AUGUST

Strange STORIES

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

NOW 10¢

FEATURING

THE SEAL OF SIN

A Complete Novelet of Evil Powers

By HENRY KUTTNER

SATAN'S SIDESHOW

A Novelet of Siamese Twins

By CARSON JUDSON

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AUGUST W. DERLETH

MARIA MORAVSKY
AND OTHERS

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With HOME RECORDO you can make a record of your singing, talking, reciting or instrument playing right in your own home, too! No longer need the high prices of recording machines or studio facilities prevent you or your family or friends from hearing their own voices or playing. No experience necessary. No "mike" fright to worry about. No complicated gadgets. In a jiffy you can set up HOME RECORDO, play or sing or talk, and immediately you have a record which you and your friends can hear as often as you wish.

CHARLIE BARNET

and other famous orchestra leaders use

HOME RECORDO

YOU TOO CAN MAKE RECORDS RIGHT IN YOUR OWN HOME

Everything is included. Nothing else to buy and nothing else to pay. You get complete HOME RECORDING UNIT, which includes special recording needle, playing needles, 6 two-sided unbreakable records. Also spiral feeding attachment and combination recording and playback unit suitable for recording a skit, voice, instrument or radio broadcast. ADDITIONAL, 2-SIDED BLANK RECORDS COST ONLY 75c per dozen.

Charlie Barnet in his private hotel suite checking a duet by Judy Ellington and Larry Taylor, Vocalists in his band.

Judy Ellington heard in Charlie Barnet's Band making a Home Recordo record for her personal album.

HAVE RECORDING PARTIES

You'll get a real thrill out of HOME RECORDING. Surprise your friends by letting them hear your voice or playing right from a record. Record a snappy talking feature. Record jokes and become the life of the party. Great to help train your voice and to cultivate speech. Nothing to practice . . . you start recording at once . . . everything necessary included. Nothing else to buy. Just sing, speak or play and HOME RECORDO unit, which operates on your electric or hand-winding type phonograph, will do the recording on special blank records we furnish. You can immediately play the records back as often as you wish. Make your **HOME MOVIE** a talking picture with Home Recordo. Simply make the record while filming and play back while showing.

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New York, N. Y.

Send entire HOME RECORDING OUTFIT (including 6 two-sided records) described above, by return mail. I will pay postman $2.98, plus postage, on arrival. (Send cash or money order now for $3.00 and save postage.)

Send ..... doz. additional blank records at $.75 per dozen.

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Note: Canadian and Foreign $3.50 cash with order.

Operates on Your A.C. or D.C. Electric Phonographs, Record Players, Radio-Phono Combinations, or Hand Winding Phonographs and Portables

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11 West 17th STREET. NEW YORK, N. Y.

« « « GRIPPING TALES IN EVERY ISSUE » » »

Strange STORIES

VOL. IV, NO. 1 AUGUST, 1940

CONTENTS

STRANGE STORIES, published bi-monthly by Better Publications, Inc., 22 West 48th Street, New York, N. Y. N. L. Pines, President. Entered as second class matter November 3rd, 1938, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3rd, 1879. Copyright, 1940, by Better Publications, Inc. Yearly, $.60; single copies, $.10; foreign and Canadian postage extra. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes, and are submitted at the author's risk. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the name of any living person or existing institution is used, it is a coincidence.

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Accountancy Home-Study

made *interesting* and *practical* thru *problem method*

YOU know as well as we do that Accountancy fits many men for positions that pay three and five and ten thousand dollars a year—gives many other men unusual opportunity to start a profitable growing business of their own.

You probably realize also that—because of the new state and federal legislation—the accounting profession faces now and for the next few years the greatest opportunity it has ever had.

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And the answer lies in the LaSalle Problem Method.

For this modern plan of training not only makes Accountancy study at home thoroughly practical but makes it interesting as well.

And here's how:

You Learn by Doing

Suppose it were your privilege every day to sit in conference with the auditor of your company or the head of a successful accounting firm. Suppose every day he were to lay before you in systematic order the various problems he is compelled to solve, and were to explain to you the principles by which he solves them. Suppose that one by one you were to work those problems out—returning to him every day for counsel and assistance—

Granted that privilege, surely your advancement would be faster by far than that of the man who is compelled to pick up his knowledge by study of theory alone.

Under the LaSalle Problem Method you pursue, to all intents and purposes, that identical plan. You advance by solving problems.

Only—instead of having at your command the counsel of a single individual—one accountant—you have back of you the organized experience of a great business training institution, the authoritative findings of scores of able accounting specialists, the actual procedure of the most successful accountants.

Thus—instead of fumbling and blundering—you are coached in the solving of the very problems you must face in the higher accounting positions or in an accounting practice of your own. Step by step, you work them out for yourself—until, at the end of your training, you have the kind of ability and experience for which business is willing and glad to pay real money—just as it was glad to pay these men.*

Five Men Who Tested and Proved It for You

For instance, there was the man who started Accountancy training with us in 1916. After a short period of study, he took a position as bookkeeper for a year, and then became accountant for a leading automobile manufacturer—with two bookkeepers under him. He became auditor of one of the foremost banks in his state with a salary 325 percent larger than when he started training.

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Do you wonder that he wrote, *"While LaSalle ads once seemed like fairy tales to me, now I know from personal experience that they are true."*

Or let us tell you about two men—one a stenographer and the other a retail clerk—neither of whom knew more than the simplest elements of bookkeeping. One became the comptroller and the other the assistant comptroller of a large company.

"LaSalle training in Higher Accountancy," wrote both, *"was the important factor in our rapid climb."*

And if you are thinking about the C. P. A. degree and a public accounting business of your own, read about the pharmacist who was earning $30 a week some years ago when a LaSalle registrar secured his enrollment for Accountancy training. Eight months later he left the drug store to take a bookkeeping job at $20 a week—less money but larger opportunity. Three years later he passed the C.P.A. examination and a year later yet he was earning $5,000 a year. Now he has his own highly successful public accounting firm for which he says, *"My LaSalle training has been largely responsible."*

Send for This Book

*Names and addresses given on request.

One-Tenth of All C. P. A's Are LaSalle Trained

If you want still more proof, remember that over 1800 C.P.A.'s—approximately one-tenth of all those in the United States who have ever passed the difficult examination for this coveted degree—are LaSalle alumni.

And knowing these facts, ask yourself if there can be any further question about the practicability of this training for you—ask rather if the real question is not about the size of your own ambition and the quality of your determination.

For Accountancy is no magic wand for the lazy or the fearful or the quitter—it offers success only to the alert adult who has the courage to face the facts and the will to carry on till the job is done.

If you are that individual, the coupon below, filled out and mailed, will bring you free the information that may open up to you the future of which you have dreamed—ability and income and success.

Is it not worth getting that information?

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A Correspondence Institution

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Please send me, free of all cost or obligation, your 48-page, illustrated book "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays," telling about the profession of accountancy and your training for success in that field.

Name.....

Address.....City.....

Position.....Age.....

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for Men of Character

EXCLUSIVE FRANCHISE FOR

AN INVENTION EXPECTED TO REPLACE A MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR INDUSTRY

Costly Work Formerly "Sent Out" by Business Men Now Done by Themselves at a Fraction of the Expense

This is a call for men everywhere to handle exclusive agency for one of the most unique business inventions of the day.

Forty years ago the horse and buggy business was supreme—today almost extinct. Twenty years ago the phonograph industry ran into many millions—today practically a relic. Only a comparatively few foresighted men saw the fortunes ahead in the automobile and the radio. Yet irresistible waves of public buying swept these men to fortune, and sent the buggy and the phonograph into the discard. So are great successes made by men able to detect the shift in public favor from one industry to another.

Now another change is taking place. An old established industry—an integral and important part of the nation's structure—in which millions of dollars change hands every year—is in thousands of cases being replaced by a truly astonishing, simple invention which does the work better—more reliably—AND AT A COST OFTEN AS LOW AS 2% OF WHAT IS ORDINARILY PAID! It has not required very long for men who have taken over the rights to this valuable invention to do a remarkable business, and show earnings which in these times are almost unheard of for the average man.

EARNINGS

One man in California earned over $1,600 per month for three months—close to $5,000 in 90 days' time. Another writes from Delaware—"Since I have been operating (just a little less than a month of actual selling) and not the full day at that, because I have been getting organized and had to spend at least half the day in the office; counting what I have sold outright and on trial, I have made just a little in excess of one thousand dollars profit for one month." A man working small city in N. Y. State made $10,805 in 9 months. Texas man nets over $300 in less than a week's time. Space does not permit mentioning here more than these few random cases. However, they are sufficient to indicate that the worthwhile future in this business is coupled with immediate earnings for the right kind of man. One man with us has already made over a thousand sales on which his earnings ran from $5 to $60 per sale and more. A great deal of this business was repeat business. Yet he had never done anything like this before coming with us. That is the kind of opportunity this business offers. The fact that this business has attracted to it such business men as former bankers, executives of businesses—men who demand only the highest type of opportunity and income—gives a fairly good picture of the kind of business this is. Our door is open, however, to the young man looking for the right field in which to make his start and develop his future.

Not a "Gadget"— Not a "Knick-Knack"—

but a valuable, proved device which has been sold successfully by business novices as well as seasoned veterans.

Make no mistake—this is no novelty—no flimsy creation which the inventor hopes to put on the market. You probably have seen nothing like it yet—perhaps never dreamed of the existence of such a device—yet it has already been used by corporations of outstanding prominence—by dealers of great corporations—by their branches—by doctors, newspapers, publishers—schools—hospitals, etc., etc., and by thousands of small business men. You don't have to convince a man that he should use an electric bulb to light his office instead of a gas lamp. Nor do you have to sell the same business man the idea that some day he may need something like this invention. The need is already there—the money is usually being spent right at that very moment—and the desirability of saving the greatest part of this expense is obvious immediately.

Some of the Savings You Can Show

You walk into an office and put down before your prospect a letter from a sales organization showing that they did work in their own office for $11 which formerly could have cost them over $200. A building supply corporation pays our man $70, whereas the bill could have been for $1,600! An automobile dealer pays our representative $15, whereas the expense could have been over $1,000. A department store has expense of $88.60, possible cost if done outside the business being well over $2,000. And so on. We could not possibly list all cases here. These are just a few of the many actual cases which we place in your hands to work with. Practically every line of business and every section of the country is represented by these field reports which hammer across dazzling, convincing money-saving opportunities which hardly any business man can fail to understand.

Profits Typical of the Young, Growing Industry

Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a $7.50 order, $5.83 can be your share. On $1,500 worth of business, your share can be $1,167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollars' worth $6.70, on a hundred dollars' worth $67.00—in other words two thirds of every order you get is yours. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of earning an even larger percentage.

This Business Has Nothing to Do With House to House Canvassing

Nor do you have to know anything about high-pressure selling. "Selling" is unnecessary in the ordinary sense of the word. Instead of hammering away at the customer and trying to "force" a sale, you make a dignified, business-like call, leave the installation—whatever time the customer says he will accept—at our risk, let the customer sell himself after the device is in and working. This does away with the need for pressure on the customer—it eliminates the handicap of trying to get the money before the customer has really convinced himself 100%. You simply tell what you offer, showing proof of success in that customer's particular line of business. Then leave the invention without a dollar down. It starts working at once. In a few short days, the installation should actually produce enough cash money to pay for the deal, with profits above the investment coming in at the same time. You then call back, collect your money. Nothing is so convincing as our offer to let results speak for themselves without risk to the customer! While others fail to get even a hearing, our men are making sales running into the hundreds. They have received the attention of the largest firms in the country, and sold to the smallest businesses by the thousands.

No Money Need Be Risked

In trying this business out. You can measure the possibilities and not be out a dollar. *If you are looking for a business that is not overcrowded*—a business that is just coming into its own—on the upgrade, instead of the downgrade—a business that offers the buyer relief from a burdensome, but unavoidable expense—a business that has a prospect practically in every office, store, or factory into which you can set foot—regardless of time—*that is a necessity* but does not have any price cutting to contend with as other necessities do—that because you control the sales in exclusive territory is your own business—*that pays more on some individual sales than many men make in a week and sometimes in a month's time*—if such a business looks as if it is worth investigating, *get in touch with us at once* for the rights in your territory—don't delay—because the chances are that if you do wait, someone else will have written to us in the meantime—and if it turns out that you were the better man—we'd both be sorry. So for convenience, *use the coupon below*—but send it right away—or wire if you wish. But do it **now.** *Address*

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Choose FOR YOURSELF FALSE TEETH AT *Amazingly Low Prices*

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Posed by a Professional Model

THE TESTIMONIAL LETTERS WE PUBLISH are communications that customers have sent to us without solicitation and without pay. We have large numbers of such missives. We never print anyone's letter without previous consent. We believe that each of our customers who has written to us enthusiastically indorsing our dental plates is sincere. We do not, however, intimate or represent that you will receive the same results in any instance that those customers describe. What is important to you is that when you pay for our teeth, WE GUARANTEE IF YOU ARE NOT 100% SATISFIED IN EVERY RESPECT WITH THE TEETH WE WILL MAKE FOR YOU, AFTER YOU HAVE WORN THEM AS LONG AS 60 DAYS, WE WILL GLADLY REFUND TO YOU EVERY CENT YOU HAVE PAID US FOR THEM.

BEFORE AFTER

Mrs. Elsie Boland of Norton, Kansas, writes:

"Enclosed find two pictures. One shows how I looked before I got my teeth; the other one afterwards. Your teeth are certainly beautiful. I have not had mine out since the day I got them, except to clean them."

Harry Willoughby, Adairville, Kentucky, writes:

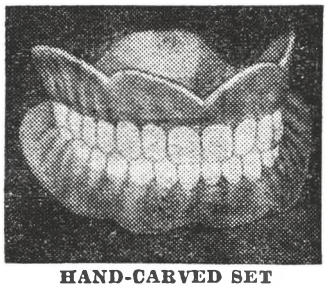
"I have received my teeth and am PROUD OF THEM."

Mrs. Geo. G. Conklin, Bridgeport, Connecticut, writes:

"I received my set of teeth. I wear them day and night. I have good reason to be well pleased with them. Thank you very much."

MADE - TO - MEASURE DENTAL PLATES DIRECT FROM OUR LABORATORY TO YOU!

We make to measure for you **individually**—BY MAIL—Dental Plates for men and women—from an impression of your own mouth taken by you at your home. We have **thousands of customers** all over the country wearing teeth we made by mail at sensible prices.



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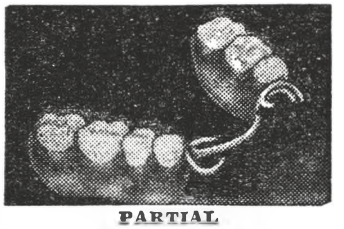
AT ROCK-BOTTOM PRICES

If you find out what others have paid for theirs, you will be astounded when you **see how little ours will cost you!** By reading our catalog, you will learn how to **save half or more on dental plates for yourself.** Monthly payments possible.



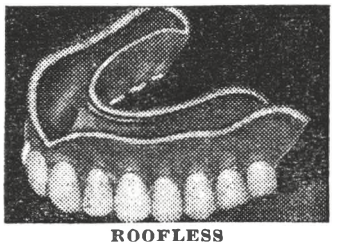
PARTIAL

ON 60 DAYS' TRIAL

Make us prove every word we say. Wear our teeth on trial for as long as 60 days. Then, if you are not **perfectly satisfied** with them, they will not cost you a cent.

WITH MONEY - BACK GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION

We take this risk. We guarantee that if you are not **completely satisfied** with the teeth we make for you, then any time within 60 days we will immediately refund every cent you have paid us for them. **We take your word.** You are the judge.



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HIGH-GRADE MATERIAL AND EXPERT WORKMANSHIP

TRY our practically unbreakable ROOFLESS, PARTIAL and TRANSLUCENT plates. Our dentures are set with **pearly-white, genuine, porcelain teeth;** constructed from **high-grade materials,** with **expert workmanship,** to give **long service.** We make **all styles** of plates. **A dentist who has had many years' experience** in making **dental plates supervises the making of each plate. . . .**

FREE IMPRESSION MATERIAL, Catalog with our new low prices and information. Don't put this off. Do it TODAY! CLIP COUPON OR WRITE. A one cent postcard with name and address plainly written is all that is necessary.

We also Repair or Reproduce Old Plates—48-hour Service

UNITED STATES DENTAL COMPANY

Dr. Ernest French, Supervisor of Laboratory

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MAIL THIS COUPON NOW

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

Send, without obligation, your FREE impression material, catalog, and information.

NAME.....

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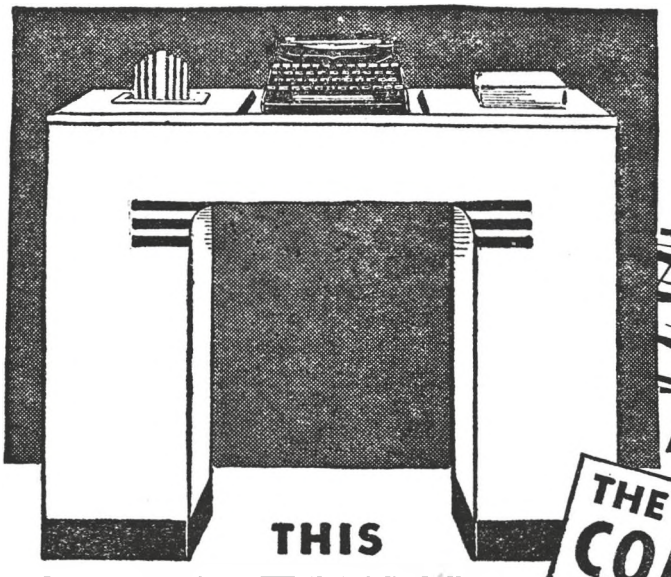

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WITH ANY

REMINGTON PORTABLE TYPEWRITER

A beautiful desk in a neutral blue-green—trimmed in black and silver—made of sturdy fibre board—now available for only one dollar ($1.00) to purchasers of a Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable Typewriter. The desk is so light that it can be moved anywhere without trouble. It will hold six hundred (600) pounds. This combination gives you a miniature office at home. **Mail the coupon today.**

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How easy it is to pay for this combination. Just imagine! A small good will deposit and terms as low as 10c a day to get this combination at once. You will never miss 10c a day. Become immediately the possessor of this combination. You assume no obligation by sending the coupon.

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SPECIAL CARRYING CASE

The Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable is light in weight, easily carried about. With this offer Remington supplies a beautiful carrying case sturdily built of 3-ply wood bound with a special Dupont Fabric.

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ALL ESSENTIAL FEATURES of large standard office machines appear in the Noiseless Deluxe Portable—standard 4-row keyboard; back spacer; margin stops and margin release; double shift key; two color ribbon and automatic reverse; variable line spacer; paper fingers; makes as many as seven carbons; takes paper 9.5″ wide; writes lines 8.2″ wide, black key cards and white letters, rubber cushioned feet.

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

The Remington Noiseless Deluxe Portable Typewriter is sold on a trial basis with a money-back guarantee. If, after ten days trail, you are not entirely satisfied, we will take it back, paying all shipping charges and refunding your good will deposit at once. You take no risk.

SEND COUPON NOW!

Remington Rand Inc. Dept 169-8
465 Washington St., Buffalo, N. Y.

Tell me, without obligation, how to get a Free Trial of a new Remington Noiseless Deluxe Portable, including Carrying Case and Free Typing Booklet, for as little as 10c a day. Send Catalogue.

Name.....

Address.....

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

DISCLOSED AT LAST

Strange Secrets that provide a Master Formula to a

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THE KEY TO SUPREME MASTERY

UNLOCKS THE DOOR TO YOUR LATENT POWERS

Through countless ages in every ancient land there have been infinitely wise men who were the oracles of their times. These men performed long hidden rites which they closely guarded. Through the practice of *Eclecticism*—a system of philosophic knowledge—they were enabled to perform amazing feats—miracles which people could not understand. All of them had the power to ACHIEVE THAT WHICH THEY DESIRED!

Now, in a sensational new book, "THE DOORWAY TO YOUR SUCCESS", a simple explanation is given to these long hidden secrets. For the first time it is told how *you*, too, may "get out of the shadows and into the light of understanding"; how you can *Control Your Destiny* by breaking the shackles which bind the hidden powers within *YOU!*

WRITTEN FOR MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE MOST PRESSING NEED IS FOR MONEY!

Long hidden under high sounding names and cloaked by mysterious rites, this amazing book reveals that almost any person of ordinary intelligence can achieve untold success by utilizing the simple rules of Universal Nature. You are shown, step by step, how to put into practice certain fundamental principles which will help you solve your problems of *Health, Business Success, Love and Happiness.* The Bible tells us that "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he". What you *think* you are—YOU ARE! You can attain anything you desire; overcome seemingly impossible obstacles; win riches, bend people to your will if you use the Master Formula of Power Thinking as revealed in "THE DOORWAY TO YOUR SUCCESS".

ACTUAL SUCCESS EXPERIENCES DIVULGED FOR THE FIRST TIME

By way of proving the Great Truths which are unveiled here for the first time, the author has devoted an important part of "THE DOORWAY TO YOUR SUCCESS" to *true experiences of people who have practiced the principles explained and who have WON SUCCESS in the face of almost impossible odds.* NOTHING HAS BEEN WITHHELD! Case 1 tells of a man who had to succeed within a limited time or go bankrupt. *In 30 days he had paid all of his debts.* Case 2 describes a doorman who needed $5 that afternoon and the almost uncanny and unexpected manner in which it came to him. Case 3 relates the true story of an old woman who was reduced to stealing milk before dawn and who received the $500 she desired before night. Case 4 tells the experience of a young man who could not afford to marry until he had learned the Universal Secret. How he won his love and achieved happiness is related here.

These and other TRUE EXPERIENCES will show you the way to Supreme Mastery over every situation so that you, too, may attain SUCCESS, LOVE, WEALTH AND HAPPINESS!

READ IT AT OUR EXPENSE—10 DAYS—FREE!

The thrill which will come to you as you read page after page of "THE DOORWAY TO YOUR SUCCESS" will be an inspiration. You'll wonder that you had never seen nor recognized nor understood the simple truths as they are unfolded. Here, at long last, is a book which throws down the challenge at your feet, "WIN SUCCESS, LOVE, HEALTH, WEALTH and HAPPINESS or perish in misery". Accept the challenge by securing your copy of this book.

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Just deposit the sum of $1 plus a few cents postage with the mailman when he delivers. "THE DOORWAY TO YOUR SUCCESS". Read it, study it 10 days. If you feel that it can not help you—return it and your deposit will be refunded at once! The *first* step to Success is positive action—so mail the coupon at once.

This Coupon May Start YOU on the ROAD TO GLORY

AN AMAZING BOOK THAT MAY CHANGE THE COURSE OF YOUR ENTIRE LIFE!

Some of the Subjects Covered:

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- How to Attract Riches to You
- How to Win a Job—and Keep It
- How to Bring Out Your Undeveloped Talents
- How to Attract the Love of Others
- How to Attain Happiness in Marriage
- How You Can Win Mastery Over Others
- How to Break the Shackles of Fear
- How You Can Direct Your Personal Forces
- How to Make Each Daily Act Successful
- How the Power of Thoughts Can Be Turned into Actual Assets
- How to Retain Youthfulness of Spirit, Actions and Deeds
- How Your Visions Can Be Turned into Actual Accomplishments
- And scores of other subjects too numerous to mention

Now Only $1.00

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I need a book like "The Doorway to Your Success". Please send a copy at once. I will deposit $1.00 (plus a few pennies postage) with the mailman on delivery with the understanding that I will return the book in 10 days for refund if not entirely satisfactory.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

IMPORTANT: By enclosing a Dollar Bill with your order you can SAVE Postal Delivery Charges. The terms of our Guarantee remain the same.

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The Biggest, Best and Brightest of Them All!

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FIRST
IN ACTION!

FIRST
IN THRILLS!

FIRST
IN ADVENTURE!

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EACH

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EVERYWHERE

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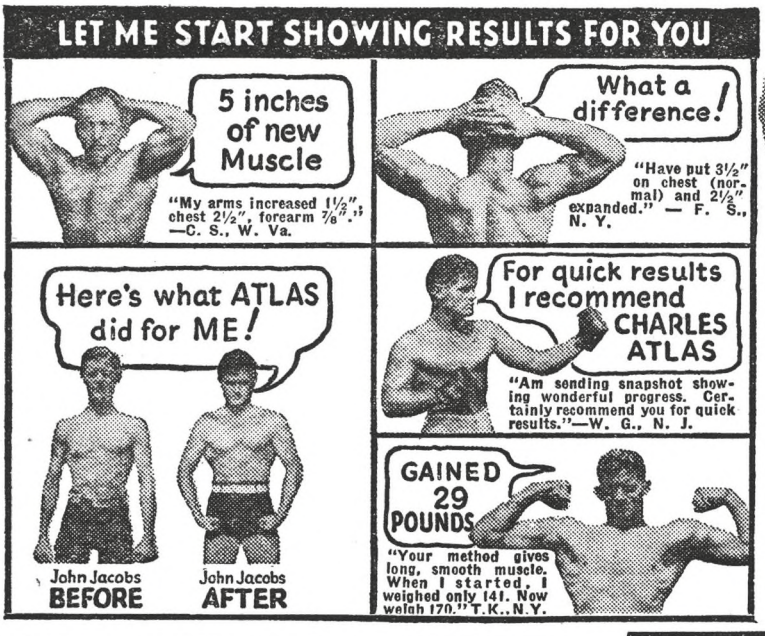
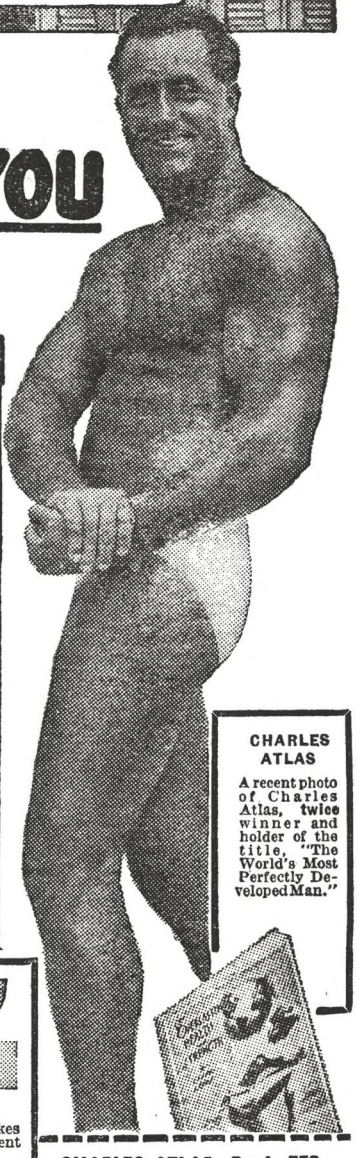
Get All Three

AT YOUR FAVORITE
NEWSSTAND

Will You Let Me PROVE I Can Make YOU a *New Man?*





CHARLES ATLAS

A recent photo of Charles Atlas, twice winner and holder of the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

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I could fill this whole magazine with enthusiastic reports from OTHERS. But what you want to know is—"What can Atlas do for ME?"

Find out—*at my risk!* Just give me a 7-day trial. Just one week!—and even in that short time I'll start giving RESULTS. AND it will be the kind of RESULTS that you (and anyone else) can SEE, FEEL, MEASURE with a tape!

THIS STERLING SILVER CUP BEING GIVEN AWAY. — This valuable cup stands about 14" high on a mahogany base.

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CHAPTER I

Power

IT IS often difficult to trace human wickedness to its source. Jewel Worth was, perhaps, one of the most evil creatures that ever existed on earth. But it was not until her twenty-fifth year that this evil was so horribly manifested.

As a young girl, Jewel was apparently normal in every way. With her younger sister, Kay, she attended private schools and eventually college, while her father, who was an archeologist, hunted his dreary treasures in Tibet, Africa, and the Rubh el Khali of Arabia. The girls were motherless. When they graduated from college, Dr. Arthur Worth retired from active service and bought an estate in the Berkshire hills, where he lived with his daughters and a few servants.

In that sunny, pleasant estate, the

Jewel lifted her hand. The light coalesced into a single blazing ray

Both Blessed and Cursed Is the Hand That Wears the Ancient Seal of Solomon, Until a Twisted Soul Is Drawn into Its Sinister Bondage—and Reaps a Ghastly Harvest!

sin of Jewel Worth grew and was nurtured seemingly from nothing until it burst into a poisonous and terrible flower. Michael Castile may have been to blame—certainly he was weak in acceding to Jewel's demands—though he could have had no idea of the possible consequences. But, of course, Castile was desperately, hopelessly in love with Jewel. From the moment he realized that love he was doomed.

A flower that grew from nothing? It is scarcely credible. Somewhere, deep within Jewel, there was a chemical or psychic seed of evil that waited, dormant, for the right environment to quicken it. Jewel and Kay were half-sisters; the mothers of both were dead. Kay's mother, perhaps, might be held responsible for the ultimate sin, though she was merely the instrument of an unchangeable law—the Mendelian law of heredity.

We know little, as yet, of the characteristics that may be transmitted through the generations by the genes and chromosomes of human beings. And we know little of the real truth behind the ancient lore of demonolatry which we casually dismiss as superstition. The line of Jewel Worth was tainted.

During the Salem mania an ancestor of hers had been tried for witchcraft. In the Scottish witch-baiting days another ancestor had been burned to ashes at the stake, accused of casting spells and possessing strange powers. In the family were seers, fortune-tellers, and occultists. Through the gloomy, dark halls of centuries the girl's forebears had come, carrying an ancestral curse which waited, latent, in Jewel until she realized her power.

SHE missed being lovely by a hair's-breath. Her hair was not quite fine enough; its red-gold was dull and tarnished rather than glowingly brilliant. Her pale, patrician face was a bit too thin and her blue eyes were somewhat shallow. She was tall, but angular rather than graceful. Her half-sister, Kay, was not lovely either, but she was undeniably pretty—a small, soft, friendly girl with brown eyes and hair, and extremely tiny feet.

There was little rivalry between the two girls. If Jewel ever beguiled one of Kay's admirers, Kay didn't mind. But Tommy Hazard was a man Jewel couldn't beguile, and in time a deep and real love began to exist between Kay and Hazard. Oddly enough, Hazard, the only man Jewel couldn't get, was the one she wanted. At first she was piqued, finally, angry. And ultimately she loved her half-sister's suitor with a hopeless passion.

Michael Castile provided the catalyst. He was a small, slim, dark-haired man in his early thirties, an odd mixture of Irish, Spanish, and Moorish blood. He had known Dr. Worth and corresponded with him for years. He also lived in the Berkshires not far away. Castile's interest in archeology was intense but eccentric. His main study was anthropology. His library contained innumerable works on sorcery and the black arts.

"The study of psychology includes abnormality," he observed once to Dr. Worth, as the old man and his daughters were leaving his home one evening. "Abnormal anthropology is equally important. Demonology, magic, goety, they all help to throw light on dead centuries. One can't understand people without knowing both sides of their characters."

"I fail to see how superstition can affect trends so deeply," Dr. Worth grunted, his strong, tanned old face scarcely wrinkled by his sixty years of service. "Some research is necessary, yes. But you've practically exhausted your subject."

"Oh, no." Castile grinned, white teeth flashing. "The subject can't be exhausted. You don't realize what a tremendous field magic is, or the scope of its ramifications. There are so many things—from calling up the devil to hanging a sieve outside your door to keep witches away."

"I still feel you're neglecting more important subjects by concentrating on superstition."

"Magic, or belief in it, has changed the world. Why, back in pre-historic times the witch-doctors and *shamans* got power and set up a class that has persisted to modern times. In Sumeria, the oldest civilization, the magic-makers were feared and respected. In

Egypt the priests of evil were as powerful, almost, as the priests of Amon-Ra. Even in the middle ages a friendless, starving, wretched old woman could get what she wanted by pretending to be a witch. Of course she ran the danger of being burned alive, but many took the chance. The history of magic is the history of power, Dr. Worth."

The archeologist grunted, unconvinced, and bade his host good night. Jewel lingered in the library with Castile. She was examining a book she had pulled from the shelves—*The Philosophy of Witchcraft.*

Castile touched her arm.

