From your appearance, Mr. Graham -- or, rather, Alistair -- I presume you had a most trying night. Did you see the vision again?

Yes, doctor. The last time I told you about it, it was a dim vapor. But last night it was more definite. It appeared as a white, cloud-like substance; and I could sense the presence of green eyes that regarded me with baleful malignancy. I don't remember falling asleep again, and I don't know how I came to be sitting in front of the typewriter when I awoke.

As an author of weird tales, you should know that visions cannot harm you.

I know, doctor. But writing requires a certain sensitivity of the mind, and a good night’s sleep is essential. Ever since the vision came, I have not been able to concentrate. I have been haunted with a feeling of remorse and guilt. But I have no conception of what it is.

Do you believe in automatic writing?

There have been recorded cases. Why?

I found the following in my typewriter, though I have no recollection of typing it.

Solemn bells toll midnight’s charade. Pangs bite, Hass; once more your white eerie presence Ascends, its hoar chilling with its essence. Dismayed, torn heart longs for slumber’s respite ... Enraged spirit, whose love I wore, rogue maid Denied, by love betrayed -- oppress me not.

Forget my slight, forgive my evil plot ... Rancor lingers on; lsense it, afraid, Insane with remorse naught can right ... Love, for Gracious yore, I implore, instill pity, Haunt me not, fade to death, as enmity Takes flight ... Have mercy? You laugh. Nevermore.

Rather grim but well constructed. Have you ever written poetry before?
Except for chapter headings, in the style of Robert E. Howard, no.
Then your mind must be trying to tell you something.

What?
I do not know at present. The mind is devious and expects you to decipher its cryptic meanings. Have you ever had the vision before, say, when you were young?

No, doctor. It just occurred recently. Why?
The mind is a mysterious computer. It stores all kinds of experiences and needs a parallel experience or reminder to recapture something that might have been forgotten. Were there any incidents in your life where you committed a crime or endured a painful heartache?

No. But now that you mentioned it, I am in the process of writing a story where one mind usurps another mind. Could it be a memory from some past life is haunting me?

I do not know. Did the visions begin with the tale you are writing?

Why, yes. A short time after. Could that be the parallel reminder?

What is the story about?
It is called 'The House on Hade Street' and is a take-off on H.P. Lovecraft's 'Outsider'. I sent an outline to Warren Farnsworth, the editor of Odd Tales. He liked it, but if I don't buckle down, I won't be able to meet the deadline he set.

What is the plot?
Briefly, the hero returns to a house where he had been born and from where he had been taken when he was only a baby. The house is grim and foreboding. It is rather dismal as it faces a concrete embankment above which freight trains pass. From records of the Home Finding Society, he learns that his mother was found dead in her bed, a gun in her hand. Though presumed a suicide, there was doubt, as his father could not be found. A thorough search was made but his father's disappearance remained a mystery. The few facts the hero was able to find was that his mother came from Egypt and had acquired certain ancestral secrets. Now that I think about it, the vision first appeared when I had the hero sense his mind was being taken over by a force within the house. But tell me, doctor, what can I do to dispel this malignant vision?

If you could identify the source, this might be the focus for exorcism.

You mean speak her name?
E. Howard, no.

E. Howard, no.

That might be the answer. And I believe the answer lies in this acrostic verse. Please leave it with me and I will call you if I find the solution.

II

Alistair. This is Doctor Manley. I have the name.

Excellent. Thanks for calling. What do I have to do?

If the vision returns, keep repeating her name and demand that she leave you.

Something like Be gone, Satan. Be gone.

You can try.

Fine, doctor. What is her name?

III

Alistair, you look well, much better than last time. How do you feel?

Marvelous, doctor. Ever since that night of exorcism, I have slept like one dead to the world.

Did the vision frighten you?

At first, yes. I could feel the hate permeate my being. I felt a numbing cold. Then I called her name. The pale baleful green eyes wavered, lost their intensity. I called her name again. The green eyes dissolved, became mist. I called her name a third time and the mist vanished. A great feeling of release swept over me. I fell into a deep sleep that lasted twenty-four hours. When I awoke, I couldn't wait to get to the typewriter. 'The House on Hade Street' poured out of my fingers. I just got a wire from Farnsworth. The story was excellent and just in time for the deadline.

And the specter?

Has never returned.

Tell me the rest of the story.

If you recall, I told you the hero sensed his mind was being taken over by a force within the house. He also is an author. As if in a dream, he sits before the typewriter and watches his fingers automatically type a story. He falls into a deep sleep. When he awakens, he finds himself sitting before a small table. Without thinking, he presses a hidden catch and a secret drawer opens. In the drawer are two items - a magazine and a typewriter. The magazine contains a story written by his father over a quarter of a century ago. The story looks familiar, and
he nearly collapses when he compares it with the story he has typed. Except for a few words, the two stories are identical. He then reads the diary and discovers the hate his father had for his mother, the beatings he gave her, and the deep fear that she would use her ancient secrets to destroy him.

Rather grim. What was the end?

A great storm with lightning and thunderbolts rocks the house. The hero rises from his bed and sleep-walks to the attic. He walks to a paneled wall and presses a certain molding. Part of the wall swings back. Green mist pours out, and there in the long-closed niche, behind the acrid mist, he barely sees himself in a mirror. At that point a tremendous flash of lightning strikes the house and ignites it. In the ensuing fire, he is knocked unconscious by a falling beam. He is rescued by a fireman and wakes up in a hospital. When he is able to walk, he returns and finds the house has been completely destroyed.

And the take-off on Lovecraft's 'Outsider'?

A reverse one. There was no mirror in the niche. But, tell me, how did you find the name of the specter?

You unconsciously created an Acro-Double.

What is that?

Two poems in one. By rearranging the number of metric feet to a line, another poem is created, and in this case, another acrostic as well. Here is the second version of 'Shaded Fright'.

Solemn bells toll midnight's charade.
Pangs bite, harass; once more your white
Eerie presence ascends, its hoar
Chilling with its essence. Dismayed,
Torn heart longs for slumber's respite...
Enraged spirit, whose love I wore,
Rogue maid denied, by love betrayed--

Oppress me not, forget my slight,
Forgive my evil plot ... Rancor

Lingers on; I sense it, afraid,
Insane with remorse naught can right...
Love, for gracious yore, I implore,
Instill pity, haunt me not, fade.
To death, as enmity takes flight...
Have mercy? You laugh: Nevermore.