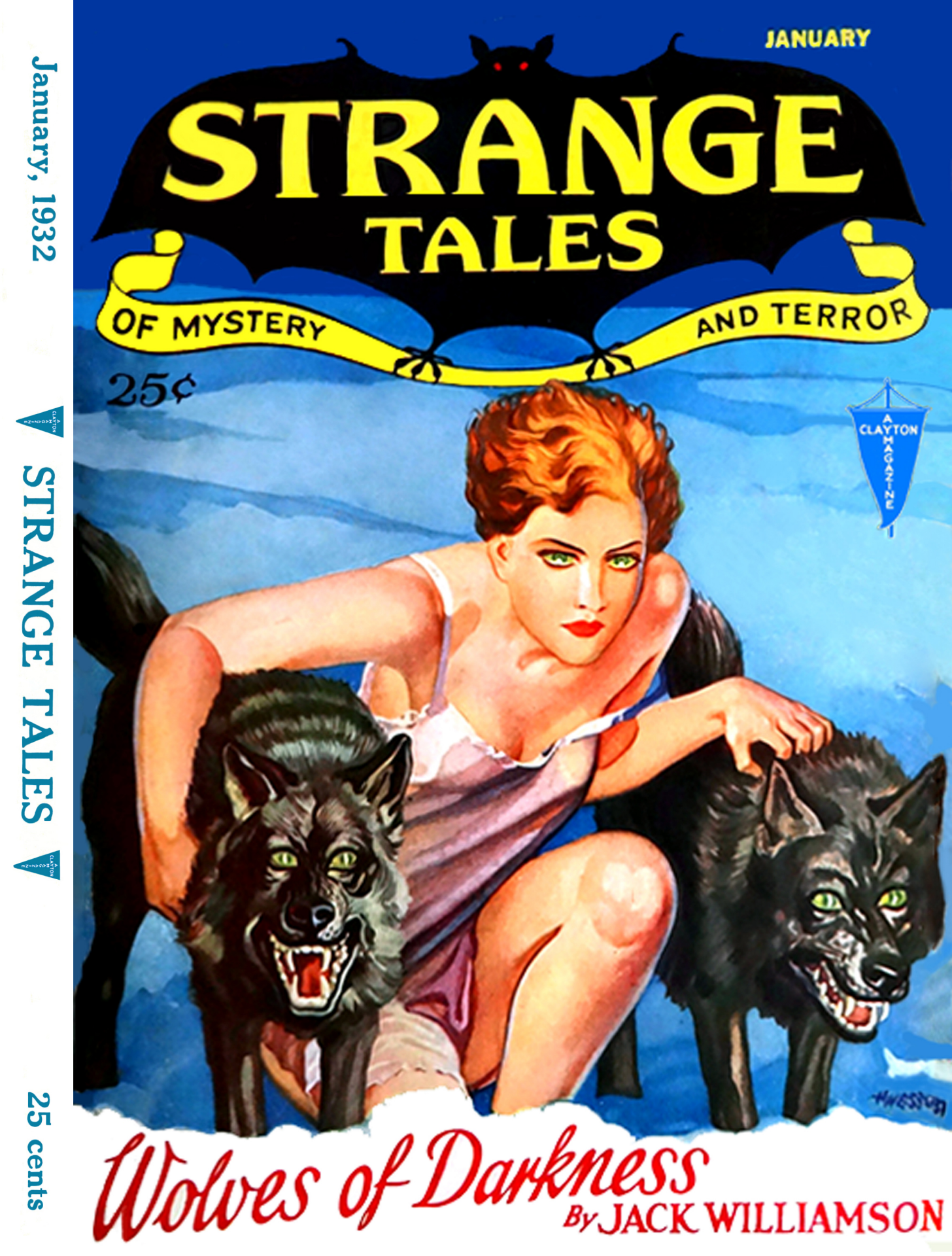
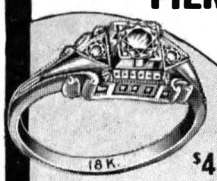

January, 1932
STRANGE TALES
25 cents
JANUARY
STRANGE TALES
OF MYSTERY AND TERROR
25¢
A CLAYTON MAGAZINE
Wolves of Darkness
By JACK WILLIAMSON

SENSATIONAL GIFT VALUES

FIERY, GENUINE BLUE-WHITE DIAMONDS

Sent for $1.00

BALANCE 10 MONTHS TO PAY!



$48.50

F K 57 . . . The new **"Princess Una"**—square prong engagement ring, hand pierced and engraved 18-K Solid White Gold; fiery, genuine blue-white diamond in center with 2 matched diamonds on sides. Very specially priced! *Only* $4.75 a *Mo.*

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F K 58 . . . **"Rising Star"**—hand pierced and engraved 18-K Solid White Gold square prong set with brilliant, genuine, blue-white diamond and 2 matched diamonds on sides. First time at this low price. *Only* $3.65 *a Mo.*

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F K 39 . . . **"Miss America"** — artistically hand engraved, 18-K Solid White Gold modern mounting; exceptionally fiery, genuine blue-white diamond in center, (six) 6 matched genuine diamonds in step-effect sides. *Only* $4.75 *a Month.*

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F K 56 . . . Gent's 14-K Solid White Gold ring; the black onyx is set with a fiery, genuine blue-white diamond and 2 raised, 14-K Solid White Gold initials. Never sold before at this low price! *Only* $2.85 *a Month.*

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It is a mighty long time since your dollar was able to buy so much for you. Only our own direct diamond importations and over $2,000,000. yearly in orders in our national mail order and retail chain store system make possible so much quality and style at such low prices. Order now in full confidence . . you will be delighted with these saving prices on genuine blue-white diamonds, fine standard watches and exquisite modern jewelry No extra charge for the convenience of dignified liberal credit.

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HOW TO ORDER: Just send $1.00 with your order and your selection comes to you on **10 DAYS' FREE TRIAL. NO C.O.D. TO PAY ON ARRIVAL.** After full examination and free trial, pay balance in 10 equal monthly payments.

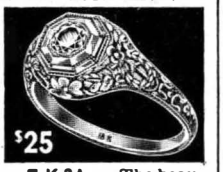
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR MONEY BACK. You have the full privilege of 10days' free trial; if not completely satisfied, or if you can surpass these values anywhere, return shipment at our expense and the entire deposit will be refunded. Written guarantee bond accompanies every diamond and watch purchased.

ALL DEALINGS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL — NO EMBARRASSING INVESTIGATIONS. No interest—no extras—no red tape; you take no risk.

(Residents of New York City and vicinity, who prefer, are invited to call in person at our salesrooms for these marvelous values.)

$27.50

F K 48 . . . Latest style bridal-blossom wedding ring; 7 expertly matched genuine blue-white diamonds in the modern, "step-settings", beautifully hand engraved 18-K Solid White Gold. Extraordinary value! *Only* $2.65 *a Month.*



$25

F K 34 . . . The beautiful **"Marleen"** richly hand engraved and pierced 18-K Solid White Gold; fiery, genuine blue-white diamond. Remarkable value! *Only* $2.40 *a Month.*

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Completely illustrated catalogue describing hundreds of very special values in genuine, blue-white diamonds from $25. to $1000.; also Bulova, Benrus, Elgin, Waltham, Hamilton, Howard, Illinois Watches, etc.—$12.50 and up; special bargains in smart modern jewelry and silverware

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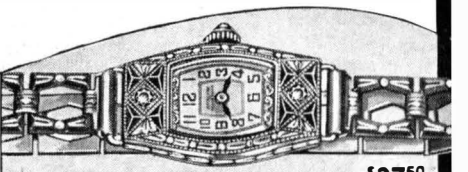
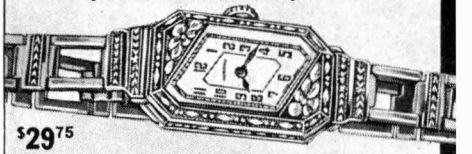


Genuine Diamond Wrist Watch $37.50

F K 60 . . . The **"Martha Washington"**—set with 2 fiery, genuine diamonds and 8 synthetic sapphires or emeralds; beautifully engraved 14-K Solid White Gold case; guaranteed 15-jewel movement. Engraved open link bracelet. A value that defies duplication at $37.50. *Only* $3.65 *a Month.*



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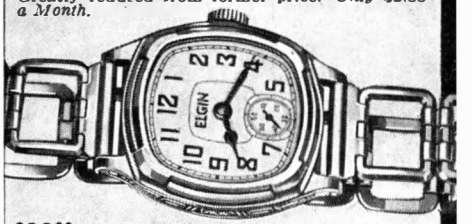
F K 61 . . . The new, nationally advertised, **Benrus "Sweetheart"** guaranteed dependable 15-jewel shock-proof **Benrus** movement; beautifully hand engraved, dainty case; protection seal keeps out dust. Engraved, open-link bracelet. Greatly reduced from former price. *Only* $2.88 *a Month.*



$22.00 **WALTHAM or ELGIN**

F K 64 . . . Nationally advertised **Waltham** or **Elgin**; guaranteed accurate and dependable. Engraved rugged case. Handsomely engraved, latest style, open link, bracelet to match. Great value! $2.10 *a Month.*

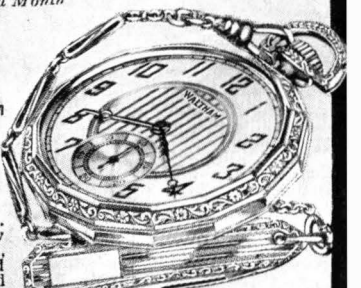
NEW BULOVA "LONE EAGLE"

$37.50

F K 65 . . . Let the watch that timed the greatest air flight in history record the flight of time for you. Guaranteed, dependable, 15-jewel **Bulova** movement fitted in handsomely engraved, modern design, **Bulova** quality sturdy case, luminous hands and dial. *Only* $3.65 *a Month*

15 JEWEL WALTHAM Pocket Watch Combination

$27.50



F K 19 . . . Nationally advertised, tested and regulated 15-jewel **Waltham** movement; 20-year warranted, engraved White Gold Filled, 12 size, thin model, decagon case. Knife and fine Waldemar chain to match. All complete in handsome gift case. Our most popular watch combination. *Only* $2.65 *a Mo.*

Issued Every

STRANGE TALES
OF MYSTERY AND TERROR

Other Month

W. M. CLAYTON, Publisher

HARRY BATES, Editor

VOL. I, No. 3

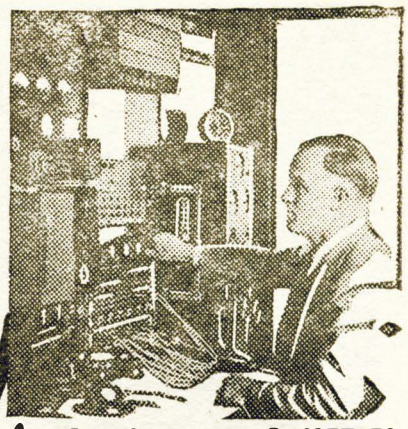
CONTENTS

JANUARY, 1932

Single Copies, 25 Cents — Yearly Subscription, $1.25

Issued bi-monthly by The Clayton Magazines, Inc., 155 East 44th Street, New York, N. Y. W. M. Clayton, President; Francis P. Pace, Secretary. Entered as second-class matter July 22, 1931, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of March 3, 1879. Application for registration of title as a Trade Mark pending in the U. S. Patent Office. Member Newsstand Group. For advertising rates address The Newsstand Group, Inc., 155 East 44th Street, New York; or The Wrigley Bldg., Chicago.

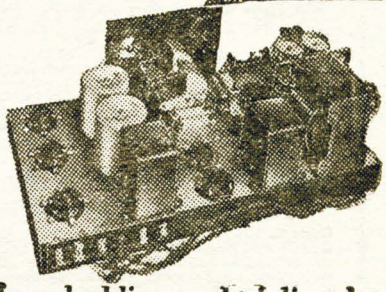
I will train you at home to fill a BIG PAY Radio Job!



I will give You my new 8 OUTFITS of RADIO PARTS for practical Home Experiments

You can build over 100 circuits with these outfits. You build and experiment with the circuits used in Crosley, Atwater-Kent, Eveready, Majestic, Zenith, and other popular sets. You learn how these sets work, why they work, how to make them work. This makes learning at home easy, fascinating, practical.

Back view of seven tube screen grid tuned radio frequency receiver—only one of many circuits you can build.



Here's Proof

If you are earning a penny less than $50 a week, send for my book of information on the opportunities in Radio. It is free. Clip the coupon NOW. Why be satisfied with $25, $30 or $40 a week for longer than the short time it takes to get ready for Radio?

Radio's growth opening hundreds of $50, $75, $100 a week jobs every year

In about ten years Radio has grown from a $2,000,000 to a $1,000,000,000 industry. Over 300,000 jobs have been created. Hundreds more are being opened every year by its continued growth. Many men and young men with the right training—the kind of training I give you—are stepping into Radio at two and three times their former salaries.

You have many jobs to choose from

Broadcasting stations use engineers, operators, station managers and pay $1,200 to $5,000 a year. Manufacturers continually need testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, service men, buyers, for jobs paying up to $7,500 a year. Radio Operators on ships enjoy life, see the world, with board and lodging free, and get good pay besides. Dealers and jobbers employ service men, salesmen, buyers, managers, and pay $30 to $100 a week. There are many other opportunities too.

So many opportunities many N. R. I. men make $200 to $1,000 while learning

The day you enroll with me I'll show you how to do 28 jobs, common in most every neighborhood, for spare time money. Throughout your course I send you information on servicing popular makes of sets; I give you the plans and ideas that are making $200 to $1,000 for hundreds of N. R. I. students in their spare time while studying. My course is famous as the course that pays for itself.

Talking Movies, Television, Aircraft Radio are also included

Special training in Talking Movies, Television and home Television experiments, Radio's use in Aviation, Servicing and Merchandising Sets, Broadcasting, Commercial and Ship Stations are included. I am so sure that I can train you satisfactorily that I will agree in writing to refund every penny of your tuition if you are not satisfied with my Lessons and Instruction Service upon completing.

64-page book of information FREE

Get your copy today. It tells you where Radio's good jobs are, what they pay, tells you about my course, what others who have taken it are doing and making. Find out what Radio offers you, without the slightest obligation. ACT NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute Dept. 2AM
Washington, D. C.

$100 a week

"My earnings in Radio are many times greater than I ever expected they would be when I enrolled. They seldom fall under $100 a week."
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Jumped from $35 to $100 a week

"Before I entered Radio I was making $35 a week. Last week I earned $110 servicing and selling Radios. I owe my success to N. R. I."
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$500 extra in 6 months

"I find I made $500 from January to May in my spare time. My best week brought me $107. I should have taken it long ago."
HOYT MOORE
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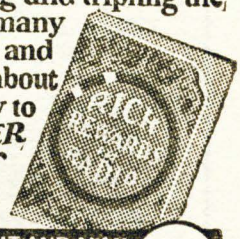
I am doubling and tripling the salaries of many in one year and less. Find out about this quick way to BIGGER PAY



Radio Needs Trained Men

FILL OUT AND MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY

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National Radio Institute, Dept. 2AM
Washington, D. C.

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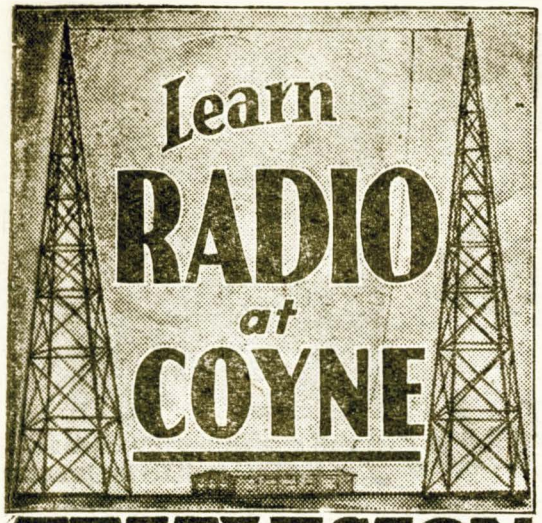

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Dissatisfied with your present job? Not making enough money? Then let me show you how to prepare for a real job at a real pay, in RADIO—one of the fastest growing, biggest money-making trades on earth.

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Scores of jobs are open to the Trained Man—jobs as Designer, Inspector and Tester—as Radio Salesman and in Service and Installation work—as Operator, Mechanic or Manager of a Broadcasting Station—as Wireless Operator on a Ship or Airplane—jobs with Talking Picture Theatres and Manufacturers of Sound *Equipment*—with Television Laboratories and Studios—fascinating jobs, offering unlimited opportunities to the Trained Man.

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Come to Coyne in Chicago and prepare for these jobs the QUICK and PRACTICAL way—BY ACTUAL SHOP WORK ON ACTUAL RADIO EQUIPMENT. Some students finish the entire course in 8 weeks. The average time is only 10 weeks. But you can stay as long as you please, at no extra cost to you. No previous experience necessary. Get the facts!

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St. No......

City.....*State*.....

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$158 Month First Year
Raise to $225 Month

Many Other U. S. Government Jobs Open to Men and Boys 18 to 50

Post Office Clerks City Mail Carriers Rural Mail Carriers
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These are steady positions. Strikes, poor business conditions, lockouts or politics do not affect them. U. S. Government employees get their pay for full twelve months every year. There is no such thing as "Hard Times" in the U. S. Government Service.

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Railway Postal Clerks now get $1900 the first year, being paid on the first and fifteenth of each month, $79.16 each pay day. Their pay is increased $100 and $150 a year. The maximum is $2700 a year, $112.50 each pay day. They get extra allowance for hotel expenses when away from home.

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Clerks and Carriers get $1700 the first year regular and automatically increase $100 a year to $2100 with further increase to $2300. They also have 15 days' vacation. City residence is unnecessary.

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DO YOU EARN $1900 EVERY YEAR? HAVE YOU ANY ASSURANCE THAT A FEW YEAR FROM NOW YOU WILL GET $2700 OR MORE A YEAR, EVERY YEAR?

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—Immigrant Inspector	($2100-$3000)
—Prohibition Agent	($2300-$2800)

Name.....

Addr s.....

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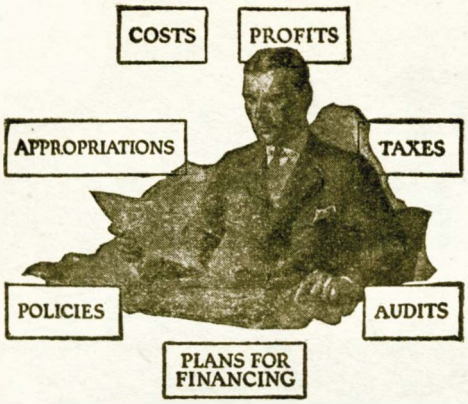
Fill out the coupon. Tear it off and mail it today—now, at once. DO IT NOW—This investment of two c nts for a postage s mp may result in your getting a life U. S. Government Job.



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☐ Railway Station Mgmt.	☐ Stenography—Stenotypy
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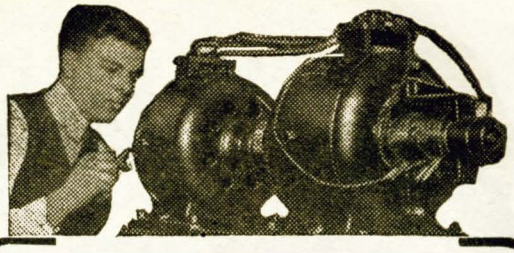
Name.....

Present Position.....

Address.....



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Please send me your Free, Illustrated Book on Electricity and Coyne. Give details of special Electrical Refrigeration offer too.

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

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POST YOURSELF! It pays! I paid J. D. Martin, Virginia, $200 for a single copper cent. Mr. Manning, New York, $2,500 for one silver dollar. Mrs G. F. Adams $740 for a few old coins. I want all kinds of old coins, medals, bills and stamps. I pay big cash premiums.

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NUMISMATIC COMPANY OF TEXAS

Dept. 162 FORT WORTH, TEXAS

(Largest Rare Coin Establishment in U. S.)

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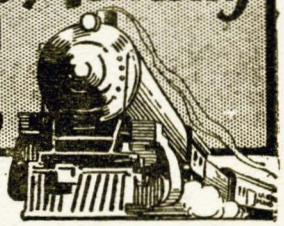
Pay Range $105 to $250 Monthly

OPEN to BOTH CITY and COUNTRY PEOPLE—AGE RANGE-18 to 50



$200-$250 MONTH

SPECIAL AGENTS
(Investigators)

Government Secret Service Work is one of the most fascinating and interesting branches of the service for men. These positions are located throughout the country and are both traveling and stationary. In addition to the high salaries that run up to $5000 yearly, all traveling expenses are paid while on the road.

$2100 YEAR TO START

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The duties are to check and inspect goods brought into this country by tourists, merchants, and manufacturers. Inspectors are required to levy the duties, etc., and see that Customs regulations are not violated. This is a very fascinating work with splendid salaries.

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The Rural Mail Carrier is out in the open air and sunshine; easy, healthy work, short hours, with a large part of the day left to do as he pleases. Thousands of city positions available for those who prefer inside work, delivering mail in large office buildings. These positions available to both country and city people.

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Pleasing, steady work with opportunities for rapid advancement, up to $2500 per year. These positions may be had in the various Gov't Offices at Washington or in any part of the country. This also includes Forest and Field Clerks.

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"I'll see it through if you will!"

"THEY tell me there's five or six million of us—out of jobs.

"I know that's not your fault, any more than it is mine.

"But that doesn't change the fact that some of us right now are in a pretty tough spot—with families to worry about—and a workless winter ahead.

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"We're not scared, either. If you think the good old U. S. A. is in a bad way more than temporarily, just try to figure out some other place you'd rather be.

"But, until times do loosen up, we've got to have a little help.

"So I'm asking *you* to give us a lift, just as I would give one to you if I stood in your shoes and you in mine.

"Now don't send me any money—that isn't the idea. Don't even send any to the Committee which signs this appeal.

"The best way to help us is to give as generously as you can to your local welfare and charity organizations, your community chest or your emergency relief committee if you have one.

"That's my story, the rest is up to you.
"I'll see it through—if *you* will!"

—Unemployed, 1931

THE PRESIDENT'S ORGANIZATION ON UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF

Walter S. Gifford
Director

COMMITTEE ON MOBILIZATION OF RELIEF RESOURCES

Owen D. Young
Chairman

The President's Organization on Unemployment Relief is non-political and non-sectarian. Its purpose is to aid local welfare and relief agencies everywhere to provide for local needs. All facilities for the nation-wide program, including this advertisement, have been furnished to the Committee without cost.

This advertisement is printed without charge by the Clayton Magazines.

Gargle twice daily—keep well—stay on the job

Don't be one of those thousands who every year suffer colds needlessly. Who pay the penalty in discomfort, lost health, and lost wages due to absence from work.