"Time to go, kid," he said. "Take the book along if you want to read it."

She looked up at the man, her blue eyes glowing.

"I'd like to, Mike," she said. "I hadn't realized what a fascinating subject this is. You must have a tremendous lot of books on it."

"Sure. And some of them were plenty expensive. Original manuscripts, vellum and parchment, old instruments of sorcery, divining rods and so on. I've plenty of stuff here you can't find in any library."

JEWEL'S red lips were slightly parted. "May I come here sometimes and do some reading?" she asked. "I'd like to study the—history of magic, Mike. It'd be interesting, and I've so much spare time. "

"Sure. Any day. Be glad to—" Castile's dark face was expressionless.

"Jewel!" It was her father's voice, summoning.

"Thanks a lot. I'll take you up on it." The girl reached out and squeezed Castile's arm gently.

She went out, listening to a refrain that ran like a drumbeat through her mind— "The history of magic is the history of power—power—power!"

Something deep within Jewel Wôrth had quickened to life that night and was stirring restlessly, in the throes of psychic birth. As a scrap of iron is drawn relentlessly toward a lodestone, so the dark lore drew the daughter in whose veins ran the blood of witch mothers. It was not merely casual curiosity. Nothing on earth could have kept Jewel away from Michael Castile's library the next day.

She read and studied avidly. Castile would sometimes halt in his work and come to the door to watch her, while a slow, inevitable pulse of passion grew within him. He fought it down, coldly reasoning with himself. A youngster like Jewel wouldn't be willing to marry a dull, dry-as-dust anthropologist. She was too youthful, too vibrantly alive. She needed someone nearer her own age. Someone who could be a companion, take her to dances, give her gayety and laughter.

And yet, Castile thought, I am only thirty-two. I can change my life. I can pattern my life to suit her desires—

He never spoke of his love. But through the long summer days and nights he spent more time with Jewel, helping her, instructing her, as she studied the history and practice of magic. It was the latter which interested her more. Castile was an authority, and gave Jewel considerable information. He showed her ancient, secret spells written on weathered, discolored vellum, pentagrams emblazoned with cabalistic signs, sounds and scents and other things supposed to break the veil between this world and others.

Carried away by his interest, he spoke sometimes with passionate belief, and then, coming back to sanity, he would chuckle at his own intensity and dismiss the subject with half-mocking amusement.

But Jewel never laughed. Though her lips would curve sympathetically, deep inside her was something cold and deadly and burningly strong that drove her deeper into her studies. The seed within the girl was germinating. A force long dormant was wakening, slowly, inevitably, and at times Jewel felt that the diagrams and spells she was reading for the first time were oddly and inexplicably familiar.

An ancestral memory, perhaps, made her progress astonishingly swift. A scientist might say that a recessive characteristic in the girl was becoming dominant through action of a catalyst.

But Jewel was restless and unhappy.

While Dr. Worth was not wealthy, he loved his daughters and tried to gratify their whims, readily sacrificing his own comfort when necessary. He gave parties and dances which he could ill afford, encouraged the girls' friends to visit, and gave them allowances as large as he could. But Jewel was not satisfied. The peaceful, quiet life of the Berkshires did not please her. She preferred the turmoil of New York.

"I'm sorry, Jewel," Dr. Worth told her in response to her pleas. "I can't afford to pull up stakes. Besides, Kay's happy here — it wouldn't be fair to her. She's engaged to Tommy Hazard now, and that's about all she wants. My investments have been going badly lately, too. If you really want to go to New York, I'll increase your allowance as much as I can, but I'm afraid it won't be enough. You'd have to get a job to get along. I can arrange that if you want. The work won't be hard."

"I won't live on a shoestring," Jewel flashed, "and I certainly won't work. Why should I?" She became thoughtful. "Mike has money. Maybe—"

"Certainly not!" her father snapped. "You mustn't ask him—or have you?"

"No. But—"

"Try and get along a while longer." Dr. Worth's bronzed face grew softer. He put his arm about his daughter, pulling her close. She pulled away impatiently. "I'll do what I can, Jewel. Maybe I can do something with my investments. In a few months perhaps I can send you to New York with enough money to live fairly well."

"All right." The girl frowned and turned to the door. "But it isn't fair. I can tell you that." She went out.

Dr. Worth relaxed in his chair, frowning. He rubbed his hand across his eyes. Matters were worse than he had told Jewel. The investments were in bad shape. But perhaps he could do something, give the girl what she wanted....

And Jewel Worth drove her roadster toward Michael Castile's home. Her face was expressionless, but in her eyes was a blue flame, and in her brain a voice thundered:

"The history of magic is the history of power—magic is power—power!"

CHAPTER II

The Signet

IT WAS now six months since Jewel first began her study of sorcery. Since that time she had imperceptibly changed, not outwardly, but new traits had developed in her character. They were as yet latent, but ready to mould her actions when necessary. And three things contributed to her unhappiness.

First, lack of money, forcing her to live a life she detested. In New York she pictured herself as a mysterious glamorous figure, with a good part of the world at her feet. Far different from the dreary Berkshire routine.

Second, there was Tommy Hazard. Jewel knew, now, that she was passionately in love with the man. He had given her no encouragement, being completely wrapped up in Kay. And Jewel's experimental advances had been so much wasted effort. So the girl's love for Hazard inevitably caused in her heart a corresponding hatred for Kay.

And finally, Michael Castile. He could no longer disguise what he felt for Jewel. He loved her, and said so. She dared not refuse him point-blank, since she needed him in her research. While she consented to their engagement, she insisted that it be kept a secret for a time. Unwillingly Castile agreed, tortured and miserable by Jewel's caprices.

He came to meet the girl at the door, his face eager, hands outstretched. She submitted passively to his kiss.

"What's wrong, darling?" he asked. "Is something the matter?"

Jewel nodded.

"Come into the library," she said. "I want to talk to you, Mike."

Castile followed her, lit a cigarette, and set out a decanter of old Oloroso sherry.

"Drink?" he offered.

"Yes, thanks. Will you answer a question honestly?"

"Of course."

"Father has a certain ring he keeps

in the safe." Jewel looked steadfastly at the man. "I've seen it. What—"

Castile stood motionless, and suddenly the wine-glass stem snapped in his hand. Silently he took out a handkerchief and wrapped it about his bleeding fingers. Only then did he speak.

"You've seen it? How?"

Jewel hesitated. She knew the safe combination, of course, but the ring had been in a locked jewel-case which a surreptitiously-procured skeleton key had opened for her. It wouldn't do to mention that.

"Father was careless. He had it out."

"He has never had it out of its case since he showed it to me and I confirmed his suspicions," Castile said coldly.

The girl rose suddenly, setting down her glass, and came toward Castile. She stood very close to him, the fragrance of her perfume strong in his nostrils. Her nearness was intoxicating. Castile made as though to turn away.

Jewel put her arms about his neck and waited. The result was inevitable. When the long kiss was over, Jewel knew the battle was half won. Castile would talk.

EVENTUALLY, he did.

"The ring was smuggled out of Arabia—I won't say by whom," he began. "It was purchased from a nomad chief in the Rubh el Khali, the great desert there. The Khali's a waste now, a wilderness, but there were cities once upon a time. Old cities. Places older than history, Jewel. The ages lie sleeping there, and from those forgotten ages have come legends."

"The legend of Suleiman—"

"The legend of Suleiman ben Daoud, Solomon of Ophir, Lord of the Genii, whom God made the wisest of all men. Yes."

"Solomon had power over all living things—living or dead," Jewel said softly. "He ruled demons and afrits through virtue of a certain signet?"

"The Seal of Solomon. Yes, the ring in your father's safe is the Seal of Solomon, Jewel. He suspected it, and showed it to me. I knew at once. I advised him to keep it hidden forever, or else to destroy it. You've studied the history of magic, but there are some things I have never told you. I've come to believe that sorcery is something more than a legend. Beyond the charlatanry and faking there are certain basic laws which are more than normal. Magic has existed in the past, that I know. Whether it exists today—" Castile shrugged. "I have Moorish blood. And there were Moorish sorcerers in Spain once, in the Alhambra. I'm more ready to believe than the average man, perhaps. But I *know* there are things beyond life which are subject to little-known laws of sorcery and magic."

If Castile saw the blazing fire in Jewel's eyes, he ignored it.

"The Seal of Solomon did not originate on earth," he went on. "It came from—elsewhere. And an adept may use the power of the signet, releasing its potential powers in ways which we call supernatural. The Seal may bless or curse, depending on how it is used. It has the faculty of changing men to beasts, to bring absolute power and protection to its wearer. Its secrets are—but you must forget all this, Jewel. I shall speak to your father today."

The girl's lashes lowered.

"You haven't played fair with me, Mike," she said, irrelevantly.

"What?" He was caught by surprise.

Suddenly Jewel swung about and pointed to a closet in the corner.

"You never showed me that part of your library," she said, triumphantly.

"Jewel!" Castile's dark face went white under the swarthiness. "You've not been in there?"

"No."

"Then how—"

"Marginal notes in other books. References to certain volumes and charts. There's part of your library I haven't seen, isn't there?"

"A part you'll never see. You can't play around with magic. There are things in that closet that would upset the science of this century. It's evil, Jewel, and when I die, all this stuff will be destroyed. A loss to science, perhaps, and to research, but a blessing to humanity. You've only seen

superficial spells and formulae. There are—others. There are keys that unlock the gates of hell itself."

"Is there a formula for using the Seal?"

"No," Castile said, too swiftly. "There is none."

"Mike, I think you take all this too seriously," Jewel smiled disarmingly. "You need a rest. When we're married, I'll see that you spend little time in this library." He failed to catch the ominous meaning behind the words.

NEVERTHELESS, Castile was still suspicious.

"I think you'd better go now," he said. "I'll drive you home. I want to see your father."

"Don't be rude, Mike. You can at least give me another drink before I go."

Castile unwrapped the handkerchief from his fingers. The bleeding had stopped. He poured more sherry. Jewel sipped and made a wry face.

"Got any bitters?"

"Of course." He went to the sideboard. The girl moved swiftly. From her handbag she took a tiny pellet and dropped it in Castile's glass, where it immediately dissolved.

This sleeping potion was the first fruit of her research. It was powerful, so much so that within a minute after sipping the wine Castile was slumped in his chair, inert and motionless.

Jewel rose with pantherlike agility. She went to the door, locked it, and returned to search the sleeping man. Armed with his key-ring, she went to the closet and tried key after key in the lock. Finally one fitted—she swung open the door.

The closet was small, lined with shelves that were littered with books, scrolls and papers. Jewel switched on an electric bulb overhead and hurriedly began to examine the conglomeration. Luckily, she knew what to look for. But it was nearly an hour before she found the musty vellum roll covered with Latin inscriptions, and headed by the phrase, *"Via trita, via tuta."*

Twilight deepened and hung purple shadows over the Berkshires. Still Jewel pondered over the scroll. It did not reveal all the power of the Seal, but it revealed enough. The secret of will, and of suggestion. A hypnotized man, if touched with a bit of ice and told that it is red-hot metal, will develop a blister on his skin at that point. And the Seal was a far stronger catalyst, drawing its power from the cosmic and unknown gulfs beyond our universe. A man, told that he is a beast—a lycanthrope—a werewolf....

The full moon rose over the eastern mountain rim. Castile awoke suddenly as the strength of the sleeping potion wore off. For a second he remained quiet in his chair, his eyes intent on the open door of the closet.

Then, cursing, he sprang up and rushed forward. Roughly he seized Jewel, tore the scroll from her hand, and dragged her out, locking the closet door in fumbling haste. He switched on a lamp, and, in its wan radiance, stood staring at the girl.

"What have you done?" he asked hoarsely.

She shrugged, smiling enigmatically.

"I'm taking you to your father now," Castile said. "Come along!"

He gripped the girl's arm. She pulled free, leaped away, and with a quick motion switched off the lamp. Moonlight filtered vaguely through the windows, dusting the rows of books with yellow dimness.

Before Castile could move Jewel slipped something on the middle finger of her left hand. Instantly, fierce, blazing light flamed through the room—cold, unearthly.

It came from a ring, the stone of which was carved with archaic, strange symbols.

"The Seal—" Castile whispered.

In the blinding light Jewel's face was transfigured. She seemed like a goddess, her eyes lambent with blue electric radiance. No longer was the red-gold hair dull and tarnished, no longer did she seem thin and angular. Even under the stress of his horror and emotion Castile caught his breath at sight of the girl's new, incredible loveliness.

She lifted her hand. The light coalesced into a single ray. It shot out and struck Castile's forehead, seeming

to sink deep, deep! He gave a single cry and stood motionless, frozen.

"You are not taking me to my father, Michael Castile," the girl said. "You are going to him alone. And—in other form!"

The light flared up. Almost visible waves of thought and will seemed to leap from Jewel's eyes. Abruptly flame bathed the body of Castile, shrouding him from view.

The white fires sank down. They vanished. Where Castile had stood was now no human figure.

In the shadows something slunk forward, a shaggy, half-seen form that growled deep in its throat.

Jewel went to the window and flung it open. She stepped aside.

"Go to my father!" she commanded. "And *kill!*"

The thing in the room made a swift leap. For a second the silhouette of a huge wolf loomed against the moonlight. Then it was gone. The padding of its racing feet died into silence.

But in the brain of Jewel Worth an insistent rhythm beat stronger and stronger. She stood staring out into the vast abyss of the sky, listening to a voice that cried in mad exultation:

"Power—power—power!"

CHAPTER III

The Plan

THE death of Dr. Arthur Worth caused a small turmoil in the Berkshire country. He was found in his bedroom, a ruined corpse, with his throat torn completely out. There were wolf-tracks outside the window. Posses were organized; for days men beat the woods in search of a savage beast who could not be found.

Michael Castile could do nothing. The hypnotic powers of the signet had sealed his lips at Jewel's command. The betraying words could not form themselves on his tongue, no matter how hard he might try to confess. Even from a distance Jewel could control the man, as long as she wore the ring. And it never left her finger now, day or night. She assumed command of the household. Kay was prostrated with grief, although Tommy Hazard remained with her as much as possible. Jewel ignored him. She could afford to wait, now, till her preparations were made.

THERE was now nothing to fear from her father. Jewel had another motive in engineering his death—he had carried large insurance premiums. But Jewel soon discovered that he had allowed them to lapse. She hid her baffled fury well, and changed the nature of her schemes. First, she liquidated what was left of the estate, realized a small cash sum.

Michael Castile had money, but was not wealthy. Jewel decided to go to New York. Kay, however, was adamant in refusing, and the upshot was a flood of angry words and, on Kay's part, tears. Jewel solved the problem by going to New York with her share of the money, leaving her half-sister to shift for herself.

With her Jewel took Castile. Not yet assured of the scope of her power, she dared not leave him alone in the Berkshires. But she soon found that there was nothing to fear. The Seal of Solomon was potent beyond anything she had imagined. And, of course, Castile's lips were sealed.

Jewel considered and reconsidered. She was still deeply infatuated with Tommy Hazard, but was not anxious to win him immediately. Hazard's fortune was not sufficient for her desires. She could wait, confident that the Seal would bring to her the man she loved whenever she wished.

Meanwhile there was much to do. She spent her small hoard recklessly, drawing on Castile when it was depleted, buying gowns, perfumes, and even jewels. She plunged into a social whirl, considering it an investment, a means of finding the right fish to hook. And, in due time, at a fashionable café, she met Stephen Bruner.

Bruner was an oil millionaire, a widower in his late fifties, but still hale and hearty. His fortune was large enough even for Jewel's exacting requirements.

The café was crowded. Castile,

appearing dark and sullen in his full-dress, sat across the table from Jewel, playing with his glass. Lately he had taken to drinking heavily, and he was more than half-drunk now. He looked up when the girl spoke to him.

"Mike, do you see that man?" she said. "Over at the big table?"

"I see him. Well?"

"Stephen Bruner, isn't he? I've seen his picture—"

"What are you up to?" Castile's face twitched.

Jewel did not answer. She glanced at the ring on her finger and then turned to gaze at Bruner. Her eyes took on a lambent, compelling glow. The Seal of Solomon was suddenly luminous—

As though drawn by a magnet, Bruner swung around. His stare met Jewel's. Some silent, strange greeting flared in that look, and then abruptly Bruner had thrust back his chair and was coming forward. He halted to speak briefly with the head waiter, who was supposed to know everyone who was anyone.

Introductions were made. Bruner immediately deserted his party to sit with Jewel, to her intense pleasure. Castile continued to sit glumly in his place, drinking double brandies in swift succession.

"It's odd we've never met," Bruner said. "Have you been in New York long?"

"No. Less than a month. I'm trying to see everything at once."

"Well—" Bruner hesitated. "I'm going down to Hatteras in my yacht over the week-end. A small party. I wonder—"

"It's scarcely conventional, is it?" Jewel asked, laughing. "However, if Mr. Castile is included in the invitation—"

"I don't believe I care to go," Castile broke in on Bruner's hasty acquiescence. "Miss Worth will feel much freer without me."

There was a brief pause. Jewel put her hand on the table—the signet gleamed eerily in the bright light.

"Mr. Castile forgets his manners, I'm afraid. You'll excuse him—"

The girl's blue gaze sought Castile's and a menacing glow burned in their depths. The man moved uneasily in his chair.

"Sorry. Of course I'll be glad to accept."

"Good!" Bruner's heavy face beamed with pleasure. "I'm sure you'll enjoy yourselves. We'll—eh?" He paused as a blond, pink-skinned youth came up beside him. The young man looked rather like a rabbit, with his buck teeth and receding chin.

"My son, Jack," Bruner introduced the newcomer, with little grace. "Miss Worth, Mr. Castile."

"Glad to know you," Jack said, and sat down without invitation. He took a monogrammed silver case from his pocket, offered the others cigarettes, and lit one for himself. Then he sat back, the white cylinder drooping from one corner of his slack mouth. His small, bright eyes were fixed intently on Jewel, who was conscious of the scrutiny. In that silent stare the girl read dislike.

And, in the days that followed, the dislike deepened. Jewel could read the motive. Bruner was infatuated with the girl, and made no secret of it. His son, who had looked forward for years to the prospect of the inheritance of millions, grew restive and worried. But the power of the signet held Stephen Bruner inexorably.

Three months later Bruner and Jewel were married. The girl twisted the knife in Castile's wound by insisting that he be best man. Jack failed to attend the wedding, to his father's outspoken anger.

"He's a bit jealous, Steve," Jewel said as the guests were departing. "Give him time. He'll come around. Don't do anything you'd regret later."

"I'd like to disinherit the damn pup," Bruner sputtered. "If I hadn't promised his mother—"

THAT, of course, was the difficulty. Bruner had made a new will, dividing his estate equally between his wife and son. Jewel waited, biding her time.

The newly-wedded couple lived in Bruner's New York mansion, from which Jack had indignantly taken his departure. Castile, at Jewel's order, maintained an apartment uptown. She

visited him there occasionally, chiefly to reassure herself that the power of the ring was not failing.

One day a telephone call from Castile summoned the girl to his apartment. He greeted her with an unusual touch of ironic triumph and gave her a telegram to read.

"They've been married," he said, smiling. "Tommy Hazard and Kay. Last night. I've already wired them congratulations."

Jewel shivered uncontrollably. Her face went paper-white, a dead pale mask in which only the electric blue eyes seemed alive. Even her lips were suddenly gray.

She turned her gaze on Castile, and the man evaded the deadly look. But slowly, inexorably, his head turned till he stared at the motionless girl. She said nothing, but on her finger the Seal waxed and waned with pale radiance.

"No." Castile whispered. "No—don't, Jewel!"

He stepped back a pace. Stiffly, like an automaton, he turned and walked across the room toward the window. He opened it.

Twenty stories below Fifth Avenue sent up a droning hum of noisy traffic.

Castile put one leg over the sill. His face was twisted and utterly horrible with stark fear.

Then he paused. The two figures remained unmoving for a dozen heartbeats.

Suddenly Jewel relaxed. Her shoulders sagged; she went to the sideboard and poured a stiff peg of brandy for herself, and a stiffer one for Castile. He had drawn back from the window now and had dropped into a chair, where he sat shaking, head in hands.

"Drink this," the girl commanded, and Castile obeyed. The trembling that racked him passed. He lay back, silent. Jewel watched him broodingly.

"You were very near to death then, Mike," she said. "Very near."

"I wish to God you'd made me jump," Castile burst out. "It'd be over then, anyway."

"You don't really wish that. You're afraid of death. Well, so am I. It's natural enough." She finished the brandy. "So Kay's married. To Tommy. I waited too long."

Castile watched her curiously.

"You love him, don't you?" he said. "I wonder if you really can love anyone."

Jewel scarcely heard him.

"I'm through waiting," she said, decisively. "Mike, telephone Jack Bruner. Ask him to come up here as soon as he can."

"Why?"

"I told you—I'm finished with waiting," the girl said gently. "Now I shall act!"

CHAPTER IV

Fangs of the Wolf

AN HOUR later Jack Bruner entered the apartment. His weak face was sullen. Quite obviously he had been drinking heavily. When he saw Jewel his face became wry and he turned, as though to leave.

"Wait," the girl said. "Don't go, Jack. I want to talk to you."

"Well?" He hesitated.

"Why do you hate me so much?"

Jack grinned crookedly. He lit a cigarette, glanced at the sideboard, and lifted his eyebrows enquiringly. Castile got up to fix a drink.

"Hate you? I don't think I do, you know. You're very charming, quite pretty—but I think you're a golddigger."

"You think your father doesn't love me?"

"Love? Nuts." Jack gulped his brandy. "He's been in love with my mother's memories for years. He's changed completely in the last month or so. Never speaks of Mother—he's forgotten her utterly. That doesn't quite jibe with my father as I've known him. You've changed Dad, Jewel, haven't you?"

"Jack," the girl said in a different voice, "look at this."

"Eh? What—"

The Seal of Solomon burned balefully against a slim white hand. Tiny

lightnings seemed to gather about it. The glow brightened—brightened—

"What the devil are you doing? I don't—"

Jack thrust back his chair and stood up angrily. He made a motion to set down his glass, but did not complete it. Instead he froze, motionless, glaring at the fires of the signet.

The glass slipped from his fingers, shattered on the carpet.

"Jewel!" Castile whispered. "For the love of God—"

"Be silent," she said. Then she spoke to Jack. "Do you hear me?"

"I hear you," he responded dully.

"You will obey my commands."

"I will obey your commands."

"Tonight, at midnight, you will call at your father's house and see him alone in his study."

"Tonight, at midnight—"

* * * * *

As the clocks chimed twelve the doorbell rang. Jewel, preparing for bed, listened intently. She heard voices in the hall, and, presently, the heavy footsteps of her husband sounded on the stairs. She waited for a time, until the servants had retreated, and then followed Stephen Bruner.

She paused at the library door. Voices came from beyond it—Stephen's peremptory, puzzled, and Jack's, confused and stammering. Silently Jewel opened the door a crack.

Through the gap she saw the bulky figure of her husband standing beside his desk, facing Jack. The latter seemed intoxicated almost to the point of irrationality. His face was covered with perspiration, and he was swaying on his feet.

"Why the devil do you get me out of bed at this hour?" Bruner was demanding. "If you want to apologize for the way you've acted, say so."

Jack passed a shaking hand across his eyes.

"I—I don't know, Dad. I'm sick, I think—" he stammered, weakly.

BRUNER'S massive face softened. He gripped his son's arm.

"You come along. I'll put you to bed, boy. You need sleep—"

Jewel pushed the door open a bit further. She lifted the Seal of Solomon. The magic signet was alight, flaming hotly with curdled fires of radiance.

From the ring the fires leaped. A shining ray darted across the room and struck Jack Bruner's forehead. It sank in deep, avidly.

Jewel's lips moved silently. A shroud of flame hid the boy.

"Jack!" The older man was stumbling back, his face contorted. "Jack!"

Swiftly Jewel reached through the doorway and snapped off the light. The dim glow of street lamps filtered through the windows. They revealed a hulking, black form that moved swiftly and purposefully through the gloom.

A low snarling came to Jewel's ears. She closed the door and leaned against it, her eyes closed. Other sounds came—

When the servants answered the high-pitched, agonized shrieking, Jewel was running down the stairs toward the library. She followed the butler as he burst into the room.

"Mr. Bruner!" he called. "What—"

Jewel fumbled for the light-switch and snapped it on. Her scream was a masterpiece of acting.

Stephen Bruner was dead. He had died very horribly, as though by the fangs of a beast rather than at the hands of the man who was rising from the body, his mouth and fingers blood-smeared, his eyes glaring with insane horror.

"Master Jack!" The butler had known the boy all his life. He scarcely knew this disheveled, red-splotched creature whose bloodstained mouth was laughing in hysterical frenzy, and whose crazy mirth changed abruptly into shrill, nerve-cracking screams.

But Jack was not insane. He lived through a brief trial in which it was conclusively proved that he had murdered his father in a fit of homicidal rage as the result of a domestic quarrel. Temporary insanity, the verdict was. Jack was committed to an institution, and within a few days utilized a splinter of jagged rock to cut his throat neatly and efficiently. The complete estate went, of course, to Jewel.

She held long consultations with Castile, who had sunk into a fitful mood of depression and hopelessness. At the trial he had tried frantically and vainly to break the spell of silence that bound him, and to save Jack. But it was useless. The Seal of Solomon held him in unbreakable fetters.

"You made Jack kill himself," Castile accused Jewel, but she merely smiled and shrugged.

"Does it matter? All that is finished now, Mike." They were in Castile's apartment. He was toying with a tumbler of brandy, and Jewel was at the window, staring out thoughtfully.

"I suppose it's finished—yes. You've got everything you wanted now, haven't you? Aren't you satisfied yet?"

"No," she murmured. "There is one thing more."

"Tommy Hazard, I suppose."

"That's right."

"WHY don't you leave the kids alone?" Castile burst out. "They're happy together. After all, Kay's your sister. If you really loved Hazard, you'd want him to be happy. And he wouldn't be happy with you."

"You think not?" Jewel glanced at the ring on her finger.

"Oh, you could force him to love you, like poor Steve Bruner. But that isn't real. Every time he held you in his arms, you'd be thinking, 'This isn't Hazard. He's just an automaton, doing what I want him to do.' Do you thing you'd be happy that way?"

"I've thought of that," the girl frowned slightly. "I'll not use the Seal on Tommy."

"The ring has changed you, Jewel." Castile made a quick gesture. "You're very lovely now, lovelier than you ever were. But even so, Hazard has Kay."

"We're taking the yacht out. Down to the Bahamas, perhaps, or Havana. I want Kay and and Tommy to go with us. Arrange it, Mike."

"You quarreled with her?.

"Patch it up. Ask her to forgive me. She'll do what I want. Kay is soft, too soft for her own good. Arrange it."

"No, damn it. I—" Castile bit his lips.

The Seal glittered. As the first gleam of radiance struck it Castile caught his breath, turned, and sprang forward toward the window. He had flung it open and was clambering out when Jewel spoke.

"Mike. Do not move."

The man was statue-still.

"Come here."

His face drawn and haggard, Castile obeyed.

"So you no longer fear death," the girl said, almost tenderly. "Well—" She picked up a sharp-pointed paper-knife from the secretary and placed it in Castile's hand.

"Unbutton your shirt."

Mechanically he obeyed.

"So you are willing to face death. I wonder if you are equally willing to undergo pain? We shall see."

Jewel's eyes flamed sapphire-bright. The signet glowed with its malignant fires.

"Obey."

Stiffly Castile raised the paper-knife and pressed its sharp point into his breast. Suddenly he ripped it down

[*Turn Page*]

viciously, tearing through skin and flesh, emitting an agonized groan as he did so.

"Again."

"Jewel, don't!"

"Very well." The girl nodded with satisfaction. "You'd better put some iodine on your chest. You will arrange for Kay and Tommy to come with us?"

The Seal of Solomon was dead black, no longer aflame.

"Yes—yes, damn you!" Castile's face was gray and pain-twisted. "I'll do it."

Smiling, Jewel went to the door. She had opened it when the man's voice halted her.

"Jewel."

"Yes?"

Castile's sombre eyes brooded on the girl's face.

"Aren't you ever afraid?" he said.

She laughed, a malicious, tinkling laugh that pealed infectiously from the scarlet, lovely lips.

"Afraid? Of what? What have I to be afraid of, Mike?"

Castile was silent for a moment. Then—

"God," he said, very softly.

CHAPTER V

The Reaping

JEWEL had determined not to use the ring in conquering Tommy. She was determined to win him in other ways. She spent considerable time before her dressing table, carefully choosing cosmetics and perfumes. The mirror told her she was very beautiful. And, of course, she was wealthy. That would count. Though she had not told Castile, for some time now, through her brokers, she had been deftly attempting to strip Hazard of his fortune, far smaller now than her own. Money can do a great deal, Jewel had found. Hazard's investments had gone awry, he had lost out unexpectedly in various transactions, and, as a result, when he accepted Jewel's invitation, he was in extremely bad shape financially.

Money had spoiled Tommy Hazard. In a different environment he might have been an admirable person; but he was woefully weak and passionately fond of luxury. Never in his life had he felt a real emotion. It was strange, therefore, that two women should have loved this handsome, shallow man so deeply and utterly. Kay, realizing her husband's faults, was willfully blind to them; she was contented in his very nearness. And, though she had a few misgivings at Jewel's invitation, she was quite willing to patch up the quarrel and see her sister again. Tommy helped make this decision. Though he did not voice the thought, he realized that a wealthy sister-in-law would be a valuable asset.

So the yacht sailed south to Havana. with the Hazards, Castile, Jewel, and a dozen other guests. Jewel never once used the ring during the trip. Tommy was a bit tired of marriage already, and found Jewel lovelier than he had remembered. Slowly and imperceptibly, his passion mounted, during the course of moonlight strolls on the deck, lonely evenings in the dim salon, swims and conversations on the white, Cuban beach. The alluring nearness of Jewel tantalized him, and, too, there was a definite annoyance in his wife's presence. She was continually interrupting tête-à-tête, trying to keep him away from Jewel.

"Damn it, Kay, I'm not a child," he said one night, after Jewel had left. "We were sitting here on deck talking business—your sister's promised to help me out, you know. I need that help, badly."

"But you leave me alone so much nowadays," Kay said wistfully, slipping her arm around Hazard's shoulders. He shook her off impatiently.

"If Jewel gets insulted, we're on the rocks. I tell you I need her help."

"I'm sorry, Tommy." Kay had the look of a slapped child. "But I get so unhappy. I wish we hadn't come on this trip."

Hazard's brow contracted. He hesitated, and then reached out and drew his wife close.

"Sorry, hon," he said. "I've got so

much on my mind. Business worries. Forgive me."

"Of course." She gave him a lingering, tender kiss. "Tommy, if I thought you didn't love me any more, I don't know what I'd do."

"Don't be silly," he laughed.

"I—I'm a little afraid of Jewel, I think. It's a strange thing to say, but she's changed. Since Dad's death—"

HAZARD looked out across the starlit Pacific.

"Yes," he murmured. "She's changed."

Presently he made an excuse and left. A slim, dark figure lounged out of the shadows.

"Hello, Kay," Castile said gently. "All by yourself?"

"Hello, Mike. Yes. Want to sit down?"

"Why don't you go in the salon? They're dancing."

"Why don't you?" she retorted. "You've changed, too, Mike. Ever since Dad died, everyboy's changed."

"Except you."

"I'm not the same." She reached up and caught Castile's hands, clinging to them as though for refuge. "Mike, what about it?"

"What?"

"Tommy, and Jewel."

Castile's smile was twisted.

"You're still a kid," he said, with an assumption of mockery. "The first year of marriage is the hardest. The wife's always jealous."

"Yes? Are you going to marry Jewel, Mike?"

Castile's body shook. He turned away and leaned on the rail. Kay came to stand beside him.

"What is it? What's wrong."

The man bowed his head. He would have given his life to be able to speak, to warn Kay. But the spell of the Seal kept him irretrievably silent.

"Nothing's wrong," he said at last. "Nothing."

And suddenly Kay was in his arms, sobbing, her cheek pillowed against his chest, and he was comforting her like a child.

"It's all right, kid. It's all right."

Vague, meaningless words. For Castile knew Kay was enmeshed hopelessly in Jewel's net, and that escape was impossible. If Tommy Hazard had been strong, there might have been hope. But the fool was already infatuated with Jewel, heedless of the pain he was causing his wife. Silently Castile cursed Hazard.

