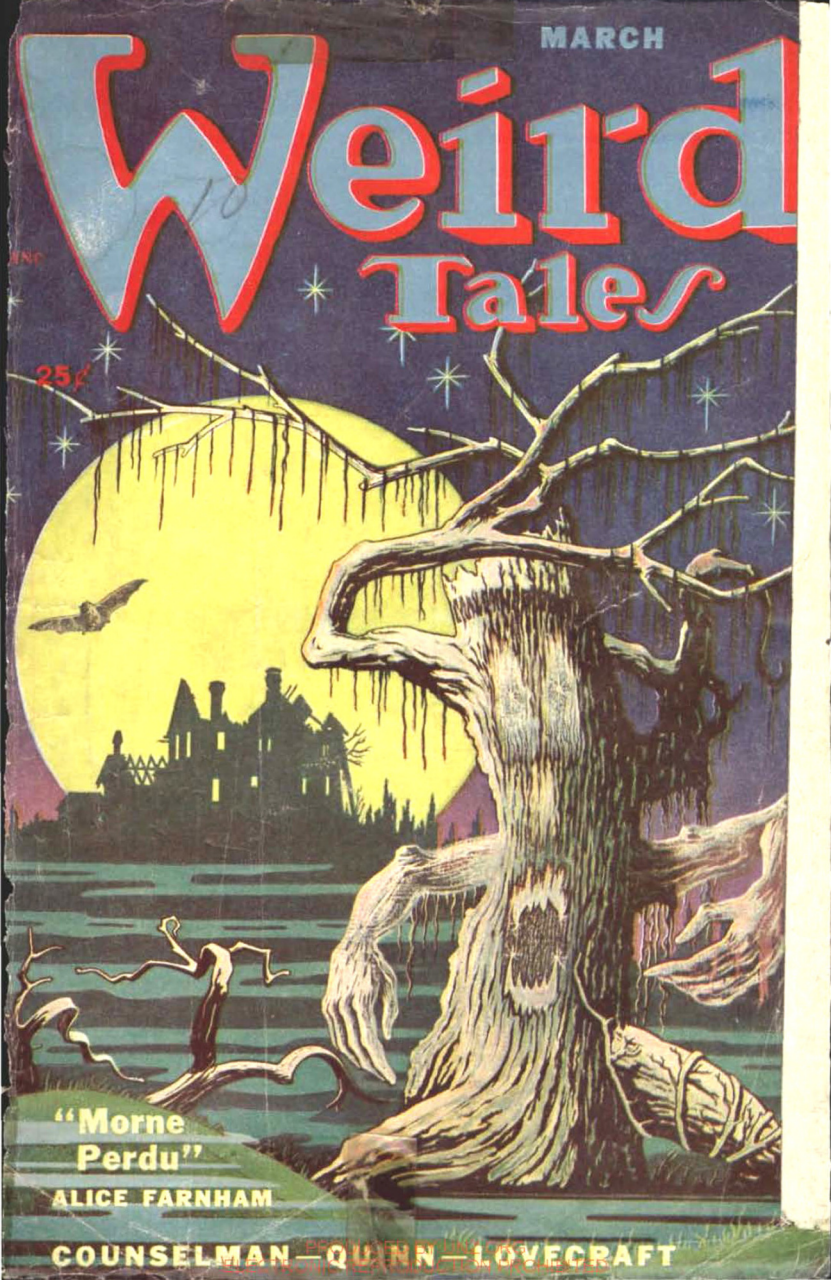
MARCH
Weird Tales
25¢
"Morne Perdu"
ALICE FARNHAM
COUNSELMAN—QUINN—LOVECRAFT

START A Fine Business in Spare Time!

RUN THE BEST "SHOE STORE BUSINESS" IN YOUR TOWN!

FREE! SELLING OUTFIT

YOU DON'T INVEST A CENT! EVERYTHING FURNISHED FREE!

I put a "Shoe Store Business" right in your hands . . . you don't invest a cent . . . make big profits . . . no rent or store overhead . . . exclusive sales features build your business.

You can have a profitable "Shoe Store" right in your hands. *You just make money!* You're independent, in a business with a never-ending demand, because EVERYBODY WEARS SHOES.

Put a "Shoe Store Business" Right in Your Hands . . . You Don't Invest a Cent . . . Make Bigger Profits . . . No Store Overhead . . . Exclusive Sales Features Build Your Repeat Business

Just rush coupon—I'll send you my Starting shoe outfit right away. ABSOLUTELY FREE. Valuable actual samples, and demonstrators of calf skin leather, kangaroo, kid, horsehide and elk-tanned leather furnished free of a penny's cost to qualified men.

My Professional Selling Outfit contains cut-away demonstrator so your customers can *feel* the restful Velvet-eez Air Cushion innersole. Special accurate measuring device—National Advertising reprints—door opener kits—the actual shoes—Everything you need to build a profitable repeat business. Here's your chance! Join me and get into the BIG MONEY!

MORE PROFITS SELLING LEATHER JACKETS

Add more profits selling top quality horsehide, capeskin, suede, nylon, gabardine, and other popular leather jackets. Also raincoats. EVERY OUTDOOR MAN A PROSPECT FOR THESE STURDY, HANDSOME GARMENTS, STYLED AND TAILORED BY EXPERTS.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING SEAL

The Good Housekeeping Magazine Guarantee Seal on Velvet-eez shoes opens doors for you and clinches sales.

TAKE ORDERS DIRECT FROM FACTORY

You sell features that no other shoe man or store can offer the folks in your territory. The Velvet-eez demonstrator you'll get free in your professional Sales Outfit will make easy sales for you, even in your spare time, as it has for hundreds of other Mason Shoe Men.

OVER 150 FAST-SELLING STYLES FOR MEN AND WOMEN

Sell amazing Velvet-eez air cushion innersole shoes with steel box toes—horsehide shoes, elk-tanned leather shoes, kid shoes, kangaroo leather shoes, slip-resistant Gro-Cork soles, oil-resistant Neoprene soles—every good type of dress, service and sport footwear—at money-saving direct-from-factory prices. Exclusive comfort features that cannot be found in retail stores.

Also special steel shanks and sturdy built-in comfort arches. Be the Mason Shoe Counselor in your area and make lots of EXTRA cash every week! You're way ahead of competition—you draw on our factory stock of over 150,000 pairs plus huge daily factory production—each customer gets EXACT fit in the style he or she wants. Special features make it extra easy to sell gas station men, factory workers, waiters, etc.

HUGE NATIONAL ADVERTISING PROGRAM

YOU are played up in big, powerful ads in National magazines. People are eager to get your special Personal Fitting Service. Rush the coupon QUICK.

MASON SHOE MFG. CO.

Dept. M-894, Chippewa Falls, Wisc.

DON'T DELAY

RUSH THE COUPON NOW!

MASON SHOE MFG. CO.
Dept. M-894
Chippewa Falls, Wisc.

Set me up right away for BIG PROFITS! Rush me your FREE Starting Selling Outfit featuring Air Cushion shoes, leather jackets, other fast sellers. Send everything free and postpaid.

Name .....

Address .....

Town ..... State .....


BILL STOPPED THE WILD BOAR'S CHARGE AND THEN...
E-E-E-K!
WILD TURKEY HUNTING IN A SOUTHERN NATIONAL FOREST CAN HARDLY BE CLASSED AS A DANGEROUS SPORT, BUT WHEN A WOUNDED WILD BOAR INTRUDES...
BANG! BANG!
NAILED HIM, EH? WHAT THE...!
I FIGURED HE'D HEAD FOR THE CLEARING. SO, I TOOK A SHORT-CUT AND...
GOT HERE JUST IN TIME TO SAVE MY LIFE!
WHEN WE BORROWED JEB'S CAR, WE SHOULDA TAKEN HIS TRAILER, TOO
WHY THAT'S JEB SCOTT'S CAR! THEN YOU MUST BE HIS HOUSE GUEST!
THAT'S ME, ALL RIGHT!
WELL, JUNE, IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU TWO COULDN'T WAIT TO MEET FORMALLY. I WAS GOING TO BRING BILL OVER THIS EVENING
UNCLE JEB, YOU'RE A PEACH
SHE'S LOVELY
LATER
BLADES, YOU BET! TRY THIS THIN GILLETTE
WHERE HAS THIS BLADE BEEN ALL MY LIFE! THAT'S THE SLICKEST SHAVE I'VE HAD IN YEARS!
THIN GILLETTES ARE MIGHTY POPULAR DOWN HERE. THEY'RE PLENTY KEEN
HE'S A FINE YOUNG MAN. EXCELLENT APPEARANCE AND VERY INTELLIGENT
I KNEW YOU'D LIKE HIM, COLONEL. I'VE APPROACHED HIM REGARDING A JUNIOR PARTNERSHIP
YOU ENJOY SWELL, EASY SHAVES... QUICK AND CLEAN... WITH THIN GILLETTES. THEY ARE THE KEENEST BLADES IN THE LOW-PRICE FIELD AND FAR OUTLAST ALL OTHERS. MADE TO FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR PRECISELY, THIN GILLETTES CANNOT SCRAPE OR IRRITATE YOUR FACE. ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES IN THE CONVENIENT 10-BLADE PACKAGE
THIN Gillette
10-25¢
4-10
TEN-BLADE PACKAGE HAS COMPARTMENT FOR USED BLADES

MARCH, 1952 Cover by Joseph Eberle

NOVELETTES

SHORT STORIES

VERSE

Published bi-monthly by WEIRD TALES, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 26, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, $1.50. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

175
Vol. 44, No. 3

D. McILWRAITH, *Editor*

There's happy news for you in the crying need for

Machine-Shop Workers!

WANTED: machinists, tool and die makers, machine-tool operators! You've seen the ads. You know the need—and the opportunities. Fat pay. Fast promotions. Essential work.

That's good news for you because, with proper training, you can qualify yourself for one of those jobs. How? I. C. S. can show you, just as it has shown thousands of men who today are foremen, supervisors and superintendents. Many had no experience, no high school education. But they studied easy-to-follow I. C. S. courses, applied what they learned and began to climb. Today they're on top and they credit I. C. S. for their success.

If they could do it, you can do it! The opportunity is there. And it's greater than ever. The courses are authoritative and up to date. You have spare time for study, but no time to spare in getting started. Better mail the coupon right now!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

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BOX 3277-G, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me full particulars about the course BEFORE which I have marked X:

☐ Machine Shop

Business and Academic Courses
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☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Business Administration
☐ Bus. Correspondence ☐ Bus. Law
☐ Certified Public Accounting
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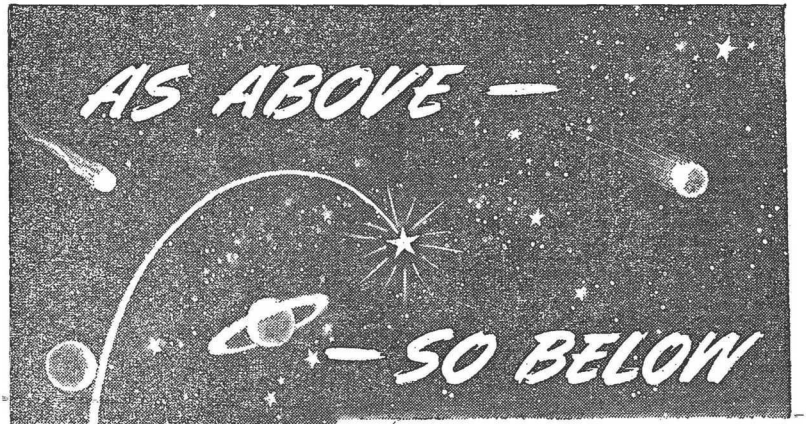
City_____ State_____ Working Hours_____ A.M. to_____ P.M.

Present Position_____ Employed by_____

Length of Service in World War II_____

Enrollment under G.I. Bill approved for World War II Veterans. Special tuition rates to members of the Armed Forces.
Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.



IS MAN A SMALL UNIVERSE?

IT HAS BEEN SAID that everything in the universe has its counterpart in man. What of your solar plexus? Does it link you with the world beyond . . . the vast cosmos of which earth is but a speck? Centuries ago, man observed that something in the center of his torso responded to his emotional excitements — joy, fear, elation, fright, sudden experiences. In seeking an explanation, there followed many more *amazing* discoveries. What did these ancient searchers for truth uncover? Did they learn how to draw energy to their emotional centers — for performing miracles and accomplishing feats that seemed impossible to the uninitiated?

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Are you perfectly satisfied with your position in life? Are you enjoying life to its fullest extent? — truly abundantly? If obstacles seem to prevent you from attaining the heights and enjoying the better things in life, you are not using the powers that reside *within you.*

ACCEPT THIS *FREE* BOOK

Let the Rosicrucians (NOT a religious organization), a progressive, practical brotherhood, explain to you the simple, *demonstrable* laws governing your inner powers. Write for your FREE copy of, *The Mastery of Life,* which tells how easily you can come to possess tested methods for understanding the powers of personal accomplishment. Send coupon today!

Scribe C. S. X.
The Rosicrucians (AMORC)
San Jose, California

I am a sincere seeker. Please send me a copy of *The Mastery of Life,* which I shall read carefully.

Name_____

Address_____

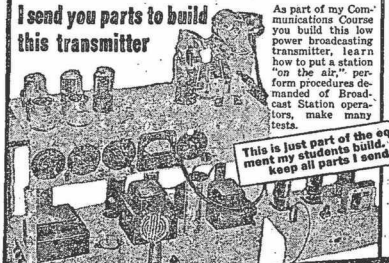
Zone Number_____ State_____

The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC) San Jose, California

You Practice COMMUNICATIONS

I send you parts to build this transmitter

As part of my Communications Course you build this low power broadcasting transmitter, learn how to put a station "on the air," perform procedures demanded of Broadcast Station operators, make many tests.

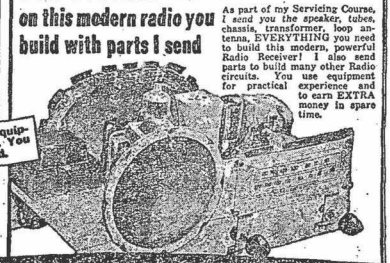


This is just part of the equipment my students build. You keep all parts I send.

You Practice Radio SERVICING

on this modern radio you build with parts I send

As part of my Servicing Course, *I send you the speaker, tubes,* chassis, transformer, loop antenna, EVERYTHING you need to build this modern, powerful Radio Receiver! I also send parts to build many other Radio circuits. You use equipment for practical experience and to earn EXTRA money in spare time.



BE A RADIO-TELEVISION TECHNICIAN

NOW! Advanced Television Practice

New, special TV kits furnished to build high-definition SCOPE . . . RF OSCILLATOR with flyback power supply . . . complete TV set . . . many other units. You see pulse, trapezoidal, saw-tooth wave forms. Get valuable PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE locating and correcting TV troubles. Mail coupon for facts, pictures and prices!

Learn Servicing or Communications Practice at Home in Spare Time

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute

Do you want good pay, a job with a bright future and security? *Would you like to have a profitable shop or* store of your own? If so, find out how you can realize your ambition in the fast growing, prosperous RADIO-TELEVISION industry. Even without Television, the industry is bigger than ever before. 90 million home and auto Radios, 3100 Broadcasting Stations, expanding use of Aviation and Police Radio, Micro-wave Relay, Two-way Radio for buses, taxis, etc., are making opportunities for Servicing and Communications Technicians and FCC-Licensed Operators.

Television is TODAY'S Good Job Maker

In 1950, over 5,000,000 TV sets sold. By 1954, 25,000,000 TV sets estimated. Over 100 TV Stations now operating. Authorities predict 1,000 TV Stations. This means more jobs, good pay for qualified men all over the United States and Canada.

Many Make $10 Extra a Week in Spare Time

Keep your job while training. Hundreds of successful RADIO-TELEVISION TECHNICIANS I trained had no previous experience, some only a grammar school education. Learn Radio-Television principles from illustrated lessons. Get PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE—build valuable multi-tester—experiment with circuits common to Radio and Television. Keep all equipment. Many students make $5, $10 extra a week fixing neighbors' Radios in spare time. SPECIAL BOOKLETS start teaching you the day you enroll.

Send Now For 2 Books FREE—Mail Coupon

Send now for my FREE DOUBLE OFFER. You get actual Servicing lesson to show you how you learn at home. Also my 64-page book, "How to Be a Success in Radio-Television." Read what my graduates are doing, earning; see equipment you practice with at home. Send coupon in envelope or paste on postal. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 2BR1, National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C. Our 38th Year.

I TRAINED THESE MEN

"I have been operating my own Servicing business. In two years I did $14,000 worth of business; net profit $6,850. Have one full time employee, an NRI student."—PHILLIP G. BROGAN, Louisville, Ky.

"Four years ago, I was a bookkeeper, with a hand-to-mouth salary. Now I am a Radio Engineer with a key station of the American Broadcasting Company network."—NORMAN H. WARD, Ridgefield Park, New Jersey.

"When halfway through the NRI course, I made $6 to $8 a week fixing sets in my spare time. Am now selling and installing Television sets and Antennas."—E. J. STREITENBERGER, New Boston, O.

"My first job was operator with KDLR, obtained for me by your Graduate Service Dept. I am now Chief Engineer of Police Radio Station WQOX. I never hesitate to endorse NRI."—T. S. NORTON, Hamilton, Ohio.

EXTRA PAY IN ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE

Knowing Radio, TV, Electronics can help you get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duty at pay up to several times a private's base pay. You are also prepared for good Radio-TV jobs upon leaving service. Mail Coupon TODAY.

Have Your Own Business

Many N.R.I. trained men start their own Radio-Television sales and service business without capital. Let me show you how you, too, can be your own boss, have a good income from your own shop. Send coupon for FREE book now!

Tested Way to Better Pay

Good for Both—FREE

The ABC's of SERVICING

How to Be a Success in RADIO-TELEVISION

MR. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 2BR1,
National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C.

Mail me Sample Lesson and 64-page Book about How to Win Success in Radio-Television. Both FREE. (No Salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

Name..... Age.....

Address.....

City..... Zone..... State.....

Approved for training under G. I. Bill

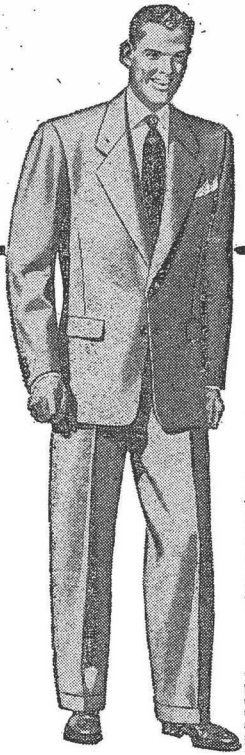
The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

Here is a letter that I actually intended writing just thirty-three years ago, when I first read my first WEIRD TALES. *To think now is really the first time I have taken time to write your column, and I must confess I am ashamed of myself for not having written sooner to explain how wonderful I think your magazine is—the most outstanding one on the stands today. I always have thought so and I always will, even though I am not just writing you to tell you this; my main reason for writing being that I agree with the readers who tell you please not to fill your magazine with S-F stories. They are all right, but you can always find two or three magazines with S-F stories, whereas there is no other magazine like yours. So please don't spoil* WEIRD TALES *after all these years for your old readers like me; I am ready to walk five miles to town for a copy. In fact, as it is I live in a suburb of Pittsburgh, and I actually ride five miles for my bi-monthly* WEIRD. *And my husband is as much of a fan as I am, plus my family and in-laws. So keep up the good work. I can hardly wait for the issues to come out. I wish yours was a weekly magazine instead of a bi-monthly one.*

Mrs. Edna A. Smith,
Pittsburgh 18, *Pa.*

We very much liked Mrs. Smith's enthusiasm, but the first sentence of her letter started us doing some calculating. The first issue of WEIRD TALES, so our files show, appeared in 1923. Maybe the issues Mrs. Smith read thirty-three years ago were

I need 500 Men to wear SAMPLE SUITS!



PAY NO MONEY—SEND NO MONEY!

My values in made-to-measure suits are so sensational, thousands of men order when they see the actual garments. I make it easy for you to get your own suit to wear and show—and to MAKE MONEY IN FULL OR SPARE TIME! MY PLAN IS AMAZING! Just take a few orders at my low money-saving prices—that's all! Get your own personal suit, and make money fast taking orders. You need no experience. You need no money now or any time. Just rush your name and address for complete facts and BIG SAMPLE KIT containing more than 100 actual woolen samples. It's FREE! Get into the big-pay tailoring field and earn up to $15.00 in a day! Many men are earning even more! You can begin at once in spare time to take orders and pocket big profits. All you do is show the big, colorful different styles. Men order quickly because you offer fine quality at unbeatable prices. Yes—superb made-to-measure cutting and sewing—and complete satisfaction guaranteed. It's easy to get first orders, but repeat orders come even easier. With my big, complete line you begin earning big money at once and you build a steady, big-profit repeat business at the same time.

No Experience—No Money Needed
EVERYTHING SUPPLIED FREE!

You need no money—no experience—no special training. Your friends, neighbors, relatives, fellow-workers, will be eager to give you orders once you show them the outstanding quality of the fabrics, the top notch fit of made-to-measure tailoring and the money-saving low prices. Every customer is a source of additional prospects. In no time at all, you'll find the orders rolling in faster and faster. And every order puts a handsome, spot-cash profit in your pocket! Mail the coupon for your big FREE OUTFIT of styles and samples NOW!

STONEFIELD CORPORATION, Dept. C-796
523 S. Throop St., Chicago 7, Ill.

Mail Coupon for FREE OUTFIT!

We supply everything—sample fabrics, full-color style cards, order forms, measuring materials—all packed in a handsome, professional leatherette-covered carrying case. Work full time or spare time. Either way you'll be amazed at how fast you take orders and how your profits begin to mount! Fill out and mail coupon today.

Send No Money—Mail Today—No Obligation

Stonefield Corporation, Dept. C-796
523 S. Throop St., Chicago 7, Ill.

Dear Sir: I WANT A SAMPLE SUIT TO WEAR AND SHOW, without paying 1c for it. Rush Valuable Suit Coupon and Sample Kit of actual fabrics. ABSOLUTELY FREE.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State.....

ghostly foretastes of the future or some such phenomenon; we'd very much like to know what they contained.—Editor, WEIRD TALES.

We were particularly pleased that Mr. Joseph Eberle found time to do the beautiful illustration on page 33 for Clark Ashton Smith's poem "O, Golden-Tongued Romance." We always knew Eberle was not only a beautiful illustrator, but a very careful one. This was borne out by the following interesting letter which came with the picture:

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

After much deliberation and a bit of reference I decided that the enclosed illustration is descriptive of the poem "O, Golden Tongued Romance" by Clark Ashton Smith.

I chose to pick the articles that are, I found, to be very prominent in an Egyptian tomb: This, I thought, would do the job much more thoroughly than a group of small illustrations.

As far back as the Old Kingdom the viscera were interred in four vases (Canopic jars). These were under the protection of four divinities (two at the top of the illustration and two at the left bottom), who were responsible for guarding the deceased against hunger and thirst.

These canopic jars contain the heart and other organs of the deceased embalmed in spices. Myrrh is one of the ingredients that was used. It is indicated by the fragrance rising from the canopic jar. The man-headed jar holds the stomach, the dog-headed jar the small intestines, the lungs and heart being placed in the jackal-headed one, while the hawk-headed jar contains the liver which is the one which I have illustrated.

The Egyptian mask was buried with the mummy most extensively.

The lettering at the top of the illustration closely resembles Coptic, which was written in the Greek alphabet plus seven characters adapted from the Egyptian script. It came into use after Christianity had spread into Egypt to replace the ancient religion of the land. In fact, as the old religion gave way to the new, the knowledge of the Heiroglyphic writing, which during the Greco-Roman period had been largely confined to the native priesthood, was gradually forgotten. It was used until approximately 641 A. D. My reference may be found in the following books, "When Egypt Ruled the East," by George Steindorff and Keith C. Seele; "Wonders of the Past," by Hammerton; "History of Egypt," by Breasted.

Joseph R. Eberle, Jr.,
Aliquippa, Pa.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

In a recent issue of WEIRD TALES *you published a novelette by August Derleth, "The Keeper of the Key." May I say I thought it was wonderful, but about it—*

There was reference in the story to a certain morbid volume called the "Necronomicon" by some kind of crazy Arab. I have read about this volume in other fantasy stories, and curiosity has possessed me. Was there such a thing as the cult of Cthulhu and the Necronomicon? If so, could you please give me some information about them?

Robert Paulive,
New York, N. Y.

This letter interested us very much; a new generation is growing up and enjoying WEIRD TALES (all except the "corny vampire stories," Robert added) that doesn't know of the Lovecraft legend. Our first reaction was to answer Robert's letter through the mails, and then it occurred to us what a splendid opportunity it offered for WEIRD TALES' readers, both old and young, to tell Robert about H. P. Lovecraft, about the Cthulhu cult and the whole fantastic story of fantasy that took on the semblance of reality. Won't you please write it for us? We'll print the letters in the Eyrie, and not only Robert who wrote us the inquiry, but other young readers will find in them much of interest and fascination.—The Editor, WEIRD TALES.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I'm not sure whether I shall be welcomed to the Eyrie or not. For I have always

(Continued on page 95)

6 MAGIC WORDS GIVE YOU DAILY CASH

KENDEX NYLONS ARE FREE UNLESS SATISFACTORY!

Amazing, but true! The most sensational offer ever made! Can you imagine how much *money you could make writing orders for wonderful nylons that actually cost nothing* unless satisfactory? Is there any woman who would hesitate to wear beautiful nylons at OUR risk? Nothing like this has ever been heard of in the hosiery industry. Never before was it possible for any man or woman, young or old, to earn a steady income so easily!

The leading Kendex full fashioned, sheer de luxe first quality nylons have just been reduced to only $.98 a pair INCLUDING your commission, bonus and even postage. This stocking is so finely made—gives so much wear, that KENDEX will refund the full $.98 purchase price if the hose do not give satisfactory wear within a period of ONE AND A HALF MONTHS! If the hose runs, snags or shows undue wear, the hose will cost the customer nothing!

We don't care if you are 18 or 80—whether you have one hour or 50 hours a week to spare. How can you help make a lot of money? Women buy two million pairs of nylons every day. Just say "Kendex nylons are FREE unless satisfactory" and practically every woman will be eager to give you an order.

There is nothing for you to buy or deliver. You don't risk a dime. Pay nothing now or later. Just mail the coupon, that's all. We'll send you FREE SAMPLE STOCKING and complete money-making outfit postage prepaid. You write orders. We deliver and collect. Advance cash plus huge cash bonus that increases your earnings by 40%. No obligation. If you don't make more money than you thought possible, throw the outfit away! Need we say more?

KENDEX
CORPORATION
BABYLON 79, N. Y.

FREE SAMPLE STOCKING

Date.....

Kendex Corporation
Babylon 79, N. Y.

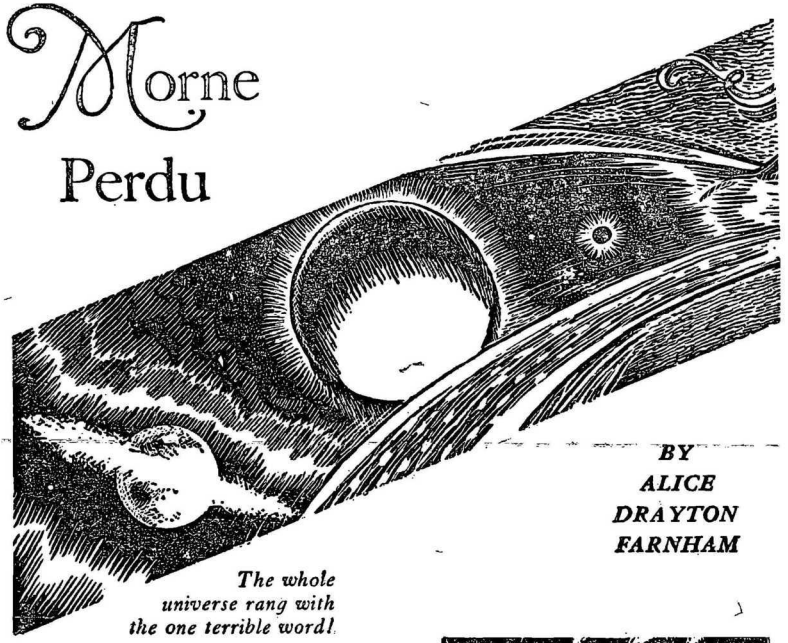
Send me, absolutely free and postage prepaid, your complete money-making outfit including free sample stocking. It is understood I am under no obligation and if I am not satisfied with the money I make, I will throw away the whole outfit.

Name .....

Address

City ..... Zone.... State.....

Morne Perdu



The whole universe rang with the one terrible word!

BY ALICE DRAYTON FARNHAM

I

IT WAS not until three days after Jim's burial that Adela found the key. She opened his old roll-top desk in the gray ghost-light of dawn, feeling not elated but worn and ill.

When the sweating blacks had thrown the first spatterings of red earth upon Jim's coffin, in the raw hole between the mahogany trees, she had thought to feel secure. She had raised her eyes to the blue blaze of the Caribbean, beyond the quiet crosses, and known a savage exultation throughout the clergyman's well-bred mumble, a hatred and contempt for the dead that no power, no circumstance in life or death could efface.

And then it had gone. All in a moment, a cloud from nowhere had darkened the sun, a dry-season wind sprung up among the brown dry mahogany leaves and scat-

tered them in a little gust over the parched dead grass. A little sigh, a superstitious shudder, ran over the group of clean and tattered natives who stood in a knot at the churchyard gate apart from the gentle-folk, as the dry earth fell thudding now on the village-made casket—a whisper, a breath, a word. A word plucked from the air, to turn her blood to ice.

"Obeah!"

In Adela's ears it grew, it loudened, it swelled into a roar. The clergyman, the little circle of semi-strangers about the grave, brought only by an unspoken necessity to maintain the white man's prestige, must turn upon her now with accusing looks. Faint, she steadied herself on a tombstone.

"Obeah!"

And then she had raised her eyes and seen the man. Smiling a little secret smile, he was leaning with folded arms against the giant silk-cotton tree that grew just beyond the churchyard wall. No other native on the island would have dared to touch it, for the silk-cotton gives shelter to evil spirits of a frightful kind; but there he had stood among his own, his ragged shirt blowing against his brown chest in the wind, every black hair of his curling beard crisp with vitality, his eyes bright with derision, as he had smiled with intimate amusement at Adela across the open grave.

Behind her now in the empty room came a sudden noise, as a lizard fell from a rafter with a little plop, and stared at her with bright unwinking eyes as she whirled around in terror.

"I didn't!" she cried out wildly, beating her fists on the still closed desk. "Oh God, do you hear me? I'd nothing to do with it! You died of anemia—the doctor said so!"

From the bare floor the lizard stared up at her, with its jewel-bright eyes, its little secret grin. For a dizzy moment, it was the mocking face of the obeah man, grinning at her feet.

"MORNE PERDU!" Jim Mountford had said, with the grating laugh that still set her teeth on edge, though it was fifteen years since she had heard it. " 'Hill of the Lost,' eh? Natives shortened it, of course; 'Hill of the Damned!' Jolly names those old Frenchies could give a place, what?"

Adela sat watching him with strangely fluttered spirits as he teetered back and forth on the hearthrug, with his red weather-beaten face and his shallow light blue eyes.

Idiot, she thought, to be twittering like a schoolgirl! But her life had shrunk and narrowed since they last had met; into its straitened confines, across the quiet monotony of her routine as Classics Mistress in the Girls' Secondary School, the return of Jim Mountford was a kind of bombshell. Fifteen years ago he had been an unwelcome suitor, dismissed without regret; tonight— Tonight she was alone in the world, and fifteen years older.

He had grinned at her.

"Rum, eh? Never expected to see me again, after your old man threw me out. Didn't mince matters, did he? Thought for a bit he was going to shoot me. And you weren't too matey yourself." He gave a short bark of laughter, in which there was no mirth. "Well, you never know, do you? Here's the old boy dead, you here all alone —and me back again. Old Faithful in person! What do you say, Adela?"

She busied herself with the spirit-lamp that was heating their coffee.

"Do let me pour you another cup," she said evasively. "I'm sure what you have must be cold."

What *was* there to say? Jim Mountford had been a joke once: common Jim Mountford, with his embarrassing devotion. She had been very grateful to her father for ridding her of him. But her father was dead now, and unfortunately with the years he had grown more formidable, so that in the end he had rid her of everyone else as well. And life in England had grown very drab, teaching Latin extremely dull. Perhaps she hadn't been fair to Jim Mountford.

Her father, she remembered wryly, had been convinced he was a scoundrel. Jim hadn't taken his dismissal very well. He had written a letter that had turned the Colonel quite purple one morning at breakfast.

"Vindictive devil!" he had snorted. "Trying to frighten me! Beware of a feller who holds a grudge, Adela!"

