JULES DE GRANDIN Returns! . . . In STONEMAN'S MEMORIAL by S

MAY

Weird Tales

15¢

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DOROTHY QUICK

The Rogue Ship

With a

Sub-Hating Soul! . . .

"VENGEANCE IN HER BONES" by MALCOLM JAMESON

Look out for COLDS and SORE THROAT

Gargle LISTERINE—*QUICK!*

Listerine Antiseptic may head off a cold before it gets serious

This wonderful precaution is worth remembering the next time you have cold sniffles or feel achy.

In clinical tests made during 10 years of research, regular twice-a-day Listerine Antiseptic users had fewer colds, milder colds, colds of shorter duration than non-users, and also fewer sore throats due to colds.

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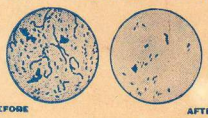
Try keeping these invaders under control with Listerine Antiseptic before they get the upper hand. At the first sign of trouble gargle quick and often. Lambert Pharmacal Company, *St. Louis, Missouri.*

NOTE HOW LISTERINE GARGLE REDUCED GERMS



The two drawings illustrate height of range in germ reductions on mouth and throat surfaces in test cases before and after gargling Listerine Antiseptic. Fifteen minutes after gargling, germ reductions up to 96.7% were noted; and even one hour after, germs were still reduced as much as 80%.

ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

MAY, 1942 Cover by Ray Quigley

Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

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D. McILWRAITH, *Editor.* HENRY AVELINE PERKINS, *Associate Editor.*

A JULES DE GRANDIN NOVELETTE

BY SEABURY QUINN

THE ADVENTURES OF THE FAMOUS LITTLE GHOST BREAKER SINCE HIS LAST ESCAPADE IN WEIRD TALES

In answer to numerous inquiries concerning the whereabouts and activities of Dr. Jules de Grandin and Capt. Sir Haddingway Ingraham Jameson Ingraham (less formally known as Hiji) during the past three years I am happy to be able to supply the following data:

De Grandin went to France immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 and was serving in Syria when the truce was made with Germany and the French Republic abolished. The fiery little patriot at once repudiated Vichy and all its works, made his way to Africa and joined the Free French forces of Gen. Charles de Gaulle and became a captain in the *corps de santé*. A severe case of enteritis, contracted during the unsuccess-

Lust for cruelty, lust for murder, the savage urge to rend and slay our fellow beings—they are all there . . . buried away in the brains of every one of us!

"When she screamed the second time the fear of death was on her. . . ."

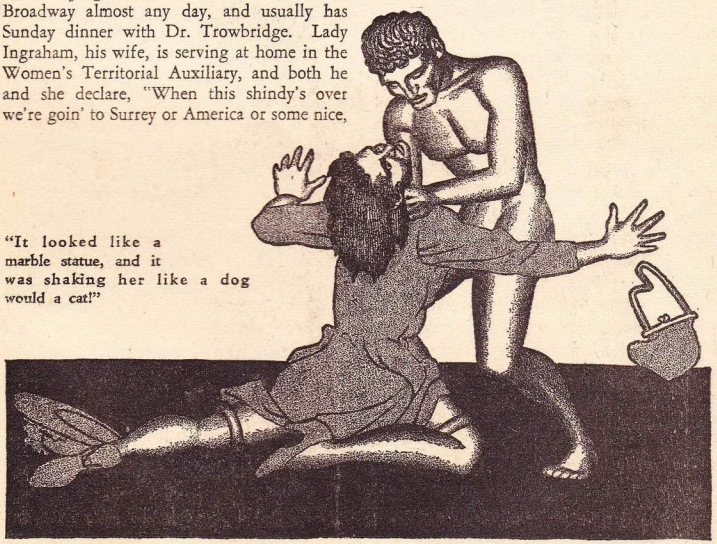
Stoneman's Memorial

In which once again the gluttonous, bibulous, boastful—but lovable—Jules de Grandin returns to fight the forces of darkness!

ful attack on Dakar, and the tardy realization of his superiors that he was far more valuable as an intelligence and liaison officer than as a military surgeon caused him to be sent to England and later to this country, where he at once went to see Dr. Samuel Trowbridge at Harrisonville, N. J.

Hiji, who was a captain of Houssa policemen in British West Central Africa (and enjoying it hugely) when Poland was invaded, resigned his commission and became a major of infantry in the B.E.F. In the retreat from Dunkerque his right femur was shattered by a shell fragment, and he was invalided out of service and sent as an attaché to the British Consulate General at New York. He can be seen limping down Fifth Avenue or lower Broadway almost any day, and usually has Sunday dinner with Dr. Trowbridge. Lady Ingraham, his wife, is serving at home in the Women's Territorial Auxiliary, and both he and she declare, "When this shindy's over we're goin' to Surrey or America or some nice, quiet place and settle down to raisin' flowers and kids and bulldogs."—S. Q.

THE reunion had been a huge success. Norah McGinnis, delighted at de Grandin's return, had fairly outdone herself with dinner, and if she had not quite killed the fatted calf for him her oysters with champagne, turtle soup with dry sherry, filet of sole with graves and roast pheasant with burgundy was a more than merely satisfactory substitute. Now, with the firelight beating back the shadows with its rosy lashes and casting changing highlights on the drawn curtains, I looked



"It looked like a marble statue, and it was shaking her like a dog would a cat!"

about the study much as a proud father might regard his family at a Thanksgiving homecoming. The room was redolent with a mixture of cigar smoke, the scent of burning apple wood and the bouquet of old whiskey and older brandy.

Across the hearth from me sat Jules de Grandin, small-boned and delicately built, sensitive and neurotic as a woman, with a few more lines in his forehead, a few more tiny wrinkles round the corners of his eyes, a slightly tensed look in his gaze, but obviously happy as a schoolboy on a holiday. His little, round blue eyes were agleam with pleasure, his small wheat-blond mustache was fairly quivering with ecstatic joy as he passed the fragile, bubble-thin inhaler back and forth beneath his nose before he took a reverent sip of the pale cognac that was old when Andrew Jackson held New Orleans from the British. Hiji, a little thinner than I'd known him in the old days, and with several white hairs showing in the little black mustache that was in such sharp contrast to his pewter-colored hair, seemed to fill the sofa with his broad ruggedness. He had absorbed prodigious quantities of Scotch and water since we came from the table, and with each succeeding drink the tense lines in his face seemed softening. Detective Sergeant Costello, smooth-shaven, ruddy-faced, white-haired and even bigger than Hiji, filled his easy chair completely, and like Hiji took enormous quantities of Scotch, but took it without water. His smooth, pink face and blue, ingenuous Irish eyes were curiously misleading. He had the look, and often the precise manner of a suffragan bishop, plus an emergency vocabulary that would have been the envy of an army mule-skinner.

Ten minutes out of Newark Airport the night plane for the West roared overhead, its motors droning like a swarm of angry hornets. Hiji poured the last four ounces of his drink down in a single gulp and looked up quizzically. "Not long since we'd been duckin' for the cellar when we heard one o' those blokes, eh, Frenchy?" he asked de Grandin.

"*Tu parles, mon vieux,*" the little Frenchman agreed with a smile. "Me, I am—how do you say him? muscle-tied?—from running into rabbit-holes when they appeared. *Parbleu,* but it was execrable, no less. When one has finished dinner, one desires to relax, to feel the pleasant combination of the process of digestion and slow poisoning by alcohol and nicotine. But did *les Boches* think of that? Damn no! They spoiled my after-dinner rest at least a thousand times. *Cochons!* If one were to come to me now and tell me, 'Jules de Grandin, here is fifty thousand francs. It is all yours if you will rise and move from where you sit'—*morbleu,* but I would tweak him by the nose and hurl the proffered bribe back in his face. I would let nothing interfere with the luxury of this hour—"

"Beg pardon, sor," Norah came to the study door apologetically, "but there's a young man askin' fer th' Sergeant, Dr. Trowbridge. He says as how—"

"Arrah, Norah darlin', hold yer whist!" broke in Costello reprovingly. "Did ye not hear Dr. de Grandin say we couldn't be disturbed th' now? Tell th' young felly to come round to Headquarters in th' mornin'. 'Tis meself's off duty now, an'—"

"But, Sergeant acushla, 'tis one of yer own lads as wants ter see ye," she persisted. "He says as how his name is Dennie Flannigan, an'—"

"Does he, now, bad cess to th' young omadhaun? Well—" he looked at us apologetically, then, to de Grandin:

"Would ye be afther listinin' to th' lad, Dr. de Grandin, sor? He's in bad trouble, so he is, and likely to be in worse before all's said an' done. Ye see, his father, Dennie Flannigan—God rest 'is soul!—wuz

me buddy when I wuz first appointed to th' force, an' many a night we walked th' same beat together. Killed in th' line o' duty, he wuz, too, an' I'm responsible for young Dennie's appointment."

"There's been some trouble round about th' town these last few weeks, sor. A killer's on th' loose, and devil a hand can we lay on 'im, so th' newspapers is givin' us a goin' over. Well, sor, 'twas Dennie's hard luck to be walkin' down th' street th' other night when th' killer wuz out. He heard a woman scream an' ran to help her, an' caught th' murderer almost red-handed."

"Eh?" Jules de Grandin raised slim black brows. "Since when has it been a misfortune to catch a criminal at his crimes, *mon brave?*"

"That's just it, sor. I said he almost caught 'im. But not quite. Th' killer's on th' lam, ye see, an' Dennie orders 'im to halt, an' when he doesn't he lets fly wid everything he has. Pumps five shots into him, an' still he keeps on runnin'.

"Well, anyone can miss a shot or two sor, I've done it meself, but five shots in succession at almost point-blank range, that ain't so good. An' th' alibi he turned in didn't help his case much, either."

"Qu'est-ce donc? What was his excuse?"

COSTELLO'S eyes were wide and serious, not mocking or ironical, as he looked in de Grandin's face. "He said it wuz a stone man, sor."

"Que diable? My ears have played me false. I thought I heard you say he said it was a man of stone, my Sergeant."

"That's right, sor. He said it was a stone man—a statue that ran like it wuz livin'. He says his bullets had no more effect on it than they'd have had on a stone wall. He knows he didn't miss, an' I believe him, for he's a good shot, but—"

"Drunk, that's what he was," commented Hiji, helping himself to a fresh drink. "Drunk as a goat, seein' livin' statues and pink elephants. That's what's the matter."

Costello nodded gloomily. "That's what th' assistant commissioner says, too, but I've got me doubts about it. Dennie's a member o' th' Cath'lic Total Abstinence Society, an' if he'd had a drink 'twas supmin new for 'im."

"Always has to be a first time, you know, old son."

"Taisez-vous! Be silent, species of a camel!" de Grandin ordered sharply. "Who art thou to point the finger of derision at a drunkard?" Then, to Costello:

"And you believe this, *mon Sergent?*"

"Well, sor," Costello was embarrassed, but deadly serious, "I wouldn't go that far, but I don't think th' lad wuz lyin'. Not knowingly, anyhow."

"A Frenchman and an Irishman," commented Hiji sadly to his almost-empty glass, "tell either of 'em that the moon's made o' green cheese, and they'll believe you—"

"Attend me, if you please, my friend," de Grandin interrupted as he leaned toward Hiji, two little wrinkles deepening suddenly between his brows, "shake off your drunkenness a moment, if you will be so kind. To refuse to deny is not to affirm. Me, I have the open mind, so has the good sergeant. So have you up to a certain point, but no further. If I tell you that a listener to the radio can hear a speaker's words a thousand miles away before those in the same room hear it you say, 'Very likely, that is scientific.' But when you hear an honest policeman encountered what he thought was a stone statue running down the street you scoff and say that he was drunk. Yet fifty years ago one statement would have seemed as absurd as the other, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

Hiji grinned at him and smothered back a hiccough. "You've definitely got some-

thing there, Frenchy. I apologize. Have Costello bring his stone-man-seein' copper in and let's hear what he's got to say. I'll suspend judgment till his story's told, but it had better be good. I can't afford to take time from my drinkin' to listen to old wives' tales."

Patrolman Dennis Flannigan was a fine, honest-looking youngster. "Black Irish" —smooth, clear skin, black curly hair and eyes so dark a brown that they seemed black.

"Have a seat, Dennie lad," commanded Costello when introductions were completed, and:

"Have a drink?" asked Hiji as the young policeman settled in a chair.

"No, thank you, sir, I never use it," he refused, and Costello shot a glance of triumph at the Englishman.

De Grandin nodded affably. "Quite right, *mon enfant.* You have as much right not to drink as I have to do so." Then with one of his quick, elfin smiles, "The Sergeant tells us you had an unique experience the other night; that you met a miscreant in armor that defied your bullets as a tin roof turns the rain aside. It must have been a great surprise to you, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

A STUBBORN look came in the youngster's face. "It wasn't armor, sir," he contradicted. "The man—the thing—was solid stone, and turned my bullets as if they'd been made o' putty."

"Eh, how is it that you say? A man of stone? You seriously expect us to believe that?"

"No, sir, I don't. I don't expect anyone to believe me. If someone told me the same thing I'd say he was drunk or crazy or both, but it's the truth, sir, just the same.

"It was last Sat'day night, or Sunday morning, about ten minutes after twelve. I can fix the time pretty well, for the clock in St. Dominic's tower had just finished striking midnight when I turned in my call from the box at Bay and Tunnell Streets. My next call was from Fox and Pettibone, and I'd covered almost half the distance to it when I heard a woman screaming bloody murder somewhere down the block where Blake Street crosses Tunnell.

"There's all sorts o' cries, sir, and pretty soon a cop gets so he knows 'em. At first I thought this woman had a case o' jimjams—it's a rough neighborhood, with lots o' drinkin' and the like o' that goin' on all night—but when she screamed the second time I knew the fear o' death was on her, so I took out down the block as fast as I could leg it.

"Blake Street ain't so well lighted, and some of the tough kids in the neighborhood are almost always breaking the few lights they have, but there was a street light burnin' almost in the middle of the block, and I could see almost as well as if it had been daytime. Something white was bending down above what seemed to be a woman, shaking her like a bulldog would a cat, and I knew there was a murder being done, so I let out a yell and drew me gun."

"Just as I came up with 'em the white thing dropped the woman—no sir, that ain't quite right—it didn't drop her, it threw her half across the street, like a man could throw a bundle of old clothes, sir, and then, without even turning round went down Blake Street toward the waterfront. That's when I saw it plain, sir, for it passed right under the street light. It was a marble statue, sir; a marble statue, bone-white and just about a man's size, maybe a little smaller, but heavier. Lots heavier. I could hear its stone feet clumpin' on the sidewalk as it walked away, and when it broke into a run it sounded like a steam-hammer that's been stepped up to about a hundred an' eighty strokes a minute."

"U'M?" de Grandin tweaked the ends of his mustache. "One sees. And what transpired then, if you please?"

"Well, sir, I'd seen these here now livin' statues in the theatre—you know, the kind they have when actors put on white tights and smear white powder on their hands and hair and faces, then pose against a black background? I thought at first this guy was in some sort o' costume like that, with maybe metal bottoms on his shoes, so I shouted to him to halt, and when he kept on goin' I fired at him. My first shot must have missed, so I let him have four others, and while he had a good head-start o' me I don't think that I missed him all four times. In fact, I know I didn't."

"Comment? What makes you so positive?"

A flush washed up the young man's cheeks and brow as he thrust a hand inside his blouse and drew a twist of paper from an inner pocket. "This, sir," he answered as he tore the paper open and dropped its contents into Jules de Grandin's hand. "I saw that fly from it as it ran down the street. I know my bullet knocked it off when it struck and ricocheted."

De Grandin outlined his chin with the thumb and forefinger of one hand while he balanced the white marble splint in the hollow of the other. "U'm?" he commented, and again, "U'm?" Then, abruptly, "How was he dressed, this naughty stone person?"

"He wasn't, sir."

"Eh, how is it you say?"

"He was necked, sir. Stripped bare as your hand, and I could see the light shone on his back and shoulders as he ran, but—it's funny how you notice little things without even realizin' you're looking at 'em—there was no play of muscles underneath his skin as he ran. He was all smooth and white and shiny, just like any other statue, and when I saw the chip fly off of him I reached down and picked it up whilst I was runnin' after him. He lost me, though, sir. Turned the corner of James and Blake about a dozen—maybe twenty—yards ahead of me, and when I got there he was gone. I hunted for him for awhile, then went back to the woman."

"She was dead, sir, and all broken up. It was as if she'd been a rag doll that some spoiled brat had torn up. Her face was all crushed in, her neck was limp as rope, and it seemed to me like both her shoulders had been broken."

"Yes? And then?"

"There wasn't anything to do but call the precinct, sir, so I put in a call and waited by her till the wagon came from the morgue. Then I filed my report, sayin' just what I've told you, and when the assistant commissioner read it he went wild. Told me I was crazy, or had been drinkin' while on duty, and gave me half an hour to draw a new report or stand charges. I wouldn't do it, sir. It *was* a stone thing, not a man, that killed that woman, whether anybody believes it or not. So now I'm relieved of duty and if I can't prove it was a livin' statue that committed that murder I guess I'll have to turn me badge in."

"Ah-ha. You showed this bit of stone to *Monsieur le Commissaire?"*

"Yes, sir," grimly, "I showed it to him."

"And what did he say to it?"

"Applesauce."

"Comment? He said sauce of the apple, no more? He made no move to investigate—"

"He was drunk, I'm tellin' you," asserted Hiji gravely. "Drunk as an owl. Too beastly intoxicated to take the proper steps. Blasted inefficiency, that's what it is. If one of my Houssas told me he'd seen a ju-ju runnin' through the forest and showed me where he'd chipped a piece of it away with his rifle, d'ye think I'd

talk about applesauce, or marmalade or jam? You know ol' Hiji better'n that! No, sir, drunk or sober, I'd investigate. That's what I'd do."

The shadow of a smile lurked underneath the tightly waxed ends of de Grandin's small blond mustache. "I am like Balaam's ass, all ears, my friend," he declared. "How, by example, would you investigate this case?"

Hiji looked at him with the long, earnest stare of one far gone in liquor. "Oh, so you think I wouldn't know what to do, eh? Think I'm too drunk to know my business? Listen, my small French friend, once a policeman always a policeman. The constable says the bloke was naked, doesn't he? That ain't particularly shockin', but it's interestin'. There's lots o' statuary around this town, but not much of it's nude, 'specially the male figures. Who the devil wants to look at a nude man? Think customers would go to burlesque houses to see some cove march up an' down the stage an' strip his shorts and singlet off? You know they wouldn't. All right, then, the hunt's considerably narrowed down. So I'd check up every statuary group containin' nude male figures, and look at 'em all closely to see if they showed bullet marks or had a piece chipped off 'em. Then, when I found one answerin' the prescription I'd know I had the murderer, and I'd hang him. Yes, sir, hang him higher than I hanged old Mebili the witch-doctor when he started monkey-shines up in the Luabala Country—"

"Nom d'un porc d'un nom d'un porc!" de Grandin interrupted in delight. "It may be that it is the whiskey and not you who speaks, my old, my priceless one, but whether it be you or alcohol that speaks, you talk the good, hard sense. But yes!

"Go home and have no further fear of discharge, *mon enfant,"* he told Dennis Flannigan. "I, Jules de Grandin, will assist you, and though we have a case of utmost difficulty, we shall win, for Jules de Grandin is one devilish clever fellow. Assuredly."

When Flannigan had gone he turned once more to Hiji with the pleased expression of a cat that contemplates a bowl of cream. "Come, *brave compangnon,"* he invited as he poured a fresh supply of liquor into their glasses, "it has been long since we were satisfactorily drunk together. For why are we waiting?"

DESPITE the often-quoted copybook axiom to the effect that wine is a mocker and strong drink an abomination they were both as fresh as the proverbial daisy when they came down to the dining room next morning and did more than ample justice to a breakfast of orange juice, cereal, pancakes and sausage and broiled mackerel. Hiji, who must report at the consulate at ten, limped off to catch the nine-fifteen train for New York and, his seventh cup of well-creamed coffee disposed of, de Grandin grinned at me across the empty table.

"What time are office hours today, *mon vieux?"* he asked, lighting a vile-smelling French cigarette.

"No office hours this morning," I answered. "I've a patient to look in on at Mercy Hospital and two more at the Consolidated. After that I'm free till five this afternoon."

"Bien," he nodded, "and you will kindly chauffeur me around the town, as in the good old days?"

"Be glad to. Where shall we go first?"

"U'm," he considered a moment. "To the police headquarters, if you will be so kind. I would have a word with *Monsieur l'Inférieur Commissaire. Ah bah,* a fool he must be, that one!"

WENDELL WINTERBOTHAM, first assistant police commissioner, sat behind his glass-topped wide desk decorated

with twin fountain pens, a telephone, a brass-bound desk blotter and an amber glass bud-vase in which stood a single crimson rose and smirked at Jules de Grandin with the deprecating, irritating smile of a man who was not born yesterday. "And you seriously expect me to put credence in this absurd story, Dr. de Grandin?" he asked.

"I seriously do, *Monsieur le Commissaire.* I do not say, or even think, it was a stone man who committed this murder, but I do believe the young policeman thinks it was, and the marble splinter which he shot from it—and which I hear he showed to you in support of his story—gives some weight to his belief. It may well be the miscreant wore some fantastic sort of disguise—"

"Bosh! Who'd go around in such a get-up to commit a murder? It just doesn't make sense—"

"Assuredly, *M'sieur.* Nor does it make sense that he beat his victim almost to a pulp when one blow would have killed her. When Sergeant Bertram disinterred the bodies of the dead from Paris cemeteries and hashed them with a grave-digger's spade, that made no sense, either; when Jack the Ripper killed his victims in the London slums and mutilated their corpses, that made no sense to normal men, but—" he gestured the ending with a wave of his hand—"there are strange things buried in the secret mausoleums of the mind, *Monsieur le Commissaire.* Lust for power, lust for cruelty, lust for murder—savage urges to deface and rend and tear and slay our fellow being, they are all there. And while we keep them under lock and key they are still there, lying like the vampires to arise and walk from their coffins when the opportunity arises. But certainly. This murderer, this killer, he may be eminently respectable by day, an honored lawyer or doctor, perhaps a businessman or even clergyman. That is when he plays the rôle of Dr. Jekyll. But when the ghost of Mr. Hyde comes forth to prowl, what power of deepest hell may not be loosed?"

"H'm." The commissioner grew thoughtful. He was not a stupid man, only opinionated and "practical." Before becoming assistant commissioner he had been director of a mail order house, and prided himself on having brought hard-headed business efficiency to public service. "You think we may be dealing with a homicidal maniac?"

De Grandin raised his narrow shoulders in the sort of shrug that no one but a Frenchman can achieve. *"Comme qui dirait?* The ear-marks of the killing point to it. If, as we may assume, this is a second Sergeant Bertram we deal with—he was a mellow-mannered, lovable young man when not gripped by his mania—it may well be that he puts on the disguise of a statue when he goes upon his killing-quests. It may be that he has devised a sort of armor that will defy bullets—"

"A crazy man?" scoffed Winterbotham.

"As you say, *M'sieur,* a crazy man. But a crazy man who is brilliant and talented in normal times and uses his great talents to assist him in the crimes he commits when his second, evil personality is uppermost. It could be so, *n'est-ce-pas?"*

"Why, yes, I suppose so. Wait a minute—" Winterbotham pressed a button underneath his desk, and, to the clerk who answered the summons, "Bring me the files in the Jukes, Mahoney and Ebbert cases, please."

He ruffled through the papers, then: "I hadn't thought of it, Doctor," he confessed, "but what you say puts a new light on this case. Here's Sally Jukes, a woman of no lawful occupation, arrested several times for vagrancy and half a dozen times for soliciting. She was killed in Deal Street shortly after midnight three weeks ago. Her—"

"One moment, if you please, *Monsieur le Commissaire,*" de Grandin interrupted. "The other two, the Mahoney and Ebbert women, what were their occupations, if you know?"

The commissioner gave a slight start. "No known—or, rather, too well known means of support—"

De Grandin nodded. "There was no question, then, I take it, concerning their morals, which, *hélas,* were all on the wrong side of the question mark?"

"That's right, Doctor. All three were—"

"Exactement. And how, if you please, did *la* Jukes meet her end?"

"The coroner's report shows death was due to dislocation of the spinal column between the second and third cervical vertebrae. There was also a fracture of the right occiput, and the frontal bone, both shoulders—"

"Précisément, M'sieur. And were not the two other women similarly broken?"

"Ye-es," the commissioner thumbed through the records of the other cases. "You're right, Doctor. The coroner's physician's findings in all three cases are almost identical. We don't know that all three were killed by the same person, of course, but the technique of the murders—"

"Was the calling card of the assassin, by blue! Did not I say it?"

Winterbotham's somber eyes showed traces of amusement. "What do you want me to do, Doctor? Accept young Flannigan's report? Give out to the newspapers that an animated statue's running amok, that the police can't catch it, that their bullets can't hurt it, and that no man's life is safe?"

"By no means, *M'sieur.* Tell the press you have a clue, a dozen of them, if you wish, and that you're satisfied the killings have no connection with each other and were perpetrated by different persons. That will pique the murderer's vanity, and will also lull him into feeling safe. Make no mistake, he reads the papers, this one. He gloats in secret at the thought that he has foiled the police, that he can murder with impunity. Yes, certainly. *Bien.* Let him gloat. Soon comes our turn. Meantime, I pray you, do not be too hard on the young Flannigan. He is an honest boy, else he would not stick to his story so stubbornly."

"All right, Doctor. I think your advice is sound, and I'll not press charges against Flannigan. May we count on your cooperation?"

"A hundred and forty-five percent, *M'sieur!*"

We shook hands all around at parting, and for a moment I was fearful that de Grandin would implant a kiss on Winterbotham's cheeks for promising to restore Dennis Flannigan to duty.

"Non, merci," he denied when I suggested that I drive him on his other errands. "I shall do very nicely afoot, my friend. I have important missions to perform, and you are due at the hospitals. Go call upon your patients, but bid Madame North to wait dinner for me. Unless I am more mistaken than I think, I shall have the appetite of the ostrich when I return."

HE WAS home in time to mix the cocktails, and as I sipped the pale gold fluid from the beaded glass I realized with a pang that not since he had left for France when war broke out had I tasted a perfect Martini. These were pluperfect, with the vermouth cutting the flavor of the gin just enough to leave the dryness intact, the Angostura blending faultlessly with both. "Was it a successful day?" I asked as I helped myself to a second portion from the frost-encrusted shaker.

"Eminently, my friend," he assured me. "I have found that which I sought; now I desire to hear that—"

"Dinner is served, if ye plaze, sor," announced Norah from the doorway, and de Grandin who would no more think of keeping dinner waiting than of whistling in church was silent till the soup was served. Then, as Norah put the plate of steaming mulligatawny before him, "Tell me, Friend Trowbridge, do you know the Spring of Temperance?"

"The Spring—" I countered, wondering if he were being facetious, then as recollection dawned, "you mean the fountain in Dunellan Park? Why, yes, I've seen it, but I don't believe I ever really noticed it. Why do you ask?"

He spread a dab of butter on his hot roll and gave me a quick, level glance. "Me, I saw her today. I examined her most carefully, and—"

"You mean—" the look in his eyes gave me the clue, but it seemed so utterly fantastic—"there were bullet marks on it?"

"Four," he replied sententiously. "The young Flannigan did not lie to us, or to the *commissaire de police.* But no. Also, I matched the little marble splinter which he left with me into a little, so small notch knocked from the arm of the standing male figure."

Norah set the joint before me, a rolled beef-roast, brown and crisp on the outside with glacéd potatoes turned in its juice, and for a moment there was silence as I carved, then, when she'd left us to ourselves once more: "You will recall the group of statuary, perhaps? A child and young woman bend above the basin of the fountain, back of them, and leaning toward the spring, is a male figure, nude as are the other two, and slightly less than full life-size."

"Yes, I remember now. It caused considerable scandal when it was unveiled. Some of our ladies' organizations thought its undraped figures might corrupt youth. That's why they put it in Dunellan Park instead of—"

"One comprehends," he cut in. "The female mind, especially in America, is something which no one can understand—or perhaps which one understands entirely too well if he is versed in psychology. But it is of the statues that I speak, not of their esthetic qualities. I searched the city with the comb of the fine teeth, and was all but despairing when at last I came upon that group. 'Jules de Grandin,' I then said to me, 'it is here your quest ends, either in success or failure.' 'You are entirely correct, as usual, Jules de Grandin,' I reply to me, and forthwith I examined every square inch of those *sacré* statues' marble hide.

"And what did I discover? *Morbleu,* upon the back of the male standing figure I found three small, shallow, flattened pits with gray discolorations which indubitably were the marks of soft-nosed leaden bullets. But certainly. And on the triceps of the figure's left arm was a little nitch, also discolored as from a lead missile, and into it I set the marble splinter left with me by the young Flannigan. *Parbleu,* it fitted perfectly, like the slipper on the little, dainty foot of *Cendrillon.* Yes. Certainly. Of course."

"You're certain they were bullet marks? Children, especially boys, are everlastingly committing acts of vandalism—"

"*Ah bah!* You ask me if I know the tell-tale mark of the bullet on stone? Me, Jules de Grandin, the soldier? My friend, I know him as I know the lines of my own hand. Have I not seen him on the walls where military executions have been carried out? Of course. I tell you, good Friend Trowbridge, there is no doubt about it. Fantastic and incredible as it may seem, it was that statue which repelled the bullets of young Flannigan, that very marble image that killed Lucy Ebbert, and by almost inescapable inference Sally Jukes and Mae Mahoney also."

"Well," I forced a smile that did not go much below the surface, for despite the ab-

surdity of his statement his deadly earnest manner made me feel uncomfortable, "if that's the case we're in a bad fix. As Winterbotham said this morning, a marble statue is running amok and the police are powerless against it. If a marble image can come to life and go on a rampage, what is to prevent those bronze colossi in Military Park from taking the warpath?"

"Jules de Grandin," he returned smiling. He did not make the statement boastfully, but simply, as an existing fact. "I shall take measures to insure their tranquility, my friend."

"What measures?"

He drew his shoulders upward in a shrug of complete eloquence. "How should I know? The time is not yet ripe, my friend. When it has come, *pardieu,* Jules de Grandin will be there also!"

"You certainly think highly of yourself," I admitted, "but it seems to me you've taken on a job that's worthy of your best this time. If bullets won't stop this stone murderer, the only thing left to do is smash it with a sledge hammer, and you'd find yourself involved with the police if you tried that. I doubt if even your persuasiveness could convince the Park Department that one of their prize groups of statuary has developed homicidal tendencies. Besides, if one statue has come alive to commit murder, what's to stop the rest? You can't tear down or break up every piece of sculpture in the city. Why, counting the monuments in the cemeteries, there must be at least—"

"You are informing me?" he broke in with a slightly worried frown. "No, my friend, as you say, we cannot embark on a course of wholesale image-smashing. Besides, this business of the monkey, if I interpret it correctly, is more a symptom than a disease. One does not treat a case of ache, by example, by local applications, one treats the gastro-intestinal disturbance which is the etological factor. So it must be in this case. We must reach the underlying cause of all this nonsense, and remove it—or him."

I NODDED and, irrelevantly, it seemed to me, he asked abruptly: "This Monsieur Joseph Stoneman, who was he, if you please? A plaque set in the fountain' base informs the beholder that he bestowed it on the city as a memorial to his son who was, one takes it, killed in the war."

"No, he wasn't killed in battle," I rejoined. "He met his death in a speakeasy brawl. Joe Stoneman was a manufacturer of carbonated beverages and made a fortune out of them. His Jingerade and Kolatonik were famous at one time, but since repeal of prohibition they've lost popularity."

"Ah? The public ceased insulting its collective stomach with his nostrums when once more it had a chance to drink light wines and beer?"

"Not quite. Stoneman was almost fanatically opposed to alcohol in every and any form. He was one of our foremost dry crusaders, and almost succeeded in getting a bill through the legislature prohibiting the use of alcohol as a solvent in medicines. It took the combined efforts of the Medical Society and Pharmacists' Association to defeat it. He was credited with donating almost fantastic sums to finance the dry cause, too."

"One sees completely. It was an excellent advertisement for his own non-intoxicating beverages."

"No one believed that. He seemed so utterly sincere, but when repeal became operative one of the first things he did was to set up a huge brewery and advertise his beer almost as extensively as he had his soft drinks. His advertising campaign announced that as long as people were to be allowed to drink intoxicants anyway he felt it his duty to make a good beer which they would drink in preference to hard liquor.

Nobody believed him. His former associates in the dry cause turned against him as a traitor and saloon proprietors and tavern keepers, remembering how he'd led the prosecutions for infraction of the prohibition laws refused to handle his beer, so both his soft drink and beer businesses fell flat and he sold his brewery and factories and retired."

He frowned thoughtfully. "One sees. And what of his son's death? You said it occurred in a speakeasy? Strange the son of such a father should die so."

I nodded. "It was something of a scandal. The youngster was a harum-scarum sort of lad, and while his father sought to dry up liquor at the source, he worked industriously to cut down the supply from the consumer's angle. One evening there was a brawl in a speakeasy, and when the police came they found young Stoneman lying in the street outside the place with his head staved in and his neck broken—"

"*Morbleu,* can such things be?" he almost shouted.

"Eh?" I jerked back. "What d'ye mean?"

"His injuries, my friend. He had his head staved in; he had his neck broken—so did the three women killed by the statue. Do not you see some connection?"

"I don't quite see what you're driving at," I confessed.

The smile he flashed at me was infectious as a yawn. "I am not sure that I do, either," he admitted. "It is a puzzle picture that we work on, my friend. As yet we have but a few pieces, and the pattern is obscure, but presently we shall have more, and then we shall see order emerging from this apparent chaos. Meantime, why distress ourselves unduly? Shall not we go to the study for coffee?"

HE CAME bustling in next afternoon and thrust a copy of the *Journal* into my hand. "We must surely go to this, my friend," he informed me, indicating an item on the third page with the tip of a well manicured finger. "It will be of the interest."

The paragraph announced that Dr. Bradley-Stoker of the Universities of Edinburgh and Dublin would lecture on the secret writings of Cornelius Agrippa that night at Sawyer Hall.

"I don't think I'd be interested," I told him. "Why don't you go alone? I've had a rather trying day and—what's the matter with you?" He was grinning like a small boy who observes a portly gentleman in a high hat coming toward him on a snowy day.

"Me, I promise you will not be bored," he assured me. "It may be possible the learned doctor will not show up for his lecture, but I am certain that another will."

"Who?"

"Wait and see, my friend. If all goes as I think that all will go I shall explain to you completely. I have been busy as a hive of bees today. I have made investigation of the death of young Monsieur Stoneman, and some of the things I found out gave me furiously to think. The speakeasy where he was done to death was in Tunnell Street, that most unsavory thoroughfare where Sally Jukes came to her end, and near which both the Ebbert and Mahoney women were murdered. Moreover, all three of them had been among those present when he was killed. There was another there also, one Nellie Cook, and this afternoon I saw and talked with her."

"Yes?" I asked, puzzled. "And what is the connection—"

"She is, according to the popular phrase, down on her luck at present, having been but recently released from jail. Once she was a singer, a night club entertainer, and specifically a *chantreuse* in the Hard-Boiled Owl, the speakeasy where the young Stoneman met his finish. *Tiens,* he was the

devil of a fellow, that young man. He thought that he could best professional gamblers at their own craft, and on the night that he was killed had been engaged in a crap game with three young gangsters, boy friends of the girls, who had, in every probability, inveigled him into playing. *Tenez,* a blind man could foresee the outcome. He lost and lost again, then finally decided he had been cheated and made demand for his money, threatening to expose the dive and have his father prosecute it and all its inmates.

"Thereupon the three young gentlemen who rejoiced in the names of Handsome Harry, Gentleman Jim and Lefty Louis set upon him with brass knuckles and blackjacks. When they were finished with him he was entirely wrecked."

"Did the girl tell you this? I never heard anyone was prosecuted for his murder."

"But no. The gentlemen involved made themselves scarce, and either through loyalty or fear of reprisal the girls refused to implicate them. Their story was that they and the young Stoneman had been innocently drinking when three strange hoodlums rushed in and assaulted him, apparently for no reason."

"I should think she'd be afraid to tell you this, even now," I objected. "Gangland has a way of dealing with informers."

"Quite yes, but in this instance there is little fear. Gentleman Jim and Handsome Harry met their several deaths some years ago in a gang battle; Lefty Louis recently went to his reward in the tuberculosis ward of a state prison. So of all those witnessing or taking part in *l'affaire* Stoneman only this Cook woman remains. You will see her tonight at the lecture."

I laughed outright. "A discourse on the secret charms and spells of Cornelius Agrippa seems the least likely place to meet a superannuated trull."

"Nevertheless, she will be there. I have made sure of it. Today I took her to the shops and bought her everything that she needed, including several drinks, a manicure and a fresh hair-bleach. She was pathetically grateful, and will be more grateful still for the fee I have promised her if she acts and speaks exactly as I have instructed her."

A NEAT placard announced the lecture when we arrived at Sawyer Hall, but it appeared that Dr. Bradley-Stoker would not have a large house. The ticket seller yawned in his booth and the doorman had no duties to perform. When we went in we found we had the little auditorium to ourselves except for a fat man and a woman muffled to the ears in a fur-collared coat. For half an hour we sat there, then an usher stepped out on the stage and announced Dr. Bradley-Stoker had been called out of town on urgent business. Accordingly there would be no lecture, and our money would be refunded to us at the box office.

The fat man was before us at the window, and what little of him I could see I disliked instinctively. When he turned his face it seemed to me his puffy red cheeks threatened to engulf his little eyes completely. It was a face like that of some sleek, sleepy cat, more animal than human.

The woman crowded on our heels, and indignation fairly exuded from her. "It's an imposition," she told no one in particular in a sharp, strident voice, "bringing us out on a night like this for nothing!"

As she voiced her protest Jules de Grandin gave a start of surprise and then turned toward her. "Why, Mademoiselle Nellie!" he exclaimed. "This is indeed a pleasure. May I present my friend Dr. Trowbridge? Friend Trowbridge, this is Mademoiselle Nellie Cook."

With the quick suspicion of a wink at me he continued, keeping his voice up, "I did not know that you were interested

in Cornelius Agrippa, *Mademoiselle."* The quick flick of his eyes bade me take notice of the fat man at the ticket seller's window.

I turned my head a little and was aware of a sharp feeling of revulsion. The man was regarding us with a cold, steady look, the sort of look a cat might have before a mouse-hole, and at the woman's reply I could see a sudden gleam in his dull eyes, as if their lead had been scratched to malicious brightness.

"I surely am interested," she was assuring de Grandin, and she, too, spoke much louder than seemed necessary. "Why, they say he had some sort of charm by which he could make stone images come to life and do whatever he commanded them. That's what I wanted to hear about particularly tonight. You know—" there was a sharp catch in her voice, as though her breath had halted momentarily—"I can't get it out of my head that poor Sally and Mae and Crystal were not killed by some fiend as the papers seem to think, but—" her voice sank to a sharp whisper that could have been heard in a boiler shop—"but by *an animated statue,* Doctor!"

WE DROVE a block or two in silence, then: "Well, did I put it over all right, sir?" she asked de Grandin. "I gave the act all I had."

"You did it excellently, *Mademoiselle,"* he replied. "Here is your promised reward." A bill changed hands, and, "Where can we put you down?" he asked.

"Any place where I can get a drink. Ugh! When I think of how that little fat guy looked at me I feel cold right down to my toes and need a good, stiff snifter."

The little Frenchman nodded sympathetically. "I quite agree, *Mademoiselle.* And I suggest that you stay indoors till the new moon appears, also."

"I'll think about it," she returned with a laugh as she climbed down from the car, "but after a girl's just finished a college course she wants to get out under the bright lights, you know. G'night, sir, and' thanks."

"Now what the deuce is all this nonsense?" I demanded as we turned toward home. "I don't believe there was a lecture scheduled for tonight at all, and—"

"My perspicacious, good Friend Trowbridge," he broke in with a chuckle. "Of course there was not! The learned Dr. Bradley-Stoker exists in my mind, and nowhere else. I hired the hall, I put the notice in *le Journal,* I hired the usher to make the announcement—"

"Of all the silly, childish charades!" I exclaimed. "Whatever were you thinking of to play a prank like that?"

"It was no prank, my friend," he answered soberly. "It was a stratagem of war, and it was most successful. We know now who our foeman is, and we can make plans for his defeat."