A shadow crossed them—Tommy and Jewel, dancing to a dreamy Strauss waltz.

Clouds blotted out the moon. Castile, looking up, realized that they were in for a blow, a big one.

He was right. That night the clouds banked and piled one upon another, till the sky was dead-black. The wind rose. A driving, icy rain began to fall. The yacht fled north.

All the next day, and well into the next night, the storm continued unabated. The vessel was seaworthy, and the captain and crew able. But more than one of the passengers was seasick; and finally everyone but the crew was ordered off the decks. Caged up in the yacht, the party danced staggeringly and deluged the bartender with orders. By midnight everyone was drunk, save for Kay and Castile, and, of course, Jewel. She moved calm, unperturbed, and lovely through the noise, tumult.

"We're rounding Hatteras," Castile said to Kay. "Nearly home. Glad, kid?"

She didn't answer. Suddenly she rose and left the salon. Castile thought nothing of it till he realized that Jewel and Hazard were also gone.

HE GOT unsteadily to his feet, bracing himself against the pitching of the vessel, and followed. But it was ten minutes later before he found his quarry, and in that time the inevitable had happened.

Castile met Hazard standing straddle-legged in the passage.

"Where's Kay?" he said sharply. "Have you seen her?"

"Yeah." Hazard's voice was thick. "I didn't mean to—hit her."

"What?"

"Really, Castile, you saw how things were. A man can't help what he feels. A divorce—"

Castile's hands twitched, but he said nothing. Hazard went on:

"I was, well, kissing Jewel. No harm

in that. Kay came along. She said things. I told her the truth. That I was in love with Jewel."

"Then you hit her?" Castile said, with deadly softness.

"Well, she—"

And suddenly Jewel was standing behind Hazard a cruel, enigmatic smile on her red lips, her eyes alight with triumph and malice. Something he read in that cool gaze made Castile pause.

"Where's Kay?" he whispered.

And, abruptly, Castile knew. With an oath, he turned and was racing along the corridor, up steps, into a night gone mad with roaring storm. The wind smashed icily against him, the rain blinded him. A flash of lightning revealed the deck, empty of any human form— But, no—at the rail—

"Kay!" Castile shouted. He sprang forward, too late. The girl was gone.

She was lost in the tumult of raging seas. Castile seized a life-preserver and flung it out. He had one foot on the rail when a voice called to him.

"Mike!"

Slowly he turned. Jewel was standing at the head of the companion-way, the Seal of Solomon on her hand blazing with weird gleams.

"Come here!"

Castile looked at Jewel. And, quite suddenly, he knew that all the love he had once had for her was gone completely. In its place another love had grown.

Wholeheartedly unselfishly, Castile forgot himself utterly in the realization that he loved Kay. And in that instant the spell snapped and broke.

Castile turned and sprang over the rail.

Jewel remained motionless with shocked surprise. Then she, too, ran to the rail. Clinging to it with both hands, peering through the murk, she strained her eyes in search of Castile or Kay.

Lightning flamed along the clouds. It revealed two heads in the surging green-black waters. Castile saw Kay, swam strongly toward her. Then all was dark.

Again light came. Castile had reached the girl, was bearing her up in his arms. The life-preserver was being swept toward the two.

Castile gripped it.

A wave carried him in the direction of the yacht as the lightning died.

From the companion-way came Hazard's voice.

"Jewel! Jewel!"

The girl gripping the rail looked around swiftly. She bit her lip, touched the Seal on her finger. Again the lightning blazed out.

With it blazed the Seal of Solomon! Flames of evil made the talisman radiant! Her hand lifted, Jewel stood staring out to sea.

Castile, bearing Kay, was nearly at the yacht's side.

From the ring a pale beam lashed out. It touched Castile's forehead. He looked up and saw Jewel.

His gaze cursed her.

His hands relaxed their grip on the life-preserver. The cork ring was swept away.

Unmoving, unresisting, still cradling the unconscious Kay in one arm, Michael Castile sank beneath the black waters.

JEWEL and Tommy Hazard were married less than a month later.

Money can afford to ignore public opinion. The body of Kay had been washed ashore at Hatteras, but Castile's corpse remained unrecovered. However, Hazard was legally free to remarry, and so, as soon as it could be arranged, a ceremony was performed before a justice of the peace, and the couple quietly departed for the docks, from which they were to go abroad.

Hazard's shallow nature had felt the shock of Kay's death for only a brief time. Infatuated as he was with Jewel, he didn't let his mind linger long on unpleasantness. The prospect of a new life stretched alluringly before him, with comfort, luxury—and the beautiful girl he had just married.

There was no wedding supper. The two embarked without fanfare, and Jewel spent a last hour discussing matters with her attorneys. Everything to do with the estate had been placed in their hands. This was the last of business for a long time. A year's honeymoon, traveling all over

the world, enjoying a new-found happiness. . . .

The liner sailed at dusk. The lights of New York fell astern, as Jewel and Hazard stood by the rail, watching the Statue of Liberty fade into a puppet-like figure.

"Happy?" she asked.

"Sure. Aren't you?"

Jewel hesitated. Her thoughts went back over the last year, back to the day she had begun her studies in Castile's strange library. Well, she had won everything she wanted. Money, freedom, the life and the man she loved. And now—what?

She looked at the Seal of Solomon. Without its aid she had stolen Tommy from his wife. It had served its purpose. And, of late, Jewel had begun to feel a queer uneasiness. A belated fear of the uncanny powers she had called on was growing in the back of her mind.

She wanted to forget, now. There would be no more need for the Seal. It was the only link with the past. Suddenly she found herself hating it.

What had Castile said once? "The Seal may bless or curse, depending on how it is used." Well, so far it had blessed. It would have no chance to use its malignant powers now that the need for it had passed.

Jewel slipped the ring from her finger and dropped it overside. As the circlet vanished into the dark a cold, tight band seemed to compress her heart briefly, and involuntarily she shivered. For, suddenly, she remembered another phrase Castile had used.

"It protects the wearer as long as it is worn."

"What did you drop?" Hazard was peering over the rail. "Your—why, where's your ring?"

"It slipped off," Jewel lied. "It doesn't matter. A cheap thing, anyway. Let's go in, Tommy."

He laughed and circled her waist with his arm. Together they left the deck.

MIDNIGHT. The ship ploughed through a calm, moonlit ocean. The night air was balmy and pleasant, stars were reflected in the dark, mirror-like surface. In her suite Jewel slept uneasily, tossing and murmuring—

Suddenly she sat up, eyes wide in the gloom. With a soft cry she reached out and touched the reassuring warmth of Hazard's shoulder beside her. He grunted in his sleep, but did not awaken.

Jewel shivered, even in the warm air. She had dreamed, strange, disturbing dreams. She tried to recall them, but couldn't. There was only a vague memory of something that rocked, rocked endlessly in endless seas, a memory of green depths, and dark eyes that watched, probing into Jewel's—

It was utterly silent. The powerful beat of the great pistons in the ship's heart throbbed through the night. The rippling splash of waves against the side, almost inaudible.

It was too silent.

Jewel shivered again, and glanced up. Moonlight streamed in through the portholes. And, at first, she did not see the shadow on one of the ports.

A darkness filtered down within the moonrays. Slowly, silently, a cloudy blackness obscured the light, till the ports were invisible and the room completely dark. As though caught in the grip of nightmare, Jewel remained immobile, her tongue dry and cleaving to her palate, sitting upright in the bed and staring, staring.

The darkness coalesced into a jet pillar, man-high. Again the moonlight rushed in. And the pillar was no longer black. Nor was it merely a cloud of darkness.

A man stood there.

And, meeting the passionless, cold stare of those unspeakable eyes, Jewel knew that she looked upon a Horror.

It was Michael Castile.

He wore the same clothing as when she had last seen him alive, but green algae and seaweed clung to the dripping garments. Dank hair was pasted damply on the pallid forehead. The white face was without expression. Only the eyes watched, frigidly, accusingly.

Through gray lips Jewel choked out a name.

"Mike—"

The Horror lifted its right arm.

Looking at the hand, Jewel shook with sudden nausea. Some of the fingers had been eaten away so that bone and gristle showed through. But on one finger was—

The Seal of Solomon.

JEWEL thrust out imploring, clawing hands. She strove to leap from the bed, to rush to the door. But abruptly the talisman glowed with eerie radiance, and she was frozen motionless.

The Seal flamed bright. Jewel tried to scream; spittle drooled from the corners of her lax mouth. All her beauty was gone under the stress of soul-shattering, abysmal terror.

From the signet leaped a pale ray. It lanced out and was gone. Dazzled for a second, Jewel blinked as her vision accustomed itself to the gloom. Then her heart leaped.

The thing that had been in her room was gone.

At first Jewel dared not believe it. She stared about; then she found that the spell of immobility that had bound her was gone. Sick, shaking with reaction, she fell back on the bed.

Her hand fumbled out.

"Tommy," she gasped. "Oh, Tommy —wake up!"

Then, without warning, Jewel screamed and jerked away, her eyes straining through the shadows as she sought to confirm that which she refused to believe—

A low, snarling growl came out of the darkness.

A knife-edged shriek burst from Jewel's throat.

"Tommy! Tommy! Don't—" she cried hysterically.

Moonlight gleamed on savage fangs as the wolf sprang.

Featured Next Issue: THE EVIL ONES, *a Novelet of Horror from the Depths by August W. Derleth and Mark Schorer*

The Dead Know All

By NORMAN A. DANIELS

Author of "The Man Who Was Death," "The Talking Clue," etc.

A Would-Be Murderer Meets His Nemesis When a Woman's Indomitable Spirit Conquers Hate

IT FELT good to be out of the room where Death's wings cast murky shadows. June Hunter, immaculate in her starched white nurse's uniform, stood on the terrace overlooking the sea, inhaling fresh, pure air untainted by the medicinal odors of the sick-room. She moved over against the waist-high iron grille-work which protected anyone who stood too close to the edge of the terrace.

She looked down at the jagged, ugly rocks far below and shivered. The first day she had arrived at Fenton Manor, Jim Fenton's body was being lifted from those rocks. A dozen hours later he died without regaining consciousness. The coroner's verdict had been suicide. Jim Fenton had fallen from this terrace and the guard rails were too high to permit the death to be listed as accidental.

He could see his own hands through her throat

Phyllis Fenton, old, wrinkled, austere, was Jim Fenton's grandmother. After his death she seemed to lose whatever spark of vitality had kept her frail body from going far beyond the normal span of life. June Hunter had stayed on to take care of the old lady. Not that she liked the job so much, but jobs were scarce, and the salary was good here.

Someone stepped beside her, and June caught the odor of whiskey. She didn't have to turn her head to identify the newcomer. It was Clyde Marshall, the only surviving member of the Fenton family. Marshall, who drank too much, gambled too much and hated the old lady who ruled his life. Now she was dying, and he was already mentally spending the fortune she would leave him.

"A long way down," he said sarcastically. "Jim found out just how far down, eh, June?"

"I'm sorry. Mrs. Fenton needs me." June faced him, her cheeks flushed in anger.

MARSHALL grabbed her arm. "Now see here," he snarled. "I haven't done anything to make you despise me. Listen—the old lady is going out for sure this time; I know Soon as she kicks off, I'll have plenty. I'll be a nice guy to know."

June pulled herself free and walked off the terrace. Marshall followed her, but he stopped halfway across the big living-room. Dr. Redfern was coming down the stairs. He looked at Marshall coldly, motioned June to follow and led her into the study. He closed the door before he spoke.

"She'll slip out this afternoon, I'm afraid. Poor old lady. Nothing left to live for since her grandson fell over that terrace. Look here, June, I don't like leaving you alone in this house with Marshall. He's not to be trusted. In fact—I'd lay an even bet that he's a murderer."

"Murderer?" June gasped. "You mean he—Jim Fenton?"

"That's what I think." Dr. Redfern nodded. "Jim was not a suicidal type. The old lady believes the same thing. Just told me so, in fact, and—she also told me other things— Well, if you're sure it's all right, I'll be on my way. Phone me if she goes out."

Redfern picked up his bag and closed the front door. June walked slowly up the stairs to the sick room. She stepped in and walked over to the huge bed on which lay a tiny bit of humanity with only a meager spark of life left. The dying woman opened her eyes as June arranged the pillow gently, and a smile stole across her thin face.

"You won't have to put up with me much longer, my child. No, don't lie—I know when the end is near and honestly I'm not sorry. I've lived long, too long, since Jim died. But I wanted to talk to you. There is something—"

"Please." June patted the old woman's hand. "Don't try to talk. Tomorrow you'll feel stronger."

"Tomorrow?" Phyllis Fenton cackled in dry humor. "All my tomorrows are wrapped up in today, child. There will be no tomorrow for me, not one. Now listen carefully. They told me Jim committed suicide I don't think he did. Soon, very soon, I'll know for sure. They say the dead know everything. My nephew, Clyde Marshall, is hanging around like a buzzard, waiting for me to die. He believes he will get my money, but I've fooled him. He's a philandering wretch, not worthy of this family. He is the only man who would profit at Jim's death.

"Therefore—I gave Dr. Redfern a new will which names you, my child, as the sole beneficiary. Clyde gets what he deserves—nothing."

June only smiled. She had heard dying, delirious people talk this way before.

"Please Mrs. Fenton, don't talk," she murmured. "I'd rather you rested. You need all your strength."

PHYLLIS FENTON coughed. A paroxysm of pain crossed her face. The breath in her throat rattled horribly, and June felt the aged hand tighten on her arm. The old woman's eyes were filming over. This was to be the end, then. June picked up the hand, held it gently and let her finger rest against the pulse. It was flicker-

ing, like the flame of a candle when it reaches the final drop of tallow. Somehow June found herself murmuring a prayer and tears rolled, unchecked, down her cheeks. One last, convulsive shudder—and Death picked up his trappings, to move on to a new victim. Phyllis Fenton was dead, her face creased in the last frozen lines of agony.

June drew a long breath and checked the time automatically. It was just ten after two.

It was better this way. She had lived long, and for weeks the spark of life had slowly grown weaker and weaker. June arose. She had certain duties to perform before she phoned the doctor and the undertaker. She took a spool of surgical gauze from her bag, tenderly crossed the old woman's dead arms and tied them together, fastening the gauze with a safety pin. Then she tied the ankles, closed the staring eyes and pulled a sheet over the corpse.

As she straightened up, someone stepped from behind her. With a cry of horror, June moved back. It was Marshall. He didn't look at the sheet-covered corpse of his aunt. No sorrow registered in his deep-set eyes; only a hatred that brought his lips back in a scowl.

"She's dead, and I'm glad. But she tricked me at the end. If I'd known that fool doctor had a new will, I'd have killed him. I waited twenty-five years—only to be cheated by one of her whims. Damn her soul!"

June put both hands against his chest and pushed him out of the room. She said nothing, but slowly a feeling of terror was creeping over her. This man was half-mad. He had listened, heard his aunt's dying words, and he knew he had lost everything. Marshall was strong, powerfully built and cruel. She was alone in this vast house with him. The influence of his aunt's character, and her millions, on him was gone now.

He suddenly seized June's arm in a painful grasp and yanked her out of the death room. Without a word she was propelled down the steps and into the spacious living-room. Marshall flung her into a chair.

"So," he snarled, "you are the heiress. A doublecrosser who convinced her I shouldn't have the money. Well, I shall have it, do you hear? It's rightfully mine. I've put up with her tantrums for years to get it and I won't be cheated now."

JUNE forced herself to remain cool.

"You're mad," she said. "Listen to me. I don't want that money. I didn't encourage her to will it to me. But it is mine. You can't stop Dr. Redfern from turning the new will over to the attorneys."

Marshall's eyes narrowed. Suddenly he lunged for her, pinned her to the chair and took out a coil of thin rope from his pocket. When she tried to resist, he struck her savagely across the face. He twisted the rope around her wrists and ankles, lashed them tight. Then he stepped back.

"No—you're right. I can't stop those lawyers from getting the will, but I can stop myself from losing the money that I've lived years to get. My aunt made a will leaving you the money. But what if you died? What if you had an accident? I'd swear you were dead before my aunt died. I'd testify she was alive when you died which automatically voids the will and I get everything. Who'd dispute my word? The difference in time between your death and hers is so small that no doctor could swear who died first. I said I'd be a nice guy to know—after I got the money, but I'm not a nice guy when I see that dough slipping out of my hands."

Marshall wheeled and walked swiftly out on the terrace. June, her eyes wide with horror, watched him. Marshall took a wrench from his pocket and carefully padded its teeth with pieces of soft flannel. Then he attacked the railing until he had one length of it free. He glanced over his shoulder, grinning sardonically at June. He calmly reinserted the length of railing, twisting it only a slight bit. Then he carefully wiped the metal with a cloth to remove fingerprints. After that was finished, he returned to stand over June.

"See what happens, beautiful?

You're going to have an accident. I've been prepared for something like this. You'll lean up against the railing and it will give way. They'll find one part of it badly rusted. I took care of that weeks ago, right after Jim pitched over. They said he committed suicide. What a laugh! He leaned against the railing too and it gave way. He went over, but I put the railing back in place so nobody noticed it. They thought he jumped on purpose. I'm clever, you see. Nobody even suspected. I was going to let it look like an accident, but I thought if they said suicide, it might make the old lady die faster. It did, too"

"You murdered him," June cried. "You fixed the railing so he fell."

"Sure I did and I got away with it." Marshall's lips parted in a cold smile. "I'll get away with it again, too. This time they'll say it was accidental and I'll be very, very sorry that I didn't have the railing examined more carefully after Jim died. The rust on it looks real. No one can prove I weakened it with acid."

MARSHALL untied her ankles and then freed her wrists. He seized her by both arms and propelled her toward the terrace. June screamed, but it was only a release for the emotions raging within her. No one lived within five miles of this big house that overlooked the sea—and the jagged rocks on the shore.

Then, suddenly, Marshall paused. Somewhere upstairs a door slammed. He let go of June and she made a valiant effort to get clear of him. But he was faster. He lunged after her, whirled her around and struck her a cruel blow under the chin. June saw the room gyrate crazily. She was aware of a blackness stealing over her; the floor came up mysteriously. She crumpled and lay very still.

Vaguely she seemed to remember that slamming door in this house of death and murder. But nothing else happened. The wind, perhaps, had forced a door shut. Marshall regained control of his nerves and bent down to pick her up. It would be over soon now. She was only half-conscious, and incapable of the slightest resistance even if she had been strong enough to overcome his brutal strength. His hands curled around her wrists.

Then Marshall paused again and cocked his head. Someone was moving down the stairs. Walking down with light, steady steps. And the only other occupant of this house was —a dead woman!

Marshall spun around, darted into the hallway. He seized a heavy silver candelabra. June watched him. Everything seemed miles away. Marshall looked up the stairs. The heavy weapon he held over his head came down slowly and his arms hung limply by his sides. He began backing into the room. His face was dead-white, his lips trembled and his eyes were dilated in terror.

June gave a gasp. She saw the hem of the old-fashioned nightgown Phyllis Fenton had worn in death. Naked feet padded down the stairway slowly, methodically.

It couldn't be Phyllis Fenton. Yet it was. She had died—June knew the symptoms of death. She couldn't possibly have been mistaken, yet Phyllis Fenton came into that room as austere and stately as she had moved in life.

"A-Aunt Phyl-Phyllis," Marshall gasped. "I—I thought—"

"You thought I was dead," she interrupted. "Fool. Did you think I'd go and leave this girl in your hands? Clyde, sit down."

But the madness that had seeped into Marshall's soul wasn't to be routed so easily. He looked from the white, pallid face of his aunt, to June's staring, horrified eyes.

"It's a trick," he snarled. "It's an attempt to fool me, but it won't work. I've wanted to kill you for years—years. You wouldn't die! You hung on to tantalize me, to wave that will before my eyes, force me to obey every damned crazy whim you could think up. Well, that's over now. You're really going to die this time. I'll wring that scrawny neck of yours. I'll kill you slowly, make you suffer as you made me. I'll have your money. You can't stop me!"

"No," June heard her own voice pleading wildly. "Marshall, please

don't. Don't kill her. She's ill. I—I thought she had died. She won't be able to stand much. You can't do this. I'll turn all the money over to you. She's old—terribly sick."

June tried to get up from the floor. A hand she couldn't see had closed about her wrist. It was a wrinkled hand with thin, emaciated fingers. It was the same hand she had held in death! It was Phyllis Fenton's hand. Yet—she stood ten feet away and her arms were at her sides.

A soft, gentle voice whispered and it was the voice of Phyllis Fenton. Yet her lips never moved!

"Don't worry, my child. You have nothing to fear. He can't harm me. And now I know what happened to Jim. Didn't I say that the dead know everything?"

A scream welled up in June's throat but something held it in check. Perhaps it was the soothing quality of that ghostly voice. Perhaps it was the tender touch of the hand on her arm.

Marshall roared in mad rage. He leaped for the old woman. His hands gripped her throat, squeezed it unmercifully. June started up again, but that same gentle touch checked her. She could only watch, while her heart pounded wildly.

Marshall lifted the old woman from the floor, lifted her with his hands wound about her thin throat. He hurled her on the davenport, put both knees on her frail chest and his fingers sank deeply into her throat.

"You'll not rob me," he howled. "Not of the money that is rightfully mine."

She didn't move, didn't try to fight back. Marshall squeezed that age-wrinkled throat for five minutes. Then he shoved her back, arose and rubbed his hands.

"There," he snarled, "you'll not trick me again."

"As for you—it's your turn now." He whirled about and grimaced at June.

He advanced a step and June tried to scream again. The gentle touch on her arm was gone. No voice whispered words of encouragement in her ear. She was alone with him. Unutterably alone, for this time there could be no question of Phyllis Fenton's death. Marshall had all but broken her neck.

He leered at June, reached out two clawing hands.

"Clyde!"

The voice was calm, without either reproach or surprise. Marshall flung himself around, his mouth agape. Phyllis Fenton stood in the doorway, exactly as she had been standing when he leaped upon her with strangling fingers. He looked at the davenport. There was no corpse lying there, stilled in death.

Marshall's face was crimson. As June watched, it slowly turned to purple. His eyes were protruding from their sockets, his whole body was trembling visibly.

A SCREAM of rage escaped his lips and once again he leaped for her. She didn't move. His hands closed around her throat. But there was no throat! He found that his fingers interlocked, squeezed only themselves. Yet she stood there, calmly, sedately. He could see his own hands through her throat. . . .

Marshall flung himself away. He was cackling horribly and now the signs of stark madness shone on his face. He covered his eyes, staggered back.

The old woman moved toward him, slowly, inexorably as death itself. Marshall gave a strangled shout and retreated. She matched her steps with his own. He was out of the room, on the terrace now, and still backing He touched the loosened rail, strained forward. The old woman was still coming toward him. He forgot about the railing, put his weight against it. His hands grabbed vainly for support but found none. June had a fleeting glimpse of a face creased in terror. Five seconds later she heard the crash of Marshall's body against the rocks below. June closed her eyes and shuddered. Something touched her wrist gently and she looked up. Phyllis Fenton stood over her, smiling gently.

"I am so tired, child. This has been a great effort. Sleep a few moments. You'll be quite all right then. Sleep

brings dreams. May all the rest of yours be sweeter than this one."

June found that her eyes closed involuntarily. How many minutes she remained like that she didn't know until much later. When she opened her eyes again, she was alone in the room. She seized a chair and pulled herself up. She slowly rubbed her forehead and tried to puzzle out what had happened. Then memory returned. She whirled and ran out on the terrace. The waist-high railing was broken. The ends of it showed rusty brown. No one would prove it wasn't real rust, Clyde Marshall had said. She looked over the edge. There was a dark object flung across the rocks. June turned quickly and raced upstairs.

The door of the death room was closed. She opened it and turned on the light. The sheeted form of the old lady lay on the bed. June raised the cover. Phyllis Fenton's face wore a composed smile of peace. The agonizing lines brought on by death were gone.

Her hands were folded across her thin chest, the wrists tied by surgical gauze. The safety pin glittered oddly in the light. Her ankles were similarly fastened, just as June had left them.

For a full minute June stood there quickly, her head bowed. Then she looked at the clock. It was two fifty-four. Phyllis Fenton had died at two-ten.

June walked over to the phone and dialed a number.

"Doctor Redfern? This is Nurse Hunter. Please come up here quickly. Clyde Marshall tumbled off the terrace. Yes, just as Jim Fenton did, but this time the railing gave way. It must have been rusted and weak. I—I don't feel very well. I guess I fainted, because I should have phoned you the moment Mrs. Fenton died. Yes—she's gone. She died," June looked at the clock again, "at exactly two-ten."

Next Issue: BE YOURSELF, a Fantastic Novelet by Robert Bloch

THE HOUSE OF STANLEY

By GEORGE J. RAWLINS

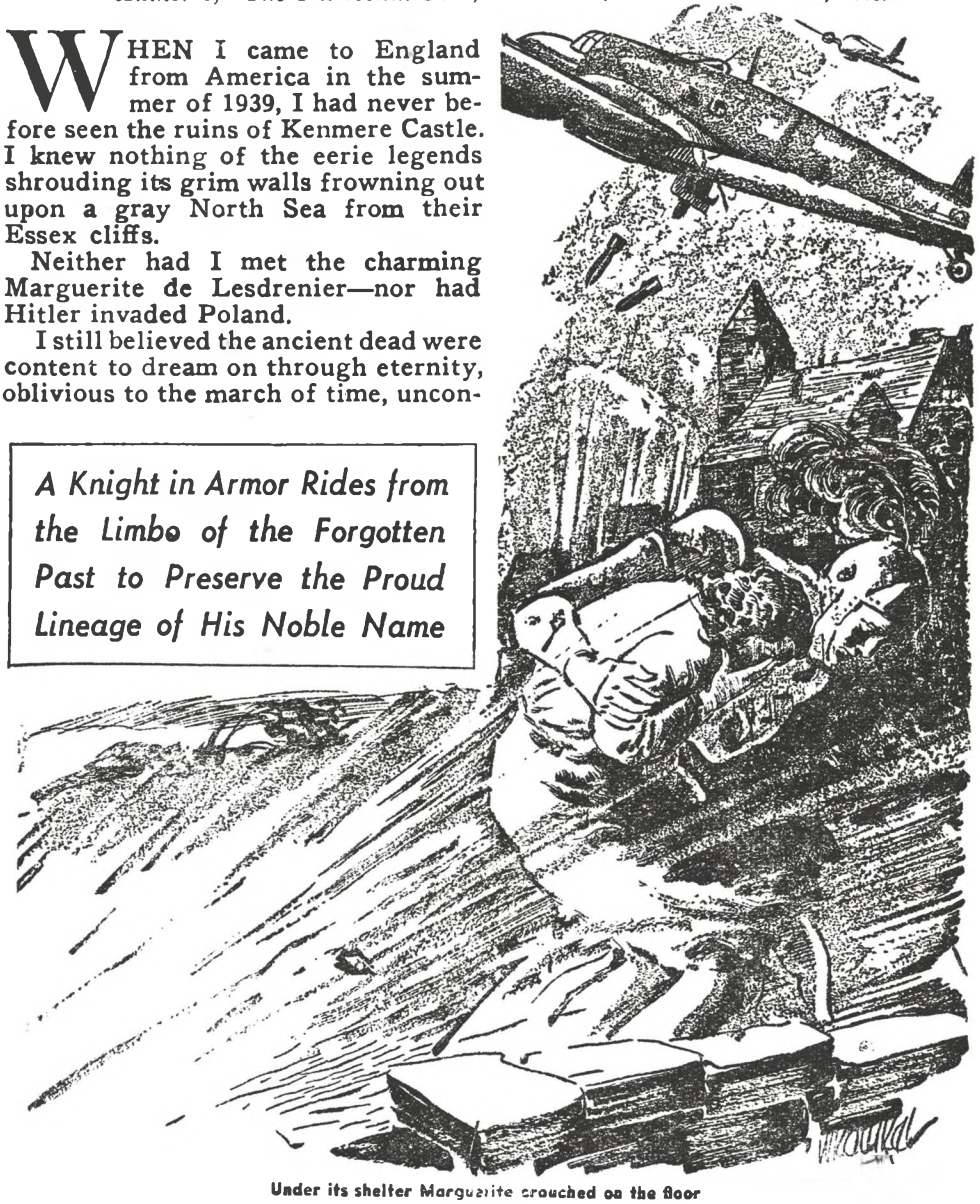
Author of "The Thirteenth Boat," "Hound of the Haunted Trail," etc.

WHEN I came to England from America in the summer of 1939, I had never before seen the ruins of Kenmere Castle. I knew nothing of the eerie legends shrouding its grim walls frowning out upon a gray North Sea from their Essex cliffs.

Neither had I met the charming Marguerite de Lesdrenier—nor had Hitler invaded Poland.

I still believed the ancient dead were content to dream on through eternity, oblivious to the march of time, uncon-

A Knight in Armor Rides from the Limbo of the Forgotten Past to Preserve the Proud Lineage of His Noble Name



Under its shelter Marguerite crouched on the floor

cerned with the fate of living mortals.

Entering the castle for the first time, I had a vague feeling I had been there before.

"Stories I read as a kid!" I told myself. "Half-forgotten memories of picture-book tales of knighthood!"

I had no sentimental interest in the place. I, Edgar Stanley, proud of my old-American stock—my pioneering ancestors were stalwart, blond, blue-eyed men, rugged and aquiline of countenance, and I'm proud to be one of such a line.

Today, I am its sole surviving member.

I acquired Kenmere quite by accident, in settlement of foreign holdings inherited from my father. Now that I owned the castle I intended to investigate it, for tales of ancient chivalry still intrigue me.

ALONE in the echoing solitude of those ghostly halls, imagination carried me back through the years. I heard ribald laughter and the clang of armor from the guard-room, the fancied thud of hoofs as some phantom courier galloped across the drawbridge.

I smelled the aroma of roasting venison from the kitchens. A pigeon cooing on the parapet became a winged bearer of love missives from errant knight to his demoiselle!

Day-dreaming, I came to what had been the chapel. Its roof gone, peaked arches marked the windows in its tottering walls. Behind the grass-grown alter-dais an opening led down into the crypt. Somehow, I knew I would find that opening there. I descended the stone stairs into the dank darkness that shrouded Kenmere's ancient dead.

Along the vault's subterranean walls, tiers of recesses housed their long-dead occupants. In the light of my flashlight I tried to read the inscriptions, but effacing time had done its work. Here, a date, there a barely decipherable "Lord of Kenmere", a cross, a crest, a *"Requiescat in pace."*

Engrossed by chill enchantment, I did not notice the closing-in of evening. My flashlight had grown dim. Then, through deathlike stillness, there came a stealthy thumping—distant, regular, scarcely audible, but steadily approaching.

I listened. My pulses raced, and the heartbeat in my ears confused my hearing. It might be footsteps on hollow tile, it might be the thud of clods falling upon a coffin!

I hurried along the crypt, the cold of empty darkness grasping at my back, and rushed headlong up the stairs to collide with the caretaker.

"Lor', sir, but you scairt me!" gasped the astonished Rand. "I don't come about 'ere much at this hour, Sir. It's a bit uncanny—but I thought you might 'ave got lost!"

So it was Rand's footsteps I had heard resounding on the flagstones above the crypt! Chagrined at my momentary panic, a wild thought seized me.

"Rand," I said, "where can I get workmen? There are rooms in the donjon-keep I want fixed up for my quarters."

"You don't expect to live there, Sir? Lor', Sir, I wouldn't adivse it!" Rand was quite serious. "It 'as been tried, even in my time, Sir. They do say the place is haunted!"

"Good!" I forced a laugh. "Maybe some ancient ghost will give me his autobiography!"

IN AUGUST I moved into a modern apartment with its own light-plant and water-system, built into Kenmere Castle. Within its confines I lived in the twentieth century. Across my threshold lay the dim and musty past where medieval ghosts were supposed to stalk by night.

Perversely, I encouraged those ghosts. Alone in total darkness in the moldering crypt I awaited the witching hour of midnight, but naught disturbed the slumbers of the dead!

"Evidently," I decided, "the ghosts of Kenmere aren't concerned with me!" Yet Rand insisted no one else had been able to spend a night within the Castle walls.

