

26 There Is No Death

1. pages 537-540. **Just after noon...Houdini had broken through.** Our descriptions of Arthur Fords séances that allegedly reached both Houdini and his mother were composited from several sources including William V. Rauscher, *The Houdini Code Mystery – A Spirit Secret Solved* (Pasadena: Mike Caveney’s Magic Words), 2000, R.G. Pressing (editor), *Houdini Unmasked* (Lily Dale, New York: Dale News, 1947), Francis R. Fast, *The Houdini Messages* (New York, F.W. Redford, 1929), and Allen Spraggett with William Rauscher, *Arthur Ford : The Man Who Talked with the Dead* (New York : New American Library, 1973).

2. page 537. **“It was indeed the message...”** Bess to Arthur Ford, February 9, 1928. Letter in the Milbourne Christopher collection.

3. pages 538-540. **“I came to impress you that...Houdini had broken through.** “Arthur Ford and the Spirit of Houdini” by Docta Josta, *Spiritualist Monthly*, March 1931, 14.

4. page 540. **Houdini breaks chains of death...** William V. Rauscher, *The Houdini Code Mystery – A Spirit Secret Solved* (Pasadena: Mike Caveney’s Magic Words, 2000), 136, 140.

5. page 540. **“My friends will call me...”** “Widow Plans To Prove Houdini Spirit Talk”, unidentified newspaper clipping in the Silverman files in the Houdini Historical Center at the Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin.

6. page 540. **“Regardless of any statements...”** Bess Houdini’s signed statement from January 9, 1929, reprinted in *Banner of Life*, 1929. Clipping in the Libbet Crandon de Malamud Collection.

7. page 540. **“Houdini Message a Big Hoax!”** *New York Graphic*, January 10, 1929.

8. pages 541, 543. **“I shall lie on the living room couch...a story to-night.”** “‘Rev.’ Ford Faked Houdini Message” by Rea Jaure, no date, clipping in the Egyptian Hall Houdini Scrapbook in the collection of George Daily.

9. page 543. **“You guys get me straight...”** “Did Houdini Give Fish Man’s Lady Friend That Code Before He Became A Spook?”, *New York Telegram*, undated clipping in the Culliton Archives, now housed at the Conjuring Arts Research Center.

10. page 544. **“There is one primary rule...”** Joseph Dunninger, *Inside The Medium’s Cabinet* (New York:David Kemp And Company, 1935), 50.

11. page 545. **“I wonder whether it would not be possible...”** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to Crandon, January 8, 1927. From the Libbet Crandon de Malamud Collection.

12. page 545. **“When I first met Arthur Ford...”** “Houdini’s Last Escape” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, October 31, 1929, typescript version, from the collection of the Georgetown University Library. Cited also in Allen Spraggett with William Rauscher, *Arthur Ford : The Man Who Talked with the Dead* (New York : New American Library), 1973, 87-88.

13. page 545. **“Tell him from me that I know....”** Daniel Stashower, *Teller Of Tales – The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle* (Henry Holt and Co., 1999), 401-402.

14. pages 545-546. **“We must put the séance on ...”** Allen Spraggett with William Rauscher, *Arthur Ford: The Man Who Talked with the Dead* (New York: New American Library), 1973, 90.

15. page 546. **“the psychic apostle of this age.”** Ibid, 93.

16. page 546. **“I had a mysterious cable...”** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to Crandon, February 18, 1928. From the Libbet Crandon de Malamud Collection.

17. page 546. **“The news itself, I felt was of such importance...”** Francis R. Fast to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, February 15, 1928. Letter in the Doyle collection of the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

18. page 547. **“Dine at Village Grove – home early no drink or weed.”** Bess diary entry, October 19, 1927, written on a page from Houdini’s last diary, from the collection of the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. That Bess was talking about abstaining from marijuana not cigarettes seems logical when we place this comment in context. We know from Ernst’s letters to Conan Doyle that at that precise time, Bess was taking “drugs”. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the use of the word “weed” to denote “cigarettes” had already fallen out of favor by 1927, but “weed” or “weed tea” was used at that time to denote marijuana, as evidenced by its inclusion in reference books by 1929. Bess was partying in New York subcultures that would have been exposed to the drug for recreational purposes. Even if you look at the context of the word in the diary entry itself, Bess seems to be applauding herself for restraining herself from partying with “drink” or “weed”, implying that she wouldn’t have gotten home early if she would have indulged.

19. page 547. **Too drunk to stand, she fell...** “Medium Repeats Message Given by Dead Magician”, unidentified newspaper clipping in the Silverman files in the Houdini Historical Center at the Outagamie Museum, Appleton, Wisconsin. Bess’s use of drugs and alcohol was confirmed by Ernst in an October 11, 1929 letter to Conan Doyle that is in the Doyle collection at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Among other things he wrote “...she has been drinking heavily and continuously since Houdini’s death and also taking drugs. One of the parties she attended with Ford, I am advised was in a disreputable place run and frequented largely by negroes.”

20. page 547. **“I’m so ill – I want to go to Harry...”** Ernst to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, October 11, 1929. Letter in the Doyle collection at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

21. page 548. **“I am so ill that when anyone...”** Ibid.

22. page 548. **Bess and Daisy ran the “speakeasy”** Ibid.

23. page 549. **“Spiritualism was a forbidden...”** Letter from Bess to Ernst, March 16, 1929, cited by Ernst in his letter to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, October 11, 1929, in the Doyle collection of the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

24. page 549. **“If these loving hands...”** “Houdini’s Last Escape” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, October 31, 1929, typescript version in the Fulton Oursler collection in the Georgetown University Library.

25. page 549. **“Now about this Houdini test...”** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to Crandon, August 13, 1929. From the Libbet Crandon de Malamud Collection.