But her father had been mistaken

for once. If Jim Mountford had been vindictive, he would never have come back. That seemed to Adela self-evident.

REALLY a most extraordinary thing, she thought, smiling nervously, this materialization from the past. She had never liked Jim Mountford—she couldn't like him even now—but there was no doubt that since becoming a man of property Jim had improved. His manner held an added assurance; the mustache lent a touch of dignity, and the loud clothes that her father had so derided—"feller looks just like a horse-trainer, dammit!"—had toned down to an unobjectionable blue serge.

"It sounds too marvelous!" she said, wishing she could overcome her nervousness. How long since she'd spoken with a man alone? "A West Indian plantation—it sounds absolutely thrilling!"

And suddenly she seemed to see it, a tiny bright picture, concentrated and brilliant, like something seen through the wrong end of a telescope—an emerald island in an aqua sea, gleaming in perpetual sun.

"Not bad," Jim agreed, complacently adjusting his tie in the mirror over the mantel. He passed one hand over his hair. "Oh, it's no palace, mind you! Just a nutmeg and cocoa estate—but a damn nice little place for all that!"

A West Indian estate, and Jim Mountford a planter. Loud, uncouth, ill-bred Jim Mountford, actually a man of substance.

And if I were to marry him, she thought suddenly—

On his last night in England Jim had proposed. Not in set terms, but she knew why; he was afraid of a second rebuff. Poor Jim! But of course she'd known what he meant. Not like Jim Mountford to be subtle.

"Must get a bit fed up with teaching stunt, eh, Adela?" He gave a comprehensive wave of disfavor toward her books. "Mean to say, teaching the young idea and all that—no life for any woman with any blood in her veins. Why not chuck it and come out to the island? We'd have some good times there. What do you say?"

Adela opened her mouth to say yes. It was an escape from her chains, from everything she hated; and Jim wasn't too bad. It was an opportunity that would never come again.

But the word would not come.

He winked at her.

"Better say yes, old girl! Neither of us getting any younger, you know!"

She moistened her lips. To antagonize him now would be fatal.

"The term—" she said faintly. "I'd have to give notice, you know, Jim. I—I just can't decide it all so quickly. You'll have to give me time."

Coolly he took his coat and started toward the door.

"Don't miss the bus, Adela!" he said, grinning. "Oh, I know you're tied up now with commitments—never really expected you to accept offhand, anyway. But you think it over. I'll be waiting—at Morne Perdu."

He seized her in a rough embrace that left her shaken yet oddly triumphant. Staring at the closed door, she unconsciously passed her hand across her lips, as if wiping off something distasteful; but her eyes were bright. Another door was still open.

II

"HILL of the Lost!" she said aloud in the bare little whitewashed room. Hollowly the walls returned her words. "Hill of the Damned!"

With a little bitter smile, she looked out at the ragged yard. In the melancholy light it seemed incredibly down at the heels and forlorn. A skeleton plum tree, its leaves not to return until summer, thrust smooth gray branches against a grayer sky. All around, in untended profusion, grew the banana palms, their leaves hanging in pitiful shreds and tatters, rustling like paper in the early-morning breeze.

A few lean and goat-like sheep were cropping desperately at a stubble of sun-scorched grass, contesting with plaintive cries the intrusions of an emaciated pig, while in little clucking twos and threes gaunt chickens with bare red necks fluttered down in a little shower of white feathers from their nightly roost in the breadfruit tree. Over it all brooded an air of sadness and decay.

Well named, she thought; it has been

well named. In truth, I am mistress of Morne Perdu.

The passage to Marianna had taken almost all of Adela's savings, but she had no regrets. Having reached her decision at last, everything else seemed irrelevant; she would not look back. As for money, she had no need of it now. All that Jim had would be hers.

The trip out was lazy and lovely and irresponsible as a dream. As the ship slid further each day into tropic waters, Adela lay basking in the sun, or leaned dreamily on the rail watching the flying fish, like little bright birds, skim the deepening blue of the water. She did not strike up many shipboard acquaintances, but for the most part remained solitary and curiously content, thinking of Morne Perdu.

Back in the hills, Jim had said in his letters . . . She could see it on its hilltop, bowered in strangely fragrant trees, smiling and peaceful in the sun. The gardens were ablaze with tropical bloom, the house half hidden under flowering vines. And inside there would be deft and smiling servants, flowers everywhere, heaps of brilliant unknown fruit on a gleaming mahogany table.

And as each day took her closer, excitement mounted within her like a fever. On the morning that they were to land, she was on deck hours before daybreak, watching with beating heart for the tiny dark shadow far to the south that was the island of Marianna.

Imperceptibly it took shape along the horizon, as the steamer made a wide arc to follow its coast. Adela stood alone at the rail; her eyes were brilliant. Purple against the dawn, it was an island of rugged hills, steep winding valleys, plunging cliffs and rocky bays; it seemed to grow and advance to meet them. Little native houses came into view, leaning on ramshackle stilts, and a ribbon of road that followed the curving shore. An occasional tiny column of smoke climbed from the tangled green of valley and hillside, and Adela wondered what kind of meal was cooking there, what people would eat it.

Now, swinging out once more, the steamer had rounded the sentinel cliffs that stood guarding the harbor. The tree-covered bluffs glided by, the crumbling old fort on the hilltop, with the grass growing from its walls, and the port of St. Marks was before them.

Tier on tier the red roofs rose above the water, climbing the green hills that enclosed the town on three sides. The houses came closer: Adela could see their verandas, their trees, the flowers in their gardens.

The little harbor was alive with boats and boatmen. Along the wide pavement that edged the long horseshoe curve of the blue Carenage, people stopped to watch and wave at the oncoming ship, full in the morning sun.

THE boat cut her engines. In the sudden silence they drifted on into the still water of the landlocked Carenage, past the little tin-roofed Grand Hotel, past the Empress Theater ("British News Tonight"), past a spread of drying cocoa beans being trampled by a giggling black girl in bare feet and a big hat. People looked out from windows along the waterfront: Adela could see the clothes they wore, the expressions of their faces, as the vessel swung slowly round and hove to by the wharf.

A sweet spicy breath seemed to rise from the place, drawn up by the hot sun from the gray weathered boards of the wharf itself. Great bags of nutmegs, of cinnamon and ginger and cocoa, lay stacked in rows by the Customs shed, ready for loading. There was a waiting crowd on the dock, with grinning faces upturned, and the air was full of clamor.

Adela shrank back from the rail for an involuntary second. The noise, the hubbub, the strange smells and cries, the confusion of black faces, were overwhelming.

And then the gangplank was lowered. As she walked down it, there was a little bustle, a little falling back among the natives, and Jim Mountford stood there awaiting her. He was wearing khaki shorts and topee, grinning with mingled assurance and self-consciousness under his sun-faded clipped mustache.

"Well, old girl, so you made it, eh? Come along—the old bus is just round the corner. I'll see to your things."

Adela was passive under his kiss. But suddenly the blinding brilliance of the sun-lit wharf, the figures and faces and move-

ment, seemed to swim and go black before her eyes. It was as if a part of her, deep-buried and beyond the reach of reason, had seen for that moment into the future, and cried out against what it saw. Jim Mountford—how could she have thought he had changed? He was common Jim Mountford still; his years in the tropics had given him only a coarse hardihood, infinitely repellent. Her dislike had abated not one jot.

Oh God, she thought wildly, what have I done? I've burned all my bridges behind me, I'm marrying a man I detest, and all for a base comfort and security!

An abyss yawned at her feet. There was no way to go but forward.

DIVINA'S soft voice came through the closed door.

"Mistress, you require your breakfast presently, no?"

Adela leaned her aching head upon her hand. How badly she had slept last night! Perhaps—yes, perhaps today she should eat breakfast.

"Later," she said dully. "Not now."

"Yes, mistress—I go start my fire just now!" said Divina joyfully. Adela could hear her padding away, her voice raised in song.

Through the window she saw the black girl, with her face of a happy child, take her leisurely way across the yard to the cook-house, leaning crazily on the pile of rocks that supported it. The side toward the house was half-open, its wall a mere waist-high partition, and she watched as Divina reached a handful of charcoal lumps from a burlap bag on the floor into the round iron coal-pot that stood on the table by the window. The fire once lit, Divina stood fanning the weak flame with an old box-top, lustily singing "Sly Mongoose" the while.

Zotty, the yard-boy, had emerged now from his hut, and stood yawning and stretching at the head of the path, an ebon-black man whose faded blue work-clothes, clean and infinitely patched, hung raggedly about his magnificent body.

"Yes, mon!" he called in cheerful greeting to Divina.

She leaned out the window.

"Yes!" she screamed, laughing all over her child's face. "My lady she eatin' break-*fuss* today, mon!"

Zotty's teeth shone whitely as bobbed his head toward Adela, sitting with heavy eyes at the desk by the office window.

"Oh, that very good!" he cried heartily. "That a good lady, mum!"

Quick tears of weakness stood for an instant in Adela's eyes. She was so tired, so tired, she felt so ill! The little touch of human warmth and kindliness seemed to crack, ever so slightly, the brittle shell of her self-control.

SHE put her weary hand to her eyes for a moment. It had been a most dreadful night. A night of sudden terrors and icy sweats, of madly racing pulses as she lay quivering and stiff, staring with straining eyes into the darkness about her bed—knowing the room was empty, and yet sure she was not alone. A night of desperate waking from frightful dreams, only to sink, struggling, down, down into dreams that were even more dreadful. And the night-mare moment when, in the square of velvet black outside her window, she had thought she saw—

No, no! Her lips tightened, turned under in a bloodless line. Raising her head rather stiffly, she brought her outstretched palms down hard upon the open desk and held them there with a sort of controlled violence, as if holding at bay some invisible enemy that must be kept down. A vein in her temple was throbbing, and that odd little mark on her arm—a spider bite, she was sure; she had seen it scuttle away when she switched on the light—seemed to ache and to throb in sympathy; but her face was still as stone as she sat there, holding down with all her force an enemy unseen. Only the hollow burning eyes were alive.

"I'm going home!" she said aloud in the empty room. "Home, home! I've opened your desk, in five minutes I'll have your money, and I've my passage booked on the *Lady Essex* for day after tomorrow! Home, home—do you hear me? I've waited six years for this day; nothing and no one will stop me now!"

Smiling a little then, a stiff compulsive

smile that was half a grimace, she began searching in his desk for the money.

JIM was in high spirits as he piloted the little Ford past the square solid Government buildings that lined the waterfront, up the steep crooked streets leading over the hill, where they were beckoned on importantly by a jet-black bobby in white tunic and helmet, and then down again, past the teeming Market Square.

"Great little place, eh, Adela?"

She had a confused impression of old stone walls, topped with a froth of pink coralita bloom, of wobbling little open buses with people hanging on to the sides and sitting on one another's laps, of narrow sidewalks so jostled with market-day crowds that people were walking in the dusty street, and as they turned a corner into the Esplanade, of gray eucalyptus trees marching along the road, looped and festooned with purple bougainvillea. High on a cliff overhanging the road stood an old stone church against the sky, the clock face toward them immovably fixed at ten minutes to four.

St. Marks left behind, the road now followed for a while a rocky tree-fringed shore, then turned sharply inland to wind upward among wooded hills. A group of clean and ragged black women who stood in a little rocky river washing clothes straightened up to stare at them curiously.

Adela looked back, and felt a little chill. Alreay the red roofs of St. Marks had disappeared among the trees. Why had they left the town so soon? Where was the hotel? Surely they couldn't have passed it. How strange that Jim had made no mention of wedding arrangements! And how lonely and wild back here in the bush, strange trees crowding close whose names she did not know, great tree-ferns looming up like distortions seen in a dream. Save for an occasional tiny native hut, crowded with staring occupants, there was not a sign of human life.

The car slowed almost to a stop, as Jim slid an arm around her and pulled her to him. His breath smelt of rum.

"Here, give us a kiss, old girl!"

When he released her, she felt frightened and a little sick. Once more, for a black instant, she saw herself and her situation in unbearable clarity.

Weakly she essayed a smile, put a tentative hand to her hair. The air was heavy and still, and she was beginning to find the tortuous interminable windings of the road slightly nauseating.

"I wonder—that is, how much farther—"

"I say, Adela, you look topping in that outfit!"

He was looking her up and down in appraisal.

"I ought to," she retorted, with an attempt at laughing vivacity. "It cost me my last shilling!"

The remark seemed to give him pleasure. His light eyes contracted with an inward enjoyment. He gave her a look at once approving and derisive.

"So you really came, eh? Tossed your bonnet over the ruddy windmill!" He chuckled, as the car made yet another hairpin turn and Adela closed her eyes. "Gad, I never actually thought you'd do it, you know! If only your old man could have been alive to see it! Lord, what I wouldn't give for a sight of his face!"

He burst into roars of laughter.

Adela dug her nails into her palms. She had loved her father. I mustn't notice, she thought. He doesn't mean—

"Jim, where are we going?" she said aloud. "It's—you know, I think I'm a little bit tired. Do we have to ride much longer?"

"Going?" He stared. "Morne Perdu, of course. Where else?"

Adela shrank against the seat.

"I see," she said faintly.

But she didn't. It was all wrong. How could she go there with him like this before they were married? What would people say? And what would the servants think? But then perehaps he was having some friend, some older woman, to stay there with them. Or perhaps he had arranged with the clergyman of St. Andrews—he had told her the little parish church was only five miles away—he was probably already awaiting them there, with a party of welcoming friends, at Morne Perdu.

A surprise wedding—she could see it—in the garden: friendly planters and their wives pressing forward with good wishes, and eager smiling servants in the back-

ground. She brightened a little. Yes, that must be it. He had a surprise for her, that was certain; she could tell by his smothered mirth, his air of being in on a secret joke. Yet she couldn't tax him with it, somehow; she felt a little timid of him all at once. It had begun to seem quite important that Jim should not be offended.

As the car left the road and began climbing a narrow rocky track almost overarched with trees, Adela became aware of a man who stood by the roadside watching them. He stood very straight and tall in his tattered clothing, and somehow there emanated from him a kind of power, an almost regal detachment, as of some solitary watcher passing judgment. With his aquiline features and short black beard, he had almost an Assyrian look.

"Local obeah merchant," muttered Jim. "Impudent beggar—half mad, of course, but it doesn't do to offend him. Hello, Sebastian. Things all quiet in the village?"

Ignoring him, the Negro Sebastian stood motionless as the car drew abreast, his quick brilliant eyes staring Adela boldly in the face. She shrank away.

"Good day, milady," he said softly. His voice was deep and rich. "You have come to the end of a journey, yes? Welcome to Morne Perdu!"

And throwing his head back in sudden uproarious laughter, he sprang up the leafy bank and was gone. Above the straining engine of the little car as it climbed the steep grade, they could faintly hear his laughter, still echoing through the forest.

"All nonsense," said Jim robustly, without looking at her. "Obeah—nothing to it. Still, one doesn't—"

"But what *is* it?"

Adela was bewildered and uneasy

"Oh, some of that African business, you know. Shango, and all that. Voodoo, they call it in the French islands. Natives still believe in that kind of rot. Well, here we are, Adela. Right at the top. Just around this bend here—"

She leaned forward, half suffocated with excitement. Around the bend would be Morne Perdu: the flowers, the clergyman, the friends, the colonnaded mansion bright with bloom, little jeweled humming-birds darting among its vines. Peace and dignity and smiling affluence lay just around the bend.

The car slowed and stopped. Before them stood a small weather-worn gray bungalow, with a corrugated metal roof. Behind it was a ruinous smoke-blackened cook-hut, unevenly elevated on a pile of smooth stones. Ragged chickens with raw red necks pecked listlessly about, and a surly pig looked at the car with contempt and stood his ground.

The little clearing was bare of grass, of flower or shrub or vine. All around it stretched the rows of stumpy cocoa-trees, with their mildewed bark, their leaves like limp green paper. Here and there a bamboo pole had been stuck in the earth to support a sagging branch. Scattered along the hillside she could see little tin and thatch-roofed huts of an almost incredible squalor, and a little distance down the yard cocoa beans were spread to dry in the sun on a huge tray, with a sliding roof on trestles beside it. A few ragged black laborers, shuffling barefoot through the cocoa-beans to polish them, stopped their work to look at her shyly, the women giggling behind their hands and attempting to hide their faces.

"Well—get out, old girl!" Jim opened the door for her, grinning. "It's the end of the line!"

Adela descended from the car like a sleepwalker. Morne Perdu. The end of the line, Jim had said. And no going back.

Around the corner of the house came a round ripe black girl, in a clean and starched print dress reaching not quite to her knees. She was barefoot and wore—indoors and out, as Adela was to learn—a broad-brimmed hat of native straw. At first she would not look Adela in the face, but stood gazing bashfully at the ground, tracing a circle in the dust with her toes.

As Jim thrust her forward, she giggled.

"This is Divina, Adela—the indoor staff. Her aunt used to cook for me till she got sick, poor old soul, and sent Divina up to take her place. Well, Divina—what do you say to the lady, eh?"

Divina raised her head then and looked at Adela, the shining candid gaze of an excited child. Laughter bubbled from her, and she clapped her hands.

"Oh, the lady look nice, nice!" she cried

in admiration. "Oh, I like the lady! She have such a beautiful dress, no?"

Jim Mountford gave a short bark of laughter.

"Come along, Adela! Divina, take care of the luggage." He took Adela by the arm. "Mind that rotten step. Have to fix it one of these days."

When they got inside, she gave one despairing look about her. The room was bare, dingy, uncarpeted. It had no ceiling, and a blotchy brown lizard scuttled hastily across a dusty beam and disappeared. There was a heavy oak table, several straight-backed wooden chairs, a peeling leather couch.

JIM was looking at her with a kind of wry compassion.

"So here we are, Adela, fifteen years later." He threw a clumsy arm about her shoulders. "Sit down, old girl—don't look so stricken. A bit primitive, maybe, but you'll get to like it." He chuckled. "After all—couldn't get back now if you wanted to!"

No. She couldn't go back now if she wanted to. Adela leaned against the door.

"But, Jim—" she began faintly. She moistened her lips. "Jim, I—really we can't—I mustn't stay here with you like this until we're married."

Jim was at the scarred oak sideboard, busy with a bottle.

"Oh, plenty of time for that!" he said easily. "All the time in the world. Here, Adela, have a drink!"

"I don't drink."

"Will when you've been here a while. Relax a bit, Adela, relax. No need to rush things, you know. We'll be married. Tomorrow, if you like. I swear it. I've just been so rushed on the estate this last week—foreman sprained his ankle, the silly blighter—I just haven't had time to get hold of old Donaldson." He gestured with his glass at the table. "Look, Divina's brought you flowers!"

The table was set for two, with dishes that didn't match. In the center was a thick water-tumbler, and from it delicate sprays of coralita vine trailed their rosy weight to the table's stained surface.

"Must have brought 'em all the way from the village in your honor, eh? No flowers up here. Pretty long walk it is too."

The pink coralita blurred as Adela looked at it. A terrible gush of feeling began its slow rise in her, of a force and tragic intensity that bore madness in its onward sweep.

She took a trembling step forward. Her hands were clenched together in a tight and desperate grip.

"Jim, I'm—I'm really quite tired. If you'd—if I could just go to my room for a little and lie down—"

Setting down his glass very deliberately, dabbing at his ragged sunburned mustache with a handkerchief, Jim Mountford crossed the room and opened a door. She stumbled blindly across the threshold. The jalousies were closed; the room was dark and smelled of tobacco. Scattered clothing lay about the floor. He followed her in.

"*Our* room, Adela," he said pleasantly, and closed the door.

SIX years, she thought with a sort of dull bitterness as she began opening the drawers of the desk. Six rainy seasons, with their everlasting drip overhead and liquid mud underfoot; six dry seasons, with their glitter and parching wind. Six years of waiting, hopefully at first—surely next week? Perhaps the week after, when he wasn't so busy—and then with hope less and less, and finally with no hope at all but only anger and despair, for Jim Mountford to marry her. Six years of the parsimony that never gave her sixpence for herself. Six years of being introduced, on the rare occasions that she drove with him to town, as "Miss Leigh, my housekeeper."

Gradually she stopped making the trip, and spent all her time at Morne Perdu. No one stared at her there; there was none to avoid her, to whisper behind their hands.

At first he had been merely evasive on the subject of marriage.

"No hurry," he protested. "You're comfortable, aren't you? Roof over your head, enough to eat, all that? I don't mistreat you, do I? Damn it, I'm fond of you, Adela. Don't you trust me?"

She looked at him stormily.

"But you asked me—I never would have

come out here, never! You came to England and asked me to marry you!"

Jim held up one hand.

"Now, now!" he said mildly. "Let's be accurate! I asked you to come out for a visit —and you did. I'm not responsible if you chose to consider that a proposal of marriage. One of these days, maybe—but don't rush me, Adela. That's all you women think of. Has Zotty got back from the post-office yet?"

She faced him across the table.

"You knew I expected to marry you," she said in a low voice. "You knew I spent all my money to get here, that I had none left to go back."

"Rather sporting of you, my dear," said Jim, smiling. "What's more, I enjoy your company. Stay just as long as you like. Zotty, bring me that paper! I want to see what Hendricks' are quoting on nutmegs today in St. Mark's."

Reaching in his pocket for his spectacles, he opened out the Island Banner.

Adela spoke with controlled intensity.

"If I had the money—just the passage money!—if I had the money I'd go back on the *Empress* tomorrow!"

Jim gave a short laugh, without looking up from his paper.

"Afraid you couldn't, old girl! I see here that they've taken the *Empress* off this run—not enough business to make it worth their while. Only way you could go now is by the Lady-boat to Barbados, and change." As an afterthought he added, "*If* you'd the money, of course."

Abruptly Adela went into the next room, stared with smarting eyes out the open window. Trees crowded close around the small clearing of Morne Perdu, but at one spot the ground fell sharply away, and through the massed tree-tops was visible one narrow glimpse of the sea, five miles away. There it lay, a sapphire sparkle among the green, and at its further end the steep black cliff of volcanic rock that was the northmost tip of the island. Round that cliff, once in each three weeks, with passengers and cargo picked up at St. Mark's, sailed the Canadian *Lady Essex,* stately and beautiful, on her way to Barbados.

Adela had seen her once, had watched her out of sight with a constriction of the throat more painful than tears. Ever after, she had looked in the paper to see when the *Lady* was due to arrive and to leave, and had watched through the gap in the trees for one glimpse of the white ship as it slowly crossed the little square of sea. And now that was to be her last link with the world she had left: a chance sight, every third week, of a northward-bound vessel.

She sat there on the edge of the iron bed, staring out to sea.

THERE had been the Saturday that Adela had walked the two miles to the open market in the little native village at the foot of the hill, with Divina proudly walking behind her with a market basket. Rumor had sprung up of a catch of fish—one of the laborers had heard the conch shell, blown as the fishermen neared the shore—and Jim had reluctantly given her the money to buy some for dinner.

The market had been crowded and noisy, with much laughing and high-pitched chatter, as Adela pushed her way through; and then, at something unseen up front, a sudden silence fell. Standing immobile in the packed market, people seemed suddenly to shrink, pressing back against the stalls to make room for someone's passing.

It was the obeah man. Striding through the crowd without looking right or left, his ragged trousers flapping against his brown legs, his lips moving as though in constant speech with some familiar, breaking into occasional laughter, there was a strange power in the man, madman though he might be. As he came past Adela, a terrified urchin, frozen into immobility, blocked the way until yanked out of his path by a frightened parental hand. The obeah man raised his arm in a denunciatory gesture, half abstractedly, and his eyes met Adela's. Recognition gleamed in them, a measuring and sardonic amusement. He halted, while Divina cowered against Adela with a stifled shriek.

Adela met the bright malicious gaze wthout flinching, though her heart beat faster than usual; For a long moment they stood thus, like duellists taking one another's measure, and then a little sigh went up from the crowd. He was gone.

Adela shook the whimpering Divina by the shoulder. She said sharply, "Stop that nonsense, Divina!"

"Oh God, I afraid him!" Divina moaned. Her childish face was streaked with tears as she straightened her big hat. "Oh God, mistress, never have I experience such eyes! They pierce my soul, yes!"

A bent and shrivelled black woman rearranged her exhibit of yams and plantains on a wooden tray. Her wizened hand was trembling.

"He is an evil man," she whispered. "Oh God, yes! He is a loup garou. And that was a terrible look that he gave madame, an evil terrible look!"

"Oh, come, *mistress!*" Divina pulled at her arm. "We go home, no? We leave this bad place!"

"Nonsense!" Adela's voice was firm, and made itself felt. Not for nothing had she taught school for fifteen years. "Stop making a spectacle of yourself, Divina! We came here for fish, and I mean to get it. Stop that blubbering at once!"

Divina hung her head without answering.

AS THEY toiled up the rocky hill together in the hot sun with the precious fish and a breadfruit, Adela said kindly, "You mustn't let a man like that frighten you, Divina. He's no different from anybody else you know."

Divina looked about her fearfully. No one was in sight.

"He *loup garou,* mistress! It have much obeah here on this island, and all persons knowing Sebastian is *loup garou.*"

The day was hot, but Adela felt ever so slight a chill at the repetition of the word.

"What—what on earth's that?"

Divina looked at her with round scared eyes over the market-basket. A bird like a black parrot watched them in silence from a casuarina tree.

"*Loup garou* suck your blood, mistress. In the night. He leave his body and take the form of a blue light. I have witness this light myself, outside a certain person's house, each night for a week, eh?"

Adela forced a laugh.

"And at the end of the week?"

"At the end of the week," said Divina simply, "that person was dead, oui?"

Adela was impatient.

"What's that got to do with Sebastian?"

"Everyone knowing it was Sebastian, mistress." Divina looked obstinate. "That person had offended him. And every morning Sebastian went round there, you hear? He went round for the asking."

"The what?"

Divina rolled her eyes.

"When *loup garou* take your blood, mistress, in the night, he must come round first thing in the morning and ask you for something. It is part of the obeah. It is by this you may know a *loup garou.* He must ask that you give him something—perhaps before you even notice the place on your arm where he drew the blood."

The black parrot flapped away. A slight shiver passed over Adela and was gone.

"Rubbish!" she said, but she was glad to see the house in sight. "There's no such thing as a *loup garou,* Divina. That's all an old superstition, and I'm surprised at you believing it. Don't let me hear any more about it!"

"Yes, mistress," said Divina. Her face set in a look of sullen stubbornness, and she spoke no more.

The days went on, the months, the rainy seasons and the dry. Every third week the Lady-boat passed across the little strip of open water that could be seen from Morne Perdu, and was gone. When Adela did not catch a glimpse of her, shining briefly in the sun or glowing across the darkness with lights ablaze, it was as if she had missed the visit of a friend.

One year the price of nutmeg was high, the next it began to fall. Cocoa held steady, and then one year witches' broom disease hit the island and Jim said violently that he was ruined. When Adela's last pair of shoes went in holes, it was weeks before he grudgingly consented to buy her a new pair, and then they were of the cheapest and heaviest make. But year in and year out she watched him put in his desk the cocoa and nutmeg money that was paid for his crops by the local agent in the village branch of the big commission house of Hendricks', before he took it to the Royal Bank in St. Mark's for deposit.

Six years—and not a day and not a night that she had not hated Jim Mountford with

ull her soul; but the six years might have lengthened into twenty had not Jim Mountford got drunk one Saturday, too drunk to know what he said.

"Poor old Adela!" he said, with a kind of maudlin pity. He had begun drinking early that afternoon, and already his eyes were red-rimmed and his hand shook as he poured the rum into his glass. A little splashed on the table.

SHE glanced at him indifferently from the doorway. No air was stirring, and the tin-roofed house was like a furnace. It was an odd gray day, when the dry leaves and the parched earth glittered like glass in a colorless metallic sun. The hands had all been paid and gone home with their little wages.

"Good-lookin' gal you used to be, too!"

Jim put the bottle down heavily and stared at her, a half commiserating smile on his unshaven face.

She shrugged, and looked down at the worn cotton dress with no change of expression. She had grown very thin and sallow, and looked older than her years, but her looks had become a matter of utter indifference.

Jim's face creased in lines of cunning and of mirth.

"Jolly good joke I played on you, wasn't it?"

"Wonderful, she agreed, watching him pour another drink.

"Poor little Adela, beggin' me year after year to marry her!" His shoulders began to shake. "Throwin' down her last sixpence to get out here! Oh, ho-ho! I turned the tables, eh, Adela? By God, I turned the tables!"

She gazed at him steadily, the dark eyes in her expressionless face taking on a certain fixed quality. Imperceptibly they widened. She stood very still, almost without breathing, but she felt a curious little tingling at the roots of her hair.

"I wasn't good enough, d'ye see," said Jim, slopping more rum on the table and then tilting the bottle itself to his lips. "A-a-ah, that's fine!" He leaned back in his chair and looked at her with a kind of vindictive gloating. "Not good enough for you and your old man, was I, Adela? But I swore I'd get even with you, my girl, and I did! 'I'll have you to ruddy bloomin' well understand, sir, my daughter is not for the likes of you, sir!' God, Adela, if old Whiskers could see you now! Housekeeper—" he gave her an alcoholic wink—"housekeeper at Morne Perdu!"

Adela was staring at him as if hypnotized.

"You did it deliberately?" she whispered.

His shoulders began to heave again.

"Poor little Adela! 'Where's the parson, when are we getting married?' 'You've got to marry me—next week!' And then, 'Please, Jim, please!' Lord, Adela, if you could have seen your face!"

He sat red-faced and gasping with laughter, the tears streaming down his face.

Adela made a choking sound. Turning, she ran down the sagging verandah steps and plunged blindly into the woods. Along the top of the ridge, behind Morne Perdu itself, ran a narrow rocky bare plateau fringed with mahogany and cedar trees, where she sometimes went for a glimpse of the sea. Her feet took her there now. She stumbled through the undergrowth unseeing, her face reddened with scratches she never felt.

Up there on the plateau, out of sight of the whole world, she gave vent to the passion of utter abasement consuming her. Swiftly she walked its whole length, turned and with the speed of the wind swept back, beating her hands together. Back and forth she walked, faster and faster, and now her hands were in her hair, in an unconscious gesture clutching it away from her scalp.

AT THAT instant the Lady-boat crossed her vision, far away at sea. At the sight she gave a deep groan, like an animal in anguish, and beat her right fist against a rough-barked tree until it bled.

"Madame has a heart that is full of storm," said a voice behind her.

She whirled around, to stare with dry dilated eyes at the smiling face of the obeah man. He made a graceful gesture at the disappearing ship.

"Madame would perhaps like to leave our little island."

She attempted to speak, but no words would come.

"I can help you, milady," said Sebastian softly. "I have powers and knowledge."

Shadow had crept up the ridge to their feet, but the setting sun threw a lurid light upon their faces.

"A certain sad event could happen, milady, and set you free. For—" smiling, he considered his price "—for fifty Trinidad dollars this sad event might happen, I think. It is a man I do not like."

Adela found her voice then.

"You fool!" she cried harshly. "I haven't fifty cents!" Not until later did it come to her that she had spoken to this ragged native as to an equal. "Do you see the way I'm dressed? I tell you I've not a shilling in the world!"

Sebastian's white teeth gleamed. The last red rays of the sun gave his dark face a terrible and sinister beauty, as if illumined by interior fires.

He said in his velvety voice, "There are many sacks of nutmegs to be sold next week, milady. On Wednesday the Hendricks' truck is to call at the boucan of Morne Perdu for its load. There will be money."

She lifted her head at that and stared at him, pressing the back of her hand to her mouth.

"There will be money," repeated the obeah man. Suddenly the sun was gone and they stood in semi-darkness, but she could see that he was smiling still. "And the money will belong to madame."

In the silence and the deepening darkness the little thin pipe of a tree-frog sounded quite close to them.

"Fifty dollars is not excessive," the velvety voice persisted. "Madame will perhaps feel then that it was worth it?"

There was a dull pounding in Adela's ears.

"Yes!" she said thickly. "Yes!"

Slowly she backed away from him. Then, averting her face, she turned and ran stumbling down the stony path.

FEAR grew in her that night, an insane gibbering fear that kept her staring awake through the darkness. Jim, who had gone to bed drunk and utterly torpid, began all at once to sleep very restlessly, to fling his arms and legs about and toss his head on the pillow. Once he moaned. Adela cowered away from him. A fine sweat dewed her face, and her hands were clammy.

In the morning he was irritable and moody, hastily drank down a cup of tea without speaking to her and went out into the sunny yard. She heard his voice down at the boucan.

When he returned, his mood was worse than ever. He rarely drank in the morning, but he poured a drink out now.

"Damn insolence!" He was sputtering. "The impudence of the fellow!" Adela scarcely heard him. She was staring with widening eyes at his forearm. Inside his elbow, plainly visible in the short-sleeved khaki shirt, was a tiny red mark that could have been a scratch, and yet on closer inspection seemed more of a puncture wound. She sat very still, her eyes fastened on it.