It never occurred to me, and I would have scoffed at the idea, that perhaps those other occupants were not true masters of Kenmere, and therefore not acceptable to its eerie

guardians. It never occurred to me that since the dead belong to eternity, they can afford to bide their time—Today, I do not scoff!

Constructing my apartment, the workmen unearthed a very old manuscript. Defaced by the seeping rains of centuries, I could decipher only fragments of its imperfect Latin. Written by an ancient Dowager of Kenmere, it lamented a wayward son of the noble House who had disappeared and had been disinherited. The other son and only heir had gone to the wars in Normandy. Concerned for his welfare, the writer consulted a famous witch. Strangely, the witch's prophecy recorded in the script, stood out in bold clear letters still untouched by time:

"No further generations shall arise in Kenmere Castle until the young Lord shall bring home the Pearl of Palestine. And through the Pearl of Palestine shall the lineage of his House be rebuilt."

The venerable writer then records deep mystification, for she knew naught of the Pearl of Palestine. And she grieved that so noble a line must perish from the earth, for the young Lord of Kenmere came home — a corpse.

September. *Blitzkreig* in Poland. In England, a State of War—and I caught the war fever. Training camps —a Subaltern's commission. Crossing the Channel in darkness, a French port at dawn, trains waiting at the pier sidings.

Through France, cheering crowds saluted us. At Laon, I stepped from the troop train to try my French on the pretty girls distributing cigarettes and chocolate bars. One charming mademoiselle, whose dark silken hair framed a face from such exquisite cameo, replied to me in perfect English.

In those few minutes we learned much of each other. When I swung aboard the moving train I had the address of Marguerite de Lesdrenier in my pocket—and her picture in my heart.

Deep in the earth below the Maginot Line I wondered what that ancient young Lord of Kenmere might think of modern warfare. Had his charger's hoofs ever spurned the ground above me? Then the skirmishing east of the Sierck Forts, and the night of September 16th, in striking distance of Merzig on the east bank of the Saar.

WE ATTACKED at dawn. Advance positions of the Siegfried Line dropped a curtain of fire along the outskirts of the city. Moving up along the railroad, my platoon entered the factory district.

As I crawled up beside a large warehouse, a big H.E. shell ploughed into the building. I saw flying fragments shoot skyward, and the massive masonry wall bulge outward above me. Little puffs of white dust spurted from the widening cracks, and the shattered wall seemed to hang in air like something in a slow-motion picture.

As I ran, the wall collapsed. Tons of débris roared down about me, and a stunning blow on my steel helmet sent me sprawling. In that brief moment of remaining consciousness before the wall buried me, I saw a man running in my direction. He came swiftly, too swiftly, it seemed! Not a Tommy, not a *poilu,* nor a German soldier—but an incongruously noble figure clad in full medieval armor. A powerful mailed arm went about me. A gauntleted hand grasped my shoulder. His vizor was open, and as he knelt beside me I caught a fleeting glimpse of his face. He flung up his shield, covering my body and protecting me from falling fragments. I heard the clang of them on its metal surface. Then—blackness!

When I regained consciousness, Hospital Corps men were digging me out. The field hospital, suspecting internal injuries, routed me back to the Base.

There, while they probed and X-rayed, I kept thinking of that man-in-armor. A vision? A fantastic hallucination? It didn't seem logical my imagination could play such a trick after refusing, under ideal conditions, to raise the ghosts of Kenmere!

The face I had seen in the open helmet seemed uncannily familiar. A face I knew, and knew well, yet I could not place its owner.

As I lay on my hospital cot, a subtle

fragrance like a spring zephyr seemed to enter the ward. I'm sure I felt it before I turned to look.

Marguerite de Lesdrenier was coming down the aisle.

Distributing magazines, she stopped to talk a moment with each patient. My pulse raced faster as she approached. At first she did not recognize me because of my head bandages.

She got no farther with her magazines; I wouldn't let her. She sat beside me and we talked until visiting hours were over—there are compensations to being wounded.

MARGUERITE'S father was in the French diplomatic service. She had lived in several countries, and in England learned the language. Now, she was organizing English-speaking war-welfare units near British stations.

She would be in the vicinity a week. I told her I thought I could make my disabilities last that long—if she'd visit the hospital every day, and she promised.

In the endless hours until her return, my mind went back again to my phantom rescuer. Had that first blow rung the curtain on my conscious mind, leaving the sub-conscious to direct the show and register a scene on my memory cells? Was the man-in-armor a manifestation of suppressed desires developed in childhood, desires born of hero-worship of mighty men of yore? No, if that were the case, my inner self would have striven to fulfill a frustrated wish and would have made me hero of the play.

None of it made sense. But neither did my vivid experience, my miraculous escape. Not with the twentieth century four-tenths gone. My head throbbed with the twisted riddle when Marguerite came—and the world was right again!

When I was able to hobble about, the medicos let me out in Marguerite's care, and by the end of the week I was fit for duty. Marguerite expected to leave for points nearer the Swiss border.

Our last night together—blackouts aren't so bad—seated in a little park, I slipped an engagement solitaire on her slim finger. I begged her to marry me that night, but she insisted I must ask her father. Old French families are like that.

We sat there close together, not talking much, and then she drew from her right hand a heavy emerald ring. Around its square-cut stone, heraldic designs wove an intricate pattern.

"Edgar," said Marguerite, pressing the ring into my hand, "I want you to wear this and bring it back to me. I feel that it's part of me, it's been in my family beyond memory."

I kissed her hands as she fitted it on my finger.

"It's a pledge of my love," she continued. "You don't mind me being a little romantic, do you? I like to think my gallant Knight carries my gage in battle! Carry it to glorious victory, or—or glorious—" Her voice failed her.

I knew what she meant, but this line of talk wouldn't do.

"Tell me about the ring," I said.

"It's the last remaining piece of a very old set. It dates back to the days of the Kings. It is always worn by the eldest daughter of the House. By tradition, when she plights her troth she must give her Knight a love token from the set, as I am doing now. A pledge redeemable only by herself in marriage."

I couldn't help but wonder, then what went with the other pieces? Evidently some of the Sir Knights didn't come back—

To my chagrin she seemed to guess my thoughts.

"The ring must be lucky," she reassured, "since it has survived so long. Are you superstitious, Edgar?"

"No," I lied, thinking of the man-in-armor.

On my way back to the Front, the man-in-armor clung to my thoughts. I had ceased trying to solve the riddle. I refused to think of him as a ghost, or consider myself haunted. Both words carried implications far too dire. I reasoned he existed only in imagination, but felt him to be a real person, a friendly person. Or, if he were a spirit, he was a guardian angel —a comforting thought to carry into the trenches.

Toying with the emerald ring on my finger, I wondered how often it had been drenched in the blood of battle. According to Marguerite it always came back to claim the hand of a maiden. No wearer of it had ever died in battle. With two such protectors, the ring and the man-in-armor, I felt well-nigh invulnerable. But what amulets did the adventuring Lord of Kenmere use on his ill-starred search for the Pearl of Palestine? Were mine more potent than his?

On September 25th, the Nazis made a determined drive under fire from their Mittlebach Forts. On the 26th we began closing in, and my outfit took an enemy casemate by assault. A nasty job, calling for grenades and flame-throwers, but the position was vital to our main movement. In the moment of confusion following the assault, the Nazis counter-attacked before we could reorganize or bring up our machine guns.

I rallied my scattered men around the casemate, returned the Nazi fire with a few hasty shots and received them on the bayonet.

I now had no control over my men except by personal example. This, I thought irrelevantly, is not unlike the way the man-in-armor would fight. Perhaps that ring on my finger had swung to the rise and fall of battle-ax as it now followed thrust and parry—

A sort of frenzy comes with bayonet fighting, a delirium of animal exhilaration at the shock of personal combat. My howling Tommies fought like madmen. Sweat streamed in my eyes. Unconscious of minor wounds, I began to taste blood. A courageous little recruit beside me was beaten to the knee.

I swung up a wide butt stroke to save him and, momentarily uncovered, a Nazi bayonet raked my ribs. Inch by inch we were forced to yield under sheer weight of numbers— What was delaying our supporting troops? Could we hold the casemate until they came?

No shouting now. Only heavy breathing, the thud of clubbed rifles, the clash of steel. An occasional shot, a groan, bitter curses between clenched teeth—

BEHIND the line of fighters the enemy was packed in a solid mass, unable to fire because of their own men. My back came up against the casemate. I sprang to the top, and with a cry plunged bayonet-first over the heads of the fighters into the massed enemy behind.

Probably I went a little insane. Once I went down, and it was then I realized someone was fighting beside me. A whirling arc of steel cut down an opponent poised for a death thrust. A powerful hand jerked me to my feet, but I did not see the face of my ally. This time, the vizor of his plumed helmet was closed.

I recall that I was not even surprised that the man-in-armor should be there with me. Had I not heard of the Angels of Mons? Back-to-back we fought, and in my blood-blind fury I seemed to acquire superhuman strength. My own rifle shattered in blocking a head stroke. Barehanded, I disarmed my adversary and spitted him on his own bayonet.

My knightly ally's broadsword mowed down all before it. The astonished Nazis did not seem to see him until his death blows fell! Together we cut a swath through our shaken opponents, piling corpse on corpse.

Behind us, a yelling grew into a mighty shout. My Tommies were coming! My Tommies were following me! My mad adventure with the man-in-armor had rallied them. On they swept, in spite of numbers, driving all before them back into the woods.

Too exhausted to carry on, I stood leaning on my captured rifle. I looked back. Supporting French troops were coming at the double! We had held the casemate.

I looked for the man-in-armor. He was gone. The ground under me began to reel, my knees trembled, I staggered—and fell.

That strange trip to the rear, and days that followed, form a confused memory. French Hospital Corps men administered first-aid, rushed me back into the woods. The trees were huge gnarled oaks. The stretcher-bearers became English archers in leather jerkins, crossbows slung from their shoulders. They carried me, not on a

modern litter, but on a medieval shield!

The dressing station medico examined my bandages. His uniform blurred, as everything does when one's eyes are crossing from loss of sleep. Blouse buttons changed to a string of beads, the buckle on his field-belt turned into a cross. A cassocked priest of the middle ages gave me a hypodermic.

Between blanks in my memory, I lived in two worlds. White hospital wards alternated with castle chambers of gray granite. Trim, starched nurses changed before my eyes to pious nuns of some ancient nursing order. Perhaps the English term "sister," applied to nurses, heightened my confusion.

ONE kindly nun bore a striking likeness to Marguerite. Yet I knew she was not Marguerite, at least, not my Marguerite, even in that other world. Then she would modernize into my competent special nurse, with no slight resemblance to Marguerite.

Medieval men-at-arms wheeled me into a modern operating room. A black-garmented man they called Leech worked over me.

"Some day, we can save a man with wounds like these," he said, as he straightened up and turned to the others.

My eyes cleared, and instead of Leech, a doctor in an operating gown looked down at me. He gazed intently into my eyes and his face relaxed. He straightened up and turned to the others.

"A few years ago we could not save a man with wounds like these," he said.

I did not slip into that other world again. The nurse told me I had a visitor—and Marguerite was with me.

"They wouldn't let me see you," she said, after our first greeting, "so I went to the Corps Surgeon. He knows my father, and remembered me as a baby when we were stationed in the Near East. The blessed old man gave me a letter to your Chief Surgeon."

"Is it your father's diplomatic influence," I queried, "or have you inherited his diplomacy?"

"I've inherited his determination—and love of bravery!" She kissed the emerald ring on my finger.

"I knew you would bring it back to me, Edgar!" She was laughing through her tears. "Bring it back covered with blood and glory!"

"Blood, all right," I agreed, gazing at the ring.

"And glory, too! You are my Knight, Edgar! The fight at the casemate is already legend. Your British officers throw out their chests at mention of it!"

I wanted to say, "There were two of us," but didn't know how to explain the man-in-armor.

I recuperated rapidly in the crisp October air of the Vosges. Then followed an ordeal. Two colonels, British and French, came to pin decorations on my bandaged chest, and I was kissed on the cheek by the Frenchman. What price glory.

I told Marguerite of my strange adventures with the man-in-armor, of my life in two worlds and the kindly nun who looked like her.

"You were very near to death, Edgar," she whispered. "They say you were delirious most of the time. I wonder—"

But when we figured it out in cold logic, everything could be explained naturally. There was nothing tangible. All the apparently supernatural lay within my subjective self. Thus reason dictates—and reason can be a deceiver.

SICK-LEAVE to Paris, where Marguerite's father gave his consent.

"Father, do you think I should go to England with Edgar? Or does France need me here?" Marguerite asked him, after the two-fold French wedding.

The kindly gentleman patted her shoulder.

"Ma chère," he said, "go to England with your invalided soldier and nurse him back to health France will need him again!"

My bachelor quarters at Kenmere proved quite ample for two. In this rural quiet only a patrol plane cruising the coast or a prowling destroyer in ghostly camouflage reminded us of war. I gained strength rapidly in

those idyllic days as we explored Kenmere's faded majesty and planned its rehabilitation.

Basking in winter sunshine in the roofless chapel above the crypt, we read together the ancient manuscript my workmen had discovered. We discussed the witch's prophecy. Then Marguerite read it over again, half to herself.

"No further generations shall arise in Kenmere Castle until the young Lord shall bring home the Pearl of Palestine. And through the Pearl of Palestine shall the lineage of his House be rebuilt."

She paused. A strange expression on her beautiful face, a new light in her deep dark eyes. I believe she was on the verge of a vast, if vague, understanding.

"Don't think me silly, Edgar, but—I believe the prophecy is coming true!"

Before I could answer, her face changed and her gaze turned seaward. Suddenly, I too heard it—the steady rhythmic drone of motors. Then we saw them. A full squadron of bombers with escort. An air raid!

We sat still and watched, feeling safe enough, knowing that a ruined castle offers no objective. Then from behind us came the whine of small fighting planes. Almost before we realized it, the two fleets joined in combat high above us.

Air fights are short. A plane wobbled off crazily toward the rear. Another plunged into the sea in flames. Then came the banshee shriek of falling bombs. Shattering detonations as columns of earth rose high in the air. Those bombs were not meant for any target. Some hard-pressed bomber was lightening her load to make a getaway.

"Quick! The crypt!" Marguerite pulled me to my feet. Even as she spoke, a bomb struck close outside the chapel. The very earth heaved. An inverted cone of flying débris blotted out the sun. The chapel floor swayed, cracked, fell—plunging us into the crypt below.

The fall separated us. Marguerite disappeared. Fighting frantically to extricate myself, I heard her scream. Inexorably, the rain of earth and rocks flung up by the blast, continued. A projecting slab of masonry protected me. In utter horror I thought of Marguerite, caught in this hail of death—

THE shower of earth ceased just as I wrenched myself free. In cold panic, I clambered over the rubbish in search of her. At the far end of the crypt, a part of the roof still stood. Under its shelter Marguerite crouched on the floor, staring blankly in my direction. I rushed to her. She recoiled at my touch, her face white, as one who has talked with death!

For a moment she gazed, as if not sure she recognized me, then she threw her arms about me and burst into hysterical sobbing.

It was minutes before I could quiet her and ascertain she was not injured.

"Oh, Edgar!" she sobbed. "I'm not the helpless coward I seem! It wasn't the bombs or the fall that made me lose my head. It was he, Edgar! I saw him!"

My dumbfounded expression must have asked a question.

"He saved me!" she went on. "Your man-in-armor! I was half stunned when I struck the floor. Someone, of course, I thought it was you, picked me up and ran with me down the crypt to the shelter of this roof. I looked into his face, and Edgar, it *was* you! Then he set me down and I saw he was clad in armor, just as you described him. I screamed and hid my face. When I looked up again he was gone. The rain of rocks had ceased and you were coming— Oh, Edgar, I don't understand!"

The sound of the air-fight died in the distance, while I held my trembling bride in my arms, at a loss for any explanation. So the man-in-armor was not a figment of my imagination. A minor mystery seemed cleared, only to make the whole more complicated. I had seen his face just once. It was the face of one I knew, and knew well, yet I could not identify it. Now Marguerite had seen him, and the face in the armor was mine!

We crawled over the débris, seeking egress from the now roofless crypt. The tombs were still intact, but the shattering detonations had cracked

the masonry. Assisting Marguerite, I braced my hand against a slab that closed a burial niche. The mortar gave way and the slab fell outward. Sunlight poured into the long-dark recess revealing a figure lying there, fully clad in a suit of mail.

I stood aghast. Link for link, plate for plate, rivet for rivet, that was the armor worn by my phantom protector at Merzig, my valiant ally at the casemate, and by Marguerite's rescuer of a moment past. The man-in-armor!

When I recovered sufficiently to tell Marguerite, she stared fixedly at the helmet and closed vizor and nodded affirmation.

"Edgar," she whispered in awed tones, "I tell you it was you I saw in that armor! You! Look, Edgar, there's a name-plate on the bier!"

REVERENTLY I came closer to the ancient dead, knelt to examine the strip of tarnished silver Marguerite indicated. Trembling, hardly daring to believe, I deciphered the age-old inscription:

"Sir Edgar,
Lord of Kenmere,
Last of the Line of Stanley.
Slain in battle in Normandy."

I could read no further. Edgar Stanley—my own name!

"You see," said Marguerite, her eyes shining with awe, "I said, he is you. Or you, he."

"You mean reincarnation?"

"Not exactly. I don't know. Heredity, perhaps. You, too, are Edgar Stanley."

"But, Marguerite, I know nothing of my ancestors before they went to America, and Sir Edgar had no heirs."

"The old manuscript tells of another son of the House. Remember? Sir Edgar's younger brother who disappeared. You may be descended from him."

"Who knows," was all I could manage to answer. My head was swimming.

I turned again to the ancient armor; I suppose it contained little but dust. I do not know. For then something caught my eye. From the plumed crest of the helmet, where a knight wore his lady's gage, I lifted an object which glowed dully in the sun. I brushed off the dust of ages. There was a glint of gold, shot through with green fire. A heavy gold breastpin, and around its square-cut emerald, heraldic designs wove an intricate pattern.

My hands shook as I held it for Marguerite to see, held it beside the finger ring she had given me. The designs and stones were identical, obviously from the same original set.

I slipped my arm about Marguerite's trembling shoulders and together we knelt before the tomb. There, in brilliant sunlight I felt that the dead had spoken, invoking an age-old benediction on our union. For I remembered Marguerite's legend of the emeralds—and a great light was dawning.

"Marguerite," my voice was shaking, "I think I know the answer. I am not Sir Edgar Stanley, but I am of his blood. I am his physical and spiritual counterpart. As the flesh of the child is the flesh of the parent, so my soul partakes of his. Yet each has its own entity. I duplicate phases of his life in modern version. Listen to me, Marguerite! He thought himself the last of his line, as I am the last of mine. Believing the House of Stanley could survive only through him, his most vital interest lay in marriage. Lay in his love for a Lady of Normandy, a French Lady who gave him this pin even as you gave me the ring. And she, Marguerite, was of your own family, as this jewel indicates. She was your prototype, as he was mine."

"YOU may be right, Edgar," she breathed.

"I know I'm right! That's why he protected me and fought for me, and rescued you. That's why the nun in my hallucinations, who looked like you, watched over me. She strove to keep my soul in my body, for you. She is to you as he is to me. They were to each other as we are to each other. Their unfulfilled love is being consummated in us, Marguerite, these hundreds of years after!"

I talked on rapidly, as things seemed clearer.

"Why, even the Leech in my other-world vision admitted my wounds were fatal. True, in his day, when my wounds were Sir Edgar's. But the modern surgeon could handle such wounds. Sir Edgar died. I lived."

"Thank God!" Marguerite smiled up at me, a vast understanding shining from her face. "And now, Edgar—what of the Pearl of Palestine?"

"I don't know. The prophecy said Sir Edgar must bring home the Pearl. Who knows, perhaps he found it but died before he could claim it."

"I think that also is true," she said, gravely. "Edgar, do you know where I was born?"

"France?"

"No. Of course, I'm French, but when I was born my parents were stationed in—in Palestine."

"Palestine!" I exclaimed, amazed at what she said.

"And Edgar," she hurried on, "do you know the meaning of the name, Marguerite?"

I shook my head.

"It comes from the Latin, for—pearl."

I could scarcely believe my ears. Then Marguerite really was the Pearl of Palestine.

"Just one thing more, Edgar, one thing to make the prophecy complete!" She toyed with the lapel of my coat. "I'm sure our ancient prototypes will be happy, will continue to give us of their blessings. Edgar, the House of Stanley *shall* be rebuilt!" She buried her face on my shoulder. "For—for the House of Stanley—is to have an heir!"

The Brood of Cthulhu Brings the Threat of Incredible Horror from the Depths to a Thriving Metropolis in

THE EVIL ONES

By AUGUST W. DERLETH and MARK SCHORER

COMPLETE NOVELET IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Mortal Greed Was the Force That Drew Souls into the Devil's Cloth of Horror and Wove a Gruesome Pattern of Fearsome Doom!

The satanic figure seemed to laugh evilly at Stratton

The TAPESTRY GATE

By LEIGH BRACKETT

Author of "Martian Quest," "Treasure of Ptakuth," etc.

"I MUST have it, Dick. It's exactly what I want for your den."

"But I don't want it, Jane," groaned Dick Stratton. "I want that sporting print of mine."

Jane Stratton's carefully made-up face, under the fashionable monstrosity she termed a hat, was set like a china mask.

"I'm going to have that place decent enough so that I can show it to my friends without apologizing. Will you bid for it, or must I?" Her voice was hard, uncompromising.

"You don't give a damn what I want,

do you?" muttered Stratton savagely. "You don't care about anybody but yourself."

Jane shrugged coldly.

"I can't see what possible difference it can make to you," she answered. "You always have your nose poked into some silly book anyway. Are you going to bid?"

Dick Stratton placed his bid. He was filled with cold desperate rage, not so much against the scrap of tapestry itself as what it stood for. To him it was a symbol of Jane's implacable domination, her maddening selfishness and stupidity.

Three times in the last year his house had been torn to pieces and redone in answer to the latest fad. It was no longer a home—it was a showcase for Jane. He was banished to his den, and even there he had nothing to say about the furnishings, though his bank account and salary were drained to the bottom to pay for them.

He got the tapestry for seventy dollars. It was an odd thing, about two feet square, with nothing but a patternless blending of odd colors. Jane took it with a little nod of triumph.

"This finishes the house," she said. "Let's go."

"Until next time," prophesied Stratton, under his breath. Their expensive coupé stood at the curb. Before getting in, Jane unrolled the tapestry in the sunlight.

"Modern as Dali. Pity you can't appreciate these things, Dick. It would make things so much more agreeable for me."

Stratton stifled his mounting fury. The tapestry looked different out in the sunlight, almost as though it would form a picture if one could just find the focus. Black and brown and silver, russet and gold, it shone with a soft lustre unlike any thread he had ever seen. Queer, springy texture, too. He reached out to touch it.

"De Good Lawd have mussy!"

Stratton jerked a quick, startled look upward. The Negro bootblack who kept a stand beside the auctioneer's was staring at the tapestry, wild-eyed with fear. As though drawn by the sheer fascination of terror, he came closer.

"Ah seed one o' dem befo'. Ah look into a conjure-woman's hut way down in de swamps in Loosiana, an' she done had one. She laughin' fit to bus', an' she say Mis' Commeroi's name, and nex' week Mis' Commeroi done gone! De conjure-woman say it's de Devil's joke-rag, whut's used all over de worl' to trap people.

"T'ain't only in dis worl'!" His gnarled black hand fastened hard on Stratton's arm. "De conjure-people knows conjures in other places. Dey swap souls, jus' fo de laugh. Anywheah dey's hate in de house, it work. It steal yo' soul! Hate's whut make it work. Burn it! Burn it!"

Stratton disengaged his arm in a burst of anger.

"Sorry," he said, "but I just paid seventy dollars for that rag. My wife insists it's modern art, so you must be mistaken. Besides," he added dryly, "there's no hate in our house." And he smiled as he thought of his own growing dark hate.

He turned his back on Jane's sharp look and slid under the wheel. The Negro still stood there, shivering, his gaze on the tapestry, lying now in Jane's lap.

"Look whut it's made of," he whispered. "Den maybe Ah'm not such a fool."

STRATTON looked. The sunlight glinted on the haphazard threads, crisp and almost alive looking. It was like—well, like Jane's hair had been when he married her. That was before he had money, before the beauty parlors had created their shellacked perfection.

With a shock of revulsion, he realized what it was.

"Jane! It's human hair!" he exclaimed.

Jane's expensively-gloved hands recoiled from it.

"Ugh!" she shuddered. "How disgusting! Dick, take it back. I won't have it in the house!"

Stratton's mouth twisted in a little smile. After all, what was so disgusting about it? Wigs were made of human hair, and nobody minded.

"Why not? Just think, Jane, there won't be a woman in New York that

won't envy you," he sneered. "You'll have something that nobody else can possibly copy. I can just see Mrs. Lydell—"

"You needn't make fun of my friends," snapped Jane. Rather reluctantly, she picked it up, turned it in the sunlight. "Still, there's something in what you say. Alice Kelly copied everything in my drawing room and I had to have it completely done over. And after all, it'll be in your den. Yes, I'll keep it."

Jane, thought Stratton as he drove away, was really a horrible woman. His knuckles showed white against the steering wheel as he felt helpless anger welling up in him.

The Negro bootblack watched the car as far as he could see it. Then he shook his head and muttered something as his fingers touched the amulet in his pocket.

THAT night, when Dick Stratton rose to go to bed, he glanced at the tapestry hanging over the cubistic mantel. The light from the nearby, hideous lamp brought the formless pattern almost into focus. He had a momentary glimpse of people ringed about some central object beneath a darkly branching thing, and just above the center of the little square, he thought he saw a face. An evil, laughing face.

"Nonsense," he grunted. And then the bootblack's half forgotten words came back. He stared at the tapestry, drowsily, thinking of the disappearance of Mis' Commeroi, whoever she was, and thinking—

With a start of horror, he realized what he was thinking. He was thinking how wonderful it would be if the Negro's ravings were true, if Jane might disappear into the picture and leave him free to find happiness. He was thinking of murder.

He turned and fled the room.

Jane didn't sleep well, either, that night. Stratton could hear her tossing in the adjoining room. It kept him awake, and he thought, though he didn't wish to think. Jane was ruining him. She was vain and extravagant and foolish, and cared for nothing except what she could get out of him. But he had no real grounds for divorce. She'd fight to keep him with every bit of strength and every trick at her command. Besides that, he couldn't afford the scandal.

And yet his life was ruined. He was still young. If Jane should die—

"No!" he whispered. "Never that. You can't get away with that!"

After a long time he slept and dreamed of a soul-trap made of human hair and the Devil laughing over Jane's dead body.

Jane was late for breakfast. Stratton, on his way down, was drawn as though by a magnet into his den. Sunlight struck through ultra-violet glass, which, like everything else in the place, he hated. It shone obliquely on the tapestry.

Stratton felt the skin of his back crawl icily.

There *was* a picture!

Twelve people were standing in a ring about a cross-shaped block that was oddly channeled. A most peculiar and unpleasant tree coiled twisting branches above them, and, standing behind the cross-shaped block so that his face was just above the tapestry's center—

He wasn't really a man. Somehow Dick Stratton knew that. He looked like a man, but no normal human ever had such eyes, like mirrors of all the foul, evil thoughts that had been born since time began. Laughing eyes. Horribly laughing. As though sin and wickedness were the most pleasureable, the most amusing, the most soul-satisfying things in the universe.

Involuntarily Stratton closed his own eyes and jerked away; and when he looked again the picture was gone.

"Some trick of the light," he whispered almost fiercely. "Imagination. Those dreams I had."

BUT he couldn't shake the vision of those laughing eyes. In self-defense, he tried again to find the same spot from which he had seen the picture, but the sun had moved a bit and he could not. For a long time he stood staring at the blurred, mocking little rag, trying to understand the feelings that raged within him. Then, starting almost guiltily at Jane's step in the

hall, he shook himself out of the queer mood that held him.

"Just tired," he told himself. "Worried. Mustn't let this—" He'd been going to say "morbid," but the mood was more than morbid. It was horrible. Funny how that Negro's wild ranting had fished up the thoughts he had never admitted even to himself. You didn't think about—murder. You didn't let yourself hate people that way, openly.

Of course, it wasn't really murder. That stuff about the tapestry being a trap was just ignorant superstition. He hadn't really seen that picture. There was nothing to it. But the thought was there just the same, and he couldn't blink it—he wished there were something to it.

"No I don't!" Stratton pressed his fists to his temples. "Jane isn't really bad. Only selfish and stupid. I've got to stop all this right now. After all, I married her. I've got to try to go on."

He didn't look at the tapestry again. But as he left the room, a thought crossed his mind, unbidden:

"If what the Negro said was true, it wouldn't really be murder. Because there wouldn't be any body." He repeated it, half aloud.

Jane faced him across the table like a china doll dressed in peach-colored satin.

"Dick," she said, before he was fairly in his chair, "I've got to have some money."

"But, Jane! Your allowance—"

"It's gone. I spent it on that dress for Mrs. Lydell's reception, but I've got to have another."

Stratton put down his paper.

"Why, Jane?" he asked.

"Alice Kelly has one of the same material. I simply can't wear the thing to the reception."

"Then wear something else."

"Dick! You know perfectly well I haven't—"

"Never mind," he said wearily. "I can't give you any more money this month. You've cleaned me out."

Jane's mouth tightened and her blue eyes went flat with anger.

"I call that gratitude!" she shouted. "I wear myself out trying to keep your home from looking like a hog-wallow. I try to keep up appearances when I go out. And you call me extravagant! Well, if you haven't any pride, I have. I'm not going to let those women laugh at us behind our backs because you're so stingy."

Stratton got up.

"Jane," he said very quietly, "you'd better be careful. I don't want the scandal, nor the trouble. But if you don't learn some sense, by heaven, I'll divorce you!"

JANE smiled.

"You can't," she said smugly. "I won't give you a divorce. And if you try to get one, I'll tell about Doris Rider."

Stratton's heart stopped, jerked, and pounded on. He hadn't known that Jane had ever heard of Doris Rider.

"You can't," he said thickly. "There's never been anything between us. Nothing at all!"

"But you can't prove it." Jane nodded, sure of herself. "Even if you could, I don't think such publicity would do her career any good. She's pretty famous, you know. Child welfare, isn't it? I think you'd best make me out a check, Dick."

He made it out without seeing either pen or figures. Then he left the room. He found himself standing in his den, staring at the tapestry, fists clenched and veins almost bursting with the black rage that shock him.

"I wish it were true!" he whispered savagely. "I wish the damned thing were a trap. I wish Jane were dead and in hell!"

It couldn't be just the light. It was as though the hate in him reached out, touched the little woven square of human hair and brought out the picture like a magic wash. Twelve people ringed around a cross-shaped block, with that high priest of hell laughing down at them. It was clear and unmistakable. So clear that Stratton realized there was an empty place in the ring just at the high priest's right, as though the weaver had intended a thirteenth person.

He went closer. It must be the violet glass that gave the picture the illusion of depth, the sudden dizzy effect of mists parting over an abyss. It

was almost as though he could see the trees of that strange forest growing, spreading back and out, shooting upward into an eerie sky.

He found he was trembling violently. He turned away, though it took all his will power. He must get hold of himself— The crazy gibberings of that bootblack, coupled with his own disrupted emotional state, had set everything awry. Suppose he did see a picture. There had been pictures before, done with treated dyes that showed only in certain lights or temperatures. After all, he had no idea how human hair would react as a fabric. The fact that there was a picture in the tapestry didn't in any way mean that what the Negro said was true.

A soul-trap. Conjure-folk of one world bartering souls with the wizards of another. Traffickers in evil, laughing at their secret jokes. Even Satan had to have a laugh now and then.

"Anywheah dey's hate in de house, it work!"

"No," said Dick Stratton. "No. I'm a sensible man. It's impossible. I'll simply get rid of the cursed thing."

But if he did, he'd be admitting fear. And besides, buried deep under his denials, under the revulsion of his civilized, conscious mind, was the fiendish, trembling hope that it was true.

For the second time Dick Stratton fled the room. And it seemed that he took with him a breath of charnal wind from a deep and rotting forest.

