

# Deadly Visions Short Guide

## Deadly Visions by Brett Halliday

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## Characters

Shayne and Lucy Hamilton are the primary recurring characters appearing in this story. Shayne is tough and relentless, but here is also sensitive to the problems of these disturbed twins.

Confused by their visions and uncertainties, he himself becomes uncertain of truth and reality at one point. He is also strongly concerned for Lucy's well-being at this point.

Lucy here is Shayne's helper and more clearly his girlfriend. Lt. Caron Thurman is a policewoman who actively pursues Shayne as they work together on the case and there is friction between Lucy and Caron. Shayne recognizes Lucy's right to her hostility because of their "relationship."



## Social Concerns/Themes

Three major social themes are found in this story, three themes which occur regularly in the most recent Mike Shayne detective stories. This story is about a pair of twins who come to Shayne because they are having premonitions of murders committed by what the police are fearing is a serial murderer. The twins were born during World War II to an American woman and her husband who had been sent to the Pacific to fight the Japanese. After the husband has left, the woman has an affair with a Japanese-American and the father/ husband consequently divorces his wife and denies the children are his. The mother dies in childbirth and the Japanese-American takes the twins but shortly afterward dies himself. The children are then shuffled from foster home to foster home. Perhaps as a result of this treatment (this causal relationship is heavily implied), the twins suffer depression, and Christopher has actually been incarcerated in a prison facility for the mentally disturbed. The theme of the debilitating effects of child abuse — or more specifically here child abandonment — is important in the story. Neither of the twins is particularly stable; they have virtually no social life, are suspected and harassed by the police, and at one point in the story even doubted by Shayne. Linked to this theme of the effects of child abuse is a concern about the treatment of the mentally ill by society. Christopher was sent to prison for disturbing the peace, a heavy penalty for a relatively minor offense. But he disturbed the peace by having a vision in a public place; society, threatened by this behavior and not knowing how to adequately deal with it, locked up Christopher. On more than one occasion in the story, Shayne or Nathan Freed, a psychiatrist working with the police, wonders who is insane, the inmates or the ones running the facilities. There is also concern for "innocent" members of society being harmed by "damaged" members as even the twins are endangered by this serial killer, who is obviously deranged. The concern goes both ways.

Finally the killer in this story turns out to be the biological father of the twins, who was so scarred by the war and his wife's unfaithfulness that he is killing all people who are somehow associated with that Japanese experience. The lasting effects of war on a society is one of the points of this story. Some other recent Shayne stories ("Search and Destroy," March 1983; "Shadow of Death," April 1983) have been about the effect of the Vietnam war on America. The effects are seen as long term as well as short term.

## Techniques

Two effectively used techniques in this story are the abrupt scene cuts and the final tie-in of all the clues; both are techniques regularly found in the more recent Shayne stories. The story opens from the perspective of the murderer; soon the perspective shifts to that of the most recent victim and then finally to Shayne's viewpoint. Even after Shayne enters the story, the scenes shift rapidly from one setting to another, keeping the pace quick and allowing for much information to be provided. The story is also nicely tied together with the ending logically growing out of the story. The reader has been provided sufficient clues to find the solution or at least believe it when it is explained to him. These techniques combine two positive qualities of the hard-boiled and classical schools of detective writing: the hardboiled action and the classically tight plot.

"Deadly Visions" was the lead story in Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine, March 1985. The story was ghostwritten by Hal Blythe and Charlie Sweet, who wrote the lead stories from November 1982 to August 1985.



# Copyright Information

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Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.

1. Young adults—Books and reading. 2. Young adult literature—History and criticism. 3.

Young adult literature—Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography—Bio-bibliography.

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