He followed her gaze.

"Oh, that? Mosquito, of course. Odd to get one up here, but it sometimes happens. You're not listening to me, Adela. I'm telling you about that obeah fellow."

Adela made no sound, but something in her expression seemed to satisfy him that he had caught her attention fully.

"Comes saunterin' up the path, if you please, and follows me to the boucan! 'Good day, sir. Could I humbly request a match?' 'Pon my word!—fellow walks two miles to ask me for a match! Good God, Adela, what's wrong with you? Look as if you'd seen I don't know what!"

That night she lay awake again, icy with sweat. Once again Jim tossed and turned, once again came that paralyzing certainty that something was in the room with them. Evil was present: she could reach out her fingers and touch it. She stuffed her knuckles against her mouth to keep from screaming.

In the morning, there was a drop of blood on the sheet where Jim's arm had lain.

"No, no!" she thought desperately. "It's all superstition, it's nothing but a mosquito bite! It's all in my mind, I've made it all up! It's not true, it's not true!"

Divina came into the bedroom and stood twisting a corner of her apron.

"Mistress, one Genevieve has told me—" she cast a terrified glance about her, and lowered her voice to a whisper—"mistress,

she has told me that for two nights she observe a blue light in this house!"

Angrily Adela turned on her. Her fingers bit into the girl's shoulder, so that she shrank away.

"Divina, stop repeating such rubbish! Get on with your work, and don't ever let me hear that kind of gossip again!"

Divina retreated, round-eyed and subdued.

"Yes, mistress. But it give me a very bad feeling."

ADELA heard her talking to herself as she crossed the yard to the cookhouse. Adela herself was breathing hard, as if she had been running.

A few days later, Jim did not get up.

"Nothing, it's nothing," he said querulously. "Don't fuss, Adela! Just not up to the mark, that's all."

Irritably he ground out a cigarette on the ashtray by the bed. It came as a little shock to her that he looked so ill. The once ruddy color had seeped out from under the sunburn, leaving it the bloodless brown of an old leaf. Jim looked suddenly old himself, withered and momentarily pathetic.

Unwilling she heard herself say, "I'll call a doctor," and immediately felt a kind of irritation with him that she had said it.

"You'll do nothing of the kind!"

Jim's brows contracted; a muscle under one bloodshot eye began to twitch.

"It's nothing, I tell you! All I want is to be left alone!"

He closed his eyes. Adela stood looking at him for a moment. His features looked oddly pinched; his mouth hung slack, as if to hold it closed were an effort too great. The mark on his arm was red and a little swollen.

A curious sense of cold that started in the pit of her stomach began to steal over Adela, as she stood staring at it in the morning sunlight. Her mind refused to accept what it saw before it. It was untrue; it was superstition and a madman's babble; it was mere fortuitous coincidence, a chain of circumstance minute but meaningless, at which any reasoning mind must scoff. Overwrought, beside herself, she had for a moment acquiesced in the madman's madness; but that was nothing, surely. A moment's hysteria, no more. If Jim was ill, it was no doing of hers; there could be no connection. She was not responsible.

And yet—a week ago Jim Mountford had been a hale and vigorous man; and today he lay with his eyes closed, and a blue shadow over them. And slowly across Adela's mind, shuttered and sealed though it was, crept black and enormous a single word, blotting out all that came before it. The room seemed to darken and contract, the morning sun to disappear. The whole universe rang with the one terrible word.

At that instant there was a confusion outside in the passage. Divina's voice rose sharply. Another voice struck in, deep and rich, and at the sound Adela stood frozen.

Jim raised his head suspiciously.

"Who's that?"

Adela's mouth was dry. She tried to speak.

Slowly the door opened. Sebastian stood there smiling, graceful in his rags. He sketched a debonair bow in the sick man's direction.

"Your pardon, sir—"

"Oh, mistress, I afraid him!" blubbered Divina.

"For God's sake, shut that girl up!" Jim's head sank back on the pillow. His face had a clammy pallor, and he had closed his eyes again. "Sebastian, get out of here! You've been hounding me all week."

"So sorry, sir!" The obeah man's mock of obsequiousness was lit by a kind of laughing deviltry, unseen by the man on the bed. At Adela he did not look once. "So sorry—but I find I am once again without matches! Would you of your great kindness—"

"Oh God, Adela—give him a match and let him go!"

Jim had not opened his eyes.

Adela took a step back. The obeah man did not look at her; a ripple of suppressed laughter crossed his brown face as he moved respectfully to the doorway.

"Go!" croaked Adela, in a voice she did not know. She clutched her throat. "Go, do you understand? *Go!*"

"Oh yes, milady," he said softly. "I understand! I understand, yes?"

He slipped out the door and was gone. Adela stumbled blindly into the next room, snatched the telephone off the hook, wound the crank with a shaking hand.

"The doctor!" she cried hoarsely. "Get me the doctor!"

THE doctor was hopeful, after the manner of doctors, but quietly insistent that Jim should go to the Colony Hospital, down at St. Mark's.

"Pernicious anemia," he explained to Adela. "Apparently of rather long standing. Seems to have been pulled down rather more than one might expect. But with transfusions and all that—very little cause for alarm, you know. Tropical anemia's rather common in these islands. They'll know what to do for him down at St. Mark's. We'll have him back in no time."

In a week, to be exact.

The last day that Adela saw him—the doctor had driven her down—he lay shrivelled and wasted on the high white bed, his head already a skull, the skin stretched taut across his cheekbones. The strong muscles of his neck had shrunken to scrawny sagging cords.

The nurse took his arm gently to tell him Adela was there. At first he gave no sign; then slowly he opened his eyes and with some difficulty focused them on her.

"Going, Adela." He could just frame the words. "Just—leaving now. Cheers, eh?"

Lingering, the nurse sought to brighten the conversation.

"Come now, things aren't as bad as all that! And we've had company today, Mrs. Mountford—from the village!"

Adela stared at her with slowly dilating eyes. Her scalp began to prickle.

There was an odd whispered chuckle from the bed.

"The obeah johnny!" it wheezed, and gasped for breath. "Joker, eh? Twenty miles on the bus to—ask me for a—copper!"

"First thing this morning," added the nurse, smiling. "The very first thing!"

He was buried next day.

OUTSIDE the day was getting under way. Zotty slid back the roof of the boucan, and a melancholy old woman in a turban tramped barefoot up and down the cocoa-beans. Black laborers, with much horseplay and shoving, were lining up by the grindstone to sharpen their long cutlasses.

There was a smell of kerosene and burning charcoal from the kitchen, the sound of many voices raised in banter. "All day, all night, Mary Ann," sang Divina, as she stooped to blow the charcoal pot.

It was foolish to be frightened. The money was here. Of course the money was here. He had put it in his desk before he was—taken ill. She had seen him. Absurd to be frightened. Absurd.

Beads of sweat stood out on her forehead.

The money was here, it was here! Somewhere in this desk. It had slipped behind his papers, perhaps; she had overlooked it in her haste. No need for excitement. Silly to feel that triphammer pulse in her throat.

She was ill, that was all; not quite herself. It was only weakness that made her feel like this; she'd slept badly. The night had been so very still, and then there were so many fireflies about. Queer little lights that one knew must be fireflies. Somehow they kept one from sleeping.

She pulled out a little drawer that rattled and stuck; in mounting frenzy tugged at it, all but shrieking. There in that drawer was her passage to England. Day after tomorrow the *Lady Essex* docked at St. Mark's. Wildly she yanked at the drawer, and it came out in her hand, the contents spilling.

A batch of old receipts.

She sat staring at them, passed a damp and trembling hand across her mouth. And now she knew that fear was in the room, accompanying her; it stood just behind her, it had been there from the beginning, waxing tall and enormous, till now it cast a shadow on the desk before her. And she knew, she knew without turning, in whose familiar shape that shadow stood.

SHE had not been afraid when she met him again on the rocky pathway that led to the river, the day after the burial, though the meeting had been none of her seeking. She stopped short when she saw him. Supporting herself against a tree, she stood there immobile, her nostrils distended, her eyes wary as a suspicious animal's. Yet still she was not afraid. The fear she had felt at the graveside was a thing of the moment only. She had been taken off guard, that was all.

The obeah man also leaned against a tree, watching her speculatively.

"Madame will be leaving us, I fear." His mellow voice held a note of liquid sadness. "It is told in the village that madame has engaged passage on the *Lady Essex*. Madame will be missed, yes?"

Adela drew back, her eyes still on his alertly.

"Go away!" Her voice was hard; it held authority. This man was nothing to her. A mere ragged native from the village, a madman who dabbled in witchcraft, in this forgotten island of the Caribbean. On Friday she would turn her back on this island forever. "You're trespassing, you know! If you annoy me I shall have you reported!"

He gave a little secret laugh, almost under his breath.

"Ah, that give me a very bad feeling! You forget your friends so soon, madame!"

A thrill of anger went through Adela. How dared he!

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

Almost, as she said the words, she was able to believe them.

"There was a bargain between us, madame." Sebastian's eyes were hard as black rocks ground smooth by the sea. "A matter of $50."

A sword had been drawn between them, flung clanging on the rocky ground at their feet.

All of Adela's being rose hard and fierce to meet the challenge. Never had she felt so sure of herself, so strong. The presumption, the cunning, the audacity! He had laid a trap for her feet: she would not be caught. Jim had sickened and died of a disease that was almost commonplace; his death had been medically certified. She had called the doctor, she had visited him in the hospital, she had done everything humanly possible. It was common knowledge.

She could have laughed in this madman's face. Yesterday's fears lay at the bottom of yesterday's grave. There had been no bargain. She was sailing on Friday for England.

The obeah man looked her full in the eye, unsmiling.

"That is your last word, milady?"

Adela's whole body seemed to swell, to tingle with an intoxicating sense of power and contempt. This man was nothing, nothing! What a fool she was, ever to have been afraid!

"My last word!" she said, her voice very clear and strong. "Now be off! If you stand there playing the fool for another instant I shall call for help! Be off with you!"

No, she had not been afraid of him then!

He had turned and gone without a word.

At thought of her triumph, a little smile curved her lips now. Almost imperceptibly her body relaxed. Her nerves had been running away with her. A sleepless night, nothing more. A sleepless night, a spider bite on her arm, and she had seen goblins where no goblins were.

And as if the thought had been a happy omen, her fingers, reaching down past a little partition at the back of the desk that had been hidden by his account-book, closed on Jim's worn old leather purse. England lay in her hand.

Such a great burst of emotion as she had never before known she would feel engulfed her now. Tears coursed down her pale face, spattered unheeded on the notes. England and safety and sanity, all the beauty of an ordered life, the heritage of ancient peace, lay waiting in her grasp.

Through the open window she could hear Divina still singing in the kitchen as she clattered her pans, and she felt a sudden rush of tenderness for the black girl.

It seemed as if she had never loved anyone half so much. She wanted to throw her arms about the girl, to cry, "Oh, darling Divina, forgive me for every harsh word I've ever spoken! You were my only friend, and I never shall see you again!"

She wanted to throw her arms about the whole world; the radiance of it almost blinded her. It was as if she had never seen it before. Her heart felt too big for her body. She laughed aloud with the glory of it. All her weariness had dropped away, like a shroud from one revived.

She must call the steamship company at St. Mark's, tell them the money was ready. She would send Zotty down with it today.

She turned the crank of the telephone, her eyes very bright.

"St. Mark's, please."

"St. Mark's is engaged," said Exchange regretfully.

Later, later! Now she would pack. She would not stop for breakfast. Breakfast was an impertinence.

"Divina!" she called, smiling. "Divina!"

AND then all at once she heard the silence. Like a sudden thunder of drums it came crashing across the carefree babble in the yard.

Adela stood very erect, without breathing, like one desperately wounded who must in a moment fall. Only her eyes moved, as they followed the obeah man in his slow implacable progress across the silent yard. His bearing was aloof, majestic; his face in repose looked sad and stern.

Slow, staring, fixed, her eyes pursued him unwinking as those of a hypnotized bird. At the door of the house she lost him for a moment, only to hear his footsteps approach down the passage. A little behind him was a hesitant terrified shuffle, and the sound of Divina weeping.

The door opened. He stood on the threshold for a moment. Adela's eyes never left his face.

"Then thousand pardons, madame," he said gravely. "It is only—"

At that instant the telephone shrilled. As in a trance, Adela took it down, her eyes still on the man who confronted her across the room.

"Mrs. Mountford—er, Miss Leigh?" whispered a faraway voice from St. Mark's. "Brown here, at Huggins Steamship. I say, I'm frightfully sorry, Miss Leigh, but the *Lady Essex* came in ahead of schedule this trip. She just left an hour ago. Captain wouldn't wait; he had orders to land his cargo at Barbados today. I tried to get word up to you yesterday, but the telephone wire was down. But your passage—I say, are you there?"

"Yes," muttered Adela. Her face was wooden.

"Your passage is all in order, you know, and the *Lady* will be back in three weeks. Gives you a bit of extra time, what? Well, cheerio!"

Adela's gaze dropped to the telephone in her hand with a kind of wondering interest, as if at some ingenious contrivance she now beheld for the first time. A roaring was in her ears.

"The Lady-boat will be back in three weeks," she said stupidly.

She raised her eyes again to the obeah man's. He was smiling.

"Oh, mistress, I afraid him!" bawled Divina. "Send him away!"

He made a little deprecating grimace.

"It is nothing, milady, nothing! My apologies for disturbing you. It is only that I have come to ask for a piece of string."

The room grew very still. Divina's hand, clutching at a corner of her apron, stopped halfway to her face. The obeah man stood with folded arms and somber eyes on Adela. Over his head a lizard, outstretched on a rafter, looked down motionless. Adela was cold and still; all sensation was gone. And so they stood for a long moment like figures on a frieze, like creatures caught centuries ago in amber, henceforward forever immobile.

And then, through the window by his shoulder, like a noble white bird with outstretched wings, Adela saw the stately Lady-boat come into sight, gleaming and splendid in the sun. Slowly, majestically, irrevocably, seen like a dream, the white ship held to its course across the little square of sunlit sea. Then, like a great burst of triumphant music stilled at a blow yet vibrating on in the silence, she rounded the dark headland and was gone.

THE MONKEY SHIP

BY GARNETT RADCLIFFE

Sometimes the gods of the Outlands look twice at Science

NO ONE could have called the *Dawn of Hope* a "Hell Ship." Although her tonnage was only fifteen hundred, every possible convenience had been supplied for the benefit of her two thousand odd worried little passengers.

Her owner, Mr. Edmund L. Donovan, had seen to that. He had told the ship's architect that "Only the best was good enough for the monks," for he was passionately fond of children and animals. Also, he was an idealist who was resolved

that posterity should inherit a world as free from disease as possible. He'd two children he worshipped. If he'd any qualms about the fate of the two thousand odd monkeys who were to sail thrice yearly on the *Dawn of Hope* as his gift from the forests of Burma to the Wise Men of the West, he could always resolve them by remembering that Harry aged seven and Lucy aged five would be amongst those who might one day benefit from his practical philanthropy.

It had been a magnificent gesture for a private individual to have made. Every scientist and medical journal in the world had applauded his action. Research-workers from every hospital in America had sent him grateful letters of thanks. An English writer who was famed as a great humanitarian had had an article published in the London *Times* entitled the *"Dawn of Hope."*

"Scientists all over the world," said the article, "must feel gratitude to Mr. Edmund L. Donovan, a wealthy American citizen, for a munificent gesture which should shame our Government and the Government of the U. S. A. for their niggardly attitude towards those who work in the field of medical research. Before they can be generally placed at the disposal of suffering mankind such drugs as Streptomycin and Aureomycin have to be tested on living creatures. In the past medical research-workers have been heavily handicapped by the expense of procuring suitable subjects for their experiments, but the arrival at San Francisco of Mr. Donovan's ship with its cargo of monkeys will bring new hope to the men and women who are struggling to stamp out forever the great scourges of humanity. . . ."

THAT article delighted Donovan. He read it for the first time in Rangoon on the very evening of the day on which the *Dawn of Hope* had sailed with her first cargo of little gray martyrs to science. And it pleased him so much that he read it aloud to Christabel, his wife, over the coffee cups after dinner on the veranda of the luxurious bungalow he had rented in the Chindwin Bund.

Christabel listened delightedly. The children were in bed so she could give him her full attention. As he read she adored him with her eyes. What a man, she thought. Big, strong, practical and kindly, and yet as bashful as a schoolboy who has had a good report. He's big, she thought. Big, reliable and sound, and a philanthropist who really gets things done.

Donovan finished reading with a self-conscious grin.

"What do you think of that, Chris? It makes me feel like Socrates, St. Francis and Roosevelt all rolled into one."

"All set for the White House?" Christabel teased.

"No, honey, I've no ambition that way. I want to help, not to rule. Seriously, are you pleased with me?"

"I am. I agree with the writer of that article that many people will have cause to bless your name."

"Thanks. That means more to me than all the pretty speeches this morning."

He was alluding to the ceremony that had attended the sailing of the *Dawn of Hope*. It had been a gay, colorful ceremony attended by many high personages. Everyone had worn garlands of flowers, a band had played, and after the passengers' quarters (as the monkeys' cages were jocularly termed) had been inspected, there had been speeches and champagne. Beneath the surface gaiety there had been a serious note. No one had been allowed to forget that the *Dawn of Hope* was a mercy ship, a ship sailing to the rescue of sick humanity.

DONOVAN'S thoughts went to her now. He could see her in his mind's eye throbbing along under the stars leaving a phosphorescent wake on the dark waters of the Bay of Bengal. In the great cages the monkeys would be sleeping in huddled bunches. Everything possible for their comfort had been done. There were branches and swings where they could play to their hearts' content, shady hiding-places for when they wished to sleep. The cages were ventilated and warmed to precisely the correct temperature and there was green and amber-tinted lighting to simulate the sort of light to which they had been accustomed in the forests. Yes, the *Dawn of Hope* was a real simian paradise. No snakes, no stalking leopards and an abundance of fresh fruit and water.

Donovan gave a sudden chuckle.

"If I were a monk I'd be queuing to get my name on the next passenger list," he said. "See the marvels of Modern America. . . . Sea, air, gay companionship and good food. . . . Non-stop luxury cruise from Rangoon to San Francisco!"

"One way tickets only," Christabel supplemented. "Ed, do you think monkeys get homesick?"

"Not if they're treated right. . . . Hullo, a visitor! Chris, look at this guy."

Christabel looked. In the moonlight she saw a native entering the front compound. He was a tiny little man with a shaven head wearing a ragged robe reaching to his ankles. He walked very slowly leaning on a stave that was taller than himself.

"I've seen him before," she said. "I noticed him this morning on the quay. He wanted to come up the gangway and a Sikh policeman stopped him."

"Shame!" smiled Donovan. "If he'd sailed with the rest of the bunch no one would have noticed the difference. Look at him scratching himself."

"He's simple," Christabel said.

The native had squatted down in the exact center of the lawn fronting the bungalow. In the moonlight he looked like a little stone Buddha. Donovan watched him with tolerant amusement. At home one wouldn't have stood for that sort of thing, but this was the East.

It was Christabel who uttered a protest.

"I'm sure he's not hygienic. I don't like him on the grass where Harry and Lucy play. Do send him away, Ed."

"I guess you're right, honey. Hi, *Chaukidar!* . . . Abdul Hakim!"

The *chaukidar* (watchman) appeared round the corner of the veranda. He was a Pathan ex-policeman whose duty it was to protect the bungalow from night marauders.

"The Sahib wishes?" he asked.

"The Sahib wishes that old scallywag to vacate his grass," Donovan said, pointing. "Here, give him this and tell him to clear off."

ABDUL HAKIM took the one rupee note, but he still looked doubtful.

"He is a very old man and he is but resting. Doubtless he will remove himself in a little while."

"I want him to go now. *Ek dum,* do you understand? What's the matter with you, Abdul Hakim?"

"Sahib, I have a little fever."

"I believe you're scared of that old fleabag! I thought Pathans were brave men!"

"We are brave men, but that one is a Holy Man and a priest of the Banda Bap. Nevertheless, I will give him the sahib's message."

They watched him march down the veranda steps, and across the graveled drive to where the priest squatted. As he neared the motionless figure his steps slowed. At a safe distance he stopped and said something in Pushtu.

The priest answered in a high-pitched, fluting voice like the song of a bird. In a moment the *chaukidar* was back on the veranda. He was breathing hard and his skin glistened.

"Sahib, I have a high fever. Will the Presence grant me permission to retire?"

"Nonsense. What did the beggar say?"

"It was but the foolish talk of an old man. He says the Banda Bap who is the God of Monkeys is listening for the voices that have left the forest. And he bade me tell you and the mem-sahib to beware lest a great evil should come upon this house."

"He did, did he? Give that stick."

Donovan's blood was up. That superstitious, flea-ridden old humbug! He'd give him monkeys if he got within range.

But he didn't get within range. At sight of the angry American looking twice as large in his dinner suit of white tussaud the priest scuttled away like a disturbed spider. As he went he uttered little angry, monkey-like cries. When he reached the shadow cast by the trees fringing the compound he disappeared as if the ground had swallowed him.

Donovan returned laughing to the veranda. His momentary annoyance had vanished with its cause.

"That's disposed of him. I don't fancy he'll come back. Where's Abdul Hakim?"

"Probably in bed with the blankets pulled over his head. He's got a 'very high fever indeed.' I'm going to have a look at the children. *Au revoir* for now."

WHEN she had gone Donovan mixed himself another highball and lit a fresh cheroot. He was feeling good, but rather tired. All the fuss and ceremony that had attended the sailing of the *Dawn of Hope* had been exhausting.

Again his thoughts went to the ship. By now she must be quite a way out. The monkeys would have settled down in the dim greenish-lit cages. Van Ruder, the Dutch skipper, would be playing cards in the officers' saloon; the Lascar crew would be singing and gambling forrard on the moonlit boat deck. And the *Dawn of Hope* would go steadily on, on, on, ploughing her very way across the dark waters, a relief ship carrying ammunition to those who fought in the laboratories against pain, disease and death.

Then he heard Christabel's step. She was half-angry, half-laughing as she offered him the filled tumbler she had carried from the night-nursery.

"For Pete's sake, taste that, Ed, and tell me what you think."

Obediently Donovan took a sip. Then he tilted the glass and drank the contents.

"Iced orange juice and very nice too! Can I have some more?"

"You don't think it tasted salty?"

"No. Should it have done?"

"The kids won't touch it. They say they're thirsty, but they won't drink a drop. The ayah's almost distracted. Ed, will you speak to them?"

"Sure, honey. You sit down and relax. I'll soon fix this."

He was gone some little time, but when he came back his expression was triumphant.

"They've had a glassful each. 'Salty or not, down it goes,' I said, and they saw I meant it. There are times one has to be firm with kids."

NEXT morning he was up early. While the rest of the family were still in bed he drove in his Buick along sandy, tree-lined roads to the office he had rented on the waterfront.

Early as he was, his neat little Burmese secretary, Miss Ammah Lun, had forestalled him. As she wished him a smiling good-morning she handed him a wireless-message form. It was from the Dutch skipper of the

Dawn of Hope. Donovan laughed as he read:

"Having a splendid trip. Passengers in high spirits and looking forward to Frisco."

He settled down at his desk. There were many letters to be read and answered. Half-a-dozen lesser universities were complaining because they had been overlooked in the distribution of monkeys. But the great majority of the letters were laudatory and grateful. Despite his modesty, reading them made him feel that he really had done something of value to mankind.

Presently a distinguished visitor was announced. Donovan, who knew Professor Hirandah Singh already by reputation as the world's greatest authority on tropical diseases, was delighted. The doctor beamed on him through thick glasses.

"The whole world of medical science is in your debt, Mr. Donovan," he said. "Perhaps you will allow us to name our new children's hospital at Calcutta after you as a small token of our appreciation?"

"My wife will be delighted," Donovan said simply. "Thank you very much indeed, Professor."

Then the telephone bell rang. Christabel was at the other end. She was worried about the children, she said. They were complaining of thirst and yet refusing to drink. Everything she or the ayah offered they spat out because they said it tasted "salty."

"And I don't think it's just naughtiness," she said. "Their temperatures are a little up and they're fretful. Do you think we should have a doctor?"

"Yes, I do," Donovan said promptly. "We'll have the opinion of Professor Hirandah Singh. If he wasn't sitting right here at my elbow I'd tell you he was the cleverest doctor in Asia. Isn't that right, Professor?"

He drove the Professor to the bungalow in his Buick. Hirandah Singh looked at the children and confirmed that they had a little fever. Probably, he said, it was due to their having been too much in the sun the day before. No, he didn't suspect malaria or sandfly. But to make quite certain since one couldn't be too careful in Rangoon he'd take blood-slides and have them analyzed at the hospital.

"And the taste of salt?" Christabel asked. "Is that a symptom or anything?"

Her tone was determinedly casual. She was being very much the modern mother who knows how foolish it is to make a fuss.

"Their little insides are upset so they have a nasty taste in their mouths," Hirandah Singh said. "When the fever has resolved itself the taste will go. However, I will look in again when I know the result of the blood test."

Donovan returned to his office. The kids would be all right. A touch of fever didn't amount to anything. Not with all these miracle drugs like strep-what-was-its-name? on the market.

THERE was a lunch in his honor at the Irrawaddy Flotilla Club. Again he had to listen to laudatory speeches. Someone called him the most practical philanthropist of the age. He responded with a semi-humorous speech in which he said that the real philanthropists were the monkeys on the *Dawn of Hope,* and that it was to them the scientists should feel gratitude.

"Although," he added, "if I were a monkey I'd rather die painlessly from the prick of a needle in a laboratory than be chewed up by a leopard in the jungle."

He excused himself as soon as he could and returned to his office. There'd been a telephone message from Christabel to say that the blood tests had proved negative; Hirandah Singh was giving the children an injection and he wasn't to worry.

Reassured, he resumed work. There were callers to be seen. One of these was the young Eurasian forestry officer who had supplied the first consignment of monkeys for the *Dawn of Hope.* To Donovan's surprise he said he didn't want to renew the contract.

"Doesn't two chips a head leave you enough profit?" Donovan demanded.

The Eurasian looked down at his boots and spoke almost ashamedly.

"It's not the money. It's—it's just I happen to like monkeys. I've got two as pets. Ever seen a sick monkey, Mr. Donovan?"

"I can't say I have."

"It's all the world like a sick child. It cuddles up to you and cries. Did you know monkeys shed real salt tears like humans? And they have toys, and they make up games and they laugh. No, I'm not trapping any more."

Donovan would have liked to have argued with him, but the telephone bell intervened. It was Christabel again. He hardly recognized the voice of his wife who was usually so poised and self-controlled.

When he had grasped what she was saying he turned rather white.

"Raving for water? Why don't you give it to them? "

"They just spit it out. Their poor little lips and tongues are encrusted with salt. And now Hirandah Singh says we mustn't give them anything to drink. He's given another injection of something. . Ed, I believe our children are dying."

"Has Hirandah Singh called in anyone else?"

"There are two specialists. They don't know what to do. I can tell by their faces. While they argue Harry and Lucy are dying slowly of thirst like people on a raft. Ed, you must do something. . . . Do you hear me? . . . You must do something."

HER voice shocked him. His cultured, self-controlled Christabel was speaking in what was almost a scream.

He, too, was afraid. He stammered as he answered.

"Hold on, Chris. I'll be with you before you can look round. Just hold on."

He flung on his jacket, cursing the delay. As he was leaving the office Miss Ammah Lun stopped him with a wireless form she seemed to think important. It was from the *Dawn of Hope*:

"Heavy swell upsetting passengers. Many seasick and refusing food. Have reduced speed."

He crushed the paper into a ball. Monkeys? What the hell did monkeys matter when his children were dying?

He was in the Buick, traveling fast. Night was falling as he turned into his compound. With all its rooms lighted and people scurrying about and the servants panicking, the bungalow gave the impression of a ship on fire. As he stopped the car a cry came through the open windows of the night-nursery.

"I'se thirsty. Mummy, water. . . .I'se thirsty."

His face and hands went suddenly wet. That had been Harry—his own son wailing like some little animal in pain! He ran across the veranda and was confronted by the tall, stooping figure of Hirandah Singh.

He caught the Indian's arm.

"What is it? Speak, man! What is it?"

"Mr. Donovan, control yourself. Come in here and sit down. We mustn't distress your wife."

He found himself in a chair. Hirandah Singh was speaking—telling him things that seemed nonsense.

"Mr. Donovan, you'll have to know the truth. We can do no more than we have already done. Your children have been attacked by some rare virus similar to the virus that causes rabies."

"Rabies?"

"A form of rabies. Drinking of sea-water produces rather similar disorder. I've risked giving them an injection of the new drug *pennyllsyllicita,* but as yet it's not produced the reaction I hoped for."

"What you mean is there's no hope?"

"You'd be wise to prepare yourself for the worst. Your wife is with them now. Would you like to join her?"

"Of course."

In the night nursery he felt an inclination to run away. This was a nightmare. A few hours couldn't have transformed his splendid, rosy children into those tiny waxen things with sunken faces and wild dark eyes. And the white-faced woman with disheveled hair who hissed at him across the cots couldn't be his beautiful Christabel.

"Look at them! That's what your vanity's done. If you hadn't dragged us to Rangoon to hear a lot of silly speeches this wouldn't have happened."

"Chris, you don't know what you're saying."

"Oh, I know all right. The children are dying of thirst and it's your fault. You should have left them in the States."

"All right, old girl."

HE COULDN'T meet her eyes, couldn't find anything to say. Lucy was tossing in delirium. He sat down by the cot and took her in his arms. She clung to him with feverish strength and he heard her hoarse whisper:

"Just a weeny drop. . . . Oh, please. . . . A weeny drop for Lucy."

Her eyes stared up into his with a wild appeal. Her tiny puckered face reminded him of the forestry officer's words.

"A sick monkey is like a sick child. . . It cuddles up to you and cries."

His little monkey! Lucy who'd been so gay and beautiful and who'd loved to romp and dance had become just a little monkey shriveled with thirst. And she wouldn't understand—that was the pity that wrung his heart. . . . She was suffering and she couldn't understand. . . .

"Water. . . Just one ickle drop. . Please, Daddy."

As he tried to soothe her an idea flashed into his mind. At a saner moment he'd have rejected it as unscientific, superstitious and absurd, but now he clutched it as if he were drowning.

"Chris!"

"What?"

"That priest—that priest of the Monkey God. Has he been here today?"

She raised her head and stared at him for a long moment. Then comprehension sprang into her eyes.

"Yes, yes, he has. The servants were afraid to send him away. He's there now. Why do you ask?"

He turned his head. Yes, through the open window he could see the Buddha-like figure motionless in the moonlight. It was ridiculous, but . . . ?

"Ed, do you think . ?"

"I daren't think. Anyway, I'm going to call back the *Dawn of Hope*. We'll put those monkeys back where they belong."

"Yes, Ed, do. Free the poor little things. Let them go back to the forest. Oh, Ed, be quick! Don't lose a second."

They were speaking in whispers like children planning some naughtiness. Almost guiltily Donovan tore a leaf from his notebook and scribbled a message.

"Return Rangoon immediately"

He felt a turncoat, almost a traitor. But he'd make it up to the scientists. Surely there were other roads to knowledge than through the suffering of innocent creatures who couldn't understand.

He gave the message to a servant with orders to have it wirelessed to the ship at once. Again he sat down by Lucy's cot. Hours that seemed centuries dragged past. Then he became aware that the night was lifting like the slow withdrawing of a curse.

The *Dawn of Hope* must have changed course for Rangoon. Christabel had taken Harry in her arms. He heard her voice as she rocked the child. She was crooning softly, simple words that might have been a spell.

"It's over now. . . . The little ones are coming back—back to the forest they love. They'll see the sun and the stars and hear the birds sing. . . . Yes, and there are pools where they can drink. . . They're coming home, home, home. . . . No more fear and pain. . . The ship is bringing them home to freedom."

"Chris?"

"Hush, he's asleep. My baby is asleep!"

Had the boy died in her arms? Then he looked at Lucy and his heart stood still. No dying child had ever looked like that!

His shout brought Hirandah Singh at the double. Hirandah Singh had been waiting with a morphia syringe in readiness for the worst, but a glance told him it would not be needed. He seized Donovan's hand and wrung it so that it hurt.

"The pennyllsyllicate has acted! They will get well very quickly now. Look, their mouths are already moist and clean! No, don't thank me. It is the miracle drug that has saved their lives!"

"Pennyllsyllicate!" Christabel tried to wink at her husband while tears rained down her cheeks. She could see through the window where the birds were serenading the dawn that the little priest of the Banda Bap no longer squatted on the lawn.

O Golden-Tongued Romance

by Clark Ashton Smith

WE FOUND, we knew it dimly
Within a dead life grimly
By guarding time inurned—
A glamor far and olden,
A fulgor night-enfolden,
A flame that in long-darkling Eden burned.