Get plenty of rest. Don't overeat. Avoid severe exposure. And gargle with full strength Listerine morning and night *every day*. Because controlled tests on 102 persons now show Listerine's amazing ability to prevent colds and to reduce their severity, once contracted.

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Now, note these amazing results:

Those who did not gargle, contracted twice as many colds as those who gargled Listerine twice a day. The colds were four times as severe and lasted three times as long.

Three times as many colds

Those who did not gargle Listerine had three times as many colds as those who gargled five times a day. The colds were four times as severe and lasted four times as long.

The secret, germicidal action with safety

Such results are due to Listerine's amazing germicidal action. Used full strength it kills germs in the fastest time accurately recorded by science. So it reduces mouth bacteria 98% or more, and maintains substantial reduction for hours.

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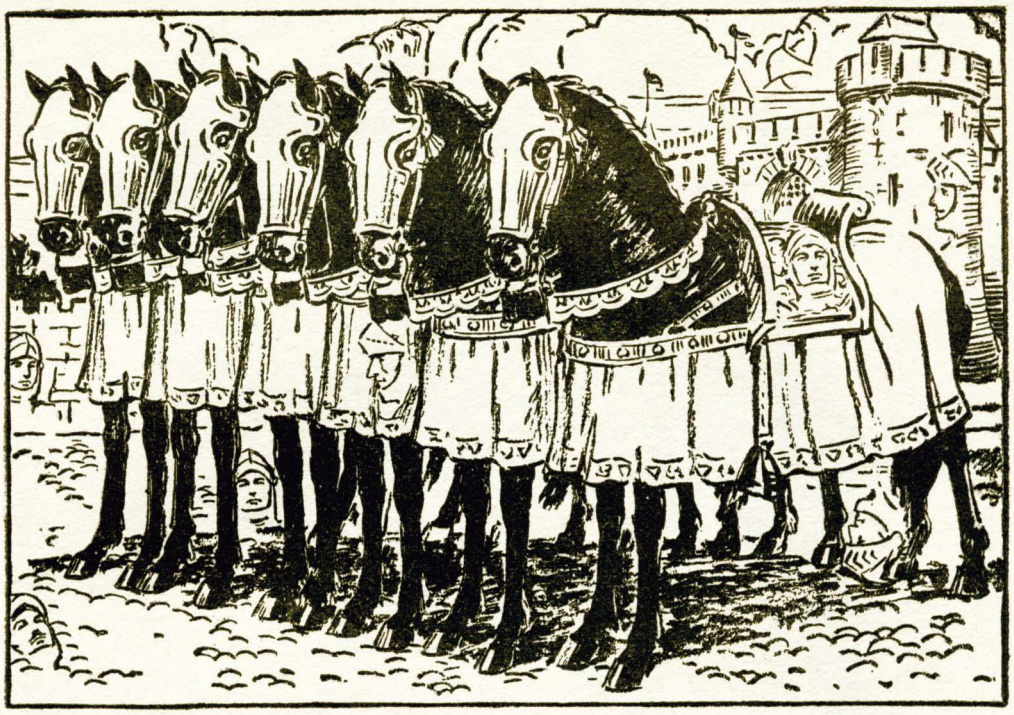

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We want this advertising campaign started at once. Therefore, $1,000 extra cash will be given the first prize winner for being prompt. Send your answer today—take no chance of losing the $1,000 extra promptness prize.

Mail Coupon Today

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Clip & Mail Today

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I have marked the faces in the $2,500.00 prize picture. I am anxious to win a prize. Please tell me how I stand.

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"Back to the wheel-chair again," said Dall bitterly.

Dead Legs

By Edmond Hamilton

DALL was the calmer of the two who were waiting in the room. He sat in his wheel-chair with eyes impenetrable and face mask-like, his hands motionless on the blanket that covered his lower limbs. Carson, the other man, was patently nervous, glancing quickly toward the room's side door at the slightest sound.

Dall, the gangster, could not know that "Dead Legs" was a prophecy of doom.

The room in which Dall and Carson waited was a curious one. It had two doors, one at the side and one at the rear, and there were no windows. It was cement-floored, lit by concealed electric lights, and held only a few chairs, a desk and a squat steel safe. There came only the faintest murmur of street noises into it; and sounds from above indicated that the room was in the basement of the house. Both men sat in silence.

Dall might have been a sphinx of flesh placed in the wheel-chair, so motionless was his attitude, but Carson's nervousness was visibly increasing. He jumped as there came finally a double knock at the side door.

Dall spoke briefly and a man entered who was younger than either of these two, and who had quick eyes and a panther-like build.

"Well, Dead Legs, we got Roper all right!" he addressed Dall excitedly. "He was trying to get out of town. Knew damned well that since we cleaned up his mob he hadn't a—"

"Not so much talk, Quinn," Dall interrupted crisply. "You've brought Roper here?"

"He's upstairs now—Burke and

Spinetti guarding him," Quinn answered. "We had our taxi planted as you said and when he took it to the station we nabbed him right off without—"

"All right, that's enough!" Dall snapped. "Tell Burke and Spinetti to bring Roper down here."

QUINN departed, and when he returned a minute later three others were with him. Two hard-faced men were obviously the guards of the third, for their automatics were close against his back.

This third man was stalwart, with a bull-like face flushed now to deep crimson. His eyes, as he entered, fastened like twin flames of fury upon the man in the wheel-chair. His hands had been securely bound, but, nevertheless, Quinn and the other two watched him closely.

"So you got me, Dead Legs!" the prisoner said bitterly to Dall. "And you weren't even satisfied to have them put me on the spot straight but had them drag me down here to your hole for you to gloat over, eh?"

"I didn't have you brought here for gloating purposes, Roper," Dall answered evenly.

Roper seemed not to have heard. "It wasn't enough," he went on, "that you and your damned mob took my end of town and all my rackets from me, that you bought some of my men and had the rest shot—you had to get me here last of all and crow to me about it!"

"I've done no crowing yet," Dall said. "And you had your warning six months ago, Roper."

"Warning!" Roper's fury seemed to reach its climax. "A warning to give up the territory my gang had always had! A warning from a cripple, a man with dead legs, a man who's never walked!"

"And a warning that I've fulfilled to the letter!" Dall reminded him. "You know now that no one in this town can buck Dead Legs Dall."

"Then, damn it, why don't you get it over with?" demanded the raging Roper. "Why don't you give your guns the word?"

Dall smiled levelly. "Because you're not going to be killed so soon, Roper. Before you die you're going to do me a great service—the greatest in the world."

Roper's laugh was ugly. "You're dreaming, Dead Legs. I'd die in torture before I'd do anything for you, and you know it."

"But you're going to do this for me whether you want to or not," Dall said, still smiling coldly. "It's a service for which I particularly chose you, Roper."

HE leaned back in his wheel-chair, his cold blue eyes on Roper's furious face. Quinn was listening, Burke and Spinetti still standing with weapons against their prisoner. At a little distance from the rest Carson was mopping his forehead, and his eyes had a nervous, desperate look.

Dall spoke again, more slowly, to Roper. "You know me, Dead Legs Dall, as every crook and almost every other person in this town knows me. You know that I've never walked, that I was born with these dead, shriveled legs, that I've sat in a chair like this for thirty years.

"They started calling me Dead Legs when I was a kid over there in the slums. Sometimes they beat me, too, because I was helpless. I soon saw that the only way I could stand against them was to be smarter than they were, and I was that. And because I was, Dead Legs was soon running a gang of kids, and as they and I grew up we became a gang of men and of tough ones, too!"

It was as though Dall had forgotten Roper and the rest as he talked, his eyes seeming to stare back into the past for a moment.

"Dead Legs Dall. . . . Yes, as that I've worked my way up, until now

I and my mob have a mortgage on this town. I've broken up every other gang here—with yours the last, Roper. I've come to the top, fought my way up, until now I've got more money and more power than I used to dream of having.

"But what good are they to me the way I am? How can I enjoy money or power when I'm chained to a wheel-chair with these dead, useless legs of mine? They couldn't keep me from getting what I wanted, but they'll keep me now from enjoying it!"

"I'm glad you realize it, Dead Legs!" said Roper harshly. "When I pass out I'll be grinning to think how you hate those legs of yours that you'll die with!"

"But I don't intend to die with them," Dall said softly. "I've reached the top and all I need to enjoy life is legs—not dead, useless legs, but living ones, legs that I can walk and run and dance with. They're what I want and I've always found a way to get what I wanted."

He leaned toward Roper. "That's where you come in, Roper. You've got what I want, strong, healthy legs. And I'm going to take them from you for myself!"

"You're crazy!" Roper exclaimed. "You poor batty cripple, you've brooded over those dead legs of yours so long you're cuckoo on them!"

"Are you so sure?" smiled Dall. "Carson, come over here."

CARSON approached slowly, glancing nervously from one to the other, and Dall gestured to him without turning from Roper.

"Do you recognize Carson? Dr. Robert Carson, one of the three greatest surgeons in this country?"

"What's he to me?" snarled Roper.

"He's going to be very much to you, Roper," Dall assured him, mockingly, "and to me, too. He's going to take those healthy legs of yours off you and put them on me."

"You poor fool!" Roper snarled derisively. "You're cuckoo, sure. You were born with those dead legs, and you'll die with them."

"I'll not!" Dall's voice cracked with the emphasis of a whip. "You're the fool, Roper. You think because such an operation would have been impossible yesterday it's impossible to-day! But it's not! Scientists and surgeons have been removing animal limbs and grafting new ones on for years, and now surgeons like Carson are beginning to do it with humans!

"Carson here has been able to graft fingers, hands. He can fasten the new limbs so that bone knits to bone; can tie and connect the nerve filaments, the arteries and veins; can graft new flesh to heal over the joint so that the new limbs are as usable as natural ones!

"Carson can do it, and Carson's going to—for I've got something on him that means death for him and disgrace for his family if I spring it. Carson's fitted up all he needs to operate with back in that room behind this, and has trained Burke and Spinetti here to act as his attendants while the operations are going on. And that's to-night!

"Yes, to-night! Carson will take off my dead legs above the knees. Then he'll take off your healthy legs and graft them at once onto my body. Then we'll bury what's left of you, Roper, under the cement floor over there in the corner. But why don't you laugh, Roper? Why don't you laugh at the impossibility of it?"

"It *is* impossible!" Roper cried hoarsely, beads of perspiration on his forehead. "I know you, Dead Legs—you're trying to torture me before you send me out! But the thing's not possible!"

DALL laughed. "You think it's not, Roper? But it is. Carson has done it many times with animals,

and he can do it with humans. And then I'll be Dead Legs no longer. Think what it means, Roper; think of me able to walk and run wherever I want to, and on your legs!

"Why, it'll be rich, it'll be rare! Can't you see the humor of it, Roper? Everyone congratulating Dead Legs Dall on the marvelous cure effected, everyone seeing him run and walk and dance, and none of them ever suspecting that he's doing it all on another man's legs, a dead man's legs, Roper's legs!"

"You hell-fiend!" shrieked Roper. "By God, you wouldn't dare do it!"

"Ah, you're beginning to believe now? I see you are. But be fair, Roper. Your legs would do you no good buried over there under the floor with you. And they can do me a lot of good. Why, even walking about on Roper's legs will keep me laughing all the time! Any pair of healthy legs would have been as good, but they wouldn't have the humor there would be in wearing Roper's legs!"

Roper lunged madly at the mocking Dall, straining at the bonds that held his hands, but Burke and Spinetti jerked him back.

From his chair Dall watched with eyes bright with interest, but beside him Carson was trembling violently.

"You demon!" Roper cried out. Then suddenly he broke down, and his tone became supplicating, almost craven. "Dead Legs, you're not going to do a thing like that? Not really? Why, it would be wrong, it would be devilish! I know we've fought and bumped off each other's men, but that's all in the game. But this would be different—hellish!"

"But the thing's impossible," Dall said, mockingly. "You remember that, Roper, you remember how sure of its impossibility you were just a little while ago. There's nothing to fear from a man gone cuckoo, is there? It's just poor nutty Dead Legs raving, so don't be afraid."

HE turned to Carson. "Everything ready back in the operating-room?" he asked swiftly, gesturing toward the rear door.

Carson managed to nod, still trembling. "It's all ready. But Dall, this thing—"

"Is going on, Carson!" Dall said with cold finality. "We've been over that ground." He turned back to Quinn and the two guards. "All right, boys, you can take Roper back there. Nothing to say before we start, Roper? No place you'd like to go afterward—on your legs?"

Roper raised his bound, trembling hands toward Dall as he was pulled away. "Yes, you can take my legs, Dall, but you'll walk on them to hell! You hear me? You'll walk on them to hell!"

Quinn had opened the rear door, through which could be glimpsed an operating-room with white tables and gleaming apparatus. The two guards were half carrying the struggling Roper, Carson following like a man in a nightmare and Dall coming last in his wheel-chair. And, as the little party went through the door, Roper's ghastly cry rose to a screaming imprecation of hate.

"To hell, Dall! You'll walk on them to hell!" he shrieked. He was still shrieking as the door closed after them all. . . .

DALL stood—*stood*—on the steps of his house with Quinn and Burke. It was night, and a few feet below them the city's ceaseless currents of people and vehicles flowed along the bright-lit street. Dall was trembling inwardly with excitement and exultation, but outwardly was looking coolly along the street.

"You're sure you don't want any of us with you?" Quinn was asking. "First time you've been out, you know."

"I'll not need you, no," Dall told them. "This is a walk I want to take

alone, Quinn, a walk I've been looking forward to for thirty years."

"Just as you say, Dead Legs," Quinn agreed. "Though it'd be no trouble to go along in case you wanted us."

"There's no need," Dall repeated. "And why call me Dead Legs now? The name hardly fits me now!"

Dall stepped down to the street, and Quinn and Burke watched from the steps as he walked casually down the street.

Each step was savored by Dall as a long-starved man might savor food. It was his dream come true, he told himself. He who had sat thirty years in a chair was walking along a street. Dall thought that some passersby looked curiously at him, and he smiled to himself. It had been weeks since word had gone forth that the useless limbs of Dead Legs Dall had been miraculously cured at last.

It was worth it all, Dall told himself as he went on. Worth the ghastly night in that white operating-room, the gleam of instruments and smell of anesthetics and realms of cool unconsciousness in which only Carson's drawn white face intruded at times. Worth the red, aching pain of the weeks that followed, the utter immobility of so long and then the first stumbling attempts at walking, inside the house. Yes, worth it many times!

DALL had no objective as he walked along. It was enough for him to be merely walking, without aim or objective. Did any of these hurrying people about him, he wondered, know the true joy and pleasure of walking? They could not. They had not spent Dead Legs Dall's thirty years in a wheel-chair.

He was walking, and walking on Roper's legs. The grim humor of that still tickled Dall's sardonic mind immensely. Roper—or all of Roper but his legs—lay deep under the re-cemented floor in the corner of his basement-office. But Roper's legs were living still and walking still, carrying Roper's worst enemy. Dall's pride expanded. What Dead Legs Dall wanted he took! Even new legs!

The hurrying people that brushed by him and the automobiles racing in the street beside him he looked on with a new eye. He had preyed upon them and their city with his criminal organization even when he was prisoned in a wheel-chair. But now that Dead Legs Dall was dead of legs no longer, what might he not do! He could expand his organization to other cities, could expand it until—

Two women a little along the street screamed, their screams drowned in the next second by the squeal of brakes. Dall stood out in the middle of the street, and the taxi that had almost run him down when he had leaped suddenly into the street was skidding to a stop beside him. Its driver emerged red-faced with anger and bore down on Dall.

"What in hell's the matter with you, fellow?" he cried. "You saw me coming and jumped right out in front of me! Are you trying to kill yourself?"

Dall seemed dazed, bewildered, stupefied. "I didn't mean to do it!" he stammered, his eyes roving wildly now. "I didn't mean—my legs seemed just to jump out with me in spite of myself."

"That's some story, that you jumped in spite of yourself!" the driver exclaimed. "I ought to take a good sock at you for—" He stopped suddenly, recognizing the man before him. "Why, it's Dead Legs Dall!" His tone was abruptly respectful, apologetic. "I heard you'd been cured, but I didn't recognize you, Mr. Dall. Of course I didn't mean any of that stuff for you—"

"It's all right—all right," Dall said. His one desire was to get away from the fast-collecting crowd. "My fault entirely." He regained the

sidewalk and started on. The driver stared after him, then returned to his cab. The crowd dispersed, and Dall walked on along the street.

BUT Dall was walking now in a daze. His mind was in sudden turmoil. What he had told the taxi driver was the truth: he had had no intention of leaping into the street until without command of his brain his legs had suddenly carried him directly in front of the onrushing cab! It was as though his legs had wanted to kill him, Dall thought.

Dall gripped himself. This would not do, he told himself. He was wrought up, nervous, and it was but natural that he should have made a misstep when walking, when legs and walking were so new to him. It was only that, could be only that. Yet back in Dall's mind persisted the thought that it had not been a misstep but a swift deliberate leap of his legs in spite of himself.

He thrust the thought back, and, as he walked on, he became once more master of himself. Every step he took his legs obeyed him. He could feel the hard sidewalk under his feet, could place each step as he wished. Dall breathed more easily. Nerves, that was all! It was but natural: one didn't often try walking for the first time—and with another man's legs! Dall even smiled.

His first confidence had almost entirely returned. He stepped unhesitatingly along once more. At that moment Dall saw thundering along the street in his direction two heavy trucks, one trying to pass the other. Some instinct warned Dall or he felt the preparatory bunching of his legs under him. For as he grasped wildly at a lamp-post beside him, his legs shot out with him in a swift leap into the two trucks' path!

It was Dall's clutch at the lamp-post that saved him, for he managed to grasp it as his legs leaped with him and to hold to it until the trucks had passed. The effort of his legs to leap out stopped instantly, but Dall clung desperately to the lamp-post. He knew now! Undistinguishable sounds came from him.

PASSERSBY who saw Dall clinging to the post desperately, with face deathly white and eyes terror-haunted, thought him drunk, apparently, and stared at him. Some stopped, and then a blue-uniformed policeman shouldered through them toward Dall.

"What's this—another hoochfiend?" he demanded sharply; then he recognized Dall. Respect tinged his manner. "What's the matter, Dead Legs?" he asked.

"Get me a taxi!" croaked Dall, clinging still to the post. "I've got to get home. I've got to get home!"

Wheeler signalled a passing cab. "What's the matter, legs go back on you?" he asked. "I heard you were cured, Dall, but you must have tried walking too soon. Got to get used to it, you know."

Dall managed to nod. "That's it, I guess. I've got to get used to it."

The cab drew up and Dall grasped its door-handle, held it tightly until he was inside. There was no need, for his legs stepped up with him quite normally, making no involuntary movements.

While the cab darted back along the street Dall clung tightly to the assist-straps. He was breathing fast, and his mind swirled chaotically with horror. He did not know the cab had stopped until its door opened.

Quinn and Burke were still up on the steps, and at his motion came running down to the cab. Both looked inquiringly at Dall.

"Grab my arms and don't let me go until we're inside the house," Dall told them. At the blank expressions he snarled with sudden fury, "Do as you're told, damn you! Hold my arms till I tell you to let go!"

HELD on either side by the two he went up the steps into the house. His legs walked up with him quite naturally, obeying every command of his brain. There seemed no need of the two restraining men. Yet Dall did not tell them to release him until he was down in his basement-office with doors closed.

"Call Carson!" Dall ordered as he sank into a chair. "Tell him to come over here, and to come quick!"

While Quinn obeyed Dall sat in a chair, his mind awhirl with incoherent thoughts. There could be no doubt of it, he told himself, his legs had twice that night tried to bring death upon him, and chance alone had prevented it. It was his legs, and not he, that had each time sought to hurl him to death in the street! His legs? No, Roper's legs!

Dall's eyes sought the oblong of newer, whiter cement in the floor at the room's corner. Roper lay under that, he told himself. Roper could do him no harm. But Roper's legs? There came rushing to Dall's mind those last words Roper had shrieked as he had been dragged into that operating-room at the rear, his last yells of agony and hate.

"You can take my legs, Dall, but you'll walk on them to hell! You'll walk on them to hell!"

Dall's hands clenched his chair's arms until his knuckles showed white. He sought to command himself. This was all moonshine, superstitious folly into which he was working himself. Roper was dead, and how could Roper's legs retain the hate of their former owner? How could Roper's legs try to kill him?

But they *had* tried to kill him, and twice this night! The truth rose in Dall's mind and could not be smashed down by any effort of will. He was wearing the legs of Roper, of the man whose last cry had been one of hate for himself. And, though attached to him, the legs were not part of him, but part of Roper still. Part of Roper's being and part of Roper's hate!

"You'll walk on them to hell. You'll walk on them to hell—to hell—to—"

"Carson's here," Burke announced from the door.

"Send him in here at once!" Dall ordered.

CARSON entered, his face pale and his eyes straying despite himself to the oblong of white cement in the corner. With an effort of will he turned his gaze from it. "What's the matter, Dall?" he asked.

"Everything's the matter," Dall answered. "Roper's legs are trying to kill me." At Carson's stupefied expression Dall's inner madness burst forth. "You heard me! Roper's legs are trying to kill me!"

Carson managed speech. "Now, Dall, calm down. You've been out for the first time and naturally you're wrought up."

"You fool!" said Dall bitterly. "Do you think I'm a nervous woman? I tell you I walked out to-night, and without any will of mine my legs jumped with me out in front of a taxi! Only luck saved me! Five minutes later they tried to leap with me in front of two trucks, and if I hadn't caught a post and hung onto it, it would have been all up.

"Neither time did I have the slightest intention of making such a jump, mind you! And don't tell me they were missteps, for they weren't. They were deliberate leaps on the part of my legs. Carson, you know how Roper hated me. Well, his legs retain that hate. They're trying to kill me!"

Carson had paled further as he listened, but he was still the calmer of the two.

"Dall, listen to me. You've gone through a big operation, the biggest ever heard of, and you've lain for weeks recovering from it. Then to-night you go out to take your first

walk in the street and because your new legs play queer tricks on you, you jump to the fantastic conclusion that they're still Roper's legs and trying to kill you."

"But how explain it?" Dall insisted. "How explain that my legs acted without the slightest order from my brain?"

"Dall, if you had a tenth of my medical experience you'd know that even in normal persons the control of the brain over the limbs often has queer lapses. Why, when my foot goes to sleep, or when my legs cramp when swimming, what's that but a lapse of the brain's control over the limbs? Everyone's had such experiences.

"Then what of your case, in which you've actually had new legs attached to your body, new nerves knitting to nerves, and bone to bone? It stands to reason, Dall, that in such case your legs would play even queerer tricks on you than in normal cases. Why, in walking you're using motor-nerves of your brain you never used before, so that at present your brain has an uncertain control over your legs."

