

Follow me, for I am...



## **A Grave Situation (Revised Edition)**

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## Quick Introduction:

*Follow me. For I am... The Phantom Stranger!*

These words sang to me when I was young. The Phantom Stranger, no doubt one of the many, lesser-known heroes, was always one of my favorites.

He was man of compassion, yet he was a man of limitless potential. Possibly as powerful as the Spectre himself. The true limits of the power of the Phantom Stranger have yet to be tested. No one knows where he came from. No one knows where he goes. That mystery appeals to me. There is so much you can do with it when it comes to writing.

This story is a revised version of the original "A Grave Situation", which is elsewhere on my site. The original took two hours to write. This time I actually put some thought into it, which makes it a much improved script.

One change from this and the previous version is the time setting. Last time it was set in the 50's. This time there is no time setting. The time is the reader's discretion.

Enjoy this new adventure of the Phantom Stranger.

**SPLASH PAGE - SINGLE PANEL**

**PANEL ONE**

Phantom Stranger is on the left, looking at the reader with his eyes shaded by the brim of his broad hat. He stands cloaked in his cape at night in a small graveyard. To the right (and in the background) is Jody. Just twelve years old (and dressed like it), Jody kneels in anguish at the grave of her mother.

**PHANTOM STRANGER**

The human mind is a wondrous thing!  
It lives, breathes, possesses  
intellect, emotion, and creativity!

**PHANTOM STRANGER**

But sometimes the mind can have a  
mind of its own, not knowing the  
difference between truth and  
perception! How can this be? I  
will show you, if you follow me!  
For I am the...

**[ LOGO ]**

Phantom Stranger!

**JODY**

My fault! It's all my fault!

**JODY**

Mother is dead—

**JODY**

—because I killed her!

**[ TITLE ]**

A Grave Situation

**PAGE TWO - FOUR PANELS.**

**PANEL ONE**

Night. Darkness. Cloudy. A young girl (Jody) walks silently down the street toward the cemetery. Graves and a creaky gate lie in the distance.

**[ CAPTION ]**

Midnight. A young girl walks to  
her destiny.

JODY

(thought)

I know I shouldn't t be out this  
late, but I had to come! I just  
had to!

PANEL TWO

A frightened Jody opens the creaky gate to the cemetery.

[ SFX ]

CCRREEAAAAAKKK!

[ NO DIALOGUE ]

PANEL THREE

Jody nervously walks through the cemetery, as if unsure  
where she is.

JODY

(thought)

I know she must be around here  
somewhere...

PANEL FOUR

On Jody, running toward grave in the distance of the  
graveyard.

JODY

(thought)

There she is!

PAGE THREE - FIVE PANELS

PANEL ONE

Jody falls to her knees at her mother's grave, full of  
anguish and guilt. A light rain begins to fall. Hidden in  
the shadows where we can barely see him is the Phantom  
Stranger. Covered by his ebon cape, his eyes are darkened by  
the brim of his hat. We see raindrops falling from his hat  
as he watches silently.

[ CAPTION ]

What is the pain of loss? What is  
the color of guilt? Perhaps she  
knows?

JODY

(distraught)

I'm sorry, Mother! I'm so sorry!

PANEL TWO

Jody, still on her knees. Her head is buried in her hands and she shakes from crying. A voice calls out from the direction of the gate.

VOICE (O.S.)

Jody? Jody? Are you here? Jody!

PANEL THREE

Jody stands and turns, surprised by the sound of the voice.

[ NO DIALOGUE ]

PANEL FOUR

A portly older man comes into view. Wearing a business suit, and a trench coat to keep out the rain, his hands are in his pockets and like the Stranger (still unseen), rain falls off his hat. This is Joe. Jody's father. Father and daughter stare at each other silently. Jody has a look of fear.

[ NO DIALOGUE ]

PANEL FIVE

Jody rushes into her father's arms.

[ CAPTION ]

Herein lies Jody's only source of comfort. Yet one she fears to let know the truth! Still her unyielding guilt drives her to say...

JODY

Father! IT'S ALL MY FAULT! She's dead because of me! I didn't mean to!

PAGE FOUR - SIX PANELS

PANEL ONE

Jody crying in her father's arms. Joe, holding Jody, looks up and sees the Phantom Stranger right in front of them, illuminated by the brief lightning flashing in the sky.

[ NO DIALOGUE ]

PANEL TWO

On Joe and Stranger. Joe appears to be somewhat embarrassed by his daughter's outburst.