Though hardly then we claimed it,
We yet adored and named it
With a name forgotten now—
A faery word and dawn-like,
A word of gramarie, gone like
An opal bird from off a purple bough . . .

Ah! vain the lamp reluming
The unhaunted vault inhuming
The cold Canopic jar,
And vain the charm recovered
From out the demon-hovered,
Worm-traveled page of pentacled grimoire.

And yet the thing we yearned for,
The thing that we returned for
From tomb and catacomb,
It may not wholly dwindle
While moon or meteor kindled
A phantom beacon on the ebon foam.

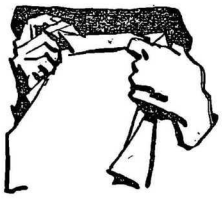
Through ghoul-watched wood unthridden,
By goblin mere and midden,
No ivory horn will blow,
No gold lamp lighten gloom-ward,
But we will carry doom-ward
The broken beauty caught from long ago:

An echo half evading
The ear, remotely fading
From a far-vibrant lyre,
A long-plucked flower blooming
In the dry urn, a fuming
Myrrh-fragrant ember in a darkened pyre.

The Mask

BY CURTIS W. CASEWIT

. . . good death masks — things to be cherished and displayed and treasured.



THERE were many reasons why Crouse was depressed. Gwen Stephenson was one of them. *Would she come back?*

Feverish pre-war Vienna. They called it the gay City of Waltzes. A delusion, when worries crush you. His wife was dead, this full year now, he was crippled and he didn't know whether Gwen was coming back. *Gwen, his good left arm.*

Crouse leaned on the side of the huge window of his studio. He leaned on his right arm. The left sleeve of his smock dangled loosely, a memento of his accident when he had arrived in Vienna five years ago. Leaning, he looked down into the street. Gaiety? Waltzes? From his window he could see the harsh limestone hills under him; he could guess the sugary Baroque façades at a distance. The Danube? An ugly, slimy river, shrouded by the lonely gauche buildings. He had worries that was all. With worries everything could turn gray—even Vienna.

Ironically, his keen, blue eyes turned toward his studio. An array of plaster heads overloaded the shelves. He hated his profession. The Austrians called it a *Maskenfabrikant.* "Warren B. Crouse—manufacturer of masks." He, a sculptor of serious promise. And Gwen had been his assistant. He had never attempted to make her more than that. He was too sensible.

Gwen was an art student, the only fellow American he had met lately in Vienna. Gwen Stephenson: Des Moines, Iowa . . Rome, Italy . Vienna, Austria. She had come to him from the Vienna Sculpture School, after the completion of her studies. Her eyes were brown like chestnuts, and always grave and a little misty. Her hair was black and silky, and drawn back in a knot. Her mouth delicate and expressive. It said, to him, mutely: "No, Warren B. Crouse. No. You may look distinguished with your straight, sharp face, and your gray hair and knowledge of life. But still: no."

Presently the sky turned black. At a distance, the spires of the *Stefansdom* looked like tiny saws. The studio was very dark. Only the skeleton shone from the wall, and a Beethoven in clay, he had bought in Berlin. There was a collection of grinning Buddhas, some sea shells from Venice, and two Indian wood masks, from the States.

Perhaps, Rudolf von Kleffensteiner would discourage her from coming back. Von Kleffensteiner was a supercilious Austrian youngster, who had more money and more than was good for him. The money had gone to his head—the women under his

feet. Warren B. Crouse didn't like Rudolf von Kleffensteiner. He often wondered how much Gwen cared for him.

Outside it was raining now. The waves of disorderly roofs at the bottom of the hill began to gleam and glitter, and look like churning waves on an ocean. The ivies rustled against the walls of the house, and the linden trees in the garden trembled, shaking off their summerly leaves.

Crouse gazed at the rickety operation table, all furnished with flat cushion, waterproof blanket and leather straps. Here, he made his clients lie down, with a smooth *"bitte, bitte*—it isn't going to hurt, be all over in a minute—just a little patience." He had learned the German language all right. A *Maskenfabrikant!* Him! A sculptor, formerly New Haven, Conn.

HIS thoughts were interrupted by the staccato noise of an automobile engine, droning up the hill. He heard a car stop and a door slam. The rusty bell at his gate tingled.

When he opened the door, von Kleffensteiner stood in front of him, in all his arrogance. His figure was athletic and wiry, almost herculean. He wore a brown tweed suit, the latest fashion in London and Milan, and a trademark of many an habitué of the Vienna coffee-houses.

His shaven face gleamed sleekly. He wiped the rain from his forehead, and two lines formed between his brows, dramatically.

"I wish to talk to you, Crouse."

He spoke to him as if to a servant, and he grinned mischievously, for he never smiled. Some people can't smile.

"Come in," Crouse said, reluctantly.

With a long step, von Kleffensteiner strode into the room. He took off his green felt hat, placing it facetiously on top of a mold. Crouse seized it with his only hand, and put it on the table, sour-faced and silent. The rain was dancing waltzes against the window.

The visitor's blond, short-cropped head bent down, with a stealthy glance in the direction of Crouse's left sleeve. Then he stared at his own hands, slowly. They were hairy and muscular, and manicured with care.

Let's hope he won't light his pipe this time, Crouse thought. Kleffensteiner smoked an atrocious variety of Bulgarian tobaccos, which Crouse detested.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

Von Kleffensteiner sat down, putting one leg above the other. His face was clad with its habitual sneer. A protruding chin gave him an air of ruthless brutality.

"Gwendolyn has sent me."

He always called her Gwendolyn. He liked to toy with her name.

"Well?"

"She has a message for you."

"What message?"

"I think she will not come back to you."

A slight tremor passed over Crouse's face. Tension gripped him. The stump of his left arm hurt, and he fingered it nervously.

Von Kleffensteiner looked at him, eagerly watching the effect of his words. His eyes wandered round the room, leisurely, resting first on the skeleton on the wall, then on the debris of plaster on the ground.

"Gwendolyn has enough of this—err crazy profession," he said.

Crouse kept silent. His dignity did not leave him for a moment.

"In fact, Crouse, if you really want to know, *I* will not let her come back."

Crouse winced with astonishment.

"You?" This was it. Gwen was his very *raison d'être.* It would be frightful if—

"Since when do you, Sir, have anything to say about Gwen's decisions?" Crouse asked. Irritation was slowly getting the better of him. He turned visibly pale.

"There are many reasons," the visitor said, rising. "I rather prefer not to discuss them." Whereupon he seized his *Tiroler* hat, and swung it over his blond stubble. With a catlike step, he reached the door. "I'll see Gwendolyn tonight. *Auf Wiedersehen!"*

AFTER the other had left, Crouse took stock of the situation. Kleffensteiner was perfectly capable of bluffing, and his visit might be nothing but a maneuver. Chicanery and intrigue were a special hobby with him. It would be relatively easy to find out about Gwen. But Crouse was no man to rush matters, and too cautious to delve into anything foolish.

It was evening. Somewhere a mechanical piano groaned, with monotony. Streetcars screeched. Lights began to glitter from some houses.

If Gwen *didn't* come back? Then what? He paid her well. There would be others. Mask making brought money. But *would* there be others? Would there be quite someone like Gwen?

He walked up the spiral staircase to his room. The howling of dogs kept him from sleeping, and the twittering of sparrows awoke him early. After coffee, he carefully prepared the paraphernalia for the day. He assembled the spatulas, a small bag with plaster, a bowl, assorted tools and his white smock. As he was leaving the house, he saw Gwen at a distance.

She pushed her bicycle up the hill, her bare knees jolting the skirt up and down.

He went toward her, his heart pounding. They met at the gate. She smiled brightly, and her white teeth sparkled. Her skin was extremely pale, as always, but her face ended in a soft graceful triangle. She wore an Austrian costume, with elegance.

"Yes, Gwen?" His voice was unsteady. There was much at stake.

Silently, her eyes searched for his. She had a directness of her own, but her face said little.

"I've come back to work."

Happiness almost strangled him.

"I thought you wouldn't come back," he said.

"Why?"

"Your friend Kleffensteiner paid me a visit last night. He—"

"Oh no!" she pursed her lips, her brown eyes wide open with astonishment.

"Did he tell you I wasn't coming back?"

"He did."

"But how could he know? I haven't seen him for days."

Crouse tucked his empty sleeve into his left coat pocket.

"It's immaterial now," he said. "We have an appointment at the Chapel. Are you ready for work?"

"Yes," she said, simply.

She propped her bicycle behind the wall, and they left, side by side.

Mortuaries were non-existent in Vienna, and the Chapel was downward some twenty minutes away. Crouse walked in silence, and Gwen's low shoes tapped on the cobblestoned road. They passed clusters of gardens, with wooden fences around them, and tiny houses, nestled in high, green grass. Sometimes, a horse and cart overtook them, or women with shawls around their heads, and straw baskets in their hands, on the way to the market.

When they arrived, Gwen helped him into his white coat. It was a gesture which he appreciated; she had many suchlike habits. She looked at him, as he unpacked his instruments, his one hand working with slow precision. The white coat accentuated his gray, patrician head. A persuasive intelligence and distinction emanated from his large, clear forehead, and the unlined, symmetric face.

They went to the middle of the room, to a white-clothed crib, adorned with roses and wreaths. A woman lay in it, silent and waxen.

Crouse reached for a small jar of vaseline. He pressed it under his left arm-pit and opened it with his right hand.

"How important is Kleffensteiner to you?" he asked, omitting the *von*.

She handed him a brush.

"That's a difficult question to answer," she said.

He leaned over the corpse. Meticulously, he smeared the eyebrows with vaseline. Then he placed a cloth on the woman's hair.

"Do you have any plans?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. Organ music came from above, softly. A funeral in progress. They were used to it.

"What plans, Gwen?"

She walked to the end of the huge, high cellar-room, to fill a basin with water. "Mainly," she said, over her shoulder, "to stay with you, for another six months."

He betrayed no emotion. He kept perfectly calm.

She came back with the basin, and placed it on a bench. Her white, beautifully shaped hands dipped into the water, probingly.

"And then?"

"Iowa perhaps." She smiled, suddenly with warmth. He felt the singular mixture of nearness and distance in her. Sometimes he fancied to think that he was important to her.

He poured the plaster into the water, and stirred. Then he spread the white, thick substance on the subject's head, with his fingers.

"I'm learning a great deal from you," she said. "This is a fascinating experience."

He loathed the profession, but it *was* fascinating. Austrians regarded good masks almost like good paintings, hanging them onto their walls, cherishing them for generations.

They waited until the plaster on the face dried. Then he withdrew the mold, with care. He handed it to her, and she wrapped it in a rug. He picked up his tools, and they left the chapel.

At the studio, he smeared plaster into the mold. After it hardened, as she removed the completed mask, they heard the throttling of the engine, coming up the hill. They looked at each other, quietly, their eyes finding one another for an instant.

A minute later, they saw von Kleffensteiner jump out of the sportscar. Every movement conveyed the feeling of elasticity and buoyant action. He wore a military-style raincoat, with a lavish belt and colossal lapels.

Gwen stared at the floor when he burst in. His overflowing poise embarrassed her. She was disturbed.

"We're not quite through, Rudolf," she said.

The mask of the woman was in front of her, on the table, eyes closed, features serene and distinctive.

KLEFFENSTEINER withdrew his coat, and thrust it on a chair, with a wide, sweeping gesture. Then he leaned against the wall, lighting a pipe. He knew Crouse didn't like pipe smoke. Suddenly he said, "*Ach*—these artists! It smells like a paint factory in here!"

He eagerly approached Gwen, who was squeezing colors out of tubes.

"Good Lord, Gwendolyn! Who is this woman?"

His English was good; he used the language like a toy.

"She is a former actress, Rudolf."

"*Donnerwetter,* what a head she has! Beautiful." He strode to the back of the room, where Crouse stood washing his hand.

"Why don't you make a mask of me sometimes, Crouse?"

Crouse rubbed dry his hand slowly. Then he walked to Gwen's table. The Austrian followed. Crouse snapped on the light, and it exploded on the visitor's short-cropped head.

"I'm serious, Crouse. How about a mask?"

He had lost all his hauteur when he wanted something. He had seen the woman's head, and vanity tore at him, now.

Crouse kept silent. He stood behind Gwen who was painting the woman's lips. The shrill voice of a singer pierced the stillness, from somewhere. Piano keys echoed dreamily.

"What do *you* think about it, Gwendolyn?"

"I think your head is interesting, Rudolf," she said with seriousness. Then she put the paints down and rose, facing him. "Your cheek bones, for example. They emerge in a remarkable way. Or—" her fingers tentatively followed his sharp profile. He clutched the hand, firmly and drew her to him.

"Good night now," Crouse said.

THEREAFTER, strangely enough, Kleffensteiner didn't come anymore. Gwen left alone, nights. Characteristically, Crouse avoided asking her further questions. Several days passed, and Gwen assisted diligently, speaking little. They took the *stadtbahn* to chapels and rich villas, and people had appointments at Crouse's residence above the town.

Then, one late evening, Crouse heard the car door slam, and the bell tingle.

He opened the door, and von Kleffensteiner stood outside, pipe in his mouth. He was as haughty as usual, his brows twisted with sarcasm, a smirk on his face.

"I've made up my mind," he said, without greeting.

"About what?"

"Don't you remember, Crouse? *The mask.* My mask."

"But this is rather late at night. I—Why such a rush?"

"Gwendolyn convinced me."

They still stood at the door. Vienna loomed below them, dots of light in the darkness. Kleffensteiner spoke again.

"She insisted. So I thought, I'll give her the mask for our—wedding."

"Are you intending to marry her?" Crouse asked. He still held a book in his hand. He put it into a chair.

"Marry her? Of course, why not?"

"Does she know you're here?"

"No" He walked into the middle of the room, and took off his trench-coat. He wore a white shirt, with an emblem on the breast pocket, and a loud tie.

"So, are you going to do it or not?" he asked impatiently.

He still held the pipe in his hand. The sickly odor of Bulgarian tobacco spread in the room.

"If you can't do it, well—"

"All right, take your jacket off."

The other complied, displaying a pair of broad shoulders. Then he walked to the mirror on the wall, and glanced at himself approvingly.

Crouse slipped into his smock. Then he rolled the antiquated operation table into the middle of the room, directly under the strong, concentrated lamp. Its beads trembled.

"I want you to be comfortable," he said, "Loosen your collar, take your tie off. Now lie down here."

As the Austrian did so, Crouse went to the wall where there was an old-fashioned gramophone, with a huge speaker. He put a record on, and presently the bold opening chords of Beethoven's *fifth* thundered through the high room.

"A little music will put you at ease."

"I am, I am—! Why such ceremonies?"

Crouse mixed the plaster, stirring with care.

"This is plaster of Paris," he said.

"Why plaster of Paris?" Kleffensteiner asked.

"Oh, Paris was rich in plaster."

The fifth surged through the night, a rhythmic harmony of woodwinds, flutes and violins. Crouse was receptive to music, and the theme flew through him, lifting his spirit.

Presently it reached a summit of grace and beauty.

"Do you like this music?" he asked.

"Oh—it's all right."

Crouse's one hand worked with deftness,

applying the cloth to Kleffensteiner's hair, brushing his eyebrows and eyelids with vaseline. Then it reached for a cardboard frame which went over the man's head.

"What's this for?" Kleffensteiner asked.

"It supports the material."

He stirred the plaster again, with his right hand, the left stump propped against the bowl. Then he fetched some salt and poured it into the thickening substance. Salt makes plaster harden with speed.

He began to spread the white material on Kleffensteiner's forehead, skillfully, like a doctor operating on a patient.

"This is cold, Crouse." The Austrian still held the pipe in his hand, and the infernal smoke penetrated Crouse's nostrils.

"Give me this, please." The American placed the pipe on the table. Then he reached for a blanket and with exertion wound it round the other's body.

"That's better," Kleffensteiner said.

"Close your eyes now."

Expertly, Crouse's hand spread more plaster on the forehead, then over the lids. He worked down over the hollow cheek bones, to the nose.

"How are you feeling?"

"Fine, fine. *Sehr gut.* It's for Gwen, anyway."

"The things one can do for a woman," Crouse said, a nuance of irony in his voice.

The quality of the plaster was perfect. It hardened fast, the salt helping.

The record had come to an end. Crouse had no time to get back to the gramophone. Its needle rasped screechingly.

"You'll have to breathe through your nose. You must not speak anymore—I'll cover your mouth now."

HE SPREAD the white material over the mouth. The other kept still while the plaster hardened.

"You'll breathe through the two straws which I put into your nose now." Crouse inserted the oiled straws, then quickly applied plaster over the nose.

With a split-second movement, he put the leather strap around the immobile body buckling it. The other wasn't aware what was done to him; if he were, he couldn't have said anything. His mouth was shut by plaster.

"Now hold your breath for a minute. It won't be long."

With dexterity, Crouse removed the straws. His spatula dipped into the bowl, lifting slabs of the white material, which he applied to the nose, and in turn, with his thumb into the nostrils.

There was a violent movement on the couch, followed by a feeble, stifled gurgle. But there was no escape. Kleffensteiner was gagged, tied and trapped.

The struggle had been brief and fierce. Death by asphyxiation comes quickly. It was like the hissing of the Austrian's pipe which Crouse threw into the basin with water.

THE man lay quite still then, and the tobacco spread in the water, eerily. Crouse went to the gramophone and lifted its arm.

Musty air pierced his lungs, and his heart was pumping ferociously. He was very excited. *What had he done?* The sudden realization swept over him: he had murdered a man. Warren B. Crouse—murderer. His brain was numb. He went to a chair, and sank into it.

At one thirty, he went to the couch and unbuckled the straps. Under the blankets, he found the virile hands in convulsive fists. The victim had struggled.

At two, he took the frame off, and the plaster mold. The face was blue, but astonishingly serene.

The dead always look serene, he told himself.

He reached for some boiled soap, and started to paint the inside of the mold. With sudden fright, he saw that the features were ghoulishly distorted. The man himself lay there, two yards from him, in rigid placidity. But the mold displayed a ghastly expression. Frantically, Crouse filled the negative with fresh plaster, trying to forget.

He worked quickly, sweat covering his brows.

At three, he heard the deep peels of the bells of the churches in town. The Votif-church followed, with three slow beats. A barge wailed on the Danube.

At four, he dizzily chipped the plaster off the mold, and held the finished mask under the light. It was as peaceful as the

dead man's face. *Everything would be all right.* He placed the mask on a shelf, all by itself, on a wooden base. For a moment he gazed at it thoughtfully.

Dispose of the body, he thought. *Gwen will be coming in the morning.*

It was still completely dark outside when he stumbled out of the house, dragging the cold corpse behind him. Far beneath, the spires of the *Rathaus* glittered and lights, here and there. Vienna was asleep.

He finally reached von Kleffensteiner's car, his arm trembling with the effort. There wasn't a soul in the streets, when he reached the bottom of the hill. In an alley, he put the parking lights on, and pushed the stiff body into the driver's seat. With silent, frightened irony, he placed Kleffensteiner's two hands on the wheel. *Two good, dead hands pawing a wheel.*

Meticulously, he chose backroads and small alleys for his return to the house. He saw no one, except an old milkman, on a cart, drawn by a sturdy horse.

The milkman said: *"Guten Morgen."*

He had never seen the man. Systematically, he went over his chances of being discovered.

There was no proof whatsoever. He had used a glove, no finger marks would be visible on the car. As for the body, he had washed every trace of plaster away. Gwen hadn't known that Kleffensteiner had come to his house. Kleffensteiner probably hadn't told anyone. He was boastful, but he shunned any suspicion of being considered vain.

When Crouse reached home it was almost dawn. He did not turn any lights on. He stumbled through his studio which he knew well enough. He didn't look at the mask, but tiptoed up the staircase to his room. Utterly exhausted, he threw himself on his bed.

IT DIDN'T seem much later that his half-sleep was interrupted by the tingling of the bell. Drowsily, he got up. He looked out of the window. She had already reached the door below him. She had a key. He heard it turn. His head dizzy, he staggered down the spiral stairs, toward her.

He saw her look past him. He read in her eyes that she knew everything. *Everything.* Her mouth twitched, and lines of dread seared across her face. Her eyes began to glint furiously. She shook her head, with quick, spasmodic movements, and the black knot of her hair swayed from side to side. Sudden passion seemed to well through her.

"It's insane," she muttered. "Insane." Advancing steadily toward him, until he almost felt her breath, she cried, "Oh Warren, I—loved you!"

His heart beat like a drum, and he felt needles of fire in his arm.

She still stepped forward, toward him. Her breath was on his cheek now. She was livid, her lips white: "You fool, you fool, you murdered him!"

His head seemed to burst open at its very seams.

"There! Look!" she cried. She turned him bodily till he faced the mask.

The mask—its mouth wide open in horror, tongue lolling between the teeth. An abominable contortion twisted its features. The eyes were swollen, apallingly, as if they had tried for one last time to force themselves out from beneath their prison. Nameless creases of terror furrowed the plaster.

Every instant of the inflicted torture was there, in front of him, with monstrous deviltry.

For a last time, he heard her voice, faintly, "fool, fool, I loved you."

Then he passed into unconsciousness.

His heart had told him she was still alive. . . . but was she?

The Scarred Soul

BY SEABURY QUINN

WHEN Altamont Productions decided to give "White Goddess" to a waiting world they went about it in a lavish manner. The plot, concocted by two name writers in collaboration with at least a hundred earnest young men and women of Altamont's story department, was somewhat cornier than an Iowa field at harvest time, but long experience had convinced Altamont that anything sufficiently publicized would be sure-fire at the box office, and so their advertising experts had a field day.

Full-page advertisements were splashed across the country. Altamont, they announced, was looking for an unknown actress, one who had not been in pictures before, to play the rôle of the Goddess, and in furtherance of their quest they had hundreds of life-size cut-outs prepared and invited young ladies from Portland, Maine to its namesake in Oregon to step into these open silhouettes and test their measurements. Newspapers published views of simpering young women in becomingly brief bathing suits attempting to fit themselves exactly into the hole, and it was not until this fertile field had been worked to exhaustion that Altamont announced the winner was an unknown by the name of Fleur LaFleur whose measurements exactly fitted the cut-out. What they did not announce was that the cut-outs had been painstakingly tailored to Miss LaFleur's dimensions at least a month before the contest was announced, that the lady had received her name not through the sacrament of holy baptism but through the genius of Altamont's publicity department, and that she was in point of fact none other than Joan Brown, once noted as the foremost strip-tease *artiste* in burlesque, but fallen out of public notice since the licensing department of New York City had banished both burlesque and Joan Brown's famous body from the purlieus of West Forty-Second Street.

ABOUT the same time Altamont announced selection of Fleur LaFleur for the part of the Goddess, Lubisi-Lubula, the great Devil-Woman of the Khiva People, stood before the throne of King Dabalah to prophesy.

Lubisi-Lubula was so old that no man could remember when she had not been as wrinkled as a spoiled melon, and among the Khiva people she spoke with finality. About the cave where she lived on the mountainside above Dabalah's capital there stood a guard of virgins, each a perfect specimen of womanhood, each able to send home a spear as truly as the best of the young men, each dedicated to the service of Lubisi-Lubula the Devil-Woman who rejoiced in blood and suffering and demanded sacrifices of the first-fruits of the gardens and the flocks, and often of the family as well. The virgins numbered thirty-three, and every year eleven new recruits were added, replacing an unfortunate eleven who, because they had begun to age where deemed unworthy to attend Lubisi-Lubula further, and so were bound with cords and dropped into the river where crocodiles made short work of them.

"Lord King," said the Lubisi in her cracked, senile voice, "the thought comes to

my liver that the time is come for me to leave the Khiva People."

When he heard this Dabalah pressed the knuckles of his hand against his lips and licked his fingers to insure immunity from wandering ghosts and devils. His father had sat in the shadow of Lubisi-Lubula, and his father's father before him. A king of the Khiva—or the Khiva People themselves—without the Devil-Woman for prophetess, protector and demigoddess was unthinkable as a goat without horns or birds without wings. "Thou wilt not leave us leaderless, O Mighty Devil-Woman?" he asked.

"Nay, Lord King, I pass my office to another. Another comes to serve in my stead, and this shall be the sign: She shall be tall and white of skin as the bole of a lightning-blasted tree, and on her head shall be a crown of flames as if the sun had come to rest upon her brow or fire been kindled in her tresses. I have said."

Then Lubisi-Lubula, Devil-Woman of the Khiva, who had reigned in terror since the time when no man's recollection ran to the contrary, stepped into her palanquin borne by eight straight-backed virgins and was carried up the mountainside.

Just at sunrise the next day the people heard the wailing of the virgins' death-song, and when Tufulo, Dabalah's *sensi-sensi* or chief minister, went to the cave to make inquiry the guard of virgins pointed vaguely to the sky and told him, "Lord, she has gone to dwell among the mighty dead on the Ghost Mountains."

THE hot Africa moon came up slowly; its face a disc of scorched gold. So swollen was it, and so heavy, that for a time it seemed it could not struggle above the horizon, and the branches of the trees seemed to have been drawn on it with charcoal.

All about was the soft scent of the forest mingling with the sharper tang of wood smoke from the fires beneath the cooking pots and the greasy, heavy odor of food stewing in the kettles.

Miss Fleur LaFleur, not long before known as Joan Brown, stirred restlesly in her canvas camp chair. The temperature was somewhere near a hundred and ten and the relative humidity not far from ninety; the air felt like that of a superheated greenhouse. It was too hot to eat the tinned food from the commissary; there was, of course, no ice to chill the bottled Martinis, and a lukewarm cocktail was insipid as turnip juice.

Nevertheless she had taken one, and then another, in hope of working up an appetite for food she did not want, or possibly to help her forget her surroundings. Why, and double why, she wondered, had Abernathy decided to come overland through the French country? The films of "White Goddess" were in the can and had been shipped back to America, and most of the company had gone with them, but Abernathy had insisted on the long trek overland in hope of getting a few "documentaries" which he could splice into a short feature. Besides herself the party consisted of Abernathy, Frank Bohan the cameraman, Chet Fairchild the sound effects man and Joe Mellish who had charge of lighting. Of course there was a host of porters, cooks and hangers-on, as well as several guides who seemed to have only a vague notion where they were, and a squad of *tirailleurs d'Afrique* commanded by a coffee-colored sergeant to insure safe conduct to the British territory.

The French *administrateur* had not liked the idea of their passing through the backlands of his district, but they had letters from those in authority . . . *que voulez-vous?* He had given them a parting word of warning:

"Before you reach the British country you will pass through Khivaland, and there, if anywhere, lies danger. Me, I do not greatly like the Khiva, they are untrustworthy and troublesome. Some day, when the government gives me a sufficient force, I shall go into their country and teach them what is which, I tell you! Meantime, be careful when you cross their land, and safe journey, *mes amis*."

THREE days before the five guides who had piloted them declared they knew the way no longer, received their pay and hastened back along the trail. They had been replaced by a quintette of tall, sullen men with ornaments of bone in ears and noses, teeth filed to a row of pointed tusks, and heavy spears in their hands. Miss LaFleur

had not liked their looks, but Abernathy reassured her. "They're harmless as a basketful of kittens, Fleur—"

"Kittens, me eye!" she had interrupted inelegantly. "They look a lot more like a lot of full-grown tigers to me—and tigers with a yen for my meat."

Indeed, the new guides had looked at her strangely, almost in fascination. Since work on "White Goddess" had ended she had washed the black dye from her flaming hair, now it shone like burnished copper in the shadows and glowed like molten rose-gold in the sunlight, and the guides seemed awestruck by its brilliance. More than once she had observed them looking at her, then muttering to each other, and tapping themselves on the head.

"What a bore!" Miss LaFleur stretched shapely arms above her head and yawned at the ascending moon. "I'm going down the trail to get some air," she told Abernathy. "Want to come along?"

He shook his head and tilted the half-empty cocktail bottle over his cup. "Better not go too far, Fleur. The sergeant tells me there are no big cats about, but just the same—"

"Oh, stay here and get drunk then, you dope!"

She turned petulantly and started down the jungle path. "I think I'd welcome a leopard as a change!"

Seeing her as she strode down the narrow trail one could not wonder that she had made a success in her profession. She wore an olive drab wool shirt left open at the throat, and her high, firm breasts seemed fighting the restraining fabric for release as she walked. Her slim waist and sleek hips were encased in khaki riding breeches, and to the knee her shapely legs were covered by high boots of the kind worn by woodsmen and Boy Scouts, but far from disguising her, the masculine apparel seemed to call attention to her femininity like a shout. No wonder audiences had gone wild when Joan Brown unzipped the fastenings of her costumes, bared her lovely arms and shoulders and the smooth expanse of torso, showing the quick play of hidden muscles underneath her white soft skin. She was feminine

as Eve, seductive as Salomé, provocative as Trojan Helen.

At the curve of the path that hid her from camp she paused and shook her head back till the glowing copper-golden waves of her hair swirled about her face and down her neck. She took a deep breath, drinking in the spiced scent of the forest, then raised her hands above her head in a luxurious stretch and yawned again. But this time her mouth remained open. She tried to scream, but no sound came between her parted lips. She turned to run, but her legs shooks so that her knees seemed in each other's way.

Before her in the path there stood the biggest blackest man that she had ever seen. Great daubs of yellow and white paint were on his cheeks and forehead, a skewer of white bone was thrust through his nose, and in each ear another splint of bone was driven. His massive chest was laced and crisscrossed with a design of long-healed scars which obviously had been made for ornament. In one hand he held a knobkerry, the other he stretched out toward her. "You come," he told her, speaking the words with a grunting effort, as if he found it hard to force them out.

The sort of feeling one has in a rapidly descending elevator took possession of her stomach, and for a moment everything around her seemed to be on a turntable. As she glanced across her shoulder she saw another huge black warrior in the path, and two more emerging from the pathside bush.

"You come!" the man who barred her way repeated. Respectfully, almost gently, he laid his hand on her shoulder.

Then Fleur LaFleur fainted.

HOW long it was before she regained consciousness she had no idea. She had a cloudy recollection of a long, forced journey, of big black men who carried her as easily as if she were a babe in arms, of something sweetly bitter they gave her to drink from time to time, and after each drink she had lapsed once more into unconsciousness.

Now she was awake again—or was she? She seemed to be in some sort of cavern, for stone walls rose about her to a vaulted roof that lost itself in shadows. Against the walls at irregular intervals were shallow earthen dishes in which there floated feebly burning wicks, and by the light of these crude lamps she saw she lay upon a bed of woven skins turned fur-side up. At her feet their crouched a chocolate-colored girl who waved a fan of vulture feathers, and behind the fan wielder knelt several other girls, each armed with a short sword. As she looked sleepily at them they raised their hands palm-upward before their faces, looking at her through spread fingers. What they exclaimed in chorus sounded like, "*Oom-wah-tah, Lubisi-Lubula!*" but she was in no mood to analyze their diction.

"What gives?" she asked.

She roused upon an elbow and exclaimed, half in astonishment, half in dismay. Somewhere in the course of her trip she had been divested of her clothes, and now, except for a fringe of monkey tails sewn to a girdle tied about her waist, she was as nude as the brown women kneeling before her.

Fleur LaFleur had never felt self-conscious at the lack of clothes. She was aware of the beauty of her body and the admiration it evoked; for years it had been her chief asset. She had been a little past fifteen when she had wheedled Mike Ginsberg who owned the Club Tropique to give her a spot in his floor show. How well she remembered: she had done a fan-dance to the bleating of a four-piece "orchestra." Very little dance there had been to the exhibition, and considerably more dancer than fans. She had posed and postured in the spotlight, fluttering the inadequate ostrich feather fans coyly, then run from the dance floor to a perfunctory spatter of applause. Later, when she had developed to magnificent young womanhood, she had been undisputed queen of burlesque strip-teasers, and every theatre where big time burlesque played had proudly displayed at one time or another a sign reading SEE JOAN BROWN'S BODY! When the script of "White Goddess" required her to pose before the camera in little more than a haughty look and several strings of pearls she had not felt the least embarrassed.

But this was different. Posing nude, or virtually so, before a theatre audience or camera was business, just as an undraped model posing for a life class was performing

routine work, but in Africa clothes marked the distinction between the native and the dominant European. To be nude among clothed Americans was to be different—to be an *artiste* playing to her public. To be naked among naked savages was to make yourself one of them.

"Where are my clothes?" she demanded.

The nude girls kneeling before her shook their heads uncomprehendingly, and further questions brought no more responses.

Diversion came in the form of a meal: baked plantains served on fresh green leaves, a calabash of rich stew (this was made of succulent young dog, but as she did not know the difference she ate heartily), and finally a big bowl of mealie beer, which was very good indeed.

After breakfast she was shown into a further cave, and there a little cataract fell tumbling from a height of some ten feet into a natural basin in the rock. When she had stood beneath the waterfall, then lain in the pool for a while, she felt better. "Looks as if they don't intend to barbecue me, for a while, anyway," she told herself as she followed the brown girls back into the first cave.