"But that just proves what I've been saying," Dall exclaimed. "They're Roper's legs, and my brain can't control them all the time. Roper's last thought was hate of me, and of you, too, and his legs are still controlled by that thought!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Carson. "Dall, get up and walk slowly along the room here. I'll show you I'm right."

DALL rose and carefully stepped along the room's length, Carson watching his movements closely from the side. Dall walked like a man at the edge of a precipice, but his legs seemed to move normally enough.

As Dall stepped more confidently back along the room toward the surgeon, Carson nodded. "You see, there's nothing the mat—" he was saying, when abruptly Dall's foot shot out and tripped Carson so that he fell to the floor! Instantly Dall's legs were lashing out in furious kicks at the fallen surgeon!

"My God, Dall!" cried Carson as he sought to rise against the shower of fierce kicks. "Get back. You're killing me!"

"I can't—the legs won't obey me!" Dall screamed, his face white and distorted. "Quinn—Burke—come here and get me!"

Quinn and Burke bursting into the room, halted in stupefaction at the sight of Dall kicking with terrific savagery at the prostrate Carson who was shielding his head with his arms and trying to regain his feet.

"Pull me away!" Dall shrieked to them. "Grab me and pull me away from him! Quick, you fools!"

Bewildered, Quinn and Burke rushed forward and grasped Dall's arms and jerked him from the fallen man. For a moment his feet still lashed out in vain kicks toward Carson and then ceased their movements.

Dall burst into a high-pitched, hysterical laugh. "Do you believe now, Carson? Roper's legs nearly got you that time! You performed the operation, you know. Roper hated you almost as much as me. Do you believe now these legs of mine are still Roper's legs?"

Carson was staggering up, his bruised face ghastly in expression. "Keep holding him," he implored Quinn and Burke thickly. "Don't let him—don't let *them* get at me! Oh, God, don't let Roper's legs get at me again!"

Dall managed to get some grip upon himself. "Burke, get Carson out to his car and take him home," he ordered his aide. "Quinn, you hold me here until they're gone and then go upstairs and get Spinetti."

Whimpering and shaking, the surgeon hastened from the room.

WHEN Burke and Carson were gone, Quinn released Dall and hastened up to the house's upper floors. Left alone, Dall paced back and forth, his head throbbing wildly. He tried to think.

It was true, then! Impossible, insane, but true! Roper's legs, attached to his body, were still Roper's legs, and had tried to kill him and to kill Carson, too! And if he went alone into the street, if he went anywhere near danger, Roper's legs would carry him into the path of death. He must not go out alone; he must keep his aides always within reach! But was this the freedom Dead Legs Dall had dreamed of in his wheel-chair?

Dall's legs seemed to obey him perfectly as he paced the room. But he knew—maddening thought!—they were but biding their time. When opportunity came they would try again to kill him. Was Roper laughing; laughing somewhere in the beyond? Was Roper still screaming the words that seemed to enter his ears: "—walk on them to hell—walk on them to hell—"

With a start Dall found that he had stopped pacing the room and was standing in a corner. He was standing on the oblong of new, white cement beneath which Roper lay! With a hoarse cry Dall jumped back, clutching a chair. His legs had taken him, without his knowing it, to the tomb of the man of whom his legs had been part!

Was Roper laughing at him this moment? *Was* he? Dall set his teeth as Quinn returned with Spinetti. He was a fighter; he would fight this!

Quinn and Spinetti approached him with some awe. "My God, Dead Legs," Quinn was saying, "you were shouting there that these new legs of yours were still Roper's!"

Dall's cold eyes swept him. "What if they are?" he demanded bitingly. "My legs may be Roper's, but the rest of me is still Dall, and it's Dall's orders you obey, isn't it?"

Spinetti crossed himself furtively, his eyes fearful upon Dall, and Quinn's lean face was a shade paler. "I'm not bucking your orders, but this business kind of scares me," he declared. "When Roper's legs were put on you it was—"

"That's enough from you, Quinn!" snapped Dall. "You and Spinetti take my arms and help me up to bed—and keep a tight hold on me going up the stairs."

IT took several minutes for them to reach Dall's bedroom on the upper floor, Quinn and Spinetti gripping his arms tightly, though his legs made no untoward movements on the way. At Dall's command they stayed until he was in bed.

"Now I want you two to take turns sitting beside the bed here until morning," he told them. "If you see me make a move to get out of bed, grab me and hold me, do you hear?"

"Sure, we get it, Dead Legs," Quinn answered. At the name Dall's rage flamed. "And don't call me Dead Legs any more!" he shouted.

Yet, as he sank back, Quinn taking the chair for the first watch, the name rang still in Dall's ears. Dead Legs! The name that had been familiar to him since childhood, but that had now a secret significance. Dead legs, yes, but not now the shrunken limbs that had won him the name. Dead Legs because now he wore a dead man's legs, Roper's legs!

Roper's face seemed passing before him in the darkness, a grin of triumph upon it. Other faces passed, too, Carson's drawn one and Quinn's, but always foremost was Roper's. He could not see whether the body below the face had legs, but Roper's face was clear—Roper's face—

Dall crashed to wakefulness to find himself struggling with Spinetti beside his bedroom window. Quinn was running in to answer Spinetti's shouts, and the two were holding

him back from the window now. Then as Dall came to full wakefulness his struggles ceased.

"Sure would have thrown yourself right out this window if I hadn't been watching!" Spinetti exclaimed. "You sprang out and were almost to the window before I knew it!"

DALL managed to speak after a while. "Take me back over to bed," he told them, choking slightly. "Then you go down, Quinn, and call up Carson and tell him to come back here the first thing in the morning. You stay and watch me, Spinetti. I won't be sleeping again."

Despite Quinn's call it was not early morning but almost noon of the next day when Carson arrived. The surgeon's face was still deathly pale despite its bruises as he came into Dall's basement-office. This time as he entered with Quinn he did not glance hastily at the white rectangle in the cement floor of the corner, but gazed at it with a fixed, fascinated stare.

Dall watched him from his chair, his eyes red from sleeplessness, like Carson's, and his face pale, but set. He smiled grimly as Carson, when he caught sight of Dall, shrank instinctively back with sudden terror in his eyes.

"Don't be afraid, Carson," Dall said. "I had Quinn tie me in this chair before you came, and he'll not release me until you go."

"I'm not afraid," Carson said hoarsely. "I think I'm past fear by this morning, Dall."

"Take hold of yourself, man!" Dall commanded him. "We're in a jam, but I'm in it worse than you, and I'm not whining yet."

Carson smiled strangely. "You call it a jam! Dall, we've done a black thing, a thing of evil. We've sinned! Don't try to pass it off as you're trying. I tell you we've done a thing of horror, and we're starting to pay for it! You're paying most, but even though you forced me to do my share of the thing I'm paying, too!

"Dall, I've been thinking, I've been remembering those last words Roper shouted to you. 'You'll walk on my legs to hell!' I see that you remember them. You've been thinking of them, too. Well, that's what you're doing. You've got Roper's legs on you, and, somehow, God only knows, they're doing what Roper wanted to do—they are taking you and trying to take me to death!"

"Carson, I told you to take hold of yourself. What we've got to do is to find some way of stopping this thing. You put Roper's legs on me. You've got to find some way of stopping these attempts of theirs to kill me!"

CARSON stared haggardly. "Some way of stopping it? Dall, there is one way in which this can be stopped, and only one way."

"And what's that way?" Dall demanded.

Carson leaned tensely toward him. "That way is to take Roper's legs off you again!"

Dall exploded into fury. "Like hell! Do you think, Carson, I went through those weeks of aching pain to give up now? Do you think I'll surrender the legs I worked for and planned for and dreamed of having?"

"Dall, give them up," Carson urged. "It's the only way of saving you, of saving us both! I tell you, this thing has brought me almost to insanity. Roper's legs on your body, trying to kill you, trying to kill me—give them up. You'll be no worse off than before."

"I'll not do it!" gritted Dall. "What if they are Roper's legs and trying to kill me? I was never afraid of Roper himself, and I'm not afraid of his legs now even though they're on my body!"

Carson rose, his face a deathlier white than before and with a desperate resolve in his eyes.

"Dall, think! I'm the only surgeon living who will take them off for you! Any other would refuse and think you insane if you asked him to do it. And if you told your story they'd simply have you arrested and tried for murder. I'm the only one who can release you, the only one who can free you from these legs of Roper's that are trying to kill you.

"You're not fighting just Roper's legs, but Roper himself, man. Roper who, somehow, from somewhere out there, is trying to kill you with these legs of his you're wearing!"

"And I'll fight him!" cried Dall. "I took his legs and I'll keep them despite Roper and all the fiends of hell!"

"That's your last word?" Carson asked, his face strange, his eyes turning fixedly again toward the white oblong in the corner, and then back to Dall.

"My last word, yes. Dead Legs Dall keeps what he's got and has always done so!"

CARSON went out without another word, walking stiffly and strangely. Quinn and Burke entered in answer to Dall's call, a hint of horror in their eyes as they met his.

"Spinetti's gone!" Quinn announced. "Must have beat it just now. He was crazy afraid and babbling about devil's work this morning, and when I looked in his room now he and his things were gone."

"Damn him!" Dall exclaimed. "I'll show him he can't back on me, devil's work or not. I'll have him back here in two days!"

"Want me to go out and get the boys started after him?" Burke asked. Dall looked levelly at him and laughed harshly.

"You'd like to get out, too, wouldn't you, Burke? And you, too, Quinn? Well, you're going to stay. No matter what devil's work there is, no matter if I came out of hell itself, I'm Dead Legs Dall and nobody in this town forgets it. Come over here and untie me!"

When Quinn and Burke had released him from the chair Dall stood up and walked back and forth. His limbs seemed to obey every command of his brain. Then suddenly like a flash they hurtled with him across the room to fling him with force against the wall!

Dall's outflung hands alone saved his head from crashing against the wall, but, as it was, he was jarred and bruised by the shock when Quinn and Burke reached his side and helped him up. He looked about him, half-stunned.

"Keep holding me!" he gasped to them. "They'll get me even in here if they can!"

"We can tie them together and put you in your old wheel-chair," Quinn suggested. "That'll keep them from jumping around like that, and you'll still be able to move about."

"Go ahead, then," Dall ordered, his face ghastly. While Burke went for the wheel-chair Quinn fastened his legs together.

When they had lifted him into the chair Dall lay back, breathing hard. The horror upon the faces of his two aides was now undisguised.

"Right back in the wheel-chair again," said Dall bitterly. "All I need is the blanket over my legs once more."

He shouted with sudden madness. "Are you laughing at me now, Roper, wherever you are? Damn you, are you laughing?"

"For God's sake don't talk that way, Dead Legs," Burke said. "My nerve's going as it is."

DALL lay back, the other two withdrawing a little from him. A succession of heavy notes of sound seemed beating in Dall's ears, methodical, steady. They changed from mere sounds into words, spoken words: "You'll walk on them to hell! You'll walk on them to hell!"

The words seemed to be crashing upon Dall from all sides by thunderous voices, yet somehow above all those voices came the screaming curse of Roper. Then Dall put his hands over his ears, but he could still hear the words pounding into his brain. And as he turned his head he could see the white rectangle in the floor at the corner, under which lay Roper—Roper—

The hoarse exclamations of Burke and Quinn pierced his mind and he woke to the realization that a convulsive movement of his bound legs had almost thrown him out of the wheel-chair! He gripped the chair's arms just in time, holding on while his legs threshed wildly about. Quinn and Burke clutched the straining legs, held them, and in a moment they quieted.

For an hour following that Dall's legs were still, and then again they were kicking in wild efforts to throw him from the chair. Again Dall clung to the chair and fought them, with the other two aiding him. But when, in the half hour after that, the legs made two more attempts to hurl him out of the wheel-chair, Dall felt his mind breaking and giving beneath the horror.

He fought the threshing and struggling of his legs, clinging wildly to the wheel-chair from which they sought to throw him. It was only in an interval of this terrible struggle that he became aware that he was alone in the room, that Burke and Quinn had yielded to their terror and fled. In his struggle with his legs he had not heard the closing of the door.

"Damn you, come back!" he cried. "Quinn—you and Burke—I'll have you all bumped. I'm still Dead Legs Dall." There came no answer.

No answer but the silence of the white oblong in the floor at the room's corner. Dall shouted to it. "You've not got me yet, Roper! Your legs haven't got me yet! I can still beat you. I can have Carson take them off."

HE wheeled himself to the desk, and, grasping the telephone, called a number. He shouted hoarsely to the man who answered, "Tell Carson that Dall wants him. Tell him Dall wants him over here at once!"

The voice that answered him was that of a well-trained servant, but it sounded strange. "But Dr. Carson can't come, sir. He's—"

"Tell Carson he's got to come!" Dall screamed into the instrument. "He's got to take Roper's legs off me, do you hear? Roper's here under the floor, but his legs are on me and he's got to take them off—take them off—"

"But Dr. Carson killed himself an hour ago, sir," the other said. "The police are here now. I'll tell them you want Dr. Carson if you—"

But Dall had hung up the receiver, was staring into blankness. Carson dead, Carson a suicide! He remembered Carson's white, strange face when the surgeon had left him. Carson was dead, the one man who could have taken Roper's legs from him! And even now those legs were again struggling, straining!

But there was a way out, even so! Dall wheeled his chair away from the desk, out into the room. Yes, a way out of the madness rapidly overtaking his brain! With legs still threshing and twisting he wheeled his chair toward the door of the operating room at the rear. He turned there to shake a trembling hand at the white-cement oblong in the floor back in the office's corner.

"You've not got me even yet, Roper, you hear? I'll beat you even now—even now." There was a hint of determination in Dall's wild mutterings. . . .

THE policemen and reporters in the little crowd were talking in excited voices as they came down

into the basement corridor of Dall's house and paused outside the door of his office. Their voices could be heard in snatches of sentences as they interrupted each other.

"—heard that Dead Legs had something on Dr. Carson for a long time, but never thought—"

"—butler said he screamed about Roper being buried under the floor in here and something about Roper's legs. We knew damned well Dall was the one who put Roper away, but couldn't pin—"

The police-captain in charge turned at the door. "Have your guns ready, there. We're going right in."

The door flew open from his kick and with pistols ready the policemen burst into Dall's office. A glance showed that he was not in it, but the door at its rear was open and in a moment they were through that. All stared about them for a moment at the elaborately-fitted little operating-room. Then they uttered cries of horror as they saw the wheel-chair that stood beside an instrument-cabinet.

Dall sat in that wheel-chair, his eyes staring blankly out of his dead, distorted face. His hands still held tightly a heavy, ax-like surgical implement, and his legs had been cut off by terrific strokes above the knees. In the red pool around the chair lay the severed bonds that had held his legs, but the legs themselves were not near the chair nor anywhere in the operating-room. The men gazed at one another dumbly.

Then someone pointed dumbly, and all saw that red footprints led from the chair into the room they had first rushed through, the office. They followed the footprints back in there and from them came exclamations of an utter and deeper horror as they saw. On the oblong of whiter cement at the corner of the room's floor lay the two severed legs.

"Roper was buried under the floor there, he said," someone exclaimed in a choking voice. "And he said Roper's legs—"

But another cried what was in all their minds. "Roper's legs or not, Dall did it back there in the other room. He never moved afterward. . . .

"How did the legs get here?"

An Unusual Ghost

SOME years ago the people who lived around Lake Fryksdal, in Sweden, were very much perturbed by a ghost that was said to haunt the waters of the lake. They called it the *sjotroll*, or water-sprite. It would suddenly appear, apparently from nowhere, on the surface of the lake, and any fishermen who were near promptly fled from it in terror, for it was said to be a harbinger of misfortune and they feared something terrible would befall them for having disturbed its abode.

None of those who ever saw the *sjotroll* could describe it clearly. For one thing, they were in too much of a hurry to get away from it to study it closely, and the brief glimpses they did get showed that it was unlike anything they had ever seen before. Some said it had horns like an elk. Others said it reached out bony hands toward them.

Finally, a Swedish lieutenant, who did not believe in ghosts, undertook to investigate the phenomenon. It isn't everyone who has shot a ghost, but this lieutenant finally succeeded in shooting this particular one, and found, to his utter amazement, that it was something that had been part living and part dead.

The living part of it was an enormous pike. The dead part was the ragged and now fragmentary skeleton of a dead sea-eagle, the talons of which were still securely fastened in the flesh of the pike's back.

It was easy to see what had happened. The eagle, soaring high above the lake, had seen the pike and had swooped down upon it with deadly accuracy, fastening its talons firmly in the flesh of the fish. The pike, however, being big and powerful, promptly dived and took the eagle with it. The battle must have been short but decisive. The monarch of the lake was in his own element; the monarch of the air was not, and he drowned before he could get those locked talons loose.

The pike won the battle, but he couldn't get rid of his attacker. He carried the trophy with him until it became a weird-looking skeleton to strike terror into the hearts of the superstitious fishermen as it mysteriously appeared and disappeared on the waters of Lake Fryksdal.

Wolves of Darkness

A Complete Novelette

By Jack Williamson

CHAPTER I

The Tracks in the Snow

INVOLUNTARILY I paused, shuddering, on the snow-covered station platform. A strange sound, weird, and somehow appalling, filled the ghostly moonlight of the winter night. A quavering and distant ululation, which prickled my body with chills colder than the piercing bite of the motionless, frozen air.

That unearthly, nerve-shredding sound, I knew, must be the howling of the gray prairie or *lobo* wolves, though I had not heard them since childhood. But it carried a note of elemental terror which even the trembling appre-

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That unearthly, nerve-shredding sound, I knew, must be the howling of the gray prairie or *lobo* wolves, though I had not heard them since childhood. But it carried a note of elemental terror which even the trembling apprehensions of boyhood had never given the voice of the great wolves. There was something sharp, broken, about that eery clamor, far-off and deeply rhythmic as it was. Something—and the thought brought a numbing chill of fear—which suggested that the dreadful ululation came from straining human throats!

Strange, strange that there runs with the wolf pack a girl with fierce green eyes.

Swiftly, hideously, they closed in upon me.

Striving to shake the phantasy from me, I hastened across the icy platform, and burst rather precipitately into the dingy waiting room. It was brilliantly lit with unshaded electric bulbs. A red-hot stove filled it with grateful heat. But I was less thankful for the warmth than for the shutting out of that far-away howling.

Beside the glowing stove a tall man sat tense over greasy cards spread on the end of a packing box

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Beside the glowing stove a tall man sat tense over greasy cards spread on the end of a packing box

which he held between his knees, playing solitaire with strained, feverish attention. He wore an ungainly leather coat, polished slick with wear. One tanned cheek bulged with tobacco, and his lips were amber-stained.

He seemed oddly startled by my abrupt entrance. With a sudden, frightened movement, he pushed aside the box, and sprang to his feet. For a moment his eyes were anxiously upon me; then he seemed to sigh with relief. He opened the stove door, and expectorated into the roaring flames, then sank back into his chair.

"Howdy, Mister," he said, in a drawl that was a little strained and husky. "You sort of scairt me. You was so long comin' in that I figgered nobody got off."

"I stopped to listen to the wolves," I told him. "They sound weird, don't they?"

HE searched my face with strange, fearful eyes. For a long time he did not speak. Then he said briskly, "Well, Mister, what kin I do for ye?"

As I advanced toward the stove, he added, "I'm Mike Connell, the station agent."

"My name is Clovis McLaurin," I told him. "I want to find my father, Dr. Ford McLaurin. He lives on a ranch near here."

"So you're Doc McLaurin's boy, eh?" Connell said, warming visibly. He rose, smiling and shifting his wad of tobacco to the other cheek, and took my hand.

"Yes," I said. "Have you seen him lately? Three days ago I had a strange telegram from him. He asked me to come at once. It seems that he's somehow in trouble. Do you know anything about it?"

Connell looked at me queerly.

"No," he said at last. "I ain't seen him lately. None of 'em off the ranch ain't been in to Hebron for two or three weeks. The snow is the deepest in years, you know, and it ain't easy to git around. I dunno how they could have sent a telegram, though, without comin' to town. And they ain't none of us seen 'em!"

"Have you got to know Dad?" I inquired, alarmed more deeply.

"No, not to say real well," the agent admitted. "But I seen him and Jetton and Jetton's gal often enough when they come into Hebron, here. Quite a bit of stuff has come for 'em to the station, here. Crates and boxes, marked like they was scientific apparatus—I dunno what. But a right purty gal, that Stella Jetton. Purty as a picture."

"It's three years since I've seen Dad," I said, confiding in the agent in hope of winning his approval and whatever aid he might be able to give me in reaching the ranch, over the unusual fall of snow that blanketed the West Texas plains. "I've been in medical college in the East. Haven't seen Dad since he came out here to Texas three years ago."

"You're from the East, eh?"

"New York. But I spent a couple of years out here with my uncle when I was a kid. Dad inherited the ranch from him."

"Yeah, old Tom McLaurin was a friend of mine," the agent told me.

IT was three years since my father had left the chair of astrophysics at an eastern university, to come here to the lonely ranch to carry on his original experiments. The legacy from his brother Tom, besides the ranch itself, had included a small fortune in money, which had made it possible for him to give up his academic position and to devote his entire time to the abstruse problems upon which he had been working.

Being more interested in medical than in mathematical science, I had not followed Father's work completely, though I used to help him

with his experiments, when he had to perform them in a cramped flat, with pitifully limited equipment. I knew, however, that he had worked out an extension of Weyl's non-Euclidian geometry in a direction quite different from those chosen by Eddington and Einstein—and whose implications, as regards the structure of our universe, were stupendous. His new theory of the wave-electron, which completed the wrecking of the Bohr planetary atom, had been as sensational.

The proof his theory required was the exact comparison of the velocity of beams of light at right angles. The experiment required a large, open field, with a clear atmosphere, free from dust or smoke; hence his choosing the ranch as a site upon which to complete the work.

Since I wished to remain in college, and could help him no longer, he had employed as an assistant and collaborator, Dr. Blake Jetton, who was himself well known for his remarkable papers upon the propagation of light, and the recent modifications of the quantum theory.

Dr. Jetton, like my father, was a widower. He had a single child, a daughter named Stella. She had been spending several months of each year with them on the ranch. While I had not seen her many times, I could agree with the station agent that she was pretty. As a matter of face I had thought her singularly attractive.

THREE days before, I had received the telegram from my father. A strangely worded and alarming message, imploring me to come to him with all possible haste. It stated that his life was in danger, though no hint had been given as to what the danger might be.

Unable to understand the message, I had hastened to my rooms for a few necessary articles—among them, a little automatic pistol—and had lost no time in boarding a fast train. I had found the Texas Panhandle covered with nearly a foot of snow—the winter was the most severe in several years. And that weird and terrible howling had greeted me ominously when I swung from the train at the lonely village of Hebron.

"The wire was urgent—most urgent," I told Connell. "I must get out to the ranch to-night, if it's at all possible. You know of any way I could go?"

For some time he was silent, watching me, with dread in his eyes.