"I'm hanged if I understand."

"Very well. Consider: The things which Mademoiselle Nellie told me today gave me the clue. Perhaps it was not likely, but it was entirely possible that these women's deaths had some connection with the killing of the young Stoneman. The fountain was unveiled a year ago, I understand. At that time the Jukes girl and her three companions were 'in college' as they call it. That is to say, they were in jail for vagrancy, shoplifting and similar petty crimes. Very well. A month ago the Jukes woman was released. True to the customs of her kind, she went at once to her old neighborhood and—*volià,* she was killed. By all accounts she did not die pleasantly."

"Then the Mahoney baggage comes from the jail. She, too, went back to her old haunts and—you have read the coroner's report in her case."

"The Ebbert girl was discharged from prison two weeks ago. Like the other two

she goes back to her old associates, like the other two she dies, but this time someone sees the killer at his work. You comprehend?"

"I certainly do not."

He breathed a sigh of exasperation, then, patiently: "Four women are suspected of complicity in the killing of a young man. The young man's father has a statuary group erected as a memorial—in a low, unfashionable part of town, by the way—and as the women, then incarcerated, are released they meet a death much like that of the young man.

"Our young Policeman Flannigan swears he saw a marble statue kill the Ebbert girl.

"Now, arranging for the lecture by the mythical Dr. Bradley-Stoker was not all I did this afternoon. By no means. I read and reread certain of Cornelius Agrippa's charms and spells. By the use of certain magic formulae the magnus claimed to be able to vivify marble statues, and make them do his will for good or ill, but only at the dark or in the waning of the moon, and only at the midnight hour between Saturday—the old Sabbath—and Sunday, the new day of worship.

"So I arrange this wholly false lecture, and arrange to have the Cook woman come to it, and to say certain things in the hearing of one I am convinced will also be there. It all transpired as I planned, my friend."

"See here," I demanded as we turned in my driveway, "was that evil-looking little fat man just ahead of us at the box office—"

"Of course," he anticipated my question. "Who else could it be but Monsieur Joseph Stoneman, father of the killed young man and donor of that statuary group to this fair city?"

THE night was cold with a cruel, penetrating chill that gnawed at our bones like a starved wolf. A gray rain slashed against the flat fronts of the grimy tenements in Tunnell Street, as halfway down the slattern row of shabby houses a door opened for a moment on the storm, showed a fuzzy square of faint light, then closed with a bang.

Muffled to the ears in a raincoat, Nellie Cook slipped from the house, paused a moment on the worn doorstep, then stepped out into the flooding street. For a moment she pressed close against the house front, seeming to hold her breath and listen. She cast a quick glance up and down the street and, keeping to the shadows, crept down the sidewalk. Frightened though she obviously was, I noticed that she walked with shortened, gliding steps and provocatively swaying hips.

For several days de Grandin had been coaching her, schooling her in her entrance, directing where she was to walk, regulating the speed of her movements. Now she was letter-perfect in the rôle, and, the dress rehearsals having been concluded, we were ready for the performance. Since we had met her in the lobby of the lecture hall the new moon had gone through its phases, and we had reached another dark period. The storm had kept the usual crowd of Saturday night revelers indoors, and as the girl emerged from the house the gong in the clock tower of St. Dominic's Church, six blocks away, boomed the first deep, resounding stroke of midnight.

Beside me in the doorway huddled Jules de Grandin. His face seemed pinched with cold, but the twitching of his little blond mustache and the intermittent quiver of his lips was purely the result of nervous tension, I knew.

He and Hiji had been deep in consultation all afternoon, and shortly before dinner the Englishman had made a hurried trip to New York, returning somewhere about nine with a small paper parcel which he handled with extreme tenderness. Now

he and Costello were ensconced in a doorway at the far end of the block, and all of us watched Nellie as she walked slowly through the pelting rain.

A street light's haze revealed the pale blur of her face as she passed under it. I knew that it was sharp and unintelligent, with hard, malicious eyes and only feeble traces of the common prettiness it once had, but in the distance, softened by the rain-filtered lamp rays, it looked fragile and appealing, and clearly terror-ridden.

She paused a moment underneath the light, looked backward fearfully, then went on toward the farther corner.

"This is so utterly inane!" I grumbled as a drop of water from the doorway's lintel fell like an icicle down the upturned collar of my raincoat. "We'll get nothing but pneumonia for our pains, and—"

"Zut! Quiet, my friend," warned de Grandin in a sharp whisper. "We are not here for pleasure, I assure you, and—*ah, barbe d'un bouc vert,* behold him!"

Something sounded on the flagstone walk almost beside us, dully, heavily, like stone striking stone. *Clump—thump, thump—clump!* and walking like a robot, yet with speed almost equal to a run, a white shape passed us.

A COLD as hard and dull as death itself seemed added to the chill of the rain-drenched night air, and I felt the breath catch in my throat like a hard, solid ball.

Agleam with rain, and moving with a stride as purposeful as Fate, yet with no play of flexing muscles showing under its white surface, a graven image—a white marble statue—passed us in the wake of the retreating girl.

"Hola!" shouted de Grandin, leaping out into the rain and struggling with some object in his trench coat pocket. *"Hola, M'sieur le Statuaire! Halte la!"*

The moving marble horror gave no sign of hearing, but heavily, yet swiftly, with the surety of inexorable Nemesis, made toward the woman.

Now we saw it fully revealed in the fuzzy glow of the street lamp. There was no expression in its carven features. Calm and composed and utterly oblivious of everything around them, its marble eyes stared straight ahead.

The woman heard the pounding of the marble feet and turned for a swift glance across her shoulder. Her scream was something horrible to hear. A bubbling, frothing, mounting geyser of sheer terror, winding upward, growing shrill and shriller till it seemed to pierce our eardrums like a probing needle.

She reeled blindly in midstep, clutching at the rain-flogged empty air with fingers gone as stiff as rigor mortis, then, seeming to realize that if she fainted she was lost, she gathered skirts and raincoat up above her knees and darted like an arrow from a bow toward the cross street.

The stone pursuer broke into a run. Not the heavy, clumsy jog-trot that might have been expected from an automaton, but the lithe, swift racing of a trained athlete, every step instinct with grace and only the hard thudding of its stone feet on the stone sidewalk to make us know it was an animated rock, not flesh and blood, that rushed through the downpouring tempest.

There was no doubt of the result. Before she'd traversed fifty steps the terror-stricken woman stumbled and fell to her knees, and for a moment as she turned toward her pursuer we saw her face like one of those old Grecian horror masks, mouth squared in agony of terror, eyes almost forcing from their sockets, cheeks gone a sort of dreadful, deathly gray despite the daubs of paint on them.

Costello's burly form came cannoning from the doorway where he hid. "Stand back, ye murderin' haythin!" he roared, raised his service pistol and let fly a stream of bullets at the charging marble horror.

The thing paid no more heed to them than it did to the pelting rain drops. We heard the *spat* of lead on stone, the screaming whine of a bullet as it ricocheted, but on the statue ran, its carved feet drumming on the flagstones of the walk.

"Duck, Sergeant!" we heard Hiji shout as he leaped past Costello, shoved him aside and faced the onrushing stone monster.

WE SAW him balance on his sound foot, raise his maimed leg almost waist-high, press something hard against his thigh, then bend forward as he hurled a missile, putting every ounce of weight and strength behind it.

The roar was utterly deafening, and the burst of sudden fire that came with it was blinding as the dazzling blaze of a flashbulb. I could feel the force of detonation beating on me like a dozen fists as it was echoed back from the house fronts.

For a long moment everything was dark, then as my eyes regained their vision, I saw a heap of marble debris on the sidewalk forty feet or so away, smashed white stone that seemed strangely like a corpse dismembered by some hideous force, here a marble hand, and there a bit of what had been an arm or leg or torso. Almost at my feet a calm, serene white marble face stared up into the pelting rain, and I had a quick qualm of wonder that it did not close its lids against the battering drops.

"Bingo!" I heard Hiji call. "Got him square amidships with the first throw, Frenchy. Jolly lucky that I did, too, or you and Trowbridge would be in the happy huntin' grounds by now."

"*Mon brave, mon superb,* my infinitely splendid Hiji!" de Grandin cried delightedly. "You are, as you have said, a marvel!"

"Who said that? Not I. You do all the boastin' around here, you little devil!"

"No matter, there is glory enough for all," the little Frenchman returned. "What though it was the agile brain of Jules de Grandin that conceived the plan of shattering him to pieces with a hand grenade because he could not be stopped with bullets? It was the fine, strong arm and fine, true, accurate aim of Hiji that gave him the *coup de grâce.* But certainly!

"Now," practically, he added, "let us see to these ones."

Costello had been knocked unconscious by the detonation of the bomb, but his loss of consciousness was short-lived, for even as we bent above him he shook himself like a dog emerging from the water. "Howly Mither!" he exclaimed. "What wuz it? Wuz I kilt entirely?"

"*Mais non, mon Sergent,* you are very much alive," denied de Grandin with a laugh. "You were struck senseless for a little so short time, but now you are all right. Of course. Give him to drink from your flask, Hiji," he added as he ran to help me with the swooning woman.

As far as I could find she had no injury of any kind. No broken bones, no cuts, no wounds. Apparently unconsciousness had been induced by fright alone.

I took her head in the bend of my elbow and held my flask beneath her nose, letting the fumes of the brandy act as a restorative. In the weak light from the street lamp, with the rain upon her face, she looked almost pretty. The long, dark, heavily mascaraed lashes lay in half moons on her cheeks, the wilful, childish mouth was relaxed and robbed of its petulance and cynicism. The tendrils of bright hair that slipped beneath the brim of her storm hat seemed really golden, not the result of a skillful bleaching.

"Gimme!" she roused as the scent of the brandy reached through her unconsciousness, grasped the flask in both hands and drank greedily. "Gosh!" she let her breath out with a gulping sigh and drank again, then drew her hand across her mouth, leav-

ing a bright stain of carmine lipstick on it. "That was sumpin, wasn't it?"

"It was, indeed, *ma belle,*" de Grandin agreed as he rose from his knees beside her. "It was indubitably something."

He looked at her a long minute, then: "What is it you would want, my little one? If you will say the word I shall be glad to find employment for you, or defray expenses of your schooling while you prepare yourself for a position. You have courage and resourcefulness, and could go far—"

"Yeah, far as the nearest gin-mill," she interrupted. "It's no dice, Doc. You can comb an' brush her all you want, an' tie a ribbon round her neck an' call her all the pet names that you know, but an alley cat is still an alley cat, an' sooner or later she'll go back to her alley. I'm no good an' never was. I know it an' you know it. Me take a job? That's a big laugh! You know I couldn't hold one twenty minutes."

THE look he gave her was direct and level, but not at all censorious. *"Tu parles, ma petite,"* he agreed with a quick smile. "Here is something for your services to Jules de Grandin," he pressed a roll of bills into her hand, "and here is something for yourself alone." Taking her cheeks between his palms he bent her face back and kissed her upon the mouth.

"Gosh, Doc," she gave him a look in which surprise and pleasure were mingled, "you ain't such a cold number yourself. Why don't—" she slurred her voice in imitation of Mae West—"why don't you come up an' see me some time?"

"Should I require the service of a brave and loyal woman again you may be sure that I shall call on you, *Mademoiselle,*" he answered with a friendly smile.

"Okay, Doc, be seein' you in the pictures." She gave him a nod of farewell and turned toward her house.

"Too bad," I murmured as I watched her walk off slowly through the rain. "She has the makings of something fine—"

"Ah bah, my friend, you sentimentalize!" he chuckled. "Did not you hear her? She understands herself perfectly, and was most just in her estimate. None but a fool would try to make a silk purse of a sow's ear, or force a different way of life on women such as that. It is her destiny to be a waster, so she will go through life a petty criminal, harried by the police, picked up on trifling charges, serving short terms in jail, then, as she put it so concisely, 'returning to her alley.' The pity is not that she is what she is, but that she was born in our time. In ancient Greece, or the Alexandria of the Ptolemies, or even in medieval Europe, there was a niche and place for such as she, a sort of honorable dishonor. *Eh bien,* they had more religion and less morals in those days, I damn think."

He shrugged as only a Frenchman can when he wishes to disclaim responsibility. The fault was Fate's, not his. And: "Hiji, thou species of an elephant," he added, "have you forgotten we have other duties to perform? Come, let us be upon our errand. *Allez vous promener!"*

"Right you are, my diminutive frog-eatin' friend," agreed the Englishman. "Carry on."

THE big old house in Albemarle Road looked gaunt and lonely. Built of gray stone with a wide porch across the front and sides, it had the jigsaw ornaments of the Victorian period set in the angles of its gables, and iron urns on high stone pedestals on its front lawn. Now, huddled in the fringe of evergreens planted almost at its foundations, it had the look of an old man who wraps his cloak about him and withdraws from life. Rain lashed against its windows, flattening on the panes, rain sluiced down its gutters, wind-driven rain washed across its porch floor

like waves that sweep across the decks of a ship in a storm.

De Grandin seized the heavy iron knocker hanging on the solid Flemish oak front door and beat a devil's tattoo with its ring. No answer came to his first summons, but at the third insistent drumming a glow showed in the fanlight above the door, and the heavy panel swung back a few inches. "Who is it?" came the challenge in a rather high-pitched voice.

The little Frenchman put his foot in the crack of the door before he replied: "Those who wish to talk with you about the memorial you erected to your son in the park, *M'sieur.*"

The exclamation answering him was almost like a squeak. The door swung nearly shut, then, wedged against his foot, came to a halt, and: "Hiji, my friend, I think I need your shoulder's weight," he told the big Englishman.

The door crashed back before the mighty push that Hiji gave it, and we were in the hallway of the old house. I looked around me with amazement. The place was a litter of bad taste. Heavy furniture of the kind fashionable in the "awful eighties" stood about the walls, bronze statuary worthy of the worst the cemeteries have to offer loomed on onyx pedestals, the pictures in their heavy gilt frames showed impossible landscapes. The only light in the room came from an old gas chandelier which, dripping colored prisms, hung from the center of the ceiling. There was a musty smell about the house, a taint of dried leather, of dust and mildewed fabrics. "*Tudieu,* my friends," de Grandin remarked, "I damn think we have come into the Castle of Despair."

He looked at the short, fat man in the flowered silk dressing gown, and: "You wish to tell us of that memorial, *M'sieur?*" he asked. "Or shall we tell you?"

"I—I don't know what you mean!" the other stammered, and the little, thin, high-piping voice that came from that great mass of fat struck me as being nothing less than shocking.

Joseph Stoneman was not an impressive figure, but he was sinister. Despite his moon face and pot belly there was none of the traditional jollity of the fat man about him, and the little eyes that looked out from the folds of fat that framed them were absolutely terrible.

"*Monsieur,*" de Grandin's voice was flat and level, and he kept his sharp gaze on the fat face of the other, "since you will not tell us, let me tell you of that memorial. Six weeks ago it left its pedestal and walked by night through Tunnell Street. There it encountered Sally Jukes, and what it did to her was most unpleasant.

"A week later it waylaid Mae Mahoney, and when its work was done there was another case for the coroner. Then Crystal Ebbert met him as she walked the street, and—"

A QUICK and dreadful change came over Stoneman's face. Gone was the childish, sullen, stupid look, gone the dullness from his eyes. His fat jaws quivered like the dewlaps of a hound that works its teeth, his little, puffy mouth began to twist convulsively. "Yes, yes!" he squeaked. "I know it; I sent him—I tracked them down like rats, the sluts that lured my poor boy to his ruin. One by one I tracked them down, and had them killed the way their gangster lovers killed him. All, all are gone, now — Jukes, Mahoney, Ebbert, Cook!"

"There you make the mistake, *M'sieur.* Mademoiselle Cook is very much alive, as we can testify, and your statue he is—pouf!—eliminated."

"You lie," the other told him. "You can't hurt him. He's proof against your bullets—"

"But not against my dynamite, *M'sieur.*"

"Dynamite?" the other echoed unbeliev-

ingly. "You dared to dynamite my lovely statue—my executioneer?"

"Quite yes, *M'sieur.* Your statue is a heap of rubble, nothing more, and we are here to make you answer for your crimes."

A sly, triumphant look came into Stoneman's little eyes. "You can't" he jeered. "Who'd believe the truth when you told it? What sober-minded jury would convict me on your testimony—or fail to send you to a madhouse?

"They'll put you safely away, and I shall be free to impose my will on the world. I'll recite the magic spell not once, but fifty or a hundred times. Think of it, I'll have a company—a regiment—of marble executioners to do my bidding, and all who offend me shall meet death. I'll wipe out alcohol and vice and sin, and I shall be the sole judge of what's right and what is wrong. I shall be like God. I shall—"

"You shall be nothing at all, *M'sieur,*" de Grandin interrupted in a low, hard voice. "You are the only man alive who knows the secret spell of the magnus to bring the dead, cold stone to life, and knowing that, you know too much for the good of mankind.

"Trowbridge, Costello," he turned to us, "will you accommodate me by retiring to the porch for a moment? I shall not keep you waiting longer than our work requires."

The Sergeant cast a meaning look at me, and, "Yis, sor," he agreed. "It'll be a pleasure, so it will."

We closed the door behind us and turned up our collars to the storm. Costello drew me to an angle of the wall, "We don't know nothin', do we, Dr. Trow-bridge, sor?" he asked softly.

* * * * *

It was not long before they joined us, locking the door carefully after them. *"Hélas,* I bring you the sad news, as the papers in the morning will report. Monsieur Joseph Stoneman, the eminent philanthropist, committed suicide tonight. It appears that he hanged himself with the belt of his dressing gown."

The Enchanted River

By DOROTHY QUICK

A delightful, very exciting tale . . . about the Great White Lord of Ceylon—two lovers—and a certain very useful old legend!

THE magic of Ceylon took complete possession of Wells Barrington before he had been a day in Colombo.

He let the big ship sail without him and hired a guide to take him into the interior.

For a month he explored the jungle, revelled in the rich vegetation and let the country grow dearer to his heart with each breath he took of the scented air.

When his wanderings brought him to a tiny native village tucked far away out of the tourist path he fell completely under the tropical spell and decided to make his home there.

After a great deal of talk with the head man of the village, he succeeded in acquiring a tract of land with a native house. Then he dismissed his guide and sent him back to Colombo with a wire to be sent to his partners saying that he had decided to stay in Ceylon, they were to sell his interest in the firm, invest the money and remit monthly payments of interest to him.

He hired a couple of men from the village, sent for stores, and proceeded to make his house comfortable so far as modern conveniences went. About it he planted a garden of rich tropical flowers. As the principal industry of Ceylon was tea growing, and he had an eye to the future, he also planted tea.

In the course of time he received letters from an outraged aunt and his partners begging him to come home, but the words rolled off his back like water from a duck's. For the first time in his life Wells Barrington was content.

He got on well with the natives, instinctively, he seemed to know what to do and say. He made them little gifts which pleased them, and learned their language with astonishing rapidity. When he shot a tiger that had been menacing the village for weeks, they called him the Great White Lord, and accorded him a deference and worship that pleased him intensely. This pleasant state of affairs might have gone on indefinitely if Wells had never seen Ara.

It was by the river that he first glimpsed her. He liked to walk there in the cool of the evening. Ara was bathing. The last rays of the dying sun reflected rosy tints on her bronze skin. Her hair was blacker than the jungle in the deepest night, her eyes like deep unfathomable pools, her lips were full and red. Wells Barrington's heart skipped a beat and he suddenly recollected the saying that it is not good for man to live alone.

Ara grasped her sarong and wrapped it around her. She at once recognized the Great White Lord and asked why he had come to the enchanted river.

"I didn't know it was enchanted," Wells replied.

Then Ara told him the story of the princess who, being thwarted in her love, had prayed that all lovers who bathed in the river would have their wishes granted, and then had drowned herself.

Wells looked at the slender girl and hesitated before he spoke, for suddenly he

Ara wrapped her sarong around her — then asked Barrington why he had come to the enchanted river. . . .

knew that the question he was about to ask was momentous. Finally he broke the silence. "Did you come to wish?"

Ara answered him simply, "Of course. I came to wish for a handsome husband."

Wells Barrington breathed easier. He wasn't exactly handsome; but he was tall and straight and had brown hair that glinted gold in the sunlight, and had a smile that usually got him what he wanted. He used it now.

"Suppose the river sent me to you?"

Ara put her slim hand in Wells' firm one, and said, "No greater thing could the river give me than the love of the Great White Lord. For weeks I have seen you in the day, and for weeks I have dreamed of you at night."

Despite her words she drew back when Wells tried to take her in his arms.

"Not yet," she whispered. "Not ever, unless the river is powerful and the prayer the princess made works well."

"What do you mean?"

Ara sighed. "Who I love is my own affair and you are the man I have chosen;

but he to whom I give myself is not of my choosing. That lies in the hands of the high priest."

"I understand," Wells told her. He had seen enough of village affairs to know that wives were bought, sometimes with silver, more often with a cow or some animal or article the parents coveted. "I will pay your father silver for you, or gold."

Sadly Ara shook her head: "I am not an ordinary maid, my lord. From my birth I have been dedicated to be the bride of whoever the high priest chooses. Unless he freely gave me to you, it would bring famine and desolation on the village. Whereas if I marry where he chooses, we will have plenty."

"That is ridiculous," Wells slipped back into the New York way of speaking.

"I do not know what you mean—rid—ridic—but I do know that the priest may give me to Singh, a horrid old man who has much wealth. That is why I came to the river to pray, for, rather than be given to Singh, I would kill myself."

"You shall not be given to Singh," Wells Barrington said firmly, in her own language. "I will see the priest myself tomorrow. I will offer him much gold for his temple and you shall be mine."

After that forthright statement he took her in his arms and this time she did not draw back.

THE next morning Wells, with a handful of gold pieces in his pocket, went to the high priest, jangled them eloquently and talked of love. He offered to marry Ara according to the rites of her own religion, but the high priest shook his head.

"No," he said firmly, "a maid dedicated to the God cannot wed with a foreigner, even though he be the Great White Lord, who has saved many of our lives by shooting the tiger-that-stole-into-the-village-by-night."

Wells drew the gold out of his pocket letting it slip from hand to hand. He would pay many of these for Ara, he said, watching the cupidity in the old priest's eye.

He waited for a response. When the priest said nothing, he added to his plea, "I will become one of you. Her religion shall be mine."

Once more the priest shook his head.

"That you cannot do. Besides even if I were to initiate you into our rites, it is too late. The maid Ara has been promised to the highest man of all — Prince Shani."

Wells had had to be passed upon by His Highness before he could purchase his land. The prince was a suave young man who had been educated in England, and had not forgotten the manners he had acquired there. He had brought them all out for Wells Barrington, but Wells knew that in Ceylon the Prince had reverted to type. He had seen the grilled windows of the women's quarters and noticed the many guards around the building at the time of his visit.

He had, however, been more fascinated by the elegance with which the prince housed his herd of elephants, for they lived in what was practically a marble palace, each elephant had his own stall and a trainer and boy in attendance.

The prince had been very affable, but Wells had not liked him. His lips were thick, and there was a cruel streak in his face. Wells remembering it exclaimed, "You cannot give Ara to him!"

"The Great White Lord may command in his own country, here it is different," the priest said firmly. "To go to the house of the prince is an honor. He has gold, which will please the god. If you care to make a gift, I am sure the god would bring prosperity to you, and perhaps someone else to love."

Wells talked much longer but he got nowhere. Dejectedly he returned to his

house minus several gold pieces. As far as the priest was concerned there was no help to be expected, and as for Prince Shani, he knew there would be no hope there. The only thing for him to do was to persuade Ara to go away with him.

He sat on the veranda and gazed out over the broad acres he had come to love, saw the flowers, heard the monkeys chattering in the trees, but for the first time felt no sense of well-being. As soon as the evening hour came, he started toward the river in search of Ara.

She was not there. He couldn't find her that day, or the next, either at the river or in the village.

The morning of the third day he was awakened by a funny noise of something hitting his window. At first he thought it was one of the monkeys amusing itself, and paid no attention to it.

When it persisted he got up to see what it was.

Outside the window, framed in the brilliant red flowers that grew around it, stood Ara—a very different Ara than when he had seen her last. She was weeping and the tears rolled unheeded down her cheek as she stretched out her hands to him.

"Oh, my lord," she sobbed, "I have just heard that I am to be given to the prince, and if Singh, the merchant, was awful, Prince Shani is more terrible. I have heard tales of what happens to his women. I would rather die than go to his palace!"

Wells leaped through the window and in one second had her in his arms.

"You shall not. I have been twice to the river to tell you so. We will leave this place together—you and I—and go over the seas to my own land."

"No," Ara sadly shook her head. "It cannot be. The God's curse would follow us forever. Rather than become the prince's bride I will kill myself. I have come to ask you to do something for me—such a little thing. Promise me that you will."

"I would give my life for you," Wells said simply.

"Then go to the river in the dusk of this evening. Go and bathe in it and pray that someway, somehow, the prayers of the princess will work a magic for us. Pray that it work quickly for tomorrow night I am to be sent to the prince."

Wells remonstrated with her, pointed out how stupid it was to waste time, that all they had to do was to leave the country. But Ara was steeped in the tradition and religion of her land and her fear was so great that despite her love for him, he could do nothing with her.

Eventually he promised to bathe in the river and make the wish, and begged her to come again that night so he could tell her what happened. He didn't really expect anything to happen, but the desire to see her again was overwhelming. She said she would come and then, tears still streaming from her lovely eyes, slipped away.

AT DUSK Wells Barrington went to the river. He threw aside his clothes and plunged in. He dove down through the clear water, and made the wish as he had promised Ara. When he struck bottom his fingers caught on something hard. Unconsciously he grasped it so that he came to the surface with it still clasped in his hand. Once more on the land he investigated his find.

It was a bell, a strangely shaped bell with a little knob on the top to hold it by. It curved downward like an apple. Half of it was solid but the bottom part was hollow and curved inward. Inside hung the clapper. It was apparently very ancient and had carvings which at present were hidden by the accumulated mud of the river. From all indications it must have lain there for years.

Wells held it up to the light and dimly

thought he had seen something somewhere that resembled it. He shook it and despite the river's mud it gave forth a lovely sound like fascinating music. He rang it again, and once more his nerves thrilled to the sheer melody of it. He put it down for a second while he got into his clothes. He started back to his home with it in his hand; and as he walked along it chimed rhythmically with each step he took.

Suddenly he became conscious of a noise behind him, the heavy tread of something following him.

He looked back but there was nothing there.

He stood still and the noise ceased.

When he started to walk again he heard once more the heavy plodding sound. When he still could see nothing, he decided it must be some animal in the deep foliage alongside the path, and felt a vague sense of alarm. It was almost dark and perhaps the tiger he had killed had had a mate. The padding steps followed him, and as he went faster they increased their pace.

All at once he felt something cold and slimy slide around his neck. Wells Barrington was a brave man, but this touch filled him with terror. He screamed and put his hand to his throat only to find nothing there. He looked behind him—green foliage met his eyes. But the foliage was bent back as though some large heavy thing had passed through it. The path had been narrow—as he walked along now it was wider. He felt a clammy moisture on his forehead, and was terribly afraid.

There were things in Ceylon — dark things that he had heard whispers of. The priest might be working a magic on him, a curse for daring to aspire to the maid the god had chosen.

Still he could see nothing. He began to run as fast as he could toward the clearing where his house was; and as he ran the bell in his hand clanged furiously and the heavy treads behind him came faster. Once more he felt the cold reptilian touch about his throat, and thought a python might have dropped from a tree. But when he put his hand up there was nothing there.

All the way home he knew something followed him, and the strange furtive touches he felt on his neck and shoulders filled him with terror. Though he could feel and hear, he could see nothing, and the weird, uncanny sensation of being followed in such a manner was worse than facing a concrete danger. The sight of a tiger would have been welcome to him, weaponless though he was.

By the time he reached his own land he was running with both hands clasped in front of him holding the bell. Without space to swing, it no longer chimed. Subconsciously, Wells missed the music.

Suddenly he realized he was no longer being followed. The animal, or whatever it was, had gone. As he went panting up the steps to his veranda, he lost entirely the sensations he had had. His fear dropped away from him. Inside his house, he was in such a state that he drank half a tumbler of whiskey straight. It wasn't until its warmth had reassured him, and made him quite positive he had been imagining things, that he looked at the bell.

As he had nothing to do until Ara came, he decided to clean it. Once slime and accumulated dirt of the river had been removed, he discovered sheer beauty, exquisite carving—bronze inlaid with color as only the Ceylonese can. He laid it on the table deciding he would give it to Ara.

BUT when Ara came the news she brought made him forget the bell.

The village was in a state of uprising against him. The news of their love and his visit to the priest had gotten about and the people were in great excitement over what they considered an insult to the god.

"You must go," she told him. "You

must go quickly. They are on their way here now and they will kill you."

"Surely," Wells protested, "you must be exaggerating."

"Oh, no," she cried and the distress on her face made him realize his danger. "They want your life for they know that, because of you, I will not wed the prince. The prince himself has helped to incite them."

"The prince!" Wells exclaimed. "I should have thought he would have protected me. He is educated, has lived in England."

Ara caught him by the arm.

"Oh, my Lord, do you not know that these things matter little here? You have offended the god, the priest says, because you have dared to love me, and I have made it worse by loving you. I spoke only to my trusted friend but her tongue was loose and she told what I said. The people come. They come with knives, with fagots! They will kill you but they will torture first. I beg of you to go!"

"I will go," Wells told her, "if you will come with me."

"I cannot come," she sobbed. "Have I not told you over and over of the curse? Have we not prayed and bathed in the river—both you and I—and nought has come of it? Leave me! I am not afraid to die, but I cannot die unless I know you are safe."

Wells Barrington took a deep breath. It didn't seem possible to him that a civilized world existed anywhere. If it did he didn't care.

"We will die together," he said.

"No, no," the girl screamed, and then with her voice pitched slightly higher, "they come! They come!"

Through the long window that opened on the verandah Wells could see a rabble of people armed with all sorts of mediaeval weapons on the edge of his clearing. They might have been a rabble from the French Revolution or some terrible ancient revolt. They were obviously out for blood—his blood. It was too late to get away. He was caught with Ara to protect and he had no weapon. There was no time to even get his guns.

All at once his eye fell on the bell. It was round and heavy and would make a good missile. He clasped it firmly in his hand and turned to Ara.

"Stay here. I will go and meet them."

"No, no," she screamed.

"There isn't any other choice now!"

He left her and walked onto the verandah, down the steps, watching the people who were more than sixty feet away from him.

It was a mob of villagers led by the high priest and spurred on from the rear by Prince Shani. The prince rode a white horse and even over the heads of the people Wells could see the leer in his eyes. Some of the natives carried flaming torches against which everything was etched plainly. Wells had no time to think. He wasn't even afraid any more. He walked straight toward them, and as he walked the bell in his hand chimed musically. Even in that moment of horror he loved the rhythm of it.

Suddenly he heard the heavy padding treads again and felt the cold wet touch on his neck. He shuddered instinctively, but in face of the oncoming rush of hostility he was no longer terrified of what he thought must be magic.

The people yelled: "White Devil, we come to send you back to the hell where you belong!"

Wells Barrington said nothing, but in his mind thoughts whirled quickly. "At least if you do I will send one of you first." He raised his arm with the bell high in the air. It chimed louder than ever.

Then the amazing thing happened. He felt himself suddenly lifted up, high above the heads of the advancing people. One

second he was standing on the ground, the next sitting on some firm object that was moving. There was a loud trumpeting cry and heavy plodding treads echoed in his ear as he advanced toward the people. He realized that though he could see nothing he was riding an elephant. He recognized the touch of its hide, the movement of its body—an elephant which was charging into the mob. The first row went down before it, trampled under its feet, screaming as it passed over them.

Then a voice, clear and high-pitched, cried, "It's Taj—Taj come again as the god said he would and he brings to us the White Lord! Fall down upon your knees and worship so that the god be not angry, otherwise he will trample all of you to death."

At this point nothing that happened would have amazed Wells. He sat still and waited. The people fell on their knees and bowed their heads to the ground before him. Only Prince Shani remained erect upon his horse. There was fear in the prince's eyes—fear and a horrible fascination that kept him rooted where he was and prevented him from turning the white horse he sat upon in the opposite direction from the oncoming elephant.

The elephant picked his way through the people who, when they knelt, had left a road clear for him. He advanced toward the prince with Wells Barrington still on his back.

"Half my kingdom if you turn him!" cried out the prince, for one moment breaking loose from the terror that held him.

Wells could see Shani trembling as a bird shakes that is fascinated by a snake knowing the doom that awaits it, powerless to move and prevent it. Despite his hatred of the prince, pity surged up in Wells Barrington's heart.

"I'll do my best!" he cried, and tugged at the left ear of the elephant, which he was holding trying to maintain his balance. He thought perhaps he could steer it in another direction as he had seen Mahouts do.

TAJ was not to be swerved from his purpose. With a trumpeting cry, he advanced upon the prince, ignoring the efforts of Wells.

Taj gave one more cry which froze the blood of all who heard it; and then he was upon the prince and his horse. The horse Taj thrust aside catching the prince up in his great trunk, as he did so. Then he stood still, swayed his trunk to and fro almost as though he were making up his mind what to do with his victim.

Shani shrieked. Wells Barrington couldn't blame him, for that moment was fraught with things beyond description. There was terror in it, while the prince dangled in mid-air and the awe-stricken people watched silently. But there was more than terror. There was a breathless eeriness, an uncanny strangeness and a sense of ageless events culminating. Wells ceased trying to guide or restrain the elephant—he knew it was useless.

The prince screamed again.

With that Taj acted. He swung his trunk rapidly back and forth until it gained a terrific momentum. Then suddenly he threw the unfortunate prince down to the ground with full force, and, trumpeting madly, trampled the Ceylonese into the earth until, to the horrified eyes of the watching Wells there was very little left of the prince.

Only then did the elephant calm. He turned toward the people and ambled slowly through them back to the spot where he had stood before. Then he stood still and reached back with his trunk touching Wells.

For one minute Wells thought he, too, was going to meet an end like Shani's. He shut his eyes, but gradually he came to know that Taj was caressing him. The

cold scaly trunk sliding over him was evincing affection, waiting for approval of what he had done.

Almost automatically Wells touched the trunk, patting it as he would a dog's back. The elephant made no sound, but stood quietly, his trunk turned back, with the tip resting in Wells Barrington's hand.

From the group of kneeling people one man arose. In the flaring light from the torches he looked like a bronze figure come to life. It was the high priest.

"Great White Lord," he said, "I ask your pardon for me and for my people. We did not know that you were the chosen of the god. For years it has been written on our scrolls that the Sacred Elephant would return and bring with him one who was to be greatly honored in our land. You are he; and we bow before you now and forevermore. Whatever you ask for shall be yours."

Wells wasted no time in making his wishes known. "I ask for the maid Ara to be my wife."

The high priest touched his forehead. "So it shall be. Bring her to the temple tomorrow and I shall unite you. And the houses of the prince and whatever was his shall be yours. Taj has decreed that nothing can be denied you. Have we your leave to depart?"

"You have," said Wells and breathed a deep sigh of thankfulness.

He watched them go, bearing the wounded with them. Not until they had all disappeared into the shadows did he move so much as a finger. But when the clearing was empty, he brought down his arm which all this time had been upright. As he did so the bell jangled softly.

Once more he felt the cold wet trunk of the elephant wind itself about him, now he was not afraid. He let himself go in its grasp and was lifted gently to the ground. In the darkness he could distinguish nothing, but his hand caressed the elephant's trunk. Then suddenly there was nothing beneath his fingers. The elephant had gone.

Ara came running out of the house. "Oh, my lord," she cried, "my lord! The princess! Her prayers have been granted. All is well for us. Where did you find the bell?"

Wells looked at the bell which he was still clasping in his right hand. "My fingers caught in it when I dove into the river. When I went out to face the mob I picked it up because I could see no other weapon."

Gently, reverently, Ara touched the bell. "It is *The Bell,*" she said, "the bell that belonged solely to Taj. Each elephant has a bell with which he is trained. He obeys its every signal. Taj was the Sacred Elephant, the most sacred of all, hundreds of years ago in the days of the princess. The princess fed Taj herself. It was one of her sacred duties. Taj loved the princess and when she died he would not eat so he sickened and, despite all the priests did for him he went away to die.

"It was then the prophecy was written down that Taj would return bearing with him a Great Lord who would bring peace and plenty to our land. His bell was flung into the river and it was said that whoever found the bell could bring Taj back from the other world, and that he would be the Great Lord."

"You mean—but you can't mean—that Taj is a ghost!"

"Of course I do," Ara responded. "Taj has been dead thousands of years but he still knows the sound of his bell and has come to answer it, and he will come whenever you ring it. We are safe, my lord. We are safe forever, you and I."

Now Wells understood the heavy plodding treads he had heard, the cold touch upon his neck that night at the river. It had been Taj following his bell as he had been trained to do. Taj! Elephant or

ghost? Ghost Ara said but he had heard elephants lived a long long time.

"Why did Taj kill the prince?" Wells was trying to understand things that were beyond understanding.

ARA hesitated a second before she replied, "My lord, there is a belief among my people that certain ones are born again. The princess killed herself because an ancestor of Prince Shani's loved her and, had she lived, she must have been his bride.

She hated him all the more because she loved a stranger youth who had come to our island in a boat and, after being shipwrecked, found his way to the interior. The princess met him and gave him her heart."

"Then, as now, the priests were jealous. They killed the stranger youth and because of that, the princess died. But first she whispered the tale of her wrongs into the ear of Taj, the elephant, and begged him to revenge her. In that past age Taj tried to reach the prince to kill him and almost succeeded but the priests prevented him. Some of the priests Taj killed before they chained him fast. The wheel of life turns, my lord, turns endlessly, but sometimes the wheel reaches the same place, the cycle is lived again."

"You mean this prince is the old prince come again!" Wells gasped.

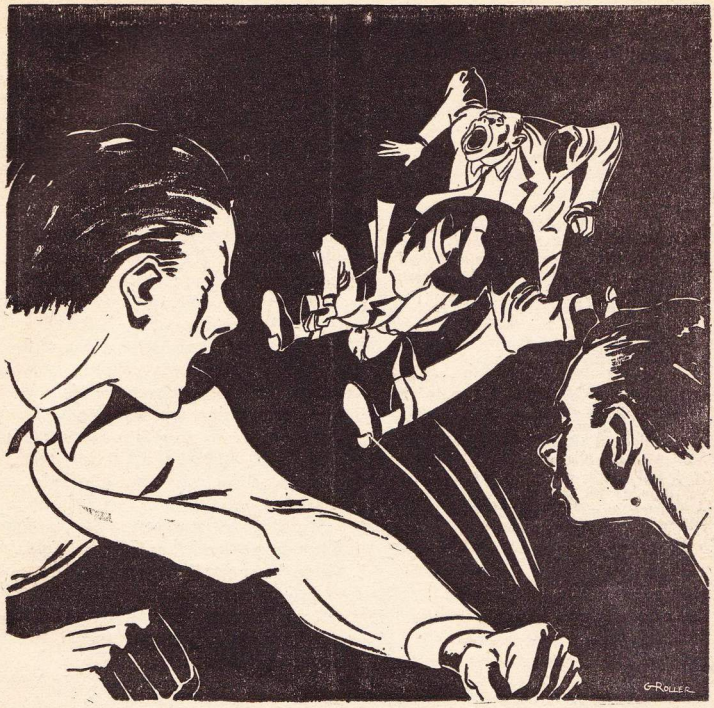
Ara nodded. "I mean that, and even more, my lord. Are you not a stranger come to our land, and is it not said that I resemble the princess as no other woman of our race has done since she lived? Did we not love and did you not find the bell? No wonder the ghost of Taj returned to do what he failed to accomplish centuries ago."

Wells felt gratitude surging through him —gratitude to Taj who had saved him and opened the way to happiness for Ara and himself.

Taj—or the ghost of Taj? What did it matter. There were many things he could not understand but he knew what had happened and what was still to come. The past was finished. The cycle rounded out and the future stretched ahead gloriously.

He put the elephant's bell securely away before he took Ara in his arms. "Tomorrow you will belong to me," he cried joyously.

And as their lips met she whispered, "Tomorrow—and all time to come."



Ghost for a Night

BY ROBERT ARTHUR

So you don't believe in ghosts? Well, well . . . maybe you can learn something from the very unpleasant lesson taught to the author of this tale!

777 Hillside Ave., Ocean Shore, Conn.
Aug. 25, 1941.

The Editors, Weird Tales,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City.