JANE slept even worse that night. Dick Stratton shivered in a mad turmoil of thought. In the morning, utterly unable to keep away, he looked at the tapestry.

It must have been the light; but he was almost sure that a nebulous mist was forming in the thirteenth place, the gap in the circle.

In the evening they went to one of Jane's interminable 'musicales.' Stratton, dog-tired, went to his den for some papers he'd want in the morning. And this time there was no doubt. A blurred shape was forming on the weird tapestry.

Jane's voice woke him from troubled sleep, late that night.

"What will you give me?" she was saying, quite clearly.

Stratton smiled grimly, then shivered. There was something unnatural about her voice, about the way she waited, as though she were listening to someone. After a bit she sighed, a little breath of pure ecstasy.

"How wonderful!" she whispered. "Everything I want. Everything! And no one to nag me. But so far away, another world!"

Again the waiting silence.

"What payment?" she whispered. A pause. "It can't be anything very bad, you're so nice. So generous. Everything I want! But my husband?"

There was quite a long wait this time. And then Jane laughed and rolled over into sound, deep sleep.

It was several minutes before Dick Stratton realized what a chillingly horrible sound that little low chuckle had been.

Driven by a feverish wildness, he went quietly downstairs, using a small pocket torch. In the pitch darkness of the den the beam made a brilliant white finger of light and touched unerringly on the thirteenth place in the circle in the tapestry of human hair.

The mist had thickened, grown to the blurred yet recognizable outlines of a woman.

The torch went out as Stratton dropped it. He stood there in the grip of a dense fear that crawled out of some unknown abyss to freeze his heart to ice and his blood to snow-water. Every atom of common sense, of sanity, or normality, rose in him to declare that this was a lie, that it was all a nightmare from which he would awaken.

But he knew. And the Negro had known. Jane, sleeping upstairs with some strange new power, knew.

There was hate in this house. He hated Jane, and his hate had broken the barrier. He had let Jane's selfish little soul be tempted to—to what?

Even in the dark the picture was visible, as though it had light of its own. It was as if some unimagined moon rode an eerie sky, to light a demon's way through that forest. And

all the while the high-priest's face was full of laughter.

SHUDDERING, sick with terror, Dick Stratton pressed his hands to his pounding temples. There was still time. He could burn the tapestry. Jane would be safe. The whole mad business could be forgotten.

But he wouldn't be free. He'd have Jane's selfishness, Jane's extravagance, Jane's smug knowledge of her power over him, until the end of his life, or the end of his money—or both. This way, if he didn't burn the tapestry, he'd be rid of her. He wouldn't really have murdered her. There couldn't possibly be any legal repercussions. They'd never find her body, because it would be in the tapestry. He'd be free.

He could enjoy life, perhaps even marry Doris Rider.

Another thought occurred to him, and he jerked a frightened glance at the picture. If the hated one was trapped into the other world, what happened to the hater?

Then he shook his head. The circle was closed. There was no more room for anyone. Besides, after Jane was gone, he could burn the tapestry. Then the gateway would be closed forever.

For a long, long time Dick Stratton stood in that cold, dark room, looking into the laughing evil eyes of the high priest. Then he turned and went back to bed, leaving the tapestry safe on the wall.

Jane was languid and tired the next day. It was as though some vital force were being drained out of her. Stratton thought of the mist in the tapestry and smiled. He even gave her a check without complaint.

"You dreamed last night. I heard you talking," he said, prompted by a curiosity he couldn't deny.

"Did I? I don't remember." Jane stared vacantly out of the window.

Stratton fought down a shudder and left.

That night Jane, moving almost as though in a dream, put on a white satin gown that had been part of her trousseau. It looked more like an evening dress, with its exquisite white roses at the neck. One of them was loose.

Dick Stratton lay down, but he knew he wouldn't sleep that night. He heard Jane's breathing slow to a deep, steady rhythm. For several hours she slept. Then, without speaking or waking, he heard her get up.

He followed her silently downstairs. Moving slowly at first, Jane went faster and faster, like a child approaching some promised treat. At the doorway of the den she paused, and Stratton saw her shiver, as though some shadow of dread had touched her. Then she went through.

He didn't follow. He knew he couldn't and remain sane. Grabbing a whiskey decanter from the library, he fled back upstairs, where he paced his room all night in a curious and semi-alcoholic state that plunged between light-headed relief and nightmare horror.

Morning brought saner thinking. His first impulse was to burn the tapestry at once, but he decided against it. The act was too abrupt, too senseless. It might even lead to awkward questions. And while there was no danger of a murder charge lodging permanently, there was always the fact that he dared not tell the truth. It would only mean an insane asylum.

Taking a deep breath, he went downstairs to call the police.

HE DID rather well with his bewildered husband act. He might have managed to get away with it, but there were complications. Jane's maid testified that her lady wasn't the sort of person to leave in the middle of the night without money, or clothes.

The butler hastened to tell of their quarrel over money. Jane's mother, a fat, overdressed, hysterical woman, heaped abuse on Dick Stratton's head. And the Law frowned, having heard before of mysterious vanishings that turned out to have been involuntary.

Stratton was called into the den for private questioning. He stood it for a surprisingly long time, bathed in icy sweat, heart thudding wildly, fists clenched. But his eyes were drawn, slowly, inexorably above the mantel toward the cloth made of human hair.

A shaft of sunlight shone through the violet glass, lighting the tapestry like a spotlight. The ring of people stood there under the monstrous tree, clearer than Stratton had ever seen them. Again he had that dizzy sense of depth, of distance. Their faces were ghoulish, convulsed with a secret mirth that held the shadow of a horror beyond human knowledge. They waited; with a curious, relaxed tensity, they waited. And the eyes of the high priest laughed.

The nebulous mist had thickened to solidity. The thirteenth place was filled.

Dick Stratton's nerves broke. His story lost coherence, became studded with babblings that hung on the brink of madness. He tried to pull himself together. He knew, in some lucid corner of his brain, that it was only the shock of seeing the final, indisputable proof—the mad, the impossible. He achieved silence, but that was all.

The frown of the Law deepened. The half-empty whiskey decanter was found in his room. And then, under the tapestry, almost hidden by the cubistic jut of the hearth, a white satin rose.

Dick Stratton looked at his wife, standing at the high priest's right, at the head of the cross-shaped block. The white satin gown showed bone-white against the dark of the twisting tree, the gown with the satin rose missing at the neck.

"What are you staring at?" demanded the Law, and it was then Stratton realized that the picture was visible only to himself. He laughed, just a shade hysterically.

"You'd better come with us," said the Law, "till we get this business cleared up. Sorry. Suspicion of murder."

Dick Stratton went quietly. He wasn't afraid of a murder charge. But an uneasy question clung in his mind.

"The Devil's joke-rag. What are they laughing at?" he would ask himself, frantically.

After a bit he was glad he was in jail. He hadn't realized what an unhealthy influence the house was beginning to have on him. He stood the grilling of the homicide men well enough, and by nightfall he had so recovered his assurance that he lay down on his cell cot in a mood for healthy sleep. It was all over, and he was rid of Jane. He was safe. All he had to do now was wait until they let him go. Then he would burn the tapestry and forget about it.

He slept—but not well. He woke in the morning, tired and dimly conscious of dreams, dreams he could not quite recall, hideous dreams.

It was then that he began to be afraid.

THE next night it was worse. He woke in a cold sweat of fear, his mind breaking with an almost physical struggle from a black web of evil. Then he slept again, dreamed again, and woke, screaming. He fought until they threatened him with a strait-jacket. Then he crouched silently in a corner, trembling because of his knowledge.

He, too, was being drawn into that circle!

Another nebulous mist was growing and thickening on that hellish tapestry of human hair, a mist that would be himself. He knew that, surely as he had ever known anything in his life.

He had to get out. He had to go and burn that tapestry. But he couldn't get out. He had to wait. He fought against sleep, but it trapped him. He dreamed, of a ring of leering faces, of a monstrous, towering tree, of band of constriction, of heaviness.

Jane's dreams couldn't have been like this. She hadn't been ridden with terror. She hadn't remembered them when she woke. And the circle was filled. There was no place for him to go.

What was happening to him? What inevitable fate was in store for him?

They talked about letting him go the next day. No body, no murder. But the law was reluctant to give up, just yet. Stratton stayed. And again sleep caught him like an entangling cloak.

He saw the tapestry hanging on his wall, and a little point of light struck full on the high priest's face. His eyes

were full of laughter, his face convulsed with some secret, cosmic mirth.

A gateway between two dimensions, a trap woven of human hair to snare souls so that Satan could have his laugh. Stratton felt evil. A black, abnormal sensation brushed his mind with charnel fingers. An evil that attacked the subconscious in sleep and lured the soul away, away into—

He woke shrieking, fighting back a knowledge that struggled to reveal itself. Again they threatened him into silence, and again he crouched—shivering, thinking.

He could feel a vital force draining out of him. First from his soul, then his body. Something was waiting for him in the tapestry, something that made his dreams different from Jane's.

It wouldn't be long now—perhaps tonight. He had to get out, he had to burn the tapestry before it was too late.

Miraculously, his cell door clashed open.

"All right, Stratton," they said. "This still looks fishy, but we can't prosecute without a body. You can go."

HIS trip home was a nightmare wherein he strove to hurry with his feet buried in quicksand. Everything was against him—traffic lights, all the possible delays of driving. A consuming weakness weighted him, coupled with fear that tottered on the brink of madness. One single thought hammered over and over within his mind:

"Burn the tapestry, burn the tapestry."

The servants were gone, amusing themselves during his absence. He let himself in, ran panting down the hall to his den. The sun was dropping low in the west.

Shaking with frantic haste, Stratton clawed his cigarette lighter from his pocket and reached up to tear the tapestry from its place on the wall.

A level red ray struck through the violet glass full on the waiting, laughing eyes of the high priest. Those eyes drew Stratton's as though an invisible bond had been forged in those minutes when he had stood there in the dark, making his decision.

Stratton screamed once. The lighter dropped from his hand and lay unheeded, burning a hole in the pale rug.

The sunlight dimmed, reddened. Shadows curled across his vision, drew back, showed him depth and thickness. He reeled in icy vertigo as distance opened suddenly into long forest aisles. Tiny trees shot hugely up and up into an eerie sky.

Dick Stratton swayed horribly between two worlds. The little figures swelled dizzily to human size and the shadows thickened around the monstrous tree. A heavy, sepulchral breeze rustled the clothing of the thirteen who stood in the waiting circle, and the laughing face of the high priest was horribly close to his own.

In a wrenching whirl of worlds and dimensions, Dick Stratton looked at the spot where his soul-mist had thickened and shaped. Then he was lying on the grooved and cross-shaped block. Bonds cut his wrists and ankles as he stared up into a face contorted with secret, evil mirth.

A pan-pipe made a reedy, whispering chuckle. A little ripple of laughter ran through the waiting circle. And as though the pipe had been a signal, they closed in.

A ring of faces was over him, blotting out the twisting pattern of the tree above. He saw the stamp of evil on them, the mark of souls condemned mingled with the sins that had brought them there—hate, greed, wickedness. His gaze fled wildly across them, stopped on Jane's haughty, selfish face—a face that had changed. . . .

The high priest laughed, and the deep, gloating sound went round the circle like a litany. The Devil's jokerag. Why did they laugh, why—

Dick Stratton lay on the cross-shaped block, quite still, and beyond screaming.

In another minute, he would know.

Next Issue: THE BALD-HEADED MAN, *by Don Tracy*

Satan's

CHAPTER I

The Golden Harvest

IF YOU turn left at the Brooklyn end of the bridge, you'll be on Sands Street—seven blocks of life-in-the-raw. In those seven blocks you'll see everything from pure English to Eskimo. Everything from millionaire to stumble-bum.

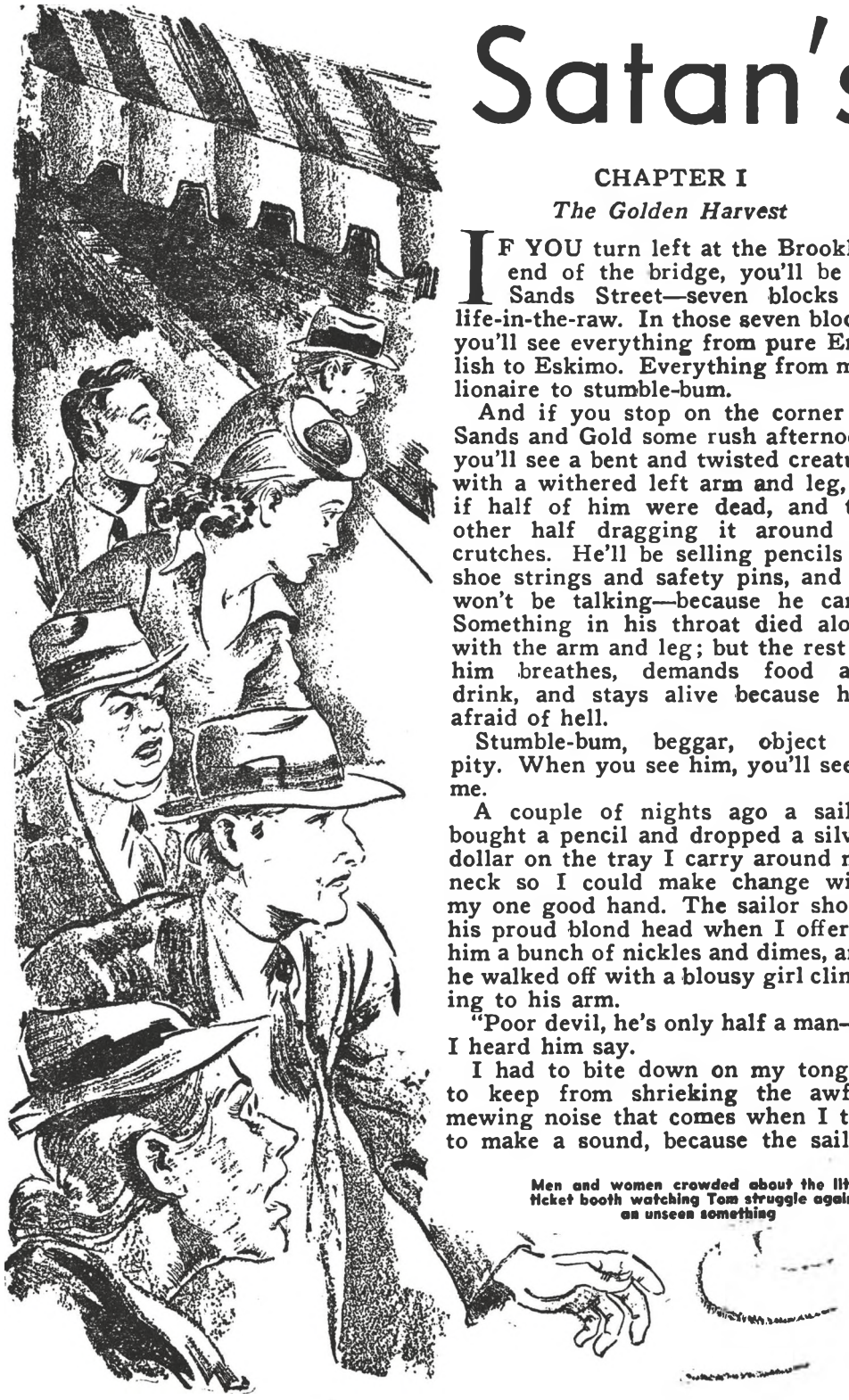
And if you stop on the corner of Sands and Gold some rush afternoon, you'll see a bent and twisted creature with a withered left arm and leg, as if half of him were dead, and the other half dragging it around on crutches. He'll be selling pencils or shoe strings and safety pins, and he won't be talking—because he can't. Something in his throat died along with the arm and leg; but the rest of him breathes, demands food and drink, and stays alive because he's afraid of hell.

Stumble-bum, beggar, object of pity. When you see him, you'll see—me.

A couple of nights ago a sailor bought a pencil and dropped a silver dollar on the tray I carry around my neck so I could make change with my one good hand. The sailor shook his proud blond head when I offered him a bunch of nickles and dimes, and he walked off with a blousy girl clinging to his arm.

"Poor devil, he's only half a man—" I heard him say.

I had to bite down on my tongue to keep from shrieking the awful mewing noise that comes when I try to make a sound, because the sailor



Men and women crowded about the little ticket booth watching Tom struggle against an unseen something

Sideshow

A Complete Novelet

By CARSON JUDSON

Author of "The Devil in Her Eyes," "My Life Is My Own," etc.

Between Two Men Joined by a Strange Law of God Comes a Flame of Searing Hate to Rip the Bonds—and Wreak a Horrible Vengeance That Is Far Beyond Human Understanding!

was right. God help me, I'm only half a man.

ONCE— But I'll have to go back a long way, back to where Hans Lepke and his Swiss wife, Gretel, were snow-bound in a little village in the Bavarian Alps, in nineteen hundred and seventeen. There was no doctor or midwife to help Hans Lepke when Gretel's sons were born. There was nobody to tell the goat-herd that twin boys are not normally joined at the hip by a fibrous bridge, scarce thicker than their smallest finger. Had a doctor been there, he might have tied the ligament with a piece of goat gut, or a silken thread, and nature would have severed the unnatural bond which bound the brothers.

But Hanks Lepke, grieving for the dead young cousin he had loved and married, knew only to keep the infants warm and well fed with the milk of a mother goat. He would sing them to sleep with a high, hushed yodel, and wait for spring to melt the snowdrifts.

Johann and Siegfried Lepke lived and if their childhood was different from that of other little boys, they did not seem to notice. I was Johann, and Siegfried was a part of me—joined at my left hip by a bridge that was scarce thicker than my thumb, and which troubled me not at all. If I wished to walk a little faster, Siegfried matched his steps with mine. If I became tired and wanted to rest, Siegfried settled conentedly on the sunny slope and watched the clouds make pictures in the blue Bavarian skies. So much a unit were we in those early days of childhood that neighbors gradually stopped regarding us as unlike themselves.

But as we grew older, I was conscious of a difference between my brother and myself. I was wild and willful, eager to climb the blurred, high mountains, to find the fragrant clumps of edelweis that dotted the crags. Siegfried cared little for climbing. He would be content to lie for hours, whistling to the little lame goat which followed us about, to talk of queer, fanciful things he saw in dreams.

There were no schools for goat-herds in Berggarten. The village had been stripped of younger men during the war, and the younger women were busy with finding enough food. Though father could read and write a little, he seemed to forget that his boys were more than goats. Summers were spent in finding pasturage for the flock, in milking and making the rank cheeses which paid for what little clothing we needed. Winters were spent as all snow-bound winters must be, feeding stomachs and keeping the bodies warm. We sheltered the goats as best we could, finding our greatest comfort between night-fall and morning, when we could huddle under goat skin covers and keep warm.

YEARS passed, as years must, and from somewhere there came an American showman who had heard of the Bavarian boys who might possibly take the place of a famous pair of Siamese Twins whose death had left a vacant platform in the side shows of Manheim-Woffard-Stengle Brothers' Biggest Show on Earth.

At first Hans Lepke was indignant and insulted, but Oscar Tillford, the circus scout, was used to bargaining. When Hans Lepke saw the shining gold money and shared the ale Tillford spilled into great earthen mugs, he decided nature had indeed been indulgent in giving him sons who could make life easy for him in his old age. Thirty dollars each month with twenty of those dollars for himself would be, *Ach, Gott,* a hundred American dollars—enough to make Hans Lepke rich in Bavaria.

And for the sons there would be America. America, where every man makes his fortune, where no one counts his dollars. Where New York comes down to Ellis Island to welcome all those who knock on the gates of gold. *Ach,* it would be a chance for Siegfried and for Johann to see the world, to hold it like a shining ball in their hands. And maybe sometimes they would come back home and buy the greatest herd of goats on the Bavarian flat lands.

"You will teach them to read, nein?" Father's eagerness made him angry

when he learned it would take weeks to get passports and permission for the boys to enter America. Hans Lepke wanted them to begin earning money at once.

"We'll teach them to read and write and figure," Oscar Tillford promised.

"*Ach, ja,*" Father said into his mug. "To figure better than me. To count, I must use my fingers."

The village people were fired with excitement, and filled with doubt, when they learned that Hans Lepke's sixteen year old sons were going across the world to America to become rich. And all because nature had made them different. Because they were the one pair out of a hundred thousand pairs of twins who were born an actual part of each other, Siegfried and I were feted in Berggarten, made much of, petted, kissed, wept over.

Then came the day of departure, and Siegfried, always tender with father, put his arms about him, promising to learn to figure and read quickly, so that when we came back to buy the great herd, he, Siegfried, could keep accounts of all the milk and cheeses.

I, too, put my arms about my father, but I made no idle promise. If America was as Oscar Tillford painted it, I would never come back to the sleepy village. I would make much money and see great cities in the strange country. I would spend my time away from the circus seeing things and meeting people. And I would make Siegfried like the things I liked. Later, if father wished, he could come to America also, and wear fine clothes like Oscar Tillford.

IT WAS like a dream. The long journey to the coast, the great ship, the noise, the people—and only when Oscar Tillford told us we could not walk on the decks did I begin to realize something of the life ahead of us.

We were a freak, Siegfried and I. We were depending on that one small bit of difference between ourselves and other people to bring us a golden harvest of money. If we paraded the decks of the ship, or the streets of America, we would no longer be a curiosity. We must understand that we were selling ourselves, and unless people paid, they could not look upon us. It made me a little sick to hear him talking as though my brother and I were a goat with two heads.

"But in Bavaria," I said, and Siegfried held my hand warmly, "people did not look upon us as a freak. It is only when the wind blows my coat or his aside, or when we swim in the lake, that anybody notices."

"Son, we'll have to dress you so's people will always notice when you get up on the platform." Tillford laughed boisterously. "One of you'll have to twist around a little and sort of walk backwards. You know, emphasize the thing that makes you different. Play it up."

CHAPTER II

Shame For Sale

WE DIDN'T understand then, but later we learned. It was Siegfried who learned to "sort of walk backwards." Siegfried, too, learned first to speak English, so that he might answer the questions of the curious who came to look at us with a strange mixture of curiosity and pity on their faces.

From the first, I hated being the butt of careless, cruel humor.

"When you eat something, can he taste it?"

"You two would be in a fix if you ever got in a fight, wouldn't you?"

"You're German, ain't you? Did a vampire frighten your mother before you were born?"

Siegfried would laugh and talk and sell our pictures for a dime, but I retched with the shame of it. I hated all those straight, independent creatures who came to look at us. When I would see someone with only one arm, or a hunchback, I would breathe deeply and curse silently, glad that there were others who knew the burden of being "different." I looked for physical handicaps and gloated when

I saw them in the throngs that visited the circus.

In the car which housed the freaks, though, I never gloated. I hated it, and wondered at the spirit of gaiety that pervaded the side-show. I could not understand how they could be so unaware of all that set them apart from a world of men who walked alone. I resented the courage and pride which was a part of most of them.

There was Captain Tim, the tiny midget and his small doll-wife; Madamoiselle Therese, the fat girl—four-hundred - and - forty - pounds - of - feminine-daintiness. There was long John, the human skeleton, and Atlas, the eight foot giant; Alex, who had three legs; Conrad who swallowed bits of glass; Little Wally, who boasted the tip of a tail. There was Bruno, the dog-faced man; Naida, the girl who could feel no pain, and allowed the barker to ram needles into her white flesh; Portia, the spider girl, whose bones were gristle; Toto a pin-headed Australian; Duvall, the ventriloquist; and Pix, who wore a thousand tattoo marks upon his body.

A WORLD apart, even in the compact world of the circus. Looking about, turning my head to see Siegfried poring over a first-grade reader, learning slowly but surely the names of things and how to say them, I felt hatred inside me. Hatred for the brother, welded to me by a ligament no thicker than my wrist. Hatred for the mother who died in giving us birth, for the father who had allowed us to leave the little Bavarian village to come into a strange and bitter world.

From Siegfried I learned to speak the alien tongue he studied, and because there was little else to do, I gradually learned to write it. But not Siegfried or anybody could teach me acceptance of a life I despised.

Because there had been no money in Bavaria, and because Hans Lepke forgot that his sons were more than goats, there had never been reason to discover that Siegfried could draw pictures with colored crayon, and I could carve out quaint caricatures of animals out of bits of wood. In Bavaria, Siegfried had used the snow for making little pictures, and I had tried to carve dried clay with father's great knife, used mostly for slaughtering goats.

In America though, there were many colored crayons, and I acquired slender bladed knives of my own. It helped to pass many long hours when we had to sit in idleness.

Siegfried, however, was seldom idle, and never lonely. He liked the noise and the smells and the excitement. He liked the crowds that came to be amused, the music, the crash of drums and cymbals, the raucous voice of the barker. He liked the candy vendors, the wheels of chance, the big, bright bundles of balloons, the pink lemonade and hamburger sandwiches with onions. In three years Siegfried learned to love the only America we knew—the Coney Island midway, the world under canvas with the circus side show, and sometimes the museums in big cities in the winter. Bitter as it was, hemmed in as it was, Siegfried loved life.

I didn't. I wanted something I had never had, something I had dreamed about and knew I could never have. I wanted to swing along Broadway of a mad midnight, brushing shoulders with a crowd that didn't gape at me. I wanted to go into a great hotel dining-room and order a meal without having the waiter wonder why two men sat so close together when there was a chair on the other side of the table. I wanted to swim and ride, and dance with a girl. To hold her in my arms, lift her mouth to mine in long, rapturous kisses. And these were hopeless desires, pushed down inside of me until they choked like hot ashes.

OUR little hoard of money grew, since there wasn't much my brother and I needed which was not provided. Enough to eat, a place to sleep, money sent to our father in Bavaria each month, and almost a thousand dollars on the books by the time we were eighteen.

Then Hans Lepke died, and money that had gone to Bavaria, grew against our names on Manheim's books. Two

thousand dollars, then three, five. Siegfried owned a diamond ring, while I boasted a flawless ruby in my tie-pin. We dressed in evening clothes when we appeared on the platform—fine black broadcloth and faultless linen, made by a tailor who knew how to measure us.

We danced, to the amusement and wonder of those who watched us, with two girls who doubled in the big tent on the trapeze. Verna Byron and Marguerite McKeever looked enough alike to be sisters and prided themselves on being able to follow when Siegfried and I led in a waltz and never make a blunder.

We were much together, Venra, Marguerite, Siegfried and I, and there were times when I almost forgot we were different. Perhaps if it had not been for Toni—but Toni came later.

Strange, but in those years Siegfried and I grew to look more and more unlike each other. We were both dark-haired and blue-eyed, both five feet eleven, with strong, broad shoulders, slim waists and delicate hands. But gradually the contours of our faces changed until we hardly looked like brothers. I knew, vaguely, it was our different natures exerting themselves upon us, but there was nothing to be done about it. Siegfried looked at the world with kindly eyes, while mine held only contempt, narrowing beneath a fretful forehead. Siegfried's lips were full and generous and smiled easily, while mine were thin and bitter, and stranger to a laugh.

Until Toni came. Toni, slim and dainty as a fairy princess, in her tarleton skirt and spangled bodice. Toni, who rode a white horse in the middle ring under the big top, and who had known Captain Tim and his midget wife in Russia.

I was twenty when I saw Toni first, and a little awed by her slim loveliness. But Siegfried wasn't awed, then or later, when Captain Tim squeaked up that Toni was "all wool and a yard wide."

It didn't make sense. Toni wasn't cloth, and she wasn't wide. She was little and lovely, all pulsing life and laughter. Captain Tim assured me that it was simply an American phrase he had picked up, one which meant that Toni was 'regular', 'a swell gal'.

I agreed with that, for there was neither curiosity nor pity in her golden eyes when she took my hand and said she was glad to know me.

TONI was at home among the freaks, for her mother was a hunchback, made that way by long exposure and hardship on the Russian Steppes after the Red rebellion. Toni had been educated in the upper circles of Russian aristocracy, and her first horsemanship was learned in the Royal Riding Academy. After the fall of the Czar, Toni had turned to the Big Top to feed herself and her mother. Now Mamma Lenski mended costumes and dyed silk tights for the trapeze artists. Toni often visited Captain Tim and his wife in the side tents, and never seemed to mind that these people were sometimes—different. For she would hold her small mother in her arms at night and rub the crooked back with ointment. And she had been with circuses long enough to accept the many phases of life in them.

It was Toni who taught Siegfried how to translate his text books from German into French, from French into English, and Toni who discovered that there was real artistry in the small pictures he made with colored crayons.

It was she who had urged him to put his bright dreams on little squares of canvas, and it was she who posed for him till he learned the lines of a slim body, the sheen and texture of white skin, the shapes of hands and bare, beautiful feet.

With me, Toni was different, as though she knew my eyes were not an artist's eyes. And, as much as I could, I busied myself with a book, or carving a small bit of ivory or pliant wood into the caricature of an animal for which I needed no model. And strangely, it was only Toni who aroused in me the instinct to protect, to shelter. I knew at last that I loved her as a man loves only one woman. When I would dance with Verna Byron, it was always Toni I felt in the circle of my arms. And it was of Toni

I deamed at night—dreaming, too, of being free of Siegfried.

CHAPTER III

"What God Hath Joined—"

PERHAPS it was those dreams that set me thinking of the possibility of someday becoming actually free of my twin. I said nothing for a long while, though, for there was a contract with Manheim, renewed each year. And money would be needed—a very great deal of money.

And all the time, resentment against my life, against all I knew of life, mounted inside me, thinning my lips and narrowing my eyes. Discontent and disgust, weariness and the horrible nervous strain of waiting, all the while daring to dream and hope—it made me a little mad.

"Johann," Toni said one evening, "how is it you and Siegfried are so unlike each other? Don't you like me at all, Johann?"

I felt my nails dig into my clenched fists.

"I do like you, Toni." I said calmly. "In what way am I different from Siegfried?"

"Well," her beautiful golden eyes looked straight into mine, "I can feel you hating things and people. You laugh so little, and Captain Tim says you—I had thought that twins—"

"You mean twins such as we, don't you, Toni?" I finished for her. "You think then that we are interdependent? It is not so. Without each other we could live as well. And someday soon, there will be enough money. Then—"

"Then you will visit the Great Daniell in Baltimore?" she smiled. "Is that what you mean to do? And you, Siegfried? Are neither of you afraid?"

A chill shook me.

"Afraid?" I shouted. "Afraid of something that might let me walk down Broadway alone some day, Toni? Of not being stared at and pointed out as being a jest of nature? Afraid?"

Again she smiled, the slow smile I had learned to love.

"Sometimes the words 'What God hath joined' do not mean just a marriage, Johann," she replied. "Believe me, you would not be happy. These things are beyond our understanding sometimes, but we must learn to accept them."

I clamped my jaws shut and she did not know that I defied the God who had allowed my life to be a travesty. She did not know I hated Siegfried. Later, when she had left us, my brother leaned closer.

"What has happened to us, Johann? Why do you hate me? Am I to blame for the thing which makes us prisoners of each other? If it is only that, there is enough money. We can go to this Daniell Toni spoke of. Perhaps he could make us free of each other. If there is danger, and you do not mind, I am willing, Johann. If it means death for one of us, I would give my life for you."

Later, I clutched at that promise. It seemed to justify me.

IN AUGUST, we were outside Washington, and although Manheim shrieked against it, we went to see Daniell, famous for his amazing skill with a knife. He shook his head gravely.

"At birth, yes. Even when you were five, or ten, perhaps. But now—the risk is too great. One, or both of you might die. I am sorry." He shrugged, helplessly.

Siegfried covered my hand with his, but I leaned toward the surgeon, pulling at his coat.

"It is our risk," I said passionately. "What do you care if we die? Your price, man? Your price for the operation? We have money—we both want it—"

"No!" Again he shook his head. "You are both young, healthy. You can make a life for yourselves. Other men, less favored than yourselves have accomplished miracles in the world of science. You each have talents. One the artist, the other—there is need for little carved gargoyles that make children laugh with delight. If you wish, you can leave the side shows. If

not, if you feel you must earn your bread and butter by presenting yourselves to the public, then do that with courage and fortitude.

"You cannot risk the chance of throwing your life—however worthless it may seem to you at the moment—back into the face of the God who gave it to you. I can call in other surgeons, but I assure you they will agree with me. Unless one of you should die, and there were a possibility of saving the other life, such an operation could not be considered at your age."