"No, I don't," he said presently. "Ten mile to the ranch. And they ain't a soul lives on the road. The snow is nigh a foot deep. I doubt a car would make it. Ye might git Sam Judson to haul you over to-morrow in his wagon."

"I wonder if he would take me out to-night?" I inquired.

The agent shook his head uneasily, peered nervously out at the glistening, moonlit desert of snow beyond the windows, and seemed to be listening anxiously. I remembered the weird, distant howling I had heard as I walked across the platform, and could hardly restrain a shiver of my own.

"Naw, I think not!" Connell said abruptly. "It ain't healthy to git out at night around here, lately."

HE paused a moment, and then asked suddenly, darting a quick, uneasy glance at my face, "I reckon you heard the howlin'?"

"Yes. Wolves?"

"Yeah—anyhow, I reckon so. Queer. Damn queer! They ain't been any loafers around these parts for ten years, till we heard 'em jest after the last blizzard." ("Loafer" appeared to be a local corruption of the Spanish word *lobo* applied to the gray prairie wolf, which is much larger than the coyote, and

was a dreaded enemy of the rancher in the Southwest until its practical extermination.)

"Seems to be a reg'lar pack of the critters rovin' the range," Connell went on. "They've killed quite a few cattle in the last few weeks, and—" he paused, lowering his voice, "and five people!"

"The wolves have killed people!" I exclaimed.

"Yeah," he said slowly. "Josh Wells and his hand were took two weeks ago, come Friday, while they was out ridin' the range. And the Simms' are gone. The old man and his woman and little Dolly. Took right out of the cow-pen, I reckon, while they was milkin'. It ain't two mile out of town to their place. Rufe Smith was out that way to see 'em Sunday. Cattle dead in the pen, and the smashed milk buckets lying in a drift of snow under the shed. And not a sign of Simms and his family!"

"I never heard of wolves taking people that way!" I was incredulous.

Connell shifted his wad of tobacco again, and whispered, "I didn't neither. But, Mister, these here ain't ordinary wolves!"

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Wall, after the Simms' was took, we got up a sort of posse, and went out to hunt the critters. We didn't find no wolves. But we did find tracks in the snow. The wolves is plumb gone in the daytime!

"Tracks in the snow," he repeated slowly, as if his mind were dwelling dazedly upon some remembered horror. "Mister, them wolf tracks was too tarnation far apart to be made by any ordinary beast. The critters must 'a' been jumpin' thirty feet!

"And they warn't all wolf tracks, neither. Mister, part was wolf tracks. And part was tracks of bare human feet!"

WITH that, Connell fell silent, staring at me strangely, with a queer look of utter terror in his eyes.

I was staggered. There was, of course, some element of incredulity in my feelings. But the agent did not look at all like the man who has just perpetrated a successful wild story, for there was genuine horror in his eyes. And I recalled that I had fancied human tones in the strange, distant howling I had heard.

There was no good reason to believe that I had merely encountered a local superstition. Widespread as the legends of lycanthropy may be, I have yet to hear a whispered tale of werewolves related by a West Texan. And the agent's story had been too definite and concrete for me to imagine it an idle fabrication or an ungrounded fear.

"The message from my father was very urgent," I told Connell presently. "I *must* get out to the ranch to-night. If the man you mentioned won't take me, I'll hire a horse and ride."

"Judson is a damn fool if he'll git out to-night where them wolves is!" the agent said with conviction. "But there's nothing to keep ye from askin' him to go. I reckon he ain't gone to bed yet. He lives in the white house, jest around the corner behind Brice's store."

He stepped out upon the platform behind me to point the way. And as soon as the door was opened, we heard again that rhythmic, deep, far-off ululation, that weirdly mournful howling, from far across the moonlit plain of snow. I could not repress a shudder. And Connell, after pointing out to me Sam Judson's house, among the straggling few that constituted the village of Hebron, got very hastily back inside the depot, and shut the door behind him.

CHAPTER II

The Pack that Ran by Moonlight

SAM JUDSON owned and cultivated a farm nearly a mile from Hebron, but had moved his house into the village so that his wife could keep the post-office. I hurried toward his house, through the icy streets, very glad that Hebron was able to afford the luxury of electric lights. The distant howling of the wolf-pack filled me with a vague and inexplicable dread. But it did not diminish my determination to reach my father's ranch as soon as possible, to solve the riddle of the strange and alarming telegram he had sent me.

Judson came to the door when I knocked. He was a heavy man, clad in faded, patched blue overalls, and brown flannel shirt. His head was almost completely bald, and his naked scalp was tanned until it resembled brown leather. His wide face was covered with a several week's growth of black beard. Nervously, fearfully, he scanned my face.

He led me to the kitchen, in the rear of the house—a small, dingy room, the walls covered with an untidy array of pots and pans. The cook stove was hot; he had, from appearances, been sitting with his feet in the oven, reading a newspaper, which now lay on the floor.

He had me sit down, and, when I took the creaking chair, I told him my name. He said that he knew my father, Dr. McLaurin, who got his mail at the post-office which was in the front room. But it had been three weeks, he said, since anyone had been to town from the ranch. Perhaps because the snow made traveling difficult, he said. There were five persons now staying out there, he told me. My father and Dr. Jetton, his daughter, Stella, and two hired mechanics from Amarillo.

I told him about the telegram, which I had received three days before. And he suggested that my father, if he had sent it, might have come to town at night, and mailed it to the telegraph office with the money necessary to send it. But he thought it strange that he had not spoken to anyone, or been seen.

Then I told Judson that I wanted him to drive me out to the ranch, at once. At the request his manner changed; he seemed frightened!

"No hurry about starting tonight, is there, Mr. McLaurin?" he asked. "We can put you up in the spare room, and I'll take ye over in the wagon to-morrow. It's a long drive to make at night."

"I'M very anxious to get there," I said. "I'm worried about my father. Something was wrong when he telegraphed. Very much wrong. I'll pay you enough to make it worth while.

"It ain't the money," he told me. "I'd be glad to do it for a son of Doc McLaurin's. But I reckon you heard—the wolves?"

"Yes, I heard them. And Connell, at the station, told me something about them. They've been hunting men?"

"Yes." For a little time Judson was silent, staring at me with strange eyes from his hairy face. Then he said, "And that ain't all. Some of us seen the tracks. And they's men runnin' with 'em!"

"But I must get out to see my father," I insisted. "We should be safe enough in a wagon. And I suppose you have a gun?"

"I have a gun, all right," Judson admitted. "But I ain't anxious to face them wolves!"

I insisted, quite ignorant of the peril into which I was dragging him. Finally, when I offered him fifty dollars for the trip, he capitulated. But he was going, he said —and I believed him—more to oblige a friend than for the money.

He went into the bedroom, where his wife was already asleep, roused her, and told her he was going to make the trip. She was rather startled, as I judged from the sound of her voice, but mollified when she learned that there was to be a profit of fifty dollars.

She got up, a tall and most singular figure in a purple flannel nightgown, with nightcap to match, and busied herself making us a pot of coffee on the hot stove, and finding blankets for us to wrap about us in the farm wagon, for the night was very cold. Judson, meanwhile, lit a kerosene lantern, which was hardly necessary in the brilliant moonlight, and went to the barn behind the house to get ready the vehicle.

HALF an hour later we were driving out of the little village, in a light wagon, behind two gray horses. Their hoofs broke through the crust of the snow at every step, and the wagon wheels cut into it steadily, with a curious crunching sound. Our progress was slow, and I anticipated a tedious trip of several hours.

We sat together on the spring seat, heavily muffled up, with blankets over our knees. The air was bitterly cold, but there was no wind, and I expected to be comfortable enough. Judson had strapped on an ancient revolver, and we had a repeating rifle and a double barrel shotgun leaning against our knees. But despite our arms, I could not quite succeed in quieting the vague fears raised by the wolf-pack, whose quavering, unearthly wail was never still.

Once outside the village of Hebron, we were surrounded on all sides by a white plain of snow, almost as level as a table-top. It was broken only by the insignificant rows of posts which supported wire fences; these fences seemed to be Judson's only land-marks. The sky was flooded with ghostly opalescence, and a million diamonds of frost glittered on the snow.

For perhaps an hour and a half, nothing remarkable happened. The lights of Hebron grew pale and faded behind us. We passed no habitation upon the illimitable desert of snow. The eery, heart-stilling ululation of the wolves, however, grew continually louder.

And presently the uncanny, wailing sounds changed position. Judson quivered beside me, and spoke nervously to the gray horses, plodding on through the snow. Then he turned to face me, spoke shortly.

"I figger they're sweeping in behind us, Mr. McLaurin."

"Well, if they do, you can haul some of them back, to skin tomorrow," I told him. I had meant it to sound cheerful. But my voice was curiously dry, and its tones rang false in my ears.

FOR some minutes more we drove on in silence.

Suddenly I noticed a change in the cry of the pack.

The deep, strange rhythm of it was suddenly quickened. Its eery wailing plaintiveness seemed to give place to a quick, eager yelping. But it was still queerly unfamiliar. And there was something weirdly ventriloquial about it, so that we could not tell precisely from which direction it came. The rapid, belling notes seemed to come from a dozen points scattered over the brilliant, moonlit waste behind us.

The horses became alarmed. They pricked up their ears, looked back, and went on more eagerly. I saw that they were trembling. One of them snorted suddenly. The abrupt sound jarred my jangled nerves, and I clutched convulsively at the side of the wagon.

Judson held the reins firmly, with his feet braced against the end of

the wagon box. He was speaking softly and soothingly to the quivering grays; but for that, they might already have been running. He turned to me and muttered:

"I've heard wolves. And they don't sound like that. Them ain't ordinary wolves!"

And as I listened fearfully to the terrible baying of the pack, I knew that he was right. Those strange ululations had an unfamiliar, an alien, note. There was a weird, terrible something about the howling that was not of this earth. It is hard to describe it, because it was so utterly foreign. It comes to me that if there are wolves on the ancient, age-dead deserts of Mars, they might cry in just that way, as they run some helpless creature to merciless death.

Malevolent were those belling notes, foul and hateful. Rioting with an infernal power of evil alien to this earth. Strong with the primal wickedness of the cosmic wastes.

"Reckon they are on the trail," Judson said suddenly, in a low, strained voice. "Look behind us."

I TURNED in the spring seat, peered back over the limitless flat desolation of sparkling, moonlit snow. For a few minutes I strained my eyes in vain, though the terrible belling of the unseen pack grew swiftly louder.

Then I saw leaping gray specks, far behind us across the snow. By rights, a wolf should have floundered rather slowly through the thick snow, for the crust was not strong enough to hold up so heavy an animal. But the things I saw—fleet, formless gray shadows—were coming by great bounds, with astounding speed.

"I see them," I told Judson tremulously.

"Take the lines," he said, pushing the reins at me, and snatching up the repeating rifle.

He twisted in the seat, and began to fire.

The horses were trembling and snorting. Despite the cold, sweat was raining from their heaving bodies. Abruptly, after Judson had begun to shoot, they took the bits in their teeth and bolted, plunging and floundering through the snow, dragging the wagon. Tug and jerk at the reins as I would, I could do nothing with them.

Judson had soon emptied the rifle. I doubt that he had hit any of the howling animals that ran behind us, for accurate shooting from the swaying, jolting wagon would have been impossible. And our wildly bounding pursuers would have been difficult marks, even if the wagon had been still.

Judson dropped the empty rifle into the wagon box, and turned a white, frightened face toward me. His mouth was open, his eyes protruding with terror. He shouted something incoherent, which I did not grasp, and snatched at the reins. Apparently insane with fear, he cursed the leaping grays, and lashed at them, as if thinking to outrun the pack.

FOR a little time I clung to the side of the rocking wagon. Then the snorting horses turned suddenly, almost breaking the wagon tongue. We were nearly upset. The spring seat was dislodged from its position, and fell into the wagon box. I was thrown half over the side of the wagon. For another agonized moment I tried to scramble back. Then the grays plunged forward again, and I was flung into the snow.

I broke through the thin crust. The thick, soft snow beneath checked the force of my fall. In a few moments I had floundered to my feet, and was clawing madly at my face, to get the white, powdery stuff away from my eyes.

The wagon was already a hundred yards away. The fear-maddened horses were still running, with Judson standing erect in the wagon, sawing wildly at the reins, but powerless to curb them. They had been turning abruptly when I was thrown out.

Now they were plunging back toward the weirdly baying pack!

Judson, screaming and cursing, crazed with terror, was being carried back toward the dimly seen, gray, leaping shapes whose uncanny howling sobbed so dreadfully through the moonlight.

Horror came over me, like a great, soul-chilling wave. I felt an insane desire to run across the snow, to run and run until I could not hear the wailing of the strange pack. With an effort I controlled myself, schooled my trembling limbs, swallowed to wet my dry throat.

I knew that my poor, floundering run could never distance the amazingly fleet gray shapes that bounded through the silver haze of moonlight toward the wagon. And I reminded myself that I had a weapon, a .25 caliber automatic pistol, slung beneath my shoulder. Something about the strange message from my father had made me fasten on the deadly little weapon, and slip a few extra clips of ammunition into my pockets.

With trembling hands, I pulled off a glove and fumbled inside my garments for the little weapon.

AT last I drew out the heavy little automatic, gratefully warm with the heat of my body, and snapped back the slide to be sure that a cartridge was in the chamber. Then I stood there, in a bank of powdery snow that came nearly to my knees, and waited.

The dismal, alien howling of the pack froze me into a queer paralysis of fear. And then I was the horrified spectator of a ghastly tragedy.

The wagon must have been four hundred yards from me, across the level, glistening snow, when the dim gray shapes of the baying pack left the trail and ran straight across toward it. I saw little stabs of yellow flame, heard sharp reports of guns, and the thin, whistling screams of bullets. Judson, I suppose, had dropped the reins and was trying to defend himself with the rifle and shotgun, and his old-fashioned revolver.

The vague gray shapes surrounded the wagon. I heard the scream of an agonized horse—except for the unearthly howling of that pack, the most terrible, nerve-wracking sound I know. A struggling mass of faintly seen figures seemed to surround the wagon. There were a few more shots, then a shriek, which rang fearfully over the snow, bearing an agony of pain and terror that is inconceivable. . . . I knew it came from Judson.

After that, the only sound was the strange, blood-congealing belling of the pack—an awful outcry that had not been stilled.

Soon—fearfully soon—that alien ululation seemed to be drawing nearer. And I saw gray shapes come bounding down the trail, away from the grim scene of the tragedy—toward **me!**

CHAPTER III

The Wolf and the Woman

I CAN give no conception of the stark, maddened terror that seized me when I knew that the gray animals were running on my trail. My heart seemed to pause, until I thought I would grow dizzy and fall. Then it was thumping loudly in my throat. My body was suddenly cold with sweat. My muscles knotted until I was gripping the automatic with painful force.

I had determined not to run, for

it was madness to try to escape the pack. But my resolution to stand my ground was nothing in the face of the fear that obsessed me.

I plunged across the level waste of snow. My feet broke through the thin crust. I floundered along, with laboring lungs. The snow seemed tripping me like a malevolent demon. Many times I stumbled, it seemed. And twice I sprawled in the snow, and scrambled desperately to my feet, and struggled on again, sobbing with terror, gasping in the cold air.

But my flight was cut short. The things that ran behind me could travel many times faster than I. Turning, when I must have gone less than a hundred yards, I saw them drawing near behind me, still vague gray shapes in the moonlight. I now perceived that only two had followed.

Abruptly I recalled the little automatic in my hand. I raised it, and emptied it, firing as rapidly as I could. But if I hit either of those bounding gray figures, they certainly were invulnerable to my bullets.

I had sought in my pocket for another clip, and was trying with quivering fingers to slip it into the gun, when those things came near enough, in a milky haze of moonlight, to be seen distinctly. Then my hands closed in rigid paralysis upon the gun—I was too astounded and unstrung to complete the operation of loading.

One of those two gray shapes was a wolf. A gaunt prairie wolf, covered with long, shaggy hair. A huge beast, he must have stood three feet high at the shoulder. He was not standing now, however, but coming toward me with great leaps that covered many yards. His great eyes glowed with a weird, greenish, unnatural light — terrible and strange and somehow hypnotic.

And the other was a girl.

IT was incredible. It numbed and staggered my terror-dazed mind. At first I thought it must be a hallucination. But as she came nearer, advancing with long, bounding steps, as rapidly as the gray wolf, I could no longer discredit my eyes. I recalled the weird suggestion of a human voice I had caught in the unearthly cry of the pack; recalled what Connell and Judson had told me of human footprints mingled with those of wolves in the trail the pack had left.

She was clad very lightly, to be abroad in the bitter cold of the winter night. Apparently, she wore only a torn, flimsy slip, of thin white silk, which hung from one shoulder, and came not quite to her knees. Her head was bare, and her hair, seeming in the moonlight to be an odd, pale yellow, was short and tangled. Her smooth arms and small hands, her legs, and even her flashing feet, were bare. Her skin was white, with a cold, leprous, bloodless whiteness. Almost as white as the snow.

And her eyes shone green.

They were like the gray wolf's eyes, blazing with a terrible emerald flame, with the fire of an alien, unearthly life. They were malevolent, merciless, hideous. They were cold as the cosmic wastes beyond the light of stars. They burned with an evil light, with a malicious intelligence, stronger and more fearful than that of any being on earth.

Across her lips, and her cheeks of alabaster whiteness, was a darkly red and dripping smear, almost black by moonlight.

I stood like a wooden man, nerveless with incredulous horror.

On came the girl and the wolf, springing side by side through the snow. They seemed to have preternatural strength, an agility beyond that of nature.

As they came nearer, I received another shock of terror.

The woman's face was familiar, for all its dreadful pallor and the infernal evil of the green, luminous eyes, and the red stain on her lips and cheeks. She was a girl whom I had known. A girl whom I had admired, whom I had even dreamed that I might come to love.

She was Stella Jetton!

This girl was the lovely daughter of Dr. Blake Jetton, whom, as I have said, my father had brought with him to this Texas ranch, to assist with his revolutionary experiments.

IT came to me that she had been changed in some fearful way. For this could be no sane, ordinary human girl—this strange, green-eyed being, half-clad, white-skinned, who ran over the moonlit snow beside a gaunt gray wolf, with dripping red upon her fearfully pallid skin!

"Stella!" I cried.

More a scream of frightened, anguished unbelief, than a human voice, the name came from my fear-parched throat. I was startled at my own call, hoarse, inchoate, gasping.

The huge gray wolf came directly at me, as if it were going to spring at my throat. But it stopped a dozen feet before me, crouching in the snow, watching me with alert and strange intelligence in its dreadful green eyes.

And the woman came even nearer, before she paused, standing with bare feet in the snow, and stared at me with terrible eyes like those of the wolf—luminous and green and filled with an evil, alien will.

The face, ghastly white, and fearfully red-stained as it was, was the face of Stella Jetton. But the eyes were not hers! No, the eyes were not Stella's!

They were the eyes of some hideous monstrosity. The eyes of some inconceivable, malevolent entity, from some frozen hell of the far-off, night-black cosmic void!

Then she spoke. The voice had some little of its old, familiar ring. But there was a new, strange note in it. A note that bore the foreign, menacing mystery of the eyes and the leprous skin. A note that had a suggestion of the dismal, wailing ululation of the pack that had followed us.

"Yes, Stella Jetton," the dreadful voice said. "What are you called? Are you Clovis McLaurin? Did you receive a telegram?"

She did not know me, apparently. Even the wording of her sentences was a little strange, as if she were speaking a language with which she was not very familiar. The delightful, human girl I had known was fearly changed: it was as if her fair body had been seized by some demoniac entity.

IT occurred to me that she must be afflicted with some form of insanity, which had given her the almost preternatural strength which she had displayed in running with the wolf-pack. Cases of lycanthropy, in which the suffered imagines himself a wolf—or sometimes a tiger or some other animal—and imitates its actions, have been common enough in the annals of the insane. But if this is lycanthropy, I thought, it must indeed be a singular case.

"Yes, I'm Clovis McLaurin," I said, in a shaken voice. "I got Dad's telegram three days ago. Tell me what's wrong—why he worded the message as he did!"

"Nothing is wrong, my friend," this strange woman said. "We merely desired your assistance with certain experiments, of a great strangeness, which we are undertaking to perform. Your father now waits at the ranch, and I came to conduct you to him."

This singular speech was almost incredible. I could accept it only on the assumption that the speaker suffered from some dreadful derangement of the mind.

"You came to meet me?" I exclaimed, fighting the horror that almost overwhelmed me. "Stella, you mustn't be out in the cold without more wraps. You must take my coat."

I began to strip off the garment. But, as I had somehow expected, she refused to accept it.

"No, I do not need it," her strange voice told me. "The cold does not harm this body. And you must come with us, now. Your father waits for us at the house, to perform the great experiment."

She said *us!* It gave me new horror to notice that she thus classed the huge gaunt wolf with herself.

Then she sprang forward with an incredible agility, leaping through the snow in the direction in which Judson and I had been traveling. With a naked, dead-white arm, she beckoned me to follow. And the great, gray wolf sprang behind me.

Nerved to sudden action, I recalled the half-loaded automatic in my hand. I snapped the fresh clip into position, jerked back the slide mechanism to get a cartridge into the breech, and then emptied the gun into that green-orbed wolf.

A STRANGE composure had come over me. My motions were calm enough, almost deliberate. I know that my hand did not shake. The wolf was standing still, only a few yards away. It is unlikely that I missed him at all, impossible that I missed him with every shot.

I know that I hit him several times, for I heard the bullets drive into his gaunt body, saw the animal jerk beneath their impact, and noticed gray hairs float from it in the moonlight.

But he did not fall. His terrible green eyes never wavered in their sinister stare of infernal evil.

Just as the gun was empty—it had taken me only a few seconds to fire the seven shots—I heard an angry, wolfish snarl from the woman, from the strange monster that Stella Jetton had become. I had half turned when her white body came hurtling at me like a projectile.

I went down beneath her, instinctively raising an arm to guard my throat. It is well that I did, for I felt her teeth sinking into my arm and shoulder, as we fell together into the snow.

I am sure that I screamed with the horror of it.

I fought at her madly, until I heard her strange, non-human voice again.

"You need not be afraid," it said. "We are not going to kill you. We wish you to aid with a greatly remarkable experiment. For that reason, you must come with us. Your father waits. The wolf is our friend, and will not harm you. And your weapon will not hurt it."

A curious, half-articulate yelp came from the throat of the great wolf, which had not moved since I shot at it, as if it had understood her words and gave affirmation.

The woman was still upon me, holding me flat in the snow, her bared, bloody teeth above my face, her fingers sunk claw-like into my body with almost preternatural strength. A low, bestial, growling sound came from her throat, and then she spoke again.

"You will now come with us, to the house where your father waits, to perform the experiment?" she demanded in that terrible voice, with its suggestion of the wolf-pack's weird cry.

"I'll come," I agreed, relieved somewhat to discover that the strange pair of beasts did not propose to devour me on the spot.