DEAR Sirs:

This is to explain why I cannot send you the story which we talked over, and which I said I would finish for you this week. Nor is it likely I will be able to send it for a long time to come, unless you can render me some desperately needed aid. As old friends who have published several of my stories and can vouch for me, I am appealing to you for assistance. I am today a frantic man. But before I explain further, please read the

enclosed clipping from the Ocean Shore *Sentinel*.

WRITER PAYS FINE FOR DRUNKENNESS

Before Judge Walter A. Beck in Municipal Court this morning Robert Arthur, 32, a writer, who resides with his wife at 777 Hillside Avenue, pleaded guilty to being drunk and disorderly. He paid a fine of fifty dollars and was released.

During the course of this morning's early hours Mr. Arthur, not a robust man, completely wrecked the establishment known as Dinty's Den, trounced two well-known Ocean Street bartender-bouncers, and after being placed in a cell toward daylight by the heroic efforts of the whole police force, ripped an iron bar from his cell door and would have escaped had he not been overpowered in another furious struggle.

In court a few hours later, he began a garbled tale of mistaken identity, but upon being questioned by Judge Beck, abruptly pleaded guilty and paid his fine.

The *Sentinel* wishes to report that the two bruisers he chastised are recovering in City Hospital, and will be out in a week or two. It also wishes to extend its felicitations to Mr. Arthur for having so effectively dealt with a notorious dive long protected by official indifference. And it would like to ask but one question.

What were you drinking, Mr. Arthur? We'd like to lay in a stock ourselves!

I have enclosed the clipping since my whole desperate plight stems from it. You may be able to guess what I have had to endure from friends who have called me up to ask the same question the *Sentinel* did—namely, what was I drinking.

As you know, I am a tetotaler. But when I tried to tell them so, they just roared with laughter and hung up. Now I reply "applejack." I do not like to lie, but I find that it is easier to admit to a lie than to get the truth believed.

But the jesting of my friends would not bother me if my wife— However, that is why I am desperate. I must explain by saying that I have been married but a short time—in fact, we only returned from our honeymoon the day before yesterday.

I had great difficulty in persuading my wife to marry me in the first place, for she was convinced that all writers are confirmed drunkards, and she herself holds liquor of all kinds in abhorrence. But I finally convinced her of my own sober, industrious nature, and it was with a feeling of greatest contentment that I finally sat down, less than forty-eight hours ago, to write the short story I promised to have in your office this week.

It was late, and my wife had retired. I stared at my typewriter for awhile, and the thought occurred to me that perhaps your readers would like a humorous tale.

So presently I hit upon the idea of having a human hero who, bothered by a ghost, hypnotises the spirit and send it off to haunt some human creditors who are pressing him for payment of their bills.

I got several paragraphs done, sketching in my debonair young hero and describing his difficulties, and then it came time to introduce the spook who was to be hypnotised.

I was staring at my typewriter, composing a description in my head, when a voice spoke unexpectedly at my side.

"No wonder you can't describe it!" The voice was hearty and scoffing. "What do you know about ghosts, anyway? You've never even seen one!"

I wheeled in astonishment. And with my mouth open to reply, found myself unable to utter a word.

Standing there beside me, reading over my shoulder what I had written, was a misty figure some six feet in height. As nearly as I could judge, it was attired in the garments of a seafaring man. It was difficult to make out details, due to the fact the city lights, seen through my open window beyond, were clearly visible through the figure.

"Who," I asked, when I could speak, "are you, and how did you get in this room?"

My misty visitant floated across the room to my easy chair beside the fireplace.

"I," he stated, "am the fellow you were just thinking of."

He pointed at my typewriter, and on his tenuous arm I saw the faint remains of a tatooed heart and the word *Lulubelle*.

"You were thinking about me," he declared. "And that gave me substance—jelled me, so to speak, so you can see me. I put the thought in your mind myself. I've been here all along, working on you. I've been waiting a long time for someone in this neighborhood to call me up, and when the opportunity came, I grabbed it. So here I am."

He leaned back and grinned at me. I could see him better now, outlined against the black leather of the chair like a photographic negative of a man.

He was big, and not unhandsome, though a long scar—or the ghost of a scar—stretched across his face from cheekbone to jaw.

"Yes," he said to my scrutiny, "I was as good a looking saltwater man as ever went down in six hundred cold green fathoms of ocean. But that's neither here no there. It's after eight bells already—midnight to you—and to cut things short, I'm here to have a spree. It's a long time since I came into port with money in pockets and a thirst in my throat, and I'm going to make the most of it. Besides that, I've a little grudge to settle. The last thing I thought of as the salt water began to trickle down my throat and the slimy seaweed brushed my face was that I hadn't given Nat Wilkins and Frog-face Smith the licking they had coming to them, for putting drops in my rum and shanghaiing me. Tonight I'm settling old debts."

"But—" I asked, "—how—"

"Look at me!" he ordered, and against my will I found myself staring hard into his eyes. Somehow they caught the firelight and concentrated it, growing brighter and brighter, until I felt myself growing strangely dizzy. Then I must have fainted, for I remember nothing of the next minute or two until I opened my eyes again and found myself lying back in my own easy chair.

"What—" I tried to ask. "What hap—"

Then for the second time that night the words froze in my throat.

I was sitting by the fireplace, *staring at myself where I sat before my typewriter.*

THE shock was unnerving. But my dismay when I lowered my gaze from myself—at least, from the individual who a moment before had been me—and staring at my new self, saw the gray mistiness which now formed my whole corporeal substance, cannot be described.

The individual sitting at my desk—I can no longer refer to him as I—grinned at me in a manner wholly foreign to my normal self.

"Yes," he said, and nodded. "Now I'm you and you're me. I'm Robert Arthur and you're Jack Mitchell—Sailor Jack, the two-legged tiger shark of the seven seas, as I was known."

"But—," I gurgled, my voice thin and distant, "how—how—"

"Hypnotism," Sailor Jack Mitchell told me. "I just hypnotised you right out of your mortal garments and into my ectoplasm. Gave me the idea yourself. I just turned around what you had in your mind."

In horror my mind flashed to the story I had begun. The gay and ghostly little tale I had planned was taking a turn which I found highly distasteful.

"I insist," I said, "that you give me back my body! You have no right to it!"

"Good boy!" he applauded. "Now you're talking like Sailor Jack, the Two-Legged Tiger Shark. Only I'm going to disappoint you. Right now I have business to attend to and a thirst to quench. Maybe a dame to look up and say hello to, if she's still around—Lulubelle Taine, as pretty a little spitfire as a sailor ever promised to marry. When I've fixed up

those little matters, we can talk about trading back again."

"But I don't drink!" I wailed. "My doctor's advice—"

"Never mind the sawbone's advice." Sailor Jack grinned again. "You're gonna drink tonight. You don't know what a treat your body has in store for it. I suppose you don't fight, either."

"I haven't had a fight in twenty years," I told him truthfully, and he burst into a great guffaw.

"Tonight," he stated ominously, "you are gonna make up for lost time—an awful lot of lost time. But I can't sit here gabbing. I got to be getting under weigh. Where's your car?"

"Parked out front of the apartment house," I answered weakly. "But what—"

"I'm going for a little ride," Sailor Jack asserted, getting to his feet. I tried to do the same, shot incontinently up into the air, and flattened out against the ceiling.

"Having trouble navigating?" he leered at me, as somehow I struggled back down to the floor. "You will at first. I'll give you a tip, though. First think of where you want to go. Ghost travel is mostly done by thought propulsion, though there's a certain amount of difficulty sometimes. When you're traveling in a wind you sometimes have to tack back and forth like a blooming wind ship trying to round the Horn. But you'll pick it up quick," he finished cheerfully. "I did."

He made as if to go out the door, then struck by a thought, paused to investigate the contents of my wallet.

"This all you got?" he demanded, scowling at the meagreness of the sum.

"I'm not in the habit of carrying large sums of money around with me," I told him snappishly.

"That's all right, Brother Arthur," Sailor Jack told me, drawing back his lips wolfishly. "I know an all-night hockshop. This writing machine must be worth something."

With that he tucked my typewriter under his arm and strode to the door. There he paused, his hand on the knob.

"If you want to hang around until I get tired using this body of yours," he told me, "think yourself over to Dinty's Den, across town on Ocean Street, and wait for me. Soon's I've hocked this writing machine, that's where I'm going to wash the taste of salt water out of my mouth.

"Besides, Dinty's Den is where I'll find Nat Wilkins and Frog-face Smith. When I've settled my account with 'em, I'll be able to go on to the next place—the place a drowned seaman like myself properly belongs."

"But—," I began feebly. "But—"

"But nothing! You'll be all right. Nobody'll be able to see you but me or another ghost, and you ain't apt to meet one."

Then, with a mocking wave of his hand, he was gone.

FOR several minutes after his departure, horrible despair gripped me. There was no one I could turn to for help—not even my wife, asleep so peacefully in the next room. My only hope was to do as Sailor Jack had suggested—follow him to Dinty's Den, and wait to get my body back.

Accordingly, following his instructions, I directed my thoughts, and a moment later was sweeping across the room and out the open window, where I paused a moment in mid-air, trying to remember in what direction Ocean Street lay.

As I floated there, I had an excellent view of the lights of the town, and the white-capped waves of the ocean in the distance, but I was in no mood to appreciate the sight. I fixed my thoughts on Ocean Street and at once began moving at a good pace eastward.

But unwittingly I dropped down close to the ground, and found an obstacle in

my path I was not experienced enough to avoid. The first thing I did was to run full into the side of a house, pop through the slightly open window, and find myself in a room where a young woman was just retiring.

Hastily I backed out, and would have blushed if ghosts could blush. Fortunately she saw nothing but the gusting curtains and shade, although she shivered as if feeling a cold draft and quickly threw on a kimono.

After that I managed to lift myself to a greater height, clear of the rooftops. But my troubles were not over. An unexpected gust blew me into the tops of a thicket of tall cedars where I became entangled in the prickly branches and was forced to extricate myself tediously.

This took me some time, but eventually I found myself above Ocean Street and drifted down to the pavement, unseen, outside the building which large neon lights proclaimed to be Dinty's Den, a rowdy, brawling bar built on a wharf that stood out over the water.

A prowling dog fled, yapping wildly, as I descended. Otherwise, the street was quite deserted, although on the deck that ran around three sides of Dinty's Den, above the water, there were some couples dancing to the music of a phonograph, and others engaged in conversation in dark corners.

Thought propulsion is not as easy a way to travel as it sounds. I'd been almost an hour getting across town, and I felt curiously weak and exhausted. Leaning wearily against a window, I peered into Dinty's Den and saw a single large room, with a bar down one side. The bar and room were crowded with rough looking men, and there were a few girls present also. The prettiest, a blonde wearing a tight-fitting red dress and much lipstick, was standing at the far end of the bar drinking with Sailor Jack Mitchell.

Sailor Jack, just lifting a glass to his lips, was laughing at something the girl said. In spite of my unpleasant situation, I smiled too. Sailor Jack was in for a surprise which would spoil all his plans. I hoped that it would cause him to abandon my body in disgust, and let me resume my own identity.

I was still smiling—with Sailor Jack's ghostly countenance—when someone seized my elbow and whirled me around with such violence that I spun about several times before I could control myself. Then I found myself gaping in astonishment at a small, dark-haired, dark-eyed girl in slightly outmoded clothes.

"Sailor Jack!" she cried at me shrilly, her eyes blazing. "So you've come back at last, you good for nothing sea scum! I knew you'd come some day, and believe me, I've been waiting for you! Promise to marry me, will you, then ship out without doing it! I'll teach you. Didn't know I was dead, did you, or I'll bet you'd have steered a course clear of here!"

With that she flung herself at me, seized me by the hair, and began to make a determined attempt to scratch my eyes out.

Startled and alarmed, I backed away. I got onto the deck around Dinty's Den, and retreated hastily around it, endeavoring to hold off the dark-haired spitfire who was attempting to tear my substance into small, useless bits.

"Please!" I cried out, desperately. "I'm not Sailor Jack! You've made a mistake. I'm someone else entirely!"

"Not Sailor Jack!" the girl shrilled, and laughed with bitter mirth. "Then you're his twin brother, and he didn't have a twin brother!"

She flung herself at me again, shrieking imprecations, and around and around the deck we whirled, creating the greatest confusion among the dancers. They could not see us, of course. But dust and bits of papers swirled up in our wake, a sleeping

cat woke to arch its back and spit, and the dancing couples shivered as we passed, as if touched by a chill breeze.

Hastily they retreated inside, glancing apprehensively over their shoulders at the dust cloud following us. The cat yowled again, and sped off into the night. And in a moment I came to a stop in a corner, utterly exhausted.

"Please!" I begged, holding off the furious girl, whom I had quickly realized was a ghost also—the ghost, I rather thought, of the Lulubelle Taine that Sailor Jack had mentioned. "Madame, I beg you to believe that I'm not Sailor Jack Mitchell!"

The girl-spirit quieted then, and stared at me, puzzled.

"You look like him," she said suspiciously. "Scar and all. But Sailor Jack wouldn't ever talk like you do, and you sure don't act like you remember me, Lulubelle Taine. Maybe you're not him, but if you're not, who are you?"

I EXPLAINED. And when I had told her about Sailor Jack's saying he was coming here to lick the two bartenders, Nat Wilkins and Frog-face Smith, she nodded.

"Yeah, that's Sailor Jack all right," Lulubelle Taine asserted. "Just the kind of trick he'd do, too, the rat. Which one is he?"

We moved to a window and I pointed out Sailor Jack, in my form, still standing at the end of the bar drinking with the girl in the red dress. Lulubelle Taine snorted.

"That shrimp?" she demanded. "Well, I s'pose it was the best Sailor Jack could do— No hard feelings, Mister. Only if he came here to lick Nat Wilkins and Frog-face Smith, he's made a big mistake. 'Cause that's them, Mister."

She pointed to two burly bruisers, each standing more than six feet and weighing at least two hundred pounds, who were behind the bar pouring drinks. Each of them had fists like a blacksmith's hammers; and staring at them, I shuddered. Sailor Jack was certainly going to be badly beaten if he assaulted them. My body simply was not built for combat with such as they. The spirit might be willing, but the flesh was weak.

"And he's already picked up a blonde!" Lulubelle Taine said scathingly. "I'll bet it was because of a blonde he didn't marry me, damn him! Just wait, though. About two more drinks and he'll get to feeling like fighting. Then oh baby, but will he take a walloping!"

I shook my head.

"Thank heaven, he won't," I said fervently. "He doesn't know it, but I'm allergic to alcohol. Two drinks always make me pass out. One more drink, and my body is simply going to go out like a light before he can start any brawls. By the time he comes to, I hope he'll be ready to let me have it back."

"Oh is that so?" Lulubelle Taine cried. "Well, listen, Mister, I *want* him to get walloped, see? I don't want him passing out. I want him to be knocked loose from his ears. I've been waiting two years to see him get what's coming to him, and I'm not going to be cheated now. Pass out, will he? Not if little Lulubelle can help it!"

In an instant she had squeezed through the partly open window, and was whisking across the crowded room above the heads of the unaware patrons. She settled down beside Sailor Jack just as he was lifting a glass of whiskey. Her hand darted out, jarring the glass and sending the liquor splashing over the red dress of the blonde.

"Take that, dearie!" Lulubelle shrilled, though the blonde couldn't hear her. But Sailor Jack could, and he gaped at her. "Hello, Sailor!" she laughed at him mockingly. "Glad to see me? I've been waiting around to have a word with you, and

after you've taken your licking, I'm going to be on hand when you give that body back to the guy you stole it from and return to this world."

In desperation, not knowing what course to take, I hurried inside and joined them, but they took no notice either of me or of the now angry blonde.

"Look what you've done to my new gown!" she was crying at Sailor Jack. He waved her away as she tugged at his arm.

"Hullo, Lulubelle," he grinned down at the dark-haired girl, invisible to everyone else. "So you've been waiting for me like a faithful sweetheart, have you? Sorry to disappoint you, but I'm not coming back. I like it the way I am, and I'm keeping this body as long as it lasts."

"In that case it won't last long!" Lulubelle retorted. She reached out. A large truck driver beside Sailor Jack was just lifting his drink. She slapped the glass from his fingers, sending the whiskey flying into his face. The truck driver turned on Sailor Jack with a roar.

"What'sa idea, punk!" he bellowed. "Nudgin' my elbow!"

"He thinks he's bein' funny!" screeched the blonde. "He throw liquor all over my new gown, too!"

"Is 'at so?" the truck driver growled. "Well, I know a good joke too."

And he swung his fist straight for Sailor Jack's nose—my nose.

SAILOR JACK ducked, and the blow missed. The truck driver swung around trying to get his balance. The enraged blonde snatched up a bottle from the bar and tried to bring it crashing down on Sailor Jack's head. He jerked aside, and the bottle splintered on the bar. The truck driver loosed another tremendous blow, roaring gutturally. Sailor Jack, moving with pantherish lightness, drove a straight right jab into the truck driver's jaw, and the big man crumpled backwards, falling with a building-jarring thud to the floor.

And with that the uproar began.

The nearest men, licking their lips happily, crowded forward, trampling on the truck driver to get at Sailor Jack. The bartender Lulubelle Taine had pointed out as Nat Wilkins snatched up a bung starter and leaned over the bar with an ugly grin.

"All right, Perfesser, you asked for it," he snarled, and brought the bung starter down.

I had no idea my limbs could move so swiftly. Sailor Jack ducked, grabbed Nat Wilkins' wrist, and twisted the bung starter from his hand. He brought it down on the head of the nearest assailant, impeding the attempt to get at him for a moment, then whirled to strike Nat Wilkins with it. The bartender grunted and collapsed limply on the bar.

By now most of the roomful of men were pushing forward, trying to reach us, and the efforts of those in the rear to push through those ahead had already started half a dozen other fights in various parts of the room. These gained volume, and the place was filled with yelling and shouting. Buffeted by the crowd, Lulubelle Taine and I were squeezed upwards, and of necessity we backed to the very end of the bar, from which vantage point we watched with mingled emotions.

Sailor Jack, as the eager hands of a dozen men reached for him, leaped nimbly up onto the bar too, grabbed up Nat Winkins' limp form, and heaved him at the men below. Half a dozen went down crashing, bowled over by the impact, and Sailor Jack's laugh rang out above all the other sounds.

"I'm Sailor Jack Mitchell, the two-legged tiger shark of the seven seas!" he bellowed. "I bite the horns of bull rhinoceroses with my teeth and eat a landlubber every morning for breakfast. Say your prayers, you puny midgets, and come on and fight!"

"Gee!" It was Lulubelle, crouched beside me, and her eyes had a bright shine to them. "What a man that Sailor Jack is! It don't matter what body he's got; it's the spirit that counts."

It was beginning to look as if this was true. Finishing his taunting yell, Sailor Jack whirled as Frog-face Smith, the second bartender, came lumbering up behind him. He made a great leap and came down behind the bar on the big man's shoulders. Frog-face Smith went over backwards, his huge mouth open and bellowing, but he had hardly struck the floor before Sailor Jack had snatched him up and was spinning him around in an airplant whirl. In the restricted space, bottles and glasses fell smashing as Frog-face Smith's frantically kicking legs struck them. The mirror splintered. A beer tap was knocked off, and a geyser of draft lager foamed into the air.

Through it Sailor Jack tossed Frog-face Smith, straight into Nat Wilkins, who was just getting up again. They both went down together. Then, struggling to their feet, they rushed Sailor Jack simultaneously.

SAILOR JACK threw a whiskey bottle, which missed and splintered against the opposite wall. Someone struggling over there in one of the private fights that were turning the place into a pandemonium took it personally and hurled a glass back. In another moment glasses, chairs, and records from the coin phonograph, which someone kicked open with a heavy boot, were sailing through the air in all directions.

Lulubelle clapped her hands excitedly as Frog-face Smith and Nat Wilkins clambered over the bar and fell upon Sailor Jack.

"Give it to 'em, Sailor!" she cried. "Smash their teeth in!"

I could only watch, gulping, cold horror gripping me; for after all, it was my body which they were assaulting so determinedly, no matter whose spirit animated it.

Sailor Jack got a hammerlock on Frog-face Smith and held his head over the broken beer tap, trying to drown him in the spouting lager. But Nat Wilkins, leaping on him from behind, began to throttle him. Sailor Jack let Frog-face Smith go, threw Nat Wilkins over his shoulder, and all three went down to the floor together in a confused, struggling mass.

It was at this moment that the police came — three constables, all large and husky, armed with long night sticks. Into the room they strode, striking indiscriminately at every head in reach. In a moment, except for unconscious forms strewn about the floor, and Sailor Jack struggling with his enemies behind the bar, the place was empty. The constables rounded the bar, used their night sticks again, and Sailor Jack, thus attacked unawares, was finally quelled, falling limply across the still forms of Frog-face Smith and Nat Wilkins.

Wasting no time in ceremony, the constables lugged my unconscious body through the shambles that had been Dinty's Den, thrust it into the Black Maria, and conveyed it to the local jail, where they placed it in a cell and left it.

Lulubelle Taine, her eyes still glowing with admiration, and I followed the clanging van to the jail, and then entered as Sailor Jack was carried inside. After the constables had departed, Lulubelle and I remained in the cell with him, taking counsel.

"The poor boy," Lulubelle said tenderly, caressing Sailor Jack's bruised brow with ghostly fingers. "I'm proud of him. There isn't anybody like him, and there never will be, either. He never cleaned out a bar quicker than he did tonight. If those

cops hadn't come, he'd have pulled the place down and thrown the pieces into the ocean before he was through."

"That's all right," I retorted worriedly, "but what about me? He's had his fun, but I'm the one that has to take the punishment."

Lulubelle looked worried too.

"You heard him say he was going to keep your body," she reminded me. "Maybe he meant it. And I don't want him to. He's mine, and I want him back in the same world with me."

Sailor Jack stirred and groaned then, shifted a little, and sat up, prying his eyes open with such difficulty that I winced.

"Hi, Lulubelle," he greeted her, yawning and looking around. "In the brig again, huh? Just like old times. I haven't had so much fun in years. What time is it?"

"It's five-thirty-five," I told him, looking at the wrist-watch fastened to his wrist —my wrist-watch.

"Pretty near daybreak, huh?" Sailor Jack remarked. "Ho hum, time to be getting out of here then."

"Now listen to me!" I said indignantly. "I demand that you restore my body to me! You've already half-destroyed it, and I want it back before you do it any more damage!"

"C'mon, Sailor," Lulubelle Taine said coaxingly. "Let him have it. You don't want it any longer."

"Why, sure, Lulubelle," Sailor Jack said amiably enough, getting to his feet. "I wasn't going to keep it. I was just trying to worry you. Listen, kid, I'm sure sorry about what happened, but those two rats, Wilkins and Frog-face, put drops in my drink and shanghaied me onto that tin can that sank. I really was going to marry you, honest."

"That's all right, Sailor," Lulubelle said tenderly. "I knew all along it was something like that. But listen, before you give him back his body. You got him into jail. What're you going to do about getting him out?"

"Well—," Sailor Jack scratched his head, and winced as he struck a tender spot. "That's so, too. I got him into th' brig, so I got to get him out. Here goes, then."

With that he spat on his hands, got a grip on a bar in the cell door, and began to pull.

My muscles stood out like iron bands. The sweat popped out on my forehead. And as I stared incredulously, the bar began to bend and pull from its socket with a loud squealing.

It was this which brought the jailer and an assistant rushing back to the cell.

"Harry!" the jailer yelled. "He's escapin'! He's pullin' th' jail apart! Grab him!"

Sailor Jack got the bar loose and twisted it toward him. Then he squeezed through the opening into the corridor and before they could collect themselves, leaped on them.

He grabbed the jailer with one hand and his helper with the other, and as they struggled in his grasp, began to knock their heads together happily. Their shouts and cries were already becoming more feeble when a faint ray of sunlight came through the cell window and painted the bars a pale silver.

AT THE same instant, giddiness overtook me. Everything went black for an instant. When I recovered myself, to my utter horror I found that my hands were entangled in human hair, and I was vigorously trying to bang together the heads of the two jailers with whom Sailor Jack had been struggling a moment before.

Over their shoulders I saw Sailor Jack and Lulubelle, standing side by side and watching.

"Sorry, Brother Arthur," Sailor Jack

called to me. "I couldn't quite finish before the sun came up. But knock 'em together once more, then grab the keys and run like hell and you'll get away all right. So long for now, though. We've got to be—"

His words, which had been getting fainter and fainter, became quite inaudible. And before my eyes he and Lulubelle faded away and were gone. While I gaped at the emptiness where they had been, the two men in my grasp struggled free.

"Get him, Harry!" the jailer gasped. "He's a wildcat! Clunk him over the head with your blackjack!"

"Gentlemen!" I cried out aghast as they bore down upon me. "Please! It's all a mis—"

After that I remember nothing more until much later, when I opened my eyes and was immediately dragged before a judge.

Due to my splitting headache and other pains my explanations were not very coherent. Dizzy as I was, I quickly saw that they were being received with disbelief. So under the circumstances I pleaded guilty and paid the fine as the quickest way of ending the incident and getting home to my wife.

And that is the entire truth concerning the events of the night. I am still confined to the house, unable to work, which is why I have failed you in the matter of the promised story. And my wife—my wife has left me to go to her mother's.

She will not answer when I phone. Her mother says she intends to divorce me. All because I cannot make her believe I wasn't drinking that night—cannot convince her that the spirit inhabiting my body was not an alcoholic one at all, except in the sense that it was addicted to strong drink on its own account.

But you have known me for a long time. You know that I never voluntarily touch liquor in any form. So please, I beg of you, write me that you believe this explanation. If I can show my wife that you are convinced of my innocence in this matter, perhaps she will return and cease talking about a divorce.

I beg you not to delay your answer. The situation is desperate and I am counting upon you. Until my wife has returned to me I will not be able to write a word.

Anxiously,

Robert Arthur.

Weird Tales
9 Rockefeller Plaza
New York City

Mr. Robert Arthur
777 Hillside Ave.
Ocean Shore, Conn.

Dear Mr. Arthur:

Thanks very much for the clipping, and the new story. We found it most amusing, and plan to use it in an early issue. We all agreed that it represents an ingenious turning to good account of the unhappy incidents detailed in the clipping.

Please send us some more stories soon!

Extend our regards to Mrs. Arthur and accept our wishes for a long and happy married life. But we would like to ask—in strict confidence, of course—what were *you drinking, anyway?*

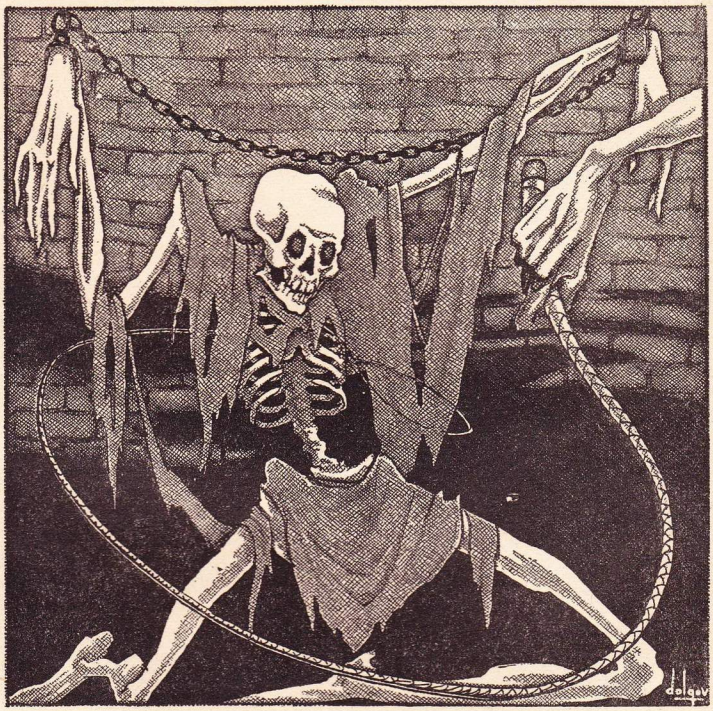
Cordially,

The Editors.

Masquerade

By HENRY KUTTNER

"She lashed that chained skeleton with a heavy cattle whip. . . ."



"LOOK," I said to Rosamond bitterly. "If I started a story like this, any editor would shoot it back—"

"You're too modest, Charlie."

"—with the usual kindly crack about rejection - doesn't - necessarily - imply - lack-of-merit-but-the-story-smells. So here we are. Honeymooning. Storm comes up. Forked lightning crackles across the sky.

Watch out for trap-doors, secret panels and clutching hands . . . and the Henshawe vampires!

Rain comes down in torrents. And that house we're heading for is obviously a deserted lunatic asylum. When we bang the old-fashioned knocker, there'll be shuffling footsteps and a very nasty-looking old coot will let us in. He'll be *so* glad to see us, but there'll be a mocking gleam in his eye when he starts talking about a legend of vampires that hang out around here. Not that *he* believes in such things, but—"

"But what makes his teeth so sharp?" Rosamond gurgled, and then we were on the rickety porch and knocking on the oak panel that lightning showed us. We did it again.

Rosamond said, "Try the knocker. Mustn't use the wrong formula."

So I banged the old-fashioned knocker, and there were shuffling footsteps. Rosamond and I looked at each other incredulously and grinned. She's very pretty. We like the same things—preferably unconventional—and so we get along well together. Anyhow, the door opened and a very nasty-looking old coot was standing there, with an oil-lamp in one gnarled hand.

He didn't seem too surprised. But his face was such a nest of wrinkles it was difficult to make out any changes of expression there. A beak of a nose shot out like a scimitar, and his tiny eyes were greenish in the dim glow. Oddly, he had thick, coarse black hair. The sort that would look well on a corpse, I decided.

"Visitors," he creaked. "We have few visitors here."

"You must get plenty hungry between callers," I cracked, and edged Rosamond into the hall. It smelled of must. So did the old man. He shut the door against the fury of the wind and beckoned us into a parlor. We brushed against old-fashioned beaded curtains and found ourselves back in the Victorian era.

Grandpop had a sense of humor. "We don't eat visitors," he remarked. "We just kill them and steal their money. But pickings are poor nowadays." He laughed like a triumphant hen with embryonic quintuplets. "Me," he said, "I'm Jed Carta."

"Carter?"

"Carta. Sit down, dry off, and I'll build a fire."

We were drenched. I said, "Can we borrow some clothes? We've been married for years, if you're wondering. But we still feel sinful. The name's Denham, Rosamond and Charlie."

"Not honeymooners?" Carta seemed disappointed.

"It's our second honeymoon. More fun than our first. Romance, huh?" I said to Rosamond.

"Yeah. It gits yuh," she agreed. A card, my wife. The only woman smarter than me that I don't hate. She's quite pretty, even when she looks like a drowned kitten.

Carta was building a fire on the hearth. "A lot of people lived here once," he remarked. "Only they didn't want to. They were mad. But it isn't an asylum any more."

"That's your story," I said.

He finished with the fire and shuffled toward the door. "I'll get you some clothes," he said over his shoulder. "That is, if you don't mind being left alone here."

"Don't you believe we're married?" Rosamond inquired. "Honest, we don't need a chaperon."

Carta exhibited a few snags of teeth. "Oh, it ain't that. Folks around here have got some queer ideas. Like—" He chuckled. "Ever heard tell of vampires? People been saying that there's been a sight of deaths in this neighborhood lately."

"Rejection - doesn't - necessarily - imply - lack-of-merit," I said weakly.

"Eh?"

"It—doesn't matter." I looked at Rosamond, and she looked back at me.

CARTA said, "Not that I take any stock in such things." He grinned again, licked his lips, and went out, slamming the door after him. He locked it, too.

"Yes, darling," I said. "He had green eyes. I noticed."

"Did he have pointed teeth?"

"He only had one. And that was worn down to the bone. Maybe some vampires gum their victims to death. It doesn't sound conventional, though."

"Maybe vampires aren't always conventional." Rosamond was staring into the fire. Shadows were dancing around the room. Lightning flared outside. Rejection-does-not-necessarily—

I found some dusty afghans and shook them out. "Peel," I said briefly, and we hung our garments before the blaze, wrapping up in the afghans till we looked like indigent Indians. "Maybe it isn't a ghost story," I said. "Maybe it's a sex story."

"Not if we're married," Rosamond countered.

I just grinned. But I was wondering. About Carta. I don't believe in coincidences. It was easier, somehow, to believe in vampires.

The door was opened, and the man who came in wasn't Carta. It looked like the village idiot—a gross, obese mountain of a man with thick, slobbering lips and rolls of fat around his open collar. He hitched up his overalls, scratched himself, and smirked at us.

"He's got green eyes, too," Rosamond remarked.

The newcomer had a cleft palate. But we could understand what he said, all right.

"All our kin's got green eyes. Grandpaw's busy. He sent me back with these. I'm Lem Carta." Lem had a bundle across his arm, and he tossed it at me. Old clothes. Shirts, overalls, shoes — clean enough, but with the same musty smell.

Lem clomped over to the fire and let his monstrous body sink down in a crouch. He had the same beak of a nose as Grandpaw Carta, but it was half-buried in pads of drooping fat. He giggled hoarsely.

"We like visitors," he announced. "Maw's coming down to say howdy. She's changing her clothes."

"Putting on a clean shroud, eh?" I hazarded. "Go away, Lem. And don't peek through the keyhole."

He grumbled, but shuffled out, and we got into those musty garments. Rosamond looked very pretty—the peasant type, I told her, which was a lie. She kicked me.

"Save your strength, darling," I said. "We may need it against the Cartas. One big horrid family. This is probably their ancestral mansion. Used to live here when it was a madhouse. Paying guests. Wish I had a drink."

She stared at me. "Charlie, are you beginning to believe—"

I said, "That the Cartas are vampires? Hell, no! They're just local yokels trying to throw a scare into us. I love you, honey."

And I nearly cracked her ribs as I hugged her. She was shivering.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I'm cold," she said. "That's all."

"Sure." I drew her toward the fire. "That's all. Of course. Naturally. Toss me that lamp and we'll go exploring."

"Maybe we should wait for Maw?"

A bat fluttered against the window. They seldom fly during a storm. Rosamond didn't see it. I said, "No, we won't wait. Come on."

At the door I stopped, because my wife had fallen on her knees. She wasn't praying, though. She was staring down at some dirt on the floor.

I hoisted her up with my free hand. "Sure. I know. It's graveyard mould. Count Dracula out west with the Hardys. Let's go look over the asylum. There should be a few skeletons kicking around somewhere."

So we went out in the hall, and Rosamond went swiftly to the front door and tried to open it. She turned wise eyes to me.

"Locked. And the windows are barred."

I said, "Come *on,*" and dragged her after me. We went back along the hall, stopping to peer into the dusty, silent rooms, brimming with darkness. No skeletons. No nothing. Just a mouldy, musty odor, like a house that hadn't been lived in for years. I thought madly: Rejection-does-not-necessarily-imply—

We went out in the kitchen and saw dim light filtering into it through a doorway. There was a curious swishing noise that puzzled me. A dark lump resolved itself into young Lem, the white hope of the Kallikaks.

THE swishing stopped. Jed Carta's cracked voice said, "Seems sharp now." Something came sailing out and smacked into Lem's face. He grabbed it, and, as we circled him, we saw that he was gnawing a chunk of raw meat.

"Good," he slobbered, his green eyes glowing at us. "So good!"

"Builds strong, healthy teeth," I informed him, and we went into the woodshed. Jed Carta was sharpening a knife on a whetstone there. Maybe it was a sword. Anyhow, it was big enough to duel with.

He looked a bit disconcerted. I said, "Getting ready for invasion?"

"Never do seem to get through with my chores," he mumbled. "Careful of that lamp, there. This place is dry as tinder. One spark and it'd go up like blazes."

"Fire is such a *clean* death," I murmured, and grunted as Rosamond jabbed me in the ribs with her elbow. She said sweetly, "Mr. Carta, we're awfully hungry. I wonder if—"

He said, in a curiously low, growling voice, "That's funny. I'm hungry too."

"Sure you're not thirsty?" I put in. "Me, I could do with some whiskey. Blood for a chaser," I added, and Rosamond punched me again.

"There are times," she said acidly, "when you just ask for trouble."

"It's camouflage," I told her. "I'm scared stiff, Mr. Carta. Honest. I keep taking you seriously."

He put down the knife and cracked his face into a smile. "You're not used to country ways, that's all."

"That's all," I said, listening to Lem gnawing and slobbering over his raw meat in the kitchen. "Must be great to live a clean, healthy life."

"Oh, yes, indeed," he chuckled. "Henshawe County's a nice place. We've all lived here a long time. Of course, our neighbors don't visit us much—"

"You surprise me," Rosamond murmured. She seemed to have got over her wariness.

"But we're a pretty old community. Pretty old. Got our customs, going 'way back to Revolutionary times—even got our legends." He glanced at a side of beef that hung from a hook nearby. "Got a legend about vampires—the Henshawe vampires. But I mentioned that, didn't I?"

"Yeah," I said, rocking on my heels. "You don't take stock in it, you said."

"Some folk do, though," he grinned. "But I don't hold with them yarns about white-faced devils in black cloaks flying through cracks and turning into bats. Seems to me a vampire might change with the times—you know? A Henshawe County vampire wouldn't be like a European one. He might even have a sense of humor." Carta cackled and beamed at us. "I figger, if he acted pretty much like other folk, nobody'd suspect what he was. And then he might keep on being like he was before he—" Carta glanced at his work-gnarled hands. "Before he died."

I said, "If you're trying to frighten us, I'll tell you right now that—"

"I'm just joking," Carta said. He turned toward the side of meat that hung from its hook. "Fergit it. You said you was hungry. How'd you like a steak?"

Rosamond said hastily, "I've changed my mind. I'm a vegetarian." Which was a lie, but I seconded my wife's motion.

Carta giggled unpleasantly. "Maybe you'd like something hot to drink?"

"Maybe I—what about whiskey?"

"Oh, sure. Lem!" the oldster called. "Rustle up some likker 'fore I lay into you."

Presently I was holding two cracked cups and a cobwebbed bottle of cheap bourbon. "Make yourselves at home," Carta invited. "You'll run across my datter somewheres. She'll talk a blue streak." Some secret thought seemed to amuse him, for he giggled in that oily, unpleasant grate. "Keeps a diary, she does. I tell her it ain't exactly wise, but Ruthie's mighty set in her ways."

We went back to the front parlor, sat before the fire, and drank bourbon. The cups were filthy, so we hoisted the bottle. I said, "It's been a long time since we've done this. Remember how we used to go driving out to the park with a bottle—"

Rosamond shook her head, but her smile was curiously tender. "We were such kids, then, Charlie. It seems so long ago."

"Our second honeymoon. I love you, darling," I said quietly. "Don't ever forget that. Don't mind my wise-cracking sometimes." I passed her the bottle. "It isn't bad."

A bat fluttered against the window pane.

THE storm wasn't letting up any. Thunder and lightning still made a conventional back-drop. The liquor warmed me. I said, "Let's explore. Dibs on the first skeleton."

Rosamond looked at me. "What was that carcass hanging up in the shed there?"

"It was a side of beef," I explained carefully. "Now come on or I'll bat your teeth in. Bring the bottle. I'll take the lamp. Watch out for trap-doors, secret panels, and clutching hands."

"And the Henshawe vampires?"

"Trap-doors," I said firmly. We went up rickety, creaking stairs into the second story. Some of the doors had barred gratings let into them. None was locked. The place had once been an asylum, all right.

"Just think," Rosamond said, drinking whiskey. "All the patients were kept here once. All insane."

"Yeah," I agreed. "Judging by the Cartas, the malady lingers on." We halted, staring through a grating at an occupied cell. A woman was sitting quietly in a corner, manacled to the wall, tastefully clad in a strait-jacket. A lamp stood near her. She had a flat dish-face, sallow and ugly; her eyes were wide and green, and a twisted half-smile was on her lips.

I pushed on the door; it swung open easily. The woman looked at us without curiosity.

"You a—a patient?" I asked weakly.

She shook off the strait-jacket, shrugged out of the chains, and stood up. Oh, no," she said, with that same twisted, frozen smile. "I'm Ruth Carta. Jed told me you were here." Feeling, apparently, that some explanation was called for, she glanced at the strait-jacket. "I was confined in an asylum for a few years, quite awhile ago. They released me, cured. Only sometimes I get homesick."

"Yeah," I said nastily. "I can understand that. Like a vampire wanting to go back to the old sod every morning."