Back in Washington, in the car which was our home, Siegfried broke the long silence between us.

"Johann, is life so intolerable?" he queried. "Once you were content, happy. If you do not like life the way it is, we could go back to Bavaria, or even find a place to hide from the public here in America. What is it that is driving you?"

"Read my brain, brother," I laughed wildly. "It is not the public I dislike. I wish to be among people, but not a target for their curious eyes. I wish to be like other men. I am going mad with desire for something I cannot have."

"But mostly it is Toni, isn't it?" His breath whistled through his teeth.

I SAID nothing, and for the first time since I could remember, Siegfried showed anger against me.

"Johann, you could not have Toni," he said quietly. "Of all the world, Toni is the one thing I would keep from you. Yet, I would not expect her to love me. Can't you understand?"

Sideways, I caught the tightness about his mouth, the slow whitening of his upper lip, and suddenly I knew that he, too, hated being what he was. Until then I had not guessed how deeply he loved the girl who was too kind, too generous to be repulsed by a thing we both railed against.

"So," I gritted, "you can feel something I did not guess. I thought it was only my heart that felt the bitter need for Toni. You never made a sign. You transfer her bright beauty to bits of canvas, but never once—"

"Loving her more than you can, I wouldn't want her to know I desired her as more than a friend, Johann," he sighed. "Neither of us could ask any woman's hand in marriage. It is unthinkable."

I covered my face with my hands, and he touched my shoulder gently.

"Women are not for us, my brother," he went on. "We must understand and accept that since talking with Daniell."

I shoved him away with a force that sent me spinning with him, reminding me furiously that I could not even fight him. Yet, mad with days and months of pent-up bitterness, crazy with disappointment over Daniell's answer, and on fire with jealousy, I beat at his face with my hands.

"Damn you," I said through clamped teeth, "damn you! Why were you conceived along with me?"

My thoughts tied themselves into knots. What was it Daniell had added as an afterthought. If one of us should die, and there was the chance of saving the other life— Suddenly I quieted. If one of us should die—

That night and for many nights, I lay beside my brother and planned how I could kill him. Poison? No. I could speak no word, buy no smallest thing without his being with me to hear what I said, to see what I paid for. A gun? That too, was beyond consideration. A knife. A quick thrust, a hurried call to the circus physician. Then Daniell or some other reputable surgeon, and freedom — or death. It made little difference. I would rather die than know I must go on living forever a prisoner.

One month, two, and poison brewed in the hot cauldron of my brain. Siegfried and I lived, walked, breathed together, but we might have been at separate poles, so distant we were from each other.

AND in the end it was Toni who set the flame to dry tinder. Something Siegfried said, some way he looked at her, perhaps, and suddenly she understood the thing of which she had not dreamed. She moved a little away from him, facing him, so that I could see only part of her startled face.

"No, Siegfried, no! I—oh, my poor friend. I—"

Tenderness sounded in Siegfried's voice, but fury dulled my brain.

"Toni, I didn't mean you to know. Surely, surely you cannot deny me the right to love you, even though I understand—" was all I heard.

"We both love you, Toni, if it adds up to anything," I laughed harshly. "How does it make you feel to be loved by two men, Toni? Both good looking, both working steadily, with a fortune of ten thousand dollars between them. Aren't you flattered?"

It was cruel, but I was turning the knife in my own heart, and her answer killed me.

"It does make me proud, Johann. Love is the highest compliment any man can pay a woman, but—"

"Yes," Siegfried's voice had an edge now. "Yes, Toni, I see. Please forget what has happened, my dear. Only remember that I do love you, and wish only for your happiness."

I saw her turn great eyes to Siegfried, eyes that for the first time held pity.

"Oh, my poor boy," she whispered. "All my life I shall be proud that you can understand and still go on loving me. And I love you for all that you are—good, gentle and courageous. Good-by, Siegfried, and—Johann."

It didn't seem possible that her good-by could mean she was lost. But in the world of the circus, there are many places to hide, and for two or three weeks we saw nothing of the girl. All the while, the poison was being distilled within me, twisting my brain into furious knots.

"If one of us should die! If one of us—should die!"

CHAPTER IV

The Bond Is Severed

AT LAST, I knew that one of us *must* die. I would wait some night until Siegfried slept, and I would hold a pillow over his face until he stopped struggling. Then I would call the doctor, tell them to hurry. They would think—everyone must be made to think it an accident.

Once I'd made up my mind I didn't hate Siegfried so much. I even talked to him about unimportant things. When the show was over, I would play checkers with him, or chess. I pretended, how carefully I pretended to all who questioned us, that since seeing Daniell, I'd given up all thought of an operation.

And how easy it was that mid-September night, a year after we had been to see Daniell. We were in Washington again, on the same lot, seeing the same crowds, after a year of monotonous repetition. The same circuit across-country to the middle west, and back on the southern route. Then Dallas and Memphis and New Orleans that were scarcely more than sand lots, so far as I knew them. Twelve months of soul-trying patience for me —twelve months of life for Siegfried.

WE HAD seen little or nothing of Toni during those months. She stayed South through the heavy Winter, perfecting a new routine in Winter quarters, while Siegfried and I spent the months in a Philadelphia dime museum. In May we opened the show in New York, and once or twice we did see Toni. She had been with Leon, a featured attraction on the billing, and there were whispers that the two of them might double their act and be married.

Those whispers maddened me. I felt sure if I were free of Siegfried I could make her love me. The desperate plan was beginning to take concrete shape.

On Friday, after the night show, the long car which housed the freaks settled itself for slumber. Except for Pix, the tattoed man, who was playing very softly on a harmonica, everything was quiet. Long John snored, at peace with himself and the world, and somewhere in the stillness, in her own compartment, Madamoiselle Therese wheezed in fat discomfort.

I lay silent, breathing evenly only by tremendous force of will. Once Siegfried whispered to me and nudged me gently, but I said nothing. Let him

think me asleep. Almost I could feel him thinking, remembering Hans Lepke and the blue, Bavarian skies, the quiet goats along the Alpine slopes. I wanted to shriek. Why didn't he sleep! Perhaps I was signing my own death warrant, but it no longer mattered. I had to be free of him, free to meet Leon on his own ground and fight for Toni and happiness.

Two o'clock. Three—and I felt Siegfried's arm move in the darkness, reaching for the little box of aspirin on the small shelf which served us as a night table. Just as well. If he slept soundly, he would not know—would not need to know—

Four o'clock, and the nervous flow of Siegfried's thoughts quieted. The twitching in his right arm stilled, and I knew he was asleep. Softly, slowly I slipped the pillow from beneath his head, and then, half blind with passion, I carried out the hellish idea which had been born in my brain so many months before.

It was odd how little Siegfried struggled. A low sigh, one or two convulsive movements, and that was all. It was almost as though he wanted to die and refused to fight for his life. Yet, it took all the will I possessed to remain silent, to keep from jerking the pillow away from his face. How did I know how long it would take for him to die? How did I know how long I could lie there with him beside me? How long could I wait, and how long must I wait to know if Daniell had been right, that death for Siegfried would mean death for me.

Holding my breath till my chest was on fire, keeping my eyes shut tight against the darkness, I felt something cold, misty, yet light as thistle floss against my face. My lids jerked open to see a gray web waft toward the curtain window, moving slowly, almost as though it were reluctant to go.

And suddenly I shrieked, pulling the pillow off my brother's quiet face and tumbling the blanket, shouting that Siegfried had died quietly in his sleep.

No need then to pretend the horror that had me by the throat. Suppose it was all for nothing! Suppose Daniell couldn't be reached! Suppose—

THE car was in an uproar. Water dashed on Siegfried in an effort to revive him chilled me to the marrow. I breathed harshly, feeling myself sucked down into a slime of unreality. I could hear fat Therese moaning; and above the turmoil, I heard the booming voice of Ajaz calling the circus doctor.

"Daniell," I screamed, in an agony of fear. "Get Daniell in Baltimore. Get anybody, but get Daniell too. If Siegfried is dead, if he is dead, only Daniell can—"

The rest is vague and unreal. I was conscious of fear frothing my mouth, and a sense of horror at what I had done. For there was horror. If, in that moment, I could have given my own life to bring Siegfried back, I would have done so. Yet there I was, bound to a thing that had been my brother, a thing that had moved and walked and laughed and loved its life. And, almost, I could feel myself dying by inches.

Daniell, after a few hours, was there in the hospital, looking down at me with accusing eyes.

"So, Johann? Nobody will believe you killed him—but I know. No court would try you, for oddly, the heart of your brother was weak, and he might well have died some night in his sleep. I knew that when I examined you, but warning would have been wasted. And now, you shall have your wish. We will give you a chance for life, but I cannot say if it will be worth anything to you. If I were more the man and less the doctor, I would let you die.

And I did die, almost. Two months in the hospital. For six weeks of those two months, I knew nothing. Then, gradually, I felt myself being pulled back by a force beyond Daniell's. I knew, beyond a doubt, that it was Siegfried. Siegfried, with all the gentleness gone from him, with no smile now, forcing me back into the body no longer linked to his.

The nurses, urging me to talk and take food, could not see what I saw creeping in through curtained win-

dows at night. They could not feel what I felt brushing across my forehead. And, because they could not see nor hear nor feel, they wondered when I started up in the night, screaming to them for death.

ON THE second Friday of the third month, I left the hospital. I was walking alone for the first time in my life, yet, as I passed through the office where a great mirror hung, something forced my eyes up. There was Siegfried beside me, gray and shadowy as a wisp of fog, but his brooding eyes were looking into mine and there was a bitter smile on his lips.

I closed my eyes and tried to shriek, but no sound came from my clogged throat. As I had been bound to Siegfried in life so I was bound to him in death. The difference was that now he hated me.

On the hospital records that operation was written as having been successful. Three of the ten thousand dollars which was Siegfried's and mine paid for Daniell's skill. Yet, when the doctor himself saw me in the office that night, he did not look proud of his handiwork.

"Johann," he said slowly, "there is a book which you should learn to read. There is one verse which says "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." I am a strong man, Johann, but I fear the vengeance of the Lord. So I take no credit for having been successful in saving your life. Good day."

There was no one from the circus to meet me when I rejoined them in Savannah. Manheim himself was surprised.

"But, Johann, you have nothing now for the side show. You are not unlike other men, with two arms, two legs and one body. I have torn up your contract, of course. If you like, you can stay on with us. You could, say, sell tickets."

I was glad for that. The world of the circus was all the world I knew. There, at least, would be people to call me by name.

And I wanted desperately to see Toni. I felt that I had to see her.

The first night was not so bad, although I had no glimpse of Toni. I was kept busy selling tickets, making quick change for the people eager to go inside the big tent. Once I found myself smiling at the antics of a clown who paraded the entrance with a trained pig.

CHAPTER V

Vengeance Is Mine

ON THE next night a small child with curling yellow hair—and eyes that saw what others could not see—caught her mother's hand.

"Mamma, there are two men in there, see? One is like a shadow. Is it a mystery man, mamma?" She whispered loudly enough for me to hear every word.

And turning, I was conscious of the gray blur on my left, cold and damp as Bavarian mist. Through the shadow, beyond it, I saw Toni coming toward me, mortal terror in her golden eyes. I knew she could see Siegfried beside me and that she was hating me.

"Toni," I begged, and my words rasped my throat raw. "Toni, I—"

She shook her bright head slowly.

"Johann, why? Oh, why—" Her voice faltered.

"I wanted you," I said desperately. "I thought—"

"Did you think that would make me love you?" Scorn curled her red lips. "You fool! Siegfried was worth more than a hundred like you. He had talent, he was glad to be alive, and gay, and I cared for him as one might care for a loveable puppy at first. Then I began to love him for his goodness, his fine mind and his gentleness. And you—you with your maggot-ridden brain, you thought I—"

I quivered under the whip of her accusing eyes.

"Toni, I couldn't go on living like that. One of us had to die. It might have been both of us." I tried to plead with her.

"I shouldn't have left him alone with you." Her eyes narrowed. "I should have told them all to watch

you. Now it's too late. Nobody would believe me if I told them you murdered him. They'd say you ran too great a risk. They'd say—"

She caught a quick breath and her small hands covered her eyes.

"Siegfried—Siegfried, don't—" she cried.

Men and women crowded about the little ticket booth, watching Toni struggle against an unseen something which clutched her, pulling her closer and closer to me, until her hands were fighting at my face through the bars of the booth, clawing the skin of my cheek until blood ran in salty rivulets into my mouth. Suddenly she slumped, half fainting in the dusty clutter of confetti.

"You killed only the good in him, Johann. Oh, God, the thing you carry with you now is—is—"

They took her away, a slim, broken, sobbing wisp of a girl with a bright kimono blowing open to show a tarleton skirt and a spangled bodice. And in my left ear there was the muted sound of laughter, like, yet so unlike the laugh of Siegfried.

And in that moment I felt the healing scar on my left hip burn as if a flame were pressed against the flesh, sending a fierce pain coursing down the muscles and bone of my leg and up through my arm, into the thick cords of my throat and into my head. It was as if Siegfried were creeping back inside me, his laughter still sounding in my ears.

A WEEK, and the cords in my throat thickened, the sinews of my arm and leg tightened, and the skin turned red and angry, pulling against the flesh.

A month—and when I stripped the tickets off the little rolls on the booth, the ligaments in my fingers were slow to obey my mind, and my left leg slewed about a bit as I walked. My throat no longer let my voice pass clearly, and always, always I could feel the undead fingers of Siegfried clawing at my vitals.

Another month, and my leg and arm were almost useless. Massage refused to revive them. Already I was bent sideways, so that I could not straighten. But in the mirror at times, I caught a gray reflection of Siegfried, and he was still as straight and strong as he had been in life. He was held to me now by a thin thread, light as thistle floss, but all my effort could not break it. My hand passed through the shadow, and there was nothing in the mirror. I was slowly going mad.

Six months, and now Manheim could not even allow me the poor privilege of selling tickets. He was kind enough, but no circus carries dead weight.

"Go to Hot Springs," he advised. "The mud baths, perhaps. If you improve, there will always be something you can do, Johann."

A year, and my money dwindled, sifting from my pockets into the pockets of reputable doctors and quacks—anything, or anybody that might possibly arrest the spreading death. And yet, I didn't want to live. More than ever, I was bound to Siegfried, and now the eerie laughter which none but I could hear was forever in my ears; and my nostrils flared against the never lessening odor of decay that clung about me.

Why didn't I kill my worthless self, you wonder? Ask why men fear the unseen, and they seldom explain. But I can answer that I tried to die—and couldn't. Once, a gun, loaded and held against my temple, the trigger pulled, and only a thud against a bullet that did not explode. A cold mist wrapped itself about my hand until my fingers let slip the revolver. And the laugh, eerie and humorless, rang against my ear drums.

And once, on Broadway, where the traffic rolls in billows against Thirty-second Street, I stepped into the stream. But something spun me outward, till the great truck wheel straddled my body and left me untouched, for strangers to pick up and exclaim over because of my narrow escape. It was then I knew that Siegfried would not let me die. I must live my worthless life out with him forever beside me, laughing at my misery.

Two years, and there was no money left at all. Yet the part of me that kept on breathing demanded food, the luxury of a bed, even if it were

only a twenty-five cent flop on the Bowery, where other men retched when they saw me.

Yes, I walked down Broadway alone, but still the eyes of the curious followed me, and nobody paid. This was not unusual, this bent and twisted back, and the leg that slewed about, the arm that crooked upward. This was slow paralysis. A poor old thing who couldn't even talk because of a tight band about his throat, a band that felt like fingers, almost, but not quite smothering.

And always, wherever I went, waking or sleeping, I was conscious of the flame against my left hip, of the scar that never entirely healed. And there were times, when I made my slow way past shop windows, that I would see Siegfried walking with me, matching his steps with mine—but nobody else ever seemed to see. Only once, a blind man's dog bristled his thick neck ruff and showed his teeth, not at me, but at the shadow that stalked beside me.

With the last of my little hoard of pennies, I got a beggar's license, and now—well, if you turn left at the Brooklyn end of the bridge and go down Sands Street to Gold, you'll see me peddling shoe strings and pins and pencils.

Half a man! That's what the sailor said, wasn't it? But then he couldn't see the ghost of Siegfried standing beside me, pale as thistle floss, but stronger than I shall ever be.

"Vengeance is mine," said the text in the Bible I learned to read, but the God of that Book takes strange ways to wreak his vengeance. Through the slow hours and long days, my brother laughs into my ear and curves his slim, artistic fingers into the unseen ligament that binds us. Siegfried walks beside me, keeping me alive to die by inches—waiting—waiting—

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

THE LESSER BRETHREN MOURN

The Story of a Weird Burial

By SEABURY QUINN

TO BOATL AND BACK

A Story of the Mayan Jungles

By HENRY KUTTNER

—and many others

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Birkett's Twelfth Corpse

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

Author of "The Slanting Shadow," "The Man from Dark Valley," etc.

Room swung the oar savagely at Birkett's head

Darkly Swirling Waters Covered All That Remained of a Hideous Secret!

THE wall of hate that stood between the two old rivermen, Fred Birkett and Hank Room, had grown from a strange and gruesome rivalry—finding bodies of persons drowned in the Wisconsin River at Badger Prairie.

At the time of the tragic drowning of Bud Enters, the rivermen were tied. Each had found eleven bodies in the past forty years. It was said by each of them, and repeated in Badger Prairie, that Bud Enters' body would decide the contest.

The sympathy of Badger Prairie was with Birkett, a kindly old man, as opposed to the sullen surliness of Room, who was somewhat younger. Birkett had always joked about his odd luck at finding bodies in the river, and still looked upon his almost uncanny way of knowing where the bodies had been taken by the swift current as more amusing than not.

But Room had brooded upon his

rival's luck ever since Birkett had earned a five-hundred dollar reward for finding the corpse of a young student who had fallen into the Wisconson while drunk—almost a decade before.

Room made no effort to conceal his violent hatred for Birkett, nor could Birkett keep down his dislike for his rival.

Bud Enters was drowned on a warm night in July, and twenty boats put out from Badger Prairie within an hour after he went down. Fred Birkett and Hank Room were among them. Both men headed downstream, knowing by long past experiences that the swift current in mid-channel, where the youth was drawn under, would quickly roll the body below Badger Prairie toward the long clay river bank southeast of the village, which was locally known as the Yellowbanks district.

TOWARD dawn, Fred Birkett found Bud Enters' body, rolling along in shallow, swift water crossing a sandbar just above the Yellowbanks. The moon was out, and he had no difficulty seeing the body, which he immediately caught with a boathook and secured to the boat without removing it from the water. Then he edged his boat out of the current and headed swiftly upstream.

Just where Hiney's Slough enters the Wisconsin, he met Room. He could not help boasting.

"Just made my dozen," he called to Hank in a gruff, yet faintly triumphant voice.

Room turned his boat and swung across current toward him.

Birkett rested on his oars. Unaware of the fury that consumed his rival, he went on.

"Well, we couldn't both find him," he said, agreeably. "Let the best man win, I always say." He smiled in the satisfaction of feeling himself the better of the two.

Room said nothing. He was looking cautiously upstream and down, his eyes scanning the surface of the water for sight of any boat, his ears waiting to catch any sound that might indicate the approach of other searchers. The two boats lay in quiet water, away from the current.

Whether or not Birkett heard Room loosen and jerk out one oar is problematical. He turned toward Room just as the oar descended and dealt him a glancing blow on the side of the head.

He toppled from his boat, turning the vessel with him.

With a savage lunge, Room pushed Birkett's boat out of reach of the older man, just as he came coughing and gasping to the surface of the water. With another quick movement, Room detached Enters' body from the overturned boat. He made no attempt to catch the body, knowing that the current would not carry it from this quiet water, and he could always return and find it.

Then he shot away, unmindful of Birkett's despairing cries, secure in the knowledge that Birkett could not swim very well. A little way upstream he paused and listened. There was no sound from below. Birkett had gone down.

A cunning smile touched Room's lips. Edging the boat into shallow water, he left himself fall fully clothed into the river, wetting himself thoroughly, except for his torn hat. This he threw into the bottom of the boat to give it the appearance of having been hastily torn away from his head and thrown there. Then he got back into the boat and rowed furiously toward Badger Prairie.

The circle of boats was now further downstream, and he did not have to row up quite as far as he drifted down. He timed his entrance well, for Enters' cap had just been found along-shore, and the searchers were excited over their find. Quite suddenly he shot from under the bridge into the yellow glow of lanterns held high above the water.

"Birkett's gone under," he shouted frantically. "His boat tipped just above the Yellowbanks!"

ANYONE who might have doubted his cries was easily convinced by his bedraggled appearance. It did not require his explanation that he had gone into the water after Birkett to

explain the wetness of his clothes. He told hastily that the old man fought hard, that he had had to hit him, finally, and had reluctantly let him go in order to save himself.

He led the rowboats to a spot a hundred yards above the entrance to Hiney's Slough, where in the quiet water the two bodies still lay. Room was enjoying the irony of the knowledge that his twelfth body would be that of his old rival. He broke into speech again, excitedly telling about the accident, and explaining that the boat had long since gone downstream, swept away by the powerful current in which it had tipped. He pointed out approximately the place where the accident had occurred, and went glibly over his story a third time. Then he left the searchers, and pulled into the current toward the dark waters where Birkett had actually gone down.

That much Badger Prairie was later able to piece together. What happened after that is more obscure and fraught with horrific suggestions. It is certain that Room went downstream, and equally certain that he seemed to be heading for Hiney's Slough, though one or two disputed this point later. Despite the moon, it was difficult to observe Room's progress downstream, for he was soon lost in the dark, heavy shadow on the quiet water surrounding the slough's junction with the river.

In the babble of sound made by the searchers above the slough, Room might have called for some time and not have been heard. At any rate, during a lull in the conversation, someone picked up the sound of frantic calling. Everyone stood and listened. Once again came a sharp call, in a voice which was immediately identified as Hank Room's. The call was heavy with horror and fear. Then another call began to sound, but was abruptly stopped, almost as if it had been rudely shut off by a hand clapped over the lips through which it came.

The boats immediately pulled away toward Hiney's Slough.

At first there was nothing to be seen except the bottoms of two overturned boats, one of which was Room's, the other Birkett's. Then someone saw the body of Enters against one bank, apparently just washing up from deep water. Quite near it, partly submerged, they found the bodies of Hank Room and Fred Birkett.

Room was dead, yet he had not drowned. He had been strangled. For when the horrified searchers pulled him out of the water, they found Fred Birkett's dead fingers sunk deep in the flesh of Room's neck.

Birkett had found his twelfth corpse.

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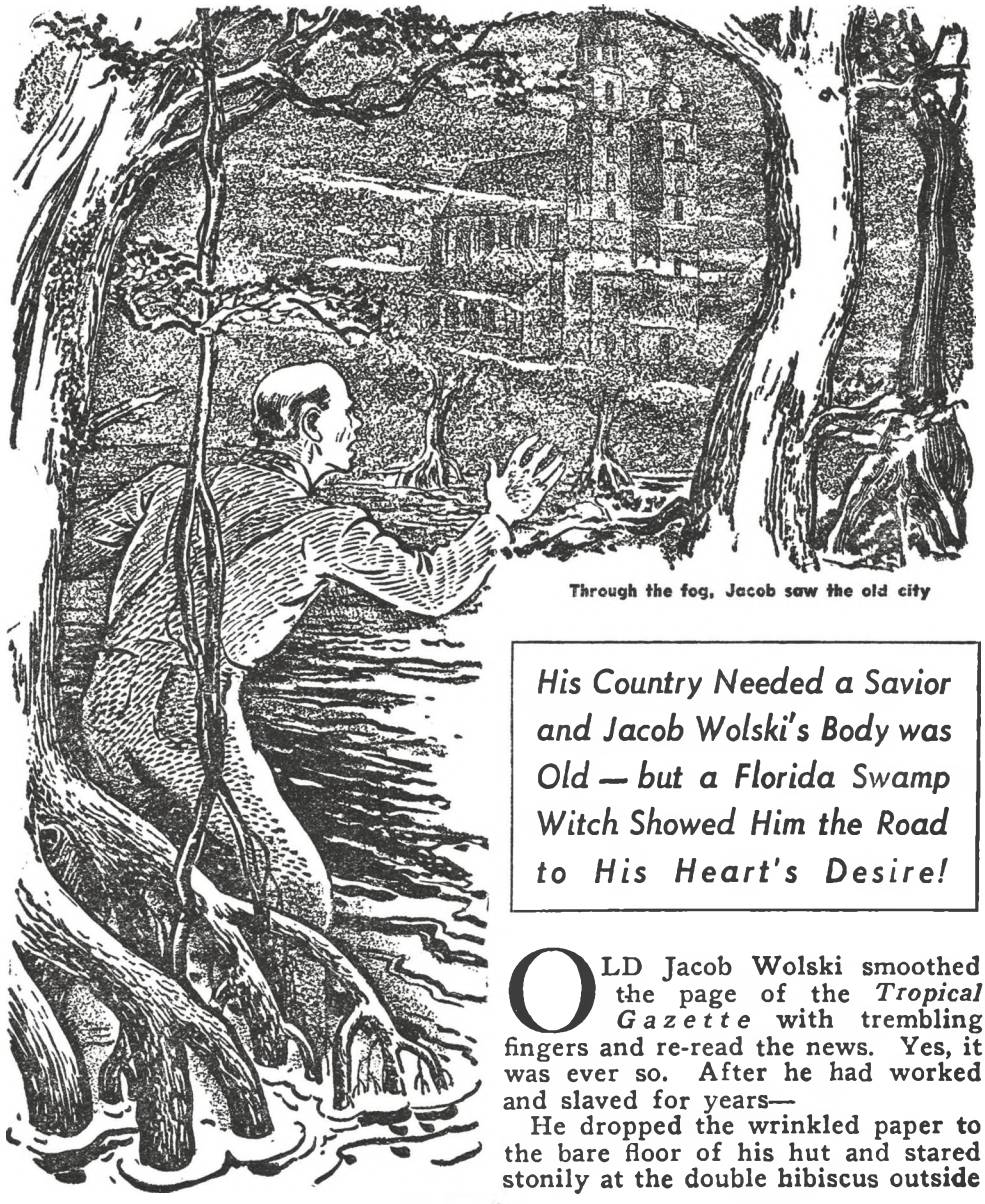
Lurking in the Gloom of Night, a Vengeful Demon Forces Its Human Vassal to Commit Murder in THE BALD-HEADED MAN, *a Powerful Story by* DON TRACY *in the Next Issue*

I Am Going to Cracow!

By MARIA MORAVSKY

Author of "Spider Woman," "Soul of the Cello," etc.



Through the fog, Jacob saw the old city

His Country Needed a Savior and Jacob Wolski's Body was Old — but a Florida Swamp Witch Showed Him the Road to His Heart's Desire!

OLD Jacob Wolski smoothed the page of the *Tropical Gazette* with trembling fingers and re-read the news. Yes, it was ever so. After he had worked and slaved for years—

He dropped the wrinkled paper to the bare floor of his hut and stared stonily at the double hibiscus outside

the windows without seeing it. Humming birds hovered over the great red stars of poinsettas. Mockers sang lustily. But all that was nothing to Jacob, now that he had lost his dream.

He dropped his head on the unpainted table and wept. He would never go to Poland, because Poland was no more. Worse than no more—conquered by the old enemy.

He remembered the first line of the old hymn. Poles were once jailed for singing it.

"POLAND SHALL NOT PERISH. . . ."

Once more they would be forbidden to sing it. Jacob's shoulders, stooped from bending for years over his strawberry patch, shook spasmodically. He would never see Cracow.

Like an echo of his own sob, he heard another, somewhere outside. He went out. By his potting shed, he saw a big Negro girl covering her face with her palms.

"What's the matter, Joda?"

She rolled up her enormous black eyes and whimpered.

"I's hongry!"

"That's easy to remedy," he said, patting her crinkly head. "Come inside, child."

He gave her a slab of buttered bread and a glass of milk. She ate in big mouthfuls, her large sugar-white teeth biting off pieces of bread.

"It's more than that. Why are you still crying?" he asked.

"Lost me job," she answered between mouthfuls, her thick, purplish lips quivering.

"Why? I know you don't steal white folks victuals, and you're a mighty good worker. What's the matter?"

"It's me powers," she whispered, her eyes rounded with self amazement. "I got powers. But, so help me, I uses 'em jes' on bad folks. I wuz a hired help at Burpies, but cows went dry. They say I done it. But no, so help me, no!"

"Of course not. Stupid superstition! Fed now?"

She nodded so vigorously that the great double brass loops stuck in her ears jingled.

"Cain't you all use me here?" Her staring black eyes were hopeful now.

He was back with his new sorrow and did not hear her. Again the vision of the ancient city which he would never see, swam before him in the mist of his own tears. The homely face of the black girl lit with understanding.

"It's about them news from the other side you-all grieve about."

UNDER the impact of that unexpected understanding, Jacob broke down.

"I'll never see my country any more!" he cried, and beat his hollow chest with his gnarled hands.

The black girl straightened. Strange grace seemed to flow now through her long body. Her manlike muscles were momentarily tensed, as if for a blow, meant for some unseen enemy. Then, her face softened, became almost comely because of its compassionate expression.

"Oh, yes, you-all will see Cracow, Jacob Wolski!"

He was surprised, not by her fantastic prophecy, but by a detail of her speech—how did she know the name of the Polish capital he longed to visit? Thought transmission?

She looked at him keenly, rolling the whites of her eyes in uncanny fashion.

"I has powers!" she whispered, and a small, sharp arrow of weird surprise slipped into Jacob's heart and lodged there.

The two stood there, face to face, their heads bent a little toward each other, like two conspirators, when a coarse voice startled them.

"Hey, Uncle Jacob," it bellowed, "you stop hobnobbing with that black witch! Don't you know she is smelled for a hexer?"

Jacob turned toward him with as much authority as he could summon. That nephew, Bartek, with his carousing and his ignorant superstitions.

"She is no witch. She is our hired help, from now on. Remember that, Bartek!"

There was no use living frugally and saving, now that the *hope* was gone, Jacob thought, showing the girl

her sleeping quarters in the hayloft. He might as well have someone to bend over those strawberry beds, and take it easy himself. No, he would never see Cracow.

But he could not kill the dream. Next morning, when his black helper took a basket-full of young shoots and went to transplant them into the strawberry field, Jacob went out for a walk, nursing his sorrow.

He seldom had any leisure before, and found out that grief thrives on idleness. As he walked toward Cypress Swamp, the recollection of yesterday's news grew more poignant. Cracow, which had fallen into the enemy's hands, was besieged again and bombed once more in his agonized thoughts.

Trying to stop looking inward, he lifted his head to the sky.

BUT the sky that morning was not its usual brilliant blue. Fog obscured it. One of the three fogs allotted yearly to southern Florida, by the official weather prophet. He remembered that wearily, with a semblance of a smile. First fog of the season.

Two thin fogs and one heavy, this was generally Dade County's fog ration. This one, which now clouded the village of Palmingo, was a thin fog, almost a mist. The difference was, that mists came here at dawn and went with sunrise, but that purplish haze stayed on, even after daylight came.

Jacob groped in the amethystine fog, out and away from his fertile acres, out of the town limits. Every hamlet here was called a town or a city, he reflected, a faint, ironic smile stirring his bushy white mustache. In Poland, a settlement had to be centuries old, or at least well populated, before it was accorded the name of a city. But here, why, a few huts on stilts in that yonder Cypress Swamp would pass for a town, with a Chamber of Commerce springing from nowhere among the rabbit tobacco weed.

With that bitterly whimsical smile still on his lips, ruddy in spite of his sixty years, Jacob glanced in the direction of the distant swamp. Something in there made his pale-blue, far-sighted eyes open wider. Strange peaked buildings were sticking up through the fog, like solid dark furniture through a curtain.

He walked faster. If it were illusion, let it last, he thought. Those were neither Negro shacks on stilts, nor jerry-built villas for Northern tourists.

It was a real city—real and familiar. The cobblestone streets. . . . The moat around King Sobieski's castle. . . . The gothic towers of Cracow's Coronation Cathedral. . . .

Jacob did not even rub his eyes. What if only in a bewitched dream he was seeing Cracow? He was seeing it. That was enough. Oh, the fog, the merciful fog!