The woman—I cannot call her Stella, for except in body, she was not Stella!—helped me to my feet. She made no objection when I bent, and picked up the automatic, which lay in the snow, and slipped it into my coat pocket.

SHE and the gaunt gray wolf, which my bullets had so strangely failed to kill, leaped away together over the moonlit snow. I followed, floundering along as rapidly as I could, my mind filled with confused and terror-numbed conjecture.

There was now no doubt remaining in my mind that the woman thought herself a member of the wolf-pack, no doubt that she actually was a member. A curious sympathy certainly seemed to exist between her and the great gaunt wolf beside her.

It must be some strange form of lunacy, I thought, though I had never read of a lycanthrope whose symptoms were exaggerated to the terrible extent that hers appeared to be. It is well known that maniacs have unnatural strength, but her feats of running and leaping across the snow were almost beyond reason.

But there was that about her which even the theory of insanity did not explain. The corpse-like pallor of her skin; the terrible green luminosity of her eyes; the way she spoke—as if English were an unfamiliar tongue to her, but half mastered. And there was something even more indefinite: a strangeness that smacked of the alien life of forbidden universes!

The pace set for me by the woman and the wolf was mercilessly rapid. Stumble along as best I could, I was unable to move as fast as they wished. Nor was I allowed to fall behind, for when I lagged, the wolf came back, and snarled at me menacingly.

Before I had floundered along many miles, my lungs were aching, and I was half blind with fatigue. I stumbled and sprawled in the soft snow a last time. My tortured muscles refused to respond when I tried to rise. I lay there, ready to endure whatever the wolf might do, rather than undergo the agony of further effort.

But this time the woman came back. I was half unconscious, but I realized vaguely that she was lifting me, raising me to her shoulders. After that, my eyes were closed; I was too weary to watch my surroundings. But I knew dimly, from my sensations of swaying, that I was being carried.

Presently the toxins of exhaustion overcame my best efforts to keep my senses. I fell into the deep sleep of utter fatigue, forgetting that my limbs were growing very cold, and that I was being borne upon the back of a woman endowed with the instincts of a wolf and the strength of a demon; a woman who, when I had last seen her, had been all human and lovable!

CHAPTER IV

A Strange Homecoming

NEVER can I forget the sensations of my awakening. I opened my eyes upon gloom relieved but faintly by dim red light. I lay upon a bed or couch, swathed in blankets. Hands that even to my chilled body seemed ice-cold were chafing my arms and legs. And terrible greenish orbs were swimming above in the terrible crimson darkness, staring down at me, horribly.

Alarmed, recalling what had happened in the moonlight as a vague, hideous nightmare, I collected my scattered senses, and struggled to a sitting position among the blankets.

It is odd, but the first definite thing that came to my confused

brain was an impression of the ugly green flowers in monotonous rows across the dingy, brown-stained wall paper. In the red light that filled the room they appeared unpleasantly black, but still they awakened an ancient memory. I knew that I was in the dining room of the old ranch house, where I had come to spend two years with my uncle, Tom McLaurin, many years before.

The weirdly illuminated chamber was sparsely furnished. The couch upon which I lay stood against one wall. Opposite was a long table, with half a dozen chairs pushed under it. Near the end of the room was a large heating stove, with a full scuttle of coal and a box of split pine kindling behind it.

There was no fire in the stove, and the room was very cold. My breath was a white cloud in that frosty atmosphere. The dim crimson light came from a small electric lantern standing on the long table. It had been fitted with a red bulb, probably for use in a photographer's dark room.

All those impressions I must have gathered almost subconsciously, for my horrified mind was absorbed with the persons in the room.

My father was bending over me, rubbing my hands. And Stella was chafing my feet, which stuck out beneath the blankets.

And my father was changed as weirdly, as dreadfully, as the girl, Stella!

His skin was a cold, bloodless white—white with the pallor of death. His hands, against my own, felt fearfully cold—as cold as those of a frozen corpse. And his eyes, watching me with a strange, terrible alertness, shone with a greenish light.

His eyes were like Stella's—and like those of the great gray wolf. They were agleam with the fire of cosmic evil, with the light of an alien, hellish intelligence!

AND the woman—the dread thing that had been lovely Stella—was unchanged. Her skin was still fearfully pallid, and her eyes strange and luminously green. The stain was still on her pale face, appearing black in the somber crimson light.

There was no fire in the stove. But, despite the bitter cold of the room, the woman was still clad as she had been before, in a sheer slip of white silk, half torn from her white body. My father—or that which had once been my father—wore only a light cotton shirt, with the sleeves torn off, and a pair of ragged trousers. His feet and arms were bare.

Another fearful thing I noticed. My breath, as I said, condensed in white clouds of frozen crystals, in the frigid air. But no white mists came from Stella's nostrils, or from my father's.

From outside, I could hear the dismal, uncanny keening of the running pack. And from time to time the two looked uneasily toward the door, as if anxious to go to join them.

I had been sitting up, staring confusedly and incredulously about, before my father spoke.

"We are glad to see you, Clovis," he said, rather stiffly, and without emotion, not at all in his usual jovial, affectionate manner. "You seem to be cold. But you will presently be normal again. We have surprising need of you, in the performance of an experiment, which we cannot accomplish without your assistance."

He spoke slowly, uncertainly, as a foreigner might who has attempted to learn English from a dictionary. I was at a loss to understand it, even if I assumed that he and Stella both suffered from a mental derangement.

And his voice was somehow whining; it carried a note weirdly

suggestive of the howling of the pack.

"You will help us?" Stella demanded in the same dreadful tones.

"Explain it! Please explain everything!" I burst out. "Or I'll go crazy! Why were you running with the wolves? Why are your eyes so bright and green, your skins so deathly white? Why are you both so cold? Why the red light? Why don't you have a fire?"

I babbled my questions, while they stood there in the strange room, and silently stared at me with their horrible eyes.

FOR minutes, perhaps, they were silent. Then an expression of crafty intelligence came into my father's eyes, and he spoke again in those fearful tones, with their ring of the baying pack.

"Clovis," he said, "you know we came here for purposes of studying science. And a great discovery has been ours to make; a huge discovery relating to the means of life. Our bodies, they are changed, as you appear to see. Better machines they have become; stronger they are. Cold harms them not, as it does yours. Even our sight is better, so bright lights we no longer need.

"But we are yet lacking of perfect success. Our minds were changed, so that we do not remember all that once it had been ours to accomplish. And it is you whom we desire to be our assistant in replacing a machine of ours, that has been broken. It is you that we wish to aid us, so that to all humanity we may bring the gift of the new life, that is ever strong, and knows not death. All people we would change with the new science that it has been ours to discover."

"You mean you want to make the human race into monsters like yourselves?" I cried.

My father snarled ferociously, like a beast of prey.

"All men will receive the gift of life like ours," his strange voice said. "Death will be no more. And your aid is required by us—and it we will have!" There was intense, malefic menace in his tones. "It is yours to be our aid. You will refuse not!"

He stood before me with bared teeth and with white fingers hooked like talons.

"Sure, I'll help you," I contrived to utter, in a shaken voice. "I'm not a very brilliant experimenter, however." It appeared that to refuse would be a means of committing very unpleasant suicide.

TRIUMPHANT cunning shone in those menacing green eyes, the evil cunning of the maniac who has just perpetrated a clever trick. But it was even more than that; it was the crafty look of supreme evil in contemplation of further victory.

"You can come now, in order to see the machine?" Stella demanded.

"No," I said hastily, and sought reasons for delay. "I am cold. I must light a fire and warm myself. Then I am hungry, and very tired. I must eat and sleep." All of which was very true. My body had been chilled through, during my hours on the snow. My limbs were trembling with cold.

The two looked at each other. Unearthly sounds passed between them, incoherent, animal whinings. Such, instead of words, seemed to be their natural speech; the English they spoke seemed only an inaccurately and recently learned tongue.

"True," my father said to me again, in a moment. He looked at the stove. "Start a fire if you must. What you need is there?" He pointed inquiringly toward coal and kindling, as if fire were something new and unfamiliar to him.

"We must go without," he added.

"Light of fire is hurtful to us, as cold is to you. And in other room, called—" he hesitated perceptibly, "kitchen, will be food. There we will wait."

He and the white girl glided silently from the room.

Shivering with cold, I hurried to the stove. All the coals in it were dead; there had been no fire in it for many hours, none, perhaps, for several days. I shook down the ashes, lit a ball of crumpled newspaper with a match I found in my pocket, dropped it on the grate, and filled the stove with pine and coal. In a few minutes I had a roaring fire, before which I crouched gratefully.

IN a few minutes the door was opened slowly. Stella, first peering carefully, apparently to see if these was light in the room, stepped cautiously inside. The stove was tightly closed, no light escaped from it.

The pallid, green-eyed woman had her arms full of food, a curious assortment that had evidently been collected in the kitchen in a haphazard manner. There were two loaves of bread, a slab of raw bacon, an unopened can of coffee, a large sack of salt, a carton of oatmeal, a can of baking powder, a dozen tins of canned foods, and even a bottle of stove polish.

"You eat this?" she inquired, in her strangely animal voice, dropping the articles on the table.

It was almost ludicrous; and too, it was somehow terrible. She seemed to have no conception of human alimentary needs.

Comfortably warm again, and feeling very hungry, I went over to the table, and examined the odd assortment. I selected a loaf of bread, a tin of salmon, and one of apricots, for my immediate use.

"Some of these things are to be eaten as they are," I ventured, wondering what her response would be. "And some of them have to be cooked."

"Cooked?" she demanded quickly. "What is that?"

Then, while I was silent, dazed with astonishment, she added a terrible question.

"Does it convey that they must be hot and bleeding from the animal?"

"No!" I cried. "No. To cook a food one heats it. Usually adding seasonings, such as salt. A rather complicated process, requiring considerable skill."

"I see," she said. "And you must consume such articles, to keep your body whole?"

I admitted that I did, and then remarked that I needed a can cutter, to get at the food in the tins. First inquiring about the appearance of the implement, she hurried to the kitchen, and soon returned with one.

Presently my father came back into the room. Both of them watched me with their strange green eyes as I ate. My appetite failed somewhat, but I drew the meal out as long as possible, in order to defer whatever they might intend for me after I had finished.

BOTH of them asked many questions. Questions similar to Stella's query about cooking, touching subjects with which an ordinary child is familiar. But they were not stupid questions—no, indeed! Both of them evinced a cleverness that was almost preternatural. They never forgot, and I was astounded at their skill in piecing together the facts I gave them, to form others.

Their green eyes watched me very curiously when, unable to drag out the pretense of eating any longer, I produced a cigarette and sought a match to light it. Both of them howled, as if in agony, when

the feeble yellow flame of the match flared up. They covered their strange green eyes, and leaped back, cowering and trembling.

"Kill it!" my father snarled ferociously.

I flicked out the tiny flame, startled at its results.

They uncovered their terrible green eyes, blinking. It was several minutes before they seemed completely recovered from their amazing fear of the light.

"Make light no more when we are near," my father growled at me. "We will tear your body if you forget!" His teeth were bared; his lips curled like those of a wolf; he snarled at me frightfully.

Stella ran to an east window, raised the blind, peered nervously out. I saw that the dawn was coming. She whined strangely at my father. He seemed uneasy, like an animal at bay. His huge green eyes rolled from side to side. He turned anxiously to me.

"Come," he said. "The machine which we with your aid will repair is in the cellar beneath the house. The day comes. We must go."

"I can't go," I said. "I'm dog tired; been up all night. I've got to rest, before I work on any machine. I'm so sleepy I can't think."

He whined curiously at Stella again, as if he were speaking in some strange wolf-tongue. She replied in kind, then spoke to me.

"If rest is needful to the working of your body, you may sleep till the light is gone. Follow."

SHE opened the door at the end of the room, led me into a dark hall, and from it into a small bedroom. It contained a narrow bed, two chairs, a dresser, and wardrobe trunk.

"Try not to go," she snarled warningly, at the door, "or we will follow you over the snow!"

The door closed and I was alone. A key grated ominously in the lock. The little room was cold and dark. I scrambled hastily into the bed, and for a time I lay there, listening.

The dreadful howling of the wolf-pack, which had never stilled through all the night, seemed to be growing louder, drawing nearer. Presently it ceased, with a few sharp, whining yelps, apparently just outside the window. The pack had come here, with the dawn!

As the increasing light of day filled the little room, I raised myself in the bed to scrutinize its contents again. It was a neat chamber, freshly papered. The dresser was covered with a gay silk scarf, and on it, in orderly array, were articles of the feminine toilet. A few dresses, a vivid beret, and a bright sweater were hanging under a curtain in the corner of the room. On the wall was a picture—of myself!

It came to me that this must be Stella's room, into which I had been locked to sleep until night had come again. But what weird and horrible thing had happened to the girl since I had seen her last?

Presently I examined the windows with a view to escape. There were two of them, facing the east. Heavy wooden bars had been fastened across them, on the outside, so close together that I could not hope to squeeze between them. And a survey of the room revealed no object with which they could be easily sawed.

But I was too sleepy and exhausted to attempt escape. At thought of the ten weary miles to Hebron, through the thick, soft snow, I abandoned the idea. I knew that, tired as I already was, I could never cover the distance in the short winter day. And I shuddered at the thought of being caught on the snow by the pack.

I lay down again in Stella's clean bed, about which a slight fragrance of perfume still lingered, and was soon asleep. My slumber, though deep, was troubled. But no nightmare could be as hideous as the reality from which I had found a few hours' escape.

CHAPTER V

The Machine in the Cellar

I SLEPT through most of the short winter day. When I woke it was sunset. Gray light fell athwart the illimitable flat desert of snow outside my barred windows, and the pale disk of the moon, near the full, was rising in the darkening eastern sky. No human habitation was in view, in all the stretching miles of that white waste. I felt a sharp sense of utter loneliness.

I could look for no outside aid in coping with the strange and alarming situation into which I had stumbled. If I were to escape from these dread monsters who wore the bodies of those dearest to me, it must be by my own efforts. And in my hands alone rested the task of finding from what evil malady they suffered, and how to restore them to their old, dear selves.

Once more I examined the stout wooden bars across the windows. They seemed strongly nailed to the wall on either side. I found no tool that looked adequate to cutting them. My matches were still in my pocket, however, and it occurred to me that I might burn the bars. But there was no time for such an undertaking before the darkness would bring back my captors, nor did I relish the thought of attempting to escape with the pack on my trail.

I was hungry again, and quite thirsty also.

Darkness fell, as I lay there on the bed, among the intimate belongings of a lovely girl for whom I had owned tender feelings—waiting for her to come with the night, amid her terrible allies, to drag me to I knew not what dread fate

The gray light of day faded imperceptibly into pale silvery moonlight.

Abruptly, without warning, the key turned in the lock.

STELLA—or the alien entity that ruled the girl's fair body—glided with sinister grace into the room. Her green eyes were shining, and her skin was ghastly white.

"Immediately you will follow," came her wolfish voice. "The machine below awaits the aid for you to give in the great experiment. Quickly come. Your weak body, it is rested?"

"All right," I said. "I've slept, of course. But now I'm hungry and thirsty again. I've got to have water and something to eat before I tinker with any machine."

I was determined to postpone whatever ordeal lay before me as long as possible.

"Your body you may satisfy again," the woman said. "But take not too long!" she snarled warningly.

I followed her back to the dining room.

"Get water," she said, and glided out the door.

The stove was still faintly warm. I opened it, stirred the coals, dropped in more fuel. Soon the fire was roaring again. I turned my attention to the food I had left. The remainder of the salmon and apricots had frozen on the plates, and I set them over the stove to warm.

Soon Stella was back with a water bucket containing a bulging mass of ice. Apparently surprised that I could not consume water in a solid form, she allowed me to set it on the stove to thaw.

While I waited, standing by the stove, she asked innumerable ques-

tions, many of them so simple they would have been laughable under less strange conditions, some of them concerning the latest and most recondite of scientific theories, her mastery of which seemed to exceed my own.

My father appeared suddenly, his corpse-white arms full of books. He spread them on the table, curtly bid me come look with him. He had Einstein's "The Meaning of Relativity," Weyl's "Gravitation und Elektricität," and two of his own privately printed works. The latter were "Space-Time Tensors" and the volume of mathematical speculation entitled "Interlocking Universes" whose bizarre implications created such a sensation among those savants to whom he sent copies.

MY father began opening these books, and bombarding me with questions about them, questions which I was often unable to answer. But the greater part of his queries related merely to grammar, or the meaning of words. The involved thought seemed easy for him to understand; it was the language which caused him difficulty.

His questions were exactly such as might be asked by a super-intellectual being from Mars, if he were attempting to read a scientific library without having completely mastered the language in which its books were written.

And his own books seemed as unfamiliar to him as those of the other scientists. But he ran through the pages with amazing speed, pausing only to ask an occasional question, and appeared to gain a complete mastery of the volume as he went.

When he released me, the food and water were warm. I drank, and then ate bread and salmon and apricots, as deliberately as I dared. I invited the two to share the food with me, but they declined abruptly. The volley of questions continued.

Then suddenly, evidently concluding that I had eaten enough, they started toward the door, commanding me to follow. I dared not do otherwise. My father paused at the end of the table and picked up the electric lantern, whose dimly glowing red bulb supplied the only light in the room.

Again we traversed the dark hall, and went out through a door in the rear of the frame building. As we stepped out upon the moonlit snow, I shuddered to hear once more the distant, wailing ululation of the pack, still with that terrible note which suggested strained human vocal organs.

A few feet from us was the door of a cellar. The basement had evidently been considerably enlarged, quite recently, for huge mounds of earth lay about us, filling the back yard. Some of them were covered with snow, some of them black and bare.

THE two led the day down the steps into the cellar, my father still carrying the electric lantern, which faintly illuminated the midnight space with its feeble, crimson glow.

The cellar was large, neatly plastered. It had not been itself enlarged, but a dark passage sloped down beside the door, to deeper excavations.

In the center of the floor stood the wreck of an intricate and unfamiliar mechanism. It had evidently been deliberately smashed—I saw an ax lying beside it, which must have been the means of the havoc. The concrete floor was littered with the broken glass of shattered electron tubes. The machine itself was a mass of tangled wires and twisted coils and bent magnets, oddly arranged outside a great copper ring, perhaps four feet in diameter.

The huge copper ring was mounted on its edge, in a metal frame. Before it was a stone step, placed as if to be used by one climbing through the ring. But, I saw, it had been impossible for one actually to climb through, for on the opposite side was a mass of twisted apparatus—a great parabolic mirror of polished metal, with what appeared to be a broken cathode tube screwed into its center.

A most puzzling machine. And it had been very thoroughly wrecked. Save for the huge copper ring, and the heavy stone step before it, there was hardly a part that was not twisted or shattered.

In the end of the cellar was a small motor-generator—a little gasoline engine connected to a dynamo—such as is sometimes used for supplying isolated homes with electric light and power. I saw that it had not been injured.

From a bench beside the wall, my father picked up a brief case, from which he took a roll of blue prints, and a sheaf of papers bound in a manila cover. He spread them on the bench and set the red lantern beside them.

"This machine, as you see, has been, most unfortunately for us, wrecked," he said. "These papers tell the method of construction to be followed in the erection of such machines. Your aid we must have in deciphering what they convey. And the new machine will bring such great, strong life as we have to all your world."

"You say 'your world'!" I cried. "Then you don't belong to this earth? You are a monster, who has stolen the body of my father!"

BOTH of them snarled like beasts. They bared their teeth and glowered at me with their terrible green eyes. Then a crafty look came again into the man's sinister orbs.

"No, my son," came his whining, animal tones. "A new secret of life have we discovered. Great strength it gives to our bodies. Death we fear no longer. But our minds are changed. Many things we do not remember. We must require your aid in reading this which we once wrote—"

"That's the bunk!" I exclaimed, perhaps not very wisely. "I don't believe it. And I'll be damned if I'll help repair the infernal machine, to make more human beings into monsters like you!"

Together they sprang toward me. Their eyes glowed dreadfully against their pallid skins. Their fingers were hooked like claws. Saliva drooled from their snarling lips, and naked teeth gleamed in the dim crimson radiance.

"Aid us you will!" cried my father. "Or your body will we most painfully destroy. We will eat it slowly, while you live!"

The horror of it broke down my reason. With a wild, terror-shaken scream, I dashed for the door.

It was hopeless, of course, for me to attempt escape from beings possessing such preternatural strength.

With startling, soul-blasting howls, they sprang after me together. They swept me to the cellar's floor, sinking their teeth savagely into my arms and body. For a few moments I struggled desperately, writhing and kicking, guarding my throat with one arm and striking blindly with the other.

Then they held me helpless. I could only curse, and scream a vain appeal for aid.

The woman, holding my arms pinioned against my sides, lifted me easily, flung me over her shoulder. Her body, where it touched mine, was as cold as ice. I struggled fiercely but uselessly as she started with me down the black, inclined passage, into the recent excavations beneath the cellar's floor.

Behind us, my father picked up the little red lantern, and the blue prints and sheets of specifications, and followed down the dark, slanting passage.

CHAPTER VI

The Temple of Crimson Gloom

HELPLESS in those preternaturally strong, corpse-cold and corpse-white arms, I was carried down narrow steps, to a high, subterranean hall. It was filled with a dim blood-red light, which came from no visible source, its angry, forbidding radiance seeming to spring from the very air. The walls of the underground hall were smooth and black, of some unfamiliar ebon substance.

Several yards down that black, strangely illuminated passage I was carried. Then we came into a larger space. Its black roof, many yards above, was groined and vaulted, supported by a double row of massive dead-black pillars. Many dark, arched niches were cut into its walls. This greater hall, too, was sullenly illuminated by a ghastly scarlet light, which seemed to come from nowhere.

A strange, silent, awful place. A sort of cathedral of darkness, of evil and death. A sinister atmosphere of nameless terror seemed breathed from its very midnight walls, like the stifling fumes of incense offered to some formless god of horror. The dusky red light might have come from unseen tapers burned in forbidden rites of blood and death. The dead silence itself seemed a tangible, evil thing, creeping upon me from ebon walls.

I was given little time to speculate upon the questions that it raised. What was the dead-black material of the walls? Whence came the lurid, bloody radiance? How recently had this strange temple of terror been made? And to what demoniac god was it consecrated? No opportunity had I to seek answers to those questions, nor time even to recover from my natural astonishment at finding such a place beneath the soil of a Texas ranch.

THE emerald-eyed woman who bore me dropped me to the black floor, against the side of a jet pillar, which was round and two feet thick. She whined shrilly, like a hungry dog. It was evidently a call, for two men appeared in the broad central aisle of the temple, which I faced.

Two men—or, rather, malevolent monstrosities in the bodies of men. Their eyes shone with green fires alien to our world, and their bodies, beneath their tattered rags of clothing, were fearfully white. One of them came toward me with a piece of frayed manila rope, which must have been a lasso they had found above.