She froze, her shallow eyes like green glass. "What's Jed been saying to you?"

"Just local gossip, Mrs. Carta." I extended the bottle. "Have a drink?"

"Of that?" Her smile got vinegary. "No, thank you!"

It seemed to be a deadlock. Ruthie stared at us, with those green, unreadable eyes and that fixed smile, and the musty smell was choking in my nostrils. What next?

Rosamond broke the silence. "*Are* you Mrs. Carta?" she asked. "How is it you have the same name as—"

"Be still," I said softly. "Just because we're married doesn't mean everybody is."

But Ruth Carta didn't seem annoyed. "Jed's my father. Lem's my son," she explained. "I married Eddie Carta, my cousin. He's been dead for years. That's why they put me in an asylum."

"Shock?" I suggested.

"No," she said. "I killed him. Everything went red, I remember." Her smile didn't change, but I saw sardonic mockery in it. "That was long before such a defense was laughed out of courts. Just the same, it was true in my case. People make a mistake when they think *clichés* aren't true."

"Seems to me you've a lot more education than Lem or Jed," I remarked.

"I was at a girl's school in the east, when I was young. I wanted to stay there, but Jed couldn't afford it. It made me pretty bitter—tied down to drudgery here. But I don't mind the dullness now."

I wished Ruthie would stop smiling. Rosamond reached for the bottle. She said, "I know how you must feel."

Mrs. Carta moved back against the wall, placing her palms flat against it. Her eyes were preternaturally bright. And her voice was a whining rasp.

"You can't know. A young thing like you— You can't know what it's like to have a glimpse of glamor and excitement and pretty clothes and men, and then have to come back here, shut up to scrub floors and cook cabbage, married to a stupid lout with the mind of an ape. I used to sit by the kitchen window and look out and hate everything and everybody. Eddie never understood. I used to ask him to take me to town, but he couldn't afford it, he said. And somehow I scrimped and saved enough for a trip to Chicago. I dreamed about that. Only when I got there I wasn't a kid any more. People on the streets stared at my clothes. I felt like screaming."

I drank bourbon. "Yeah," I said. "I know—I guess."

Her voice rose higher. There was saliva dribbling from her lips.

"So I came back and then one day I saw Eddie kissing the hired girl and I took up the axe and I chopped at his head. He fell down and jerked like a fish and I felt like I was a girl again. And everybody was looking at me and saying how wonderful and pretty I was."

HER voice was like a phonograph. It screamed monotonously. She slid down against the wall, till she was sitting, and froth foamed on her lips. She twitched all over. She began to scream hysterically, but it was even less pleasant when she started to laugh.

I took Rosamond's arm and propelled her out into the hall. "Let's find the boys," I said. "Before Ruthie finds an axe."

So we went downstairs, to the kitchen, and told Lem and Jed about it. Lem giggled, his fat face quivering, and headed for the hall. Jed drew a pitcher of water and followed. "Ruthie gets them spells," he said over his shoulder. "They don't last long, as a rule." He vanished.

Rosamond still had the lamp. I took it from her, set it down gently on the table, and gave her the bottle. We finished it. Then I went to the back door and tried the lock. It was, of course, fastened.

"Curiosity was always my weakness," Rosamond said. She pointed to a door in the wall. "What do you suppose—"

"We can find out." The liquor was having its effect. Armed with the lamp, I

tugged at the panel, and we stared down into the darkness of a cellar. It was, like everything else in this house, musty-smelling.

I preceded Rosamond down the steps. We were in a dark chamber like a vault. It was completely empty. But a strong oaken trap-door was at our feet. The open padlock lay near it, and the hasp had been clicked free.

Well, we continued on our merry way by means of a ladder. It went straight down for perhaps ten feet. Then we found ourselves in a passage, dirt-walled. The noise of the storm was shut out.

On a shelf at our side was a tattered notebook, with a pencil attached to it by a bit of grimy string. Rosamond opened it, while I peered over her shoulder.

"The guest book," she remarked.

There were a list of names, and, under each one, were significant notations. Like this:

"Thomas Dardie.

$57.53. Gold watch. Ring."

Rosamond giggled, opened the book to the last item, and wrote:

"Mr. and Mrs. Denham."

"Your sense of humor kills me, darling," I said coldly. "If I didn't love you, I'd wring your neck."

"It's safer to wisecrack, sometimes," she whispered.

We went on. At the end of the passage was a small cell, with a skelton chained to the wall. On the floor was a wooden circular lid, with a ring in it. I lifted the disk, held the lamp low, and we looked into the black depths of a pit. The odor wasn't by Chanel.

"More skeletons?" Rosamond asked.

"Can't tell," I said. "Want to go down and find out?"

"I hate dark places," she said, quite breathlessly, and suddenly I let the lid slam back into place, set down the lamp, and was holding Rosamond very tightly. She clung to me like a child afraid of an unlit room.

"Don't, darling," I muttered, my lips against her hair. "It's all right."

"It isn't. This awful—I wish I were dead. Oh, I love you, Charlie! I love you terribly!"

We broke apart then, for footsteps were sounding through the vault. Lem and Jed and Ruthie appeared. None of them seemed startled to find us here. Lem's eyes were fixed on the skeleton; he licked loose lips and tittered. Ruthie was staring blindly, with that same fixed, twisted smile. Jed Carta gave us one look, green and malicious, and put down the lamp he was carrying.

"Hello, folks," he said. "So you found your way down here, hey?"

"We were wondering if you had a bomb shelter," I told him. "One feels a bit safer, wiith world conditions as they are."

He cackled. "You don't scare easy. Here, Ruthie." He took a cattle-whip from where it hung on the wall and thrust it into the woman's hands. Instantly she was galvanized into activity. She walked toward that chained skeleton and began to lash it. Her face was a dreadful smiling mask.

"It's the only thing that'll quiet her when she gets these spells," Jed told us. "Been worse since Bess died." He looked at the skeleton.

"Bess?" Rosamond asked weakly.

"She—used to be a servant girl here. We figger this don't hurt her none now, and it keeps Ruthie quiet, mostly."

MRS. CARTA dropped the whip. Her face was still frozen, but, when she spoke, her voice was perfectly normal.

"Shall we go upstairs? It must be unpleasant here for our guests."

"Yeah," I said. "Let's do. Maybe

you've got another bottle kicking around, Jed?"

He nodded toward the wooden disk on the floor. "Wanta look down there?"

"I already did."

"Lem's pretty strong," the old man said, apparently at random. "Show 'em, Lem. Use Bessie's chain. Won't matter if it's busted now, will it?" All the Cartas seemed vastly amused.

Lem lumbered over and snapped the chain easily. "Well," I said, "that's that. Small Fry here uses his hands. You've got a knife. What does Ruthie use? Axe, I suppose."

He grinned. "You don't think we really kill people who stop by here, now! Or, if they have cars, drive 'em into the big pool back of the house."

"Not if you're the Henshawe vampires, too," I said. "You'd be scared to death of running water."

"It ain't running," he said. "It's stagnant. You shouldn't take any stock in such things."

Rosamond said softly, "All the doors are locked, and the windows are barred, We found your guest book. We looked into your oubliette. It adds up, doesn't it?"

"You fergit such notions," Carta advised. "You'll sleep better if you do."

"I'm not sleepy," Rosamond said.

I picked up the lamp and took her arm. We preceded the others along the passage, up the ladder into the cellar, and thence to the kitchen. I noticed that a huge tub filled with water stood in a dim corner.

We could hear the storm now, in all its raging fury.

Carta said, "I aired out a bed for you two. Want to go now?"

I shook the lamp. "Put more kerosene in this, will you? It'd scare my wife frantic if it went out in the night."

Jed nodded to Lem, who shuffled off and came back with a sloshing can. He refilled the lamp.

We all went upstairs. Jed went first, a scarecrow figure with a coarse black wig. After us followed Lem, loutishly grinning, and in the rear Ruthie, with her fixed smile and wide, shallow green eyes.

"Hey," I said, "you're going to have to drag our bodies downstairs to the cellar, Jed. Why make more work for yourself?"

"Figgered you might be tired," he chuckled. "Anyway, I got a few chores to tend to—but I'll see you later."

It was a nightmare procession upstairs that screamed protest under our feet. I said so, flippantly.

Rosamond pursed her lips. "A bit too melodramatic."

"There should be thirteen steps," I remarked. "That'd be a subtle touch. Thirteen steps to the gallows," I explained to Jed, who was peering back at us with an inquiring scowl.

He cackled. "You're taking stock in things that ain't so. If you think we're murderers, why don't you leave?"

"The door's locked."

"You might ask me to unlock it."

I didn't answer that, for the mockery in his voice was unpleasant. Lem slobbered happily at our heels. We went along the hall to an end bedroom. It smelled musty. Branches tore at the barred window. A bat flung itself frantically against the pane.

In the room, we waited. I put the lamp on a dusty bedside table. Lem, Jed and Ruthie stood by the door. They looked like three green-eyed wolves watching us.

"Did you ever stop to think," I asked, "that we might not be sheep? You haven't even asked us where we come from or how we got here."

Jed favored us with a one-toothed grin. "Guess you ain't familiar with Henshawe County, Mister. We haven't had no law

here to speak of for a long time now. We been mighty careful—I don't reckon the federal gov'ment pays us any mind. And Henshawe County can't support a sheriff worth his salt. Don't try to bluff us, 'cause it won't work."

I shrugged. "Do we look worried?"

There was grudging admiration in Jed's tone. "You don't scare easy. Well, I got my chores to do before—bedtime. See you later."

HE VANISHED into the dark.

Ruthie jerked her hand. Lem licked his lips and vanished.

The woman's smile was a frozen grimace. "I know what you're thinking. What you're afraid of," she said. "And you're right."

Then she stepped back and slammed the door. We heard the lock click.

"Jed forgot to give me another bottle," I observed. "I'll be sober pretty soon. And thirsty. Very thirsty." I heard my voice change a little. "It's all right, darling. Come here."

Rosamond's lips were cold; I could feel her shiver.

"This room's like an icebox," she murmured. "I can't get used to the cold, Charlie. I can't get used to the cold!"

There was nothing I could do but put my arms around her as tightly as I could.

"Try remembering," I said quietly. "It isn't night. It isn't storming. We're not here. We're back in the park, and it's afternoon. Remember, dear?"

She buried her face in my shoulder. "It's hard to remember, somehow. It seems like forever since we saw daylight. This horrible house—oh, I *wish* we were dead, darling!"

I shook her a little. "Rosamond!" She gulped.

"Sorry, dear. Only—why did this have to happen to us?"

I shrugged. "Call it luck. We're not the first in this spot, obviously. Keep your eyes closed and remember."

"Do—do you think—they suspect?"

"How could they? They're too busy playing their own little murderous game."

I could feel the shudder of utter revulsion that went over her.

"We can't change what's coming," I had to remind her. "We can't change them—or us."

Slow tears stole from under her lashes. And we clung together like children afraid of the dark. I couldn't think of a wisecrack. It's hard, sometimes.

The lamp flickered and went out. I didn't have any matches. It didn't much matter now, of course. Not now.

"Wish Lem had remembered the other bottle," I murmured after awhile. "Whiskey helps. I'm glad we were allowed whiskey, anyhow."

The storm was passing swiftly. Already moonlight drifted in wanly through the windows. I remembered *Dracula,* and the shapes that had materialized in the moonrays. They made even the window-bars looks diaphanous.

But, I told myself, the Cartas weren't vampires. They were just murderers. Mad, cold-blooded, remorseless. No, I reminded myself, if the Cartas had been vampires they wouldn't have pretended to be. Real vampires don't—look at *Dracula!*

I held on to Rosamond and shut my eyes. Somewhere a clock struck midnight.

And then—

WELL, it was about two o'clock when the key I had been expecting rattled in the lock. The door opened and Jed Carta stood on the threshold, shaking from head to foot, the lamp jerking in his hand. His voice cracked as he tried to speak.

He couldn't. He just beckoned for us to follow him. We did, even though we knew what to expect. I could hear Rosamond whimpering very softly, "I wish we

were dead. Oh, I wish we were dead!"

Jed took us into a bedroom across the hall. Ruthie Carta was lying on the floor. She was dead. There were two tiny red punctures in her skinny throat, and indented channels marked the courses of drained blood-vessels.

Through an open door I could see into the next room, and the gross, motionless body that lay there. It was Lem, and he, too, was a corpse.

Jed Carta almost screamed, "Something came and—" His face was a shaking, knotted mask of fear. "The Henshawe vampires!" he forced out, scarcely able to articulate.

"Dog eat dog," I said. I glanced at Rosamond. She met my eyes with the shrinking revulsion I had come to know so well, and a shame-faced eagerness behind the revulsion. I knew it was time to wisecrack again—anything to get that look out of Rosamond's eyes.

"I've got a surprise for you, Jed," I said, and moved nearer to him—nearer. "I know you don't take any stock in such things, but, believe it or not, we're the Henshawe vampires."

The Dreamer in the Desert

BY FRANCIS FLAGG

NEAR Time's white dawn the cities stood
In fabled grandeur by a flood
That rolled where now the desert lies
Burning beneath its molten skies.

Strange galleons on inland seas
Bore golden freights for monarchies
Ruling from gorgeous peacock thrones
Long mingled with the desert stones.

Green grew the grass and smiled the lake
Where now the lizard and the snake
Lie somnolent, the orchards fair
Are gone the way of dust and air.

Only a wraith of all its glory
The desert mutely tells the story
For dreaming men to muse upon
From crystal dawn to crystal dawn.

Yes, here it was that Arnor lay,
And lads and lasses passed this way
Through smiling field and tangled wood
In search of lovers' solitude.

The Temple priests went chanting here
To bless the harvest of the year,
And troths were pledged beneath the sky
That fruits might blush and corn grow high.
The god-man came on shoulders strong
Of the intoning, reverent throng,
The goddess came with raven hair
And pallid face of carved despair;

The conqueror trod with martial train
Victorious from the wars again,
And judgments rang through silver halls
That only dreaming now recalls.

Ah, vain their pomp and vain their pride,
Their glory scattered far and wide,
Their loot of jasper, jade and gold
One with the unrelenting mold.

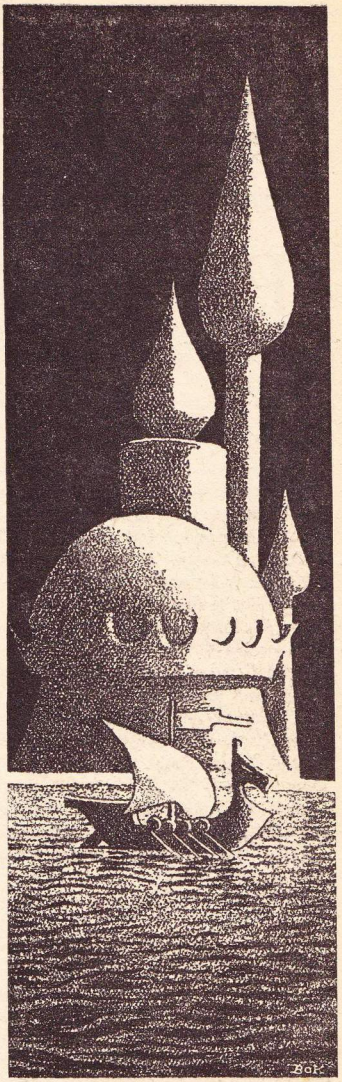
Where is the might of Arnor now,
The triple crown on empire's brow?
Question the wind, the sun, the air,
The spider's web, the wildcat's lair,

For ruthless Time has gnawed the face
Of high gods in their holy place,
And only ghostly towers rise
In phantom glory to the skies.

But poets dream and rivers run
With crystal waves beneath the sun,
And deserts bloom and cities grow
As they revive the long ago.

The poet sees the king and slave
That Time has couched in common grave,
The "eternal" nations that could not stand
The might of wind, the strength of sand,

And wakes from dreams—the plains are bare,
With only heat-waves rolling there.



He swore that she would be as warmly pulsing with life as before —that he would bring her back from the world of the dead by a strange process of Phoenix-like rebirth!

The Deadly

"PALINGENESIS?" said the man standing next to me at the bar, as he turned to face me. "What do you think *you* know about it? Scientists say it's a mythical theory based on that legendary tale of a rose reduced to ashes and then restored magically to living loveliness by some olden Mage for a queen of Sweden."

I thought to myself that scientists had other theories but that after all nothing in the cosmos is ever lost; things merely change their unessential qualities and become other things. At any rate, it wasn't palingenesis I wanted to discuss; what I wanted was to draw out that man until he forgot his lofty reserve. I wanted to make sure—well—

"You'll have to pardon me," said I aloud, "but you have such a striking resemblance to my old friend, the artist Julian Crosse who enlisted in the French Foreign Legion about 1914 and was later reported dead, that I was attempting to account for it by palingenesis. Jestingly, of course. I was his agent," I explained.

"Oh?" said the man and ordered another gin-and-tonic.

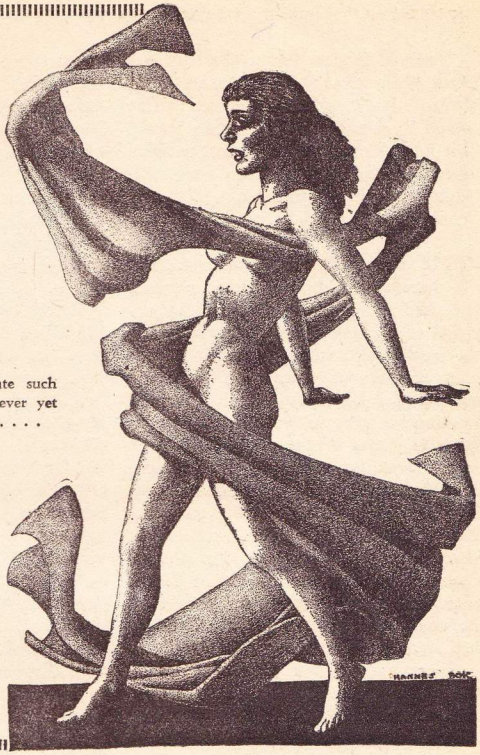
He sipped his drink with obvious appreciation.

I kept watching, careful not to let him see how amazed I was at what appeared to me not a resemblance but Julian redivivus, only it couldn't be, for Julian would have known and greeted me. This man had done neither; he had indifferently suffered my presence and my attempts at conversation until I had jestingly uttered that open-sesame word, palingenesis. Then he abruptly turned to me with that scornful query as to what *I* knew about palingenesis.

I finished my Scotch-and-soda; beckoned the bartender to bring me another drink and a fresh pack of cigarettes. I had a feeling that my vis-a-vis was about to spill something interesting, so I lighted a cigarette and waited with outward patience that belied my inward state, for the likeness to Julian Crosse was rather more than I had observed at first glance. It is true that this man had an unruly shock of hair even if it was iron-gray while Julian's had been warm brown. The man had no last joint on the fourth finger of his left hand; Julian had once caught and mashed that joint and it had been amputated. This man's skin was an even pallor while Julian's face had always glowed with the warm tan of the outdoor man. Yet there was, in the very manner the chap spoke, something that brought Julian vividly to mind; I mean, his assumption of esoteric knowledge that Julian always pretended but did not possess as far as my experience with him had brought out. No matter what branch of occultism we discussed, he had always touched upon it as the mystery of today and the scientific fact of tomorrow. So I waited, sure that I would shortly be given a dissertation upon palingenesis, the phœnix-like rebirth from its ashes of what had once been a living entity. That was how sure I was that the stranger was Julian and that the discussion, whether as

Theory

BY GREYE LA SPINA



She had learned to create such delights as no man had ever yet been permitted to enjoy. . . .

a workable theory or as a survival of superstition, would be couched in such magical phrases that no one could listen without being caught in the trailing fringes of enthusiasm.

"I had an experience with palingenesis," said the man, holding up his glass and twirling it so that the clear contents purled against the edges. "It might interest you, if you are open-minded."

He hesitated and then said slowly, his piercing blue eyes full on mine, transfixing me much as the Ancient Mariner transfixed the Wedding Guest: "My profession took me to Maine. I was doing a lot of painting those days."

A strong conviction grew within me but the potency of that gaze restrained my mind from forming a conclusion and my tongue from uttering my thoughts. I rubbed out my half-smoked cigarette and nervously lighted another.

"Yes?" said I non-committally.

An expression that I interpreted as satisfaction flickered over the man's face. He took another sip of gin-and-tonic and mercifully lowered his hypnotic eyes from my face.

I wanted to clap him on the back and shout, "You weren't killed. You are Julian Crosse." But I was morally certain that he would have replied with chilling gravity that Julian Crosse was dead. So I confined myself to observing his every movement while I thought of many things, all closely connected with my old friend.

THE art world knows his work well. The character of his brilliant canvases, drenched with golden sunshine in the portrayal of which no other contemporary artist could equal or surpass him, told its own story of the young man's joyous attitude toward life. Up to 1912 he had painted nothing but trees; individual trees, groups of trees, vistas of forest glades in their virgin loveliness, pierced by those miraculous shafts of amber light which he knew how to paint with such sumptuous technique. The work he produced in the early part of the following year was of such entirely different character that I found it difficult to accept as his, for in spite of its undoubted qualities his gifted brush had made an entirely new departure.

As soon as collectors discovered that in these new pictures Julian had intensified the qualities that had made his wild, sun-drenched woods so distinctive and different, they began to buy up the new paintings at a rate which kept me frantically begging for canvases, more canvases, and yet more canvases. These new pictures featured a single model, a charming young girl; slender, supple, dark hair and eyes. Julian painted her in innumerable poses that built up a fairly representative picture of her life. The interpretation of that series formed the continuous life of a simple country girl whose existence was bounded by the narrow horizon of humble duties. Julian injected an enchantment, a charm, into those homely tasks that threw a glamorous haze about the girl so that the loveliness of her utter simplicity, the quiet acceptance of her apparently uneventful life, became things of spiritual beauty almost too great for words. Julian's "Girl Peeling Potatoes," for instance (now one of the valued modern acquisitions of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art), is something more than its name signifies; it is a vision of innate beauty underlying the humblest duties that are accepted with spiritual insight as symbols of higher things.

Throughout 1912, then, Julian painted his Maine model assiduously. But there were two distinct periods in that year. It was not until the second period canvases had been on sale for some time that one art critic discovered that in these later canvases the girl's face was never depicted, that her hidden hands were idle, her figure always drooping, half concealed in voluminous draperies. This fact met with a certain amount of speculative interpretation. These last pictures did not sell as did the earlier ones; they possessed a peculiar morbidness to the point of blocking an assault on the public imagination that might have inspired the passion of ownership. Despite my protests, Julian continued to ship me those sodden convases unanimated by the spiritual qualities that had made the earlier portraits so noble. People would look at them, shudder, walk away with corrugated brows and narrowed eyes. They could not help feeling, as I felt, a strange quality emanating from them; a powerful, undeniable impression of something unhealthy, morbid, far from sane.

Then some newspaper fellow got it into his head to ferret out the artist. He made a big feature article for his Sunday paper out of what he thought he'd dug up. He said Julian had fallen in love with one of two sisters, of whom the younger died and the one he loved had gone completely out of her mind and run away. Julian and the girl's guardian had found her in Bangor, dying of consumption, and had brought

her body home. The reporter had it that Julian had painted the first portraits when the girl was herself and the others after she'd begun to fail mentally. This account satisfied the public's curiosity more or less and Julian told me he didn't care enough about what was being said to affirm or deny the story; he said there were things in life of such vast inner import that their outward and often misleading manifestations mean nothing to the human being who experiences them.

Julian's last paintings were a drug on the market and all at once he must have stopped his work entirely for I got no more from him. He came to see me in New York and when I remonstrated, he replied that he was sailing for France and intended to join the Foreign Legion. He told me that the woman he loved had died horribly and he himself could only wish for death now. I have to say that he went to his death as a bridegroom to his wedding morning, welcoming it as a door that would open a wider, happier existence. I add this last because some fool reporter had the impudence or temerity to suggest that Julian must have been a drug victim to have put into his work the weird and bizarre qualities such as emanated from it during his last painting period.

At this point in my reminiscences, the stranger (or was he?) confronting me at the bar broke in upon my rambling thoughts and began to talk in a low, intense but unhurried voice, every intonation of which strengthened that incredible conviction which grew and grew within me as I listened.

"I met a girl up in the Maine woods," said he. "Her name was Marzha. She lived with her younger sister Idell in a log shack, put up in the wilderness by her uncle Elisha Moffatt so that he might study without human interruptions the occult subjects to which he had devoted himself. Her father, a sea-captain, had gone down with his ship and her mother, a passionately loving Persian woman, had not long survived him. Elisha had taken his orphaned nieces into his home and they had been brought up in his own fashion, which meant that he had taught them a smattering of mathematics and their ABCs and had then let them seek their own education from the books in his library, mostly comprised of occult volumes.

"I felt that in Marzha I had met everything man could desire in woman, so accompanied her to the log cabin to meet her uncle. Elisha was a remarkable man. Black smocked, heavy black hair in wavy masses; shaggy black brows over deep-set black eyes, rich black beard parted in the middle like old pictures of Moses, he impressed me as a being whom it would be a privilege to know better, especially as I soon learned from sixteen-year-old Idell that he was always carrying on some obscure occult experiment in his completely equipped laboratory. To my astonishment, Elisha welcomed me into the family circle as a guest, with a disregard of conventions that made me like him the more. As our acquaintance ripened into warm intimacy, I realized that he had hoped for just what happened, the growing attachment between Marzha and myself.

"THERE was, however, what at first seemed to me a silly situation to deal with; Idell imagined herself in love with me. She had inherited a tempestuous temperament and at sixteen was more highly sexed than Marzha at nineteen. She entertained a raging jealousy of her sister that tore at her soul. My devotion to my betrothed, my depiction of her in my canvases, brought the wild girl's passion to such a point that she determined to usurp her sister's place at any cost. Her simpler arts of feminine seduction degenerated into sheer, open, abject pleading for a love she ardently desired with every fiber

of her wild being. She found me deaf, dumb and blind to anything but Marzha.

"Early one morning I went with Elisha to Bangor; he needed certain herbs that were not procurable in his woods and I wanted several tubes of color. We returned in the late afternoon. Marzha did not come to meet us, although I kept my eyes on the open doorway hungrily from the moment the log-house came in sight. It was Idell who burst out and ran toward us. Her appearance was alarming. Her hair tumbled in wild confusion about her shoulders; her face was a pallid white; her eyes were wide and staring. She screamed at us over and over as she half ran, half stumbled, toward us.

"Marzha is dead! Marzha is dead!

"Elisha groaned in stupefied incredulity and I knew then what I had suspected—that Marzha was his best loved niece.

"Our flying feet carried us into the log-house but we were too late. Marzha's head rested on her outstretched arms on the table; her flesh was cold and stiff. Already her body showed the dreadful signs of reaction from the poisoned mushrooms that Idell declared her sister had inadvertently included in those prepared for lunch. I held to my almost stilled heart the distorted, terrible, discoloring face of my dear dead, trying to hide its horror in my bosom.

"Idell cried out to her uncle that he knew well her own aversion to fungi. Elisha replied, with a slow restrained speech more terrible than any emotional outoutpouring, that Marzha must have been strangely bespelled to have picked a poisonous genus after her long years of familiarity with the innocuous fungi. From this veiled innuendo Idell did not defend herself but she withdrew from the log-house as if she could not meet our eyes.

"Palingenesis, you said, didn't you? Well, paligenesis is what Elisha Moffatt said to me. I was to help him; he had spent much study on it; it could be done; I need not mourn. We need only build a funeral pyre and cremate Marzha's body, preserving the ashes.

"The idea of cremation met my approval. I could not bear to put her body in the earth while the hateful poison still tore at her so relentlessly. At the same time I feared lest Elisha's mind had become unhinged by the disaster. I told him that I intended to scatter the purified ashes upon the running water of the clear brook that murmured near the log-house. At this he protested hysterically, declaring that I would be a madman to block his plan. Have her back, he said, he would. He *knew* how the process worked and believed he could bring Marzha back, warmly pulsing with life.

"I told him defiantly that he was certainly mad and that I would not have her ashes desecrated by his unholy experiments. He swore to me in turn by the Ark of the Covenant that held the seven mysteries of creation that he would not permit my stupidity to stand in his way. When I in turn swore to keep Marzha from him, he laughed.

"He bade me note how easily he could wrest her body from me, and lifted his arm until I felt so numbed from head to foot with my impotent struggle against an unseen but potent power he wielded so easily that I was obliged, against my will, to bow reluctantly to his wishes.

"I told myself that fire purified that which it consumed and was it not better than the worm? I tried to believe that the pure element of flame would clarify the poison's dire work, returning Marzha to my arms alive and lovely as Elisha declared."

The bartender paused significantly before the narrator and me, his eyes bent upon our drained glasses.

"Will you accept a drink?" I asked my vis-a-vis.

"Gin-and-tonic," replied he indifferently.

"Give me another Scotch-and-soda," I ordered.

For a few moments the man and I sipped our drinks and puffed at our cigarettes. He had accepted a cigarette from me, rolling it slightly between his fingers as Julian had used to do, so that it got so soft it only lasted for a few puffs. I was full of impatience and kept wondering when the moment would arrive to clap the man on the shoulder and cry joyfully that he was Julian Crosse and I'd known it all along. After three or four puffs he rubbed out the cigarette and took up the burden of his discourse.

"We made up a pile of wood," went on the man, "and reverently laid on that rude pyre the stiffened, hideous travesty of what had been a gracious living creature. About this pyre Elisha paced with priestly solemnity, chanting strange words in an unknown tongue. As his signal I lighted the pyre with a torch he had hastily prepared. The red flames leaped avidly until naught was left but a pile of powdery gray ash. This Elisha carefully gathered to the finest particle, putting it into a great urn against the time of the experiment, for the performance of which his consuming anxiety betrayed itself in almost feverish word and gesture. He had also, he explained, to make certain alterations in the incantations because of extraneous matter from the pyre itself.

"MEANTIME Idell fumed and fretted but kept well away from her uncle's accusing eyes, for she had reason to believe in his more than ordinary powers. Me, also, she left alone.

"The morning after the episode of the funeral pyre, Elisha told me that I must let him have a small quantity of blood from my median vein. It was an ingredient in what he called the elixir Primum Ens Sanguinis. He put this blood into a bottle, adding by twice its weight a certain alcahest of which fortunately he had just sufficient. He sealed the bottle and arranged for it to be maintained at blood warmth in the laboratory for fourteen days.

"If you chance, my friend," said the man (I almost spoke out my secret thoughts when he called me that) as he sipped his drink, "to have curiosity as to the nature of the alcahest, you will find it in any accredited magical book by Paracelsus, Eliphus Levi, Trithemius, even Agrippa. Suffice it that after fourteen days Elisha filtered the flashing, ruby-clear liquid that had risen to the top of the bottle. The elixir was carefully decanted into a chemically clean container and put to one side where it would be safe until needed.

"I insisted upon being present at the ceremony, which meant Idell's presence, as this particular rite depended upon a unity or a triad. Idell was admitted between the outer and inner circles her uncle had traced upon the laboratory floor, and was bidden to feed the lamps that at stated distances sent up clouds of pungent, perfumed smoke. The great urn stood in the center of the inner circle, where Elisha and I were also, surrounded by that ring of oil lamps that sent up clouds of choking smoke from their tiny wicks. My skin stung into gooseflesh with vaguely intangible intuitions of something portentous, amazing, hovering at the exact point of revelation. So we stood, the uncle, the lover, and the slayer of the dead girl, in unholy combination to rob Death.

"With my own eyes," said the man (and bent them upon me until responsive gooseflesh pricked upon the surface of my body while I listened in a kind of trance to the eerie tale), "I *saw* that palingenesis. My ears tingled with the strange combinations of syllables Elisha chanted. At last the lid of the urn stirred slowly as if pushed upward by some as yet unharnessed but po-

tent power. I cannot express in words the terror that struck me at that sluggish movement as of something horrible beyond words, for beneath that cover I knew there was nothing but gray ash, the final chemical resolution into nothingness of a human body. Yet the cover did move, despite my bristling hair and goosefleshed skin. It moved—it tilted upward—fell back as if that which impelled it were not yet strong enough to concentrate upon pushing it aside.

"Then from that urn where reposed the ashes of the dead there puffed an occasional darkish mist. Horror tore at me and I could hardly control the agonized retching that began to shake my body.

"Again that Something lifted the lid of the urn. Elisha cried his charms the louder, chanting a barbaric strain the words of which throbbed within my brain as if even they, each individual word, was possessed of strange occult significance and living power.

"Did you ever stop to consider," the man digressed thoughtfully, "the amazing magical powers that lie within two or three tiny words, rightly used?"

He did not pause for my comment but continued.

"I watched the urn. Finally the lid was pushed perceptibly to one side. It trembled there upon the edge of the urn. I gazed with a fixed stare for I could see nothing below it but empty air hazy with clouds of pungent smoke. All at once the cover flew off and crashed upon the floor, shattering into a thousand fragments as if the power that lifted and flung it were almost too tremendous yet to control or direct itself.

"The voice of the adept became a shouting triumph even if an undertow of something tremulous within his being betrayed to me a human shrinking at this fearful thing he was doing. I realized too late that something obscene and unholy was taking place. When my staring eyes could no longer doubt that they were in reality seeing the actual recall into life of what had become an appalling horror, I sickened so that I could no longer look upon it. Retching, I turned my back upon what I could not bring myself to credit although my eyes had told me it was only too true.

"From that urn where had reposed the sacred ashes of the dead there arose a tenuous vapor that slowly and undeniably was taking a woman's shape. It was darkly purple, horribly suggestive of the grave and decay. As I had looked, this slowly materializing Thing drifted downward from the open top of the great urn and came to a rest upon the floor beside me. The glassy, unseeing eyes had no intelligence in them, yet were they in horrid manner the eyes of Marzha. The awful purple face, the writhing features that shaped more and more into familiar, beloved semblance, yet so loathly were in their suggestions of rotten decomposition that I went down upon the floor at that horrid phantom's feet, unconscious.

"PALINGENESIS! The Thing Elisha Moffatt had resurrected from Marzha's ashes was her body *as it had gone from life,* disfigured by purple and black discolorations due to the poison's rapid action; ghastly, too, because of the unwholesome, suggestive puffiness of gas-inflated flesh that had decomposed so rapidly. This Thing neither ate, drank, spoke nor breathed, as far as we could perceive. It walked among the haunted three in that log-house, affecting each in different fashion by its loathly presence.

"Idell frankly feared the Thing's clumsy approach and would fling herself abjectly upon me, begging for protection. To Elisha it represented at once his occult triumph and the sad evidence that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing; yet his

horror was transcended by his scientific enthusiasm at his experiment's success. If he had a regret, it was that he had not foreseen that he could not raise up a body to the beauty it had possessed before Death had defaced it so horribly. It was I who suffered most poignantly. The resurrected Thing was obviously soulless and this seemed the ultimate desecration. I could hardly bear to look upon it, so unutterably repulsive and loathsome did I feel it to be. I begged Elisha to reverse, if he could, the spell that bound the Thing to earth, that it might crumble into ashes and those ashes be given decent interment. At first he would not acquiesce for the evidence of his ghastly success was as yet too precious for what he bitterly termed my mania of wanton destruction. So I began secretly to plot for its removal. I remembered that when It had first appeared from the urn the adept had sprayed it with a dilution of that ruby elixir he had distilled from the alcahest and my blood. I noted later that three drops of the elixir in distilled water were given daily to the ghastly Thing that not only offended the eye with its appalling appearance of death and decay but only too well attacked the sense of smell so that at its approach nausea would invariably seize upon me.

"Each day Elisha took the elixir from the safe in order to feed and spray the Thing. I saw that the ruby liquid was diminishing in quantity day by day and asked him what he planned to do when it was gone. Make more, he had replied. I told him I would refuse to give my blood and that Idell certainly would not be complaisant about hers. This must have filled him with despair since it seemed the adept could not use his own life fluid. The liquid grew less. Then Idell took a hand. She said that as she saw it, the Thing had not been sprayed sufficiently and that if her uncle were to be more generous the following day, the Thing might in turn throw off its horrid mantle of decay and become Marzha in all her beauty. For this I thanked her, as Elisha agreed to think over the situation from my standpoint if this further experiment did not succeed.

"Despite the dwindling supply of the elixir, Elisha was more generous with the spray the following morning and his attempt was, in a strange way, successful. The lips of the Thing opened; the puffed eyelids lifted a crack to show the gleam of intelligence. No words came from the Thing but the dry, blackened lips mouthed inaudibly. The Thing sank supinely upon the floor as if exhausted by that small effort, and Elisha sprayed it again, while I begged that he let it droll away into nothingness. He pushed me aside and shouted with triumph as the Thing began to revive slowly. It raised to a sitting posture. It began to alter subtly, the frightful evidence of decomposition fading and the skin glowing with new life. The dark eyes opened under normal lids. What had been a loathsome Thing became Marzha, beautiful as before. Elisha, in wild excitement, sprayed the reviving body recklessly with the Primum Ens. Pulsing blood reddened pale cheeks; puffy paws became white, delicate hands.

"While Elisha started for his desk to consult a notable tome on palingenesis, I received in my welcoming arms the miraculously revived beauty and life that was Marzha; sweet and wholesome to the touch, fragrant with fair health, incredibly thrilling as her mouth fixed upon mine in a long, hungry kiss. At just that moment Elisha checked his rush, standing as if frozen. He called me to throw her from my arms and look upon something lying behind the table at his feet.

"Marzha's arms clung, her voice caressed with passionate words of love, so fiery with ardor that I could hardly credit her lips with having uttered them. Prescience of unutterable calamity over-

whelmed me as I tore myself from her embrace and followed Elisha, to stand staring like a lack-wit at that which lay behind the table."

"Make it a Scotch-and-soda for me," said I to the approaching bartender. "On second thought, better make it a double one. I need it."

"Another gin-and-tonic," said the narrator impatiently. He fixed me again with that hypnotic gaze which I did not heed, for I could not have left him with the tale still untold and the hoped-for disclosure still a secret.

"The revenant pursued me," said the man, after the bartender had set our drinks on the counter and lingered a moment to wipe up the rings left by our last drinks. "She called me her life, her love. She begged me not to look upon what her uncle wished me to see. She promised that if I would only love her she would be a thousand women for me and could grant untold gratifications if she chose.

"SHE was too late to deceive me. On the floor behind the table lay the still warm body of Idell, an ironical smile of evil triumph on her lips. Beside her on the floor a labeled bottle told the story.

"I could not understand until Elisha cried in fury that she had done it purposely that her soul might inhabit and renovate Marzha's body. To me this was the supreme, unpardonable desecration. The dead body of my sweet love was obviously animated now by the passionate fire and wicked intelligence of the tempestuous Idell, who again approached me with the sinuous litheness of an enamoured tigress. I hesitated, for the woman approaching me was to all appearances the woman I had loved and lost; I wondered if perhaps this were not some further spell of Elisha's.

"Then the woman cried out, 'Oh, my beloved, can you deny our love? Look, could any other woman be as desirable as I?' and she tore from her gleaming white body the homespun garment and smiled with such allure that Elisha must have trembled for me. She said, as she neared me, that she had learned to create such delights as no man had ever yet been permitted to enjoy. . . .

"As she approached, I withdrew, for never could I have believed that this tempestuous, abandoned creature was the finely reserved woman I had worshiped. I bade her let me alone, saying harshly that I did not care to traffic with Marzha's murderess.

"Idell must have read in my voice the doom of all she had dared for; she turned upon me in fury and despair. From her delicate lips—the lips that had been Marzha's—words poured telling the hideous story of a perverted passion, a hatred too deep not to have seized upon the opportunity to rid herself of an envied rival.

"In the midst of this tirade I realized what the withdrawal of the Primum Ens Sanguinis might mean to this unwelcome revenant.

"I snatched up the bottle, lifted it high in the air, then crashed it purposefully to the floor where it burst into fragments that flicked the ruby drops of sparkling life-essence seeping into the cracks, every drop lost forever.

"Elisha shouted a protest that changed to a moan of resignation. Idell sank upon the floor and, face in hands, wept with tumultous sobs that shook Marzha's body.

"That was the beginning of the end. Fearful were the days that came and went. Elisha and I were determined that the going, whatever it might be, should be in our presence for we feared lest Idell might have learned somewhat that would enable her to maintain Marzha's body and transport it from our sphere of influence; to what evil she might, by her knowledge and wicked will, have devoted it we dared not

think. With the passing of each day the body that had been Marzha's became more attenuated, more subtle in essence. At moments Idell would throw herself at my feet and beg me to give my blood again to Elisha for the prolongation of her life. Although it was agony to see Marzha's body perishing before my eyes, I braced myself to watch her die.