THE Bantu dialect her captors spoke was a simple one, having a small vocabulary, practically no conjugated verbs and no genders to its nouns. She learned it readily and soon could carry on a kind of conversation with her guardians.

From what they told her, always with averted faces and eyes respectfully cast down, she was a sort of combination goddess, high priestess and oracle. Before she went to dwell among the shades on the Ghost Mountains her predecessor had foretold that she would come to them, "a woman on whose head there is a crown of flame, as if the sun had come to rest upon her brow or a fire kindled in her tresses," and ever since the Khiva warriors had sought her till they found her walking by the river. Her will was law, her word was a sword, and her sword death, but before she entered fully into her reign she must be "prepared."

"I hope they'll give me something more to wear," she said a little wistfully when the virgins of her guard told her the day of preparation neared.

They did, but not at all what she expected or hoped for. Upon the day appointed Kisiki, the King's chief witch-doctor, knelt and beat his forehead on the earth before her, as did his eight assistants. Then twelve roosters—four white, four black, four red—were decapitated and thrown on the ground to run and flop in crazy circles till their headless gyrations came to an end and they lay quivering and stiffening. A venerably-bearded black he-goat protested loudly when Kisiki and his assistants transfixed it with their spears and sprinkled each other with its blood.

Except in pictures Miss LaFleur had never seen anything killed, and movie deaths were not much more convincing than movie life. This was the real thing, raw and bloody, and she retched at sight of it.

But her incipient nausea gave way to consternation when she saw Kisiki coming toward her with a bone stiletto in his hand. She gave a squeal of anguished fright when two of her guardians seized her hands and two more grasped her firmly by the hair, making it impossible for her to move her head.

Next instant she felt a sharp pain in the lobes of her ears, and saw Kisiki standing back, admiring his handiwork. They didn't need to tell her, she knew that she was ornamented like a Khiva warrior—women of the Khiva might wear loops of wire in their ears, or even discs of bone, but only warriors might wear bone rods; not even witchdoctors might thus ornament themselves.

Then, "Not that! Not *that*!" she screamed as Kisiki came toward her once more. This time he held an eight-inch bone bodkin delicately between his forefingers. "No—*no*, I tell you—I won't—" Miss Fleur LaFleur fought like a trapped tigress with her guardians.

Resistance was useless. Almost before she realized what had happened the long, needle-sharp bone splint had been thrust through the septum of her nose and she was bleeding profusely while a virgin of her guard knelt before her, sponging blood from her chin and bosom with a soft rag.

After that they gave her a big dish of some sweet-bitter medicine, and in a little while she fell asleep.

THE next few weeks were like a long, dark night of troubled dreams. Dimly, she remembered waking, moaning feebly in pain, and having something bitter-sweet poured into her mouth, then sinking back to sleep again to have the process repeated endlessly.

At last she struggled back to full consciousness. The pain and swelling had gone from her ears and nose, and as she glanced down she could see the eight-inch splinter of white bone projecting each side of her nostrils above her lip, and from the corners of her eyes she could detect the ends of the long skewers thrust through her ear-lobes. She raised a tentative hand to the nose-rod. To her dismay it did not budge, neither did the long white splints set in her ears. In the healing process scar tissue had formed about the savage ornaments, so that they had grown fast in their positions. They had become as inseparably a part of her as her own skeleton or skin.

She ran a frightened tongue across her lips. There was something wrong with her mouth, something in it that should not be there, or . . .

Her eyes fell on her forearm as she raised her hand to finger her nose-skewer. It looked like an earthworm—several earthworms—writhing across her skin. She brushed at the loathsome thing, and felt the sliding pressure of her fingers. What . . .? She pressed cold fingertips against her cheek. There was a roughness there, a sort of lace-like series of swellings that when she stroked them gave back the sensation of touch.

There was, of course, no mirror in the cave, but she knew what to do. Into the farther cavern she ran, seized a lamp-dish from the wall and held it over the still water of the bathing pool.

She felt a cold sense of foreboding as she leant above the pool, but when she gazed into its limpid depths and saw the image they reflected she gave a scream that rose and flickered like a living flame.

Never in her worst nightmares had she envisioned anything so horrible. Across her brow and cheeks and chin, along the bridge of her nose and over chest and shoulders, down each arm clear to the wrist, and over her abdomen from the swell of her breasts to her hips, there ran a lacework of discolored welts as intricate in pattern as the braid on a circus band-leader's coat. The skin had been scarred deeply with a sharp knife while she slept, and lampblack and blue clay had been worked into the cuts so that they healed in permanently raised seams of a dark liver-color. Every other one of her front teeth had been knocked out, and those remaining had been filed to a needle-point, so that she seemed to snarl like a great carnivore when she drew her lips back.

She screamed again as she beheld her image, a scream that spouted in a thin, terrible geyser of sound. Up and up the anguished cry mounted, growing shriller and more shrill until it seemed no human throat was capable of sustaining it.

Then everything was still in the cavern.

THE life-prisoner who hears the steel gates clang shut behind him knows that he has left the world he knew behind. From then on there will be no failures or successes, no thoughts of loss or gain, no hope of love or courtship or marriage.

So it was with Fleur LaFleur. Her horrible disfigurement, the savage ornaments that she could not remove from nose or ears, her almost-complete nudity, the constant presence of her guard of virgins had shut and barred the gate that never could be opened on the world that she had known. Lubisi-Lubula they called her—"the Holy Devil-Woman."

Very well, then, she would *be* Lubisi-Lubula. She would forget that she had ever been Joan Brown of Broadway or Fleur LaFleur of Hollywood; she would foreswear her race and birth to be what Fate had decreed she must be. Lubisi-Lubula was a cruel demigoddess? All right, they wanted it that way, that was the way the'd have it.

Twice every month, at the new moon and the full, they bore her in her sedan chair about the fields and through the village, that she might overlook the growing crops and insure increase in the flocks. The people of the kraal fell on their faces as she passed, and even King Dabolah bowed his head and hid his eyes respectfully.

When she sat in judgment she was terrible. The old Lubisi-Lubula had ordered

thirty lashes for a trivial offender, the new one with the fiery tresses ordered hands or feet hacked off as casually as she might order gardeners to prune bushes. More times than not she ordered the death penalty and watched the executioner perform his work without the tremor of a lip or flicker of a lid.

Twice a year they offered human sacrifices to her. In the old days two youths and two maidens had been selected by lot to kneel before her cave and have their throats cut when the Lubisi gave the signal, but the new Devil-Woman could not be propitiated by such offerings.

She demanded ten, a dozen, twenty victims at each sacrifice, and sometimes took the sacred knife and did the bloody work herself.

Almost frantically she set herself the task of thinking as well as speaking in Kiswahili. In two years she discovered with elation that she was forgetting English. With a perverted glee like that with which the suicidal maniac contemplates self-destruction she looked forward to the time when, all English forgotten, she would be as completely a savage as any woman of the Khiva, speaking only savage dialects, acting, thinking, *being* the Lubisi-Lubula and nothing else, with only her red hair and blue eyes as souvenirs of a totally forgotten past.

FROM the moment she first walked on the set Frank Bohan the cameraman had loved Fleur-LaFleur. With him it was the desire of the moth for the star, the hopeless yearning for the unattainable. He saw her, tall and lissome, altogether lovely, with hair that shone like burnished copper in the shadows and glowed like molten rose-gold in the light, and from a side view he beheld her face, small-features, clearly cut as the image on a coin, with the sweet line of her chin sweeping down to the flower-stalk curve of her throat. The emotion that possessed him at the sight of her was not accurately to be called love; it was more like magic, like bewitchment, and the moment he first glimpsed her he knew that as long as his heart beat and his blood pulsed he would bear her image in his heart and cleave to her as faithfully—and helplessly—as the tides swing to the moon.

Fleur LaFleur saw in him only a compactly built small man with rather untidy hair, a bridge of freckles across his nose, and deep-set, serious gray eyes. She submitted to his orders with a gracious condescension such as that a young queen might have for the modiste who fits her gowns, she always smiled at him, but as a person he made no more impression on her than one of the cameras he handled with such magical effects.

The night she disappeared Frank was like a man possessed. He combed the jungle like a beagle questing for a rabbit, searching fruitlessly until compelled to stop from sheer exhaustion. When the sergeant and the troopers reported no clues he raged and swore at them in hysterical fury, and forced Abernathy to hold up the safari for three days while they explored still farther in the bush.

"I've heard there's a big kraal not far from here," he told the sergeant. "Feller named Dabolah's the boss there. Why don't we go and ask him what he knows about her?"

"*Mais ici, M'sieu' l'Americaine, ce n'est pas possible!*" the sergeant, who was a full-blood Yafouba, achieved a shrug that would have done credit to a boulevardier.

"Why the hell ain't it possible here?"

"This is the Khiva country, M'sieu, and Khivamen are very bad peoples. At times they practice *le cannibalisme*. They are the last cannibals left in the territory, and are very warlike, very treacherous, very fierce. If we had a battalion—or better still a regiment—I should gladly go to them and say, 'My friends, produce the lady with the flaming hair, or we shall do unpleasant things to you,' but"—once more he shrugged in helpless resignation—"I have not a battalion or a regiment, or even a full company. It would be foolhardy to attempt it. *Voilà tout.*"

So the safari crossed the rest of the French country at forced march, went into British territory and eventually reached Freetown. Then they went back to California and work.

But never for a moment did the thought of Fleur LaFleur leave Frank Bohan. His salary was a large one, for he was a top-notch technician, and as no one expected

him to live in the style of a star or director, he saved most of it. In three years he had enough to make possible a plan which he had nursed since Abernathy and the sergeant gave up the search.

The French *administrateur* viewed his plan with a dim eye, but a present of two cases of Pernod brightened his outlook. "But it is impossible!" the *sous-officier* of *tirailleurs* declared, but when he heard that Bohan was prepared to pay a bonus of five cartons of American cigarettes and ten American silver dollars to each member of the expedition he was all enthusiasm. Two weeks later Bohan with an escort of a full platoon of native troopers and armed with a machine gun camped five hours' march from Dabolah's capital.

The moon-stained shrubbery of the jungle was a mass of purple shadows and shifting highlights. Northward the low hills rose and dipped and rose again like the back of a nesting bird, and behind them, like an Oriental lamp, rose the bleached disc of the African moon. "It wasn't far from here she disappeared," Frank told himself. "That guy Dabolah has his place right over yonder," he nodded toward the hills that rose against the horizon in a low saw-toothed line.

"I'll go in alone and give him a good sales talk—and have the troopers ready to close in with the machine gun . . ." He rose, made sure his pistol was all loaded and in order, and nodded to the sentry. "If I'm not back here by daylight, you know what to do."

"Perfectly, M'sieu'," the trooper answered. He had heard the plan discussed a dozen times.

"Now, let's see," Frank halted to take a bearing. "If she'd gone down this way—that's toward the river—she would have turned about here . . ." The impact of a knobkerry against his head was like the sound of a fist struck into an open palm, and he went down as bonelessly as a rag doll from which the sawdust has been ripped.

A GREAT fire roared against the darkness some fifteen feet away, and he could feel its heat against his cheeks. About the edges of the zone of firelight he could see the sheen of sweat-slicked bodies and the whites of intent, hostile eyes. Somewhere in the shadows a drum sounded with an urgent rhythm. There was insistence and a sort of chuckling fiend-joy in the hollow booming of the taut skin. Across the fire from him, his body streaked with sweat and hideous with ceremonial scars, a fat man with a leopard skin draped on his shoulders sat and looked at him with dull, lack-luster eyes, and to the fat man's right and left there stood a double rank of warriors with long spears in their hands. Beside the warriors there crouched a group of old men, wrinkled as worn-out shoes, with snakeskins braided in their hair and necklaces of human toe- and finger-bones about their throats. Witch doctors!

For what seemed like a week he strained against the grass ropes binding wrists and ankles, and the fat man in the leopard skin sat watching him in moody silence. The utter silence was more terrifying than a chorus of warwhoops; the fixed eyes of the king and people bored into him like a dentist's drill, the terror of the unknown and unguessable plucked at his nerves like a harpist at the harp strings.

Suddenly the stillness crashed. A wave of whispered warning rippled through the crowding savages: *"Lubisi-Lubula, Lubisi-Lubula!"*

From somewhere in the shadows back of the fire came a double rank of tall young women, each with a spear in her hand, each adorned with a string of white beads, and nothing else. Behind them came eight more tall, lithe, naked maidens walking ceremoniously under the poles of a sedan chair, and after them came other armed young women.

The litter-bearers set their burden down and from the palanquin there stepped a figure hewn full-membered from a nightmare. The face was terrifying as the accusation of a guilty conscience, for on brow and cheeks and chin there lay an intricate lacework of liver-colored scars, and through the nose was thrust a length of human shin bone, while in each ear a similar savage ornament was pierced. Upon the chest and stomach, too, was an elaborate design of blue-purple scars like those worn by the most distinguished savage warriors, and up each arm from wrist to shoulder was a network of dis-

colored scars, as if worms crawled upon the flesh.

When the mouth opened in the mutilated face he saw that every other front tooth had been knocked out and those remaining filed to a point—the mark of highest distinction among the cannibal tribes.

But the body! Graceful as a young tree in the wind, with delicate, slim wrists and ankles and a neck like the stem of a flower. And as if they drew sustenance from the rest of her, her breasts were ripe and full and lovely almost beyond imagining. When she stepped it was with a peculiar lightness, and the curves of her high insteps were arching lines of loveliness.

The smattering of Kiswahili he had picked up enabled him to understand her: "Lord King and people of the Khiva, I claim this one as mine. You all have seen me deal out death, you all know I am a stranger to pity. To this one I shall do as does the spider to the fly. *Hyah*! I shall tear his throat out with my teeth and drink his blood as it runs hot and gushing from his neck. Bring him to me in my house-in-the-mountain. I have said."

The room in which he lay seemed some kind of cavern. Skins lay like rugs upon the floor, on a raised platform stood a bed of carved wood, and on the walls were native lamps which shed a faint and smoky glow. By their light he could see her standing at the far side of the room, and when she spoke her lips curled back from pointed teeth like those of some great carnivore about to pounce. "Get out!" he heard her tell the virgins of her guard. "Begone while Lubisi-Lubula slakes her thirst and eats her fill!"

The maidens of the guard bent foreheads to the floor and crept from the dread presence of the Devil-Woman twittering with fear. Who knew if she might choose one of them for dessert?

She stepped toward him as he lay bound and helpless, and he could see the light flash on her pointed teeth.

But there was no fear in him, only a great pity as he asked, "Fleur—poor Fleur! —what have they done to you?"

She stopped in mid-stride, almost in mid-breath.

"Frank Bohan, you know me?" She spoke slowly, hesitantly, as though she had to feel and fumble for each word before she brought it out.

His voice was soft with tenderness. "How could I fail to know you, Fleur, seeing I

have had no thought of any one but you since the moment I first saw you?"

"Oh!" Her sob was like the cry of a hurt animal. "Oh, Frank, *no*!"

"You knew I loved you, Fleur? You couldn't help but know it. I've thought of you so constantly since they stole you that night that at last I had to come and look—"

Her smile was a mere writhing of the facial muscles, making the grotesque scars on her face do a macabre dance. "And you found me—like this!"

"Untie me, Fleur," he begged, then, when she took a short sword from the wall and slashed the cords that bound his wrists and ankles: "I've hunted you almost a year. I *knew* you were alive. No matter what they told me—no matter what my brain said, my heart told me you were still alive. I've got a platoon of troopers—with a machine gun—ready to close in; they'll march into the kraal if I don't show up by daybreak. We'll take you back—back home—"

Her laugh was a dreadful thing, as shocking a scream of pain. "Like this?" she ran her hands across her hideously scarred face and body, then touched the bone spikes grown fast in her nose and ears. "What would you do with me, put me in a Coney Island sideshow? 'The Wild Woman from Africa'?"

"We'll have a plastic surgeon take 'em off, Fleur. They can do wonders—"

She broke in: "Short of flaying me no one could take these scars off, Frank. They're more than skin-deep; they reach clear down to the flesh underneath. And even if a plastic surgeon could take the scars off my body, what sort of surgery should we need to take the scars off my soul? I've sent hundreds to their death for no reason at all; I've demanded human sacrifice; sometimes I've done the butchery myself. I've eaten human flesh like any other cannibal. What surgeon could cut out those memories, what priest could grant me absolution for those sins?"

"I love you, Fleur."

"Poor Frank, to have loved so loathsome a thing!"

He knelt beside her, resting his cheek against her knees, and for a long time there was silence in the cave, then:

"You told them back home you were coming to look for me?"

"Of course."

"Then listen, Frank. You must go back; you must tell everyone that Fleur LaFleur—or Joan Brown, if you please—is dead, but that you found her grave. Joan Brown—or Fleur LaFleur—*is* dead, Frank, and this cave is her sepulchre."

"But—"

"No buts, my dear. I can't go back. I am as powerless to go back as if my body were indeed dead and I only a ghost. It would have been far better for me if they'd killed my body, but they didn't. They killed my soul, and so my body has to stay and haunt the place where my soul died."

He took her hand and held it to his cheek, then kissed it slowly, first one finger, then another, and finally the smooth palm. "Please, Fleur—"

"You must go quickly, Frank. There is another entrance to this cave—I'll show it to you—and if you hurry you can meet the soldiers before daylight. Please, if you love me as you say you do, you *must* go back and tell them Fleur LaFleur is dead, and that you saw the place where she is buried."

Beside the secret exit of the cave she halted and gave him her hand, and he kissed it once more. "Follow the path straight down the mountain, then turn left," she told him. "You'll meet the soldiers on the way, and—hurry, hurry, dear, there's not much time till daybreak."

At the turn of the steep mountain path he looked back. The moonbeams picked her out as if she stood upon a darkened stage in the glow of a spotlight. None of her disfigurements was visible in the soft light, but her lovely body shone like pearl in the moon-radiance.

She raised her hand in a gesture of farewell. "Good bye, Frank darling. Good bye! And Frank—"

"Yes?" he halted at the call.

"Don't forget, dear. Give my regards to Broadway!"

THE PRISM

by MARY ELIZABETH COUNSELMAN

Souls look different when you see them through rainbow glass.

WRECKERS were tearing down the old Jemison mansion on "the Hill" when Jeddy found the prism. I t to tell you about it. Now! Because I . . . Well, I haven't got much time. The pain, you understand . . .

It was nothing in the world but a broken bangle off the big crystal chandelier that had

lighted the Jemisons' ballroom, back yonder when the old white-columned house was the center of Alabama's largest plantation, and music and laughter drifted out across the velvet lawns and formal gardens to the slave quarters in back. Jeddy had a right there; he was a kind of distant cousin, who used to work as a handyman and errand-boy for the family before they went broke and moved to Carolina. Besides, he was more of a help than a bother to the wrecking crew—bringing them water from the spring, holding their crowbars and hammers for them, or lifting some heavy piece of lumber; always with that eager vacuous grin that marked him for what he was. An imbecile, a harmless imbecile. A man with a child's mind. . . .

OR, ANYHOW, that was how everybody in Jemisonville regarded him. Especially after he started wandering around town, peeking at people through that little piece of broken glass. Small pastimes like that seemed to fascinate Jeddy, as they would a kid. Like the time he found the constable's whistle and went around blowing it for a week or more, with that high silly ripple of laughter that always bubbled out of him when he was pleased. Only, the prism amused him longer than anything—long enough, in fact, to change our whole town, and maybe the county!

Jeddy was a huge hulk of a man, all of six feet tall if he would stand up straight, instead of shuffle along in that ape-like crouch, with his arms dangling almost to his ankles. Red hair—which was never cut unless Tom Kimball, the barber, managed to coax him into his chair in return for an errand—hung down over his low forehead like a sheep-dog's, Jeddy's bright shoe-button-eyes peered through it, like some animal hiding in the brush; and his broken buck-teeth showed in a continual grin. He wore the same faded blue shirt and overalls, day after day, until Zack Mobley, who runs the clothing store, would give him a new pair and take the old ones away from him.

Well—that was our Jeddy, who lived in one of the slave cabins out back of the Jemison house . . . and who blew the lid off our town like a tornado, about five months ago.

LIKE I say, nobody paid much attention to him. It was a familiar sight—as familiar as the fountain in the square, or Holy Roller preachers yelling in front of the courthouse on Saturday—to see Jeddy shambling down the street, playing with some silly thing he had picked up someplace. Something shiny, or that made a funny noise. When he found the prism and went to peeking at everybody through it, we would just smile.

"Hi there, Jeddy! What ye got?"

And he would stop, grinning like a pleased baby, and squint at you through that piece of glass, cut in facets like a pendant and broken off across the middle. Jeddy never could talk plain, but those of us who had known him all our lives could make out what he meant by those few disjointed words he jabbered out: baby-words, in the deep guttural voice of a thirty-year-old man.

"Uh—Glass!" he would explain, squinting through the thing and hopping up and down like an excited kid. "See? It's all shiny! All . . . *colors!* Colors like rainbow!" If you happened to be facing the sun he'd move around to the other side, and peer at you silhouetted against the sunlight.

That was when it would happen.

IT HAPPENED first to Belle Freely, our local miss who was reputed to be no better than she should be. Jeddy was about the only man in town who was ever caught speaking to Belle on the street, in case their wives or some neighbor might be looking. Long ago, when she had turned up with a baby and refused to name the father, Jemison had branded her with the scarlet letter "A". The fact that she worked as a waitress in the "Busy-B Cafe", every day from six to midnight, did nothing to change local opinion concerning her means of livelihood.

But late one evening Jeddy met her in front of the post office, amid the snickers of those watching while they waited for the mail to be put up. As usual he stopped, grinning vacantly, to peer at Belle through his little broken prism. She stopped, smiling wearily, her drab blondined hair looking more dyed than ever in the setting sun.

Jeddy took one look at her, to a background of whispers and muffled guffaws. Then:

"Oh-h!" he blurted. "Uh . . . I never knowed you was like *that*, Miss Belle! My, you're *purty*. . . ! All *blue* like the sky in . . . in the summertime! Blue's a *good* color, uh, about the best color folks can be! Uh, they ain't many blue folks in this-here town. . . !"

He scowled suddenly, whirling on the group of idlers who were doing the whispering. Jeddy was a big man, like I said; and he was no pleasant sight, glowering through that long hair, with his lips drawn back from those buck-teeth in a snarl of anger. The boys began to edge away. Pretty soon there was nobody there, snickering at Belle Freely, except two evil-eyed poolroom hounds, who were in the habit of "bragging" about every woman in town—including the mayor's wife.

One of them, Shemp Hackett, nudged the other and winked.

"That your girl there, Jeddy?" he drawled. "That where you was last Monday night, when Old Man Lyle couldn't find ye to help him kill that weasel was after his chickens. ? A-visitin' with your girl, huh?"

Jeddy's scowl became a thundercloud. He took one step forward, swung his big ham-like fist—and Shemp was picking himself up off the sidewalk, with a cut lip and a very surprised expression.

"Duh, don't you talk like that about Miss Belle!" Jeddy roared at him as he, and also his wary-eyed buddy, backed out of range. "Don't *nobody* say bad things about Miss Belle no more, y'hear me? I've done seen her through my little rainbow-glass . . . and it don't *never* lie! The color it shows, that's what you are *inside*. And nobody, *not nobody*, can fool this-here little spy-glass! 'Cause it shows up the color you are, never mind how much you pretend. . . !"

Well . everybody laughed, of course, when the story got around.

Then, abruptly, everybody stopped laughing. Because, a nice-looking man came to town, hunting for a Julia Freeman—who turned out to be none other than our Belle. Seems the baby was not hers at all, but her dead sister's child. The father, who had been reported missing in action in the Pacific, had been engaged to Belle; but he had somehow lost his head and got her sister in trouble. Belle protected her name, though, and left home, to work in a cheap cafe rather than give up her sister's child to an orphanage. . It all came out when the man got Reverend Meecham to marry him and Belle, after telling him just how it was and what a fine character Belle, that misjudged lady really was.

BUT about Jeddy and his prism, there was still a lot of joking back and forth. The idea of Belle being a "blue person" struck people's fancy somehow or other, and they began to stop Jeddy on the street and ask him, just to kill time:

"Hi, Jeddy! How do *I* look through that piece of glass you got? What color am I?"

It tickled Jeddy, of course, all that attention. I doubt that more than one person a day ever spoke to him. But now everybody was speaking—even though he sensed, as a child senses such things, that we were only poking fun at him and his broken chandelier pendant.

He would stop and peer at anybody he met, though, just the same. Parting that shaggy bang of his, he would lift his prism up to one beady black eye and squint through it for a moment. Then he'd say, quite gravely and earnestly:

"You're a red person, Miz Boman. You got ways that hurt people around you—'cause red's a *hurtin'* color, and that's how you show up in my rainbow-glass. Mostly red, but shadin' off to orange around the edges."

"Well! I never!"

Miss Tessie Boman was our most sanctimonious church-goer. But she was also the biggest gossip in Jemisonville, and had broken up many a happy home with her tale-bearing.

"Who's green, Jeddy?" somebody would ask, snickering behind his hand. "That mean what we think it does?"

"Nope." Jeddy would shake his head solemnly. "If you're green, it don't mean like you're dumb. It jest means . . . well, that you ain't either bad or good, just in-between. There's a heap of green folks in this town," he announced cheerfully. "And maybe a few yeller ones, like Nurse Alison, or the Doc. Them are the ones that *help* folks in misery. The green 'nes do no *harm*.

but they jest, uh, kinda live for their-selves. . . ."

"Well, who's violet, Jeddy? Is that a good color?"

"Duh-h, that's the best there is!" That grinning face would beam at his tormentor. "Only, uh, there ain't no purple folks hereabouts . . 'Cept maybe Granny Hodges; she's a *mite* purple around the edges. And . . . and babies," Jeddy would add softly. "All babies is, duh, kinda lavendar-blue. . . ."

SO THAT was how it went for about three weeks. Jeddy and his prism got to be a standing joke in Jemisonville. We talked about it at bridge parties and church socials, joshing one another that you need not try to wear "that yellow dress" or "that blue shirt," because your *true* color would show up in Jeddy's prism anyhow!

Of course, plenty of us took a peek through that little piece of glass. But all we ever saw was what everybody can see through a "translucent prism," as the Professor called it. Just rays of sunlight, broken up into all the colors of the spectrum. Maybe . . maybe it was the *way* Jeddy held it to his eye. . . . Oh, *fiddlesticks!* Sounds like I *believe*. .!

But then Professor Gowan, who reads a lot of crazy stuff nobody else would pick up, came out with the news that Jeddy's weird notion was by no means original. Metaphysical societies, he said, have long believed that an *astral body*—sort of a luminous mist that the soul, or personality, gives off—surrounds every human being. The Holy Men can see them—and those pure enough in heart to see people as what they are, instead of what they seem. Emanations, the Professor called them. Their colors range with the spectrum: from red, the most physical color, to violet, the most spiritual.

Scientifically, he says, the theory is sound enough . . . because it seems that the atoms of every chemical give up a vapor that can be determined by its color in the spectroscope. That's an instrument the astronomers use to find out what the stars are composed of, and how hot they are, and how dense. Maybe *people* give off a vapor, too. Maybe the kinds of chemicals we're made of, mostly, are determined by our characters, our personalities. . . .

I wouldn't know about that. I'm no scientist. And I'm no "higher thought" crackpot. I'm just a housewife and mother, and . . . and . . .

Well, all I know is what Jeddy said to me, that day outside the doctor's office. I spoke to him kindly, the way I always try to do, even though he is feeble-minded and a burden on the community. But my heart was not in it. *After what Doc Peebles had just told me?* My teeth were set hard in my lower lip, to keep the tears back. Tears of terror and despair, and hopelessness, and resentment. . . .

"Hello, 'Jeddy," I mumbled, trying to walk around his big hulking figure, standing there in the middle of the sidewalk to squint at me through his broken glass. "How's your peep-show working today?"

"Duh, fine! . . . Huh-huh! . . . Fine, Miz Mary!" Jeddy gurgled, like a big happy overgrown baby. "All colors! All pretty colors, folks are. . !"

I tried to pass, but he would not move, so I waited patiently for him to finish his foolish little game. But I was twisting my hands together, fighting for self-control. . . .

Then, idly, I noticed how Jeddy's wide vacuous grin was fading. A frown of child-like bewilderment furrowed his low forehead—what I could see of it for that shaggy red bang. He peered at me intently through the prism.

"Duh, I . . . I ain't never see nobody like *that* before, Miz Mary!" he muttered, squinting harder at my silhouette against the mellow afternoon sunlight. "Uh . . . uh . . I never see nobody that was blue in the middle and red around the outside! Uh, not them two colors right together. !"

I smiled stiffly, hardly hearing his queer words. For, what the doctor had just told me was gnawing away at my mind like an evil gray rat. I wanted to push Jeddy out of my path, and run, sobbing, down the street until I came to my own familiar doorway. John was there, I knew, talking to the nominating committee of the reform group. But I would just burst right in and throw myself into his sheltering arms, sobbing out the truth.

What did it matter to me now, what

would it matter to John, that he had been chosen to run against Gerald Vincent? Vincent, our next Congressman? The most powerfully-entrenched and completely crooked man in our county?

IT WAS he who had torn down the old Jemison place, planning to build on its site a paper mill! A smelly, noisy paper mill in the center of our quiet residential area! Jemisonville was a farm community, anyhow, whose livestock depended on the purity of the little creek that flowed through our town. Broad Creek—which Gerald Vincent proposed to use as a dumping place for his mill waste. . . ! John, my husband, had been fighting the move for a year, with growing success.

But all that seemed so terribly unimportant now, compared with the terrible thing I was going to tell him in a few minutes. *Cancer!* The inoperable kind. And the thought of his being away from me, those last few months I had to live! Stumping the county for votes. . . ? No, I couldn't bear it. He wouldn't expect me to. When I told him, he would simply give up all thought of running against. . .

I came to myself. Jeddy was still standing there, peeking at me through his bit of chandelier pendant. What was it he had said? I started. *Red! Red, with a . . . a blue center. . . ?* I tried to pass.

"Duh, wait, Miz Mary!" Jeddy blurted excitedly. "Uh, the red part—it's . . . it's fadin' away now! Like . . . like the blue was *pushin'* it. . . ."

My eyes widened, staring at him, at that foolish like piece of glass held up to his eye. Blue? Pushing away the red? Good, swallowing up the bad . . . as I thought what it would mean to John, to our town, to our whole county. Red? I wanted to hurt everyone, because I was so hurt and afraid. Resentful! Why must I suffer all alone, just because ? But . . . Jeddy had said . . .

Non-sense! It could only be a crazy coincidence! How could this poor imbecilic creature know what was going on inside me? See it through a little shattered glass ornament that had come off a chandelier. . ?

I turned, though. I ran back up to Doc Peebles' office, and made him promise not to tell John or anyone until after the election. Until Gerald Vincent was defeated, and our little farm-town of Jemisonville was given back to its people. Until my husband was sent to Washington—to represent them as honestly as one man knows how, instead of fleece them and use them, as Vincent would have done.

Well—he's there now. I still haven't told him—and won't until the pain becomes too unbearable. Somehow, though, I'm not afraid anymore. I guess everybody has to die, one way or another. . . .

Jeddy? Oh, he's still around. Playing with a white flint arrowhead now, that he found up on the west slope of Bent Mountain. Seems he lost his prism someplace—probably that time he was chasing the butterfly across Old Man Lyle's cow-pasture. Yes, it's gone . . . and of course, the whole thing was just silly. I mean, the idea of people being a certain *color,* according to whatever chemical gas their souls give off! Now, me —I certainly wouldn't set myself up as a *blue* person. . ! Fiddlesticks! I'm as mean as the next one!

But now and then, I can't help wondering (supposing it *was* true) what color *Jeddy* would be, viewed through that little broken prism of his.

Violet, maybe. . . ? The color of saints . . . and babies?

Age-old horror is a hydra with a thousand heads.

The Horror at Red Hook

By H. P. Lovecraft

"THE nightmare horde slithered away, led by the abominable naked phosphorescent thing that now strode insolently bearing in its arms the glassy-eyed corpse of the corpulent old man.

"There are sacraments of evil as well as of good about us, and we live and move to my belief in an unknown world, a place where there are caves and shadows and dwellers in twilight. It is possible that man may sometimes return on the track of evolution, and it is my belief that an awful lore is not yet dead."