Later it came to me that these two must be the mechanics from the city of Amarillo, who, Judson had told me on the evening of our fatal drive, had been employed here by my father. I had not yet seen Dr. Blake Jetton, Stella's father, who had been the chief assistant of my own parent in various scientific investigations — investigations which, I now began to fear, must have borne dreadful fruit!

While the woman held me against the black pillar, the men seized my arms, stretched them behind it, and tied them with the rope. I kicked out, struggled, cursed them, in vain. My body seemed but putty to their fearful strength. When my hands were tied behind the pillar, another length of the rope was dropped about my ankles and drawn tight about the ebon shaft.

I was helpless in this weird, subterranean temple, at the mercy of these four creatures who seemed to combine infernal super-intelli-

gence with the strength and the nature of wolves.

"See the instrument which we are to build!" came the snarling voice of my father. Standing before me, with the roll of blue prints in his livid hands, he pointed at an object that I had not yet distinguished in the sullen, bloody gloom.

IN the center of the lofty, central hall of this red-lit temple, between the twin rows of looming, dead-black pillars, was a long, low platform of ebon stone. From it rose a metal frame—wrought like the frame of the wrecked machine I had seen in the cellar, above.

The frame supported a huge copper ring in a vertical position. It was far huger than the ring in the ruined mechanism; its diameter was a dozen feet or more. Its upper curve reached far toward the black, vaulted roof of the hall, glistening queerly in the ghastly red light. Behind the ring, a huge, parabolic mirror of silvery, polished metal had been set up.

But the device was obviously unfinished.

The complex electron tubes, the delicate helixes and coils, the magnets, and the complicated array of wires, whose smashed and tangled remains I had observed about the wreck of the other machine, had not been installed.

"Look at that!" cried my father again. "The instrument that comes to let upon your earth the great life that is ours. The plan on this paper, we made. From the plan, we made the small machine, and brought to ourselves the life, the strength, the love of blood—"

"The love of blood!" My startled, anguished outcry must have been a shriek, for I was already nearly overcome with the brooding terror of my strange surroundings. I collapsed against the ropes, shaken and trembling with fear.

The light of strange cunning came once more into the glaring green eyes of the thing that had been my father.

"No, fear not!" he whined on. "Your language it is new to me, and I speak what I do not intend. Be not fearing—if you will do our wish. If you do not, then we will taste your blood.

"But the new life came only to few. Then the machine broke, because of one man. And our brains are changed, so that we remember not to read the plans that we made. Your aid is ours, to restore a new machine. To you and all your world, then, comes the great new life!"

HE stepped close to me, his green eyes burning malevolently. Before my eyes he unrolled one of the sheets which bore plans and specifications for the strange electron tubes, to be mounted outside the copper ring. From his lips came the curious, wolfish whine with which these monsters communicated with one another. One of the weirdly transformed mechanics stepped up beside him, carrying in dead-white hands the parts of such a tube—filaments, plate, grid, screens, auxiliary electrodes, and the glass tube in which they were to be sealed. The parts evidently had been made to fit the specifications—as nearly as these entities could comprehend those specifications with their imperfect knowledge of English.

"We make fit plans for these parts," my father whined. "If wrong, you must say where wrong. Describe how to put together. Speak quick, or die slowly!" He snarled menacingly.

Though I am by no means a brilliant physicist, I saw easily enough that most of the parts were useless, though they had been made with amazing accuracy. These beings

seemed to have no knowledge of the fundamental principles underlying the operation of the machine they were attempting to build, yet, in making these parts, they had accomplished feats that would have been beyond the power of our science.

The filament was made of metal, well enough—but was far too thick to be lit by any current, without that current wrecking the tube in which it were used. The grid was nicely made—of metallic radium! It was worth a small fortune, but quite useless in the electron tube. And the plate was evidently of pure fused quartz, shaped with an accuracy that astounded me; but that, too was quite useless.

"Parts wrong?" my father barked excitedly in wolfish tones, his glowing green eyes evidently having read something in my face. "Indicate how wrong. Describe to make correct!"

I CLOSED my lips firmly, determined to reveal nothing. I knew that it was through the wrecked machine that my father and Stella had been so dreadfully altered. I resolved that I would not aid in changing other humans into such hellish monsters. I was sure that this strange mechanism, if completed, would be a threat against all humanity—though, at the time, I was far from conceiving the full, diabolic significance of it.

My father snarled toward the woman.

She dropped upon all fours, and sprang at me like a wolf, her beastly eyes gleaming green, her bare teeth glistening in the sullen red light, and she was hideously howling!

Her teeth caught my trousers, tore them from my leg from the middle of the right thigh downward. Then they closed into my flesh, and I could feel her teeth gnawing . . . gnawing. . . .

She did not make a deep wound, though blood, black in the terrible red light, trickled from it down my leg toward the shoe—blood which, from time to time, she ceased the gnawing to lick up appreciatively. The purpose of it was evidently to cause me the maximum amount of agony and horror.

For minutes, perhaps, I endured it—for minutes that seemed ages.

The pain itself was agonizing: the steady gnawing of teeth into the flesh of my leg, toward the bone.

But that agony was less than the terror of my surroundings. The strange temple of black, with its black floor, black walls, black pillars, vaulted black ceiling. The dim, sourceless, blood-red light that filled it. The dreadful stillness—broken only by my groans and shrieks, and by the slight sound of the gnawing teeth. The demoniac monster standing before me in the body of my father, staring at me with shining green eyes, holding the plans and the parts that the mechanic had brought, waiting for me to speak. But the most horrible thing was the fact that the gnawing demon was the body of dear, lovely Stella!

She was now digging her teeth in with a crunching sound.

I writhed and screamed with agony. Sweat rolled from my body. I tugged madly against my bonds, strove to burst the rope that held my tortured leg.

Fierce, eager growls came wolflike from the throat of the gnawing woman. Her leprously pallid face was once more smeared with blood, as it had been when I first saw her. Occasionally she stopped the unendurable gnawing, to lick her lips with a dreadful satisfaction.

FINALLY I could stand it no longer. Even if the fate of all the earth depended upon me—as I thought it did—I could endure it no longer.

"Stop! Stop!" I screamed. "I'll tell you!"

Rather reluctantly, the woman rose, licking her crimson lips.

My father—I find myself continually calling the monster by that name, but it was *not* my father—again held the plans before my face, and displayed upon his palm the tiny parts for the electron tube.

It took all my will to draw my mind from the throbbing pain of the fresh wound in my leg. But I explained that the filament wire would have to be drawn much finer, that the radium would not do for the grid, that the plate must be of a conducting metal, instead of quartz.

He did not easily understand my scientific terms. The name tungsten, for instance, meant nothing to him until I had explained the qualities and the atomic number of the metal. That identified it for him, and he appeared really to know more about the metal than I did.

For long hours I answered his questions, and made explanations. A few times I thought of refusing to answer, again. But the memory of that unendurable gnawing always made me speak.

The scientific knowledge and skill displayed in the construction of the machine's parts, once the specifications were properly understood, astounded me. The monsters that had stolen these human bodies seemed to have remarkable scientific knowledge of their own, particularly in chemistry and certain branches of physics—though electricity and magnetism, and the modern theories of relativity and equivalence, seemed new to them, probably because they came from a world whose natural phenomena are not the same as ours.

THEY brought, from one of the chambers opening into the great hall, an odd, glistening device, consisting of connected bulbs and spheres of some bright, transparent crystal. First, a lump of limestone rock, which must have been dug up in the making of this underground temple, was dropped into a large lower globe. Slowly it seemed to dissolve, forming a heavy, iridescent, violet-colored gas.

Then, whenever my father or one of the others wished to make any object—a metal plate or grid, a coil of wire, an insulating button, anything needed in building the machine—a tiny pattern of it was skilfully formed of a white, soft, wax-like substance.

The white pattern was placed in one of the crystal bulbs, and the heavy violet gas—which must have been disassociated protons and electrons from the disrupted limestone—was allowed to fill the bulb through one of the numerous transparent tubes.

The operator watched a little gauge, and at the right instant, removed from the bulb—not the pattern, but the finished object, formed of any desired element!

The process was not explained to me. But I am sure that it was one of building up atoms from the constituent positive and negative electrons. A process just the reverse of disintegration, by which radium decomposes into lead. First such simple atoms as those of hydrogen and helium. Then carbon, or silicon, or iron. Then silver, if one desired it, or gold! Finally radium, or uranium, the heaviest of metals. The object was removed whenever the atoms had reached the proper number to form the element required.

With this marvelous device, whose accomplishments exceeded the wildest dreams of the alchemist, the construction of the huge machine in the center of the hall proceeded with amazing speed, with a speed that filled me with nothing less than terror.

IT occurred to me that I might delay the execution of the monsters' dreadful plan by a trick of some kind. Racking my weary and pain-clouded brain, I sought for some ruse that might mislead my clever opponents. The best idea that came to me was to give a false interpretation of the word "vacuum." If I could keep its true meaning from my father, he would leave the air in the tubes, and they would burn out when the current was turned on. When he finally asked the meaning of the word, I said that it signified a sealed or enclosed space.

But he had been consulting scientific works, as well as my meager knowledge. When the words left my lips, he sprang at me with a hideous snarl. His teeth sought my throat. But for a very hurried pretense of alarmed stupidity, my part in the dreadful adventure might have come to a sudden end. I protested that I had been sincere, that my mind was weary and I could not remember scientific facts, that I must eat and sleep again.

Then I sagged forward against the ropes, head hanging. I refused to respond, even to threats of further torture. And my exhaustion was scarcely feigned, for I had never undergone a more trying day—a day in which one horror followed close upon another.

Finally they cut me loose. The woman carried me out of the sullen crimson light of the temple, up the narrow passage, and into the house again; I was almost too weak to walk alone. As we came out upon the snow, the distant, keening cry of the weird pack broke once more upon my startled ears.

The pale disk of the moon was rising, cold and silvery, in the east, over the illimitable plain of snow. It was night again!

I had been in the subterranean temple for more than twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER VII

When I Ran from the Pack

AGAIN I was in the little room that had been Stella's, among her intimate possessions, catching an occasional suggestion of her perfume. It was a small room, clean and chaste, and I had a feeling that I was invading a sacred place. But I had no choice in the matter, for the windows were barred, and the door locked behind me.

Stella—or, I should say, the were-woman—had let me stop in the other room to eat and drink again. She had even let me find the medicine cabinet and get a bottle of antiseptic to use in the wound on my leg.

Now, sitting on the bed in a shaft of cold, argent moonlight, I applied the stinging liquid, and then bound the place with a bandage torn from a clean sheet.

Then I got to my feet and went to the window: I was determined to escape if escape were possible, or end my life if it were not. I had no intention of going back alive to the hellish red-lit temple.

But the quavering, dismal, howling of the pack came faintly to my ears, as I reached the window, setting me trembling with horror. I gazed fearfully across the fantastic desert of silvery snow, bright in the opalescent haze of moonlight.

Then I glimpsed moving green eyes, and I cried out.

Below the window was a huge, lean gray wolf, pacing deliberately up and down, across the glistening snow. From time to time he lifted his head, stared straight at my windows with huge, malevolent eyes.

A sentinel set to watch me!

With my hopeless despair came a leaden weight of weariness. I felt suddenly exhausted, physically and mentally. I stumbled to the bed, crept under the covers without troubling to remove my clothing, and fell almost instantly asleep.

I AWOKE upon a gray, cold day. A chill wind was whistling eerily about the old house, and the sky was gloomy with steel-blue clouds. I sprang out of bed, feeling much refreshed by my long sleep. For a moment, despite the dreary day, I was conscious of an extraordinary sense of relief; it seemed, for the merest instant, as if all that had happened to me was a horrible nightmare, from which I was waking. Then recollection came, with a dull pain in my wounded leg.

I wondered why I had not been carried back into the terrible temple of blood-red gloom before the coming of day; perhaps I must have been sleeping too soundly to be roused.

Recalling the gray wolf, I looked nervously out at the window. It was gone, of course; the monsters seemed unable to endure the light of day, or any other save the terrible crimson dusk of the temple.

I wrapped a blanket about my shoulders, for it was extremely cold, and I set about at once to escape from the room. I was determined to win my liberty or die in the attempt.

First I examined the windows again. The bars outside them, though of wood, were quite strong. My utmost strength failed to break any one of them. I could find nothing in the room with which they might be cut or worn in twain, without hours of labor.

Finally I turned to the door. My kicks and blows failed to make any impression upon its sturdy panels. The lock seemed strong, and I had neither skill nor tools for picking it.

But, while I stood gazing at the lock, an idea came to me.

I still had the little automatic, and two extra clips of ammunition. My captors had shown only disdain for the little weapon, and I had rather lost faith in it after its puzzling failure to kill the gray wolf.

Now I backed to the other side of the room, drew it, and deliberately fired three shots into the lock. When I first tried the door again, it seemed as impassable as ever. I worked upon it, twisting the knob, again and again. There was a sudden snap, and the door swung open.

I was free. If only I could reach a place of safety before darkness brought out the weird pack!

IN the old dining room I paused to drink, and to eat scantily. Then I left the house by the front door, for I dared not go near the mouth of that hell-burrow behind the house, even by day. In fearful, desperate haste, I set out across the snow.

The little town of Hebron, I knew, lay ten miles away, directly north. Few landmarks were visible above the thick snow, and the gray clouds hid the sun. But I plodded along beside a barbed wire fence, which I knew would guide me.

Slowly the time-yellowed ranch house, an ugly, rambling structure with a gray shingle roof, dwindled upon the white waste behind me. The outbuildings, resembling the house, though looking smaller, more ancient and more dilapidated, drew toward it to form a single brown speck upon the endless desolation of the snow-covered plain.

The crust upon the snow, though frozen harder than upon the ill-fated night of my coming, was still too thin to support my weight. It broke beneath my feet at every step, and I sank ankle-deep in the soft snow beneath.

My progress was a grim, heart-breaking struggle. My strength had been drained by the nerve-racking horrors and exhausting exertions of the past few days. Soon I was

gasping for breath, and my feet felt leaden-heavy. There was a dull, intolerable ache in the wound on my leg.

If the snow had been hard enough to support my weight, so that I could run, I might have reached Hebron before dark. But, sinking deep into it at every step, it was impossible for me to move rapidly.

I must not have covered over half the distance to Hebron, when the gloom of the gray, cheerless day seemed to settle upon me. I realized, with a chill of fatal horror, that it had not been early morning when I set out; my watch had stopped, and since the leaden clouds had obscured the sun, I had no gauge of time.

I must have slept through half the day or more, exhausted as I had been by the day and night of torture in the dark temple. Night was upon me, when I was still far short of my destination.

Nearly dead with fatigue, I had more than once been almost on the point of stopping to rest. But terror lent me fresh strength. I plodded on as fast as I could, but forcing myself to keep from running, which would burn up my energy too soon.

ANOTHER mile, perhaps, I had covered, when I heard the weird, blood-congealing voice of the pack.

The darkness, for a time, had been intense, very faintly relieved by the ghostly gleam of the snow. But the clouds had lightened somewhat, and the light of the rising moon shone through them, casting eldritch shadows of silver on the level snow.

At first the dreadful baying was very distant, low and moaning and hideous with the human vocal note it carried. But it grew louder. And there was something in it of sharp, eager yelping.

I knew that the pack which had run down Judson and me had been set upon my trail.

The terror, the stark, maddening, soul-searing horror that seized me, is beyond imagination. I shrieked uncontrollably. My hands and body felt alternately hot and fevered, and chilled with a cold sweat. A harsh dryness roughened my throat. I reeled dizzily, and felt the pounding of my pulse in all my body.

And I ran.

Madly, wildly. Ran with all my strength. Ran through the thick snow faster than I had thought possible. But in a few moments, it seemed I had used up all my strength.

I was suddenly sick with fatigue, swaying, almost unable to stand. Red mists, shot with white fire, danced in front of my eyes. The vast plain of snow whirled about me fantastically.

And on and on I staggered. When each step took all my will. When I felt that I must collapse in the snow, and fought with all my mind for the strength to raise my foot again.

All the time, the fearful baying was drawing nearer, until the wailing, throbbing sound of it drummed and rang in my brain.

Finally, unable to take another step, I turned and looked back.

FOR a few moments I stood there, swaying, gasping for breath. The weird, nerve-blasting cry of the pack sounded very near, but I could see nothing. Then, through the clouds, a broad, ghostly shaft of moonlight fell athwart the snow behind me. And I saw the pack.

I saw them! The pinnacle of horror!

Gray wolves, leaping, green-eyed and gaunt. And strange human figures among them, racing with them. Chill, soulless emerald orbs staring.

Bodies ghastly pallid, clad only in tattered rags. Stella, bounding at the head of the pack.

My father, following. And other men. All green-orbed, leprously white. Some of them frightfully mutilated.

Some so torn they should have been dead!

Judson, the man who had brought me out from Hebron, was among them. His livid flesh hung in ribbons. One eye was gone, and a green fire seemed to sear the empty socket. His chest was fearfully lacerated. And the man was—eviscerated!

Yet his hideous body leaped beside the wolves.

And others were as dreadful. One had no head. A black mist seemed gathered above the jutting, lividly white stump of his neck, and in it glowed malevolently—two green eyes!

A woman ran with them. One arm was torn off, her naked breasts were in ribbons. She ran with the rest, green eyes glowing, mouth wide open, baying with other members of the pack.

And now I saw a horse in that grotesque company. A powerful, gray animal, he was, and he came with tremendous leaps. Its eyes, too, were glowing green—glowing with the malignant fire of an evil intelligence not normally of this earth. This was one of Judson's animals, changed as dreadfully as he and all the others had been. Its mouth yawned open, with yellow teeth glistening, and it howled madly with the pack.

Swiftly, hideously, they closed in upon me. The weird host sprang toward me from all directions—gray wolves, men, and horse. Eyes glaring, teeth bared, snarling, the hellish horde came closer.

The horror of it was too much for my mind. A merciful wave of darkness overcame me as I felt myself reeling to fall upon the snow.

CHAPTER VIII

Through the Disk of Darkness

I AWOKE within the utter stillness of a tomb. For a little time I lay with eyes closed, analyzing the sensations of my chilled, aching body, conscious of the dull, throbbing pain from my wounded leg. I shuddered at recollection of the fearful experiences of the past few days, endured again the overwhelming horror of the moment when the pack—wolves and men and horse, frightfully mutilated, eyes demoniacally green—had closed in upon me on the moonlit snow. For some time I did not dare to open my eyes.

At last, nerving myself against the new horrors that might surround me, I raised my lids.

I looked into the somber, crimson radiance of the ebon-pillared temple. Beside a dull jet wall I lay, upon a pile of rags, with a blanket thrown carelessly over me. Beyond the row of massive, black, cylindrical pillars, I saw the great, strange machine, with the huge copper ring glistening queerly in the dim, bloody light. The polished mirror behind it seemed flushed with a living glow of molten rubies, and the many electron tubes, now mounted in their sockets, gleamed redly. The mechanism appeared to be near completion; livid, green-orbed figures were busy about it, moving with a swift, mechanical efficiency. It struck me abruptly that they moved more like machines than like living beings. My father, Stella, the two mechanics.

For many minutes I lay very still, watching them covertly. Evidently they had brought me down into this subterranean chamber, so that I would have no chance to repeat my escape. I speculated upon the possibility of creeping along the wall to the ascending passage, dashing through it. But there was little hope

that I could do it unseen. And I had no way of knowing whether it might be night or day; it would be folly to run out into the darkness. I felt the little automatic still under my arm; they had not troubled to remove a weapon which they did not fear.

Suddenly, before I had dared to move, I saw my father coming across the black floor toward me. I could not repress a tremor, at closer sight of his deathly pallid body and sinister, baleful greenish eyes. I lay still, trying to pretend sleep.

I FELT his ice-cold fingers close upon my shoulder; roughly I was drawn to my feet.

"Further assistance from you must be ours," whined his wolfish voice. "And not again will you be brought back living, should you be the fool to run!" His whine ended with an ugly snarl.

He dragged me across toward the fantastic mechanism that glistened in the grim, bloody radiance.

I quailed at the thought of being bound to the black pillar again.

"I'll help!" I cried. "Do anything you want. Don't tie me up, for God's sake! Don't let her gnaw me!" My voice must have become a hysterical scream. I fought to calm it, cudgeled my brain for arguments.

"It would kill me to be tied again," I pleaded wildly. "And if you leave me free, I can help you with my hands!"

"Be free of bonds, then," my father whined. "But also remember! You go, and we bring you back not alive!"

He led me up beside the great machine. One of the mechanics, at a shrill, wolfish whine from him, unrolled a blue print before me. He began to ask questions regarding the wiring to connect the many electron tubes, the coils and helixes and magnets, all ranged about the huge copper ring.

His strange brain seemed to have no conception of the nature of electricity; I had to explain the fundamentals. But he grasped each new fact with astounding quickness, seemed to see the applications instinctively.

It soon developed that the great mechanism was practically finished; in an hour, perhaps, the wiring was completed.

"Now what yet is to be constructed?" my father whined.

I realized that no provision had been made for electricity to light the tubes and energize the magnets. These beings apparently did not even know that a source of power was necessary. This, I thought, was another chance to stop the execution of their hellish plan.

"I don't know," I said. "So far as I can see, the machine now fits the specifications. I know nothing else to do."

HE snarled something to one of the mechanics, who produced the bloody rope with which I had previously been bound. Stella sprang toward me, her lips curled in a leering animal snarl, her white teeth gleaming.

Uncontrollable terror shook me, weakened my knees until I reeled.

"Wait! Stop!" I screamed. "I'll tell if you won't tie me!"

They halted.

"Speak!" my father barked. "Quickly describe!"

"The machine must have power. Electricity?"

"From what place comes electricity."

"There is a motor generator up in the cellar, where the other machine is. That might do."

He and the monster that had been Stella hurried me down the black-pillared hall, and up the inclined passage to the old cellar. He carried

the red-glowing electric lantern. In the cellar I showed them the generator and attempted a rough explanation of its operation.

Then he and the woman bent and caught the metal base of the unit. With their incredible strength, they lifted it quite easily and carried it toward the passage. They made me walk ahead of them as we returned to the machine in the black hall—blasting another hope for a chance to make a dash for the open.

Just as they were placing the heavy machine—gasoline engine and dynamo, which together weighed several hundred pounds—on the black platform beside the strange, gigantic mechanism, there came an interruption that, to me, was terrifying.

From the passage came the rustle of feet, and mingled whining, snarling sounds such as the monsters seemed to use for communication. And in the vague, blood-red light, between the tall rows of great black pillars, appeared the pack!

Huge, gaunt wolves there were. Frightfully mutilated men—Judson, and the others that I had seen. The gray horse. All their eyes were luminously green—alight with a dreadful, malevolent fire.

Human lips were crimsoned. Scarlet smeared the gray wolves' muzzles, and even the long nose and gray jaws of the horse. And they carried—the catch!