"A day came when the misty body subsided like a thin layer of gray ash upon the floor.

"As it sank, I heard—or thought I heard—a thin, threadlike sigh in my ears. I breathed a prayer; not for Marzha who did not need it but for the unhappy Idell, and may God pardon me if I did wrong. Upon the surface of the brook's running waters I scattered the gray dust that it might be too widely separated ever again to be subject to palingenesis."

The narrator stopped abruptly and addressed himself to his half-empty tumbler of gin-and-tonic. His obvious attitude was that he had gone to considerable trouble to clarify palingenesis to me, even to the point of furnishing an example of its workout in everyday life.

I waited in trepidation to hear what I hoped for but the man said no more; he sipped his drink in silence.

"You painted both the girls, didn't you?" I ventured finally.

"Yes," he said, and sipped again.

"Marzha first and Idell in Marzha's body afterward?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then you are Julian Crosse," said I and would have clapped him on the shoulder but that he incomprehensibly removed himself by rising and starting to leave the bar.

"Julian Crosse died in 1915," he said. "Also, it isn't expedient for the dead to return," he threw back over his shoulder.

"Dead men don't drink gin-and-tonic," I muttered.

He was still looking at me and he smiled. "No?" he said.

The swinging-door flapped and a man in perhaps his early seventies came into the bar. "Oh, here you are," he said. He was a remarkable man with shaggy white hair, shaggy white eyebrows, shaggy white beard divided in the middle like the pictures of Moses. "You forgot your drops," he said, and gave the other man a small bottle that sparkled redly.

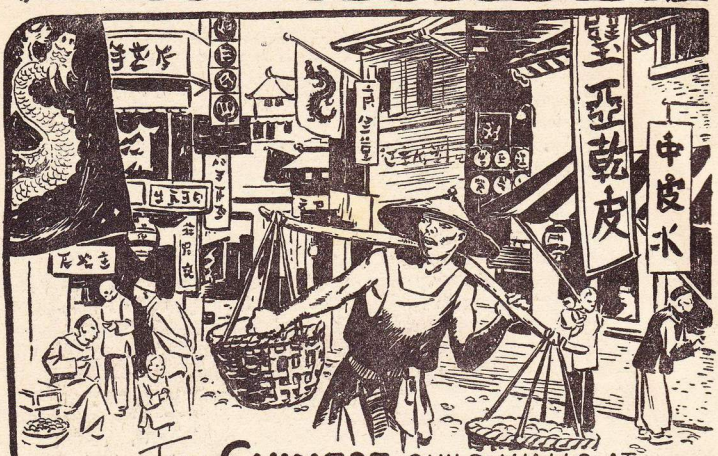
"I suppose I ought to thank you," returned my man resignedly.

He turned a sadly whimsical smile upon me as he opened the outside door.

"How some human beings cling to the evidence of their past successes," he said, and went out, followed by the ancient.

I said to the bartender, "Put the bottle of Scotch on the counter. I think I want to get drunk."

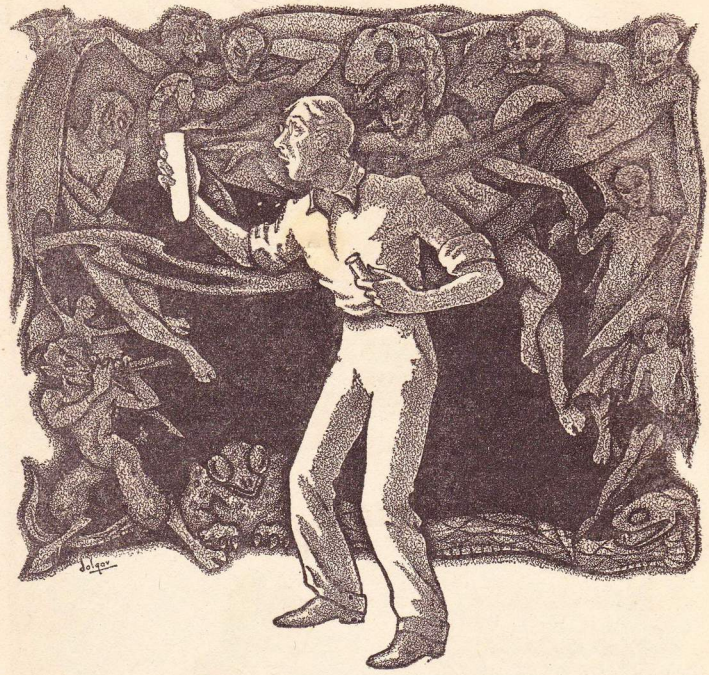
SUPERSTITIONS



THE **CHINESE** BUILD WALLS AT THE END OF VARIOUS THOROUGHFARES AND ALLEYS *TO STOP THE DEMONS AND GHOSTS THAT ARE BELIEVED* ***TO DASH UP AND DOWN SEEKING VICTIMS!*** IT IS SUPPOSED THAT A SPIRIT, IN ITS PURSUIT OF A PERSON, RUNS HEADLONG INTO A WALL AND ITS COURSE IS DEFLECTED, *FOR THE CHINESE BELIEVE* ***THAT SPIRITS CAN MOVE ONLY IN A STRAIGHT LINE!*** —ANOTHER, AND ONE OF THE MOST CURIOUS METHODS EMPLOYED TO GET RID OF EVIL SPIRITS IS WHEN A PERSON, FEELING A DEVIL LURKING NEAR HIM, QUICKLY BUYS A HANDFUL OF STAGE MONEY AND TOSSES IT TO THE WINDS— THE IDEA BEING *THAT THE EVIL SPIRIT* ***WILL BE OFF AFTER IT IN HOT PURSUIT!***

AND TABOOS by Hill

Maybe you've heard it said of someone, "he's scared of his own shadow." Well, here's the story of a man who had a damned *good reason to be!*



Black Bargain

By ROBERT BLOCH

IT WAS getting late when I switched off the neon and got busy behind the fountain with my silver polish. The fruit syrup came off easily, but the chocolate stuck and the hot fudge was greasy. I wish to the devil they wouldn't order hot fudge.

I began to get irritated as I scrubbed away. Five hours on my feet, every night, and what did I have to show for it? Varicose veins. Varicose veins, and the memory of a thousand foolish faces. The veins were easier to bear than the memories. They were so depressing, those customers

of mine. I knew them all by heart.

In early evening all I got was "cokes." I could spot the "cokes" a mile away. Giggling high-school girls, with long shocks of uncombed brown hair, with their shapeless tan "fingertip" coats and the repulsively thick legs bulging over furry red ankle socks. They were all "cokes." For forty-five minutes they'd monopolize a booth, messing up the tile table-top with cigarette ashes, crushed napkins daubed in lipstick, and little puddles of spilled water. Whenever a high-school girl came in, I automatically reached for the cola pump.

A little later in the evening I got the "gimme two packs" crowd. Sports-shirts hanging limply over hairy arms meant the popular brands. Blue work-shirts with rolled sleeves disclosing tattooing meant the two-for-a-quarter cigarettes.

Once in awhile I got a fat boy. He was always a "cigar." If he wore glasses he was a ten-center. If not, I merely had to indicate the box on the counter. Five cents straight. Mild Havana — all long filler.

"Oh, it was monotonous. The "notions" family, who invariably departed with aspirin, Ex-Lax, candy bars, and a pint of ice-cream. The "public library" crowd—tall, skinny youths bending the pages of magazines on the rack and never buying. The "soda-waters" with their trousers wrinkled by the sofa of a one-room apartment, the "hairpins," always looking furtively toward the baby buggy outside. And around ten, the "pineapple sundaes"—fat women Bingo-players. Followed by the "chocolate sodas" when the show let out. More booth-parties, giggling girls and red-necked young men in sloppy play-suits.

In and out, all day long. The rushing "telephones," the doddering old "three-cent stamps," the bachelor "toothpastes" and "razor-blades."

I could spot them all at a glance. Night after night they dragged up to the counter. I don't know why they even bothered to tell me what they wanted. One look was all I needed to anticipate their slightest wishes. I could have given them what they needed without their asking.

Or, rather, I suppose I couldn't. Because what most of them really needed was a good long drink of arsenic, as far as I was concerned.

Arsenic! Good Lord, how long had it been since I'd been called upon to fill out a *prescription!* None of these stupid idiots wanted *drugs* from a drug-store. Why had I bothered to study pharmacy? All I really needed was a two-week course in pouring chocolate syrup over melting ice-cream, and a month's study of how to set up cardboard figures in the window so as to emphasize their enormous busts.

Well—

He came in then. I heard the slow footsteps without bothering to look up. For amusement I tried to guess before I glanced. A "gimme two packs"? A "toothpaste"? Well, the hell with him. I was closing up.

The male footsteps had shuffled up to the counter before I raised my head. They halted, timidly. I still refused to give any recognition of his presence. Then came a hesitant cough. That did it.

I found myself staring at Caspar Milquetoast, and nearly rags. A middle-aged, thin little fellow with sandy hair and rimless glasses perched on a snub nose. The crease of his froggish mouth underlined the despair of his face.

He wore a frayed $16.50 suit, a wrinkled white shirt, and a string tie—but humility was his real garment. It covered him completely, that aura of hopeless resignation.

TO HELL with psycho-analysis! I'm not the drug-store Dale Carnegie. What I saw added up to only one thing in my mind. A moocher.

"I beg your pardon, please, but have you any tincture of aconite?"

Well, miracles *do* happen. I was going to get a chance to sell drugs after all. Or was I? When despair walks in and asks for aconite, it means suicide.

I shrugged. "Aconite?" I echoed. "I don't know."

He smiled, a little. Or rather, that crease wrinkled back in a poor imitation of amusement. But on his face a smile had no more mirth in it than the grin you see on a skull.

"I know what you're thinking," he mumbled. "But you're wrong. I'm—I'm a chemist. I'm doing some experiments, and I must have four ounces of aconite at once. And some belladonna. Yes, and—wait a minute."

Then he dragged the book out of his pocket.

I craned my neck, and it was worth it.

The book had rusty metal covers, and was obviously very old. When the thick yellow pages fluttered open under his trembling thumb I saw flecks of dust rise from the binding. The heavy black-lettered type was German, but I couldn't read anything at that distance.

"Let me see now," he murmured. "Aconite—belladonna—yes, and I have this—the cat, of course—nightshade—um hum—oh, yes, I'll need some phosphorus of course—have you any blue chalk?—good—and I guess that's all."

I was beginning to catch on. But what the devil did it matter to me? A screwball more or less was nothing new in my life. All I wanted to do was get out of here and soak my feet.

I went back and got the stuff for him, quickly. I peered through the slot above the prescription counter, but he wasn't doing anything — just paging through that black, iron-bound book and moving his lips.

Wrapping the parcel, I came out. "Anything else, sir?"

"Oh—yes. Could I have about a dozen candles? The large size?"

I opened a drawer and scrabbled for them under the dust.

"I'll have to melt them down and reblend them with the fat," he said.

"What?"

"Nothing. I was just figuring."

Sure. That's the kind of figuring you do best when you're counting the pads in your cell. But it wasn't my business, was it?

So I handed over the package, like a fool.

"Thank you. You've been very kind. I must ask you to be kinder—to charge this."

Oh, swell!

"You see I'm temporarily out of funds. But I can assure you, in a very short time, in fact within three days, I shall pay you in full. Yes."

A very convincing plea. I wouldn't give him a cup of coffee on it—and that's what bums usually ask for, instead of aconite and candles. But if his words didn't move me, his eyes did. They were so lonely behind his spectacles, so pitifully alone, those two little puddles of hope in the desert of despair that was his face.

All right. Let him have his dreams. Let him take his old iron-bound dream book home with him and make him crazy. Let him light his tapers and draw his phosphorescent circle and recite his spells to Little Wahoo the Indian Guide of the Spirit World, or whatever the hell he wanted to do.

No, I wouldn't give him coffee, but I'd give him a dream.

"That's okay, buddy," I said. "We're all down on our luck some time, I guess."

That was wrong. I shouldn't have patronized. He stiffened at once and his mouth curled into a sneer—of superiority, if you please!

"I'm not asking charity," he said. "You'll get paid, never fear, my good man.

In three days, mark my words. Now good evening. I have work to do."

Out he marched, leaving "my good man" with his mouth open. Eventually I closed my mouth but I couldn't clamp a lid on my curiosity.

That night, walking home, I looked down the dark street with new interest. The black houses bulked like a barrier behind which lurked fantastic mysteries. Row upon row, not houses any more, but dark dungeons of dreams. In what house did my stranger hide? In what room was he intoning to what strange gods?

Once again I sensed the presence of wonder in the world, of lurking strangeness behind the scenes of drug-store and apartment-house civilization. Black books still were read, and wild-eyed strangers walked and muttered, candles burned into the night, and a missing alley-cat might mean a chosen sacrifice.

But my feet hurt, so I went home.

II

SAME old malted milks, cherry cokes, vaseline, Listerine, hairnets, bathing caps, cigarettes, and what have you?

Me, I had a headache. It was four days later, almost the same time of night, when I found myself scrubbing off the soda-taps again.

Sure enough, he walked in.

I kept telling myself all evening that I didn't expect him—but I *did* expect him, really. I had that crawling feeling when the door clicked. I waited for the shuffle of the Tom McCann shoes.

Instead there was a brisk tapping of Oxfords. English Oxfords. The $18.50 kind.

I looked up in a hurry this time.

It *was* my stranger.

At least he was there, someplace beneath the flashy blue pin-stripe of his suit, the immaculate shirt and foulard tie. He'd had a shave, a haircut, a manicure, and evidently a winning ticket in the Irish Sweepstakes.

"Hello, there." Nothing wrong with that voice—I've heard it in the ritzy hotel lobbies for years, brimming over with pep and confidence and authority.

"Well, well, well," was all I could say.

He chuckled. His mouth wasn't a crease any more. It was a trumpet of command. Out of that mouth could come orders, and directions. This wasn't a mouth shaped for hesitant excuses any longer. It was a mouth for requesting expensive dinners, choice vintage wines, heavy cigars; a mouth that barked at taxi-drivers and doormen.

"Surprised to see me, eh? Well, I told you it would take three days. Want to pay you your money, thank you for your kindness."

That was nice. Not the thanks, the money. I like money. The thought of getting some I didn't expect made me genial.

"So your prayers were answered, eh?" I said.

He frowned.

"Prayers—what prayers?"

"Why I thought that—" I'd pulled a boner, and no mistake.

"I don't understand," he snapped, understanding perfectly well. "Did you perhaps harbor some misapprehension concerning my purchases of the other evening? A few necessary chemicals, that's all—to complete the experiment I spoke of. And the candles, I must confess, were to light my room. They shut my electricity off the day before."

Well, it *could* be.

"Might as well tell you the experiment was a howling success. Yes, sir. Went right down to Newsohm with the results and they put me on as assistant research director. Quite a break."

Newsohm was the biggest chemical supply house in our section of the country. And he went right down in his rags and

was "put on" as assistant research director! Well, live and learn.

"So here's the money. $2.39, wasn't it? Can you change a twenty?"

I couldn't.

"That's all right, keep it."

I refused, I don't know why. Made me feel crawling again, somehow.

"Well then, tell you what let's do. You are closing up, aren't you? Why not step down the street to the tavern for a little drink? I'll get change there. Come on, I feel like celebrating."

So it was that five minutes later I walked down the street with Mr. Fritz Gulther.

We took a table in the tavern and ordered quickly. Neither he nor I was at ease. Somehow there was an unspoken secret between us. It seemed almost as though I harbored criminal knowledge against him—I, of all men, alone knowing that behind this immaculately-clad figure of success, there lurked a shabby specter just three days in the past. A specter that owed me $2.39.

We drank quickly, both of us. The specter got a little fainter. We had another. I insisted on paying for the third round.

"It's a celebration," I argued.

HE LAUGHED. "Certainly is. And let me tell you, this is only the beginning. Only the beginning! From now on I'm going to climb so fast it'll make your head swim. I'll be running that place within six months. Going to get a lot of new defense orders in from the government, and expand."

"Wait a minute," I cautioned, reserve gone. "You're way ahead of yourself. If I were in your shoes I'd still be dazed with what happened to me in the past three days."

Fritz Gulther smiled. "Oh, that? I expected *that*. Didn't I tell you so in the store? I've been working for over a year and I knew just what to expect. It was no surprise, I assure you. I had it all planned. I was willing to starve to carry out my necessary studies, and I did starve. Might as well admit it."

"Sure." I was on my fourth drink now, over the barriers. "When you came into the store I said to myself, 'Here's a guy who's been through hell'!"

"Truer words were never spoken," said Gulther. "I've been through hell all right, quite literally. But it's all over now, and I didn't get burned."

"Say, confidentially — what kind of magic did you use?"

"Magic? Magic? I don't know anything about magic."

"Oh, yes you do, Gulther," I said. "What about that little black book with the iron covers you were mumbling around with in the store?"

"German inorganic chemistry text," he snapped. "Pretty old. Here, drink up and have another."

I had another. Gulther began to babble, a bit. About his new clothes and his new apartment and the new car he was going to buy next week. About how he was going to have everything he wanted now, by God, he'd show the fools that laughed at him all these years, he'd pay back the nagging landladies and the cursing grocers, and the sneering rats who told him he was soft in the head for studying the way he did.

Then he got into the kindly stage.

"How'd you like a job at Newsohm?" he asked me. "You're a good pharmacist. You know your chemistry. You're a nice enough fellow, too—but you've got a terrible imagination. How about it? Be my secretary. Sure, that's it. Be my secretary. I'll put you on tomorrow."

"I'll drink on that," I declared. The prospect intoxicated me. The thought of escape from the damned store, escape from the "coke"-faces, the "ciggies"-voices, very

definitely intoxicated me. So did the next drink.

I began to see something.

We were sitting against the wall and the tavern lights were low. Couples around us were babbling in monotone that was akin to silence. We sat in shadow against the wall. Now I looked at my shadow—an ungainly, flickering caricature of myself, hunched over the table. What a contrast it presented before *his* suddenly erect bulk!

His shadow, now—

His shadow, now—

I saw it. He was sitting up straight across the table from me. But his shadow on the wall was *standing!*

"No more Scotch for me," I said, as the waiter came up.

But I continued to stare at his shadow. He was sitting and the shadow was standing. It was a larger shadow than mine, and a blacker shadow. For fun I moved my hands up and down, making heads and faces in silhouette. He wasn't watching me, he was gesturing to the waiter.

His shadow didn't gesture. It just stood there. I watched and stared and tried to look away. His hands moved but the black outline stood poised and silent, hands dangling at the sides. And yet I saw the familiar shape of his head and nose; unmistakably his.

"Say, Gulther," I said. "Your shadow—there on the wall—"

I slurred my words. My eyes were blurred.

But I felt his attitude pierce my consciousness below the alcohol.

Fritz Gulther rose to his feet and then shoved a dead-white face against mine. He didn't look at his shadow. He looked at me, through me, at some horror behind my face, my thoughts, my brain. He looked *at* me, and *into* some private hell of his own.

"Shadow," he said. "There's nothing wrong with my shadow. You're mistaken. Remember that, you're mistaken. And if you ever mention it again, I'll bash your skull in."

Then Fritz Gulther got up and walked away. I watched him march across the room, moving swiftly but a little unsteadily. Behind him, moving very slowly and not a bit unsteadily, a tall black shadow followed him from the room.

III

IF YOU can build a better mousetrap than your neighbor, you're liable to put your foot in it.

That's certainly what I had done with Gulther. Here I was, ready to accept his offer of a good job as his secretary, and I had to go and pull a drunken boner!

I was still cursing myself for a fool two days later. Shadows that don't follow body-movements, indeed! Who was that shadow I saw you with last night? That was no shadow, that was the Scotch I was drinking. Oh, fine!

So I stood in the drug store and sprinkled my sundaes with curses as well as chopped nuts.

I nearly knocked the pecans off the counter that second night, when Fritz Gulther walked in again.

He hurried up to the counter and flashed me a tired smile.

"Got a minute to spare?"

"Sure—wait till I serve these people in the booth."

I dumped the sundaes and raced back. Gulther perched himself on a stool and took off his hat. He was sweating profusely.

"Say—I want to apologize for the way I blew up the other night."

"Why, that's all right, Mr. Gunther."

"I got a little too excited, that's all. Liquor and success went to my head. No hard feelings, I want you to understand

that. It's just that I was nervous. Your ribbing me about my shadow, that stuff sounded too much like the way I was always kidded for sticking to my studies in my room. Landlady used to accuse me of all sorts of things. Claimed I dissected her cat, that I was burning incense, messing the floor up with chalk. Some damn fool college punks downstairs began to yap around that I was some kind of nut dabbling in witchcraft."

I wasn't asking for his autobiography, remember. All this sounded a little hysterical. But then, Gulther looked the part. His sweating, the way his mouth wobbled and twitched as he got this out of me.

"But say, reason I stopped in was to see if you could fix me up a sedative. No, no bromo or aspirin. I've been taking plenty of that stuff ever since the other evening. My nerves are all shot. That job of mine down at Newsohm takes it all out of me."

"Wait a minute, I'll get something."

I made for the back room. As I compounded I sneaked a look at Gulther through the slot.

All right, I'll be honest. It wasn't Gulther I wanted to look at. It was his shadow.

When a customer sits at the counter stools, the storelights hit him so that his shadow is just a little black pool beneath his feet.

Gulther's shadow was a complete silhouette of his body, in outline. A black, deep shadow.

I blinked, but that didn't help.

Stranger still, the shadow seemed to be cast *parallel* with his body, instead of at an angle from it. It grew out from his chest instead of his legs. I don't know refraction, the laws of light, all that technical stuff. All I know is that Fritz Gulther had a big black shadow sitting beside him on the floor, and that the sight of it sent cold shivers along my spine.

I wasn't drunk. Neither was he. Neither was the shadow. All three of us existed.

Now Gulther was putting his hat back on.

But not the shadow. It just sat there. Crouched.

It was all wrong.

The shadow was no denser at one spot than at another. It was evenly dark, and —I noted this particularly—the outlines did not blur or fade. They were solid.

I stared and stared. I saw a lot now I'd never noticed. The shadow wore no clothes. Of course! Why should it put on a hat? It was naked, that shadow. But it belonged to Gulther—it wore spectacles. It was his shadow, all right. Which suited me fine, because *I* didn't want it.

Fiddling around compounding that sedative, I got in several more peeks.

Now Gulther was looking down over his shoulder. *He* was looking at his shadow, now. Even from a distance I fancied I saw new beads of sweat string a rosary of fear across his forehead.

He knew, all right!

I came out, finally.

"Here it is," I said. I kept my eyes from his face.

"Good. Hope it works. Must get some sleep. And say—that job offer still goes. How about coming down tomorrow morning?"

I nodded, forcing a smile.

Gulther paid me, rose.

"See you then."

"Certainly." And why not? After all, what if you do work for a boss with an unnatural shadow? Most bosses have other faults, worse ones and more concrete. That shadow—whatever it was and whatever was wrong with it — wouldn't bite me. Though Gulther acted as though it might bite *him*.

As he turned away I looked at his departing back, and at the long, swooping black outline which followed it. The shadow rose and stalked after him. Stalked.

Yes, it followed quite purposefully. To my now bewildered eyes it seemed larger than it had in the tavern. Larger, and a bolder black.

Then the night swallowed Gulther and his non-existent companion.

I went back to the rear of the store and swallowed the other half of the sedative I'd made up for that purpose. After seeing that shadow, I needed it as much as he did.

IV

THE girl in the ornate outer office smiled prettily. "Go right in," she warbled. "He's expecting you."

So it was true, then. Gulther was assistant research director, and I was to be his secretary.

I floated in. In the morning sunshine I forgot all about shadows.

The inner office was elaborately furnished—a huge place, with the elegant walnut panelling associated with business authority. There was a kidney-desk set before closed venetian blinds, and a variety of comfortable leather armchairs. Fluorescent lighting gleamed pleasantly.

But there was no Gulther. Probably on the other side of the little door at the back, talking to his chief.

I sat down, with the tight feeling of anticipation hugged somewhere within my stomach. I glanced around, taking in the room again. My gaze swept the glass-topped desk. It was bare. Except in the corner, where a small box of cigars rested.

No, wait a minute. That wasn't a cigar-box. It was metal. I'd seen it somewhere before.

Of course! It was Gulther's iron-bound book.

"German inorganic chemistry." Who was I to doubt his word? So naturally, I just had to sneak a look before he came in.

I opened the yellowed pages.

De Vermis Mysteriis.

"Mysteries of the Worm."

This was no inorganic chemistry text. It was something entirely different. Something that told you how you could compound aconite and belladonna and draw circles of phosphorescent fire on the floor when the stars were right. Something that spoke of melting tallow candles and blending them with corpse-fat, whispered of the uses to which animal sacrifice might be put.

It spoke of meetings that could be arranged with various parties most people don't either care to meet or even believe in.

The thick black letters crawled across the pages, and the detestable odor arising from the musty thing formed a background for the nastiness of the text. I won't say whether or not I believed what I was reading, but I will admit that there was an air, a suggestion about those cold, deliberate directions for traffic with alien evil, which made me shiver with repulsion. Such thoughts have no place in sanity, even as fantasy. And if *this* is what Gulther had done with the materials, he'd bought himself for $2.39.

"Years of study," eh? "Experiments." What was Gulther trying to call up, what did he call up, and what bargain did he make?

The man who could answer these questions sidled out from behind the door. Gone was the Fritz Gulther of the pin-stripe suit personality. It was my original Caspar Milquetoast who creased his mouth at me in abject fear. He looked like a man—I had to say it—who was afraid of his own shadow.

The shadow trailed him through the doorway. To my eyes it had grown overnight. Its arms were slightly raised, though Gulther had both hands pressed against his sides. I saw it cross the wall as he

walked toward me—and it moved more swiftly than he did.

Make no mistake. I saw the shadow. Since then I've talked to wise boys who assure me that under even fluorescence no shadow is cast. They're wise boys all right, but I saw that shadow.

Gulther saw that book in my hands.

"All right," he said, simply. "You know. And maybe it's just as well."

"Know?"

"Yes. Know that I made a bargain with —someone. I thought I was being smart. He promised me success, and wealth, anything I wanted, on only one condition. Those damned conditions; you always read about them and you always forget, because they sound so foolish! He told me that I'd have only one rival, and that this rival would be a part of myself. It would grow with my success."

I sat mute. Gulther was wound up for a long time.

"Silly, wasn't it? Of course I accepted. And then I found out what my rival was—what it would be. This shadow of mine. It's independent of me, you know that, and it keeps growing! Oh, not in size, but in *depth,* in intensity. It's becoming—maybe I *am* crazy but you see it too—more solid. Thicker. As though it had palpable substance.

CREASE-MOUTH wobbled violently, but the words choked on.

"The further I go the more it grows. Last night I took your sedative and it didn't work. Didn't work at all. I sat up in the darkness and watched my shadow."

"In darkness?"

"Yes. It doesn't need light. It really *exists,* now. Permanently. In the dark it's just a blacker blur. But you can see it. It doesn't sleep, or rest. It just waits."

"And you're afraid of it? Why?"

"I don't know. It doesn't threaten me, or make gestures, or even take any notice of me. Shadows taking notice—sounds crazy, doesn't it? But you see it as I do. You can see it waiting. And that's why I'm afraid. What's it waiting for?"

The shadow crept closer over his shoulder. Eavesdropping.

"I don't need you for a secretary. I need a nurse."

"What you need is a good rest."

"Rest? How can I rest? I just came out of Newsohm's office. He doesn't notice anything—yet. Too stupid, I suppose. The girls in the office look at me when I pass, and I wonder if they see something peculiar. But Newsohm doesn't. He just made me head of research. Completely in charge."

"In five days? Marvelous!"

"Isn't it? Except for our bargain—whenever I succeed, my rival gains power with me. That will make the shadow stronger. How, I don't know. I'm waiting. And I can't find rest."

"I'll find it for you. Just lie down and wait—I'll be back."

I left him hastily—left him sitting at his desk, all alone. Not quite alone. The shadow was there, too.

Before I went I had the funniest temptation. I wanted to run my hand along the wall, through that shadow. And yet I didn't. It was too black, too solid. What if my hand should actually encounter *something?*

So I just left.

I was back in half an hour. I grabbed Gulther's arm, bared it, plunged the needle home.

"Morphine," I whispered. "You'll sleep now."

He did, resting on the leather sofa. I sat at his side, watching the shadow that didn't sleep.

It stood there towering above him unnaturally. I tried to ignore it, but it was a third party in the room. Once, when I

turned my back, it moved. It began to pace up and down. I opened my mouth, trying to hold back a scream.

The phone buzzed. I answered mechanically, my eyes never leaving the black outline on the wall that swayed over Gulther's recumbent form.

"Yes? No—he's not in right now. This is Mr. Gulther's secretary speaking. Your message? Yes, I'll tell him. I certainly will. Thank you."

It had been a woman's voice—a deep, rich voice. Her message was to tell Mr. Gulther she'd changed her mind. She'd be happy to meet him that evening at dinner.

Another conquest for Fritz Gulther!

Conquest—two conquests in a row. That meant conquests for the shadow, too. But *how?*

I turned to the shadow on the wall, and got a shock. It was lighter! Grayer, thinner, wavering a little!

What was wrong?

I glanced down at Gulther's sleeping face. Then I got another shock. Gulther's face was dark. Not tanned, but dark. Blackish. Sooty. *Shadowy.*

Then I did scream, a little.

Gulther awoke.

I just pointed to his face and indicated the wall-mirror. He almost fainted. "It's combining with me," he whispered.

His skin was slate-colored. I turned my back because I couldn't look at him.

"We must do something," he mumbled. "Fast."

"Perhaps if you were to use—that book again, you could make another bargain."

It was a fantastic idea, but it popped out. I faced Gulther again and saw him smile.

"That's it! If you could get the materials now—you know what I need—go to the drug-store—but hurry up because—"

I shook my head. Gulther was nebulous, shimmery. I saw him through a mist.

Then I heard him yell.

"You damned fool! Look at *me.* That's my shadow you're staring at!"

I ran out of the room, and in less than ten minutes I was trying to fill a vial with belladonna with fingers that trembled like lumps of jelly.

V

I MUST have looked like a fool, carrying that armful of packages through the outer office. Candles, chalk, phosphorus, aconite, belladonna, and—blame it on my hysteria—the dead body of an alley-cat I decoyed behind the store.

Certainly I felt like a fool when Fritz Gulther met me at the door of his sanctum.

"Come on in," he snapped.

Yes, snapped.

It took only a glance to convince me that Gulther was himself again. Whatever the black change that frightened us so had been, he'd shook it off while I was gone.

Once again the trumpet-voice held authority. Once again the sneering smile replaced the apologetic crease in the mouth.

Gulther's skin was white, normal. His movements were brisk and no longer frightened. He didn't need any wild spells—or had he ever, really?

Suddenly I felt as though I'd been a victim of my own imagination. After all, men don't make bargains with demons, they don't change places with their shadows.

The moment Gulther closed the door his words corroborated my mood.

"Well, I've snapped out of it. Foolish nonsense, wasn't it?" He smiled easily. "Guess we won't need that junk after all. Right when you left I began to feel better. Here, sit down and take it easy."

I sat. Gulther rested on the desk nonchalantly swinging his legs.

"All that nervousness, that strain, has

disappeared. But before I forget it, I'd like to apologize for telling you that crazy story about sorcery and my obsession. Matter of fact, I'd feel better about the whole thing in the future if you just forget that all this ever happened."

I nodded.

Gulther smiled again.

"That's right. Now we're ready to get down to business. I tell you, it's a real relief to realize the progress we're going to make. I'm head research director already, and if I play my cards right I think I'll be running this place in another three months. Some of the things Newsohm told me today tipped me off. So just play ball with me and we'll go a long way. A long way. And I can promise you one thing—I'll never have any of these crazy spells again."

There was nothing wrong with what Gulther said here. Nothing wrong with any of it. There was nothing wrong with the way Gulther lolled and smiled at me, either.

Then why did I suddenly get that old crawling sensation along my spine?

For a moment I couldn't place it—and then I realized.

Fritz Gulther sat on his desk, before the wall *but now he cast no shadow.*

No shadow. No shadow at all. A shadow had tried to enter the body of Fritz Gulther when I left. Now there was no shadow.

Where had it gone?

There was only one place for it to go. And if it had gone there, then—*where was Fritz Gulther?*

He read it in my eyes.

I read it in his swift gesture.

Gulther's hand dipped into his pocket and re-emerged. As it rose, I rose, and sprang across the room.

I gripped the revolver, pressed it back and away, and stared into his convulsed countenance, into his eyes. Behind the glasses, behind the human pupils, there was only a blackness. The cold, grinning blackness of a shadow.

Then he snarled, arms clawing up as he tried to wrest the weapon free, aim it. His body was cold, curiously weightless, but filled with a slithering strength. I felt myself go limp under those icy, scrabbling talons, but as I gazed into those two dark pools of hate that were his eyes, fear and desperation lent me aid.

A single gesture, and I turned the muzzle in. The gun exploded, and Gulther slumped to the floor.

They crowded in then; they stood and stared down, too. We all stood and stared down at the body lying on the floor.

Body? There was Fritz Gulther's shoes, his shirt, his tie, his expensive blue pinstripe suit. The toes of the shoes pointed up, the shirt and tie and suit were creased and filled out to support a body beneath.

But there was no body on the floor. There was only a shadow—a deep, black shadow, encased in Fritz Gulther's clothes.

Nobody said a word for a long minute. Then one of the girls whispered, "Look—it's just a shadow."

I bent down quickly and shook the clothes. As I did so, the shadow seemed to move beneath my fingers, to move and to melt.

In an instant it slithered free from the garments. There was a flash—or a final retinal impression of blackness, and the shadow was gone. The clothing sagged down into an empty, huddled heap on the floor.

I rose and faced them. I couldn't say it loud, but I could say it gratefully, very gratefully.

"No," I said. "You're mistaken. There's no shadow there. There's nothing at all—absolutely nothing at all."

"Maybe he's killed her! We've got to catch him!"

The Giant in a Test Tube

BY GEORGE ARMIN SHAFTEL

Just a rat . . . and yet it was their future fame, fortune and success; and — IMMORTALITY!

IT WAS just a rat they stared at, and yet it was their future, it was fame and fortune and renowned success and—immortality, too. It was just a rat in the cage, but a *young* rat where an old one had been.

Young Dr. Joel Randall looked at Mary Worth, his laboratory assistant, and his

lean young face was transfigured "We've done it, Mary," he said incredulously. "Actually done it."

"We!" she snorted. Mary was the robust one, Mary was always solidly down to earth. "You did it, Joel. It was your brains and vision. All I did was fetch and carry."

"Do you see what it means?"

Mary did. Her sweet young face turned grave and awed as she studied the rat. Two days ago, the rodent had doddered and ached around the pen, his fur lacklustre and his whiskers drooping, rheumy-eyed, arthritic of joint, obviously a rat far gone with old age and disease. Then Joel Randall and Mary had treated the rodent. Injected the serums on which they had been working so long. Serums to wash incrustations out of the joints; serums to put new tone in muscles, to pep up the endocrine glands, to sweep fatigue poisons out of sinews; serums to turn the innards of bones into factories for red corpuscles again; serums to melt the decay of old age out of a body and catalyze the processes of virile youth into life again! Serums to turn time backward. Serums to show that old age is not necessary and inevitable but a disease which can be fought off—into the doddering old rat, Joel and Mary had injected their precious treatment. And now, the rodent was—*young*. Young again! His pelt glowed with good health; his eyes were bright and his whiskers rampant; and he snuffed and prowled with a vital, glowing energy.

"If only," Mary breathed, "if only it would work for a man as well as it's working on our animals."

Joel's keen blue eyes clouded.

That was the rub. You had to be careful. Human beings weren't guinea pigs. The serums were carefully balanced combinations of elements that might prove poisonous to a man. You could afford to make a mistake if your subject was a rat. But not if your subject was a human being.

Joel said, "We'll experiment some more—then I'll try the serum on me."

"On me!" Mary blurted, with so much of sudden, protective vehemence that he laughed, and she crimsoned—and he drew her close and kissed her sweet lips.

"On neither of us, I'm afraid," he said softly. "We're young. We've got to have an *old* subject."

"Try and find one!"

"Something'll turn up," he said. But his voice wasn't confident. For a moment he was silent; then, absently, he kissed Mary's yellow hair, and mused aloud: "But if we could only prove in some dramatic way that would bring attention to us, that we're on the right track—I tell you, Mary, nothing as important as this work has been done since Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood! Something mankind has always hunted for. The Fountain of Youth—but not some magic hot springs or abracadabra to fee-fi-fum a man into youth again, but a real, honest-to-gosh scientific way to push back old age. Why, it's as important as the discovery of fire. Or the discovery of the wheel, or of printing. We'd be giving a reasonable measure of immortality to mankind. We'd be benefactors of mankind, like Prometheus, who brought fire to earth—"

"Don't sound so frustrated! Something's bound to turn up," Mary insisted, comfortingly.

SOMETHING did turn up.

Not right away. It was after the story of Dr. Joel Randall's discoveries had got into the newspapers; after reporters and feature writers had worn a smooth path to the door of his laboratory at the back of the university campus in Berkeley, that the thing happened. It was after the first great furor of his work had begun to die down, after wishful requests and ur-

gent demands that he *prove* his serums would work on human beings as well as rodents, that the opportunity knocked on Joel's door.

"My name is Hawes, Jeff Hawes," the man said as Mary ushered him into the laboratory.

Young Dr. Randall stared, taken aback. For the stranger was a startling, and disturbing figure. Dr. Randall was tall, but Jefferson Hawes towered six-feet-six inches, and his shoulders were broad in proportion. But for all his height and size, the man was sick and old, with something tragic in the stooped hunch of his great shoulders, in the deep lines of his gaunt face and the blurred and faded gray of his eyes. In his youth, the man obviously must have been a rugged giant. But that had been long ago.

"What can I do for you?" Dr. Randall asked.

"I've been reading in the papers about your work, and—"

"Yes?"

"I want you to try it on me, sir!"

Dr. Randall blinked; and young Mary caught her breath sharply.

"Sorry, Mr. Hawes. Until we've proved our work beyond chance of a slip-up—"

"But how can you prove it 'less'n you try it on a man?"

Dr. Randall's boyish face reddened, and he drew himself up in very dignified fashion.

"That is my problem, Mr. Hawes, and—"

"Listen to me! Don't turn me down without listening to me," the towering old man pleaded. "I know it's risky. But I'm willing to take the chance. Glad to! Because— Mind if I sit down; I'm tired."

Dr. Randall at once pushed a chair forward; though Mary, impulsively, lifted a hand to prevent. She couldn't put it into words, but deep in her mind were vague forebodings.

"Doc, I'm sixty years old," Jeff Hawes said, turning his wasted face toward the light so that the lines and sunken hollows of his cheeks were plain. "I've been a bed ridden invalid nearly all my life. They called it a rheumatic fever, when I came down with it. They didn't really know *what* it was. Anyway, until a year ago, it wasted me, put me flat on my back without the strength to lift a hand. For most of my adult life, Doc!"

Young Dr. Randall's quick sympathies were plain on his candid face. Hawes had an advantage and pushed it.

"You see what I'm askin', Doc? I've missed out in life. I'll grab at any chance, no matter how desperate, to get back some of those years I spent in a hospital ward. I can't lose. I've got nothing, now. If your treatment doesn't work, even if it kills me, I'm no worse off than I am now. But if it *does* work—"

"Lord knows, you deserve a break."

"But, Joel," Mary put in, "think about it! Wait."

"I'm beggin' you, sir," Hawes pleaded. "I'll sign papers, do anything, to clear you of blame if anything—goes wrong. And think of what it'll mean to you if you can do for me just a tenth of what you've been able to do in your experiments!"

Fame, and fortune, and immortality—

"Mary, we can't refuse!" said Dr. Randall. "I'll do it. We've *got* to do it, Mary!"

ONCE decided upon it, characteristically Dr. Randall put all his youthful drive and ingenuity into the problem. Jeff Hawes would live in the laboratory building. Moreover, for sake of the gloomy, towering old man's self-respect, Dr. Randall gave Hawes a job as chore man; and went out of his way to make Hawes believe that his services were of value to the lab.

And he started giving Hawes the precious treatments.