—Arthur Machen

I

NOT many weeks ago, on a street corner in the village of Pascoag, Rhode Island, a tall heavily built, and wholesome looking pedestrian furnished much speculation by a singular lapse of behavior. He had, it appears, been descending the hill by the road from Chepachet; and encountering the compact section, had turned to his left into the main thoroughfare where several modest business blocks convey a touch of the urban. At this point, without visible provocation, he committed his astonishing lapse; staring queerly for a second at the tallest of the buildings before him, and then, with a series of terrified, hysterical shrieks, breaking into a frantic run which ended in a stumble and fall at the next crossing. Picked up and dusted off by ready hands, he was found to be conscious, organically unhurt, and evidently cured of his sudden nervous attack. He muttered some shamefaced explanations involving a strain he had undergone, and with downcast glance turned back up the Chepachet road, trudging out of sight without once looking behind him. It was a strange incident to befall so large, robust, normal-featured, and capable-looking a man, and the strangeness was not lessened by the remarks of a bystander who had recognized him as the boarder of a well-known dairyman on the outskirts of Chepachet.

He was, it developed, a New York police detective named Thomas F. Malone, now on a long leave of absence under medical treatment after some disproportionately arduous work on a gruesome local case which accident had made dramatic. There had been a collapse of several old brick buildings during a raid in which he had shared, and something about the wholesale loss of life, both of prisoners and of his companions, had peculiarly appalled him. As a result, he had acquired an acute and anomalous horror of any buildings even remotely suggesting the ones which had fallen in, so that in the end mental specialists forbade him the sight of such things for an indefinite period. A police surgeon with relatives in Chepachet had put forward that quaint hamlet of wooden Colonial houses as an ideal spot for the psychological convalescence; and thither the sufferer had gone, promising never to venture among the brick-lined streets of larger villages till duly advised by the Woonsocket specialist with whom he was put in touch. This walk to Pascoag for magazines had been a mistake, and the patient had paid in fright, bruises, and humiliation for his disobedience.

So much the gossips of Chepachet and Pascoag knew; and so much, also, the most learned specialists believed. But Malone had at first told the specialists much more, ceasing only when he saw that utter incredulity was his portion. Thereafter he held his peace, protesting not at all when it was generally agreed that the collapse of certain squalid brick houses in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, and the consequent death of many brave officers, had unseated his nervous equilibrium. He had worked too hard, all said, in trying to clean up those

nests of disorder and violence; certain features were shocking enough, in all conscience, and the unexpected tragedy was the last straw. This was a simple explanation which everyone could understand, and because Malone was not a simple person he perceived that he had better let it suffice. To hint to unimaginative people of a horror beyond all human conception—a horror of houses and blocks and cities leprous and cancerous with evil dragged from elder worlds—would be merely to invite a padded cell instead of a restful rustication, and Malone was a man of sense despite his mysticism. He had the Celt's far vision of weird and hidden things, but the logician's quick eye for the outwardly unconvincing; an amalgam which had led him far afield in the forty-two years of his life, and set him in strange places for a Dublin University man born in a Georgian villa near Phœnix Park.

And now, as he reviewed the things he had seen and felt and apprehended, Malone was content to keep unshared the secret of what could reduce a dauntless fighter to a quivering neurotic; what could make old brick slums and seas of dark, subtle faces a thing of nightmare and eldritch portent. It would not be the first time his sensations had been forced to bide uninterpreted—for was not his very act of plunging into the polyglot abyss of New York's underworld a freak beyond sensible explanation? What could he tell the prosaic of the antique witcheries and grotesque marvels discernible to sensitive eyes amidst the poison cauldron where all the varied dregs of unwholesome ages mix their venom and perpetuate their obsecene terrors? He had seen the hellish green flame of secret wonder in this blatant, evasive welter of outward greed and inward blasphemy, and had smiled gently when all the New Yorkers he knew scoffed at his experiment in police work. They had been very witty and cynical, deriding his fantastic pursuit of unknowable mysteries and assuring him that in these days New York held nothing but cheapness and vulgarity. One of them had wagered him a heavy sum that he could not —despite many poignant things to his credit in the *Dublin Review*—even write a truly interesting story of New York low life; and now, looking back, he perceived that cosmic irony had justified the prophet's words while secretly confuting their flippant meaning. The horror, as glimpsed at last, could not make a story—for like the book cited by Poe's German authority, *"er lässt sich nicht lesen"*—it does not permit itself to be read.

II

TO MALONE the sense of latent mystery in existence was always present. In youth he had felt the hidden beauty and ecstasy of things, and had been a poet; but poverty and sorrow and exile had turned his gaze in darker directions, and he had thrilled at the imputations of evil in the world around. Daily life had for him come to be a fantasmagoria of macabre shadow-studies; now glittering and leering with concealed rottenness as in Aubrey Beardsley's best manner, now hinting terrors behind the commonest shapes and objects as in the subtler and less obvious work of Gustave Doré. He would often regard it as merciful that most persons of high intelligence jeer at the inmost mysteries; for, he argued, if superior minds were ever placed in fullest contact with the secrets preserved by ancient and lowly cults, the resultant abnormalities would soon not only wreck the world, but threaten the very integrity of the universe. All this reflection was no doubt morbid, but keen logic and a deep sense of humor ably offset it. Malone was satisfied to let his notions remain as half-spied and forbidden visions to be lightly played with; and hysteria came only when duty flung him into a hell of revelation too sudden and insidious to escape.

He had for some time been detailed to the Butler Street station in Brooklyn when the Red Hook matter came to his notice. Red Hook is a maze of hybrid squalor near the ancient waterfront opposite Governor's Island, with dirty highways climbing the hill from the wharves to that higher ground where the decayed lengths of Clinton and Court Streets lead off toward the Borough Hall. Its houses are mostly of brick, dating from the first quarter of the middle of the nineteenth century, and some of the obscurer alleys and byways have that alluring antique flavor which conventional reading

leads us to call "Dickensian." The poulation is a hopeless tangle and enigma; Syrian, Spanish, Italian, and Negro elements impinging upon one another, and fragments of Scandinavian and American belts lying not far distant. It is a babel of sound and filth, and sends out strange cries to answer the lapping of oily waves at its grimy piers and the monstrous organ litanies of the harbor whistles. Here long ago a brighter picture dwelt, with clear-eyed mariners on the lower streets and homes of taste and substance where the larger houses line the hill. One can trace the relics of this former happiness in the trim shapes of the buildings, the occasional graceful churches and the evidences of original art and background in bits of detail here and there—a worn flight of steps, a battered doorway, a wormy pair of decorative columns or pilasters, or a fragment of once green space with bent and rusted iron railing. The houses are generally in solid blocks, and now and then a many-windowed cupola arises to tell of days when the households of captains and ship-owners watched the sea.

From this tangle of material and spiritual putrescence the blasphemies of an hundred dialects assail the sky. Hordes of prowlers reel shouting and singing along the lanes and thoroughfares, occasional furtive hands suddenly extinguish lights and pull down curtains, and swarthy, sin-pitted faces disappear from windows when visitors pick their way through. Policemen despair of order or reform, and seek rather to erect barriers protecting the outside world from the contagion.

The clang of the patrol is answered by a kind of spectral silence, and such prisoners as are taken are never communicative. Visible offenses are as varied as the local dialects, and run the gamut from the smuggling of rum and prohibited aliens through diverse stages of lawlessness and obscure vice to murder and mutilation in their most abhorrent guises. That these visible affairs are not more frequent is not to the neighborhood's credit, unless the power of concealment be an art demanding credit. More people enter Red Hook than leave it—or at least, than leave it by the landward side—and those who are not loquacious are the likeliest to leave.

MALONE found in this state of things a faint stench of secrets more terrible than any of the sins denounced by citizens and bemoaned by priest and philanthropists. He was conscious, as one who united imagination with scientific knowledge, that modern people under lawless conditions tend uncannily to repeat the darkest instinctive patterns of primitive half-ape savagery in their daily life and ritual observances; and he had often viewed with an anthropologist's shudder the chanting, cursing processions of blear-eyed and pock-marked young men which wound their way along in the dark small hours of morning. One saw groups of these youths incessantly; sometimes in leering vigils on street corners, sometimes in doorways playing eerily on cheap instruments of music, sometimes in stupefied dozes or indecent dialogues around cafeteria tables near Borough Hall, and sometimes in whispering converse around dingy taxicabs drawn up at the high stoops of crumbling and closely shuttered old houses. They chilled and fascinated him more than he dared confess to his associates on the force, for he seemed to see in them some monstrous thread of secret continuity; some fiendish, cryptical and ancient pattern utterly beyond and below the sordid mass of facts and habits and haunts listed with such conscientious technical care by the police. They must be, he felt inwardly, the heirs of some shocking and primordial tradition; the sharers of debased and broken scraps from cults and ceremonies older than mankind. Their coherence and definiteness suggested it, and it showed in the singular suspicion of order which lurked beneath their squalid disorder. He had not read in vain such treatises as Miss Murray's Witch Cult in Western Europe; and knew that up to recent years there had certainly survived among peasants and furtive folk a frightful and clandestine system of assemblies and orgies descended from dark religions antedating the Aryan World, and appearing in popular legends as Black Masses and Witches' Sabbaths. That these hellish vestiges of old Turanian-Asiatic magic and fertility-cults were even now wholly dead he could not for a moment suppose, and he frequently wondered how much older and how much blacker than the very worst

of the muttered tales some of them might really be.

III

IT WAS the case of Robert Suydam which took Malone to the heart of things in Red Hook. Suydam was a lettered recluse of ancient Dutch family, possessed originally of barely independent means, and inhabiting the spacious but ill-preserved mansion which his grandfather had built in Flatbush when that village was little more then a pleasant group of Colonial cottages surrounding the steepled and ivy-clad Reformed Church with its iron-railed yard of Netherlandish gravestones. In this lonely house, set back from Martense Street amidst a yard of venerable trees, Suydam had read and brooded for some six decades except for a period a generation before, when he had sailed for the Old World and remained there out of sight for eight years. He could afford no servants, and would admit but few visitors to his absolute solitude; eschewing close friendships and receiving his rare acquaintances in one of the three ground-floor rooms which he kept in order—a vast, high-ceiled library whose walls were solidly packed with tattered books of ponderous, archaic, and vaguely repellent aspect. The growth of the town and its final absorption in the Brooklyn district had meant nothing to Suydam, and he had come to mean less and less to the town. Elderly people still pointed him out on the streets, but to most of the recent population he was merely a queer, corpulent old fellow whose unkempt white hair, stubbly beard, shiny black clothes and gold-headed cane earned him an amused glance and nothing more. Malone did not know him by sight till duty called him to the case, but had heard of him indirectly as a really profound authority on medieval superstition, and had once idly meant to look up an out-of-print pamphlet of his on the Kabbalah and the Faustus legend, which a friend had quoted from memory.

Suydam became a "case" when his distant and only relatives sought court pronouncements on his sanity. Their action seemed sudden to the outside world, but was really undertaken only after prolonged observation and sorrowful debate. It was based on certain odd changes in his speech and habits; wild references to impending wonders, and unaccountable hauntings of disreputable Brooklyn neighborhoods. He had been growing shabbier and shabbier with the years, and now prowled about like a veritable mendicant; seen occasionally by humiliated friends in subway stations, or loitering on the benches around Borough Hall in conversation with groups of swarthy, evil-looking strangers. When he spoke it was to babble of unlimited powers almost within his grasp, and to repeat with knowing leers such mystical words of names as "Sephiroth," "Ashmodai" and "Samael." The court action revealed that he was using up his income and wasting his principal in the purchase of curious tomes imported from London and Paris, and in the maintenance of a squalid basement flat in the Red Hook district where he spent nearly every night, receiving odd delegations of mixed rowdies and foreigners, and apparently conducting some kind of ceremonial service behind the green blinds of secretive windows. Detectives assigned to follow him reported strange cries and chants and prancing of feet filtering out from these nocturnal rites, and shuddered at their peculiar ecstasy and abandon despite the commonness of weird orgies in that sodden section. When, however, the matter came to a hearing, Suydam managed to preserve his liberty. Before the judge his manner grew urbane and reasonable, and he freely admitted the queerness of demeanor and extravagant cast of language into which he had fallen through excessive devotion to study and research. He was, he said, engaged in the investigation of certain details of European tradition which required the closest contact with foreign groups and their songs and folk dances. The notion that any low secret society was preying upon him, as hinted by his relatives, was obviously absurd; and showed how sadly limited was their understanding of him and his work. Triumphing with his calm explanations, he was suffered to depart unhindered; and the paid detectives of the Suydams, Corlears and Van Brunts were withdrawn in resigned disgust.

It was here that an alliance of Federal

inspectors and police, Malone with them, entered the case. The law had watched the Suydam action with interest, and had in many instances been called upon to aid the private detectives. In this work it developed that Suydam's new associates were among the blackest and most vicious criminals of Red Hook's devious lanes, and that at least a third of them were known and repeated offenders in the matter of thievery, disorder, and the importation of illegal immigrants. Indeed, it would not have been too much to say that the old scholar's particular circle coincided almost perfectly with the worst of the organized cliques which smuggled ashore certain nameless and unclassified Asian dregs wisely turned back by Ellis Island. In the teeming rookeries of Parker Place—since renamed—where Suydam had his basement flat, there had grown up a very unusual colony of unclassified slant-eyed folk who used the Arabic alphabet but were eloquently repudiated by the great mass of Syrians in and around Atlantic Avenue. They could all have been deported for lack of credentials, but legalism is slow-moving, and one does not disturb Red Hook unless publicity forces one to.

These creatures attended a tumbledown stone church, used Wednesdays as a dance hall, which reared its Gothic buttresses near the vilest part of the waterfront. Clergy throughout Brooklyn denied the place all standing and authenticity, and policemen agreed with them when they listened to the noises it emitted at night. Malone used to fancy he heard terrible cracked bass notes from a hidden organ far underground when the church stood empty and unlighted, whilst all observers dreaded the shrieking and drumming which accompanied the visible services. Suydam, when questioned, said he thought the ritual was some remnant of Nestorian Christianity tinctured with the Shamanism of Tibet. Most of the people, he conjectured, were of Mongoloid stock, originating somewhere in or near Kurdistan—and Malone could not help recalling that Kurdistan is the land of the Yezidees, last survivors of the Persian devil-worshippers. However this may have been, the stir of the Suydam investigation made it certain that these unauthorized newcomers were flooding Red Hook in increasing numbers; entering through some marine conspiracy unreached by revenue officers and harbor police, overrunning Parker Place and rapidly spreading up the hill, and welcomed with curious fraternalism by the other assorted denizens of the region. Their squat figures and characteristic squinting physiognomies grotesquely combined with flashy American clothing, appeared more and more numerously among the loafers and nomad gangsters of the Borough Hall section; till at length it was deemed necessary to compute their number, ascertain their sources and occupations, and find if possible a way to round them up and deliver them to the proper immigration authorities. To this task Malone was assigned by agreement of Federal and city forces, and as he commenced his canvass of Red Hook he felt poised upon the brink of nameless terrors, with the shabby, unkempt figure of Robert Suydam as archfiend and adversary.

IV

POLICE methods are varied and ingenious. Malone, through unostentatious rambles, carefully casual conversations, well-timed offers of hip-pocket liquor, and judicious dialogues with frightened prisoners, learned many isolated facts about the movement whose aspect had become so menacing. The newcomers were indeed Kurds, but of a dialect obscure and puzzling to exact philology. Such of them as worked lived mostly as dock-hands and unlicensed peddlers, though frequently serving in Greek restaurants and tending corner newsstands. Most of them, however, had no visible means of support; and were obviously connected with underworld pursuits, of which smuggling and bootlegging were the least indescribable. They had come in steamships, apparently tramp freighters, and had been unloaded by stealth on moonless nights in rowboats which stole under a certain wharf and followed a hidden canal and house Malone could not locate, for the memories of his informants were exceedingly confused, while their speech was to a great extent beyond even the ablest interpreters; nor could he gain any real data on the reasons for their systematic importation. They were reticent about the exact spot from

which they had come, and were never sufficiently off guard to reveal the agencies which had sought them out and directed their course. Indeed, they developed something like acute fright when asked the reason for their presence. Gangsters of other breeds were equally taciturn, and the most that could be gathered was that some god or great priesthood had promised them unheard-of powers and supernatural glories and rulerships in a strange land.

The attendance of both newcomers and old gangsters at Suydam's closely guarded nocturnal meetings was very regular, and the police soon learned that the erstwhile recluse had leased additional flats to accommodate such guests as knew his password; at last occupying three entire houses and permanently harboring many of his queer companions. He spent but little time now at his Flatbush home, apparently going and coming only to obtain and return books; and his face and manner had attained an appalling pitch of wildness. Malone twice interviewed him, but was each time bruskly repulsed. He knew nothing, he said, of any mysterious plots or movements; and had no idea how the Kurds could have entered or what they wanted. His business was to study undisturbed the folk-lore of all the immigrants of the district; a business with which policemen had no legitimate concern. Malone mentioned his admiration for Suydam's old brochure on the Kabbalah and other myths, but the old man's softening was only momentary. He sensed an intrusion, and rebuffed his visitor in no uncertain way; till Malone withdrew disgusted, and turned to other channels of information.

WHAT Malone would have unearthed could he have worked continuously on the case, we shall never know. As it was, a stupid conflict between city and Federal authority suspended the investigation for several months, during which the detective was busy with other assignments. But at no time did he lose interest, or fail to stand amazed at what began to happen to Robert Suydam. Just at the time when a wave of kidnappings and disappearances spread its excitement over New York, the unkempt scholar embarked upon a metamorphosis as startling as it was absurd. One day he was seen near Borough Hall with clean-shaved face, well-trimmed hair, and tastefully immaculate attire, and on every day thereafter some obscure improvement was noticed in him. He maintained his new fastidiousness without interruption, added to it an unwonted sparkle of eye and crispness of speech, and began little by little to shed the corpulence which had so long deformed him. Now frequently taken for less than his age, he acquired an elasticity of step and buoyancy of demeanor to match the new tradition, and showed a curious darkening of the hair which somehow did not suggest dye. As the months passed, he commenced to dress less and less conservatively, and finally astonished his few friends by renovating and redecorating his Flatbush mansion, which he threw open in a series of receptions, summoning all the acquaintances he could remember, and extending a special welcome to the fully forgiven relatives who had lately sought his restraint. Some attended through curiosity, others through duty; but all were suddenly charmed by the dawning grace and urbanity of the former hermit. He had, he asserted, accomplished most of his allotted work; and having just inherited some property from a half-forgotten European friend, was about to spend his remaining years in a brighter second youth which ease, care and diet had made possible to him. Less and less was he seen at Red Hook, and more and more did he move in the society to which he was born. Policemen noted a tendency of the gangsters to congregate at the old stone church and dancehall instead of at the basement flat in Parker Place, though the latter and its recent annexes still overflowed with noxious life.

THEN two incidents occurred—wide enough apart, but both of intense interest in the case as Malone envisaged it. One was a quiet announcement in the *Eagle* of Robert Suydam's engagement to Miss Cornelia Gerritsen of Bayside, a young woman of excellent position, and distantly related to the elderly bridegroom-elect; whilst the other was a raid on the dance-hall church by city police, after a report that the face of a kidnapped child had been seen for a second at one of the basement windows. Malone had participated in this raid, and studied the place with much care when in-

side. Nothing was found—in fact, the building was entirely deserted when visited—but the sensitive Celt was vaguely disturbed by many things about the interior. There were crudely painted panels he did not like—panels which depicted sacred faces with peculiarly worldly and sardonic expressions, and which occasionally took liberties that even a layman's sense of decorum could scarcely countenance. Then, too, he did not relish the Greek inscription on the wall above the pulpit; an ancient incantation which he had once stumbled upon in Dublin college days, and which read, literally translated: "O friend and companion of night, thou who rejoicest in the baying of dogs and spilt blood, who wanderest in the midst of shades among the tombs, who longest for blood and bringest terror to mortals, Gorge, Mormo, thousand-faced moon, look favorably on our sacrifices!"

When he read this he shuddered, and thought vaguely of the cracked bass organ-notes he fancied he had heard beneath the church on certain nights. He shuddered again at the rust around the rim of a metal basin which stood on the altar, and paused nervously when his nostrils seemed to detect a curious and ghastly stench from somewhere in the neighborhood. That organ memory haunted him, and he explored the basement with particular assiduity before he left. The place was very hateful to him; yet after all, were the blasphemous panels and inscriptions more than mere erudities perpetrated by the ignorant?

BY THE time of Suydam's wedding the kidnapping epidemic had become a popular newspaper scandal. Most of the victims were young children of the lowest classes, but the increasing number of disappearances had worked up a sentiment of the strongest fury. Journals clamored for action from the police, and once more the Butler Street station sent its men over Red Hook for clues, discoveries, and criminals. Malone was glad to be on the trail again, and took pride in a raid on one of Suydam's Parker Place houses. There, indeed, no stolen child was found, despite the tales of screams and the red sash picked up in the areaway; but the paintings and rough inscriptions on the peeling walls of most of the rooms, and the primitive chemical laboratory in the attic, all helped to convince the detective that he was on the track of something tremendous. The paintings were appalling-hideous monsters of every shape and size, and parodies on human outlines which cannot be described. The writing was in red, and varied from Arabic to Greek, Roman, and Hebrew letters. Malone could not read much of it, but what he did decipher was portentous and cabalistic enough. One frequently repeated motto was in a sort of Hebraized Hellenistic Greek, and suggested the most terrible demon-evocations of the Alexandrian decadence:

HEL. HELOYM. SOTHER. EMMANVEL. SABOATH. AGLA. TETRAGRAMMATION. AGYROS. OTHEOS. ISCHYROS. ATHANATOS. IEHOVA. VA. ADONAL. SADY. HOMOVSION. MESSIAS. ESCHEREHEYE.

Circles and pentagrams loomed on every hand, and told indubitably of the strange beliefs and aspirations of those who dwelt so squalidly here. In the cellar, however, the strangest thing was found—a pile of genuine gold ingots covered carelessly with a piece of burlap, and bearing upon their shining surfaces the same weird hieroglyphics which also adorned the walls. During this raid the police encountered only a passive resistance from the squinting Orientals that swarmed from every door. Finding nothing relevant, they had to leave all as it was; but the precinct captain wrote Suydam a note advising him to look closely to the character of his tenants and protegés in view of the growing public clamor.

V

THEN came the June wedding and the great sensation. Flatbush was gay for the hour about high noon, and pennanted motors thronged the street near the old Dutch church where an awning stretched from door to highway. No local event ever surpassed the Suydam-Gerritsen nuptials in tone and scale, and the party which escorted the bride and groom to the Cunard pier was, if not exactly the smartest, at least a solid page from the Social Register. At 5

o'clock adieux was waved, and the ponderous liner edged away from the long pier, slowly turned its nose seaward, discarded its tug, and headed for widening water spaces that led to Old World wonders. By night the outer harbor was cleared, and late passengers watched the stars twinkling above an unpolluted ocean.

Whether the tramp steamer or the scream was first to gain attention, no one can say. Probably they were simultaneous, but it is of no use to calculate. The scream came from the Suydam stateroom, and the sailor who broke down the door could perhaps have told frightful things if he had not forthwith gone completely mad—as it is, he shrieked more loudly than the first victims, and thereafter ran simpering about the vessel till caught and put in irons. The ship's doctor who entered the stateroom and turned on the lights a moment later did not go mad, but told nobody what he saw till afterward, when he corresponded with Malone in Chepachet. It was murder—strangulation—but one need not say that the clawmark on Mrs. Suydam's throat could not have come from her husband's or any other human hand, or that upon the white wall there flickered for an instant in hateful red a legend which, later copied from memory, seems to have been nothing less than the fearsome Chaldee letters of the word "LILITH." One need not mention these things because they vanished so quickly—as for Suydam, one could at least bar others from the room until one knew what to think oneself. The doctor has distinctly assured Malone that he did not see IT. The open porthole, just before he turned on the lights, was clouded for a second with a certain phosphorescence, and for a moment there seemed to echo in the night outside the suggestion of a faint and hellish tittering; but no real outline met the eye. As proof, the doctor points to his continued sanity.

Then the tramp steamer claimed all attention. A boat put off, and a horde of swart, insolent ruffians in officers' dress swarmed aboard the temporarily halted Cunarder. They wanted Suydam or his body—they had known of his trip, and for certain reasons were sure he would die. The captain's deck was almost a pandemonium; for at the instant, between the doctor's report from the stateroom and the demands of the men from the tramp, not even the wisest and gravest seaman could think what to do. Suddenly the leader of the visiting mariners, an Arab with a hatefully negroid mouth, pulled forth a dirty, crumpled paper and handed it to the captain. It was signed by Robert Suydam, and bore the following odd message:

In case of sudden or unexpected accident or death on my part, please deliver me or my body unquestioningly into the hands of the bearer and his associates. Everything, for me, and perhaps for you, depends on absolute compliance. Explanations can come later—do not fail me now.

Robert Suydam.

CAPTAIN and doctor looked at each other, and the latter whispered something to the former. Finally they nodded rather helplessly and led the way to the Suydam stateroom. The doctor directed the captain's glance away as he unlocked the door and admitted the strange seamen, nor did he breathe easily till they filed out with their burden after an unaccountably long

period of preparation. It was wrapped in bedding from the berths, and the doctor was glad that the outlines were not very revealing. Somehow the men got the thing over the side and away to their tramp steamer without uncovering it.

The Cunarder started again, and the doctor and ship's undertaker sought out the Suydam stateroom to perform what last services they could. Once more the physician was forced to reticence and even to mendacity, for a hellish thing had happened. When the undertaker asked him why he had drained off all of Mrs. Suydam's blood, he neglected to affirm that he had not done so; nor did he point to the vacant bottle-spaces on the rack, or to the odor in the sink which showed the hasty disposition of the bottles' original contents. The pockets of those men —*if men they were*—had bulged damnably when they left the ship. Two hours later, and the world knew by radio all that it ought to know of the horrible affair.

VI

THAT same June evening, without having heard a word from the sea, Malone was very busy among the alleys of Red Hook. A sudden stir seemed to permeate the place, and as if apprized by "grapevine telegraph" of something singular, the denizens clustered expectantly around the dance-hall church and the houses in Parker Place. Three children had just disappeared—blue-eyed Norwegians from the streets toward Gowanus—and there were rumors of a mob forming among the sturdy Viking of that section. Malone had for weeks been urging his colleagues to attempt a general clean-up; and at last, moved by conditions more obvious to their common sense than the conjectures of a Dublin dreamer, they had agreed upon a final stroke. The unrest and menace of this evening had been the deciding factor, and just about midnight a raiding party recruited from three stations descended upon Parker Place and its environs. Doors were battered in, stragglers arrested, and candle-lighted rooms forced to disgorge unbelievable throngs of mixed foreigners in figured robes, miters and other inexplicable devices. Much was lost in the mêlée for objects were thrown hastily down unexpected shafts, and betraying odors deadened by the sudden kindling of pungent incense. But spattered blood was everywhere, and Malone shuddered whenever he saw a brazier or altar from which the smoke was still rising.

He wanted to be in several places at once, and decided on Suydam's basement flat only after a messenger had reported the complete emptiness of the dilapidated dance-hall church. The flat, he thought, must hold some clue to a cult of which the occult scholar had so obviously become the center and leader; and it was with real expectancy that he ransacked the musty rooms, noted their vaguely charnal odor, and examined the curious books, instruments, gold ingots, and glass-stoppered bottles scattered carelessly here and there. Once a lean, black-and-white cat edged between his feet and tripped him, overturning at the same time a beaker half full of red liquid. The shock was severe, and to this day Malone is not certain of what he saw; but in dreams he still pictures that cat as it scuttled away with certain monstrous alterations and peculiarities.

THEN came the locked cellar door, and the search for something to break it down. A heavy stool stood near, and its tough seat was more than enough for the antique panels. A crack formed and enlarged, and the whole door gave way—but from the other side; whence poured a howling tumult of ice-cold wind with all the stenches of the bottomless pit, and whence reached a sucking force not of earth or heaven, which, coiling sentiently about the paralyzed detective, dragged him through the aperture and down unmeasured spaces filled with whispers and wails, and gusts of mocking laughter.

Of course it was a dream. All the specialists have told him so, and he has nothing tangible to prove the contrary. Indeed, he would rather have it thus; for then the sight of old brick slums and dark foreign faces would not eat so deeply into his soul. But at the time it was all horribly real, and nothing can ever efface the memory of those nighted crypts, those titan arcades, and those half-formed shapes of hell that strode gigantically in silence holding half-eaten things

whose still surviving portions screamed for mercy or laughed with madness. Odors of incense and corruption joined in sickening concert, and the black air was alive with the cloudy, semi-visible bulk of shapeless elemental things with eyes. Somewhere dark sticky water was lapping at onyx piers, and once the shivery tinkle of raucous little bells pealed out to greet the insane titter of a naked phosphorescent thing which swam into sight, scrambled ashore, and climbed up to squat leeringly on a carved golden pedestal in the black-ground.

Avenues of limitless night seemed to radiate in every direction, till one might fancy that here lay the root of a contagion destined to sicken and swallow cities, and engulf nations in the fetor of hybrid pestilence. Here cosmic sin had entered, and festered by unhallowed rites had commenced the grinning march of death that was to rot us all to fungus abnormalities too hideous for the grave's holding. Satan here held his Babylonish court, and in the blood of stainless childhood the leprous limbs of phosphorescent Lilith were laved. Incubi and succubae howled praise to Hecate, and headless mooncalves bleated to the Magna Mater. Goats leaped to the sound of thin accursed flutes, and AEgipans chased endlessly after misshapen fauns over rocks twisted like swollen toads. Moloch and Ashtaroth were not absent; for in this quintessence of all damnation the bounds of consciousness were let down, and man's fancy lay open to vistas of every realm of horror and every forbidden dimension that evil had power to mold. The world and nature were helpless against such assaults from unsealed wells of night, nor could any sign or prayer check the Walpurgissage of horror which had come when a sage with the hateful locked and brimming coffer of transmitted demon-lore.

Suddenly a ray of physical light shot through these fantasms, and Malone heard the sound of oars amidst the blasphemies of things that should be dead. A boat with a lantern in its prow darted into sight, made fast to an iron ring in the slimy stone pier, and vomited forth several dark men bearing a long burden swathed in bedding. They took it to the naked phosphorescent thing on the carved gold pedestal, and the thing tittered and pawed the bedding. Then they unswathed it, and propped upright before the pedestal the gangrenous corpse of a corpulent old man with stubby beard and unkempt white hair. The phosphorescent thing tittered again, and the men produced bottles from their pockets and anointed its feet with red, whilst they afterward gave the bottles to the thing to drink from.

All at once, from an arcaded avenue leading endlessly away, there came the demoniac rattle and wheeze of a blasphemous organ, choking and rumbling out of the mockeries of hell in cracked, sardonic bass. In an instant every moving entity was electrified; and forming at once into a ceremonial procession, the nightmare horde slithered away in quiet of the sound—goat, satyr, and AEgipan, incubus, succuba, and lemur, twisted toad and shapeless elemental, dog-faces howler and silent strutter in darkness—all led by the abominable naked phosphorescent thing that had squatted on the carved golden throne, and that now strode insolently bearing in its arms the glassy-eyed corpse of the corpulent old man. The strange dark man danced in the rear, and the whole column skipped and leaped with Dionysiac fury. Malone staggered after them a few steps, delirious and hazy, and doubtful of his place in this or any world. Then he turned, faltered, and sank down on the cold damp stone, gasping and shivering as the demon organ croaked on, and the howling and drumming and tinkling of the mad procession grew fainter and fainter.

Vaguely he was conscious of chanted horrors, and shocking croakings afar off. Now and then a wail or whine of ceremonial devotion would float to him through the black arcade, whilst eventually there rose the dreadful Greek incantation whose text he had read above the pulpit of that dance-hall church.

"O friend and companion of night thou who rejoicest in the baying of dogs (here a hideous howl burst forth) and spilt blood (here nameless sounds vied with morbid shriekings), who wanderest in the midst of shades among the tombs (here a whistling sigh occurred), who longest for blood and bringest terror to mortals (short, sharp cries from myriad throats),

Gorgo (repeated as response), Mormo (repeated with ecstasy), thousand-faced moon (sighs and flute notes), look favorably on our sacrifices!"

As the chant closed, a general shout went up, and hissing sounds nearly drowned the croaking of the cracked bass organ. Then a gasp as from many throats, and a babel of barked and bleated words—"Lilith, Great Lilith, behold the Bridegroom!" More cries, a clamor of rioting, and the sharp, clicking footfalls of a running figure. The footfalls approached, and Malone raised himself to his elbow to look.

THE luminosity of the crypt, lately diminished, had now slightly increased; and in that devil-light there appeared the fleeing form of that which should not flee or feel or breathe—the glassy-eyed, gangrenous corpse of the corpulent old man, now needing no support, but animated by some infernal sorcery of the rite just closed. After it raced the naked, tittering, phosphorescent thing that belonged on the carven pedestal, and still farther behind panted the dark men, and all the dread crew of sentient loathsomenesses. The corpse was gaining on its pursuers, and seemed bent on a definite object; straining with every rotting muscle toward the carved golden pedestal, whose necromantic importance was evidently so great. Another moment and it had reached its goal, whilst the trailing throng labored on with more frantic speed. But they were too late, for in one final spurt of strength which ripped tendon from tendon and sent its noisome bulk floundering to the floor in a state of jellyish dissolution, the staring corpse which had been Robert Suydam achieved its object and its triumph. The push had been tremendous, but the force had held out; and as the pusher collapsed to a muddy blotch of corruption the pedestal he had pushed tottered, tipped, and finally careened from its onyx base into the thick waters below, sending up a parting gleam of carven gold as it sank heavily to undreamable gulfs of lower Tartarus. In that instant, too, the whole scene of horror faded to nothingness before Malone's eyes; and he fainted amidst a thunderous crash which seemed to blot out all the evil universe.