OVER Judson's livid, lacerated shoulders was hung the torn, limp, bleeding body of a woman—his wife! One of the gaunt gray wolves had the hideously mangled body of a man across his back, holding it in place with jaws turned sidewise. Another had the body of a spotted calf. Two more carried in red-dripping jaws the lax gray bodies of coyotes. And one of the men bore upon his shoulder the remains of a huge gray wolf.

The dead, torn, mutilated specimens were dropped in a horrible heap in the wide central aisle of the jet-pillared temple, near the strange machine, like an altar of death. Dark blood flowed from it over the black floor, congealing in thick, viscid clots.

"To these we bring life," my father snarled at me, jerking his head toward the dreadful, mangled heap.

Shuddering and dazed with horror, I sank on the floor, covering my eyes. I was nauseated, sick. My brain was reeling, fogged, confused. It refused to dwell upon the meaning of this dreadful scene.

The mad, fearful, demoniac thing that had been my father jerked me roughly to my feet, dragged me toward the motor generator, and began plying me with questions about its operation, about how to connect it with the strange mechanism of the copper ring.

I struggled to answer his questions, trying vainly to forget my horror in the work.

Soon the connection was completed. Under my father's directions, I examined the gasoline engine, saw that it was supplied with fuel and oil. Then he attempted to start it, but failed to master the technique of choking the carburetor. Under constant threat of the blood-darkened rope and the were-woman's gnawing fangs, I labored with the little motor until it coughed a few times, and fell to firing steadily.

Then my father made me close the switch, connecting the strange machine with the current from the generator. A faint, shrill humming came from the coils. The electron tubes glowed dimly.

And a curtain of darkness seemed suddenly drawn across the copper ring. Blackness seemed to flow from the queer tube behind it, to be reflected into it by the polished mir-

ror. A disk of dense, utter darkness filled the ring.

FOR a few moments I stared at it in puzzled wonder.

Then, as my eyes became slowly sensitized, I found that I could see through it—see into a dread, nightmare world.

The ring had become an opening into another world of horror and darkness.

The sky of that alien world was unutterably, inconceivably black; blacker than the darkest midnight. It had no stars, no luminary; no faintest gleam relieved its terrible, oppressive intensity.

A vast reach of that other world's surface lay in view, beyond the copper ring. Low, worn, and desolate hills, that seemed black as the somber sky. Between them flowed a broad and stagnant river, whose dull and sullen waters shone with a vague and ghostly luminosity, with a pale glow that was somehow unclean and noisome, like that of decaying foul corruption.

And upon those low and ancient hills, that were rounded like the bloated breasts of corpses, was a loathsome vegetation. Hideous, obscene travesties of normal plants, whose leaves were long, narrow, snake-like, with the suggestion of ugly heads. With a dreadful, unnatural life, they seemed to writhe, lying in rotting tangles upon the black hills, and dragging in the foul, lurid waters of the stagnant river. Their thin reptilian, tentacular vines and creepers glowed with a pale and ghastly light, lividly greenish.

And upon a low black hill, above the evil river, and the rotting, writhing, obscene jungle, was what must have been a city. A sprawled and hideous mass of red corruption. A foul splash of dull crimson pollution.

This was no city, perhaps, in our sense of the word. It seemed to be a sort of cloud of foul, blood-hued darkness, trailing repulsive tentacles across the low black hill; a smear of evil crimson mist. Mad and repulsive knobs and warts rose about it, in grotesque mockery of spires and towers. It was motionless. And I knew instinctively that unclean and abominable life, sentience, reigned within its hideous scarlet contamination.

My father mounted to the black stone step between the copper ring, and stood there howling weirdly and hideously, into that world of darkness—voicing an unclean call!

IN answer, the sprawled, nightmare city seemed to stir. Dark things—masses of fetid, reeking blackness—seemed to creep from its ugly protuberances, to swarm toward us through the tainted filth of the writhing, evilly glowing vegetation.

The darkness of evil concentrate, creeping from that nightmare world into ours!

For long moments the utter, insane horror of it held me paralyzed and helpless. Then something nerved me with the abrupt, desperate determination to revolt against my fearful masters, despite the threat of the bloody rope.

I tore my eyes from the dreadful attraction that seemed to draw them toward the foul, sprawled city of bloody darkness, in that hideous world of unthinkable evil.

Realization came to me that I stood alone, unguarded. The green eyes of the monsters about me were fixed in avid fascination upon the ring through which that nightmare world was visible. None of them seemed aware of me.

If only I could wreck the machine, before those creeping horrors of darkness came through into our world! I started forward instinctively, then paused, realizing

that it might be difficult to do great damage to it with my bare hands, before the monsters saw me and attacked.

Then I thought of the little automatic in my pocket, which I had been permitted to keep with me. Even though its bullets could not harm the monsters, they might do considerable damage to the machine.

I snatched it out and began firing deliberately at the dimly glowing electron tubes. As the first one was shattered, the image of that hideous, nightmare world flickered and vanished. The huge, polished mirror was once more visible beyond the copper ring.

For the time being, at least, those rankling shapes of black and utter evil were shut out of our world!

As I continued to fire, shattering the electron tubes and the other most delicate and most complicated parts of the great mechanism, a fearful, soul-chilling cry came from the startled monsters in human and animal bodies.

Suddenly the creatures sprang toward me, over the black floor, howling hideously.

CHAPTER IX

The Hypnotic Revelation

IT was the yellow, stabbing spurts of flame from the automatic that saved me. At first the fearfully transformed beasts and men had leaped at me, howling with the agony that light seemed to cause them. I kept on firing, determined to do all the damage possible before they bore me down.

And abruptly they fell back away from me, wailing dreadfully, hiding their unearthly green eyes, slinking behind the massive black pillars.

When the gun was empty, some of them came toward me again. But still they seemed shaken, weakened, uncertain of movement. In nervous haste, I fumbled in my pockets for matches—I had not realized before how they were crippled by light.

I found only three, all, apparently, that I had left.

The weird monsters, recovered from the effect of the gun flashes, were leaping across toward me, through the sullen, blood-red gloom, as I struggled desperately to make a light.

The first match broke in my fingers.

But the second flared into yellow flame. The monsters, almost upon me, sprang back, wailing in agony again. As I held the tiny, feeble flame aloft, they cowered, howling, in the flickering shadows cast by the huge, ebon pillars.

My confused, horror-dazed mind was abruptly cleared and sharpened by hope of escape. With the light to hold them back, I might reach the open air.

And to my quickened mind it came abruptly that it must be day above. It was morning, and the pack had been driven back to the burrow by the light of the coming sun!

As swiftly as I could, without extinguishing the feeble flame of the match with the wind of my motion, I advanced down the great hall. I kept in the middle of the wide central aisle, afraid that my enemies were slinking along after me in the shadows of the pillars.

BEFORE I reached the passage which lead to the surface, a stronger breath of air caught the feeble orange flame. It flickered out. Dusky crimson gloom fell about me once more, with baleful green eyes moving in it, in the farther end of the temple. The howling rose again, angrily. I heard swiftly padding feet.

Only one of the three matches was left.

I bent, scratched it very carefully on the black floor and held it above my head.

A new wailing of pain came from the monsters; they fell back again.

I found the end of the passage, rushed through it, guarding the precious flame in a cupped hand.

In the great hall behind me, the blood-chilling wail of the pack rose again. I heard the monsters surging toward the passage.

By the time I had reached the old cellar, from whose wall the slanting tunnel had been dug, the match was almost consumed. I turned, let its last dying rays shine down the passage. Dreadful cries of agony and terror came again; I heard the monsters retreating from the tunnel.

The match suddenly went out.

In mad haste I dashed across the cellar's floor and blundered heavily into the wall. I found the steps that led to the surface and rushed up them desperately.

I heard the howling pack running up the passage, moving far swifter than I was able to do.

At last my hand touched the under surface of the wooden door, above the steps. Beyond, I knew, was the golden light of day.

And at the same instant, corpse-cold fingers closed about my ankle, in a crushing, powerful grasp.

Convulsively, I thrust upward with my hand.

The door flew up, slammed crashingly beside the opening. Above was soft, brilliant azure sky. In it the white morning sun blazed blindingly. Its hot radiance brought tears to my eyes, accustomed as they were to the dim crimson light of the temple.

Fearful, agonized animal wailing sounds came again from behind me.

The grasp on my ankle tightened convulsively, then relaxed.

LOOKING back, I saw Stella on the steps at my feet, cowering, writhing as if in unbearable agony, animal screams of pain coming from her lips. It seemed that the burning sunlight had struck her down, that she had been too much weakened to retreat as those behind her had done.

Abruptly she seemed to me a lovely, suffering girl—not a strange demoniac monster. Pity for her—even, perhaps, love—came over me in a tender wave. If I could save her, restore her to her true, dear self!

I ran back down the steps, seized her by the shoulders, started to carry her up into the light. Deathly cold and deathly white her body still was. And still it had a vestige of that unnatural strength.

She writhed in my arms, snarling, slashing at my body with her teeth. For a moment her green eyes smoldered malevolently at me. But as the sunlight struck them she closed them, howling with agony, and tried to shield them with her arm.

I carried her up the steps, into the brilliant sunlight.

First I thought of closing the cellar door, and trying to fasten it. Then I realized that the light of day, shining down the passage, would hold back the monsters more effectually than any locked door.

It was still early morning. The sun had been up no more than an hour. The sky was clear, and the sunshine glittered with blinding, prismatic brilliance on the snow. The air, however, was still cold; there had been no thawing, nor would there be until the temperature had moderated considerably.

AS I stood there in the blaze of sunlight, holding Stella, a strange change came over her. The fierce snarling and whining sounds that came from her throat slowly died away. Her writhing, convulsive struggles weakened, as though a tide of alien life were ebbing from her body.

There was a sudden last con-

vulsion. Then her body was lax, limp.

Almost immediately, I noticed a change in color. The fearful, corpse-like pallor slowly gave place to the normal pinkish flush of healthy life. The strange, unearthly chill was gone; I felt a glow of warmth where her body was against mine.

Then her breast heaved. She breathed. I felt the slow throbbing of her heart. Her eyes were still closed as she lay inert in my arms, like one sleeping. I freed one of my hands and gently lifted a long-lashed lid.

The eye was clear and blue—normal again. The baleful, greenish fire was gone!

In some way, which I did not then understand, the light of day had purified the girl, had driven from her the fierce, unclean life that had possessed her body.

"Stella! Dear Stella! Wake up!" I cried. I shook her a little. But she did not rouse. Still she seemed sleeping heavily.

Realizing that she would soon be chilled, in the cold air, I carried her into the house, into her own room, where I had been imprisoned, and laid her on the bed, covering her with blankets. Still she appeared to be sleeping.

For an hour, perhaps, I tried to rouse her from the profound syncope or coma in which she lay. I tried everything that experience and the means at hand made available. And still she lay insensible.

A most puzzling situation, and a surprising one. It was almost as if Stella—the real Stella—had ben dispossessed of her body by some foul, alien being. The alien, evil life had been killed by the light, and still she had not returned.

AT last it occurred to me to try hypnotic influence—I am a fair hypnotist, and have made a deep study of hypnotism and allied mental phenomena. A forlorn hope, perhaps, since her coma appeared so deep. But I was driven to clutch at any straw.

Exerting all my will to recall her mind, placing my hand upon her smooth brow, or making slow passes over her still, pale, lovely face, I commanded her again and again to open her eyes.

And suddenly, when I was almost on the point of new despair, her eyelids flickered, lifted. Of course, it may have been a natural awakening, though a most unusual one, instead of the result of my efforts. But her blue eyes opened and stared up at me.

But still she was not normally awake. No life or feeling was revealed in the azure depths of her eyes. They were clouded, shadowed with sleep. Their opening seemed to have been a mechanical answer to my commands.

"Speak. Stella, my Stella, speak to me!" I cried.

Her pale lips parted. From them came low, sleep-drugged tones.

"Clovis." She spoke my name in that small, colorless voice.

"Stella, what has happened to you and my father?" I cried.

And here is what she told me, in that tiny, toneless voice. I have condensed it somewhat, for many times her voice wandered wearily, died away, and I had to prompt her, question her, almost force her to continue.

"My father came here to help Dr. McLaurin with his experiment," she began, slowly, in a low monotone. "I did not understand all of it, but they sought for other worlds besides ours. Other dimensions, interlocking with our own. Dr. McLaurin had been working out his theory for many years, basing his work upon the new mathematics of Weyl and Einstein.

"Not simple is our universe. Worlds upon worlds lie side by

side, like the pages of a book—and each world unknown to all the others. Strange worlds touching, spinning side by side, yet separated by walls not easily broken down.

"IN vibration is the secret. For all matter, all light, all sound, all our universe, is of vibration. All material things are formed of vibrating particles of electricity—electrons. And each world, each universe, has its own order of vibration. And through each, all unknown and unseen, are the myriad other worlds and universes vibrating, each with an order of its own.

"Dr. McLaurin knew by mathematics that these other worlds must exist. It was his wish to explore them. Here he came, to be alone, with none to pry into his secrets. Aided by my father, and other men, he toiled through years to build his machine.

"A machine, if successful, would change the vibration rate of matter and of light. To change it from the order of our dimension, to those of others. With it, he might see into those myriad other worlds in space beside our own, might visit them.

"The machine was finished. And through its great copper ring, we saw another world. A world of darkness, with midnight sky. Loathsome, lividly green plants writhed like reptilian monstrosities upon its black hills. Evil, alien life teemed upon it.

"Dr. McLaurin went through into that dark world. The horror of it broke down his mind. A strange madman, he came back. His eyes were green and shining, and his skin was very white.

"And things he brought back with him—clinging, creeping things of foul blackness, that stole the bodies of men and beasts. Evil, living things, that are the masters of the black dimension. One crept into me, and took my body. It ruled me, and I know only like a dim dream what it made my body do. To it, my body was but a machine.

"Dim dreams. Terrible dreams. Dreaming of running over the snow, hunting for wolves. Dreams of bringing them back, for the black things to flow into, and make live again. Dreams of torturing my father, whom no black thing took, at first.

"FATHER was tortured, gnawed. My body did it. But I did not do it. I was far away. I saw it only dimly, like a bad dream. One of the black creatures had come into my body, taken it from me.

"New to our world were the black things. Light slays them, for it is a force strange to their world, against which they have no armor. And so they dug a deep place, to slink into by day.

"The ways of our world they knew not; nor the language; nor the machines. They made Father teach them; teach them to speak; to read books; to run the machine through which they came. They plan to bring many of their evil kind through the machine, to conquer our world. They plan to make black clouds to hide the sun forever, so our world will be as dark as their own. They plan to seize the bodies of all men and animals, to use as machines to do that thing.

"When Father knew the plan, he would not tell them more. So my body gnawed him—while I looked on from afar, and could not help. Then he pretended to be in accord with them. They let him loose. He smashed the machine with an ax, so no more evil things could come through. Then he blew off his head with a gun, so they could not torture him, and make him aid them again.

"The black things could not them-

selves repair the machine. But in letters they learned of Clovis McLaurin, son of Dr. McLaurin. He, too, knew of machines. They sent for him, to torture him as Father had been tortured. Again my mind was filled with grief, for he was dear to me. But my body gnawed him, while he aided the black things to build a new machine.

"Then he broke it. And then . . . then. . . ."

Her tiny, toneless voice died wearily away. Her blue eyes, still clouded with shadowed sleep, stared up unseeingly. Deep indeed was her strange trance.

She had even forgotten that it was I to whom she spoke!

CHAPTER X

The Creeping Darkness

AN amazing and terrible story, was Stella's. In part, it was almost incredible. Yet, much as I wished to doubt it, and much as I wished to discount the horror that it promised our fair earth, I knew that it must be true.

Prominent scientists have speculated often enough of the possibility of other worlds, other planes, side by side with our own. For there is nothing solid or impenetrable about the matter of our universe. The electron is thought to be only a vibration in the ether. And in all probability, there are vibrating fields of force, forming other electrons, other atoms, other suns and planets, existing beside our world, yet not making their existence known. Only a tiny band of the vibrations in the spectrum is visible to our eyes as light. If our eyes were tuned to other bands, above the ultra-violet, or below the infrared, what new, strange worlds might burst upon our vision?

No, I could not doubt that part of Stella's story. My father had studied the evidence upon the existence of such worlds invisible to us, more deeply than any other man, had published his findings, with complete mathematical proof, in his startling work, "Interlocking Universes." If those parallel worlds were to be discovered, he was the logical man to make the discovery. And I could not doubt that he had made it—for I had seen that world of dread nightmare, beyond the copper ring!

And I had seen, in that dark, alien world, the city of the creepings things of blackness. I could well believe the part of the story about those strangely malignant entities stealing the bodies of men and animals. It offered the first rational solution of all the astounding facts I had observed, since the night of my coming to Hebron.

And it came to me suddenly that soon the monstrous beings would have the machine repaired; they could need no further aid from me. Then other hordes of the black shapes would come through. Come to seize our world, Stella had said, to enslave humanity, to aid them in making our world a planet of darkness like the grim sphere they left. It seemed mad, incredible—yet I knew it was true!

I MUST do something against them! Fight them—fight them with light! Light was the one force that destroyed them. That had freed Stella from her dread bondage. But I must obtain better means of making light than a few matches. Lamps would do; a searchlight, perhaps.

And I was determined to take Stella to Hebron, if she were able to go. I must go there to find the supplies I needed, and yet I could not bear the thought of leaving her for the monstrosities to find when night fell again, to seize her fair body again for their foul ends.

I found that at my command she

would move, stand, and walk, though slowly and stiffly, like a person walking in sleep. It was still early morning, and I thought there might be time for her to walk to Hebron, with me to support her steps, before the fall of darkness.

I investigated her possessions in the room, found clothing for her: woolen stockings, strong shoes, knickers, sweater, gloves, cap. Her efforts to dress herself were slow and clumsy, like those of a weary child, trying to pull off his clothing when half asleep, and I had to aid her.

She seemed not to be hungry. But when we stopped in the dining room, where the remainder of the food still lay on the table, I made her drink a tin of milk. She did it mechanically. As for myself, I ate heartily, despite ill-omened recollections of how I had eaten at this table on the eve of my first attempt to escape.

We set out across the snow, following along by the wire fence as I had done before. I could distinguish my old footprints and the mingled tracks of wolf, man, and horse, in the trail the pursuing pack had left. We followed that trail with greater ease now, for the soft snow had been packed by the running feet.

I walked with an arm about Stella's waist, sometimes half-carrying her, speaking to her encouragingly. She responded with slow, dull mechanical efforts. Her mind seemed far away; her blue eyes were misty with strange dreams.

AS the hours of weary struggle went by, with her warm body against mine, it came to me that I loved her very much, and that I would give my life to save her from the dread fate that menaced us.

Once I stopped, and drew her unresisting body fiercely to me, and brought my mouth close to her pale lips, that were composed, and a little parted, and perfumed with sleep. Her blue eyes stared at me blankly, still clouded with sleep, devoid of feeling or understanding. Suddenly I knew that it would be wrong to kiss her so. I pushed her pliant body back, and led her on across the snow.

The sun reached the zenith, and began declining slowly westward.

As the evening wore on, Stella seemed to tire—or perhaps it was only that her trance-like state became deeper. She responded more slowly to my urgings that we must hurry. When, for a few moments, my encouraging voice was silent, she stood motionless, rigid, as if lost in strange vision.

I hurried her on desperately, commanding her steadily to keep up her efforts. My eyes were anxiously on the setting sun. I knew that we would have scant time to reach the village before the fall of night; haste was imperative.

At last, when the sun was still some distance above the white horizon, we came within sight of the town of Hebron. A cluster of dark specks, upon the limitless plain of glittering snow. Three miles away, they must have been.

Still the girl seemed to sink deeper into the strange sea of sleep from which only hypnotic influence had lifted her. By the time we had covered another mile, she refused to respond to my words. She was breathing slowly, regularly; her body was limp, flaccid; her eyes had closed. I could do nothing to rouse her.

THE sun had touched the snow, coloring the western world with pale rose and purple fires. Darkness was not far away.

Desperately, I took the limp, relaxed body of the girl upon my shoulders and staggered on beneath the burden. It was no more than

two miles to Hebron; I had hopes of getting there with her before dark.

But the snow was so deep as to make the effort of even unburdened walking exhausting. And my body was worn out, after the terrible experiences I had lately undergone. Before I had tottered on half a mile, I realized that my effort was hopeless.

Dusk had fallen. The moon had not yet risen, but the snow gleamed silvery under the ghostly twilight that still flooded the sky. My ears were straining fearfully for the voice of the dreadful pack. But a shroud of utter silence hung about me. I was still plodding wearily along, carrying Stella.

Abruptly I noticed that her body, against my hands, was becoming strangely cold. Anxiously, I laid her down upon the snow, to examine her — trembling with a premonition of the approaching horror.

Her body was icy cold. And it had again become ghastly, deathly white. White as when I had seen her running over the snow with the gaunt gray wolf!

But her limbs, strangely, did not stiffen; they were still pliant, relaxed. It was not the chill of death coming over her; it was the cold of that alien life, which the sunlight had driven from her, returning with the darkness!

I knew that she would soon be a human girl no longer, but a weird wolf-woman, and the knowledge chilled my soul with horror! For a few moments I crouched beside her inert body, pleading wildly with her to come back to me, crying out to her almost insanely.

THEN I saw the hopelessness of it, and the danger. The monstrous life would flow into her again. And she would carry me back to hateful captivity in the subterannean temple, to be a slave of the monsters—or perhaps a member of their malefic society.

I must escape! For her sake. For the world's. It would be better to abandon her now, and go on alone, than have her carry me back. Perhaps I would have another chance to save her.

And I must somehow render her helpless, so that she could not pursue me, when the dread life returned to her body.

I snatched off my coat, and then my shirt. In anxious haste, I tore the shirt into strips, which I twisted rapidly into cords. I drew her ankles together, passed the improvised bonds about them, knotted them tightly. I turned the frightfully pallid, corpse-cold girl upon her face, crossed the lax arms behind her back, and fastened her wrists together with another rope of twisted cloth. Then, by way of extra precaution, I slipped the belt from my trousers and buckled it firmly about her waist, over the crossed wrists, pinioning them.

Finally I spread on the snow the coat I had taken off, and laid her upon it, for I wanted her to be as comfortable as possible.

Then I started off toward Hebron, where a litle cluster of white lights shone across the snow, through the gray, gathering dusk. I had gone but a few steps when something made me pause, look back, fearfully.

The inert, deathly pallid body of the girl still lay upon the coat. Beyond it, I glimpsed a strange and dreadful thing, moving swiftly through the ghostly, gray twilight.

Incredible and hideous was the thing I gazed upon. I can hardly find words to describe it; I can give the reader no idea of the weird, icy horror that grasped my heart with dread fingers as I saw it.