JOE

I'm- I'm sorry you had to see this,  
stranger...

PANEL THREE

On Stranger.

PHANTOM STRANGER

Apologies are not necessary. I am  
... a friend.

PANEL FOUR

On Joe, Stranger, and Jody. Jody, driven mad by guilt, suddenly runs away into the woods.

JODY

EEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!!!

PANEL FIVE

On Joe and Stranger, both watching her run. Joe has his hand out reaching toward his daughter.

JOE

(yelling)

Jody? JODY!!!!

PANEL SIX

Still on Joe, with water rolling down his cheeks.

[ CAPTION ]

Are those tears we see, or is it  
merely the rain? Does even he  
know?

FATHER

She's gone...

PAGE FIVE - THREE HORIZONTAL PANELS

PANEL ONE

On Stranger.

PHANTOM STRANGER

She can run, but she cannot hide  
from the truth. Nor does she need  
to. May I ask what happened with  
her mother?

PANEL TWO

On Joe, looking like a cross between embarrassed and angry.

[ NO DIALOGUE ]

PANEL THREE

Still on Joe, looking resigned.

JOE

Yeah. Okay. Sure. For some  
reason, I feel I can trust you.

PAGE SIX - SIX PANELS

PANEL ONE

[Flashback begins]

Establishing shot: External view of Jody's school. Bright,  
spring day with birds flying by and a gentle breeze. Kids  
are outside talking to each other after school and waiting  
for the bus or a ride home. In the distance we see Jody's  
mother approaching from the street.

[ CAPTION ]

It was another beautiful day.  
Weather had been nice lately.  
Myrna was her way to get Jody...

PANEL TWO

Myrna (a pretty and grown up version of Jody) pulls into the  
school and we see Jody getting into the car. Mother and  
daughter both look happy to see each other.

[ CAPTION ]

Jody tells me everything was fine.  
Both of them were in a good mood.

PANEL THREE

View from center back seat. Myrna is driving, Jody is  
playing with the radio.

[ CAPTION ]

Until...

JODY

Let's have some music.

PANEL FOUR

Back seat view. Myrna turns off the radio.

MYRNA

Not now, Honey. You can listen  
when we get home.

PANEL FIVE

Back seat view. Jody turns radio on again.

[ CAPTION ]

But Jody insisted, like teenagers  
do.

JODY

C'mon, Mom. I had a hard day.  
That test was awful! But at least  
I think I passed.

PANEL SIX

Close up on radio as Myrna turns it off again.

[ CAPTION ]

And Myrna made it a power struggle.

MYRNA (O.S.)

I said you can listen when we get  
home!

PAGE SEVEN - FIVE PANELS

PANEL ONE

[Flashback Ends]

Over Stranger's shoulder, looking at a very sad Joe.

JOE

There was a collision. Myrna died  
instantly.

JOE

Jody walked away without a scratch.



PANEL TWO

On Joe.

JOE

That was one year ago today. Jody  
has been blaming herself ever  
since. When I saw she had left the  
house, I figured she came here.  
But Jody wasn't the cause of the—

PANEL THREE

On Stranger, who puts his hand up as if to stop Joe.

PHANTOM STRANGER

—Hold.

PANEL FOUR

On Joe, looking a bit confused.

JOE

Why? What's wrong?

PANEL FIVE

On Stranger, looking in the direction Jody ran.

PHANTOM STRANGER

Your daughter is in danger!

PAGE EIGHT - FIVE PANELS

PANEL ONE

On Joe, surprised.

JOE

What? How do you—

PANEL TWO

Scene shift to the woods to the left of the cemetery. Jody  
lies on the ground amongst the twigs and leaves. Stranger  
and Joe appear in front of her.

JOE

—know?

PANEL THREE

On Joe, looking down at Jody.

JOE

Jody?

PANEL FOUR

On Joe and Jody. Jody does not move or respond in any way.

[ NO DIALOGUE ]

PANEL FIVE

On Joe. Now desperate.

JOE

JODY!!!

PAGE EIGHT - FIVE PANELS

PANEL ONE

Joe turns to Stranger.

JOE

What happened?

PANEL TWO

On Stranger.

PHANTOM STRANGER

She has fallen and suffered serious injury. But I can heal her.

PANEL THREE

Wide on Stranger and Jody. Stranger has his arms out. Powerful rays come from his two hands and envelope Jody.

[ CAPTION ]

The time has come at last. The Phantom Stranger takes action!