VII

MALONE'S dream, experienced in full before he knew of Suydam's death and transfer at sea, was curiously supplemented by some oddities of the case; though that is no reason why anyone should believe it. The three old houses in Parker Place, doubtless long rotten with decay in its most insidious form, collapsed without visible cause while half the raiders and most of the prisoners were inside; and both of the greater number were instantly killed. Only in the basements and cellars was there much saving of life, and Malone was lucky to have been deep below the house of Robert Suydam. For he really was there, as no one is disposed to deny. They found him unconscious by the edge of the night-black pool, with a grotesquely horrible jumble of decay and bone, identifiable through dental work as the body of Suydam, a few feet away. The case was plain, for it was hither that the smugglers' underground canal led; and the men who took Suydam from the ship had brought him home. They themselves were never found, or identified; and the ship's doctor is not yet satisfied with the certitudes of the police.

Suydam was evidently a leader in extensive man-smuggling operations, for the canal to his house was but one of several subterranean channels and tunnels in the neighborhood. There was a tunnel from this house to a crypt beneath the dance-hall church; a crypt accessible from the church only through a narrow secret passage in the north wall, and in whose chambers some singular and terrible things were discovered. The croaking organ was there, as well as a vast arched chapel with wooden benches and a strangely figured altar. The walls were lined with small cells, in seventeen of which—hideous to relate—solitary prisoners in a state of complete idiocy were found chained, including four mothers with infants of disturbingly strange appearance. These infants died soon after exposure to the light; a circumstance which the doctors thought rather merciful. Nobody but Malone, among those who inspected them, remembered the somber question of old Delrio: "An sint unquan daemones incubi et succubae, et an ex tali congressu proles nasci queat?"

Before the canals were filled up they were thoroughly dredged, and yielded forth a sensational array of sawed and split bones of all sizes. The kidnapping epidemic, very clearly, had been traced home; though only two of the surviving prisoners could by any legal thread be connected with it. These men are now in prison, since they failed of conviction as accessories in the actual murders. The carved golden pedestal or throne so often mentioned by Malone as of primary occult importance was never brought to light, though at one place under the Suydam house the canal was observed to sink into a well too deep for dredging. It was choked up at the mouth and cemented over when the cellars of the new houses were made, but Malone often speculates on what lies beneath. The police, satisfied that they had shattered a dangerous gang of maniacs and alien smugglers, turned over to the Federal authorities the unconvicted Kurds, who before their deportation were conclusively found to belong to the Yezidee clan of devil-worshippers. The tramp ship and its crew remain an elusive mystery, though cynical detectives are once more ready to combat its smuggling and rum-running ventures. Malone thinks these detectives show a sadly limited perspective in their lack of wonder at the myriad unexplainable details, and the suggestive obscurity of the whole case; though he is just as critical of the newspapers, which saw only a morbid sensation and gloated over a minor sadist cult when they might have proclaimed a horror from the universe's very heart. But he is content to rest silent in Chepachet, calming his nervous system and praying that time may gradually transfer his terrible experience from the realm of present reality to that of picturesque and semi-mythical remoteness.

Robert Suydam sleeps beside his bride in Greenwood Cemetery. No funeral was held over the strangely released bones, and relatives are grateful for the swift oblivion which overtook the case as a whole.

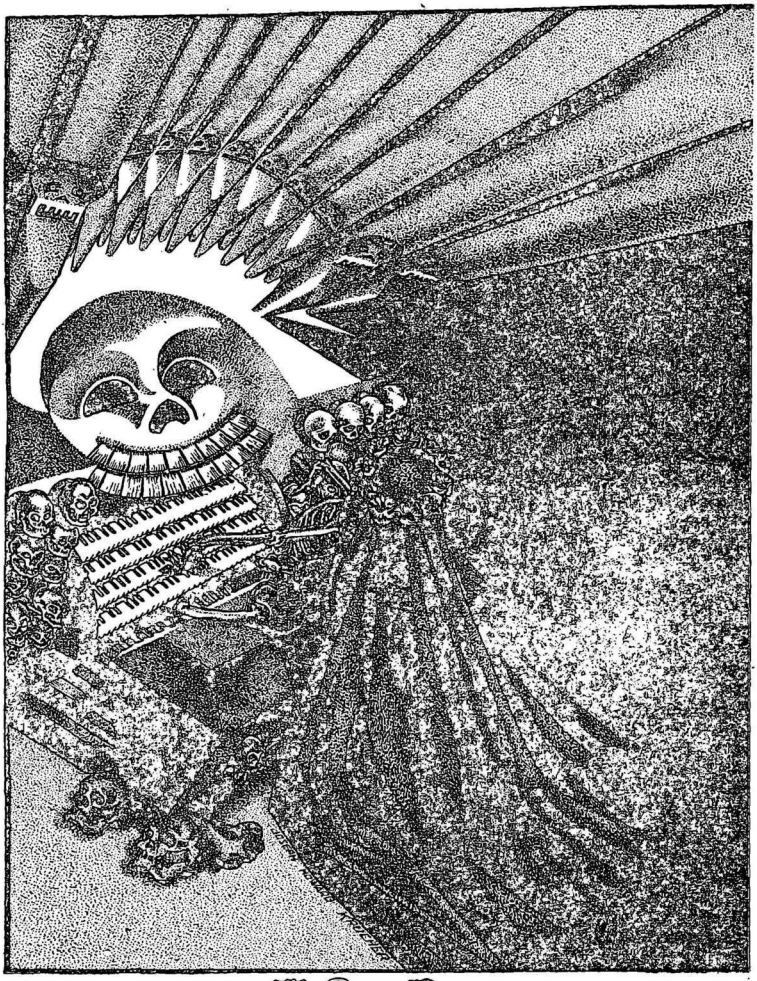
The scholar's connection with the Red Hook horrors, indeed, was never emblazoned by legal proof; since his death forestalled the inquiry he would otherwise have faced. His own end is not much mentioned, and the Suydams hope that posterity may recall him only as a gentle recluse who dabbled in harmless magic and folk-lore.

As for Red Hook—it is always the same. Suydam came and went; a terror gathered and faded; but the evil spirit of darkness and squalor broods on amongst the mongrels in the old brick houses, and prowling bands still parade on unknown errands past windows where lights and twisted faces unaccountably appear and disappear. Age-old horror is a hydra with a thousand heads, and the cults of darkness are rooted in blasphemies deeper than the well of Democritus. The soul of the beast is omnipresent and triumphant, and Red Hook's legions of blear-eyed, pockmarked youths still chant and curse and howl as they file from abyss to abyss, none knows whence or whither, pushed on by blind laws of biology which they may never understand. As of old more people enter Red Hook than leave it on the landward side, and there are alreday rumors of new canals running underground to certain centers of traffic in liquor and less mentionable things.

The dance-hall church is now mostly a dance-hall, and queer faces have appeared at night at the windows. Lately a policeman expressed the belief that the filled-up crypt has been dug out again, and for no simply explainable purpose. Who are we to combat poisons older than history and mankind? Apes danced in Asia to those horrors, and the cancer lurks secure and spreading where furtiveness hides in rows of decaying brick.

Malone does not shudder without cause—for only the other day an officer overheard a swarthy squinting hag teaching a small child some whispering patois in the shadow of an areaway. He listened, and thought it very strange when he heard her repeat over and over again:

"O friend and companion of night thou who rejoicest in the baying of dogs and spilt blood, who wanderest in the midst of shades among the tombs, who longest for blood and bringest terror to mortals, Gorgo, Mormo, thousand-faced moon, look favorably on our sacrifices!"



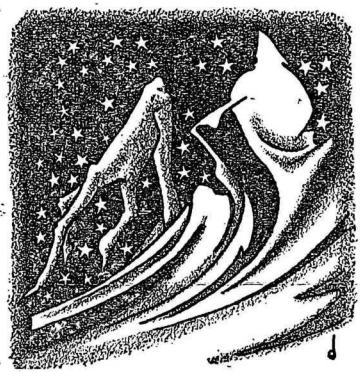
The Bride of Death.

VEIL'D IN THE BLACKNESS OF EBON—FAR FROM THE HEIGHTS OF HEAVEN;
THE BRIDE OF DEATH, 'PON THE WITCHING MIDNIGHT HOUR
IN A FRENZY OVERWHELMING, UNLEASHES HER POWER—
SENDING FORTH A TORRENT OF CASCADING CACOPHONY,
VIBRANT-TUMULTUOUS, MIND-SHATTERING—FAR FROM A SYMPHONY.)
AMID CRASH AND ROAR HER BONY FINGERS COMMAND A FLOOD
FREEZING TO THE MARROW, A MORTAL'S BLOOD;
THE SPELL IS CAST—THE MORTAL'S CAUGHT FAST;
WITH A DIABOLICAL FURY, DUET OF DISONANCE, AND DEATH'S RATTLING CRY
REACH A CRESCENDO—LEAVING ANOTHER BODY FLOATING, WHERE HUMAN
EYES CANNOT PRY.

JOSEPH HOWARD KNUCKER.

The Place of Desolation

Could it be that Earth had moved out of its orbit into closer relation with the stars of other universes?



BY AUGUST DERLETH

IT SHOULD be understood that the place takes its name not from any whim of mine but from the fragmentary manuscript which I discovered on the premises. It lies in what has been taken for the crater of a meteor's collision with earth, an event which must have taken place many thousands of years ago, for some geologic progress has manifestly been made since it was formed. The house itself rises in a grove of trees at its approximate center, and the crater has a diameter of roughly a mile. It lies—but perhaps its location ought not to be too precisely defined; suffice it to say that it lies in the northern part of one of the midwestern states of America, in a country of forests and lakes, ten miles from the nearest village, three from an Indian reservation.

I visited it twice, the first time on the occasion of my discovery of the fragmentary manuscript, the second time out of curiosity stimulated by that manuscript. There appears to be no record of just when the house was built, but it must have been somewhere around 1940, for Septimus Sabata discovered the crater at about that time, and located upon it soon after. It is in his hand that the manuscript is written. That he built the house, evidently without the help of Indians, can be inferred from references in the extant portions of the manuscript. That he lived in it with one companion for a short time cannot be gainsaid. And that he had some truly extraordinary experiences I think must be admitted by anyone who takes more than a cursory glance at the manuscript he did not quite succeed in destroying.

One might wonder what manner of man he was. Of middle age, of an inquiring mind, not easily disturbed, a trained observer—these factors emerge from the manuscript; his physical proportions do not matter. He set down a curious manuscript, he burned a portion of it, fragments remained to be found in his fireplace. The fragments, however, are substantial and strangely disturbing—disturbing enough to put one in two minds about publishing them, to suppress them on the one hand, or to release them for the information, if such it can be called, the pages contain.

Something happened to Sabata from the beginning—not alone the superstitious avoidance of the crater by all the Indians of the vicinity; no, something about the house and the place, something that

aroused all Sabata's curiosity, and inspired him ultimately to setting down on paper the phenomena which he observed. I am not presumptuous enough to pass any final judgment on what Sabata has written; all the portions of his manuscript have been preserved and they are reproduced here, in full.

The manuscript began with the seventh page, numbered in his hand; this survived, badly charred, as the first of a sequence, throughout which a certain consecutive story is told, however disjointedly, though the story is wholly strange and inconclusive. Such material as had gone before would seem to be indicated as a general description of the site of the house, together with some initial hints of events or aura not in keeping with what Sabata had expected.

* * *

". . . where the grove of conifers had stood, what was evidently a city of some size. I could not determine what kind of hallucination this was. I did not conceive that it might not be an hallucination. The city was there, of an architecture utterly alien to me, not conservative, but highly functional. Evidently the architects had been followers of the so-called modern school, which embraces Saarinen, Wright, Le Corbusier, and others. But to what extent and to what time this following had taken place, I could not say. There were great ramps for air traffic with machines of no recognizable type moving on and off the ramps high up in the city, fanning out from towers which were surely those of air terminals. Also within sight were individual flyers—people wearing some kind of attachment which enabled them to fly from place to place with astonishing ease.

"I watched this scene with amazement, gazing with awe upon the stupendous towers of a super-city of some far future time where I had expected to see nothing more than the landscape of trees and the low, undulating ground ending in the far slope, with which I was just beginning to become familiar. It flowed outward as far as I could see; it was alive with all the activity of a busy metropolis; it presented undreamed-of vistas, and there were such machines moving about in the canyoned streets, on earth's surface as well as in the air, as I am sure were not imagined in contemporary man's wildest dreams. It had none of the insubstantiality of a mirage, none of the mistiness of a dream image; it rose sharp and clear, palpable and undeniably real before the eyes.

"Now, as I stood staring at this phenomenon, a most curious thing took place. I observed, when I moved back from the window a little way that I could see the city through the wall as well as the window; there was apparently no difference, for between the city and me the walls were as opaque as the glass. But I had less than a few moments to contemplate this discovery, for suddenly, from top and bottom simultaneously, the entire city seemed to fold or wash inward like a screen creasing towards its center and changing, settling into a different scene, which became once more the remembered landscape of conifers and swelling land. The entire phenomenon could not have lasted much more than a minute. Had I seen it or not? I remembered then the illusion of barren waste I had seen in that place only two days before. This, too, had appeared and vanished again as strangely. But, because its barrenness was not too alien to the landscape, I had thought the absence of the conifers due to an hallucination or a blind spot. Now, then, was it —or not?

"And, if not, what was its cause? Had the glass some magic property? Or was it an attribute of space? Strange indeed that this dwelling I had erected should have failed so signally to eradicate the reputation this site has had for generations among the natives and, before them, the Indians, who had various names for this sunken area, calling it particularly by one word which signified the 'place of desolation', and variously by another which identified it as belonging exclusively to the 'Great Manito' because it was here that their 'God' made himself manifest in many marvels. Were they, then, such marvels as this I had just witnessed?

"Now the landscape was tranquil, serene, unaltered. The pine trees waved in a light wind, the far horizon shimmered in bands of heat. The curiously heavy feeling was returning to the house, as if the building and all within the sunken area were settling

back to wait for something more to take place, something as different as that which had already happened, transforming once again to an alien landscape, like the barren waste or the marvelous super-city.

"The events of our days moved forward as before.

"I studied among the books I had moved in, with little interruption save for the distant sound of Ezra's radio, or Ezra himself coming to ask about certain as yet unknown aspects of his duties, unknown only in the sense that he had not yet been given any decision about them. But he said very little; he was taciturn and uncommunicative, an ideal servant for a man of my leanings. It was he who went into the village occasionally, and brought back the legends of this place—how the Indians shunned it or revered it, depending upon their natures; how the white inhabitants of the region were uneasy about it. But there was nothing other than a mass of vague fancies to sustain the natives, and only a curious insistence that at this place the hand of 'Manito was made manifest to them, to support the beliefs of the Indians. Could they mean by 'the 'hand of Manito', I wondered, the same kind of phenomena I had twice witnessed?

"There was nothing substantial about the tales Ezra brought back. He repeated them phlegmatically, in spare words, with no suggestion of his personal belief. Perhaps, if there had been more credulousness on his part . . But, of course, all speculation is idle. Events may move in a predestined manner, against which all deeds and decisions of even the mass of men are meaningless.

"APPROXIMATELY a week passed by before anything further happened. Then it was at night. I had been working late, past midnight. Ezra had long since gone to bed. I put out the light and walked over toward the north wall on my way to the stairs, when suddenly it was as if I stood outside, with the walls transparent. Landscape and stars shone through, as were the house but glass or something even less tangible. I stood where I was, for the first time unwilling to move, confident that the illusion would last but a brief time.

"But in that time I saw the stars. And they were not familiar. Or worse, they were familiar with an alarming degree of variation. I recognized at first only the stars of Ursa Major, the Great Bear or Big Dipper, and these only by the purest happenstance; for I sought them, knowing where the Dipper should be in the heavens, and I saw them, but not in the form of the Dipper known throughout the history of man—no, the stars were now strung out in an irregular line; the outline of the Dipper was gone.

"I looked to the north star. But Polaris was gone, too, far from where it had once been. Indeed, I could not be sure that the star down along the horizon which seemed to me Polaris, was that star at all. But the fixed star which appeared in the place of Polaris was recognizable—it was the giant star, Vega, far from its one-time position in the heavens. I gazed at this strange sky in awe, for many more stars of first magnitude were there, stars I could not identify, stars I am certain I never saw or read about before. The entire constellation of Auriga seemed to have come up closer—but at this moment an arresting thought came to me: could it not indeed have been that Earth had moved out of its orbit into closer relation with the stars of other universes?

"The scene held. Longer than a few moments, longer than a minute. And on that heaven lights began to move, the lights of a great ship which came out of the stars and settled like a feather into the landscape far to the left, once its jets had ceased, where there was a glowing in the sky, as if a city lay there below the horizon. Then the sky was filled with ships, moving back and forth, into the star-spaces and down to Earth.

"Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the outlines of the room grew stronger, came back; the stars faded away, blacked out; the walls, the ceiling, the bookshelves, the familiar furniture, the desk—all resumed their former solidity. But for a horrible moment I found myself in doubt about which was the reality, and which the dream?

"Or could it be, I asked myself, that both were reality?

"For I felt no transition, no aura of sleep, no weariness, nothing. The senses apprehended sight and sound—for at the

last the humming as of distant machines was apparent, just faintly audible, as it were, on the rim of awareness. Then once again, all was tranquil, serene; I went on my way as if nothing had taken place, and certainly, to Ezra, snoring in his sleep, nothing had.

"I think it was at this time that I determined to set down what had taken place; so I returned to my desk and began without further delay to put . . ."

A BREAK in the manuscript at this point indicates the loss of two pages to the flames; the narrative resumes in disjointed notes, evidently from a daily journal begun to supplement what had been written.

". . in battle. The aircraft vanished, and a bombardment began. The very first bomb obliterated the entire city. Atomic, perhaps? Or hydrogen? It could have been either, but seemed more probably the latter. Destruction of this nature might otherwise have seemed inconceivable to me; it was not just that the buildings were shattered to rubble; no, they were completely disintegrated, and so, presumably, were all living things within the radius of that titanic force.

"Time in that place seemed to move with incredible swiftness. A kind of vegetation sprang up rapidly on the site of the city; and presently great ships landed and discharged passengers. Not men. Not human beings at all. Not even entities remotely related to the human race. They were clad in alien, ungainly uniforms, and they did not appear to breathe oxygen, but seemed rather to be protected against the atmosphere of the planet. They were many-legged or armed—I could not determine which, bearing six down each side of their tall, slender bodies. I was made to think of preying mantises, such was their appearance. What seemed evident was their alien origin—certainly not of this planet. There was no other key to their origin, whether from some near star or from some distant planet, and their ship afforded no clues.

"The invaders did not go far from the ship; they examined such vegetation as grew, and then returned hurriedly to their haven. Quite apparently the atmosphere was antipathetic, and even with their protective garments they dared not chance it for long.

"But now, with the alteration of the landscape this interplanetary warfare had brought about, I could no longer be sure that I looked out upon the familiar terrain beyond my walls. Time had wrought such changes that no single point of familiarity remained; I could not guess at what distant period I gazed upon in this fascinating show which went on before my eyes at moments beyond and apart from my power to order them.

"The scene faded as abruptly as it had begun, with the interplanetary visitors returning to their ship and evidently preparing to take off once more for the place from whence they had come.

"Nothing further tonight.

"July 7th: Ezra disappeared today. I missed him right after witnessing a brief change in the landscape—to one of utter desolation. The Indian name again. And how right, surely! But what time? I could not fix upon it, though it seemed to be in the early ages of the planet, yet certain aspects hinted of a future beyond that era of interplanetary warfare. Wherever Ezra went, he took nothing but the clothes he wore with him. Taciturn he has always been, but so erratic, never.

"July 11th: I spoke with Bennington on the long distance telephone this afternoon out of Kaubun, the reservation—they have a modern lodge, and several university-educated Indians in control of the settlement. Bennington talked a long time. I could not decide whether he was taking me seriously or whether he was convinced that I suffered from hallucinations. To tell the truth, I could not say which myself. But he talked learnedly about a warp in space and time, suggesting that it had something to do with the meteor's falling here to make the mile-wide depression in which the house stands. I could not precisely follow him, but he said in short that I might have built the house in the midst of a space-time-warp, where time and space as we knew it terrestrially did not exist, and that anyone living in that place might actually co-exist in time and space fundamentally alien to our own. Alien, that is, by virtue of being not today, but what we call yesterday or tomorrow, which are only different names for various segments of the same element

or dimension. One could even slip into the warp, he hinted, and said, 'Look into Fort. I sent you a collected edition.'

"So I have been looking into Fort. True, there are strange disappearances. Dorothy Arnold, Ambrose Small, Benjamin Bathhurst—whose walking around his horses at an inn, in plain sight of two other people, only to vanish, he seems the most strange of all—and others. But these are inconclusive; they are all negative.

"July 17th: It began today in mid-afternoon, as nearly as I can remember. An extraordinary sequence of events which lasted for hours. It began with barren landscape under a hot, molten sun; the landscape itself was molten, in flux, without trees, but in some geologic formation unknown to me. The sky was red, and sun, moon, and stars seemed to race across it at incredible speeds, so that years passed in less than a second. The land changed, became solid, vegetation, animals, human beings appeared. A low, animal-like kind of man, living at first with his mate, then communally, in villages, in slowly-expanding societies, in cities. An era of war followed, then another period of expansion and growth, followed by industrial progress, and again war.

"The sequence came in a pattern—of growth and conquest, of war and chaos, and at last there appeared a familiar city, the first city I had seen, the city of the high towers and advanced methods of air travel. But this fell all too soon in war, and another took its place. Then came the period of interplanetary warfare, followed by utter desolation, and an era of galactic exploration.

"Life on other planets, on near stars and far. Alien life-forms in possession of Earth and her sister planets. And then a final holocaust involving the destruction of all life on Earth.

"But this was not the end, though I had thought it would be. No, it began over again. The same patterns, the same sequence, with the molten sun and the molten earth, the first animals and vegetation, the first, crude man. And it continued until the era of the first wars, when the scene fell away, as before, fading, becoming indistinct and pale and finally being lost in the blackness of the night which held the earth around the house in this place of desolation.

"I sat for a long time tonight, long after midnight, thinking of all this, of this stupendous show for which there was no accounting. Unless Bennington is right. But how could he be? Such a thing is beyond my comprehension. What I had seen, however, was not. Was it not indeed a capsular history of mankind? Of its past I knew, of its future I could guess.

"The entire history of mankind, the entire saga of Earth in one vast panorama!

"Is it not in essence the key to civilization itself? History is cyclic. So is man. Though he destroy himself, he will return. This will be his fate and the fate of his planets—to rise to an almost godlike height of civilization, to destroy himself, to be reborn.

"July 21: Still no word from Ezra.

"July 22: Odd, the house gives off curious sounds. Like voices, far away. Or perhaps a voice; I cannot be sure. A voice imploring, begging, pleading. I cannot guess what it portends.

"July 27: An interplanetary show. Space travel is clearly a possibility in this remote world. A base on the moon, certainly; trips back and forth being made with some regularity, if I read correctly what I see. No colonization, however; the bases are solely for military purposes.

"July 29: I began to think this morning and I asked myself why it should be that this house should assume a transparence at such occasions as the landscape suffers alteration if it is not that the house itself, as well as perhaps everything surrounding it within the crater, is on the borderline of what Bennington calls the 'space-warp'? It could be so. Would it follow, then, as Bennington suggests, that one might slip over into the impinging dimension and time?

"If space and time are dimensions . . but, of course, there can be no doubt of that. Does the house cease to exist at such times? Do I? But I remain conscious, aware, with memory of what I have seen as well as of my own past which must be presumed apart from what goes on in this place so shunned by the Indians of the vicinity. I ask myself, what is existence? the state of being? I am; therefore I exist. The house is;

therefore it, too, exists. I see it, feel it, hear it. But I see also what takes place around the house, something that seems to exist conterminously. But how could two solids occupy the same space? I shall have to ask Bennington that one!

"July 31: Bennington says of course, two solids could occupy the same space in different dimensions. A long involved discussion at the reservation lodge with John Longfeather, who supports Bennington's line. I did not tell him anything, naturally; it is quite enough if Bennington thinks me slightly off balance, as I am sure he does.

"We shall see. It ought to be fairly simple. Next time I will prove Bennington wrong or right by walking through the wall."

* * *

THIS is the end of the manuscript. If Sabata wrote anything further, I have been unable to find it. The manuscript had been thrown face downward into the fire, by whose hand I do not know. I have assumed it to be Sabata's; I may be in error.

As I have pointed out, I visited the house twice. I went there the first time in order to look into Sabata's disappearance. As the only known relative of Septimus Sabata, it was natural that I should go. I went there a second time after reading the manuscript and those appended notes from his diary or journal.

One could speculate endlessly about my relative. But in essence, all speculations resolve into logical certainties. Either he was mentally unbalanced or he was not. If he was, then his manuscript may be dismissed as a product of that imbalance. If he was not, then some other explanation for the manuscript must be found, unless we accept the suggestion that Sabata was at work on a piece of fiction he could not put together to his own satisfaction, which would also explain his attempt to destroy it.

It is certainly the easiest course to suggest that his state of mind was not healthy. But there are disturbing factors which cannot be resolved that easily. What did happen to Ezra, for instance? And the conversations with Bennington and John Longfeather—these took place, since I confirmed them myself. Bennington only asked, "Do you suppose he walked through the wall?" but at my obtuse look, he abandoned his question; that was before I had read the manuscript through. The Indian, an intelligent, college-educated young man, went out to the house, touched nothing, and seemed anxious to get away; he spoke of it later as a 'place apart'

ON MY second visit I went to the house alone.

How absurd it is to think of the house as having transparent walls struck me at that visit. The house is exceptionally well built. Walked through the wall, indeed! In some places the wall is a solid foot through, with only a small air-space, and all the rest of it like imitation granite. Whatever Septimus Sabata lacked, he did know how to build a strong and solid house.

Everything was in its place. The sun shone. Indeed, the house had a singular cheerfulness, quite as if it were waiting to welcome its next tenant. Having got rid of Ezra—he, too, no doubt Bennington would say, might have walked through the wall—and Sabata, the house waited for someone else to come and live in its expertly planned rooms.

I have only the pleasantest memory of the house Sabata built, of the place the Indians call the 'place of desolation'. Except, of course, for one minor and doubtless totally insignificant thing. On my second visit to the house I could not rid myself of the conviction that I could hear, quite audibly, but faintly, as from a great distance away, the sound of Sabata's voice calling my name and imploring me to help him 'back'. It was a persistent conviction, from which I was not freed until I crossed the rim of the crater on my way home.

But then, the place did have a reputation, according to Sabata's own written document—a place, if for nothing else, of illusions and hallucinations. Small wonder that I should have had one, too! I shudder to think of how far my mind might have wandered if I had stayed. Like poor Septimus Sabata. Walking through a wall, indeed! The trouble with scientists like Bennington is that they have no fundamental respect for plain common sense.

Whether or Not You Believe in Reincarnation, You Will Be Thrilled By Reading

Jungle Beasts

BY WILLIAM P. BARRON

I

"LOOK!" said the nurse to the young interne on the second floor of Dr. Winslow's sanitorium. "See what I found in the table drawers of 112—the patient who was discharged last evening. Do you suppose this horrible story can be true?"

The interne took the manuscript with a blase air. He had read so many of these ravings on paper!

"This one is really unusual," said the nurse, noticing his manner. "Please read it."

Mildly interested, the interne began to read:

THE STORY OF A VAMPIRE

WHY am I here in this place of madness, this house of diseased minds? Because of a cat!

And it is a cat that takes me away from this place—to go to my death! And maybe this cat will follow on to haunt me in some other world as it has in this. Who knows?

This doom had its beginning, as far as this life is concerned, when I was a boy, a lonely boy in my grandmother's house. My grandmother had a great yellow Tartar cat that she loved as only a lonely old woman can love a cat.

Perhaps it was because I was jealous of

the love and attention my grandmother lavished on Toi Wah—a boy's natural antipathy for anything that usurps the place he thinks is his by right. Or perhaps it was the same impish impulse to inflict suffering on a helpless dumb creature, which I have observed in other boys.

Anyway, with or without reason, I hated this self-complacent, supercilious animal that looked at me out of topaz eyes, with a look that seemed to see through and beyond me, as if I did not exist.

I hated her with a hatred that could be satisfied only with her death, and I thought and brooded for hours, that should have been devoted to my studies, of ways and means to bring this death about.

I must be fair to myself. Toi Wah hated me too. I could sense it as I sat by my grandmother's chair before the fire and looked across at Toi Wah, who lay in a chair on the opposite side. At such times I would always catch her watching me out of half-closed eyes, stealthily, furtively, never off her guard.

If she lay in my grandmother's lap and I leaned over to stroke her beautiful yellow fur, I could feel her actually shrink from my hand, and she would never purr, as she always did when my grandmother stroked her.

Sometimes I would hold her on my lap and pretend that I loved her. But as I stroked her, my hands would itch and twitch with the desire to clinch my hand in her satiny skin, and with the other hand choke her until she died.

My desire to kill would become so overpowering that my breath would become hurried, my heart would beat almost to suffocation and my face would flush.

USUALLY my grandmother, noticing my reddened face would glance up over her spectacles, from the book she was reading and say, "What ails you, Robert? You look flushed and feverish. Perhaps the room is too warm for you. Put Toi Wah down and run out in the air for a while."

I would take Toi Wah then, and, holding her as tightly as I dared, and with my teeth clenched to restrain myself, I would put her on her cushion and go out.

My grandfather had brought Toi Wah, a little yellow, fluffy amber-eyed kitten, home with him in his ship from that mysterious land washed by the Yellow Sea.

And with Toi Wah had come a strange tale of her taking, stolen from an old Buddhist Monastery garden nestling among age-old pines beside the Grand Canal of China.

About her neck was a beautifully wrought collar of flexible gold, with a dragon engraved along its length, together with many Chinese characters and set with stones of topaz and jade.

The collar was cleverly made so as to allow for expansion as the need arose, so that Toi Wah was never without her collar from her kittenhood to adult age. In fact, the collar could not be loosened without injury to the metal.

One day I descended into the kitchen with the cat in my arms and showed Charlie, our Chinese cook, who had sailed the Seven Seas with my grandfather, the collar about her neck.

The old Chinaman stared, until his eyes started from his head, all the time making queer little noises in his throat. He rubbed his eyes and put on his great horn spectacles and stared again, muttering to himself.

"What is it, Charlie?" I asked, surprised at the old man, who was usually so stoically calm.

"These velly gleat words," he said at last, shaking his head cryptically. "Words no good flo you. Words good for velly gleat cat; Gland Lama cat."

"But what do the words say?" I urged.

He mooned over the inscription for a long time, fingering the collar lovingly, while Toi Wah lay passively in my arms and looked at him.

"He say what I no can say good in English," he explained at last. "He say, 'Death no can do, no can die.' See? When Gland Lama cat wear this colla', no can die. No can be kill him—just change flom cat to some other thing; monkey—tiger—hoss—maybe man—next time," he concluded vaguely.

"He say, 'Love me, I love you, hate me, I hate you.' No can say good in English what Chinese say. See?"

And with this I had to be content for the time. Now I know the characters engraved on Toi Wah's collar referred to a quotation

from the seventh book of Buddha, which, freely translated, reads as follows:

"That which is alive hath known death, and that which lives can never die. Death is not; there is only a changing from shape to shape, from life to life.

"Mayhap the despised animal, walking in the dust of the road, was one time King of Ind, or the consort of Ghengis Khan.

"Do me no harm. Protect me, O Man, and I will protect thee. Feed me, O Man, and I will feed thee. Love me, O Man, and I will love thee. Hate me, and I will hate thee. Slay me, and I will slay thee.

"We be brothers, O Man, thou and I, from life to life, from death to death, until Nirvana be won."

If I had only known then, and stayed my hand, I would not now be haunted by this yellow terror that peers out at me from the dark; that follows after me with softly padding feet; never nearer, never receding until . . .

Toi Wah was mated with another Tartar cat of high degree, and became the mother of a kitten.

And such a mother! Only the hard heart made cruel by fear would remain unsoftened by the great cat's untiring devotion to her kitten.

Everywhere she went she carried it in her mouth; never leaving it alone for a moment, seeming to sense its danger from me; an abnormal, hated cat!

However, she seemed to relent even toward me if I happened to pass her chair when she was nursing the little creature.

