(Frightened)* Distinctly.

MRS. RHODES. *(Frightened)* And a pistol shot!

PETERS. *(Dramatically, as he goes toward door L. slowly)* A woman in white—a woman in white! They shot at her as they shoot at me when I play the ghost. *(Laughs.)* They thought it was the ghost. *(Almost whispers.)* Thought it was the ghost. *(Laughs viciously and exits door L.)*

(MYRA THORNHILL appears at door c. and is seen unlocking it.)

MAGEE. *(Runs to foot of stairs and calls up to women)* My God, another key!

MARY and MRS. RHODES. What?

MAGEE. Ssh! *(He waves them back.)* Ssh!