PHANTOM STRANGER

This should not take long.

PANEL FOUR

Still on Stranger, Joe and Jody. Rays from the Stranger levitate Jody off the ground. She lies horizontal in the air in front of the Stranger.

JOE

What the...?

PANEL FIVE

On the three as Jody is softly let down to the ground by Stranger's powers.

PHANTOM STRANGER  
She'll be okay now.

PAGE NINE - FIVE PANELS

PANEL ONE

On a surprised and concerned Joe.

JOE  
Just who are you, Mister?

PANEL TWO

On Stranger.

PHANTOM STRANGER  
I am...a stranger.

PANEL THREE

On Jody, on the ground. She begins to stir. The rain has just stopped.

JODY  
>UUNNNGGHH<

PANEL FOUR

On Joe, rushing to Jody.

JOE  
Jody! Are you okay?

PANEL FIVE

On Jody, sitting up and holding onto her head as though she is in some pain.

JODY  
Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

PAGE TEN - FOUR PANELS

PANEL ONE

On Joe, now holding Jody tenderly, like a father. His gaze is toward the Stranger.

JOE

I don't know who you are or how you did that, but... I thank you.

PANEL TWO

On Stranger. He ignores the thanks of Joe and speaks directly to Jody.

PHANTOM STRANGER

Jody. Look into my eyes. See the truth.

PANEL THREE

Close up on Jody's eyes.

[ CAPTION ]

As Jody looks into the eyes of the Stranger, both she and her father are taken to another place—

PANEL FOUR

Jody and Joe are now sitting in the back seat of a car. Myrna and (a year younger) Jody are in the front seats.

[ CAPTION ]

—the place of the accident!

PAGE ELEVEN - FIVE PANELS

PANEL ONE

View from center back seat. Myrna is driving, Jody is playing with the radio.

JODY

Let's have some music.

PANEL TWO

Back seat view. Myrna turns off the radio.

MYRNA

Not now, Honey. You can listen  
when we get home.

PANEL THREE

Back seat view. Jody turns radio on again.

JODY

C'mon, Mom. I had a hard day.  
That test was awful! But at least  
I think I passed.

PANEL FOUR

Back seat view. Myrna turns the radio off. View through the  
windshield is a car in the other lane.

MYRNA

I said you can listen when we get  
home!

PANEL FIVE

Back seat view. Car in the other lane swerves and is coming  
right at them. Myrna and front seat Jody do not see the car  
because they are looking at the radio. Back seat Jody and  
Joe put their hands in front of their faces as if to protect  
themselves from what is coming.

[ NO DIALOGUE ]

PAGE TWELVE - FIVE PANELS

PANEL ONE

Scene shift back to woods, where Joe and Jody are standing  
with hands in front of their faces. The Stranger pulled them  
back just before the collision.

[ NO DIALOGUE ]

PANEL TWO

On all three. Joe and Jody relax as realization dawns on  
Jody.

JODY

It... It wasn't my fault!

PANEL THREE

On Stranger, looking mysterious with his eyes shaded by his hat.

PHANTOM STRANGER

No. There was no way that collision could have been avoided, even if both of you saw it coming. It was not your fault, Jody. This burden is no longer yours to carry.

PANEL FOUR

On Joe.

JOE

I never blamed you, Jody. The only one who ever thought this was your responsibility is you.

PANEL FIVE

On Jody and Joe as they hug again.

[ NO DIALOGUE ]

PAGE THIRTEEN - FIVE PANELS

PANEL ONE

Joe looks to Stranger.

JOE

Once again I thank you, stranger.

PANEL TWO

On Stranger.

PHANTOM STRANGER

I must take my leave. Please be good to each other.

PANEL THREE

On Jody.

JODY

Please don't leave, Sir! Where will you go?

PANEL FOUR

On Stranger.

PHANTOM STRANGER

Where I go I cannot say and you may  
not follow. For I am but a poor  
wayfaring Stranger.

PANEL FIVE

Still on Stranger as he begins to fade. We see the  
background through him as he dissolves.

PHANTOM STRANGER

Farewell.

PAGE FOURTEEN - THREE HORIZONTAL PANELS

PANEL ONE

View from the back as Joe and Jody walk away.

JODY

Father? Who was that man?

PANEL TWO

Pull out to see them at a distance.

JOE

I don't know, Honey.

PANEL THREE

Pull out further so they are way in the distance in the dark.

JOE

I guess he was some kind of...  
Phantom Stranger!

END STORY.