At such times she would lay stretching out her legs, opening and shutting her great paws in a sort of ecstasy, purring her utter content. She would look up at me, maternal pride and joy glowing in her yellow eyes, soft and lustrous now, the hate and suspicion of me crowded out by mother love.

"Look!" she seemed to say. "Look at this wonderful thing I have created out of my body! Do you not love it?"

I did not love it. No! On the contrary, it intensified my hate by adding another object to it.

My grandmother added fuel to the fire by sending me out to the shops to buy delicacies for Toi Wah and her kitten; liverwurst and catnip for the mother, milk and cream for the kitten.

"Robert, my son," she would say to me, all unaware of my hatred, "Do you know we have quite a royal family with us? These wonderful cats are descended in an unbroken line from the cats of the Royal Household of Ghengis Khan. The records were kept in the Buddhist Monastery from which Toi Wah came."

"How did Grandfather get her?" I asked.

"Do not ask me, child," the old lady smiled. "He told me only that he stole her in a spirit of bravado from the garden of the ancient Buddhist Monastery when egged on to do so by his friends. They were spending an idle week exploring the ancient towns along the Grand Canal of China; and were attracted by the beautiful Tartar cats in this garden. It seemed the Buddhist Monks reared these cats as a sort of religious duty.

"Your grandfather always believed that a Buddish curse of some sort went with Toi Wah after a Chinese merchant translated the Chinese characters on her collar for him. And he often said he wished that he had not whisked her into the pocket of his big sou'wester jacket, when the priests were not looking.

"Myself I do not believe in these superstitious curses and omens, so I would not let him take the collar off. In fact, he *could* not do it; it was so cunningly riveted.

"He always feared some evil would come from the cat, but I have found her a great comfort and a thing to love."

And she would hold out her hands to Toi Wah, and the great cat would leap in her lap and rub her head lovingly against my grandmother's neck.

After that I feared Toi Wah more than ever. This fear was an intangible, elusive thing. I could not understand it or analyze it; but it was very real. If I wandered about the dim old passageways of my grandmother's ancient house, or explored the dusty cobwebby rooms, there seemed always to follow after me the soft padding sound of Toi Wah's paws. Following, always after me, but never coming nearer; always just beyond where I could see.

It was maddening! Always to have following after me the stealthy, soft, almost in-

audible sound of padded feet. I could never win free from it within the house.

In my bedroom, sitting alone before the fire with the door locked and bolted, every corner of the room previously explored, the bed looked under, I would always feel that she was sitting there behind me, watching me out of vigilant yellow eyes. Eyes that were full of suspicion and hate. Waiting, watching—for what? I did not know. I only feared.

Out of this fear grew many unreal terrors. I came to believe that Toi Wah was waiting a favorable chance to spring on me from behind, or when I was asleep, and to dig her great curved claws into my throat, tearing and rending it in her hate.

I became so possessed by this fear that I fashioned a leather collar for myself that fitted well up under my ears and around my neck. I wore this always when I was alone in my room and when I slept, gaining some sense of security thereby. But in the night time! No one can know what I, a lonely boy, suffered then!

My eyes would no sooner close in drowsy weariness when the stealthy padding of Toi Wah's footsteps would begin. I could hear them coming softly up the stairs, stealing along the dark passageway to my room, at the end. They stopped there because the door was locked and bolted, with the heavy chiffonier jammed against it as an extra precaution. I would listen intently, and I fancied I could hear a faint scratching sound at the door.

Then there would rush over me all the terrors of the dark. Suppose I had failed to close the transom securely? If the transom was open Toi Wah could, with one great leap, win through and on to my bed. And then—

The cold sweat of fear would exude from every pore, as my imagination visualized Toi Wah leaping through, and, with a snarl, pouncing upon my throat with tooth and claw. I would shudder and tremblingly feel about my neck to make sure my leather collar was securely fastened.

At last, unable to stand the uncertainty any longer, I would leap out of bed, turn on the light, rush to the door, frantically drag the heavy chiffonier to one side, and throw open the door. Nothing!

Then I would creep along the passageway to the head of the stairs, and peer down into the dimly lighted hall. Nothing!

Looking fearfully over my shoulder as I went, I would go back to my room, shut the door, lock and bolt it, push the chiffonier against it, assure myself that the transom was closed, and jump into bed, burying my head beneath the covers.

Then I could sleep. Sleep only to dream that Toi Wah had crept softly into the room and was sucking the breath out of my body. This was a popular superstitution in the country years ago, and no doubt my dream was aided by my being half suffocated beneath the bedclothes. But the dream was nonetheless terrifying and real.

Night after night I lived this life of cowering terror; of listening for the haunting sound of stealthy, softly padding footsteps always following, never advancing, never receding.

But the day of my revenge came at last. How sweet it was then; How frightful it seems now!

II

TOI WAH'S kitten, now half grown, wandered away from his mother below stairs and up to my room. Returning home from school, I found him there, lying on the rug playing with one of my tennis balls.

Joy filled my heart at the sight of him. I had just seen his mother sleeping placidly on my grandmother's lap, who was also sleeping.

I softly closed and locked the door. At last I would be rid of one of the pests that made my life a hell! I put on my leather collar and the heavy gloves I used for working in the garden. I took these precautions

because even of this small kitten I was afraid!

Unaware of its danger, the kitten romped about the rug. I drew a long breath, stooped and picked him up. He looked at me, sensed his danger, spat, and tried to squirm out of my hands.

"Too late, you devil!" I exulted, holding him firmly.

A buzzing came to my ears, a fullness of the head, a dryness of the mouth, as I choked him—choked him until his glazing yellow eyes started from their sockets and his tongue hung out. Choked him joyously, relentlessly, deriving more pleasure from the death agony of this little creature, whose mother I hated and feared, than I had ever known.

After a long time I opened my hands and looked at him closely for any signs of life. But he was quite dead. Of one of them at least, I was forever rid, I thought jubilantly as I gazed at the lifeless body. And then—

THERE came a scratching at the door; and a loving, agonized *meow!*

It did not seem possible that any animal was capable of putting into the only sound with which it could express itself, the anxious, yearning love that sound conveyed.

The old fear clutched at my heart. It seems incredible that I, almost a full-grown man, a football champion and all-round athlete, could be afraid of a cat in broad daylight.

But I was! Cold sweat poured down my back, and my hands trembled so that the dead kitten fell with a soft *thump* on the rug.

This sound aroused me from my semi-stupor of fear. Hastily, I threw up the window-sash and tossed the inert little body out into the yard.

I closed the window, and, with a studied nonchalance, walked whistling to the door and opened it.

"Come in, kittie," I said innocently. "Poor kittie!"

Toi Wah ran in and frantically circled the room, *meowing* piteously. She paid no attention to me, but ran here and there, under the bed, under the chiffonier, seeking in every corner of the large old-fashioned room.

She came at last to the rug before the fire, lowered her head and sniffed at the spot where, but a moment before, her darling had lain.

She looked up at me, then, with great mournful eyes. Eyes with no hate in them now; only unutterable sorrow. I have never seen in the eyes of any creature the sorrow I saw there.

That look brought a queer lump in my throat. I was sorry now for what I had done. If I could have recalled my act, I would have done so. But it was too late. The dead kitten lay out in the yard.

For a moment Toi Wah looked at me, and then the sorrow in her eyes gave way to the old look of suspicion and hate. And then, with a yowl like a wolf, she sprang out of the room.

As night came on, my fear increased. I dared not go to bed. I was uneasy, too, craven that I was, for fear my grandmother would suspect me. But, fortunately for me, she thought the kitten had been stolen and never dreamed I had killed it.

I lingered until the last moment before starting upstairs to bed. I studiously avoided looking at Toi Wah as I passed her on my way to the stairs.

I raced up the stairs and down the long passage to my bedroom. Hastily undressing, throwing my clothes here and there, I plunged into the very center of the bed and buried my head beneath the covers.

There I waited in shivering terror for the sound of padding footsteps. They never came. And then, because I was tired out by the lateness of the hour, and perhaps also stupefied by the lack of fresh air in my room, I slept.

Far in the night I heard the chimes from the church across the street, and opened my eyes. The moonlight was shining in from the window and I saw two fiery eyes glaring at me from a corner.

Was I in the clutches of a nightmare, engendered by my fears? Or had I, in my haste to get to bed, neglected to shut and lock my door? I do not know, but suddenly there was a jar to the bed as something leaped upon it from the floor.

I sat up, shivering with terror, and Toi Wah looked into my eyes and held them. In her mouth she held the bedraggled body of

her kitten. She laid it softly down on the coverlet, never taking her eyes from mine.

Suddenly a soft glow, a sort of halo, shone around her, and then, as I am a living and an honorable man, *Toi Wah spoke to me!*

III

SHE said—I could see her mouth move—*"He that hath slain shall slay again. Then he that slayeth shall himself be slain.*

"Yea, seventy times seven shall the days be after my cycle is broken. Then, at this hour, shall I return that the thing may be accomplished after Lord Buddha's law."

Then the voice ceased, the halo faded. I felt the bed rebound as she jumped to the floor, and there I heard the soft padding of her feet down the passageway.

I awoke with a shriek. My forehead was damp with sweat. My teeth were chattering. I looked and saw that my door was wide open. I leaped out of bed and turned on the light. Was it a hideous dream, a fearful nightmare?

I do not know. But, lying there on the coverlet, was the wet muddy body of Toi Wah's kitten.

A live and famished man-eating tiger in the room could not have inspired me with greater terror. I dared not touch the cold dead thing. I dared not remain in the room with it.

I fled down the stairs, stumbling over furniture in the lower hall, until I reached the houseman's room. Here I knocked and begged, with chattering teeth, to be allowed to remain on a couch in his room until morning, telling him I had been frightened by a dreadful dream.

Early the next morning I secretly took the dead kitten out in the garden and buried it deep, putting a pile of stones over the grave; watching carefully for any glimpse of Toi Wah.

As I returned to the house, I met the old housekeeper, who stood with an anxious face at the kitchen door.

"Master Robert, no wonder that you could not sleep the morn! Your poor grandmother passed away in the night. It must have been after midnight, for I did not leave her until the stroke of eleven."

My heart leaped. Not for surprise or grief at my grandmother's death. That was a thing to be expected, and the cold aristocratic old lady had not loved me over-much.

Nor was it for joy that she had left me rich, the last of an old race whose forbears went down to the sea in ships, bringing home the wealth of the world.

No! I thought only that Toi Wah and I were on equal ground at last! And that as soon as possible I would rid myself of the dread of her by day and my terror of her by night.

My inheritance would be a thing of little worth if I must spend anxious days and fear-haunted nights. Toi Wah must die, in order that I might know joyful days and sleep at night in peace.

The joyous blood throbbed in my head and hissed in my ears as I raced up to my room, got my leather collar and gloves and seized the great iron poker beside the fireplace.

I carried these up to the attic, a small, close room. Already the corpse candles had been lighted. I gave only a glance at the quiet, gaunt, aristocratic old face, dignified even in death.

I looked about in the flickering shadows thrown by the candles for Toi Wah. I did not see her. Could it be that she, sensing her danger, had fled?

My heart sank. I drew my breath sharply.

"The cat—Toi Wah?" I asked the housekeeper, who watched beside the dead. "Where is she?"

"Under the bed," she answered. "The poor creature is that distracted she would not eat, and had to be driven from your grandmother's side in order that we might compose the body. She would not leave the room, but darted under the bed there, snarling and spitting. It's afraid of her I am."

I got down on my hands and knees and peered under the bed. Crouched in the farthest corner was Toi Wah, and her great yellow eyes glared at me in terror and defiance.

"It's afraid of her, I am, Master Robert," the housekeeper repeated. "Please take her away."

I was afraid of Toi Wah, too. So afraid of her that I could know no peace, nor happiness, if she lived. I was sure of that.

IT IS the coward who is dangerous. Fear kills always if it can. It never temporizes, nor is it ever merciful. Beware of him who fears you.

I crawled under the bed and seized her. She made no resistance, much to my surprise, but I could feel her body trembling through my gloves. As my hand closed over her, she made a little sound like a gasp—that was all.

I crawled out, and in the presence of the housekeeper, and the dead, I held her lovingly in my arms, calling her "poor kittie" and stroking her long yellow fur, while she lay passive, tremblingly passive, in my arms.

I deceived the housekeeper, who thought I was venting my grief for my grandmother's death by loving and caressing the object of the old lady's affection. I did not deceive Toi Wah. She lay quietly in my arms, but it was the paralysis of terror; the nonresistant stupor of great fear. Her body never ceased trembling, and her eyes were lifeless and dull. She seemed to know her fate and had accepted the inevitable.

I carried her upstairs, threw her upon the floor and locked the door. I seized the poker beside the door and turned to slay her. Toi Wah lay where I had thrown her, crouched as if to spring, but she did not move. She only looked at me.

I did not fear her now. On my hands were heavy gauntlets, and about my throat was the heavy leather guard I had made, bradded and studded with steel and brass.

Toi Wah did not move. She only looked, but such a look! It appealed to the merciless devil in my heart. It burned into my soul.

"Kill me!" her great amber eyes seemed to say. "Kill me quickly and mercifully as you killed the darling of my heart. What sayeth the Master: 'Be merciful, and thy heart shall know peace.' Today is yours, tomorrow— Who can say?"

As if in a dream, I stood and looked into her eyes. Looked until those amber eyes converged into a dirty yellow pool around the edge of which grew giant ferns and reeds taller than our forest trees. And a misty haze hung over the scene.

Into the pool floated a canoe, a hollowed-out tree trunk. In the canoe was a man, a woman, and a child, all naked except for skins about their shoulders.

The man pushed toward the shore with a pole, and as he made a landing he leaped into the water and pulled the boat upon the bank.

As he pulled at the boat, the reeds quivered to the right of him, and a great yellow-colored tiger leaped from the cover of the ferns and seized the child.

For a moment it stood there, the man and woman paralyzed by fear and horror. Then, blood dripping from its jaws, it leaped back among the reeds and was gone.

The face of the man in the boat *was mine!* And it was Toi Wah who held my child in her dripping jaws! A great Toi Wah, with sabre teeth and dirty yellow hide, but still Toi Wah.

The pool faded and I stood there, looking into the eyes of my grandmother's Tartar-cat.

But I knew! *At last I knew!*

IV

EXPLAIN it how you will, I knew that somewhere far back in that prehistoric time, Toi Wah had snatched away my first-born before my tortured eyes and that his tender flesh had filled a sabre-toothed tiger's maw.

Now had come the day of my revenge! I clutched the poker more firmly in my hands.

I stood and seized her by the collar that none of us had been able to unfasten. It came off in my hand!

Wonderingly, I looked at it, then cast it aside, to think no more of the curious antique until . . .

I was in haste to rid myself of this thing of hate and dread. My heart leaped. I ground my teeth in an ecstasy of joy; my cheeks burned. A feeling of well-being and power made my whole body glow. . . .

I left her there, at last, on the blood-stained floor, a broken dead thing, and went out and locked the door after me.

I was free at last! Free from the fear of claws and teeth in my quivering throat. Free from the sound of softly padding feet. I was a new man, indeed, for there sloughed from me all the old timidity and lack of aggressiveness that this fear of Toi Wah had engendered in me. I went from my grand-

father's house to college, a man among men. . . .

I did not return again to the house of my inheritance until I brought my bride—a shy, soft, fluffy little thing, a lovely contrast to the aggressive type of modern woman.

She was an old-world Eastern type, the daughter of a returned Chinese missionary, educated in the Orient, and she had the manners and had absorbed the ideals of the soft-voiced, secluded, home-loving Chinese women among whom she had been reared.

Her light brown eyes and yellow hair, her slow, undulating graceful walk, and her quaint old-fashioned ways attracted me; and after a short, impetuous wooing we were wed.

I was very happy. Only twenty-four, wealthy, and married to a loving and beautiful girl whom I adored!

I looked forward to a long life of peace and happiness, but it was not to be. From the very day of my return to the accursed house of my grandmother there was a change. What was it? I do not know, but I could feel it. I could sense it, the very first day. A subtle something, a pall of gloom, intangible, elusive and baffling, began slowly to settle over me, stifling and suffocating the happiness that was mine before the evil day of my return home.

I had returned from the village with some trifle of household necessity. The servants had not yet arrived, and the housekeeper, old and infirm now, was busy putting the place in order.

Returning, I sought my wife, and found her in my grandmother's room, standing before the life-size portrait of Toi Wah, done in oil for my grandmother by a great artist, who also loved cats as she had loved them.

Until that day Toi Wah had remained only a dim memory of a fear-driven boy's cruel revenge. Purposely, I had put all thought of her out of my mind. But now it all returned, a horde of hateful memories, as I stood there in the open door and saw my wife standing and gazing up at the likeness of the great cat.

And as she turned, startled at my entrance, what did I see?

I saw, or thought I saw, a likeness, a great likeness, between the two! Eyes, hair, the

general expression— Why had I not noticed it before!

And what else? In my wife's eyes was the old fear, the ancient hate, I used to see in Toi Wah's eyes when I came suddenly into my grandmother's room—this room! The look flashed out for an instant and was gone.

"How you frightened me, Robert!" she laughed. "And the look in your face! What has happened?"

"Nothing." I answered. "Nothing at all."

"But why did you look at me so?" she insisted. "Surely something has gone amiss. Aren't the servants coming? If they are not, I am not entirely useless; I can even cook," and she laughed again, an embarrassed laugh I thought.

She had the manner of having been surprised by my entrance, of being detected in something, secret or hidden, which she was now trying to cover up and conceal.

"Why," I stammered confusedly, for this remarkable resemblance had thrown me quite off my feet, "nothing is wrong. Only I was suddenly struck, as you stood there by the portrait of my grandmother's cat, by the remarkable resemblance; your hair, your eyes—the same color. That was all."

"Why, Robert!" she laughed, holding up an admonishing finger.

This time I was sure of the note of confusion in her laugh, which seemed forced. My wife was not given to laughter, being a quiet, self-contained sort of person.

"Imagine! I, like a cat!"

"Well," I said lightly, gathering her in my arms—for I, too, was dissembling, now that I had regained my self-possession and saw that I was betraying my secret fear—"Toi Wah was a very beautiful and high-bred cat. Her ancestry dated back to Genghis Khan. So to resemble her would not be so bad, would it?" And I kissed her.

Did she shrink from the caress? Did her body tremble in my arms? Or was it imagination, the stirring of old memories of Toi Wah, who shrank from my lightest touch?

I did not know. I do know, however, that my strange experience on that day was the beginning of the end; that is not yet, but is swiftly on the way—for me!

V

AS THE day wore on, I grew restless and uneasy; ill at ease and dissatisfied.

So after dinner I went for a long walk along the country roads. When I returned my wife was asleep. I lay down softly beside her, and, tired out by my long walk, was soon asleep myself.

Asleep, I dreamed. Dreamed of Toi Wah and Toi Wah's kitten. And I heard again, in my sleep, the plaintive cry of the cat mother as she called anxiously and lovingly for her kitten that would never return.

So vivid and so real was the dream that I awoke with a cry of the cat in my ears. And as I awoke, I seemed to hear it again—plaintive, subdued, a half-cat, half-human cry, as if a woman had cried aloud and then quickly suppressed the cry.

And my wife was gone!

I sprang up hastily. The moonlight was streaming through the window. It was almost as light as day. She was nowhere in the room.

I went swiftly down the hall and descended the stairs, making no noise with my bare feet. The door of my grandmother's room was open. I looked in. Two luminous eyes, with a greenish tinge, glowed out at me from the semi-darkness of the far corner.

For an instant my heart stood still, and then raced palpitatingly on. I took a deep breath and went toward the unknown thing with glowing eyes that crouched in that corner.

As I reached the pool of moonlight in the center of the room, I heard a gasp of fear, a sudden movement, and my wife fled past me, out of the room and up the stairs.

I heard the bedroom door slam behind her, heard the key turn in the lock.

As she rushed past me and up the stairs, the patter of her feet fell on my ears like the soft padding of Toi Wah's footsteps that had filled my youthful years with fear. My blood chilled at this old, until now, forgotten sound.

What craven fear was this? I tried to pull myself together, to reason rationally. Fear of a cat long dead, whose mouldering bones were upstairs on the attic floor! What was there to fear? Was I going mad?

The slamming of the bedroom door, the

turning of the key in the lock, instantly changed my thought and roused in me an overwhelming fury. Was I to be locked out of my own bedroom—*our* bedroom?

I rushed up the stairs. I knocked on the door, I rattled the knob. I pounded with my fists on the panels. I shouted, "Open! *Open the door!*"

In the midst of my furious onslaught, the door suddenly opened and a sleepy-eyed little figure stood aside to allow me to enter.

"Why, Robert!" she exclaimed, as I stood there, bewildered and ashamed, a furious conflict of doubt, fear and uncertainty raging in my mind. "What's the matter? Where have you been? I was sound asleep, and you frightened me, shouting and pounding at the door."

Was I deceived? Partly. But in her eyes! Ah! In her eyes was that sly, inscrutable cat-like look that I had never seen there until that day. And now that look never leaves them, it is there always!

"What were you doing below stairs—alone—in my grandmother's room?" I stammered.

She arched her brows incredulously.

"I?—below stairs? Why, Robert, what is wrong with you? I just this moment awoke from a sound sleep to let you in. How could I be below stairs?"

"But the bedroom door was locked!" I exclaimed.

"You must have gone below yourself," she explained, "and shut the door after you. It has a spring lock. You surely must have had some hideous dream. Dear, come to bed now." And she went back to bed.

Again I dissembled as I had that day when I found her standing before Toi Wah's portrait. I knew, beyond a reasonable doubt, that she was lying. I knew I had been fully awake and in my right senses when I had gone downstairs and found her there. Evidently she desired to deceive me, and until I could fathom her motive I would pretend to believe her. So muttering something to the effect that she must be right, I got into bed also.

But not to sleep. There came trooping into my harried mind all the old youthful terrors of the dark, and I lived over all those terror-haunted days when I dwelt in fear of

Toi Wah or of a shadowy something, I knew not what.

Lying there in the dark, I resolved that morning would find me leaving that seemingly ghost-ridden place forever. My peace of mind, my happiness, to be free from fear—these things were worth all the fine old country places in the world. And with this resolution, I slept.

I slept far into the day, awaking at noon to find my wife had gone out with some of our neighbors for a game of tennis and afternoon tea. So, clearly, I could not arrange to leave until the next day. I must await my wife's return, and in the meantime formulate some sort of reasonable excuse to explain to her my precipitate return to town, after planning a year's sojourn in the country.

And then, too, it was daylight now, sober matter-of-fact daylight, and, as was always the case with me, the terrors of the night then seemed unreal, half forgotten nightmares. So I dismissed the subject from my mind for the time being, and set out for a long walk across the fields.

IT WAS near dinner time when I returned. As I opened the door of the dining room, my wife turned from where she stood by the fireplace to greet me, and I was again struck by her resemblance to Toi Wah. The arrangement of her hair heightened this effect. And when she smiled!—I cannot describe it! Such a sly, secret, feline smile!

"Robert," she said, as she came to me and put up her lips to be kissed. "Do you know what day this is?"

I shook my head.

"Why, it's my birthday, you forgetful boy! My twenty-first birthday, and I have a surprise for you.

"The old Buddhist priest, who taught me when I was a child gave me a flagon of rare old Chinese Lotus wine, when he parted from me, which I was to keep inviolate until my twenty-first birthday. I would be married then, he said, and on that day I was to unseal the old flagon and drink the wine with my husband in memory of my old teacher who would then be in the bosom of Nirvana.

"Look!" and she turned to the serving-table on which sat a small, squat wicker-covered flagon, and handed it to me.

I LOOKED at it curiously. It was sealed with a small brass seal, which was stamped all over with dim Chinese characters.

"What are these characters?" I asked, handing her the flagon.

She looked closely at the seal.

"Oh! One of those wise old Buddhist sayings, which the Chinese stick on everything." She smiled. "Shall I translate it? I can, you know."

I nodded.

"*'Wine maketh the heart glad or sad, good or evil. Drink! Oh! Man to thy choice!*' " she read.

Then she pulled off the seal and poured out the wine; a thick amber liquid, so heavy that it poured like thick cream. Its bouquet filled the room with a faint, far-off odor of lotus flowers.

"Shall we drink now, Robert, or shall we wait until dinner is served?"

"Let us drink now," I said, curious to taste this Eastern wine, with which I was not familiar.

"Amen!" said my wife, softly.

Then she spoke, rapidly and softly under her breath, a few Chinese words, or so I judged them to be, and we drank the wine. There was not a great deal in the flagon, and we drank it all before dinner was served.

As I sat at dinner a strange comfortable feeling gradually came over me. Distrust, fear, and apprehension died out of my mind, and my heart was light. My wife and I laughed and talked together as we had done in the days of our courtship. I was a different man.

After dinner we went into the music room and she sang for me. Sang in a sweet low voice strange weird old songs of ancient China.

Of the dragon banner floating in the sun, and the watch fires on the hills. Of old Tartar loves and hates. Of wrongs that never die, but pass on from age to age, from life to life, from death to death—unhasting, unending until the debt be paid.

I sat listening, dozing in a hazy mental languor, with the feeling foreign to me of late, that all was well with the world. I was peacefully happy, and my wife's sweet voice crooned on. Bedtime, the going up to our

bedroom, and what followed after is only a blurred memory.

I awoke, or seemed to awake (now that I am in this madhouse I do not really know) far into the night.

I awoke with a feeling of suffocation, a sensation of impending dissolution. I could not move, I could not speak. I had a sense of something indescribably evil, loathsome, blood-curdling, that was hanging over me, threatening my very life.

I tried to open my eyes. The lids seemed to be weighted down. All the force of my will could only slightly open them. Through this slight opening, I saw my wife bending over me, and the eyes that looked at me *were the inscrutable eyes of Toi Wah!*

VI

SLOWLY she bent down—I could sense the delicate fragrance of her hair—and applied her sweet, soft lips to mine. Again I felt that I was suffocating, that the very breath of my life was being drawn from me.

I concentrated all my will in the effort to struggle, and with tremendous effort I was able feebly to move an arm. My wife hastily took her lips from mine and looked at me closely, with the cruel amber eyes of the great Tartar cat, whose bones lay in my garret.

Once more she leaned over and applied her lips to mine. I lay there in helpless

lethargy, unable to move, but with an active mind that leaped back into the past, bringing to my memory all the old nursery tales of childhood of cats sucking the breath of sleeping children, of the folklore tales that I had heard of helpless invalids done to death

by cruel cats who stole their breath from them.

I began to be aroused at last. Was my breath to be sucked from me by this half-human, half-cat that was bending over me? With a final despairing effort of my wine-sodden will, I raised my arms and pushed this soft sweet vampire from my breast and from the bed.

And then, as the cold sweat of fear poured from my trembling body, I shouted for help. At last my servant came running up the stairs and pounded on the door.

"What is it?" he called. "What is wrong, sir? Shall I go for the police?"

"Nothing is wrong," answered my wife calmly. She had risen from where I had thrown her and was arranging her disheveled hair. "Your master has had a terrible dream, that is all."

"It is a lie!" I shouted. "Do not leave me alone with this vampire!"

I sprang from bed, and, heedless of my wife's semi-nude condition, I flung open the door. She shrank back, but I seized her by the wrist, beside myself with nervous terror.

And then—there on her wrist—I saw! I looked closely to be sure. Then instantly all was clear to me. I was in doubt no longer. I *knew!*

"Look!" I shrieked. "Here on her wrist! Toi Wah's collar!" I do not know why I said it, or scarcely what I did say, but I knew it to be true!

"Toi Wah's collar!" I repeated. "She can't take it off! *She is changing into a cat!*" Look at her eyes! Look at her hair! Soon she will be Toi Wah again with the collar about her neck, and then—"

And then I saw my wife disconcerted for the first time. I felt the arm I had seized, tremble in my frenzied grip.

"Why, Robert!" she stammered. "I—I found this on the attic floor yesterday. And —and—thinking it a curious old Chinese relic, I put it on my wrist. It's a bracelet, not a collar!"

"Take it off then!" I shouted. "Take it off! You can't! You can't, until you become Toi Wah again, and then it will be about your neck. Read what it says! It is in your accursed tongue!

"But you shall never live to madden me

again with fear, to make my life a hell of peering eyes and padding feet, and then to suck my breath at last! I killed you once, I can do it again! And again and yet again in any shape the devils in hell may send you to prey upon honest men!"

And I seized her by her beautiful throat. I meant to choke her until those cruel yellow eyes started from their sockets, and then laugh as I saw her gasping in the last agony of death.

But I was cheated. The servants overpowered me, and I was brought here to this madhouse.

I said I was perfectly sane then. I say it now. And learned alienists, sitting in council, have agreed with me. Tomorrow I am to be discharged into the custody of my sweet cooing-voiced wife, who comes daily to see me. She kisses me with soft lying lips that long to suck my breath, or perhaps even rend the flesh of my throat with the little white teeth back of the cruel lips.

So tomorrow I will go forth—to die. To be murdered! I go to death just as surely as if the hangman waited to haul me to the gallows, or if the warden stood outside to escort me to the electric chair.

I *know* it! I have told the learned psychologists and doctors that I know it. But they laugh.

"All a delusion!" they exclaim. "Why your little wife loves you with all her loyal heart. Even with your fingerprints a bluish bruise about her tender throat, she loved you. That night when you awoke, frightened, to find her bending over you, she was only kissing you, in an effort to soothe your troubled sleep."

But I *know!* Therefore, I am setting all this down so that when I am found dead the learned doctors may know that I was right and they were wrong. And so that Justice may be done.

And yet—perhaps nothing can be done. I have ceased to struggle. I have given up. Like the Oriental, I say, *"Who can escape his fate?"*

For I shall die by Chinese justice, a Buddhist revenge for killing the Tartar cat, Toi Wah. Toi Wah that I hated and feared, and have hated and feared through all the lives that the two of us have lived, far, far back to that time when the yellow sabre-

toothed tiger seized my first-born and fled with him among the reeds and ferns of the Paleozoic marshes, a dainty morsel for her kitten.

And so—farewell!

"Such a weird tale!" the nurse shuddered, as the interne finished the manuscript. "Let us drive over to Cheshire Manor and—"

"Do you believe this story?" interrupted the interne, tapping the manuscript with his fingers, and skeptically lifting his eyebrows and smiling.

"No, of course not," exclaimed the nurse, "but—the drive won't do us any harm, and—I would like to make sure."

As they stopped their car before the somber old mansion they were struck by the strange silence of the place. Not a servant answered their ring. And after a time, since the door stood open, they entered and began to ascend the stairs.

A strange, weird, lonesome sound floated down to them—the yowl of a cat.

They stopped for an instant and looked at each other, and then, reassured by the sunlight, and both being matter-of-fact professional people, they passed on. At the head of the stairs they faced a long passage at the end of which was an open door.

"Look! That is the bedroom he wrote about," whispered the nurse, grasping the interne's arm.

They walked softly down the passage to the door and looked in. On the bed lay the man they sought, glassy-eyed, eyed with fallen jaw and livid face—dead!

On his breast stood a great yellow amber-eyed cat, who faced them with an arched back and menacing snarl. Involuntarily, they drew back. The cat sprang past them and down the passageway to the stairs, uttering the same weird cry.

"My God!" gasped the nurse, with pallid lips. "Did you see? About that cat's neck—and it was a Tartar cat; I know the breed—about the cat's neck was—was the topaz and jade collar—that—that he wrote about!"

The Eyrie

(Continued from page 8)

been, until recently, a science-fiction fan rather than a devotee of the macabre. But the last two issues of WEIRD TALES *have won me completely. Not to the exclusion of stf of course, for nothing could do that. But now I enjoy weirds quite as much as science-fiction or fantasy.*

I don't know whether you are aware of it or not, or whether you strive for the effect. But there is something about WEIRD TALES, *like a faint aurora; subtly suggestive of grave stones on a moonlit night. Or silent rooms in a deserted house. Or a dark enchanted nook in some far off wood. Just a glance at the cover brings to mind a picture of dark waters, naked trees against a threatening sky, and skulls piled on the beach. Perhaps this effect is only with me. But I think not. I believe your excellent magazine should get all the credit for spooky effects.*

There is little to criticize about WEIRD TALES. *And much to praise. I think the club the best idea ever. The Eyrie usually contains only well written letters. The art is usually good. I rarely find fault with the stories. In short you have won yourself another devotee of* WEIRD TALES. *So keep up the good work. And the very best of luck to your continued success.*

Ivan H. Copas,
Peebles, Ohio.

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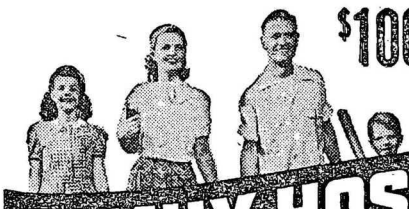

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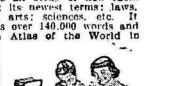

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