It was not until the end of the week, after the treatments were already well under way, that Dr. Randall was stopped in front of the Berkeley Post Office by Police Sergeant Davies.

"Say, Doc. I hear that old Jeff Hawes is working for you?"

"Yes, he is."

"Well, I guess it's all right."

"Why shouldn't it be?"

"You know he's an ex-convict? Yeah. Killed an army paymaster, and a deputy-sheriff who tried to capture him. Forty years ago, that was. He was sent to the penitentiary for life. Last month, though, the governor pardoned him. You knew that?"

"Why, I hadn't heard the exact d-details," Dr. Randall stammered.

"Guess it's all right, so long as you know."

Young Dr. Randall walked on down the street in a daze.

Hawes had said he'd been an invalid most of his life.

Invalid, hell! A convict, imprisoned for double murder, that's what he'd been—

Dr. Randall was afraid that Mary's quick gaze would see his startled concern when he arrived at the lab. But she was herself so excited that she noticed nothing at all about him.

"Joel, come quick! You've got to see!"

His heart leaped into his throat. Had something happened, already? He blurted, "Where's Hawes?"

"In the back yard. Come along!"

He followed her into the laboratory, to the cage at the end of the long row, the cage inhabited by the rat which had reacted so successfully to their experiments.

"Look at him!" Mary breathed.

Dr. Randall looked, and his pulse raced and stuttered.

The rat was well. Very well. Furiously well. His fur was sleek and thick and shining, and his eyes bright with vigor.

"Why, he's—*bigger!*" Dr. Randall blurted.

"Much bigger, Joel."

The rat was prowling and snuffing and climbing about with an overflow of pent energy that rocked his cage—as if his body was distended with a power and vitality that almost crackled like sparks off his fur.

"Don't you see?" Mary prompted.

"He's growing?"

"Yes, Joel. But so *fast!*"

"He's telescoping time. Putting on months of growth inside of hours."

"And gaining strength and spirit with it!"

Young Dr. Randall's gaze lifted. He looked out into the backyard.

Old Jeff Hawes was just starting to split some kindling; setting a chunk of wood onto a eucalyptus stump used as a chopping block. Lifting a heavy axe with one hand, as if it were made of papier maché, he brought it down onto the chunk. The steel sheared through the chunk like a cleaver going through jello, sliced right on through and buried itself a foot deep in the chopping block. Hawes stared. He hefted on the axe handle to loosen the blade, and the hickory axe handle broke off as if it were a straw. Hawes stood there, pop-eyed, gawking at the handle in flabbergasted surprise.

And Dr. Randall groped a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped cold sweat from his forehead—

IT WAS Joel and Mary's custom, since they worked late in the lab, to have their dinner brought over from the college cafeteria. Old Jefferson Hawes ate with them usually.

Coming into the little room they used as a dining room that evening, Jeff Hawes bumped his head on the top of the doorway.

Frowning, he rubbed his forehead and stared at the door top.

"Funny. Never bumped that before," he rumbled.

Mary looked at Dr. Randall, and her lovely gray eyes held a poignant mixture of feelings—of pleasure in success, mingled with forebodings.

"How do you feel, Jeff?" Dr. Randall asked, more sharply than he intended.

"Never felt so well in my life, Doc!"

He looked well, too. His face, which had been so tragically seamed and pallid a few days before, had smoothened with firm flesh and turned ruddy with good health. Moreover Dr. Randall saw, with a shock that made his innards feel cold, that Hawes' stooped back had straightened. His iron-gray hair was now thicker and *darker*—

Hawes said, "I'll never be able to thank you enough for what you've done for me, Doc. I think you're one of the greatest men who ever lived. That you'd bother even for a minute to help out an old tramp like me— Well, it damn near makes me pray."

HIS deep voice was shaky with feeling. He meant it, every word; and young Dr. Randall blushed.

Hawes ate with relishing gusto; yet he managed to keep talking. He was brimming over with good spirits. It was a little hard for the others to bear; for the rumble of his deep voice filled the room with its vibration, and when he laughed—which he did often—the windows rattled as if the Navy were holding gunnery practice out at sea.

He talked to Mary as much as he did to Dr. Randall. It was obvious that he liked Mary. He kept jumping up to bring her a glass of water or another cup of coffee or more bread; and he kept passing the food to her, alert to her tiniest wish. Obviously he felt that he *owed* the world and all to Dr. Randall; and obviously he *thought* the world and all of Mary. But realizing this only deepened the shadowy misgivings in young Dr. Randall's mind.

As he cut into his steak, Hawes bore down on his knife as it encountered tough sinew. The blade went on through steak, and plate, and to the hilt in the wood of the table. Hawes stared in rueful consternation.

During the next few days, young Dr. Randall stared in an even more rueful consternation that continued to mount with the tragic relentlessness of a fever as Hawes went about his chores.

A window stuck in the lab. Mary asked Hawes to lift it. He gave it a little pull. It flew up so hard that every pane of glass in it shattered. Then again, Dr. Randall started down the driveway in his modest sedan, not noticing that a rear door was swinging open. Hawes pushed it lightly, to shut it. The door slammed shut so hard that the metal flanges folded back and the hinges snapped and the door shot right on through the car to hit the opposite door. And, again, Mary started crating some rats for shipment to another laboratory. She asked Hawes to hammer a nail through one slab of hard wood. He hit the nail once—and drove it, and the corner post of the crate, into the ground as if a piledriver had smacked it. Then again—students, waiting for the faculty tennis court in back of the lab to be vacated, were batting balls down the driveway. One offered his racket to Hawes. Hawes hit a ball lightly: that ball shot through the gut of a racket held up to return it, and hit the wooden backstop of the court and went right on through it like a projectile. Dr. Randall had once seen straws which a hurricane had driven like railroad spikes into a telephone pole. He looked at Hawes, and thought of that hurricane.

Hawes suffered agonies of self-blame after each such incident; he swore at himself for a clumsy oaf, and vowed he would be more careful.

That afternoon, Mary went shopping with him. He needed new clothes, for his old suits were now too small.

As they walked home up Telegraph Avenue, a big police dog rushed out of a yard, broken section of chain dangling from his collar. Somebody in the yard shouted.

The dog lunged at Mary. Old Jeff Hawes snatched her up, lifted her aside and kicked at the dog.

His foot caught the beast squarely. The kick lifted it off the ground and hurled it smashing through a billboard beside the walk. The body of the dog and shattered boards landed in the midst of a dozen boys playing ball on the lot behind the billboard, knocking a couple of them down. For an instant the group stood frozen, staring.

"You all right?" Hawes asked Mary hoarsely. "That dog might've bit you!"

He set her down. He strode onto the lot, and savagely kicked the dog's body halfway across the lot. The boys broke and fled.

When Mary told Dr. Randall about it, later, he rubbed his youthful jaw in frowning concern. He didn't say it to Mary, but to himself he thought, *Maybe I've made an awful mistake.*

After dinner, Dr. Randall returned to the laboratory to finish a piece of work he'd left undone.

A commotion among the rat cages brought him running to the back of the long room. He looked at the cage in which he kept the rat which his experiments had changed from an aged dodderer to a young rat brimming with fight and vigor.

The cage was empty. Wires of the sidewall had been chewed and twisted apart as if they had been made of spaghetti.

Shrill squealing made Dr. Randall lunge to the farther row of cages. He saw that cage after cage had been ripped open, and that a score of rats were stampeding across the floor. A half-dozen of them lay dead, their throats ripped open. And one rat, larger than the others and glossier of fur, was pouncing like a cougar onto another victim. For an instant the young scientist stood frozen, utterly aghast.

Abruptly he snatched the window pole. The big rat saw him, but did not dart under the cages in flight. When he strode forward, the rat sprang toward him. Swiftly Dr. Randall brought the pole down and crushed the life out of the beast.

Mechanically Dr. Randall cleaned the place up. As he worked, his lean young face tightened with resolve.

"Jeff," Dr. Randall said in the lab next morning, "I've finished with your treatments. You'll have to leave, now."

A WEEK passed, then, and Dr. Randall and Mary heard nothing from Jeff Hawes. The old man had been reluctant to go.

But he thanked Dr. Randall, with heartfelt gratitude, for what Dr. Randall had already done for him. And he thanked Mary for being so friendly to an old derelict like himself.

But Jeff Hawes hadn't looked like an old man as he strode out of the laboratory; for his back was straight, his shoulders erect, and he carried his towering bulk with lithe and sinewy ease.

A week passed—and then Police Sergeant Davies spoke excitedly to Dr. Randall over the phone.

"Doc, you seen Jeff Hawes today?"

"No. Something wrong, Sergeant?"

"Listen, Hawes got a job at the ice plant in Alameda this morning. He was helping the men snake a box car down the track—and he leaned against it and shoved it so hard that it crashed into the next car before the foreman could get out from between them. Crushed the life out of him."

Dr. Randall gasped an oath.

"The men got kind of panicky, and one

of them swung at Hawes, and a fight started—"

"But, Sergeant, Hawes is a good man. He wouldn't intentionally hurt anybody!"

"Just the same, one of those men who tangled with him has a brain concussion, and another guy's chest is caved in. I'm tellin' you, Hawes is a danger to the community. We got to find 'im and lock 'im up. For keeps, this time. Where is he, Doc?"

"He's not here, Sergeant."

"If he shows up, call me."

Dr. Randall hung up — and his lean young face was so heartsick that Mary hurried toward him.

"What's wrong, Joel?"

He started to tell her, and shut up. For, crossing the yard, to the rear door of the lab, he saw the towering figure of old Jeff Hawes. For an instant, Dr. Randall sat taut, his mind racing. And then, with dazing suddenness, he hit Mary. Hit her on the point of the chin so hard that she slumped back against the laboratory table, senseless, and slipped to the floor.

And the next instant, Dr. Randall was bent over her, rubbing her hands, saying, "Mary! Are you hurt, Mary?"

"What happened?"

Dr. Randall looked up into old Jeff Hawes' staring face.

"Mary just came back from the bank, Jeff—I'd sent her to draw some money for me. A man followed her in here and slugged her and grabbed her purse. He must've seen her draw the money!" Dr. Randall straightened up. "Come on, Jeff! I saw him run down the driveway. Maybe he's killed her! We got to catch 'im!"

"I'll break his neck!" Hawes said.

And he was right behind Dr. Randall as the latter lunged out the doorway and sprinted up the drive.

"He went up the hill!"

Through the line of cars parked along the back street, and across the road toward the old Greek Theatre the young doctor ran. Hawes kept right at his elbow. Up the concrete steps, then around the high fence toward the top of the hill they ran.

"See 'im?" Dr. Randall panted. "He dodged into the eucalyptus grove!"

He left the path and cut straight up the hill, jumping over a fallen tree, ramming through some brush. Hawes, gasping for breath, fell behind him a couple paces. Dr. Randall reached the wooden fence marking the edge of the campus, and flung himself over it. For an instant he halted, as Hawes laboriously climbed the fence.

"There he goes, Jeff! On the path round the hill!"

And Dr. Randall plunged on ahead. The slope was steep. He was gulping for breath, his mouth open, but he ran hard. Looking back over his shoulder, he called, "Come on, Jeff! We'll lose 'im!"

Old Jeff Hawes managed to spurt ahead and catch up with him; but he was breathing as if he were choking, in sobbing gasps, as if a hand were clutched tight about his throat; and his face was grayish, his eyes anguished.

"I c-can't—make it."

"You got to, Jeff! I'll need your help!"

Hawes stumbled and fell prone. At once he lurched to his feet. On up the steep slope after Dr. Randall he followed, his body bent forward so that his hands almost touched the grass. Dr. Randall's heart was thumping in his chest as if it would tear loose from his ribs, and darts of fire lanced his straining chest. But, in desperation, he increased his pace; and looking back, he yelled at Hawes, "Faster, Jeff! *Faster!*"

Hawes tried. He almost caught up with Dr. Randall—and then he fell. His great hands clawed at the grass, and he fought to his knees; but then, abruptly, he slumped onto his face. And his long arms, so terrible in their strength, slumped limp and inert on the grass.

After a moment, Dr. Randall bent over him; and regret and profoundest pity were mirrored on the young man's face.

Old Jeff Hawes was dead.

"IT WAS his heart," Dr. Randall explained to Mary, later. "It was an old heart, to begin with. When our serums made his body young and made him grow in size, his vital organs didn't grow with it. So often that's the case when an unbalance of the endocrine glands causes a young man to develop into a giant. The vital organs are pretty well kept in limits by heredity, and don't grow in proportion. So, when an extra strain was put upon Jeff's heart, it—failed. That's something we'll have to take into account in our work."

"Poor old fellow!"

"But it's better this way, Mary. There was nothing ahead for Jeff, but prison. And as long as he lived, he was a serious danger to others."

She nodded soberly. Blinking, she turned her face away for a moment. Comfortingly he put his arm about her shoulders.

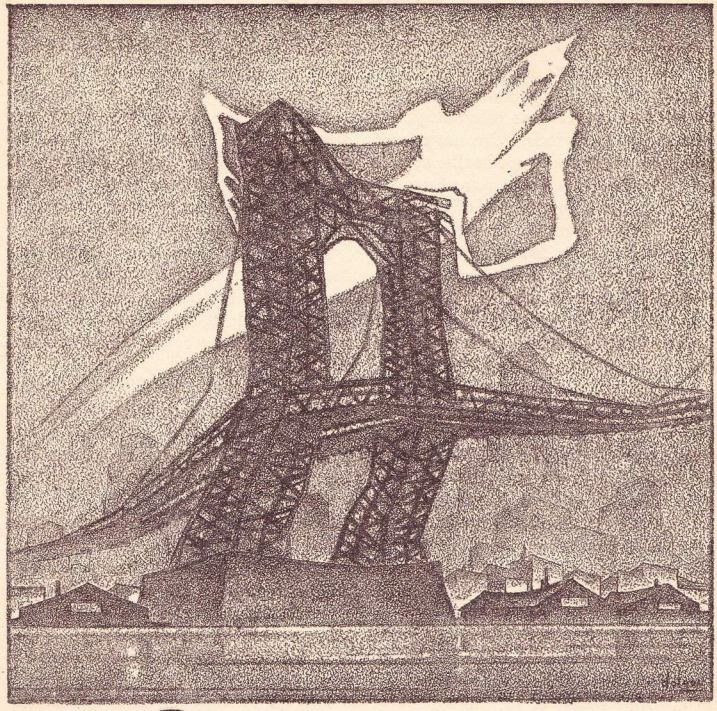
Mary felt of her chin, and said in reproach, "You're something of a danger to others, yourself. I bet you'll turn out to be a wife-beater."

"Maybe you better think twice about marrying me?"

"I have thought twice—I've thought four times, a dozen times, if I should marry you or not. And every time it comes out *yes!*"

He smiled. But his lean young face tightened as he glanced along the work benches of the crowded laboratory.

"And the sooner the better. We've got a lot of work to do!"



The Concrete Phantom

By WESTON PARRY

It was to be the longest bridge in the world—remember? But somebody had other plans . . . !

I SUPPOSE I'm the only man left alive who knows what really happened to the Interstate Bridge. Oh, the newspapers were full of it at the time. Some called it sabotage—there were a lot of strikes going on then, and the boys were only too glad to pin it on the building unions. Others said the engineer had made an error of a fraction of an inch—you know the kind of romantic baloney the feature writers like to dish out.

The engineer did commit suicide later and they wrote a lot about that, but I happen to know it was woman trouble. That

engineer was one of the best in the country. He didn't make any mistakes.

Unless you call it a mistake to leave the supernatural out of your calculations.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not one of those guys who goes to spiritualist seances and talks about auras and ectoplasms. I always thought I was pretty hardboiled until I was called in on the Interstate Bridge case. When you've been a private detective for twenty years, you learn that most crimes and disasters can be traced right back either to human rottenness or human ignorance, and I don't know which is worse and whether they aren't often the same.

But there was nothing human about the collapse of the Interstate Bridge. You probably saw it in the newsreels: the high, strong, curving span of steel, trembling and swaying in the wind, then buckling like a matchbox under a giant heel.

It was to be the longest, greatest bridge in the world, remember? Well, Somebody had other plans.

It happened more than ten years ago if you recall. When I left the case, after it had been officially closed, I wasn't quite sure—just uneasy enough so I never could go after my work with the same enthusiasm again. But a couple of months ago I obtained the final proof. Now I'm living with my brother and sister-in-law and their kids in the country. I told everybody I was retiring because I was getting too old for my job.

That's not true. I just want to spend the rest of my days in front of a warm fire with my relatives near me, where a boy's shrill whistle or a little girl's smile will snap me out of it when I begin to think too much about the horrible revengeful force that was willing to pay any price in human lives to trap one man.

Even now I become cold all over when I remember it, the Thing, whatever or whoever it was, that baffled company officials, FBI men and millions of horrified newspaper readers all over the country. That missed once and waited ten years for its chance.

I can't believe it was Mike Wroblinski alone. It was Wroblinski and whatever dark secret he found in the other world. There are many evil things we don't understand. But about the Interstate Bridge, I understand more than most people.

My share in the business began in September. You remember the disaster itself took place three months later, during a December gale that shouldn't have damaged more than a few fishing boats and telephone poles.

I was hired by the Ellis Contracting Company to do a little quiet investigating about a series of nasty accidents that had been happening on the bridge, nothing really serious you understand, but damned annoying.

Gordon Ellis, president of the company, talked to me personally. He was a tall, skinny character, with a tight mouth always clamped around a cigar, and mean eyes propped up by heavy black pouches. He was probably in his early forties at the time, but he looked older, sallow as an old cornstalk and jittery as a fly under glass.

Ellis didn't waste any time on superfluous details. He gave me the facts cold. In August, his foreman, Tim Reddy, had walked out on a girder and been snatched back by a crew just before the supports gave way and plunged a good hunk of steel into the river. The girder could not be retrieved in that depth and current, but the executives and Reddy grilled the crew working on it. Everything seemed above board. The men were trusted and long-time employees. The big shots put it down to a mistake and told the men they'd pay for any more errors with their jobs.

TWO weeks later a company tug rammed into an object near the huge concrete approach to the bridge on the river's left

bank. The captain was a rough Irishman who swore he'd gone by the same spot hundreds of times and was damned if he didn't think someone had planted a rock there to put a hole through his boat. The executives managed to calm him, but when the tug was hauled off, they found she had been lying on top of a large block of concrete which no member of the Ellis Contracting Company could identify.

"I tell you, we've got to get to the bottom of this," Ellis snapped at me. "Nobody remembers pouring that concrete. We built the approaches weeks ago. Only a lunatic would pour a concrete block that wasn't going to be used. And how did it get into the river? And if it was sabotage, how could anyone plant the thing without being seen? Why, it's like stealing a house."

Then there was the riveter who was found unconscious atop the structure and couldn't tell who had struck him. His riveting machine had disappeared, and the only conclusion was that he had been hurt in some inexplicable manner and the machine had fallen into the river. Or that someone had stolen it after knocking him out.

There were other things. But the story that seemed to enrage Ellis more than all the rest was one persistently reported by Giuseppe Antonino, a night watchman known to have a peculiar fondness for red Italian wine.

After the loss of the riveting machine, a minor event in itself but one that might mean almost anything, Giuseppe began to spread it around the waterfront cafés and hangouts, that while he was on his trick, between midnight and dawn, he frequently heard the sound of muffled riveting.

I talked to him about it. "Meester," he'd say earnestly, his black eyes staring out of a face that got paler with each word, "I looka and I looka and I looka, and whata do I see? Notheeng. Notheeng buta ratatatat ina da dark, ana nobody ona da bridge, nobody noplace. Everytheeng quiet lika da grave, and a ratatatat, lika dat. Believa me, eet's not human. You knowa whata I teenk? I teenk eet's a ghost."

"Baloney," I answered, and advised Ellis to put more men to guard the bridge at night. He did so, but nothing ever was found, and the men began to repeat Giuseppe's story.

You can imagine what that did to the morale of the crews working on the bridge. Most of them pretended they took no stock in the tale, but you could tell they felt it, by the cautious way they moved, the way they jumped when anything unusual happened or a loud noise sounded or someone came up suddenly behind them. It got so work on the bridge was slowed down about a third.

And Ellis with an ironclad deadline in his contract!

"I tell you we've got to do something," he kept saying. "My whole contract, my future depends on building this bridge in time."

That was how the affair stood the night Ellis and I decided to go on the bridge at 3 a. m. and hear the ghost riveter ourselves. It seemed he usually went into action at that hour. You can see we were still hard-boiled and discounted the ghost story. Privately we suspected the guards of gathering in the men's locker shed and sampling Giuseppe's wine, while they were supposed to be on duty.

But when I joined Ellis at 3 a. m. in the pitch darkness, under a cloudy sky that blacked out the moon, with only the wind whistling through the girders to break the eerie silence, and the two of us shivering like small dots above the swirling river, I can tell you I didn't feel good at all. Not at all.

Because three hours earlier I had sat in the back room of Bill McManus' tavern

and listened to a story that turned my stomach to oatmeal.

I WAS up at the bar, drinking rye with beer for a chaser, when I noticed a small group of men farther up the room, nudging one another and giving me the eye.

I pretended not to see, but watched in the bar mirror as they whispered together, evidently holding a consultation. Finally one of them, an old-timer named Zych, climbed casually off his stool and sauntered over to me.

"You the detective Ellis hired to look into these accidents?" he asked abruptly.

I nodded. At first I had tried to keep my mission a secret, but it wasn't much use, with all the men I talked with repeating the conversation to their friends. I did have a couple of guys planted among the workmen, however, and nobody ever got on to them.

"You be interested in a story?" he asked, looking down at the bar, where his finger was drawing wet circles.

"What kind of a story?" I asked warily.

"Something that might give you a tip," he said, "and might not."

"Okay, spill it. I'll listen."

He already had his back to me. "Come into the other room," he said over his shoulder.

I followed him into the back. We sat around a table with the other members of the group, who had come after us with a great show of nonchalance.

"You don't know what's up around here, do you?" Zych began.

I admitted I didn't.

"Ellis never told you about Mike Wroblinski, did he?"

"Mike Wroblinski?" I asked. "No, I don't think he did."

Zych snorted, and over the other faces around the table came a series of queer smiles, the kind that men put on when they have a shady secret, something unpleasant.

"What is this anyhow?" I asked suspiciously.

"Nothing but a story," Zych answered. "You can take it or leave it."

And so he began.

Mike Wroblinski was one of the older workmen, a Pole who had been with the company for forty years, capable and trustworthy, but a taciturn individual who didn't mix much and never talked about himself. His only effort at mixing—if you can call it that—had been to join the Workmen's Sick and Death Benefit Association.

"He told somebody once they had to give his old man a pauper's funeral," Zych explained, "and he didn't want that to happen to him. He wanted to be buried decent, from a church, when his time came."

Wroblinski had been riveting at the point where the bridge curved to meet the top of the left concrete approach. Nearby him other laborers were pouring concrete into a huge mould which was to form one of the pillars.

At about noon on the day Zych was describing, Wroblinski climbed down and approached Reddy, the foreman. He complained of feeling ill and asked if he could take the rest of the day off.

Ellis happened to be passing with the engineer and overheard the conversation.

"Go back to work, Wroblinski," he ordered curtly. "We've had enough delays on this job as it is. If we let every man with a hangover go home we'd never get anywhere."

Wroblinski turned his dark scowling face toward the boss.

"I ain't got no hangover," he muttered. "I don't feel good."

"That's enough out of you," Ellis shot back. "Go up to your job or you don't work here any more."

The Pole turned his burning eyes full into Ellis' own. His lip snarled upward a little, and then he walked away, grinding out unintelligible words between his teeth. He returned to his post and started to work.

Then—nobody quite knew how it happened—the Pole must have been seized with a dizzy spell. First he was seen to stand up on his narrow perch, staggering like a drunken man. The next moment he had thrown up his hands, and with a terrible scream that came thinly down to the horrified onlookers below, he fell like a plummet into the gigantic mould, while tons of liquid concrete rolled over him.

The man on the concrete mixer jammed on the brakes. It was too late. He had only a glimpse of something that struggled desperately under the turgid mass before it was blotted out of sight, in a living grave.

"It was quick-drying concrete," Zych said, smiling grimly.

"Wasn't there anything you could do?"

"Do? Ha! The stuff was as solid as a rock before we could rig up a platform."

"How did they recover the body," I asked. I felt a little sick.

The same sinister smile played on Zych's face.

"The body? Oh, yes, the body. Ellis went to Wroblinski's sister and gave her ten thousand dollars to shut up about her brother and give up all claims to the body."

"But—"

"Don't you see?" Zych asked. "It would have cost several times that amount to break up the mould and start the work all over again."

"You mean—?" Prickles of horror were running up and down my spine.

"Yeah," Zych finished it for me. "Mike Wroblinski's body supports the left side of the Interstate Bridge. Some funeral, eh, for a guy that wanted to be buried decent. Now do you know why all these accidents have been happening? Now do you know who the ghost riveter is?"

I tried to shake the idea out of my mind as too absurd for belief, but my 3 A. M. meeting with Ellis sent all the terrors I had ever heard crowding into my memory.

WE STOOD alone on top of the great bridge. Never had I felt so out of touch with all mankind. The wind lashed at my face, and suddenly the intricate steel network under my feet no longer seemed to me the strong man-made creation of comforting day, but a flimsy insecure cobweb suspended under the limitless sky of night.

Ellis' face looked more pinched than ever. I started to speak, anxious for the sound of my own voice in the weird atmosphere. But before I could open my mouth the sound began: Ratatatatat, ratatatat, as though from a great distance, just as Giuseppe had described it.

Ellis clutched my arm. "What's that?" he whispered hoarsely.

We strained to listen. The same riveting noise again, this time a little nearer.

From our high position we overlooked almost the entire bridge, but nothing stirred, nothing breathed in the darkness.

"Come on," I said. "Let's go see." I started toward the middle of the bridge.

"No!" Ellis' voice was so sharp that I spun around. "No!" he repeated, and this time the exclamation was almost hysterical. When he noticed my astonishment, he tried to recover his nerve.

"I mean—well, all right. I'll follow you."

I moved ahead. Ellis was at my heels, almost hugging my back in the darkness, and I could feel that his trembling had nothing to do with the wind.

We went on, step by step, slowly, and the nearer we got to the center of the bridge the louder grew the riveting, rising to an ominous pitch.

We were about fifty feet from the exact center of the structure when I first began to feel it, a sort of sickening vibration that seemed to come from below.

I took a tentative step forward and stopped. That slight motion seemed to have exerted a direct control over the vibration. As my foot advanced, the whole bridge shook to an even broader rhythm, while—there was no doubt about it—an overpoweringly loud humming sound filled my ears. It was like standing on the runway between two giant presses rotating at terrific speed.

My mouth was dry and I could feel the hair rising on my scalp, but I gulped and attempted to address a matter-of-fact question to Ellis.

"Did you give orders to start any machinery—?" I began, and quickly broke off. Ellis hadn't heard me. He was standing in an attitude of unnatural stiffness, head up, eyes staring, and even in the darkness he looked as pale as death.

"My God, my God," he kept muttering over and over again.

I licked my lips and repeated the question, shaking his arm.

"What? No, no, of course not," he answered shrilly. "What machinery would we have under the bridge? Don't be a fool. This isn't—this hasn't anything to do with the company."

"Sounds as though some big engine had gone crazy," I hazarded, attempting a laugh that didn't quite come off. "I'm going ahead."

As I spoke, I stepped forward, and immediately the vibration increased until the whole bridge appeared to sway in a dizzy forward-backward motion, like those rolling stairs in amusement parks. The hum became a roar, and instinctively I stood still and clapped my hands over my ears.

When I stopped, the vibrating quieted. And then, above the hum and the shrieking of the wind, above the rush of the water below, the riveting began again. Ratatatatat. Ratatatatat.

I turned. Ellis was gesturing to me, his arms thrown out in supplication. He had managed to fight his way against the gale until he was a quarter of the way over to the bank from which we had come.

As I stared, the bridge suddenly gave a terrific lurch, and I felt a hideous shuddering underfoot, the grinding of steel on steel, the sharp clang of sprung metal.

Ellis' scream reached me above the awful din: "Run, run for your life. The bridge is going." I saw him struggle forward and I followed, stricken with terror.

It was as though the bridge knew it must finish the job before Ellis reached safety. Every step he took seemed to drive the bridge to a frenzy of self-destruction, to wild tearing sounds, gigantic heaves, cruel efforts to break out of the pattern fettered by the engineers.

And always above the uproar came the steady ratatatatatatat of the riveter, growing more frenzied as the distance narrowed between Ellis and the shore.

I battled my way forward. A savage gust of wind threw me against one of the half-finished supports. My foot slipped and I fell to my knees. A lurch from below knocked me sideways, and for one awful moment, I hung in space, with nothing between me and the white-crested flood of the river.

With both hands I grasped the support and pulled himself up. My face was numb with cold, but under my heavy clothes, my heart was pounding and the perspiration was pouring off my body.

Faintly in the distance I could hear the confused shouting of many men. The unbelievable spectacle had drawn the crowds out of the waterfront dives. I heard the emergency whistle shrieking through the night, but it made no impression on me. At that moment, I was concerned only

with each straining, fighting step I took across that devilish structure.

And then Ellis staggered to within a few yards of safety, directly over the left-bank approach. I saw him stand there, cowering, bent nearly double, and in spite of my danger, I clung motionless to one of the girders, panting for breath, watching him.

The man acted like a person suddenly gone mad. He put one foot forward and jumped back, screaming with terror.

At first I didn't understand, and then the truth burst on me, and I was paralyzed with horror. Ellis stood exactly over Mike Wroblinski's grave. And something, somebody, was driving him back each time he tried to cross that evil spot.

And now the bridge, or Wroblinski, or both of them and the devil together, seemed to put their shoulders to the final job.

Huge girders snapped like so many threads around me. The entire bridge seemed to crumple and pile up in the center, bending upward with a dreadful grinding noise. I was scrambling on my hands and knees, as the structure dipped sharply downward from where I stood toward the shore, at an angle of almost 75 degrees. I clutched desperately at a support, but it was no use. My stiff hands refused to hold me, and I was thudding and bumping down a steep incline, knocking into cold steel as I went.

My bulging eyes suddenly looked out into space as I hurtled toward the edge. I think I screamed as I saw death rising to meet me, and then something struck my head with resounding force, and everything was wiped out in blackness.

WELL, you saw the rest of it in the newsreels. The bridge yawned apart under Ellis and he certainly would have gone into the river, if a girder hadn't fallen and pinned him down. The rescue crews saved him and then reached me, where I lay with my head rammed against a broken piece of rail. An hour later the Interstate Bridge was nothing but a pile of steel swirling in the river, and five of the rescuers had been killed.

That's how it was. Nonsense, you say? Engineering failure, you think? The investigating Congressional Committee could not find any error. But its members hadn't heard that savage ratatatatat of the riveter.

I heard it, and I know it was rage, blind evil rage, that crushed the bridge; rage that turned mad with frustration when Ellis was carried off; rage that could brood in its own poisonous hell, awaiting another day of vengeance.

AFTER I left the case, I heard vaguely of Ellis—that he had recovered from his injuries after a month in the hospital, that he had taken to drink, that his wife had left him. Two years later I read in the papers that the Ellis Contracting Company had gone bankrupt. The engineer committed suicide about this time, but there was a woman mixed up in it, as I said before.

Ten years later—a few months ago, in fact, I was present when the last chapter was written.

I used to have my lunch in a small Italian restaurant directly across the street from a large vacant lot, on which a "For Sale" sign had stood for years.

One day construction crews appeared, and a new building began to go up, with deep foundations and huge pillars of concrete. A sports stadium, they told me.

Then one noon I arrived to discover the street roped off, policemen forming a cordon about the foundations, crowds jostling and shouting, fire engines and ambulances drawn up.

"What is it?" I asked Tom Murphy, a cop I used to work with.

"Accident," he said briefly. "Hunk of concrete they were lifting in a derrick slipped out and fell on some poor guy.

Flattened him out like a pancake. Nobody can understand how it happened. Just one of those things, I guess."

I saw men working feverishly — and vainly—about the concrete block. By craning my neck, I caught a glimpse of a ragged trouser and torn shoe toeing sadly in toward the mass that covered the rest of the body.

"A workman, eh?" I asked. "Where'd they ever get a slab of concrete like that?"

Murphy shrugged. "The Boys' Club was kinda short of money for the stadium. They bought up part of the wreckage of the old Interstate Bridge. You know, the one that collapsed ten years ago."

In the act of lighting a cigarette, my fingers froze on the match and I let it fall to the ground.

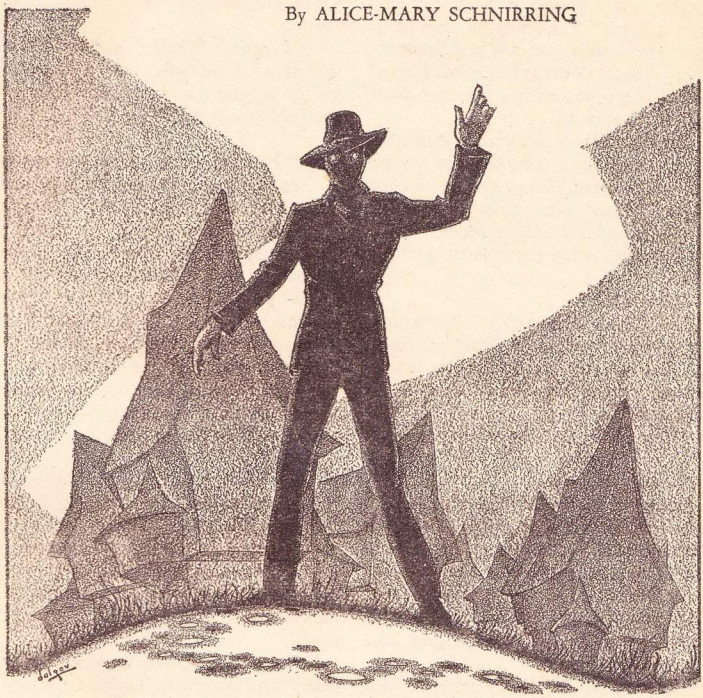
I didn't know why, but suddenly I was bathed in sweat and shaking from head to foot.

"Know who the guy was?" I asked Murphy. I tried to be casual, but the words came out like a croak.

"Yeah. Some poor bird that et over at Noonan's lunch cart with me. He was down and out, but I heard he useta be a big contractor. Name of Ellis, I think."

Crystal Vision

By ALICE-MARY SCHNIRRING



I never saw his face. But to tell you the truth, I didn't want to see it; there was something about him that made me feel—uncomfortable . . .

"AH, PAAVONURMI!" said Henry, sarcastically. "Just where the hell have you been for the past two hours, Joe?"

"Delivering the window-cards to Matson's," said Joe, trying in vain to look like injured innocence. "After all, the doctor said I should be careful of my heart, didn't he? No hurrying—no hurrying, Henry—no undue excitement—Hey!" and he ducked the block of drawing-paper that hurtled through the air. "That comes under the heading of excitement!"

"Ten blocks each way and it takes you

two hours!" moaned his boss. "If I want real speed I'll have to hire a fleet of snails. Well, go finish the lettering on the hosiery brochure—if it doesn't overtax your strength." Thumbing his nose in answer (the studio was run on democratic lines), Joe sat down at his drawing-board, picked out a pen with a hair-line point, and began to work.

For some fifteen minutes the studio was quiet, except for a short word or two exchanged between Henry, Arthur, and Joe. Then Arthur put down his brush, stretched, and suddenly chuckled.

"Have you heard Fred's latest, Joe?" he asked.

"No—what?"

"He's got a glass marble," said Arthur, convulsed at the thought, "And he's trying to sell Henry and me on the idea that he can see visions when he holds it to his forehead."

"How can he look into it when he holds it on his forehead?" said Joe. "He isn't wall-eyed—or is he?"

Henry joined in. "He doesn't look in it—he just holds it to his forehead, the way Arthur said. Then, he says, he finds himself in another world."

Joe turned to Henry in mock alarm. "Are you feeling all right, Henry dear? Shall I put a cold compress on your head for you?"

"*I* didn't say it," Henry retorted. "It's his story—and a lemon, if you ask me."

"Some haven't the ability," said a new voice. "Joe might have, though you and Arthur haven't." All three of them turned to the door, which was open to let the heat and dust of a New York July come in unimpeded. "Hi, Fred," said Henry. "Come show Joe your marble trick, then, if you think he can do it."

Fred—tall, rather heavy, with a dreamy round face—ambled in and sat down at his own drawing-board. "Conditions are not too propitious," he suggested, with a smile. "Unbelievers like you two would make even a poltergeist think twice before he bothered with any manifestations. You'd probably say "Mice!" and discourage him."

"Poltergeists! Witches! Marbles! *Nuts!*" said Arthur disgustedly. "And you, Freddy, are the biggest nut in the bag. How can you believe such stuff?"

FRED smiled again. "Well, poltergeists are pretty generally accepted," he said, "And witches—no, I don't think I can put up much of an argument for them; at least, not spelled that way; but my marble, as you call it—" "What do *you* call it, Fred?" put in Joe, who had been enjoying the exchange. "Crystal," said Fred. "My crystal vision I believe in the way you believe in—well, in the dinner you ate last night. That is, I *was* transported into another world, if you want to put it that way. You can't be mistaken about a thing like that."

"No kidding, Fred—does it really work?" asked Joe, with interest. Before Fred could answer, Henry spoke up. "Don't be a dope, Joe—Arthur and I tried it, and it's nothing but Fred's imagination. He probably falls asleep and dreams, and dreams, and thinks he's seeing things in the crystal."

"No," said Fred, with a curious earnestness. "That's not true. Look—I can prove it, if you will cut the clowning. And, of course, if Joe is susceptible to it."

"How can you tell if he is or not?" asked Arthur, skeptically.

"You can usually accomplish it at once, or can't do it at all. You and Henry just can't do it at all. Maybe Joe can. Look, Joe—lie down on the couch in the back room, and I'll show you."

Joe protested that the whole thing was just too stupid, but Fred persisted. "Try it, Joe—once is enough, if you give it a fair chance."

"Okay—sure," agreed Joe. "What do I do?"

"Here," said Fred, moving with surprising speed for one of his rather sluggish-looking build. He folded a woolen blanket and spread it on the filthy chaise-longue that graced the "back room" (an airless cubbyhole where the boys played bridge whenever a customer or a friend dropped in, which was about twenty times a day). "A woolen blanket makes a good insulator," he explained, moving the couch out from the wall, "And your head should point to the magnetic North. Here, lie down, Joe." Joe lay down.

FROM his pocket, Fred took a transparent crystal ball, about the size of a plover's egg. "This is it." Joe took it in his hand, and looked at it curiously. "What, no mysterious swirling colors?" he mocked. "This isn't the way it happens in 'Strange Tales.' The thing's a fake."

"Lie down, dope," said Fred good-naturedly. "Now, listen." His manner changed, became authoritative. "Before we start this experiment, I'll give you an idea of what to expect, in case it works. When you attain the vision, and find yourself in another world, you will find that you can explore at will. When you see some person—or even some thing—you can approach him, or it, and mentally ask the reason for their being. You will receive the answer—or, if it is something you should not know, you will be told so directly. I will sit by you and listen—because it will be best if you talk, so that we can know what you see. For some reason the memory doesn't seem to function very actively, and, also, I can help you by directing your questions so that you act merely as the means of perceiving, and will not be divided by having to think up the questions and be the source of perception at the same time."

"Oke," said Joe, airily, stretching himself on the chaise-longue. "Let's go. But where does the crystal come in?"

"Here," said Fred, stuffing a small, grimy pillow beneath each of Joe's elbows. "This will keep you from using any muscular tension to hold the crystal in place. Now hold the crystal with the tips of your third and fourth fingers of each hand." He handed the transparent globe to Fred, and put his fingers in place. "So—your little finger over your eye; forefingers high on your forehead as you can get them, and thumbs over your ears. Now you are shutting off all outside influence, and concentrating all your senses on one focal point."

"Maybe so," said Joe, grimacing, "but I certainly hope none of the boys wander in. I feel like a damn fool."

"You should—you look like one," Arthur informed him. He and Henry were grinning. To his surprise, the usually easy-going Fred turned on them with a look of anger, and was about to speak when the telephone, ringing in the studio, interrupted them. "I'll go," said Arthur; then, "Hello, Bowman Studio," as he picked up the 'phone. "Henry? Just a minute." He beckoned to Henry, who crossed over and took the 'phone from his hand. Arthur remained at his elbow, listening to the conversation.