The noise in his ears, which had persisted lately, since the chronic catarrh made him partly deaf, dissolved itself into bells, ringing joyously, as during a wedding or — a coronation?

His eyes were still feasting on the vision, slowly and enchantingly, unveiling when he heard Bartek calling him.

"Uncle! Uncle Jacob! Where are you going? Come back. Trouble at home!"

Jacob furtively wiped the happy tears that had filled his eyes a moment before, and looked back. He saw his nephew clearly. There was no more fog. The fierce Florida sunshine kindled rainbows in the long leaf pines, the black muck steamed under the mid-day heat. Jacob looked at the royal palms lining the coral-paved road which ran by the swamp. Their shadows were short. He sighed. He did not know it was so late.

"What's the matter, Bartek? You hurt someone in a brawl again? Sheriff after you?"

"No. I ain't been dissipatin' so much these days, and you know I only fight when soused. It's Joda. In hot water again. Folks want to string her up!"

"Why? Just because those cows went dry? Of all the stupid superstitions!"

"It's not only them cows," Bartek said soberly, "though the neighbors

are plumb mad you befriended her. This time they think you're harboring a murderer."

"A what? Joda wouldn't kill anybody."

"Well they say she did. You know that sickly one, with tuberculosis?"

JACOB shook his head and then clucked distractedly. This was serious. In silent consternation, both men returned to Palmingo and entered their home, built on the "wrong" side of a black irrigation ditch. Authorities called it an irrigation canal, but the natives never ceased calling it a ditch.

As they crossed the rotting log bridge, two moccasins slid lazily into the coffee-colored water, frightening away a myriad of minnows.

"The girl, I mean the dead one, Piety, wanted to drown herself in this here ditch, when Joda saw her. Joda is smelled for a witch, you know. The rumor is, that she gave the white girl a potion to give her the 'glamor' to bring back the man who jilted her."

"You mean that ne'er-do-well Browser boy? Why the girl was much better off without him."

Bartek looked at the cement floor of the hut they entered, and scowled. Something as near to compassion as he could feel crossed his brutish face.

"She never could have been much better. She had white plague something fierce. Last stages, the doc said."

Jacob tapped the damp floor with his muddy wading boot.

"I don't see no reason for doing away with Piety. She did nobody any harm."

"I don't neither. She was a mild sort of a girl, wouldn't harm a fly. Hm-m, too bad!"

More heavy silence. Mockers still shrilled outside. Dragon flies droned busily, catching mosquitoes which danced in a cloud over the black canal.

"Funny, t h a t," Bartek mused. "Piety died smiling. When her folks came in, the girl muttered something about him coming back. She looked downright pretty with that smile on her waxy face, like one of them muckwater lilies. They buried her in her would-be wedding dress."

Jacob did not hear the last words. Familiar smell assailed his nostrils, the smoky odor of burning Dade County pine. Alarmed he looked out.

"Fire, it smells like. And we without fire protection in this hole, and no insurance. Better run and ring the village fire gong."

Bartek looked out, too. Then he sighed portentously and turned his head away from the window.

"It ain't no fire, Uncle. It's them witch hunters after Joda. They're headed right here."

In a few seconds, a crowd came, carrying torches in broad daylight. It was a familiarly sinister sight. Jacob remembered another lynching years ago. That time it was an old Negro accused of horse stealing.

"They wouldn't s t r i n g up a woman?" he asked fearfully.

"Wouldn't they!" Bartek laughed mirthlessly.

A catbird outside seemed to mimic his laughter with its screeching.

"Well, we got to stop them! Guilty or not, it's for the court to decide about Joda. I won't lend a hand to murder."

"But what can we do, Uncle?"

"Take out the truck. We'll spirit the girl away. I got a friendly customer in South Miami. I'll ask him to keep her."

"Is that the same guy who wanted to buy a hive of bees off you?"

"Good thing you reminded me. I'll go and pack me those bees, hive and all. You fetch Joda."

They could hear the mob approaching.

AS BARTEK went reluctantly to the hayloft, Jacob took out his bee helmet and gloves, and went into the garden at the back of the house. The mob was already shouting and hammering at his front door, but he seemed to pay no heed to them.

When he came back, he saw the girl, her lips ashen, cowering in the corner where his walking stick stood leaning against the whitewashed wall.

"What are you doing with that

stick, child?" he asked gently, hearing her crooning over it.

"Castin' a spell," she said simply, and continued to croon.

This time her words were audible to his ears.

"And lead him to his heart's desire, you good old stick. Lead him, lead him . . . to his good old heart's desire."

Then she broke down and wept.

"You-all won't give me up? Honest? Bartek says . . ."

The house shuddered under the mob's blows.

"Bartek is right. Hop on the truck. Don't stare at that door. Hurry!"

The door was already giving way under the violent blows of the attackers. Their shouts were deafening, filled with mysterious fear and hysterical fury.

"Give up the witch!"

"Give up the hexer or you'll burn, too!"

Slowly Jacob cast his eyes around the room, looking for a weapon. Then he pursed his lips and shook his head in silent self-approval. The dynamite box!

He picked up the heavy black box and held it out through a slit in the door, now enlarged by the pickaxe blows to the side of a window.

"See this? I'll throw it at your heads, if you don't go away!" he said with ominous calm.

The enraged men recognized the familiar black container in which citrus growers kept their dynamite used for blowing plant holes in coral rock. At first, they thought that the old man was bluffing, that the box was empty. But one look at his tensed, trembling old arms, showed them plainly that the box was heavy.

"Don't think I can't do it. I won't blow myself up. There are little holes in it, to put in the fuse. I'll throw it and run," he said with a grim smile.

The mob hesitated. Then quickly put out their torches dipping them into the canal one after another. Their leader warned them.

"He might do it, for all we know. Those crazy Poles are mean fighters. Next to the Irish, I dunno—"

"Lost your nerve, Gruber?" the drunkest grower taunted him. "Jacob won't dare. Come on, you guys!"

Jacob did not wait for them to come inside. With all his strength, he threw the box into the midst of the rushing crowd.

THE lid, marked DYNAMITE, flew off. Terrible screams rent the air. But there was no smoke, no explosion, no sign of bursting fire. Still, the would-be lynchers threw down their guns, their hands clawing the air, chasing away the swarm of bees that flew out of the box.

The lynching party became disorganized long enough to enable Bartek to drive the truck out of the yard. As he stepped on the accelerator, he shouted into Jacob's ear.

"It lost you the whole hiveful of bees, Uncle. Think she is worth it?"

Jacob only smiled, muttering to himself in a congratulatory manner.

"Good job I drilled those holes in the top and did not nail the hive in the box," he said. "I was afraid the bees might suffocate." He chuckled. "No, I haven't lost them. They'll come home, all right, all except a few that they mashed with their boots."

On the way to South Miami, the two men questioned Joda.

"Did you really do away with Piety?"

"So help me, I didn't!" The girl rolled her reddened eyes. "I traded with her. She gave me her red juju beads, and I gave her her heart's desire for them. I got powers."

"So this is why poor little Piety died smiling," Jacob thought. "She must have thought herself in her faithless fellow's arms. The Negress is a hypnotist and doesn't know it."

"Yes, yes," he asserted aloud, remembering his own happy vision.

"Lemme down, you good people," Joda begged them when the car had reached South Miami's city limits. "Lemme. I'll find me a job here. Season's on."

"But, your things?"

"I got only one whole dress. The other is in rags. Jes' give me fifty cents for a night's lodging, if you-all can spare it."

She jumped off the running board,

when the car reached an intersection, without even waiting for it to stop fully for the red light. As the traffic light was changing, it fell on her face, giving her drab coffee-colored complexion a weird, greenish cast. Still, her homely face looked almost pretty, as she spoke magnanimously to Jacob.

"You shall get your heart's desire, Jacob Wolski!"

She turned to walk away, then hesitated, turned to Bartek as if with an after-decision.

"You too, young 'un."

Young Bartek's eyes lighted up for a moment as they did when he was pleasure bent, and Jacob knew what his heart's desire would be.

That was the last her rescuers saw or heard of her.

On their way back, Bartek kept morosely silent. Dank smell of swampy lowlands near Okeechobee seemed to dampen both men's spirits. When they reached Big Cypress Swamp, he exploded.

"So, you wasted gas for nothing! You threw away a hive of our best Italian bees, and made a trip, just to save that good-for-nothing girl!"

Jacob was in no mood for arguing.

"I'm too old," he said, "to waste my time on bitter words that lead nowhere. Besides, quarrels are bad for my heart. I'm getting off right here!"

Without waiting for the truck to slow down, he opened the rattling door and jumped out. It was not as dangerous as it seemed. In his youth, Jacob studied jiu jitsu which, among other things, taught him how to fall easily. He rolled down the canal and made no effort to rise until quite near the muddy water. Then he picked himself up with lightning rapidity, unusual in a man of his age, and stood shading his sad eyes with the palm of his gnarled hand, looking after the rattling truck.

"Mad as a hatter! All right, let him go alone. I'm through with—with—"

HE COULD not define what he was through with. It was too melancholy to admit, even to himself, that one was through with life.

He walked into the lowlands, far away from the sparsely inhabited suburb. Bullfrogs croaked like so many celestial guitars. There was moonlight behind those milky clouds passing over the swamp. Luminous vapors rose from it, and joined the clouds, forming bluish white mists.

Jacob looked around. Nothing could be seen save the faint outlines of palmettos, their leaves spread like gigantic fingers. He realized with a start that he had run into the second of the season's rare fogs.

Bullfrogs' voices were now more like the ringing of bells. Or was that permanent noise in his ears growing stronger? No matter. All of a sudden, he knew where he was going.

Narrow streets of Cracow beckoned him again. Oil lamps, set in the gutters for some gala illumination, flickered ahead of him. And he followed the unseen road.

Coronation Cathedral again. This time it was brilliantly lit and full of singing crowds. As he entered, he was surprised that people gave him the right of way toward the *sancta sanctorum* of the altar. But he accepted their bows and stopped only before the altar steps. As he knelt on the cold, damp granite slabs of the cathedral, it did not seem strange to him that the stones gave way under his knees, and the incense trembling before his eyes smelled of water lilies.

When he rose up from the floor, after what seemed centuries, he heard a tumult of acclaim. He looked behind to see for whom it was meant.

"Vivat Król Sobieski!" the cries rolled through the nave.

He looked harder, but saw no king. Perhaps the smoke from the incense burners made his eyes dim? He rubbed them and looked again. This time, he glimpsed an image reflected in a knight's shield. It was his own face.

His face but not his garb. Instead of the crude tropical overalls, he wore in Florida when planting strawberries, he now had on a richly embroidered coat opened in front. Beneath, was displayed a shirt of purple linen belted with a golden *pas*. From that ancient Polish belt there hung a long, hooked saber with a hilt set in precious stones.

"Take off your *shabla*, my lord

wojewoda, and replace it with a crown."

It was a priest speaking. A Polish priest wearing snow-white lacy *ornaty* over his black clerical dress.

"Rise, our victorious war leader, as our beloved king!" the priest said solemnly. And the crowd echoed and roared.

"King! Long live King Sobieski! Vivat!"

As the new king bowed with grave courtesy to his subjects, he remembered what they expected. The historical phrase, came to him in a flash.

"Poland, the buffer of the Asiatic invasion!"

Yes, this was his destiny, his self-appointed task. The century into which he had catapulted back from some distant, now forgotten future, needed him. And he solemnly responded to its need.

NO SOONER was the coronation over, than he was in the saddle again, soldier first, rather than king.

"Turks are coming from the East. Turkish hordes just passed the Russian border into Poland."

He heard his heralds with a weird feeling of one who had read all of this many years—or was it centuries ago?

"Could the past be lived differently?" He asked himself the involuntary question, and could find no answer, while his brain reeled in the chaos of conflicting memories.

Without pomp, he went to the Front in a war uniform. He arrived just in time for the decisive battle. It lasted late into afternoon. Winged hussars struck terror into the ranks of the Turks. Polish warriors followed as fast with the amaranthine flag with the white Polish eagle, as if they, too, could fly like birds of prey. Yet the Istanbul crescent still held its own.

King Sobieski watched the battle from a hill. Under him his stallion stood beating the bloody earth with its silver-shod hooves. Its master was as impatient as his spirited beast.

Suddenly, he gave the order to the stirrup holder. The boy could not believe his ears. The king, after having promised his ministers to keep out of the battle, to save himself for Poland, was galloping into the thick of it!

"Give my regards to the Seim's chairman. Tell him that the King could not stay out!"

Closer, closer. Hussars' wings swished. As the matchless troops saw their *wojewoda,* they struck with almost joyous fierceness. In another bloody hour, the enemy would run. An hour? No, half an hour, twenty minutes! Time dragged and leaped alternately during that fierce human storm.

In a short time, there would be darkness, and the Turks would reach the safety of the forest. Oh, if the daylight could only last longer! He prayed for it, swinging his saber with the viciousness of all his might.

Once again, time stopped for the Polish legion. Was it according to reality or an old legend? Again, during that interminable hour—or did it only seem like an hour — King Sobieski, former grower from the Everglades, felt that motionless time filled with vague remembrances. A swamp —a Negro girl—prophecies—

For a split second, he was not in the ornamental saddle. Stripped of his rich *sukmana,* he knelt on the trembly bog, his knees sinking deeper and deeper.

After an interminable time, his soaring soul saw a few bleached bones, brought back to the surface by a hurricane.

Darkness again. And out of that darkness, a blinding flash of crimson light—blood over his face, and someone crying:

"You're wounded, *Panie!*"

And the shouts:

"Vivat! Vivat! Victory! We won!"

Days later, supported by his faithful Hussars, he was being led to a banquet hall. His hand was in a sling. He was limping, but great joy shone on his battered face. The Turks were stopped by the Polish human wall. Europe was safe.

Safe for future trials?

Even as the pipers played, their high notes punctuated by the drums, as the tapers burned low, and as his elders grew more hilarious, the king

asked himself that pensive question.

"Safe for future trials?"

He felt suddenly very tired, sleepy and old. Poland had won. They would not need him now. He, the war leader, would feel so useless in the council chamber. The old battle-wolf, what did he know about peacetime affairs of state? He wished that the elected king could retire.

But no, it would be an insult to the electorate. Once given the supreme power by the *seim*, he had to stay on the throne.

Yet why stay, if Poland needed him no more?

How about that rumor of the spirited legion? He remembered the story his old nurse told him.

"And all these centuries, the lost legion sleeps—all but the sentinel with the golden horn."

Through the thumping of Krakoviaks, danced by the peasantry on the cobblestones of the walled courtyard, he seemed to hear the old woman crooning her tale.

"They sleep. Their pointed helmets drip with dew at night, and reflect the sun by day. They sleep, but they will awaken when Poland needs them. The golden horn of liberty will blow. . . ."

The king, tired by the festivities, dozed off.

Through the noise of the revel, he heard a faint voice of the golden horn calling, calling. . . .

He threw on a plain dark cloak over his glittering robes and went out of the palace. At the gate, a sentry stopped him with a crossed halberd.

"I'm your king," Sobieski said simply, and the sentinel saluted, perplexed.

"Do you need bodyguards, *Najasniejshy Panie?*"

"No. Since when do I mistrust my people?"

The sentry saluted again and then moved out of his way. King Sobieski walked into the darkness of the night that was punctuated by torchlights.

Once away from the center of Cracow, he breathed the piney air of the encroaching woods. Strange pines grew here, short-leafed, dark. Not like some deep-leafed pines with rainbows reflected in them he remembered. . . . Where? In some distant country of the South. . . .

He tried to recall it.

And then his thoughts were stirred away from their task of concentration by the sound of the horn growing louder.

He was in the mountains now. He saw himself, like one in a mirror sees his reflection, climbing a slope of Tatry, higher and higher. His personality was strangely divided between conflicting memories — that tropical village and the unseen blower of the horn.

Suddenly, he came upon the "Lost Legion."

He saw the sleeping postures of Winged Hussars, their horses, and the sentinel with a golden horn. He saw clear mountain stars above their heads, the rays reaching them, touching each closed eyelid with a silver finger of light. He saw the setting moon reflected in each metallic helmet, and the dew that filmed its many darkened images. He saw the sentinel stir.

The sentinel lifted the horn to his puckered mouth and blew his hollow cheeks. They expanded like a balloon near the bursting point. Clear, sonorous tones filled the air, musical and urging, unlike any other bugle call he ever heard.

THE sleeping knights awakened like one man. And, as one man, they shouted:

"Now is the time! Poland lies prostrate! You shall lead us again to her rescue!"

And the multiple mountain echo repeated the cry.

"To the rescue! Rescue . . . rescue. . . ."

Even as the king sprang into the saddle of the stately white horse, which came to him out of nowhere, he was king no more. Instead, old Jacob heard the voice of his nephew muttering:

"Where did you see those bones, neighbor? Are you sure they were human bones. Could they be—my uncle's?" Bartek said.

"I don't know, and I don't care!"

a sunburned Florida cracker responded grouchily. "It's getting dark, fog is rolling in. The third darned fog this season!"

Dragging his boots out of the muddy ground, the cracker waded away to the safety of the road and soon was lost to view around the bend in the road.

Jacob stood face to face with his worthless nephew and saw him examining the bones. Jacob's own bones! He could not go to the rescue of the recently conquered Poland. His old enemies, the Germans didn't need to fear him. Jacob was just a skeleton of himself drowned in a bog.

But his nephew, Bartek! Now there was as strong and enduring a body as Poland could wish for. Only lacking a patriotic soul, only interested in carousing. So what? Why shouldn't his body be enlisted into the service of the cause?

Over there, at the Medieval Court of Cracow, the gross soul of the young sot would be at home, in old Jacob's body. King Sobieski, no longer needed in his century, might degenerate into a drunken sot. While Jacob, in his young nephew's flesh—

A small Florida owl hooted in the distance. Now closer. Now it was sitting on a ghostly finger of palmetto, sticking out of the fog like a pointing finger.

"You shall go to Cracow!" Jacob heard his memory.

"And you, too. You both will get your heart's desire," Joda's voice rang again in his ears. . . .

In the morning, the citizens of Palmingo were very much surprised by the news. Young Wolski, who was born here, and never cared two hoots about the restoration of his old country, was going to France to enlist in the Polish Legion.

The Dead Shall Rise Up

By WILL GARTH

Author of "Fulfillment," "The Return of Eric Holm," etc.

I CANNOT say what actually took place, for I arrived too late to see. But I do know what all of us encountered in response to the terrible cries that came from the cemetery on that August night so many years ago. I was aware of what had gone before, and there were sinister hints that did not escape me. It is not difficult to guess what happened, although no one can say definitely.

It all started with the mysterious theft of the body of Mrs. Ambrose Hall from her grave in the Sac Prairie cemetery one night in July. The grave robbery was discovered early on the day following her burial. At once the little Wisconsin town became incensed at the horrible deed that had been done. Yet, despite all efforts to trace the perpetrator of the crime, there was no single clue to his identity.

Most horrible was the thought of what might have been done with the body. It was known that a nearby medical college was in need of cadavers and would pay a good price for them. Whether they bought cadavers without asking any questions, we did not know.

The dead woman's arms reached out

I think Father Shanahan was most hard hit by the occurrence, for it was he who buried the woman.

For days he hardly went out, and the Sunday after the crime he used the incident as the text for his sermon.

The second crime was an even more horrible shock to the town. This time it was the body of a little boy that was taken. It had been thought that the vandal might at-

A Prophecy Defeats a Merciless Ghoul!

tempt a second robbery, and for a week following the burial the cemetery was watched every night. But the criminal was clever. Only when the leader of the posse, an ex-undertaker named Bob Jackson, decided that it would be useless to continue the watch, did the ghoul strike a second time.

The boy whose body was stolen had been a favorite all over the town, and to make the situation even more tragic, he had been Father Shanahan's nephew.

It was only a week after the second crime that a young woman died suddenly. What was in Father Shanahan's mind as he preached the funeral sermon was only too evident. He spoke a long time about the heinous crimes that had been committed; then he descended from the pulpit and made a special blessing over the coffin.

I was sitting near enough to hear at least part of the words he uttered so solemnly.

"Desecration shall not befall you," he murmured. "Should the hands of a ghoul approach, Lord God, let the dead rise up and destroy!"

Then he reascended the pupit and spoke a brief closing paragraph to his fine sermon.

"There are two ways to combat Evil," he said. "One is with Evil. The other is with Good. The goodness and the Light are most strong, for Light has always been the enemy of Evil. Now let the forces of Good guard against the forces of Evil that have been molesting the dead in the cemetery yonder."

THAT was all he said, but it had a powerful effect on the people who heard. And, as the days went past, it began to look as if his words had been powerful enough to hold off the ghoul who had twice before desecrated the graveyard. For a little while the new grave was watched, and then the guard was withdrawn. Three nights passed, and the grave was not molested.

But we had hoped too soon. The ghoul was waiting only for a night of fury to perform his evil tasks. And the fourth night after the guard had been taken away a storm of unequalled wrath suddenly broke over the town.

A few of us had gathered at Father Shanahan's house for an informal discussion, when, above the noises of the storm, a new and terrifying sound cut into our hearing. For a moment the four of us listened. Then we rose to our feet and ran madly out of the house into the wild night. Somewhere in the storm a man's voice was screaming — screaming loudly for help!

And, when we got out into the street, we realized that the voice was calling from just a few blocks away, on the very edge of the village—from the cemetery.

AT FIRST we did not connect this frantic screaming with the ghoul who had been so mercilessly robbing graves, leaving hosts of sorrowing relatives to wonder where the bodies of their loved ones had gone. We ran swiftly on, though the screams had ceased suddenly, abruptly, as if they had been shut off by a hand clapped suddenly across a screaming mouth.

Then it was we came into the cemetery and saw the scene that has forever been imprinted on my memory. At the newly-made grave was a veiled lantern, and by its light we saw—

The grave had been opened until the coffin was reached. Indeed, the body of the unfortunate girl had been dragged from the coffin. But the ghoul was there, and he was dead! It was none other than the leader of the posse, Bob Jackson! And the thing that had killed him was the arms of the dead woman, the arms that had drawn him tightly to the fresh earth. *For the dead woman's arms had twined themselves around Bob Jackson's neck, and had broken it!*

Even as I stood there I heard the voice of the priest whispering to me: "The dead have risen up and destroyed!"

Design for Doom

By ELI COLTER

Author of "One Man's Hell," "The Crawling Corpse," etc.

In his right hand Arthur gripped the bronze hammer

An Ancient Bronze Tool Evokes Weird Visions of Violence As Maitland Struggles to Change the Bloody Course of Fate!

MY FIRST experience of the kind occurred April, 1937. Nothing had ever intimated to me that I might be psychic. I had never entertained any such ideas concerning myself. I'd never been interested in psychic phenomena, nor had any desire to experience them. Any such tendency on my part would have seemed highly amusing. A man of my temperament and pursuits wooing the realms of psychic phenomena? It would have seemed distinctly potty.

Why dash madly thither and yon striving to establish communication

with another world? I was jolly well satisfied with my own, content with my comfortable fortune. I'd amassed it myself, after I came to America with Eben. I was pleased, too, with my roomy house and my unmolested privacy inside my eight-foot adobe wall. Eben's presence in the house couldn't disturb anyone. Gentle and charming fellow, Eben. I dare say we get on together tremendously because we're so much alike. More so than brothers usually are, and inclined to hold the same attitude toward life, Eben being only five years younger.

That day in April, 1937, Eben had gone across the street to chat with our step-brother, Arthur Maitland, who is married and likes Eben's company. Arthur had a crude habit of jibing at Eben and me for being old bachelors, but the less said about Arthur's wife the better. Not an entrancing subject.

Forty-five isn't exactly senile, and Eben looked more like thirty than forty. And Arthur's charming lady served as an ever-present reminder of the benefits and advantages of the single estate. But Arthur carried his twenty-nine years and matrimonial handicap with admirable aplomb. His robust humor was irrepressible, and Eben fancied running across to chin with him occasionally.

I WAS in my living room looking over one of my collections of ancient tools and weapons. Arthur found it extremely entertaining that I spent so much time with my collections and books—which I held to be entirely my own affair, since I paid for my treasures with my own money. This particular lot of archeological specimens had always delighted me to an extraordinary degree. Especially the bronze hammer.

Ever since Eben and I moved to southern California to be near Arthur I became increasingly proud of my American items. The hammer was affirmed by reputable archeologists to be an Aztec tool, and I have always had a collector's fondness for believing in the authenticity of his acquisitions.

Both the handle and the head of the hammer were of bronze, all in one piece. The handle was short. The head was large and blunt, at least three inches across the face. The whole thing was skillfully executed and astonishingly heavy. Arthur once remarked that you could bash a man's head in two with one neat blow of the thing.

I stood there looking at the hammer, admiring it, noting the thin patina which centuries had deposited upon it. Age had turned it almost black, smudged delicately with green. I was thinking to myself that time is the one artist who works with supreme restraint, mellowing, softening, enriching his subjects. I reached out a hand, acting on the impulse to pass my fingers over the smooth face of the hammer head. And my fingers had barely come into contact with the ancient bronze when it happened.

An instant before, the California sun had been shining through the window, cheerful and bright. The sky had been clear, without a cloud. Unusually warm for spring, even in southern California. My hand touched the hammer—then, as I say, it happened.

I felt a queer ringing sound in my head. The sky went dark. I wasn't standing in my living room any more. I was sitting out in the *patio* under the big date palm by the pool. I was holding a book. A gust of wind struck me and blew over the page I was reading. Rain began to fall out of the sky.

Arthur came striding through the tall iron gates set into the adobe wall, wearing his old khaki hunting jacket, a rifle over one arm. (He owns no end of hunting togs, but he's hopelessly wedded to that khaki jacket.)

"Why don't you go in out of the rain, Tor? I got two rabbits." He waved a hand and sang out at me. I could see the little brutes' feet sticking out behind his arm.

THEN the queer ringing sound went through my head again, and the delusion was gone. Amazing! The hallucination couldn't have occupied more than two seconds. I had reached

out to touch the hammer—then I was in the *patio* and Arthur was coming through the gates. Then I was back in the living room. My fingers hadn't traveled half across the smooth face of the hammer head. And Arthur was not there. Decidedly not. Arthur was across the street in his own house, with Eben. And no rain was falling. The sky was bright and the sun was shining through the windows.

It had me stumped for a minute, then I had to laugh at myself. The explanation was so ridiculously simple.

I'd been warned years before that I couldn't depend too confidently on my heart. It is one reason I'd never married—besides Eben's needing me. He'd always found life rather bewildering, and had no one to look after him but me. I couldn't shirk my responsibility onto a step-brother as long as I lived. Besides, Arthur would have his go at it after I was dead. Not that he'd encounter any annoyance in looking after Eben—Eben is the mildest of men. He didn't even resent my leaving all my money to Arthur so that it would be properly seen to.

"You're jolly right, Tor, old fellow," he assured me. "If you'd left it to me, I'd probably run through it in a few years." He would, too. Spending it on, and for, chaps whom he judged needed it worse than he. Swell fellow, Eben.

He knew, of course, that I had been warned about the condition of my heart. But a capricious cardiac organ had never been a source of worry to me. One way of shuffling off is quite as good as another, and making a quick job of it is infinitely preferable to a boring stay in bed, I should say. I'd shrugged aside the specialist's dictum as a bogie unworthy of a second thought. I wasn't frightfully impressed by the statement that my heart was lacking in stamina and likely to play tricks on me. I'd never had any evidence of its treachery till that day. But after an instant's moderate cogitation, I concluded that what I'd experienced must have been a slight heart attack. The ringing sound in the head, the mind wandering—

I dismissed the occurrence as of no importance, and returned my attention to the bronze hammer. Naturally, I didn't mention the incident to Eben when he came home.

I forgot it completely for six weeks. As completely as if it had never been. And I had no further attack.

THE first week in June, I went out to sit in the *patio* and read under the big date palm by the pool. My Irish setter, Bruce, was lying half asleep at my feet. The sky darkened suddenly, but I thought nothing of it. The sky often turns dark in southern California in the spring.

I went on reading. I'd completely forgotten the bronze hammer incident and my supposed heart attack. A gust of wind turned over the page I was reading. With astonishing abruptness rain began to fall. That wasn't awfully unusual either. Rain will fall out of an almost clear, spring sky in California, start pelting down with as little warning as if old Jupiter Pluvius had upset his sprinkler can. So I didn't move. The rain wasn't as yet coming through the palm fronds, and the shower might be over any minute.

Then Bruce barked once, without lifting his head from his paws, and wagged his tail. I looked up to see Arthur coming in through the iron gates set into the adobe wall. He'd been hunting. He had his rifle over his arm and he was wearing his old khaki jacket. I could see the little brutes' feet sticking out behind his arm. Here in actuality was the exact scene I had visioned six weeks ago! I felt my spine chill as he raised a hand and waved at me. I knew what he was going to say before he said it.

"Why don't you go in out of the rain, Tor? I got two rabbits."

Then he hurried on toward the house to see Eben, and I sat there staring after him with my mouth open. I wasn't alarmed—I was merely astounded by the revelation and puzzled as to the reason for the meaningless piece of business. Clearly, I'd suffered no heart attack. I'd been granted a glimpse into the future. Only a blithering idiot could have

failed now to recognize the character of the experience. But in heaven's name, what was it for? It had been thrust upon me to what end? It was so trivial, so purposeless. No earthly excuse for it that I could see then.

I didn't tell Eben.

I thought it over for several days, and finally decided that it was, as they say, one of those things. It held, I decided, no significance and most likely would never happen again.

But it did happen again, near the end of that year, 1937. Another similar incident, of somewhat longer duration but quite as trivial. I began to wonder whether there might ultimately prove to be a purpose in the amazing business and I was mildly curious, although not actually perturbed.

THEN early in 1938 it happened for the third time. I was in my study. From that room there is no view save of *patio,* pools and gardens. I was reading Kipling. Bruce was asleep in front of the grate. I started to turn a page, and the queer ringing sound went through my head. I knew what to expect by now, so I sat still, waiting.

Then abruptly I was looking out the window toward the street. The adobe wall encloses the house and all the main grounds to the sides and rear. Only the narrow front strip of formal approach lies outside the adobe wall. From the living room alone can one catch a glimpse of the street onto which the house faces. I was standing in the living room before the mantle with my hand stretched toward the bronze hammer.

From that position I could gaze under the boughs of the China-berry trees to the curb. I saw gathered there the children of Fred Jermyn, who lived nearly a square distant from me. I saw Bruce go romping across the lawns to play with the Jermyn lads. I heard a shot. I went dashing out of the house to the street, and came upon ten-year-old Dickie Jermyn, standing terrified on the sidewalk with a gun in his hand. He was looking down at Bruce. The dog was lying dead on the paving with a bullet through his brain. I felt sickish.

Then the ringing sounded in my head again. I was back in my study, just turning the page of my book. I still felt ill. And then I remembered something startling. The gun little Dickie Jermyn had been holding was one of a collection of mine, an ancient dueling pistol hanging on a display board near the bronze hammer.

I daresay Eben thought I'd gone a bit balmy. But he ventured no comment when he saw me take the gun down and go out with it, nor when he saw me return some time subsequently without it. I didn't explain that I'd gone to a nearby dam, hired a boat, rowed out to the middle of the reservoir above the dam and dropped the pistol into the deepest part of the lake, load and all. I'm tremendously fond of Bruce.

I thought then that I'd solved the meaning of those peculiar flashes into the future. I'd concluded they must be intended to grant me opportunity to avert misfortune and disaster. Otherwise, of course, they were pointless.

It was in August of 1938 that I happened to be in the living room scrutinizing the bronze hammer again. I'd stopped to finger it and admire it numerous times since seeing that distressing forewarning of Dickie Jermyn and the gun. I had no fear of the accident's ever coming to pass since I'd dropped the dueling pistol into the lake. I'd kept Bruce close. Just now I'd left him asleep in my study. Eben was in his own room writing letters. I could hear my man Dobbs moving about in the next room, humming to himself. Admirable fellow, Dobbs, but he will hum.

I caught the sound of children's voices outside. I found myself looking through the window, into the street beyond the hanging boughs of the China-berry trees. The Jermyn lads were gathered on the curb. Bruce went romping across the lawn toward them.

I started for the door, running. The shot came before I was out of the room. I knew what I would find, but I kept on running. Bruce was quite dead. He'd got it through the brain.