Meanwhile, Fred was talking to Joe in a low, unhurried voice, and Joe, deprived of Henry's and Arthur's ribald comments, was becoming more serious and more genuinely interested in making a fair experiment.

"Try to think of nothing at all," Fred urged him. "Concentrate *all* your senses on absolute nothingness—and relax. Above all, relax."

For four or five minutes, there was silence in the stuffy little back room.

Suddenly it was broken by a muffled, half-spoken sound from Joe. Fred was quick to ask, "Did you see something?"

Joe hesitated. "Something—" he murmured.

"A person, or a thing?"

"A person—I think. Tall, dark. Wearing a soft felt hat; his face is turned away from me."

"Ask him—no, no; not aloud; *think* of asking him what he is, what he wants." Fred, outwardly calm, betrayed his inner excitement by the unusual pallor of his round face, and the fierce gesture with which he silenced Henry and Arthur as, finished with their telephone conversation, they came into the room and began to say something. "I will tell you what to ask him," he said, leaning forward and bending intently over Joe's relaxed body. "Don't think—just follow. If he moves away, and seems to want you to go with him, go."

Arthur and Henry were not laughing.

"He is moving away, down the street. I am going after him. The street is narrow and dark; it shines as if it were wet. I can see the sky; it is pale grey, cloudless. There are tall, windowless buildings on either side of me. He is turning a corner; I am turning after him. Now, the buildings are all behind me. I am in—I think it is a field. He has disappeared; all I can see is dark grass for a long, long way." The low monotonous voice stopped.

"Is this a job you two put up when we were—" Henry began, only to have Fred turn furiously on him and silently motion him to be quiet.

"Walk straight ahead," he suggested to the quiet figure on the chaise-longue.

"What else can you see? Trees, animals, houses?"

"Nothing."

"Look behind you—what is there?"

"Joe's voice held a note of surprise. "The houses aren't there any longer. At least there is just one house—it looks like a country estate. The moon has suddenly come out; I can see flowers growing by the path, and shrubbery around the house itself."

He stopped again. Fred urged him on: "Walk up the path, to the door. Remember, you can go anywhere you want, ask questions of anyone or anything. Ask the house, if you want, what it's there for."

"'Ask the house what it's there for!'" mocked Arthur, suddenly. "Boys, your act smells. Henry and I could have dreamed up a better one than this on even less notice."

Fred's attempt to stop him was too late. Joe was sitting up, with a puzzled look on his face, juggling the crystal ball in his left hand, absent-mindedly.

"No kidding, Arthur—it wasn't an act," he said, slowly. "I really did seem to be following some guy whose face I couldn't see; down a dark street and out into a field. And when I turned around, I saw a big house, with a garden in front of it; but when I started to walk down the garden path, it all—sort of faded out. But it really works," he added, turning to Fred. "I'd like to try it again. What's the idea of it?"

Fred's eyes were glittering, though he attempted to present his usual calm appearance. "Why, everyone of a—certain type has what I might call a "third eye"—an etherical, not a material organ. Did you ever see a statue of an oriental god? Very often you will find it represented. The crystal, of course, isn't exactly necessary to its use; but it helps to focus the attention of the subject upon the actual location of this etherical eye, which lies just a bit out from the center of the forehead. It also is something like a resistor, similar to the bit of tungsten wire in an electric light bulb, which resists the flow of electricity, slowing it down to the numerical vibration of light; the glass acts as a resistor instead of an insulator, because body electricity seems to be capable of penetrating anything. It merely slows down the body

charge, and the "eye"—or its material representation—becomes lit, vitalized; and capable of this extraordinary vision."

"You sound more like an electrician than a mystic, Freddie," said Henry, although not unkindly. "But if Joe really did see anything, why didn't Arthur and I?"

"I told you—either you can do it almost immediately (though you get much better at it as you go on), or you can't do it at all. You say I sound like an electrician—carry the analogy a little further, and I might say that this force only operates on AC, which Joe and I happen to be; while you and Arthur are DC."

"And I suppose we blow out the fuse," suggested Arthur, rolling his eyes upward despairingly. "Well, it's quarter of five—let's all go out and snatch a drink before we go home. I have a date at six o'clock, and I want to get started on the right basis." He unexpectedly did a few soft-shoe steps, which Henry almost at once followed, sliding easily into a simple routine, and humming "Sweet Rosie O'Grady." Joe caught up a guitar and thumbed appropriate chords. Fred threw out his hands in a gesture of mock defeat, and laughed, but his laugh was higher and more breathless than usual. "Okay—let's go get a drink. This is the damnedest place I ever worked in, anyway—how any work gets done is beyond me."

"Beyond everyone," smiled Henry. "But it gets done, and it gets done very-damn-well and at very-damn-good prices, too, Freddie—boy."

The four of them went out the door. "I'll lock up," said Joe, pulling a key from his pocket. "See you over at the bar."

"I'll wait for you," and Fred hung back, letting the other two go on ahead. In a minute, Joe put the key back in his pocket. As they swung into step down the street, he said hesitantly, "Fred—that wasn't imagination, was it?"

"No," he answered quietly. "Did it seem like it to you?"

"No—but, in a way, I wish—"

"What?"

"Well, you may think I sound like a sap, but—that figure; that man, or whatever it was—" he paused, struggling for words.

"What about him?"

"He—well, I never saw his face, but—to tell you the truth, Fred, I didn't *want* to see it. I didn't try. There was something about him that made me feel—not exactly frightened, but uncomfortable." He looked anxiously at his companion, afraid to find him laughing. But he was not laughing; he looked very serious, and it was some time before he spoke.

"You know, Joe," he said, finally. "You really are in another world when you use the crystal vision. And—not all of the beings that inhabit the other world are friendly. Some are, yes; I know one man who has been practicing this for years who even has made contact with what you might call his guardian angel, and consults him whenever he needs guidance. If I told you who the man is, you might find it hard to believe me. But sometimes you run into inimical forces; and when you do that, it isn't so good. They can do you harm. You know, Joe—maybe it would be better if you dropped this. I'm sorry you didn't tell me, at the time you were in contact with that being, that you felt afraid of him. I might have been able to divert you into another scene."

Joe's mouth was open a little too far for true beauty. "Oh, say, listen, Fred!" he protested. "Don't you think you're carrying this a little too far? All I said was that he made me feel that there was something queer about the whole experience, if it comes to that."

"There was," said Fred, and his plump face looked unhappy. "If I hadn't been so excited at your getting through on the

first try, so quickly, I would have realized that something was wrong. The narrow, dark streets—the houses without windows—the appearance of the streets, as if they had been rained on—finally, the empty field and the disappearance of your guide: no, Joe, I honestly don't like it. I don't think you had better try it again."

They had reached the bar, and Henry and Arthur hailed them from inside.

"Come on, come on!" called Henry, "Arthur has a date, and you two stand on the sidewalk gabbing like a couple of finishing-school girls, instead of improving the shining, if sticky, hours with a drink. For heaven's sake, Fred—you look like the last run of shad. What's the matter? The drinks are on me."

Smiling, with somewhat of an effort, Fred came in, followed by Joe, and pulled over a tall bar stool.

"Since the drinks are on you, Henry, I'll take a Scotch, instead of my usual beer," he grinned. "Make it two," said Joe. "Listen, Fred—"

"Not now—later," Fred said hurriedly. "Look—do you want to have dinner with me tonight? Or are you doing something else?"

"No; dinner will be fine," Joe responded.

Conversation became general, mostly talking shop, until Arthur, some three-quarters of an hour later and some three rye-and-waters further along, decided that he would just be able to make his date by hurrying, and the four of them uncoiled themselves from the bar-stools. Henry offered to give Arthur a lift uptown, and they drove off, leaving Fred and Joe on the Lexington Avenue sidewalk.

"Where'll we eat?"

Fred considered for an instant. "There's a good place around the corner from my apartment, on Forty-sixth Street. Want to eat there?"

Joe offering no objection, they found their way (yawning a little) to the place on Forty-sixth Street. Dinner took much of the edge off the Scotch, but they were both feeling exhilarated even when they downed the last of their coffee, and Fred was therefore more receptive to Joe's reiterated insistence on taking another shot at the crystal vision than he might otherwise have been. Finally he gave in, more or less gracefully.

"Oh, all right," he sighed. "Come on up to my place. But if you run into that same being again, ask him what he is, and what he wants."

They went up to Fred's one-room apartment; and this time Joe, within two minutes of the time he attempted to concentrate on the crystal, began to speak.

"I AM on a hillside, covered with small blue flowers—I don't know what kind they are."

"Is there anything in sight—houses, people, animals?"

"No—yes, something is moving over to my left."

"Go over to it and see what it is. Ask it what to do next."

"It is a sheep, grazing." There was a short silence, then, "I am to go straight ahead over the brow of the hill. Someone is waiting for me on the other side."

"Very well. Go ahead."

"I am on the crest of the hill. There is someone standing half-way down the other side of the hill. Far down below I can see what looks like a river—I don't see any buildings; nothing but trees and blue flowers."

"Go down the hill, speak to the person; ask him who he is."

"I can't see his face. His head is turned from me. I have a very clear feeling that he is waiting for me." There was a short pause, and then Joe's voice—much lower, with a note of fear in it. "His

face—he has just turned his head, and his face is a skull."

"That isn't anything—it just means that he was once alive, and is not any longer. Ask him what he wants."

"I don't understand him. He is trying to tell me something—I don't want to hear, I don't want to hear!"

With a violent movement, Joe threw the crystal against the wall, twisted himself upright, and swung his feet to the floor. He was trembling a little, and his face was white; a mist of perspiration showed at the roots of his hair. Fred was on his feet.

"What's the matter? Don't let the skull frighten you; it only means that you have to deal with someone who was once alive: after all, that's better than an entity which might be inimical."

"I don't feel that my pal with no face is particularly friendly, if it comes to that," retorted Joe, drily. "In fact, I'd just as soon I'd never started this."

"What was he trying to tell you that you didn't want to hear? Did you get any of it, or not?"

Joe hesitated. "He seemed to want me to go with him, but I didn't want to go. Something about him made me feel—not exactly frightened, but horribly depressed."

"Now that you've gone this far, Joe, I don't think you should give it up," Fred said slowly. "I don't believe he means you any harm. Next time you might go with him."

"Next time?" said Joe, lifting his eyebrows. "I'm not so sure there will be a next time. Not if I'm going to keep running into *him.*"

Fred laughed. "You're not apt to, you know," he said. "In fact, it's very unusual to run into him twice. If it *is* the same one."

"It's the same one, all right," said Joe. "I can feel it, somehow." He picked up his hat.

"Well, I have to get up in the morning," he said. "Sorry I lost my temper like that, Fred. See you tomorrow." Fred flapped his hand in farewell as Joe went out the door, and lazily got to his feet. He went to the bookcase, and pulled out a volume; riffled it, put it back, and chose another. He glanced idly out of the window as he opened the second book; just in time to see Joe turning the corner. Except for Joe and one other figure, the street was deserted. The other figure—Fred suddenly leaned forward—was a thin man, dressed in something dark, with a slouch hat pulled down on his forehead. Fred strained his eyes in an attempt to see the second figure's face, as he turned the corner by the street light; but he was only able to catch a glimpse of white.

He stood for a moment, indecisive; then shrugged his shoulders, turned out all the lights except the one next to the day bed, and went to bed, reading until he fell asleep.

HENRY and Arthur looked up from their drawing-boards as Fred came in, tossing his hat in the general direction of the clothes-tree that somewhat surrealistically adorned the corner of the studio.

"Only nine-thirty, and you grace the studio with your presence!" marveled Henry. "If I could get all of you to do it at the same time, I might have a really efficient organization here. You get in, and Joe doesn't. Never the time and the place and the loved one all together."

Fred looked sharply at Henry. "Joe isn't in yet? I thought you might have sent him out on a job."

"Nope—hasn't turned up yet this morning. Could be a hangover but you were presumably drinking with him, and *you're* here. He'll probably be in in a little while. Meanwhile, you can take this down the street to be photostatted, Fred. Tell him—" and Henry launched into a tech-

nical description of what he wanted. Fred retrieved his hat, picked up the drawings, and left.

When he returned, an hour later, his first question was, "Joe come in yet?"

Henry was talking into the telephone, but Arthur shook his head. "Not yet."

"I'm going over to his house," Fred said, with sudden decision. "It isn't like him not to telephone."

"Be a lot simpler to telephone him," suggested Arthur. "Henry's going to need you here if Joe's sick. We have the Bilshire job to get out today, remember; promised for this afternoon."

"That's right—yes, sure I can telephone. I don't know why I feel so upset because Joe's late to work one day, unless it's because I feel sort of responsible. He got rather excited last night, and, in a way, it's my fault."

"Oh, good lord—not the marble again!" groaned Arthur. At that moment, Henry put down the telephone. Fred started forward. "Henry, let me have that a minute—I want to call Joe's house."

"Go ahead—tell him to get over here as quick as possible, even if he has leprosy. I told Stein he could have the Bilshire campaign by four o'clock, and I need Joe here, not nursing a hangover in bed."

He dialed the number, and listened to the ringing of the bell at the other end, unanswered. "There doesn't seem to be any—hello! Hello! Who is this? Oh, Mrs. Josephson, I didn't recognize your voice. Is Joe there?"

There was a brief silence. "He's—what?" Fred's plump face took on a pasty tinge. In a half-whisper, he said, "Dead? Joe? Not— When did it happen?" In the complete silence of the studio, Henry and Arthur could hear Mrs. Josephson's voice, roughened and distorted by hours of crying, almost as plainly as Fred himself, at the telephone.

"Last—last night," said the hoarse, tired voice. "Just when he came home. I heard his key in the lock, and looked out of my bedroom window. I thought I saw someone going down the path, but he had a slouch hat pulled down over his face, and I didn't recognize him as anyone I had ever seen with—with Joe." Her voice broke. "Then—I heard Joe fall, and I ran downstairs—but there was nothing I could do. We always knew it might—might happen this way, but—"

Fred gently placed the 'phone in its cradle.

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The Gipsy's Hand

BY ALONZO DEEN COLE

Truly it is said that madness and genius are twins. And when a genius seeks revenge, mad and incredible indeed are the things that come to pass!

DR. NORMAN SHIELDS was a practical man. Training and experience had, long ago, convinced him that human emotions could be allowed no part in the work of a successful surgeon. Yet—when Nurse Murray pushed open the doors of the operating room and announced, "They're bringing the patient"—he felt a great, heart swelling pity.

With a sigh, he turned to his assistant. "Anesthesimeter all set, Dr. Gaunt?"

"All set," replied the other.

"Begin administration of your ether the moment we have Gagino on the table." Then, to the attending nurses, "Be prepared for trouble with this patient."

Miss Murray still lingered at the door. "Trouble is no word for what you're going to have," she ventured. "When I left him just now he was acting like a madman."

"He *is* a madman," the surgeon corrected; and added softly, "I don't wonder, poor devil."

"It's pretty rotten, all right," Gaunt agreed. "For a great pianist like him to lose a hand—"

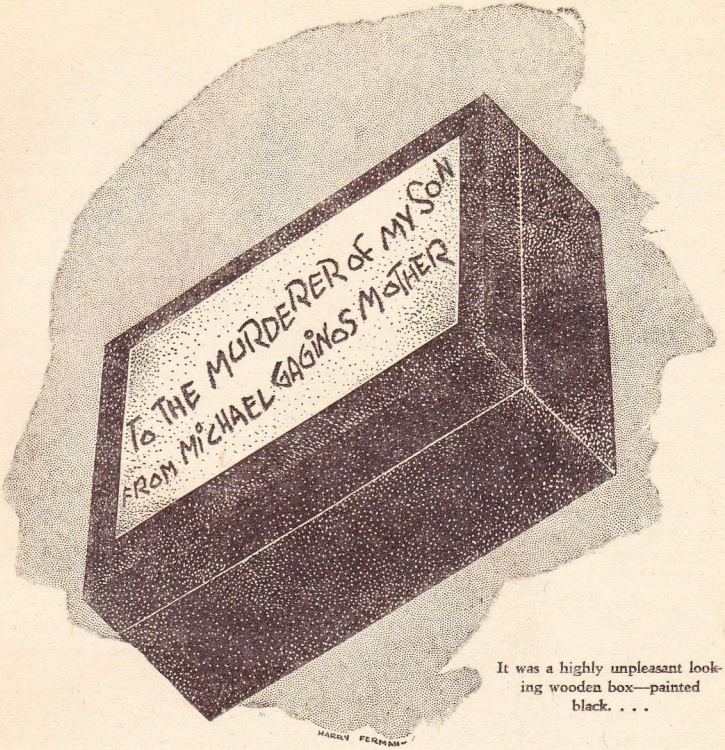
"He says you'll be taking half his soul away," was Nurse Murray's parting contribution as she vanished through the doors.

Shields shrugged his shoulders helplessly. "It's his only chance." If Gagino's left hand isn't amputated now, the purulent infection in it will soon progress beyond control. It's either his hand"—he paused—"or his life."

Gaunt abstractedly flicked a speck of non-existent dust from the sinister table at his side. "You told him that, of course?"

"Immediately after the consultation yesterday, and he flatly chose death in preference to amputation. Fortunately, his present unbalanced state of mind makes him legally irresponsible so we are free to operate on the authorization signed by Isaac Myers."

Dr. Gaunt was a highly regarded specialist in his chosen field, but his knowledge of the musical world was very limited. "Who's Myers?" he inquired.



It was a highly unpleasant looking wooden box—painted black. . . .

"The big impressario!" Shields answered, in unconcealed amazement at his colleague's ignorance of contemporary fame. "He's Michael Gagino's foster father—adopted him when he was a boy of twelve and gave him his musical education. Myers had heard him playing an old broken down piano in a Gipsy camp and recognized his talent."

"Gagino's a Gipsy?"

"Yes—full-blooded." Shields paused again. "The poor devil has a mother living, but no one knew where we could find her."

"Probably telling fortunes somewhere."

"Quite likely," the surgeon absently replied. Then, half to himself: "Gagino's twenty-five years old now. To become the artist that he is, he'd gone through thirteen years of slavery to a keyboard—*slavery*. And, in less than fifteen minutes—"

His speech was left unfinished, for outside in the corridor a man screamed—a tremulous, wild, hysterical shriek born of mingled rage and terror. The man who uttered it was quite insane.

A month ago he had been one of the most widely acclaimed musicians in the

world. Then—a month ago, as he emerged hurriedly from the wings of an unfamiliar concert stage to begin a scheduled performance, his left hand grazed a nail point which protruded from the framework.

The immediate result was merely an insignificant scratch. Gagino noted it mentally, rather than physically, and said to himself that he would paint it with iodine when his evening's work was over. But he forgot. The nail was rusty. And now—

The operating room doors swung open to their full extent and a wheeled stretcher bearing the struggling, screaming Gipsy was propelled inside by three panting orderlies. The doors were closed.

Exerting every muscle of his weakened body, Michael Gagino made a vain attempt to break the grasp of those who held him. "The law says you cannot operate without my consent," he cried, "and I forbid you! I *am* in my right mind, no matter what you say! You *cannot* cut off my hand!"

"Lift him to the table." Shields' voice was flat and toneless.

Biting, clawing, cursing: "This is all a plot!" the Gipsy shrieked. "A plot to maim me because you are jealous of my genius!" Then, abruptly, he began to sob. "My life—my soul—is in my hands! I'll die if you cut one off—I'd *rather* die!"

He was on the table now, and clamps were being fastened to his ankles and his wrists.

Staring wild-eyed at the ceiling, he prayed: "My God, don't let them—! Blessed Lord, I'll never be able to play again—I'll have no fingers to bring music from the keys! Oh, don't let them—!"

"The anesthetic, Gaunt." Shields had conquered his pity and was practical once more.

The ether cone appeared above the patient's eyes. Wrenching his head from a nurse's restraining hands, he turned to face the surgeon. The prayer of an instant ago was forgotten, as was the God to whom he'd prayed—everything was forgotten now except a maniacal hate.

"*You* will do this thing"—he shrieked at Shields—"and *you* will pay! With the curse of my people, I curse you—with the curse of the Tziganes! You are stealing half my life, but I will take the *whole* of yours! I curse you with the curse of Rom!"

Forcibly, his face was turned to meet the descending cone and Gaunt began the flow of oblivion dealing fumes. Faintly, muffled, the frenzied voice repeated: "The curse of the Tziganes—curse of Rom—" There was a silence. Then, indistinctly, Shields heard a word that sounded like "Mother."

"Poor, poor devil," the surgeon murmured, as, from the tray of instruments beside him, he lightly grasped a gleaming scalpel.

THE operation, from a surgical standpoint, was a success. A few weeks later Gagino, who emerged from the ether in a tight-lipped silence which he maintained constantly thereafter with everyone about him, was discharged from the hospital in custody of Isaac Myers. The following morning Myers went to his protégé's room in their jointly occupied apartment and found it empty. All of Gagino's possessions were in their usual place: his clothing, his treasured souvenirs of concert triumphs, his traveling equipment—and left carelessly upon the bureau top was a rather large sum of money. But to a pillow on the bed, which had not been slept in, was pinned a note which stated simply: "We shall not meet again. I have gone to join my Mother. Goodbye."

Myers vaguely remembered Michael's mother as a stern-faced woman who was held in great respect by her wandering tribe.

Unaccountably, Myers had always been a little afraid of her.

It was the custom of Dr. Norman Shields and his wife, Ria, to spend August of each year in Maine. There, half a decade previously, they had bought a spacious log cabin hidden deep in the heart of a pine forest—and in this cabin the successful surgeon found annual surcease from his workaday routine of appendectomies, the importunities of instrument vendors, and the daily visits of idle ladies who regarded illness as a virtue and an operation as a badge of honor. It was a refuge and a sanctuary; for the place contained no telephone which might convey distressful messages, no electricity to remind one of X-ray and fluoroscope—and, as it was three long miles removed from the nearest village, few personal calls were to be expected.

THE end of August was approaching now and his brief vacation time was nearly over, Shields regretted as he guided his coupé over the deeply rutted road that led to the forest home. Ria had sent him into the village on a weekly shopping trip, and the returning car was piled high with bundles.

Through the trees, a third member of the Shields family saw the familiar automobile and barked a vociferous welcome. "Hello, Pepper," greeted the doctor as he applied his brakes and grinned at the wildly leaping fox terrier.

Behind the screen door of the cabin a sweet-faced woman of thirty-five appeared.

"Hey, Ria, quiet this hound, and lend a hand with the groceries!" her husband shouted.

The smiling woman emerged from the house and, at a quiet word from her, the little dog subsided. Dr. Shields was the personage about whom this ménage revolved, but it was Mrs. Shields who managed the revolutions.

"Have you been buying out the village store?" she inquired as he opened the car door and revealed the mass of purchase within.

"There's only the food you told me to buy—and the mail." He climbed out and presented her with the coupé's lightest contents—a small pasteboard carton of cigar box size and a tight rolled, postmarked newspaper.

Gathering the remainder together, and not bothering to remove the ignition key from its lock or to close the car door, he preceded her into the house, followed closely by Pepper. Inside, he deposited his burden upon the nearest and best chair, hastily removed it as he recollected the proximity of his more careful mate, and turned to find her curiously regarding the wrapper of the newspaper he had brought.

"Who could have sent you this? All our friends know we don't want to be reminded there's a world outside when we're up here."

"Haven't thought about who sent it," he responded. "Open it and find out."

She laid the carton upon a nearby table and tore the paper from its flimsy envelope. He stooped to scratch Pepper's ears. Usually the dog, like all his kind, wriggled with delight at such attention; but now Pepper merely seemed to tolerate it. His thoughts, apparently, were elsewhere; and, though late August in Northern Maine is far from warm, prevailing weather could not account for the shivers that coursed along his little body. Shields began to worry about his unaccustomed actions.

Then Ria gasped: "Norman!!"

"Huh?" he inquired.

"It's Michael Gagino!"

"Gagino?"

"He's *dead.*"

Shields seized the paper from her hands. Rapidly scanning a front-page column which someone had heavily surrounded with black lead pencil markings, he found the information that he sought: *"Cause of death is attributed to complete mental and*

physical exhaustion brought about by the great pianist's inability to reconcile himself with the recent amputation of—" He let the paper fall.

"I *had* to do it," he murmured. "It was either that or—" He broke off and stared gloomily into space.

The somber news affected Ria as it did her husband. From the day three months ago, when Shields had first been called in consultation on Gagino's case until long after they heard of his abrupt departure from the home of Isaac Myers, the musician had been their principal topic of conversation.

Together, they had pitied his initial tragic mishap, sympathized with his resulting insanity and sorrowed over a career which Shields, as the chosen instrument of Fate, had been obliged to end. They had even laughed together, in understanding kindness, at the unreasoning, melodramatic, curse which the poor mad Gipsy had called down upon the surgeon as he strove to save his life. Very softly, mostly to herself, she put in words a picture which an item in the heavy-outlined column had flashed upon her mind: "The paper said he died in a Gipsy wagon—in his Mother's arms."

Their retrospective mood was abruptly broken by the forgotten Pepper who, pointing his small nose in the air, howled long and dismally.

Ria shuddered at the melancholy wail, so in keeping with her thoughts. The man at her side knelt down to stroke the tiny animal.

The dog paid no attention to his caress, but lifted his head and howled again. Then he repeated the performance a third time—and a fourth.

"Norman—! It's that package."

Shields' eyes followed the direction of his wife's. On a table lay the pasteboard carton he had brought from the post office. He turned back to Pepper, and saw the dog look long and fixedly at it before he bayed once more.

Curiously, he took the offending object in his hands. When it was given to him he had glanced at the return address and found it undecipherable, he recalled. Tearing away the adhesive seals, he drew from the outer covering a wooden box, painted black. Pasted on the lid of this inner receptacle was a card on which had been crudely printed with a heavy lead pencil:

TO THE MURDERER OF MY SON
FROM MICHAEL GAGINO'S MOTHER

Both stared stupidly at the legend for a moment. Then, in a half daze that seemed suddenly to numb his faculties, Shields opened the box.

As the lid fell back, there was a sharp intake of breath from Ria and an arm was raised to shield her eyes.

Within the box lay a *hand*—a *man's* hand that had been severed at the wrist. Not severed as a skilled anatomist would have done it, but as though some ghoulish amateur had played at amputation. It was a strong hand—a hand that had obviously been accustomed to long hours of daily exercise. It's pigmentation was dark. It was the hand of Gagino.

Shields gazed dully at the ghastly cadaver. "I'd know those stubby fingers anywhere," he muttered.

Ria made a futile, repellent gesture at the empty air. "Take it away," she scarcely breathed.

Her husband neither heard nor heeded. "The hand I amputated was destroyed, and it was the left—this is his *right,"* he dumbly told himself.

"Take it—" Ria began again, then stopped her plea half uttered.

The dead hand inside the box was *moving!*

The bloodless fingers flexed and straightened slowly, in the manner of a living thing that had been numbed by cold or

had slept too long, inactive. Then—balancing upon it's extended thumb, the grisly carcass coiled itself into a half-closed fist.

"Drop it!!" shrieked Ria.

Shields, held enthralled by the horror before him, tightened his grip upon the box.

Like five strong springs, thumb and fingers of the dead hand straightened and the Thing leaped from its coffin. It landed on Shields' breast, clutched and held the fabric of his shirt, and climbed swiftly upward toward his throat.

With a cry, Ria emerged from the trance of frozen horror that had held her powerless and struck. There was a hideous impact of soft warm flesh on hard cold tissue and, with a thud, the strangling hand fell hard upon the floor.

Immediately, it was in motion. Awkwardly, but swiftly—four fingers and a thumb dragging a severed wrist—it scuttled toward the open kitchen door and vanished from their sight.

Ria staggered blindly into her husband's arm and shook with retching sobs.

NORMAN SHIELDS was a practical man. In his unimaginative, material philosophy of natural cause and effect, the ghastly, nightmarish experience of a moment ago could not have happened. And yet it *had* happened, his whirling, strangely benumbed mind assured him. Mechanically, he soothed the hysterical woman in his arms while, slowly, the faculty of sober thought returned.

Thought, with Shields, always demanded action. When his wife regained her self-control, he slipped shells into the breech of a double-barreled shotgun. With his finger ready on the trigger, and followed by Ria and the shivering, whining Pepper; he explored every nook and cranny of the kitchen where the Thing had disappeared. Apparently, it was no longer there; nor did thorough search reveal its presence in the other rooms. But a bodiless, armless hand required only a very tiny hiding place—a hiding place so small it might be easily overlooked.

Abruptly Shields announced: "We're leaving here."

Without pausing to gather cherished possessions—as Gagino had not paused when he departed from his home with Isaac Myers—they left the cabin. The sun was setting, and night was very near.

As the door closed behind them, Ria sobbed. "It—it may be waiting for you out here."

Her husband stopped short. Sharply, his eyes searched the tall, rank grass which lined the path they must travel to their car.

There was a perfect place for the Thing to hide. The ivy that climbed high along the house could provide another sure concealment—and, also, the dense foliage of those trees, under whose low-hanging branches he must pass to reach the road. An icy chill of fear swept over him.

Then, suddenly, he was afraid no longer.

Grass, ivy, trees—all were handiworks of *Nature! He,* a physician, knew the laws of Nature! And Nature was all embracing—*everything* was under Her control; and natural law did not permit the existence of that impossible Thing from which he had been fleeing.

Oh, the Gipsy's hand had been in that box, all right—and Gagino's mother had sent it to him! But the rest had been either a sensory delusion or a cleverly contrived mechanical trick. The Hand had not—*could not*—have been endowed with the power of independent movement. To believe it possessed such power was to believe in magic and the supernatural! A wave of disgust and shame swept over Shields as he recalled his ready acceptance of such nonsense. In a moment, he told himself, his rapidly clearing brain would

figure the whole thing out in terms of common sense—!

His thoughts were interrupted by Ria's convulsive grasp upon his arm. "Norman"—she stared at their car—"look at our tires!!"

All four tires were flat.

Together, they ran to the coupé with Pepper at their heels. A glance confirmed the fear that again possessed his teeming brain. The rubber casings had been slashed with a knife—a knife from their kitchen, which now lay abandoned upon the earthen roadway. And all the cuts were underneath, close to the ground—where it had been most easy for an armless hand to ply a blade.

Shields no longer thought of figuring things in terms of common sense. Instead, he seized his wife and thrust her, bodily, inside the car. "We'll drive it on the rims!" he shouted, "we've got to get away from here!!"

He reached for the ignition switch, but his gesture ended in mid-air. The ignition key was gone.

An armless hand, by great exertion, could have removed it from the lock.

The man and woman looked, white-faced, at one another. The dog had made no attempt to follow them into the car, as was his usual custom. He cowered, shivering, outside upon the dusty road. The humans heard him whine—a whine of terror; then he buried his head between his paws and lay very still.

From the house they had so lately quitted came another sound—the sound of a rudely struck piano key—on their piano.

A confused jumble of unrelated, cacophonous notes followed; but soon the discords resolved into music—into the somber, eery strains of Gounod's *Funeral March of a Marionette*. And a single hand, the listeners knew, was on the keys.

Shields' taut nerves had been stretched to their elastic limit. He broke into choked, hysterical sobbing laughter. His wife turned paler than before, then fainted.

The stark fear that gripped them all was more merciful to the little dog than to his masters. Pepper's frantic heart stopped beating.

RIA SHIELDS was an impractical woman. But she was neither a weakling nor a coward, as the brief duration of her fainting spell bore witness. And when she regained consciousness to find an hysterical husband at her side, she took command.

The mocking piano was hushed now. Except for the dry, wracking sobs that shook Norman Shields—the call of a distant bullfrog, the chirping of crickets and the sigh of a gentle wind were the only sounds that Ria heard. Natural, normal, explainable sounds. But if they caused her mind to dwell upon the proven consistencies of Nature, she made no attempt to persuade herself, as had her husband, that abnormal and unnatural things had no existence.

Desperately, she soothed the broken man until his sobbing, mirthless laughter ceased. The sun was gone by that time and the sky had changed from blue to gray.

It was three miles to the village, she argued with trembling gray-white lips. If they attempted to walk, darkness would fall before they could possibly arrive—and, in darkness, it would be easy for the ghastly Hand to strike. If they returned to the cabin—warily and watchfully, of course—they would have light, which meant safety; at least comparative safety. They would gather all the lamps together in a single room—a room whose every corner they would search beforehand to insure they'd be alone. Then they'd lock themselves inside and wait for daylight. After awhile, he agreed that such a course was best.

They cautiously left the car and Shields

called Pepper. He did not move and his master, stooping down, found the little dog was dead.

Miserably, fearsomely, the man and woman looked at one another; and the unvoiced thought that passed between them was: "Perhaps he's only the first of three."

TWO hours ago they had re-entered the house which they had once regarded as a refuge from all care. Now it was a place of dread.

The rustic cabin, like most dwellings of its kind, was designed for occupancy of but a single floor. Ria, however, had caused an extra chamber to be built under the sloping roof which, on occasion, could be utilized as a spare bedroom. It was reached by a narrow staircase; and, since the chimney from the great fireplace in the living room rose along its outer side, she had directed that an extra flue be installed there and a tiny open grate. In this room, because it was small and sparsely furnished—which made it easy for them to determine that the Hand was not lurking there—they had barricaded themselves. A dozen coal-oil lamps aided the smouldering grate fire to illuminate the chamber; and it's single door and window was securely bolted from inside. Shields sat tensely upon the edge of a chair—the shotgun across his knees. His wife lay, open-eyed, upon the bed. Both were waiting—for what they didn't know.

They had been waiting two hours now, a clock upon the mantelpiece informed them: one hundred and twenty dragging minutes, each of which had seemed to pass more slowly than the last; each of which had increased their dread and worn away their hope. The intelligence, whatever it was, directing the movements of Gagino's severed hand, knew human nature—and its hate was great.

At last the vigil ended. There was a discordant crash on the piano strings below. Shields sprang to his feet and Ria sat bolt upright on the bed.

The clock ticked perhaps a dozen times before another sound was heard. And then the piano spoke again—a single hand upon its keys. It sang, as before, *The Funeral March of a Marionette.*

Shields grasped the shotgun and started madly for the door. "That Thing," he shrieked, "won't pull the strings to send *me* dancing to my coffin!!"

Before he could draw the latch, Ria had her arms about him. "Don't! *That's* what it wants—to get you out of this room!"

The surgeon sank again into the chair, and pressed quivering hands against his throbbing head.

Below, the mocking dirge continued. Over and over it was played — jerkily, haltingly, in queerly broken tempo; but each note was sure and true as four masterly fingers and a thumb pressed themselves upon the keys. Then, with an angry crash, the music ended as it had begun.

The two who waited scarcely breathed as the ensuing silence seemed to stretch into infinity. Actually not more than thirty seconds passed; and then a new sound replaced the taunting mockery of Gounod's macabre strains: a dull, measured, frightful sound—the sound of groping bloodless fingers pulling dead hard flesh from step to step of the stairs that led directly to this room.

Ria stifled the involuntary scream that struggled for release. Her husband sat rigid, tense and—helpless.

Laboriously, purposefully, the Thing finally reached the tiny balcony outside their door. They heard it scuttle rapidly across the bare pine flooring there—obviously, it hoped to find a space between door and sill that would admit it's narrow bulk. But door and sill met closely.

Presently, they heard it retreat, as it had come, down the stairs. Only now it cast itself in little leaps from step to step, with

hard dull thuds to indicate the manner of its progress. When it reached the rug-covered floor of the living room below, the ticking clock again provided the only sound that reached their ears.

"God—," muttered Norman, "God—!" And he meant it as a prayer.

Ria stood beside him, thinking—desperately recalling ancient stories of black magic she had read; hoping their recollection would provide some clue as to how this monstrous evil might be circumvented. Creatures of Hell could not cross running water, she remembered—but that barrier to witchcraft was non-existent here; no stream divided them from Gagino's vengeful hand. Silver bullets, it was said, could destroy both ghost and demon—but the only weapon they possessed was charged with useless lead. Still—while locked inside this room, they were protected: the Hand's motivating force was supernatural, but the Hand itself was physical and subject to physical laws. It could not pass through solid doors and walls, and she was sure they had closed every opening to the chamber by which it might find entrance.

The next moment her surety was blasted.

From above, they heard the now familiar flopping, scratching sound of the moving Hand. The Thing *had* found a means of entrance—one she had never considered. It was coming down the chimney.

Stark terror gripped both man and woman. In Shields' trembling hands, the shotgun wavered like a willow branch before the wind. Ria could only stare in awful fascination at the opening of the fireplace where the Thing would soon appear.

But the Hand did not appear. It's descent became slower, more cautious, and finally it stopped. The spellbound watchers heard nothing at all for a long drawn minute except the monotonous ticking of the clock. Then, inside the chimney, progress was resumed—but now the sound retreated. The Thing was climbing up—away from them.

For the first time since they had abandoned their useless car, Shields felt he might have cause for hope. The Thing had just proven itself stupid, for it had disclosed it's only means of entrance to the room and then, foolishly, failed to take advantage of it.

"Ria—," he shouted, joining action with his words, "—fetch blankets from the bed, so I can stuff them up this flue! I'll trample out the fire so I can work!"

"No—!" her voice was high-pitched, hysterical, "—keep away from that fire! Don't touch it!"

Frantically, she pulled him away from the feeble blaze that rose from slowly dying embers. "Pile on more fuel!" she screamed. "More fuel!"

"You're crazy!" the man yelled as, before he could prevent, she seized a double handful of well-dried kindling and threw it on the coals.

"Keep away from that fire!" she repeated, adding more wood to the mounting flames.

Roughly, he pulled her away. A brimming pitcher of water stood on the old-fashioned bureau; his hand reached out to grasp it and dash it on the blaze. But his action was not completed.

Upon the window pane a finger tapped. Both whirled to face the sound—and saw, against the glass, the severed hand.

It was clinging to the ivy which, at this end of the cabin, rose from earth to rooftree—and, by means of which it had descended from above so quickly. The Thing seemed to know it had attracted the attention of its victims, for the tapping ceased while it wriggled its disengaged fingers in repulsive mockery. Then all its members clutched the loose, down hanging strand of vine to which it had attached itself and, with a writhing effort, swung hard against

the glass. It rebounded and struck the pane again, harder than before—and the ivy rope swung further outward for a third return of greater force. The intent was plain—it meant to batter in the glass.

The practical surgeon reached for the gun he knew was useless—his impractical wife seized a billet of wood and hurled it at the window.

The missile struck squarely. The frail barrier that had kept the Thing outside was shattered into fragments; and, with clumsy, eager speed, it leaped inside the room.

Shields pressed the triggers of his weapon and both barrels roared. His aim was good, for the floor was splintered all about the loathesome Hand. It halted for an instant and, upon its grisly flesh, the man saw gaping wounds. Then, in a second indescribable gesture of mockery, the dead fingers bent and twisted—and the Gipsy's Hand advanced.

With an accusing glance at Ria, the surgeon groaned: "Oh, why—?" and backed away.

She screamed crazily: "I let it in to *end* it—so it can be destroyed!"

Her husband, in his backward flight, could not see the chair behind him. With a shriek of terror, he fell across it to the floor.

The Hand stopped short in its grim advance, as though surprised at the mishap which would make its triumph all too easy. Then, with a cat-like bound, it was upon the prone man's breast.

With a savage, well directed blow, Ria sent it spinning to a corner of the room. But, as it landed, the bloodless fingers were in motion for another fierce attack. Then the impractical woman seized a lighted coal oil lamp and hurled it in its path.

There was a crash of glass, an explosion, and a burst of flame. Covered and surrounded by blazing oil, the Gipsy's Hand writhed convulsive, twitching fingers; struggled in awful, frantic effort to escape; then, itself, became fuel for the leaping tongues of fire.

Shields had regained his feet and, unlocking the door, he thrust Ria from the burning room. Down the stairs they raced, then out into the cold night air.

As they left the doomed house, "How did you know what to do?" he sobbed.

Her reply was quiet. "It was afraid to come down the chimney when it felt the heat below. I remembered then that—unnatural things—can only be destroyed as witches were put to death . . . by living fire."

Her endurance was at an end. The impractical woman collapsed in the arms of her practical mate.

ON THE next day, evening newspapers carried a brief item which informed their readers that, in a squalid camp near Philadelphia, an old Gipsy woman had been found dead under mysterious circumstances.

Death had, undoubtedly been caused by fire, for the body was charred beyond recognition. Yet there was no sign of conflagration about the tent in which they found her. Foul play was suspected.

The victim was never positively identified, but it was believed she was the mother of Michael Gagino.

"—she killed nine men the first day, five the second, and seven the third. People said she was jinxed!"

THE messenger from the Navy recruiting office found old Captain Tolliver in his backyard. The crabby, sour-visaged housekeeper took him as far as the hedge back of the house and pointed the retired mariner out to him. Captain Tolliver was reclining in a ragged canvas deckchair taking the sun. He had on faded dungarees, soft and pliant as linen from hundreds of scrubbings, and the stump of his handless left arm rested carelessly on his lap. The peg-leg that matched it lay in alignment with the one good leg. The captain had his eyes closed, comfortably drinking in the sun's good heat, when he heard the crunch of the messenger's step on the gravel walk that separated the vegetable from the flower beds. The old skipper's hearing was still alert, though, and at the sound he raised his lids and looked inquiringly at the newcomer.

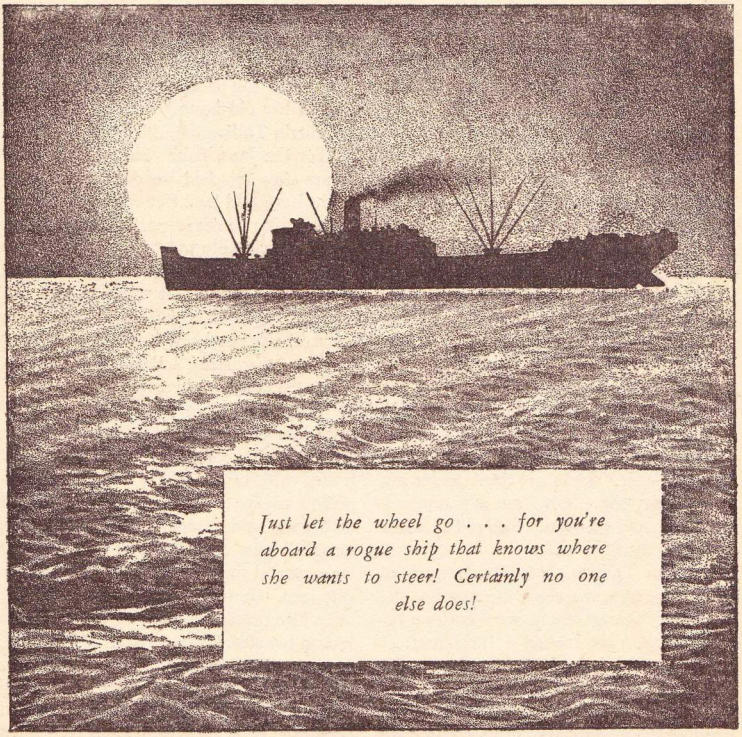
"Commander Jason's compliments, sir,"

Vengeance in Her Bones

said the bluejacket, "and would you please step down to the office. He has a ship for you."

Captain Tolliver smiled feebly, then he closed his eyes against the glare. His eyes were not overstrong these days—the doctors had said something about incipient cataracts.

"Commander Jason is confusing me with my son. He already has a ship, working out of West Coast ports. My sea-going days are over. Forever."



"The *Sadie Saxon* bore grudges, and would have her way no matter what was done—"

To emphasize his point he waved the stump of his left arm, and lifted the peg-leg slightly.

"No, sir. It's you he wants. He was very clear about that. He has a ship that only you can command. She's a rogue. They say she will obey no other skipper. He says they have waived your physical defects and will give you all the help you need. But they've got to have you."

The captain shook his head.

"He's wrong, I say. There is no such a ship. There was one once, but she rotted her life away in the back channel. They sold her finally to a wrecking company and broke her up for scrap. All I have to say to that is whoever bought that scrap had better have a care as to how they use it. For she was a vindictive wench. The *Sadie Saxon* bore grudges and would have her way no matter what you did. . . ."

"Yes, sir," said the messenger, eagerly, "that's the ship—the *Sadie Saxon*—a cargo type vessel! They've put her back in commission but she won't leave port. They need ships now that America is at war. Every ship. That's why they need you. The commander says please come. If you want, he'll send an ambulance."

"The *Sadie Saxon,*" whispered the old captain, suddenly rapt with nostalgia for World War days when he and she were in their prime.

Then aloud, "He needn't bother about the ambulance. I can get there under my own power, son. Give me a hand so I can get up and go dress. The old uniform still fits, thank God."

Captain Tolliver's senility seemed to drop from him as a cloak the moment the well-worn blue garments were back on his lean frame. He looked a little ruefully at the tarnished gold lace on the sleeves and at the cap device the years had tinted with green mold, but nevertheless he brushed the uniform carefully, squared his shoulders, and marched down the steps without availing himself of the sailor's proffered arm.

"So they didn't break her up after all?" said the captain, as they waited at the curb in the hope a cruising taxi would come by. "How come? I know she was sold."

"Too expensive. She was part of a contract for scrap to be sent to the Japs some months ago, but they only worked three days on her. She killed nine men the first day they brought their cutting torches aboard, all of them in different ways. One of her booms crashed down the second day and smashed five others. On the third day seven suffocated in a hold, and two slipped and fell overboard. The men said she was jinxed and threatened to call a strike. So they put a tug alongside and hauled her back to her old berth."

Captain Tolliver chuckled.

"For the Japs, huh? She knew it even before they attacked Pearl Harbor, but I might have told 'em. But what's this about her *refusing* to leave port. Doesn't that sound a little silly to you?"

His faded old eyes twinkled when he asked the question. It was one that did sound silly, when a person came to think about it. Yet he knew it was not silly and one an experienced sailorman would answer as seriously as he could.

"There's no other word for it, sir," replied the bluejacket, soberly. "She was refitted at Newport News, given a crew and loaded with cargo. They took her out to make a voyage to Spanish Morocco, loaded with grain and automobile tires. But she wouldn't pass the Thimble. Her rudder jammed and she piled up hard, and at high tide, too. It took four days to pull her off. They took her back to the yard and looked her steering gear over. It was okay. So they started her out again. That time she sheered out to the other side and grounded near Willoughby Spit. The third time they tried to take her out, she piled up in the dredged channel and blocked all

shipping for hours. The yard still insisted there was nothing wrong with her steering gear and suspected sabotage—"

"I know," said the captain. "They didn't find any evidence of it."

"That's right. They gave her crew a clean bill of health and ordered to sea once more. She won't budge. She had steam up and stood a good dock trial, but once she was out in the stream her propellers quit turning over—"

"With full throttle, of course," remarked Captain Tolliver calmly.

"Yes, sir. With full pressure in the boilers and throttle wide open. All she would do was drift until she banged into a dock.

"The tugs got hold of her and tied her up again. The engineers swear her engines are all right and there is no reason why she won't run. She just won't—that's all."

A taxi rounded the corner and caught the sailor's hail. As it slid to a stop before them the captain made one final remark.

"I see. They looked up her record and found she was always that way. Except when I had command of her. Well, I know what is on that little tub's mind and what to do about it. It won't be orthodox, but if they want her in service it is the only way."

"What's that, sir."

"Give her her head," said the old man cryptically, then stiffly climbed into the cab.

IT WAS a week later that Captain Tolliver arrived at Norfolk Navy Yard. An aide of the admiral in charge of transport took him to the dock where she lay. She looked spick and span and new and a painter's stage swung under her near bow, and was to play her part in keeping supplies going Eastward in spite of havoc to the West. Tolliver climbed up onto it with some difficulty and patted one of the shiny plates of her nose.

"Up to your old tricks, eh, Sadie?" the astonished aide heard him say. "Well, everything's going to be all right now. We'll go hunting together."

Was it the wash of a passing tug that caused her to bob suddenly up and down that way? The aide shrugged his shoulders and was glad he was in the regular outfit. He would hate to have to go to sea through the war zone on a rogue ship under the command of a decrepit and senile madman of a skipper.

"I am ready to take over," announced Tolliver when he was back on the dock, "whenever those three men whose names I gave you have been replaced by others more acceptable."

"Acceptable to whom, sir? I repeat that they are loyal American citizens despite their German ancestry. They have been investigated fully."

"Acceptable to me as representative of the ship," answered the captain with all his old dignity. "When they are off we sail. Not before. Perhaps it is prejudice —Sadie's funny that way—perhaps your investigation was not as comprehensive as you think. That's your problem."

The aide laughed. The old lunatic, he thought, but I'm stuck I guess. They said give him anything he asked for.

"Very well, sir," was what he said out loud.

Captain Tolliver waited patiently beside the bow until the last of the three scowling men had come down it laden with their bags and dunnage. Then he mounted to the deck and went straightway to the bridge. His hand reached for the whistle pull. A long, triumphant scream of a blast split the air.

"Stand by your lines," bellowed the old man through a megaphone, "and tell the tug never mind. We won't need her."

Two hours later the *Sadie Saxon* swept

through the dredged channel, picked up and passed the entrance buoy to the bay. Throbbing with the vibration of her churning screws and rising and falling to the heavy swell outside, she shook herself joyfully at the smell and feel of the open sea. Cape Henry and Cape Charles Lights soon faded behind. The captain set a course for Bermuda, for the ship's orders had been changed. After the long delay in setting out the situation was different. She was to rendezvous with a Gibraltar bound convoy at the island.

Mate Parker came up to take the watch. It was a cloudy, dark night and the ship was running without lights.

"Keep a sharp lookout," warned the captain, "and handle things yourself. I don't want to be called unless something extraordinary occurs."

"Aye, sir," acknowledged the mate surlily. By rights he should be the skipper of this cranky tub—not this doddering old fool.

The captain got down the ladder the best way he could and groped along the darkened decks until he came to the door of his room. He did not undress at all but lay down in his bunk as he was. The *Sadie Saxon* could be counted on to do the unexpected at any time. He closed his eyes wearily, for the excitement of the day had taxed his strength to the utmost. In a moment he was fast asleep.

It must have been well after midnight when he was roused from his deep slumber. Mr. Parker was standing over him with a look of concern on his face.

"She's gone crazy again, sir," he reported, "and we can't do a thing with her—"

"Don't try," directed the captain. "What she doing?"

"Turned sharp to the left about fifteen minutes ago and is turning up about twelve revolutions more than her proper speed. The helmsman can't do anything about it. Neither can the engineer. She won't obey her wheel or throttle. What do we do—fold up and call it a day?"

Captain Tolliver sat up in his bunk.

"Oh, no. By no means. You'll be awfully busy shortly. Turn out all hands at once. Man your lifeboats and have them ready for lowering. Shut all water-tight doors below and see that there is plenty of shoring handy in case the peak gets stove in. Have the collision mat ready. That's all."

"But the steering?"

"Just let the wheel go. She'll steer herself. She knows where she wants to go. I don't."

The mate left and the old man dragged himself to his mismated feet and began the laborious journey to the bridge. Once he was up there he made sure that the searchlight was ready to turn on in case he needed it. After that he could only wait.

THE wait was not long. Fifteen minutes later there was a shock, a grinding, bumping of something under the fore-foot and along the keel. The ship's engines stopped abruptly, then began backing. Captain Tolliver reached for the engine room telegraph and rang it to "Stop."

The ship stopped.

"Collision forward!" shouted the lookout in the bow. "We just ran down a small ship of some sort."

Tolliver could hear the boatswain and his gang dropping into the fore hold to see whether the damage was serious. Then he spoke quietly to the mate who was on the bridge beside him.

"You may put your boats in the water now, Mister. I have a hunch we just ran down a Nazi sub. I'll put on the light as soon as you are lowered."

The mate left on the run, more mystified than ever. A man came up from forward and reported the peak was full up to the waterline but the bulkhead abaft it was

holding and the ship seemed to be in no danger.

"Turn on that searchlight," ordered Captain Tolliver, "and sweep aft."

There was a chorus of gasps as the light stabbed out into the murk and almost instantly lit on a large black object rearing up above the waves. It was the bow of a submarine, and even as they sighted it it slid backwards into the deep. But in that brief glimpse they saw several men plunge overboard, and as the light swept to right and left the bobbing heads of a dozen or more men could be seen in the water.

"Pick up those men and be smart about it," yelled Tolliver through his megaphones to the boats. Then he watched as they dragged the survivors into the boats and rowed back to the ship. He watched as they hoisted the boats in and housed them at their davits.

"Put those men under guard," he directed, "and get back on your course. Things will be all right now." And with that he went below to pick up his night's sleep where he had left off.

THE arrival of the *Sadie Saxon* at Bermuda caused quite a stir. Many were the congratulations upon the ship's luck in blundering across a U-boat and ramming it in the dark. The two officers and eleven men rescued from the crash were most welcome to the British Intelligence officers. Hasty arrangements were made for quick repairs to the ship's damaged bow. She had missed the convoy for which she was intended, but there would be other convoys and the little delay was well paid for by the bag of the undersea wolf. Captain Tolliver took his praise modestly.

"It's not all luck," he said. "It is a habit of the *Sadie Saxon*. If you will look up her record in the last war you will see she has done that sort of thing before."

By the time the ship was ready for sea again the hubbub had died down. Captain Tolliver took the position assigned him with entire calm and confidence. It was a big convoy and made up of three columns of ships. The *Sadie Saxon* was given the post of danger and honor as the lead ship of the right-hand column. But destroyers frolicked about ahead and on the flanks. It would be costly for any submarine to tackle that well-guarded flotilla.

For three nights they went eastward, steaming without lights and in formation. There was no alarm other than the appearance overhead one day of a trio of scout bombers marked with the black and white crosses of Germany. The anti-aircraft guns of the escorting warships kept them at too great a height to do any damage, and so drove them away. But after their appearance old Captain Tolliver knew anything might happen. The *Sadie Saxon* had behaved most peculiarly all the while they were in sight, vibrating almost as if she had dropped a screw.

"Steady, old girl," whispered the skipper into the binnacle, "you'll have to get used to those. They're an innovation."

It was the night after that that the big attack occurred. The long triple column of ships was plowing along through a dark and misty night and thirty officers on as many bridges were staring anxiously into the murk striving not to loose sight of the tiny blue stern light of the ship ahead. Under the circumstances mutual collision was much more likely than a hostile attack. The orders were strict—maintain radio silence at all costs, never show a light under any circumstances, and above all, keep station.

But the *Sadie Saxon* cared next to nothing about commodore's orders. At ten minutes past four in the morning she balked, her engines churning violently at full speed astern, to the consternation of the blank gang who had had no bells to that effect and were caught off guard. Captain Tolliver was on the bridge when it

happened and called sharply to the forward lookouts:

"Look sharply close aboard! What do you see?"

The ship was turning rapidly to starboard, her rudder jammed hard over, while the helmsman strove wildly to bring the wheel back the other way.

"The wakes of two torpedoes, sir—no, four—five—nine! Coming from starboard, sir."

The streaks of phosphorescent light were visible now from the bridge. The *Sadie Saxon* was turning straight into them; she would pass safely between a pair of them.

The aged skipper acted with an alacrity that surprised even him. He yelled for the searchlight and with his own hand pulled the whistle into a strident blast of warning. The searchlight came on and threw its beam straight ahead. There, in a line, were three gray conning towers—three submarines on the surface and in fairly close formation. The nearest destroyer saw them too and at once plunged toward them with its guns blazing. Geysers of white water shot up about the nearest one. A couple of seconds later a bright flash told of a six-inch hit squarely at the base of a conning tower. The other two subs were diving hard, but the one that was hit did not dive. Or did not dive the regular way. It rolled slowly over toward the *Sadie Saxon,* spilling frantic men from its torn superstructure, then settled to its grave.

The leading freighter of the middle column suddenly blew up with a bang, lighting up the sea like day. A moment later the second ship of the left-hand column burst into flames. At least two of the nine torpedoes fired had found a mark. But the subs that fired them had no opportunity to fire more. They had been ambushed in their own ambush, and already three destroyers were racing back and forth over the spots where they had last been seen and dropping depth-charges by the score. Similar activities were going on on the other side. Apparently there had been other subs waiting there as well.

The *Sadie Saxon* lay still where she was until the survivors of the two ships destroyed had been brought on board. Then she unaccountably turned due south and ran for an hour at full speed. There she stopped and refused to budge another yard. It was well past the dawn then and a destroyer could be seen on the horizon behind still searching for vestiges of their attackers.

"Signal that destroyer," the captain said, "and tell him to come over here. We've got one spotted."

The destroyer came up within hail, and its captain delivered a blistering message through what must have been an asbestos-lined megaphone.

"Will the second on that ship kindly relieve that blithering idiot in command and put him under arrest? The—"

"The sub's right under me," Tolliver yelled back, "playing possum a hundred feet or so down." The ship started moving ahead. "Come in and drop your eggs. Then lock me up if you want."

He turned to Parker who was in a quandary as to what to do. The performances of the ship had shaken his nerve. He had begun to wonder whether *he* was the crazy man. Tolliver ignored him. Instead he walked out to the wing of the bridge and watched the destroyer do its work.

Huge seething hummocks of water rose as the ash-cans exploded under the surface. Four of them had gone off and the destroyer was coming back for a second run across the same spot. But there was no need. A half mile away a black nose appeared for a moment on the surface, stuck its beak up into the air, then with a loud hissing of escaping air fell back weakly into the water. Where it had been were three bobbing heads. There *had* been a sub under there!

"Thanks," flashed the destroyer, "well done. Rejoin convoy."

THEY went past Gib without stopping and made the hazardous trip to Alexandria without incident other than a few sporadic and ineffectual raids by enemy aircraft. At Alexandria Captain Tolliver found this message waiting for him; it was from ONI.

"You are a better guesser than some of our experts. The three men you tipped us off to are in jail. They planned to seize the ship and divert it to a Norwegian port. Congratulations."

The skipper gave a brief snort and then crammed the message into a pocket with his one good hand. Then he learned that on the voyage home he was to carry the convoy's commodore. The "commodore," a retired Navy captain, came aboard and looked around.

He did not say much until they were out of the Mediterranean and well to the west of Portugal. By then they had been joined by many other ships and were steaming in a formation much like the one before, with the difference that this time, being flagship, they were more nearly in the middle of the flotilla.

"You seem to have a remarkable ability to spot submarines, Captain," he remarked. "What is your secret?"

"Me?" said the skipper indignantly. "Hell, I can't see a submarine in the dark or under water any farther than the next man. All the credit is due to Sadie. She *smells* 'em. She hates 'em, too."

"Yes. I know. She rammed several in the last war, didn't she? And didn't they make her into a Q-ship?"

"She did. She was. If you'll look down there on the pedestal of the binnacle stand you'll see some file marks. There are fourteen of 'em now. Each one stand for a U-boat. Or raider. I tell you, she don't like Germans. She was a German herself, you know, but they didn't treat her right. She has a grievance."

"Now, Captain," laughed the commodore, "don't you think you are carrying your little joke too far? After all . . ."

"Do you know the story of this ship?" asked Tolliver fiercely, "well, listen."

It was close to midnight then and a bright moon was shining. The silhouettes of the ships about were distinct as black masses against the glittering white-kissed sea. The two officers went on talking, but their eyes were steadfastly kept ahead. This was a night when anything might happen.

"In 1914 this ship was spanking new. She was the *Koenigen von Sachsen* or something of the sort, freshly turned out of the Vulcan Works at Stettin. The outbreak of the war caught her at Hoboken and they tied her up for the duration. But when we joined the war in '17 and took her over, her innards were something pitiful to see. Her crew had dry-fired her boilers and they were a mass of sagging tubes. The vandals cracked her cylinders with sledges, threw the valve gear and cylinder heads overboard, and messed up all the auxiliaries. They fixed the wiring so it would short the moment juice was put on it, and they took down steam leads and inserted steel blanks between the flanged joints. In other places they drove out rivets and replaced them with ones of putty. I tell you she was dynamite, even after they fixed up the boilers and main machinery.

"Naturally, having a thing like that done to you would make you sore—especially if you were young and proud and the toast of the Imperial German merchant marine. But that was not all. On her first trip across—I was mate then—a sub slammed a torp into her off the north of Ireland and it took her stern away. Luckily she didn't sink and another ship put a hawser on us and worried us into Grennock where they fixed her up. That would have been bad enough, but on the trip home she

smacks into a submarine-laid mine off the Delaware Capes and blows in her bow. We had to beach her near Cape May.

"They rebuilt her again and we set out. But her hard-luck—or mistreatment rather—wasn't at an end. In those days our Secret Service wasn't as good as it is now and a saboteur got aboard. He gummed up things pretty bad. So bad that we caught afire and almost sank in mid-ocean. It took some doggoned hard work to save that ship, but help came and we stayed afloat. Well, that was the end of her patience. She went hog-wild. After that, no matter whether she was in convoy or not, whenever anything that was German was around—sub, torpedo, raider or what not—she went after it, and never mind engine room bells or rudder. Her whimsies cost me a hand and a leg before we were through, but I didn't mind. I figured I could take it if she could.

"She broke the hearts of three captains. A lot of captains, you ought to know, object to having the ship take charge. They said she was unmanageable and chucked their jobs. That left me in command, though at the time I didn't rate the job. Knowing something of her history, I knew better than to interfere. Her hunches are the best thing I know. No matter what she does . . ."

"Hey!" yelled the commodore, thoroughly alarmed, "watch what you're doing."

The *Sadie Saxon* had sheered sharply from her course and was heading directly across the bows of a ship in the column to one side of them. It was too late then, even if the *Sadie* had been tractable, to do anything about it. A collision was inevitable. The commodore reached for the whistle pull, but Tolliver grabbed his arm and held it.

"Wait," he urged, "this means something. I know her."

An angry, guttural shout came from the bridge of the ship whose path they were about to cross. Then came the rending crash as steel bit into steel—thousands of tons of it at twelve knots speed. The other ship had rammed the *Sadie Saxon* just abreast the mainmast and she heeled over sharply, spilling deck gear over the off rail. At once pandemonium reigned in the convoy as ships behind sheered out to avoid compounding the already serious collision.

At once fresh confusion succeeded. The ship that was the victim of the *Sadie's* caprice suddenly dropped her false bulwarks and the moonlight glinted off the barrels of big guns both fore and aft. Harsh orders sounded in German and the guns began spitting fire. Shells began bursting against ships on all side as the raider that had insinuated itself into the midst of the convoy began its work. Escort ships began dashing toward the scene, worming their way through the scattering freighters so as to get to a spot where they could open fire.

"I told you," said Captain Tolliver, serenely. "You can always trust her."

BUT she was sinking, and the crew were lowering what boats they could. The commodore was one of the first to leave, since he was in charge of the entire expedition and must transfer his flag to a surviving ship. Tolliver stayed behind. There was not room enough in the boats for one thing, and his faith in the durability of the *Sadie Saxon* was unlimited. He had seen her in worse plight many times before.

The raider had succeeded in backing away, but it, too was in a perilous condition. Her bows were torn wide open and she was fast going down by the head. She continued to fire viciously at everything within reach, paying especial attention to the crippled *Sadie Saxon.* A shell struck her funnel and threw fragments and splinters onto the bridge. One fragment struck Captain Tolliver in the right thigh and he

went down with a brief curse. Another pair of projectiles burst aft among the rest of the crew who were engaged in freeing a life raft from the mainmast shrouds. It must have killed them all, for when shortly afterward a destroyer ranged alongside and hailed, there was no answering cry.

Tolliver hauled himself to the wing of the bridge and managed to cut an opening in the weather screen. He looked out just in time to see the flaming remnants of the raider sink under the moon-tipped waves. The freighters had all gone and the destroyers were charging off in a new direction. Apparently submarines, working in conjunction with the camouflaged raider, had made their appearance. Tolliver watched a moment, then was aware of a growing faintness. His leg must be bleeding more than he thought. In a moment everything turned black.

It was broad daylight when he came to again. Another peep showed him an empty ocean. The convoy must have gone on, as it was proper and correct it should. And then he heard the burr and roar of airplanes overhead. They swooped low, machine-gunning the decks systematically on the assumption men were still aboard. One, more daring than the rest, swopped in between the masts. *Sadie Saxon* was trembling in every plate and rivet.

"Steady, girl," murmured the now delirious captain, laying his cheek against the bridge deck and patting it gently with his one hand, "you can't handle those, I know. But we've done enough, you and I. We can't keep afloat forever."

Her answer was typical. He had no way of knowing how deep she was in the water, or what her trim, but she heeled violently to port—hung there a moment, then turned quietly over on her side. The instant she chose to do it was just as the daring raider plane was diving beneath her radio antennae, ready to drop its final bomb. Captain Tolliver heard its wings snap off and its body crash as the whipping, heeling mast struck it. There was a final burst of flame, and the rest was cool, green water. The old sea-dog felt the waves close over him, but he was smiling and content.

"Bless her old heart," was his last thought, "she even got one of *those.*"

Jules Is Back

ONE of the things we like about editing WEIRD TALES is the number of letters we get from our readers. Some like ghouls for breakfast, others like to go into intimate scientific discussions about the component parts of a vampire's larynx—there are all sorts of discussions and preferences they can bring up. We like them all. But over a period of years we have been conscious of the fact that one fictional name seems to crop up more often than any other in our correspondence. "Where is Jules de Grandin?" someone asks; or "What's become of that tremendous toper, de Grandin?" or "Say, why doesn't Seabury Quinn do something about Jules?" So we began to think we should do something about it; Quinn seemed a good place to start. One day he dropped in when he was in New York from Washington, and we inquired about a de Grandin story. Quinn thought it might be a good idea, but in the meantime what did we think about this and that other idea for a story? We thought it was fine; and said so. That left de Grandin where the old boy was, until one day *Stoneman's Memorial* arrived in the mail. In Quinn's introduction to the tale itself he tells something of the cause of its being so long in arriving, and further remarks, "As to the background of the plot, I really don't know whether . . .

. . . I should make a deeper bow to Lord Dunsany for his walking idol in *A Night at an Inn*, or to Wolfgang Mozart for the walking statue of the Commandant in his opera *Don Giovanni*. In any event, this moving statue business ain't entirely new—but the way that I've presented it is brand-new, I'll be bound, and, incidentally, all the people in this story are three-dimensional characters, not just marionettes that go through their paces when the author pulls the strings—which strings are entirely apparent to the audience.

Hope you all like the story!

Incidentally, we think Quinn is a three-dimensional fellow himself, he can turn himself to so many types of story. Now you letter-writers let us know which you prefer.

Weird Goings-on at Windy Knoll

When she sent us *The Deadly Theory*, in this issue, Greye La Spina wrote from Quakertown, Pa.:

The Deadly Theory is a story done in Frank Stockton's *The Lady or the Tiger style*. It is based on the recital by Paracelus of revivifying a living thing from its ashes, *a la* the well-known Phoenix, or the rose brought to life for Queen Christina of Sweden. I do hope you'll enjoy it.

Speaking of *The Rat Master*, in a recent issue, we have some unusually mysterious mice at Windy Knoll. At least, if the odd things that have recently happened aren't due to mice, then there really is a Spook living in my old Pennsylvania Dutch farmhouse! One of these tricks raised havoc in a big soap company when I wrote them about what I'd found in a perfectly sound box of flakes; they had the articles sent to their laboratory and found them to be popcorn kernels. I couldn't account for it myself until last night, when I found—another mysterious cache of yet another nature. I'm still amazed. If anyone else told me these things, frankly, I wouldn't believe them. However, they *did* happen, so I'm *trying* to believe them.

Flesh Crawling

From Columbia, Tennessee, Frances M. Stephenson writes us:

In your January number Elizabeth Counselman's *Parasite Mansion* is marvelous. She's got an entirely new idea, to me. And the way she can make you feel that you are right there in that weird old house. That girl surely can make your flesh crawl! Let's have more stories from her.

You publish things by and about H. P. Lovecraft as if he were dead, and you had dug up the stories by some hook or crook. Is this just a trick to intrigue the reader, or is it just that way? Please print the facts for me. I think his stuff is too involved, but, if you have the courage to wade through it, the story turns out to be something!

H. P. Lovecraft died in 1937. And those of his stories which we ran in recent issues—stories which had never before seen magazine publication—were dug up only after tireless research and the piecing together of old manuscripts.

Grateful to Gruber

From Jamaica, N. Y., Miss Neith Ahmes writes:

Eo-selam 'aley huna!

I have read about "ancient evil of Egypt," until I could stomach it no more. This phrase seems to be a favorite of your authors, with the exception of Mr. Frank Gruber to whom I bow in deepest gratitude for his story *The Book of the Dead* in the November issue. Egypt was not wholly evil, and any evil it did have cannot be compared with that of today.

All of the great leaders, learned from Egypt and wove her wisdom into their own teachings. All faiths are based upon one thing, Truth! And those who are long in spirit know of only two classes. There are no pagans and churchgoers, only wise men and fools.

General Criticism

From Los Angeles, Calif., R. A. Hoffman writes:

The best story by far in the March, 1942, issue of WT is Frank Owen's *The March of the Trees.* Next is Coblentz' *The Treasure of Red Ash Desert,* and the Lovecraft series is third. Derleth's short story is well written. *Child's Play* is

fairly good. I had remembered Greye La Spina from days of yore, so to speak, but I must say that her *The Rat Master* is pretty tripey.

The Bok illustration for the Bloch tale is very attention getting. And I am glad to note that Clark Ashton Smith is to be represented soon in WT. I always look forward to his stories.

?

Alexander D. Mebane writes:

Can you tell me where I can find a library or some such place owning a complete file of WEIRD TALES? I want to set out seriously buying all the good numbers, but am unable to find out, except by hearsay, which *are* the good numbers.

Mr. Mebane didn't give any address in his letter. But if anyone who can answer his question would care to write to him in our care—and if Mr. Mebane will let us have his address—we'll be glad to forward the letter on to him.

Till the Fires of Hell Stop Boiling!

From San Francisco Bill Watson writes:

My, oh my, such a gruesome story, *Tibetan Vengeance,* but most enjoyable—to a certain extent.

Satan in a tuxedo! What a novel way of putting it. This fellow Bloch certainly has a wide range of knowledge pertaining to necromancy—especially when it comes to conjuring up daemons; and Lucifer himself. I'd like very much to make his acquaintance, Bloch's I mean.

Jameson greets us with the bi-monthly laugh riot. Some sense of humor, ye Gods!

And once more, Lovecraft is seen among the narratives in WEIRD TALES. Good. VERY GOOD.

The Rat Master, quite a nice little tale. But say, in that illustration; either that's an awfully big skull or those so-called rats are mice, small ones.

Alice Schnirring's bit had a lot to do with the mag. A totally new plot—for me anyway. Good handling too.

Keller's short was rotten, like apples.

The fellow that illustrated "*Here Daemos!*" and *Herbert West* is new, isn't he? Quite a surrealist artist.

Ah! that cover—deeevine. All the pics were good.

Yours, till the fires of Hell stop boiling!

Washington Get-together

In spite of my two unsuccessful attempts to conjure up the devil, I am still interested enough to try to form a sort of get-together club here in Washington of people whose interests lie in the same direction.

Don Reines
1710 F St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Chicago Chapter

We are organizing a Chicago and Suburban Chapter of the Weird Tales Club at my home, 434 Surf St., Chicago, Ill., and we are anxious to contact others in the locale. Here is a sample schedule of organization.

1. Much of the business of the club will be settled by letter vote. Meetings will start at 8 P. M. promptly. Day to be determined by letter vote.

Anyone interested please write,
Edmund Abelson
434 Surf St., Chicago, Ill.

From the Haunts of Dracula

About a year ago a letter of mine (much to

my surprise) appeared in your, or rather my, beloved WEIRD TALES.

My fame is still growing as witness the enclosed letter, and I think the WEIRD TALES CLUB should hear about it. It isn't every day one gets a letter from the haunts of Dracula, and it only goes to show how WEIRD TALES does get around. . . . !

But getting serious, I am sending the letter in the hope that perhaps some of our members will write to this boy.

Hoping to see the soldier's letter in print, I will cut mine short and only add congratulations for the really best weird magazine on the market, I am club member,

Anne Miller

1217 Eckert Road, Monaca, Penn.

And here is the letter—all the way from a war prisoner in vampire-haunted Bavaria:

Dear Anne:

I saw your name in the January issue of WEIRD TALES magazine and so I am taking a chance and writing to you in hope of receiving a reply. Perhaps you might like to know something about me. English of course, age 22, 5 feet, 8 inches tall. I live (when at home) at Torquay in Devon, 30 miles from Plymouth. Although a prisoner of war I can't help admiring the mountains and castle in which we live in Southern Bavaria near the Tyrol. One hears so many "weird tales" about these old castles and it is easy for one to imagine Boris Karloff running mad around the ramparts with a lank candle in one hand, a knife in the other chasing the heroine!

But could you imagine what happens here now? Some of the things are quite funny, I might tell you some time if we get acquainted!

Well, Anne, I must say cheerio because I'm stumped for once at writing to someone I don't know. Please reply! And if you have any back numbers of WEIRD TALES or any other books remember the boys over here.

So long once again,

Albert Robert Barber

Gefangenennummer 77,298,
Lager-Bezeichnung Otlag VII D, Germany.

New Year Resolution

My first New Year's Resolution was to enroll in your club and read each and every issue of the WEIRD TALES magazine.

I am 23 years of age, and being a nurse and doctor's secretary, I lead a very interesting and adventurous life.

Hoping to hear from you all real soon, I remain, yours for ghostlier and WEIRD TALES.

Eleanor Marie Loschy

208 N. Kenilworth Ave., Oak Park, Ill.

Seventh Son of Seventh Son

Ever since I can remember I have been interested in the occult, and all things supernatural. Being the seventh son of a seventh son, I have been gifted with a seventh sense. Times out of number a mysterious voice which seems to come out of the air has guided me. On one occasion I happened to be in an area in which a tribal fight between two factions was taking place. A group of bloodthirsty savages who had just indulged in an orgy of killings advanced towards me. I was fear-stricken and did not know what to do, when suddenly close to my ear I heard a calm and sweet voice telling me to stand quite still and not be afraid. I recognized the voice, and knew that I would be protected. I therefore stood still. The savages came to within a hundred yards of me, and then to my surprise uttered yells, turned 'round, and fled. I thereupon sped as fast as I could to the safety of my homestead. Some months later when calm had settled in the district the local witch doctor called on me. He informed me that one of the persons who had wanted to kill me that memorable night had told him that he had seen an angelic form standing beside me, and that was the reason the group had become frightened, turned tail, and fled.

During my stay in these countries, and whilst studying, I have learned how to make charms and amulets. You may possibly dismiss the idea that charms and amulets can possibly bring good or evil, as the case may be, to their possessors, but in this you will be entirely wrong. I am prepared to show the power of my charms to you or other members of the Weird Club.

I am prepared to answer all correspondence and questions in connection with occult matters.

Yours sincerely,

Devanand. S.

12 William St., Pietermaritzburg,
Natal, South Africa.

Correction!

In January, 1942, issue WEIRD TALES, page 128: New Members Section (Continued) see John M. Cunningham, 25 Dochfour Drive, Inverness, Scotland:

Please: Correction. It's Edwin MacDonald, 25 Dochfour Drive, Inverness, Scotland. (Lest some of my many friends think I have moved to Scotland—or vise versa.) Thanking you for this correction.

John Meyer Cunningham

2050 Gilbert St., Beaumont, Texas.

P. S. That last issue of WT was superb.

NEW MEMBERS

Antonio De Zarrage, 1884 Belmont Ave., Bronx, N. Y.
Don Lyon, 1306 D Hyatta Ave., Wilmington, Calif.
Margaret Chace, 733 South St., Southbridge, Mass.
Maurice Yates, 8250 Fountain Ave., Hollywood, Calif.
Bill Baxter, 404-141st St., Bronx, N. Y.
Henry T. Hall, State Sanitorium, Rutland, Mass.
Bill Watson, 1239 California St., San Francisco, Calif.
Mary Visconti, 44½ Weldman St., Danbury, Conn.
Neith Ahmes, 106-32 Pinegrove St., Jamaica, N. Y.
Tom Walker, 1044 Manship St., Jackson, Miss.
Leslie A. Carr, 274 Main St., Johnson City, N. Y.
Glen Knopf, 2809 South 7th St., Tacoma, Wash.
John L. Gergen, 221 Melbourne Ave. S. E., Minneapolis, Minn.
Pvt. Angelo P. Navagato, 302nd C. A. Bln. Bar. Bn., Battery B, Camp Davis, N. C.
Frank McCourt, 516 West 140th St., N. Y. City.
Edmund Abelson, 434 Suffix St., Chicago, Ill.
S. Devanand, 2 William St., Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa.
Don Reines, 1710 F St. N. W., Washington, D. C.
Eleonore Marie Loschy, 208 N. Kenilworth Ave., Oak Park, Ill.
Ralph Rayburn Phillips, 1507 S. W. 12th Ave., Portland, Oregon.
Mrs. Jessie W. Sampson, 1450 Lafayette Ave., Terre Haute, Ind.
Gala Gutbezahl, 38 Beverly Road, Kensington, Great Neck, L. I., N. Y.
Howard Stone, 16 Prescott St., Meriden, Conn.
Alton Boone, No. 5, Kershaw, S. C. (c/o Haile Gold Mines, Inc.)
Robert Miller, 225 N. Partridge St., Lebanon, Pa.
Guy LaTourette, 410 West 24th St., N. Y. City.
John Kenney, 6320 Kenmore Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Mrs. Margaretta Zuemer, 3230 Richardson Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa.
Ursey Lee Tubbs, 10815 South Figueroa St., Los Angeles, Calif.
Regis Traynor, 407 N. Evaline St., E. E. Pittsburgh, Pa.
Paul Cox, 3401-6th Ave., Columbus, Ga.
Seymour Kaimowitz, 88-10 Parsons Blvd., Jamaica, N. Y.
Prof. R. C. Boettcher, Rosehill Sanctuary, Baldwin Co., Robertsdale, Ala.
Guy Fusco, 143 Union Ave., West Haven, Conn.
Robert Kendrick, 2111 E. 35th St., Kansas City, Mo.
Claire Beck, Co. D, 15th Inf., Fort Lewis, Wash.
Mary June Klein, 211 West 108th St., New York, N. Y.
William Bueford Richards, Lawndale, N. C.
Robert C. Elkins, 907 Brickell Ave., Miami, Fla.
Owen Lawson, 5611 Indiana Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Murle Mattern, 215 N. Cottonwood, Owallala, Neb.
John W. Rouse, 1321 N. Logan Ave., Danville, Ill.
Robert F. Turner, 111 Marie St., Houston, Texas.
Jack Snyder, 1346 N. Citrus Ave., Hollywood, Calif.
Pvt. George N. Raybin, Co. C1., 1222 R. C., Camp Upton, L. I., N. Y.
Michael Deintraub, 1803 S. Drake Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Olivia Freeman, P. O. Box 374, Granbury, Texas.
Joseph Pheiffer, 837 Agatite Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Donald S. Flynn, Mooresville, Mo.
Gerald Patterson, 146 Eighth St., Elko, Nev.
Kit Gelersbach, Box 105, Forest Park, Ill.
Ernest Dukes, 3509 6th Ave., Columbus, Ga.
Molly C. Rodman, 2425 Riverside Pl., Los Angeles, Calif.
Mick Lindstrom, 139 Normal St., Chico, Calif.
Ken Cooper, 139 Normal St., Chico, Calif.
Poppa Young, 139 Normal St., Chico, Calif.
Ruth Rowland, 139 Normal St., Chico, Calif.
Dumdum Merlo, 139 Normal St., Chico, Calif.
Ruth Wheeler, 139 Normal St., Chico, Calif.

We're sorry that lack of space prevents the inclusion of the names of all New Members. The rest will appear next time.

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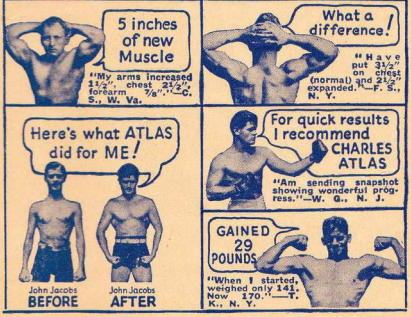

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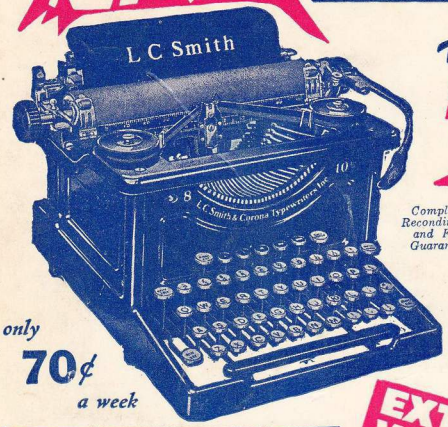

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