Dickie Jermyn was sobbing, and he held in his hand—the dueling pistol I'd dropped into the lake.

HE LOOKED up at me, utterly demoralized with fright, begging for clemency. He hadn't meant to kill the dog. He hadn't dreamed that the old gun would shoot, after it was lying in the water like that. He had been rowing with his brothers on the lake above the dam that afternoon, fishing. They'd brought up the old gun, their hook caught between the trigger and the trigger-guard.

"Please don't send me to jail, Mr. Maitland," he pleaded. "I wouldn't have hurt dear old Bruce for anything!"

I took the pistol away from him, and went down on one knee and put my arm around him and told him to stop crying. These things happened. I didn't blame him, but he must see that he wasn't to play about with old guns any more. Then I sent him home. He went, feeling a bit cheered, but still sobbing, followed by his tongue-tied brothers.

I put the pistol into my pocket and carried Bruce into the *patio*. I told Dobbs to bury him decently. I wasn't quite up to it at the moment.

I can't say what prevented my telling Eben. No conscious ratiocination on my part. He had to know Bruce was dead, how he had died. He was shocked for me and exasperated at the Jermyn children. But he learned nothing about what gun Dickie had found, or of the pre-vision I'd had of Bruce's death. I simply felt I shouldn't tell him, and I didn't. I kept the disturbing part of the affair to myself.

I won't say I didn't do a good bit of thinking about the matter. Each incident in the growing train was appreciably more serious than the one which had preceded it. If these strange excursions into the future were being bestowed upon me that I might avert disaster, why hadn't my efforts succeeded to that end? Perhaps I hadn't been careful enough in disposing of the pistol—and I didn't want Eben to see it in my possession again. I gave it away to a fellow collector. I got into the habit of moving one item and another, geting rid of them and changing them about, so Eben wouldn't attach any importance to occasional disappearances among my specimens.

The next upsetting experience came along in January, 1939. I was standing looking at my tool-and-weapon display in the living room, when it struck me suddenly that the bronze hammer had consistently figured in all these warning illusions. At the time of the first one, I'd been fingering the bronze hammer when I'd received my uncanny glimpse into the future. At the time of the second one, I'd taken the hammer down to heft its weight, recalling Arthur's facetious remark that one blow of it would bash a man's head in two. The third time, I'd been in my study, but the predicted death of my dog was to occur while I was again standing admiring the bronze hammer.

Here once more I was halted before the thing. And for the fourth time I heard that ringing sound go through my head.

FRED JERMYN was a straightforward and honest chap, but, like Arthur, he'd never been able to amass any considerable amount of money. He was one of my few close friends, and I frequently lent him my new blue limousine when he wanted to entertain a larger party than his own small car would accommodate. He drove carefully, and always returned the limousine in as good condition as when he'd borrowed it.

In this fourth unaccountable vision of the future I saw the blue limousine. Fred Jermyn was driving it, and he was unaccompanied. I saw the car swerve out of control and crash itself into a parked truck, killing Jermyn instantly.

The illusionary state lasted but an instant. Then the ringing sound filled my head again. I was back before my mantel, staring stupidly at the bronze hammer. And Dobbs appeared in the doorway to say that luncheon was served. I wanted to shout a jubilant hurrah. For, of course, I was tremendously relieved and reassured.

I went out to greet Eben, feeling decidedly bucked. I was certain now that I had solved the enigma and knew what it was all about. The purpose of these pre-visions was to maneuver me into a position where I could save Fred Jermyn's life. It was all very simple. I would never let him have the blue limousine again. And that, as they say, would be that.

The next day I purchased a maroon sedan, and this car I stood ready to lend the chap whenever he wanted it. I made a trivial excuse about refusing him the blue limousine, and he accepted my word for it without rude curiosity.

The summer went by with felicitous calm. In October I left the blue car standing in front of the garage while I was away for a bit of a chat with another collector who lives only a few squares from me.

There's no good prolonging the denouement—the car was stolen in my absence. I notified the police. The theft was broadcast, and the thief, alarmed, deserted the car, parked miles distant on a side street. Fred Jermyn came along and recognized my stolen motor. He got into the blue limousine to drive it home. . . . I daresay you've guessed the rest. They brought him home battered almost beyond recognition. The blue car was utterly demolished. The truck it struck was completely turned over.

I did become upset, then. The entire chain of events seemed so futile and disagreeably useless. I grew a shade morbid concerning the bronze hammer. For a ha'penny I'd have melted it down and scattered the slag. I was deterred from this only by the absolute conviction that it would avail me nothing. If that hammer had any purpose in my future, somebody would find the fragments, melt them back together and refashion the tool. I wouldn't be able to rid myself of it. That one grim verity my pre-visions had taught me beyond all possibility of doubt. I could foresee that these events were scheduled to happen, but by no conceivable scheming could I prevent their taking place.

I had by now espoused a settled conviction that the next pre-vision would be the climactic one and the last. I went about waiting for it.

It came in February, 1940.

I was behind my house in the porch gallery, reading again, when the ringing sound went through my head. I knew—without having the least understanding of how I should know—that here and now would be revealed to me the final purpose of all these baffling forewarnings. Then came the revelation itself, much longer than any prior incident.

THE ringing in my head ceased. I was now sitting in my study, my back toward the door, scrutinizing an ancient script. I was suddenly aware that someone had entered the room soundlessly. I felt a wave of acute alarm. At the same time I felt also a sense of inertia, and in a flash I realized that the wine had been drugged. I'd been almost asleep. All my body was flaccid with the effect of the drug. I could barely turn my head around.

Arthur was almost upon me. In his right hand he gripped the bronze hammer, swung high to crash upon my skull. I had no opportunity to defend myself. The hammer fell, with so stunning an impact that the blow cracked the skull bones.

Then I was standing just beyond Arthur, watching him in amazement as he struck again and again, hearing clearly the words he was muttering in low-voiced fury.

"Damn you, are you dead? I'm tired of living like a pauper, waiting for you to die. I should wear myself out making money when you've got such slews of it to leave! You with your bad heart! Us thinking you'd drop off any day and leave us rolling in cash. You'd go on living forever. I'm tired of waiting, do you hear?"

Naturally, he did not say all this quite so smoothly and coherently as I write it, you understand. He talked very disjointedly. Panting, between blows. I hadn't realized the fellow could hit so hard. It quite astonished me. And I was infinitely amused at the silly persistence with which he continued bashing away, when the

first blow had been entirely sufficient for his purpose.

He desisted, finally, and stepped back. He wiped the perspiration from his mouth and forehead with the back of his hand. Something of a chore, polishing off a step-brother, when it requires that amount of effort. I doubt that I'd have the zest for it myself. I wondered what he'd do next. He dropped the bloody hammer into the deep side pocket of his old khaki hunting jacket. He leered at the body, then he began talking again. I hadn't imagined he was such a fellow for talking to himself.

"Most fools make the mistake of trying to hide their tracks too well, and calling attention onto themselves by that very action," he was muttering. "You won't catch me slipping up that way!"

He turned and went out into Eben's room. I followed him. Eben was asleep on his bed. It was almost a daily habit with Eben, to lie down for a nap after he and I had indulged in our afternoon glass of port. Eben was a light sleeper; the least sound in the room would waken him. But I know he wouldn't waken now too easily. He had drunk much more of the drugged wine than I had. Arthur didn't even glance at him. He got a shirt of Eben's, and reached toward a heavy paperweight on Eben's desk. The paperweight was one I'd given Eben, another ancient relic. It was a squat stone idol set in a bakelite base. The stone head of the paperweight was about the size of the head of the bronze hammer.

I watched Arthur with lively speculation, not at all anxious about Eben. I knew he intended no physical violence toward Eben. He picked the paperweight up carefully in his handkerchief. He went back to the room where he'd left the body.

I had to admire the fellow's nerves. The thing wasn't an engaging sight. But he didn't turn a hair, mind you. He walked up to it and thumped the paperweight against the bloody skull. He rubbed the right sleeve of Eben's shirt against the same gory mess. Then he returned to Eben's room,

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wrapped the paperweight in the shirt and tossed them both into Eben's closet. Eben was still soundly asleep.

ARTHUR calmly walked out of my house and across the street to his own. I wasn't a trotter's length behind him. The ingenious fellow simply walked up the stairs to the attic room on the third floor, which he'd fitted out for his guns and hunting paraphernalia. He took off his jacket and hung it up with his other hunting togs. He was chuckling to himself.

"If anybody saw me stop by," he muttered, "I merely went in to see Eben and Tor as I often do on returning from a hunting trip, knocked, got no answer, and came on home. Nobody will have any reason to search my house. Some day when the noise has died down, and Eben's gone to the hot seat, I'll quietly go hunting again and dispose of the hammer. Nobody'll ever wonder what became of it, not even Eben. Tor was always changing things about. Art, old boy, you're a smart guy. I have to hand it to you!"

Still chuckling, he went back down the stairs.

I did not then exactly follow him. I merely found myself downstairs in his house. He was standing reading a newspaper. I seemed to realize that a little time had elapsed. I went up and glanced at the paper over his shoulder. It was dated March 10, 1952. There were staring headlines before my eyes. One read:

EBEN MAITLAND ARRESTED
FOR MURDER OF BROTHER

The article below the headline went on to say that Eben Maitland had that morning been arrested on the charge of murdering his brother, Tor Maitland. It stated further that Arthur Maitland, who had inherited all his brother's wealth, had declared that he would spend the last cent to save Eben. (Evidently he had neglected to mention the fact that Eben and I were only his step-brothers.)

But Mr. Arthur Maitland could accomplish nothing for the defense no matter to what lengths he might go, the press writer concluded. There was not the slightest loophole of escape for Eben Maitland. Dobbs, the brothers' houseman, had discovered the body. He had immediately gone in to arouse Eben, who was on his bed, apparently asleep. The death-dealing weapon had been found in Eben's closet along with his blood-stained shirt. The weapon, a heavy stone paperweight, was clotted with blood and hair from Tor Maitland's head. Its bakelite base held no finger-prints save those of Eben Maitland.

To declare that he had remained asleep while someone stole in and out of his room, removed the paperweight, killed his brother with it, returned to daub his shirt with blood and hide the paperweight and shirt in his closet, all without waking him, was utterly absurd. Especially in view of the fact Dobbs had admitted reluctantly, that Eben was an unusually light sleeper and wakened at the slightest sound. Eben seemed like one shocked dumb by horror and despair, patently the air of a guilty man.

The poor chap hadn't known the port wine was drugged, of course, any more than I myself had known. And I hadn't thought to mention to him that Arthur had brought the wine. I heard Arthur laugh as he crumpled the newspaper in his hand.

Then the ringing came in my head again. The vision was gone. I was alive and well, on my chair in the porch gallery, with a book in my hand.

I SAT erect and laughed aloud. Now, at last, I knew the reason for this train of strange visitations.

I shall have a great deal of quiet amusement during the coming years, watching Arthur and imagining the expression that will cross his face when he sees how thoroughly I have bested him. I am convinced that the next twelve years shall prove quite the happiest period of my life.

I have done three things. I have made a verbatim copy of this document and placed it, sealed, in the hands of my lawyer, to be delivered to the chief of police on March 10, 1952, after Eben is in jail, safe from

Arthur's vindictive retaliation. I have added this note, to the police chief:

My dear sir:

You will arrest Arthur Maitland for the murder of his step-brother Tor Maitland. You will procure from the third floor of his house his old khaki hunting jacket, in the right pocket of which you will find the ancient bronze hammer which was the murder weapon. As soon as you have incarcerated Arthur Maitland, you will free my excellent brother Eben and tender to him this document.

Tor Maitland.

The second thing I did was to make out a new will, bequeathing all my earthly possessions to Eben. This will is to take effect March 10, 1952, and is also locked away in my lawyer's care. If Eben spends it all on chaps who need it worse, he'll have a grand time doing it.

The third thing? That is what shall furnish me with so much quiet amusement in the next twelve years to come. After my vision had gone from me, I remembered one added bit from the newspaper article. It was this: there was one slight discrepancy in the evidence against Eben Maitland. On Tor Maitland's forehead were unexplainable marks, as if the death instrument had borne upon its surface a deeply engraved cross. The head of the paperweight was smooth, but this was considered of little moment. The evidence in full was so utterly conclusive. So—the third thing I have done—

I have spent considerable time, smiling to myself with much relish, in filing the mark of a cross deep into the head of the bronze hammer.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

Novelets and Stories by

AUGUST W. DERLETH

HENRY KUTTNER

SEABURY QUINN

MARK SCHORER

ROBERT BLOCH

DON TRACY

and Others

By LUCIFER

Famous Authority on Witchcraft and Superstition

EGYPTIAN magic, mysticism of ancient sepulchers, black arts of the Pharaohs—why have these elements persisted for centuries? Do the Pyramids still house the ghosts of kings buried within those monuments of stone which have defied nature and man for five thousand years? Or have these ghosts been reincarnated into living beings of today for some prophesied purpose?

No one knows. But for generations, stories have come out of Egypt far beyond the interpretation of science or conscientious skeptics. True, the Pyramids were not built for life, but for death—and as some say, for eternity. Ancient sepulchers they are—perhaps no different than sacred cemeteries of today. But things have been reported within the mystic channels of the Great Pyramid which make even modern kings stop and listen.

Playing with Supernatural Fire

EGYPT, 1907: Two English students, Frederick Fenton and Ronald Martin, on a summer tour have visited Cairo and the Pyramids of Gizeh. In college, Fenton had been considered a psychic. Table tipping was a dormitory pastime, but never would the table move without Fenton's hands upon it. Martin used to tease him about his supposed power to contact the spirits. So had the other lads of the school.

Thus, when these two classmates visited the King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid, Cheops, Martin jokingly suggested:

"Why not call upon the spirits here, Fred?"

But they couldn't hold their seance in the daytime amid all the tourists. They would have to come at night when the Pyramid was closed to the public. It would be easy enough to bribe the guard to let them in. Candle-light would intensify the eerie atmosphere.

Mysterious Disappearance

Their tourist friends advised them not to play with the supernatural fire. But this only made them more anxious to experiment. So that night they arranged for their strange adventure.

No one knows how successful was their seance. At daybreak when they had not come out of the mystic chamber, the guard investigated. But he could not find them. He believed they had left without his seeing them, so he didn't report the matter.

The next day, however, friends came looking for the two young spiritualists. But they had disappeared without leaving any clue to their whereabouts. It was believed they had been killed by bandits in the desert on their way back to Cairo and their bodies buried. One of the boys had carried a large sum of money.

In a few months the mystery was forgotten. Their relatives mourned them as having been murdered by robbers. So the matter was closed to further investigation.

Two years later, Peter Wooley, an English tourist, returned to England with a collection of photographs he had taken in Egypt on his trip that year. One night he was showing his snapshots to a group of friends, when one man pointed to a photograph of the Great Pyramid with two men dressed in quaint native costumes standing before it.

"Who are these men?" he asked the tourist.

With some surprise, Peter Wooley answered:

"Why, I don't know. I snapped the picture one afternoon and didn't know they were in it until I looked up. They must have stepped out of the main entrance. They spoke perfect English and seemed to know everything about pyramid construction. They even told me the Pyramids were built in 3100 B.C."

"But didn't they say anything about themselves?" asked the friend.

Wooley smiled, "Oh, yes, a lot of crazy things, but I didn't take them seriously or listen to half of it for I knew they were spoofing me. I remember they said they couldn't leave the Pyramid for one hundred years because King Khufu had ordered them punished. But I liked them in spite of their joking—you know, King

Khufu lived five thousand years ago."

But the friend didn't laugh. He shook his head.

"Funny," he said, "but I'd swear these fellows were Fenton and Martin."

"Fenton and Martin!" gasped the others.

Photographic Enigma

The photograph was taken at once to the relatives of the missing boys. They too were struck by the marked resemblance. A trip to Egypt was arranged for further investigation. Wooley was to go with them. Perhaps the boys were still alive, and through some disease or blow on the head, had lost their memories. That was the hope of the parents.

But the search was in vain. No one but Wooley had ever seen the strange guides. They had never been reported before, or since.

Today the photograph still remains an enigma in the treasure chest of the Fenton family. When recently asked to release the photograph for the public, the family refused. They didn't want to be held up to ridicule by a skeptical world.

But one thing the authorities admitted. The costumes worn by the men in the picture were not modern, but decidedly ancient!

Had these boys ventured too far into the supernatural, only to find themselves engulfed by Pyramid magic and condemned by some psychic law of ancient Egypt? Who knows?

Strange Transportation

And here is another strange case, perhaps the weirdest of all:

The year is 1910. A young Englishman visits the Pyramid for the first time. He is fascinated. Within the sacred chambers he feels the presence of something other than the tourists around him. Alone, he wanders from the others until he finds himself in a small passageway.

A strange contentment comes over him, his muscles relax. He feels exhilarated as though he had taken a drug to quiet his nerves. There seems to be no weight to his legs or arms. He closes his eyes to shake off the weird effect. Then as if by some magic touch he feels himself in space—there is nothing but a gray mist around him. His mind is bewildered. He is no longer aware of his own identity.

The mist clears. He is on a desert near a large river. There are thousands of strange people moving about, but they are dressed in flowing robes and sandals. Their skin is dark brown. He looks at his own arms and legs. He too is dark brown and he is dressed like the others.

Amazing Scene

Then he sees huge square-cut stones, each one nearly as large as a house. They are lined up along the river just beyond a sand-dune. In the distance he sees sev-

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eral columns of scantily clothed men in formation before the first great stone. Yes, they look like slaves, for here and there he sees a huge man with a whip, flailing those who seem to be weakening.

There are ropes tied to the slaves. They are harnessed to the stone. He watches. The first stone begins to move over the dune, pulled by hundreds of man-beasts. But what is the stone resting on? There are no wheels. Why doesn't it sink in the sand?

He goes over to investigate. He stands near the large stone bound with ropes leading to the men. Then he sees that the ground in front of the stone is studded with smooth boulders like huge marbles much bigger than a man's head—perfect balls of rock. They have been placed like a track over which the huge stone is pulled —a ball-bearing effect. The track leads on and on into the desert.

No one pays any attention to him. He goes closer. Suddenly the huge stone begins moving faster. The ropes to the men slacken. The men become frantic and try to pull away, for now the stone has reached an incline and gravity is moving it ahead.

Vision of Horror

But the panic-stricken men can't get away from their harness. They stumble over the slackened ropes and trip each other. At least a thousand men are facing death beneath the monster of stone which is bearing down on them.

The Englishman wants to turn away, but he can't. The stone moves on, pressing the boulders into the sand, leaving but a few inches of surface. The stone reaches the first column of men who lift their arms in supplication. The sight is terrifying. But the stone monster has no mercy; it crushes them slowly to death as blood spurts over the sand and oozes out beside the stone. The slaves are trapped like ants beneath the trampling foot of a giant.

The stone stops at the bottom of the incline, but no men are visible. All of them have disappeared, their mangled bodies mingled with the sand and boulders over which the monster has passed, leaving a red trail of horror.

The Englishman screams in terror and closes his eyes. He can't open them. Soon he feels hands holding him down. He knows he is now lying on his back. But where? He hears words:

"Take it easy, my friend. It's all right —it's all right."

Haunting Night

He opens his eyes. He sees faces looking down at him—faces he knows, those of tourists who had been with him in the Pyramid.

"What happened?" he murmurs.

"You must have fainted — the foul air of this passageway. Do you feel better now?"

For some reason he does not tell them his dream. Or was it a dream? Had he

by some strange magic been carried back into ages past? Had he witnessed a tragedy associated with the building of the great Pyramid? It was horrible.

That night in his hotel room he is uneasy. His experience still haunts him. He has to tell someone, but being sensitive, he fears ridicule. There is only one man who might understand—an Egyptian doctor he had met in the hotel—a kindly gentleman of the East.

The young Englishman tells his story to the sympathetic doctor, who smiles knowingly.

"You must tell your dream to Hamid. Come with me," says the doctor.

Mystic Bond

Soon they enter a small hut in the far side of the town. Then behind soft portals, the Englishman sees a dignified Egyptian of middle age standing in the dimly lighted room, extending his hand to the bewildered Britisher.

"My son, I am glad to know you are one of us. Your dream is your passport to the secrets of the Nile."

The young man is astonished. He had not told Hamid his dream as yet.

"But, sir, I haven't told you my dream."

Hamid smiles. "When you told it to the doctor, you told it to me. You see, he is one of us, too. We three were together in ages past."

For some reason, the young man feels at peace. Yes, he has known these men for a long time. They seem like old friends. He is happy in a strange way.

Then Hamid speaks again. "Sit down, my son. There is something which must be revealed to you."

Weird Prophecy

The young man listens profoundly as Hamid continues:

"You have a great duty to perform for your present country. Four years from now you will enter a great war which will last for four years more. You will be wounded but you shall not die. You will be honored by your king and depart for a residence across the sea and under the same flag.

"There you will marry and acquire a large tract of land. You will know which tract to take. In the year 1939 you shall once again be urged to go to war for your country, but your physical condition and age shall prevent it. It is as it should be. You shall retire to your estate and await for the proper time.

"And it will be not long in coming. For your estate shall become the future home of the King and Queen of England!"

One More Step

"Poppycock," the skeptic might say, had this prophecy been told to the world at that time. But the young man does not think so, even though as yet the prophecy has not been entirely fulfilled.

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And those who know this Englishman today do not scoff. In 1914 he entered the British army and served for four years. He was wounded in the leg, which causes him to limp to this day. He was decorated, and later he inherited a large tract of land in Canada, where he now resides. He was not able to join his old regiment in 1939 due to his bad leg.

This is what he revealed to a friend recently:

"There is only one more step of the prophecy. And the day that the King and Queen of England come to Canada to stay, I shall release my book—all of which, except the last chapter, I have prepared. I suppose the world will scoff and call me a liar—but who cares?"

Magic—or Coincidence?

Millions of people today believe in the mystery of the Pyramids. They claim that for nearly five thousand years, hundreds of prophecies have come to pass. They base these prophecies on the exact measurements of the inner chambers, symbolizing years of time in inches of Pyramid space. They point to the prophecy that the first World War was to start in 1914 and end in 1918—and that the second World War would start in 1939 and end in 1947.

These claims can be substantiated by Dr. Brown Landone in his recent book *Prophecies of Melchi-Zedek*, published by the Book of Gold Publishing Company of New York City.

Were the masters of the black arts five thousand years ago able to foresee the world in the chaotic condition of today? Or is it mere coincidence that certain measurements happen to correspond with years of time denoting great events in the history of the world?

Egyptian magic, mysticism of ancient sepulchers, black arts of the Pharaohs—who knows?

—LUCIFER.

LETTERS FROM READERS

ONCE again we extend our sincerest thanks to you for your splendid letters. Please keep them streaming in. All suggestions, opinions and comments are welcomed.

A new reader, a man who is deeply attached to the mystic, being the American Leader of the Buddhist Brotherhood of America, writes as follows:

I have just read the first issue of STRANGE STORIES, and enjoyed it very much. An ardent lover of the weird and the uncanny, I desire to thank you for giving us this very excellent magazine. Please keep your standards high. You can, if you appeal to them, attract readers of a high type—thinkers and students.

The Black Arts Club for readers will, I am sure,

be a great success and will be enthusiastically received. You can put me down as a member.

Ralph Rayburn Phillips.

Portland, Oregon.

Here are a few comments on the June issue. From a long, shrewdly critical letter comes the following extract:

Best story in the issue is the Don Alviso yarn, THE HUNCHBACK OF HANOVER. You seem to prefer morality tales for leading novelets. The last few have all taught some lesson to the reader. The author always succeeds in making an entertaining few minutes and should have a recall soon. Second honors are shared by Kuttner's TIME TO KILL, the most chilling story these eyes have glued upon in many years, and SAILOR QUITS THE SEA by Dow, a short with a really novel twist. This same applies to author's April GALLOWS GEIST. THE ROOM OF SOULS by Hammond, and Maria Moravsky's plant story share third place on my list. I'm trying to be fair, but all of the tales were so good it is almost impossible to make an accurate tally.

Charles Hidley.

New York, N. Y.

From a constant reader we receive the following comment on the last issue:

Hammond's THE ROOM OF SOULS is a real thriller. It has just enough details to hit the spot. Clemons' THE PANTING BEAST is a revenge story de luxe. Creamer's THE TERROR MUMMY utilizes its theme very well. And Price's SOLDIER, REST is a beautiful Memorial Day theme. But Don Alviso's THE HUNCHBACK OF HANOVER gets a special rating. It is a superb piece of work. The interwining of the magic element with the life throb of the characters makes it literature of the highest class. This is a story that will long be remembered.

Bart Reagan.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

We've had a number of magicians and psychologists writing in to us, and we're printing extracts from a few of these letters. The first is from a Supreme Knight of The Knights of Magic, an Independent Fraternal Order of Magicians:

I have read every copy of STRANGE STORIES from the first one printed and find each copy better than the one that preceded it. In fact, I like your magazine so well I am planning to bind the issues of the magazine in book form and devote a permanent place to them in my fast growing library of Magic and Occult literature.

Although my interests have always been toward magic of the entertainment variety, I have given a great deal of time to the investigation of occult phenomena, and have visited and seen many mediums professing occult powers in action. I have yet to see one who could do anything that I or my brother magicians could not duplicate by means of sleight-of-hand. In fact, at this writing, I seek the opportunity of furthering my investigations with an open mind.

I most certainly will tell all my friends about STRANGE STORIES and am certain that many of them who are interested in magic will also be interested in your most unusual magazine which stands head and shoulders above all the rest of a similar nature.

Lew Dick.

Flushing, N. Y.

Thanks for the praise. We'll try to live up to it. And may we suggest that anybody interested in magic will find another source of suitable entertainment of a high level in our companion magazine, THE GHOST.

Here is another magician's comment:

I am enrolling in the BLACK ARTS CLUB as a Master because I believe my twenty years

(Continued on page 96)

(Continued from page 95)

of study of all that is strange, entitles me to this.

Not only have I been a student, but have also been an active worker of lesser miracles as a professional magician for many years. Of course, modern magic makes no pretense to the Black Arts, except as entertainment. However, without deluding one's self, I believe this is about as close to being a real wizard as one may become.

I certainly enjoy STRANGE STORIES. I particularly like this month's THE HUNCHBACK OF HANOVER. This is very good because in this instance the super-normal is used as an instrument for good instead of evil as in most stories. This alone should distinguish it from the common run.

Eddie Clever.

New Cumberland, Pa.

And now for an experience from an applicant for the Black Arts' *Master's* card. This interesting letter is from an oilfield worker:

Last summer I had a job as a pumper in an oilfield. For those who are unfamiliar with oilfields, allow me to explain that it is the pumper's duty to make the rounds of the oilwells at certain intervals to see that they are kept running.

One night when working the graveyard shift (from midnight to eight a.m.), I had been delayed at the first well so that it was about one-thirty when I arrived at the fifth well on the route.

When I stepped upon the derrick floor I heard a blood-curdling scream of abject fear. Glancing upward, I saw a man falling from the top of the derrick. I heard his body hit the wooden floor ten feet in front of me.

Before I could reach the body it disappeared!

Nor did I ever see it, or any evidence of it again, although I spent some time in examining the derrick floor where it had apparently struck.

The next morning, when telling of the adventure, I learned that exactly a year ago that night, at approximately the same time, a man who was working in the crew which was drilling the well had fallen to his death in exactly the manner I had described!

John Halliburton.

Norman, Okla.

And a student of magic gives us this definition and short outline of true magic:

"Magic consists of, and is acquired by, the worship of the gods," says Plato. Magic was considered as a sacred science inseparable from religion, according to numerous scholars. The Brahmins (the early, pure school) and the Egyptian Heirophants

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I am hereby applying for membership in THE BLACK ARTS CLUB. I am a regular reader of STRANGE STORIES, interested in the occult, and am enrolling as a

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(also the original pristine school) taught that it is within the power of man to command the services of the gods by magical practices. The Greek teachers called this *Theurgia*, and its practitioners *Theurgists*. The "gods" mentioned mean not personalities, a common but seriously mistaken belief, but the various occult *causal* forces in Nature.

Every wizard was reputed to have a band of demons at his beck and call, and demon in this sense signifies but the elemental, invisible, intelligent entities having dominion over and protection of their own particular work in Nature.

From these few hints, and a great mass of reliable facts, it will be found that magic, then, consists of the various powers and faculties that are developed in a man by his increasing purity of life and thought. The more pure the man (i.e., *spiritually* pure) the more powers is he permitted to possess, since then he will not use them for selfish purposes, which Nature does not allow because lack of harmony is the result. However, since the law of things is Contrast, we can postulate "black" magic, *selfish* magic; remembering that "almost every soul-production can be imitated by mathematical ingenuity."

Surely some, seeing the wonders and marvels worked by the early Initiates, would covet those same powers for their own personal aggrandisement. And thus it was, and it is this degradation of a once select science that has caused the unpopularity of so-called "magical" practices: cunning men, more crafty than wise, found they could imitate some of the lower forms of white spiritual magic by a mathematical and material system; this accomplished, they claimed for themselves super-powers, which the people soon discovered as false, and turned away gradually from all magic.

Such in brief is a definition of true magic, as well as a short outline of its degenerate history. You don't hear of the *real* magicians, today; their motto is to Will, to Dare, to Know, and, most important, to be Silent.

Blair Moffett.

Springfield, Pa.

That's all for now. Another list of our growing club membership will be included in the next issue. If you haven't as yet joined the Black Arts Club, do so now. Simply fill out the coupon on page 96 and become a VOTARY of the Black Arts. To become a MASTER, you must write about an interesting experience or some intriguing aspect of the occult. STRANGE STORIES, at its new low price, will be better than ever in the issues to come. Next issue's roster include stories and novelets by such masters of narrative as Robert Bloch, August W. Derleth and Mark Schorer, Don Tracy, Seabury Quinn, Henry Kuttner and others.

If you like this magazine, tell others—I'm sure may of your friends would be interested in making its acquaintance. And above all, keep writing us—your ideas help us shape the future policies of STRANGE STORIES!

Thank you.

—THE EDITOR.

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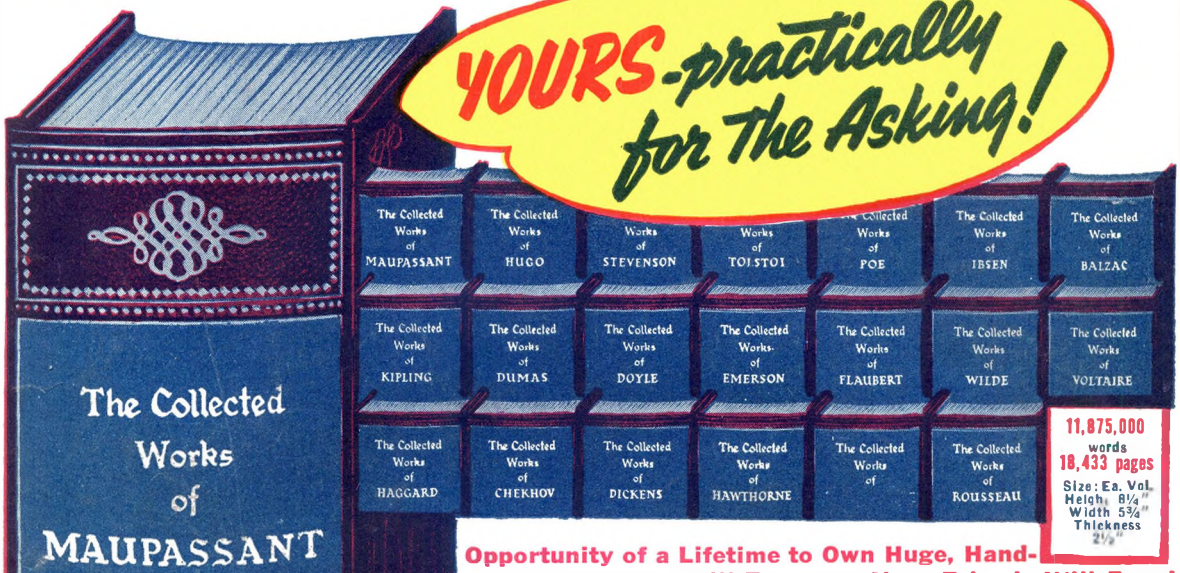

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