It was a mass of darkness, flowing over the snow. A creeping cloud of foul *blackness*, shapeless and

many-tentacled. Its form changed continually as it moved. It had no limbs, no features—only the inky, snake-like, clinging extensions of its blackness, that it thrust out to move itself along. But deep within it were two bright green points—like eyes. Green baleful orbs, aflame with fiendish malevolence!

IT was alive, this living darkness. It was unlike any higher form of life. But it has since come to me that it resembled the amoeba—a single-cell animal, a flowing mass of protoplasmic slime. Like the amoeba this darkness moved by extended narrow pseudopods from its mass. And the green eyes of horror, in which its unearthly life appeared to be concentrated, perhaps correspond to the vacuoles or nuclei of the protozoan animals.

I realized, with a paralyzing sensation of horror unutterable, that it was one of the monsters from that world of black nightmare, beyond the copper ring. And that it was coming to claim again Stella's body, to which it was still connected by some tainted bond.

Though it seemed only to creep or flow, it moved with a terrible swiftness—far faster, even, than the wolves.

In a moment after I saw it, it had reached Stella's body. It paused, hung over her, a thick, viscid, clinging cloud of unclean blackness with those greenish, fearful eyes staring from its foul mass. For a moment it hid her body, with its creeping, sprawling, ink-black and shapeless masses, crawling over her like horrid tentacles.

Then it *flowed* into her body.

It seemed to stream through her nostrils, into her mouth. The black cloud hanging over her steadily diminished. The infernal green orbs remained above, in the writhing darkness, until the last. And then they seemed to sink into her eyes.

Abruptly, her pallid body came to terrible life.

She writhed, straining at her bonds with preternatural strength, rolling from the coat into the snow, hideously convulsed. Her eyes were open again—and they shone, not with their own life, but with the dreadful fire of the green, malevolent orbs that had sunk into them.

Her eyes were the eyes of the creeping blackness.

From her throat came the soul-numbing, wolfish baying, that I had already heard under such frightful circumstances. It was an animal cry, yet it had an uncanny human note that was terrifying.

She was calling to the pack!

THAT sound nerved my paralyzed limbs. For the few moments that it had taken the monstrous thing of blackness to flow into Stella's body, I had stood motionless, transfixed with the horror of it.

Now I turned and ran madly across the snow toward the dancing lights of Hebron. Behind me the werewoman still writhed in the snow, trying to break her bonds, howling weirdly—summoning the pack!

Those twinkling lights seemed to mock me. They looked very near across the ghostly, gleaming plain of snow. They seemed to dance away from me as I ran. They seemed to move like fireflies, pausing until I was almost upon them, then retreating, to scintillate far across the snow.

I forgot my weariness, forgot the dull, throbbing pain of the unhealed wound in my leg. I ran desperately, as I had never run before. Not only was my life at stake, but Stella's and my father's. Even, I had good reason to fear, the lives of all humanity.

Before I had covered half the distance, I heard behind me the

voice of the pack. A weird, wailing, far-off cry which grew swiftly louder. The werewoman had called, and the pack was coming to free her.

ON I ran. My steps seemed so pitifully short, despite my agony of effort, so pitifully slow. My feet sank deep into the snow which seemed to cling to them with maleficent demon-fingers. And the lights that seemed so near appeared to be dancing mockingly away before me.

Sweat poured from my body. My lungs throbbed with pain. My breath came in quick, agonized gasps. My heart seemed to hammer against the base of my brain. My mind seemed drowning in a sea of pain. And on I ran.

The lights of Hebron became unreal ghost-fires, false will-o'-the-wisps. They quivered before me in a blank world of gray darkness. And I labored on toward them, through a dull haze of agony. I saw nothing else. And nothing did I hear, but the moaning of the pack.

I was so weary that I could not think. But I suddenly became aware that the pack was very near. I think I turned my head and glanced back for a moment. Or it may be that I remember the pack only as I saw it in imagination. But I have a very vivid picture of gaunt gray wolves leaping and baying hideously, and pallid, green-eyed men running with them, howling with them.

Yet on I ran, fighting the black mists of exhaustion that closed about my brain. Heartbreaking inertia seemed to oppose every effort, as if I were swimming against a resisting tide. On and on I ran, with eyes for nothing, thought for nothing, except the lights before me, the dancing, mocking lights of Hebron, that seemed very near, and always fled before me.

Then suddenly I was lying in the soft snow with my eyes closed. The yielding couch was very comfortable to my exhausted body. I lay there, relaxed. I did not even try to rise; my strength was utterly gone. Blackness came upon me—unconsciousness that even the howling of the pack could not keep away. The weird ululation seemed to grow fainter and I knew no more.

CHAPTER XI

A Battle of Light and Darkness

"PRETTY near all in, ain't you, Mister?" a rough voice penetrated to my fatigue-drugged mind. Strong hands were helping me to my feet. I opened my eyes and stared confusedly about me. Two roughly clad men were supporting me. And another, whom I recognized as the station agent, Connell, held a gasoline lantern.

Before me, almost at hand, were the lights of Hebron, which had seemed to dance away so mockingly. I saw that I had collapsed in the outskirts of the straggling village—so near the few street lights that the pack had been unable to approach me.

"That you, McLaurin?" Connell demanded in surprise, recognizing my face. "We figgered they got you and Judson."

"They did," I found voice to say. "But they carried me off alive. I got away."

I was too nearly dead with exhaustion to answer their questions. Only vaguely do I recall how they carried me into a house, and undressed me. I went to sleep while they were examining the wound on my leg, exclaiming with horror at the marks of teeth. After I was sleeping they dressed it again, and then put me to bed.

It was noon of the following day when I awoke. A nervous boy of perhaps ten years was sitting by the bed. His name, he said, was Marvin

Potts, son of Joel Potts, owner of a general store in Hebron. His father had been one of the men who had found me when their attention was attracted by the howling of the pack. I had been carried into the Potts home.

The boy called his mother. She, finding that I was hungry, soon brought me coffee, biscuits, bacon, and fried potatoes. I ate with good appetite, though I was far from recovered from my desperate run to escape the pack. While I was eating, still lying in bed, raised on an elbow, my host came in. Connell, the station agent, and two other men were with him.

ALL were anxious to hear my story. I told it to them briefly, or as much of it as I thought they would believe.

From them I learned that the weird pack had found several more human victims. A lone ranch house had been raided on the night before and three men carried from it. They told me, too, that Mrs. Judson, frantic with grief over the loss of her husband, had gone out across the snow to seek him and had not come back. How well I recalled now that she had found him! Bitterly I reproached myself for having urged the man to risk the night trip with me.

I inquired if any steps had been made to hunt the wolves.

The sheriff, I learned, had organized a posse, which had ventured out from Hebron several times. Abundant tracks of men and wolves, running side by side, had been found. There had been no difficulty in following the trail. But, I gathered, the hunters had not been very eager for success. The snow was deep; they could not travel rapidly, and they had owned no intention of meeting the pack by night. The trails had never been followed more than six or seven miles from Hebron. The sheriff had returned to the county seat, twelve miles down the railroad, promising to return when the snow had melted enough to make traveling easier. And the few score inhabitants of Hebron, though deeply disturbed by the fate of their neighbors who had been taken by the pack, had been too much terrorized to undertake any determined expedition on their own account.

When I spoke of getting someone to return with me to the ranch, quick evasions met me. The example of Judson's fate was very strongly in the minds of all present. None cared to risk being caught away from the town by night. I realized that I must act alone, unaided.

MOST of that day I remained in bed, recuperating. I knew that I would need my full strength for the trial that lay before me. I investigated the available resources, however, and made plans for my mad attempt to strike at the menace that overhung humanity.

With the boy, Marvin, acting as my agent, I purchased an ancient buggy, with a brown nag and harness, to carry me back to the ranch house; my efforts to rent a vehicle, or to hire someone to take me back, had proved signal failures. I had him also to arrange to procure for me other equipment.

I had him buy a dozen gasoline lanterns, with an abundant supply of mantles, and two five-gallon tins, full of gasoline. Finding that the Hebron High School boasted a meager supply of laboratory equipment, I sent the boy in search of magnesium ribbon, and sulphur. He returned with a good bundle of the thin, metallic strips, cut in various lengths. I dipped the ends of each strip in molten sulphur, to facilitate lighting.

He bought me two powerful electric flashlights, with a supply of

spare bulbs and batteries, extra ammunition for my automatic, and two dozen sticks of dynamite, with caps and fuses.

Next morning I woke early, feeling much recovered. The shallow, gnawed wound in my leg was fast healing, and had ceased to pain me greatly. As I sat down to a simple breakfast with the Potts family, I assured them confidently that, on this day, I was going to return to the den of the strange pack, from which I had escaped, and put an end to it.

Before we had finished eating, I heard the hail of the man from whom the buggy had been bought, driving up to deliver it and collect the ample price that Marvin Potts had agreed that I would pay. The boy went out with me. We took the vehicle, and together made the rounds of Hebron's few stores, collecting the articles he had bought for me on the day before—the lanterns, the supply of gasoline, the electric searchlights, and the dynamite.

IT was still early morning when I left the boy at the end of the street, rewarding him with a bill, and drove alone through the snow, back toward the lonely ranch house where I had experienced such horrors.

The day, though bright, was cold. The snow had never begun to thaw; it was still as thick as ever. My brown nag plodded along slowly, his feet and the buggy's tires cruching through the crusted snow.

As Hebron vanished behind me, and I was surrounded only by the vast, glittering sea of unbroken snow, fear and dread came upon me —a violent longing to hurry to some crowded haunt of men. My imagination pictured the terrors of the night, when the weird pack would run again upon the snow.

How easy would it be to return, take the train for New York, and forget the terrors of this place! No, I knew that I could never forget. I could never forget the threat of that dread, night-black world beyond the copper ring, the fact that its evil spawn planned to seize our world and make it a sphere of rotting gloom like their own.

And Stella! Never could I forget her. I knew now that I loved her, that I must save her or perish with her.

I urged the pony on, across the lonely and illimitable desert of sunlit snow.

It was somewhat past noon when I reached the ranch house. But I still had a safe margin of daylight. Immediately I set about my preparations.

There was much to do: unpacking the boxes piled on the buggy; filling the dozen gasoline lanterns, pumping them up with air, burning their mantles, and seeing that they operated satisfactorily; attaching caps and fuses to the sticks of dynamite, testing my powerful flashlights; loading the little automatic and filling the extra clips; stowing conveniently in my pockets an abundance of matches, ammunition, extra batteries for the electric torches, the strips of magnesium ribbon.

THE sun was still high when the preparations were completed. I took time then to put the pony in the stable behind the old house. I locked the door, and barricaded the building, so that, if any dread change converted the animal into a green-eyed monster, it would find itself imprisoned.

Then I went through the old house, carrying a lighted lantern. It was silent, deserted. All the monsters were evidently below. The door of the cellar was closed, all crevices chinked against light.

I lit my dozen powerful lanterns and arranged them in a circle about it.

Then I threw back the door.

A weird and fearful howl came from the dark passage below it! I heard the rush of feet, as the howling thing retreated down the tunnel. From below came angry growls, shrill feral whines.

A physical wave of nauseating horror broke chillingly over me, at the thought of invading that red-lit temple-burrow, where I had endured such unnamable atrocities of horror. I shrank back, trembling. But at the thought of my own father and lovely, blue-eyed Stella, down in that temple of terror, ruled by foul monsters, I recovered my courage.

I stepped back toward the yawning black mouth of the den that these monsters had built.

The lanterns I had first intended to leave in a ring about the mouth of the burrow, except one to carry with me. Now it occurred to me that they would prevent the escape of the monsters more effectively if scattered along the passage. I gathered up six of them, three in each hand, and started down the steps.

Their powerful white rays illuminated the old cellar with welcome brilliance. I left one of them there, in the center of the cellar's floor. And three more of them I set along the slanting passage that led down into the deeper excavation.

I intended to set the two that remained on the floor of the temple, and perhaps return to the surface for others. I hoped that the light would drive the alien life from all of the pack, as it had from Stella. When they were unconscious, I could carry out Stella and my father, and any of the others that seemed whole enough for normal life. The great machine, and the temple itself, I intended to destroy with the dynamite.

I STEPPED from the end of the passage, into the vast, black, many-pillared hall. The intense white radiance of the faintly humming lanterns dispelled the terrible, blood-red gloom. I heard an appalling chorus of agonized animal cries; weird, feral whines and howls of pain. In the farther end of the long hall, beyond the massive ebon pillars, I saw slinking, green-orbed forms, crowding into the shadows.

I set the two lanterns down on the black floor and drew one of the powerful flashlights from my pocket. Its intense, penetrating beam probed the shadows beyond the huge columns of jet. The cowering, howling shapes of men and wolves shrieked when it touched them, and fell to the black floor.

Confidently I stepped forward, to search out new corners with the brilliant finger of light.

Fatal confidence! I had underestimated the cunning and the science of my enemies. When I first saw the black globe, my foot was already poised above it. A perfect sphere of utter blackness, a foot-thick globe that looked as if it had been turned from midnight crystal.

I could not avoid touching it. And it seemed to explode at my touch. There was a dull, ominous *plop*. And billowing darkness rushed from it. A black gas swirled up about me and shrouded me in smothering gloom.

Wildly I turned, dashed back toward the passage that led up to open air and daylight. I was utterly blinded. The blazing lanterns were completely invisible. I heard one of them dashed over by my blundering feet.

Then I stumbled against the cold temple wall. In feverish haste I felt along it. In either direction, as far as I could reach, the wall was smooth. Where was the passage? A dozen feet I blundered along, feel-

ing the wall. No, the passage must be in the other direction.

I turned. The triumphant, unearthly baying of the pack reached my ears; the padding of feet down the length of the temple. I rushed along the wall, stumbled and fell over a hot lantern.

And they were upon me. . . .

THE strange, sourceless, blood-hued radiance of the temple was about me once more. The thick, black pillars thrust up beside me, to support the ebon roof. I was bound, helpless, to one of those cold, massive columns, as I had once been before, with the same bloody rope.

Before me was the strange mechanism that opened the way to that other plane—the Black Dimension—by changing the vibration frequencies of the matter of one world, to those of the other, interlocking universe. The red light gleamed like blood on the copper ring, and the huge mirror behind it. I saw with relief that the electron tubes were dead, the gasoline engine silent, the blackness gone from the ring.

And before the ring had been erected a fearful altar, upon which reposed the torn, mangled, and bleeding bodies of men and women, of gaunt gray wolves, and little coyotes, and other animals. The pack had found good hunting, on the two nights that I had been gone!

The corpse-white, green-orbed, monstrous things, the frightfully changed bodies of Stella and my father and the others, were about me.

"Your coming back is good," the whining, feral tones of the thing in my father's body rang dreadfully in my ears. "The manufacturer of electricity will not run. You return to make it turn again. The way must be opened again, for new life to come to these that wait." He pointed a deathly white arm to the pile of weltering bodies on the black floor.

"Then the new life to you also we will bring. Too many times you run away. You become one with us. And we seek a man who will act as we say. But first must the way be opened again.

"From our world will the life come. To take the bodies of men as machines. To make gas of darkness like that you found within this hall, to hide all the light of your world, and make it fit for us."

My mind reeled with horror at thought of the inconceivable, unthinkable menace risen like a dread specter to face humanity. At the thought that soon I, too, would be a mere machine. My body, cold and white as a corpse, doing unnamable deeds at the command of the thing of darkness whose green eyes would blaze in my sockets!

"Quickly tell the method to turn the maker of electricity," came the maleficent snarl, menacing, gloating, "or we gnaw the flesh from your bones, and seek another who will do our will!"

CHAPTER XII

Spawn of the Black Dimension

I AGREED to attempt to start the little gasoline engine, hoping for some opportunity to turn the tables again. I was certain that I could do nothing so long as I was bound to the pillar. And the threat to find another normal man to take my place as teacher of these monsters from that alien world brought realization that I must strike soon.

Presently they were convinced that they required more than verbal aid in starting the little motor. One of the mechanics unbound me, and led me over to the machine, keeping a painful grip upon my arm with ice-cold fingers.

Unobtrusively, I dropped a hand to feel my pockets. They were empty!

"Make not light!" my father snarled warningly, having seen the movement.

They had awakened to the necessity of searching my person. Glancing about the red-lit temple, I saw the articles they had taken from me, in a little pile against the base of a huge black pillar. The automatic, spare clips of ammunition, flashlights, batteries, boxes of matches, strips of magnesium ribbon. The two gasoline lanterns that I had brought into the great hall were there too, having evidently been extinguished by the black gas which had blinded me.

Two gray wolves stood alertly beside the articles, which must have been taken from me before I recovered consciousness after the onrush of the pack. Their strange green eyes stared at me balefully, through the crimson gloom.

After fussing with the engine for a few moments, while my father kept his cold, cruelly firm grip upon my shoulder, and scores of hideous green orbs in the bodies of wolves and men watched my every move, I discovered that it had stopped for lack of fuel. They had let it run on after I wrecked the machine, until the gasoline was exhausted.

I explained to my father that it would not run without more gasoline.

"Make it turn to cause electricity," he said, repeating his menacing, wolfish snarl, "or we gnaw the flesh from your bones, and find another man."

AT first I insisted that I could not get gasoline without visiting some inhabited place. Under the threat of torture however—when they dragged me back toward the bloody rope—I confessed that the fuel in the gasoline lanterns might be used.

They were suspicious. They searched me again, to be certain that I had upon my person no means of making a light. And the lanterns were examined very carefully for any means of lighting without matches.

Finally they brought me the lanterns. With my father grasping my arm, I poured the gasoline from them into the engine's fuel tank. Under any circumstances it would have been difficult to avoid spilling the liquid. I took pains to spill as much as seemed possible without rousing suspicion—contriving to pour a little pool of it under the exhaust, where a spark might ignite the fumes.

Then they made me start the engine. Coils hummed once more; the electron tubes lit. Blackness seemed to pour from the strange central tube, to be reflected into the great copper ring by the wide, polished mirror.

Again, I looked through the vast ring into the Black Dimension!

Before me lay a sky of gloom, of darkness unutterable and unbroken, stagnant, lurid waters, dimly aglow with the luminosity of foul decay; worn black hills, covered with obscene, writhing, reptilian vegetation that glowed vaguely and lividly green. And on one of those hills was the city.

A sprawled smear of red evil, it was, a splash of crimson darkness, of red corruption. It spread over the hill like a many-tentacled monster of dark red mist. Ugly masses rose from it, wart-like knobs and projections—ghastly travesties of minarets and towers.

It was motionless. And within its reeking, fetid scarlet darkness, lurked things of creeping gloom—nameless hordes of things like that unthinkable monstrosity that I had seen flow into Stella's body. Green-eyed, living horrors of flowing blackness.

The monsters about me howled

through the ring, into that black world—calling!

AND soon, through the copper ring, came flowing a river of shapeless, inconceivable horror! Formless monsters of an alien universe. Foul beings of the darkness—spawn of the Black Dimension!

Fearful green eyes were swimming in clotted, creeping masses of evil darkness. They swarmed over the pile of dead things on the floor. And the dead rose to forbidden, nameless life!

Mutilated corpses, and the torn bodies of wolves sprang up, whining, snarling. And the eyes of each were the malevolent, glaring green eyes of the things that had flowed into them.

I was still beside the rhythmically throbbing little engine. As I shrank back in numbed horror from the fearful spectacle of the dead rising to unhallowed life, my eyes fell despairingly upon the little pool of gasoline I had spilled upon the black floor. It was not yet ignited.

I had some fleeting idea of trying to saturate my hand with gasoline and hold it in front of the exhaust, to make of it a living torch. But it was too late for that, and the ruthless, ice-cold fingers still clutched my arm painfully.

Then my father whined wolfishly.

A creepy, formless, obscene mass of blackness, with twin green orbs in it, glowing with mad, alien fires, left the river of them that poured through the ring and crept across to me.

"Now you become one like us!" came the whining voice.

The thing was coming to flow into my body, to make me its slave, its machine!

I screamed, struggled in the cruel hands that held me. In an insanity of terror, I cursed and pleaded—promised to give the monsters the world. And the creeping blackness came on. I collapsed, drenched with icy sweat, quivering, nauseated with horror.

THEN, as I had prayed it would do, the little engine coughed. A stream of pale red sparks shot from the exhaust. There was a sudden, dull, explosive sound of igniting vapor. A yellow flash lit the black-pillared temple.

A flickering column of blue and yellow flame rose from the pool of gasoline beside the engine.

The things of blackness were *consumed* by the light—they vanished!

The temple became a bedlam of shrill, agonized howls, of confused, rushing, panic-stricken bodies. The fierce grasp upon my arm was relaxed. My father fell upon the floor, writhing across the room toward the shelter of a black pillar, hiding his green eyes with an arm flung across them.

I saw that the gray wolves had deserted their post beside the articles of mine they had been guarding, at the foot of the massive black column. I left the flickering pillar of fire and dashed across to them.

In a moment my shaking hands had clutched upon one of the powerful electric flashlights. In desperate haste I found the switch and flicked it on. With the intense, dazzling beam, I swept the vast columned hall. The hellish chorus of animal cries of pain rose to a higher pitch. I saw gray wolves and ghastly white men cowering in the shadows of the massive pillars.

I snatched up the other searchlight and turned it on. Then, hastily gathering up pistol, ammunition, matches, and strips of magnesium ribbon, I retreated to a position beside the flaring gasoline.

This time I moved very cautiously, flashing the light before me to avoid stumbling into another

bomb of darkness, like that which had been my undoing before. But I think my precaution was useless; I am sure, from what I afterward saw, that only one had been prepared.

AS I got back to the engine, I noticed that it was still running, that the way to the Black Dimension, through the copper ring, was still open. I cut off the fuel, at the carburetor. The little engine coughed, panted, slowed down. The wall of darkness faded from the copper ring, breaking our connection with that hideous world of another interpenetrating universe.

Then I hastily laid the flashlights on the floor, laying them so they cast their broad, bright beams in opposite directions. I fumbled for matches, struck one to the end of a strip of magnesium ribbon, to which I had applied sulphur to make it easier to light.

It burst into sudden blinding, dazzling, white radiance, bright as a miniature sun. I flung it across the great black hall. It outlined a white parabola. Its intense light cut the shadows from behind the ebon pillars.

The cowering, hiding things howled in new agony. They lay on the black floor, trembling, writhing, fearfully contorted. Low, agonized whinings came from them.

Again and again I ignited the thin ribbons of metal and flung them flaming toward the corners of the room, to banish all shadow with their brilliant white fire.

The howling grew weaker, the whines died away. The wolves and the corpse-white men moved no more. Their fierce, twisting struggles of agony were stilled.

When the last strip of magnesium was gone, I drew the automatic, put a bullet through the little engine's gasoline tank, and lit a match to the thin stream of clear liquid that trickled out. As a new flaring pillar of light rushed upward, I hurried toward the passage that led to the surface, watching for another of those black spheres that erupted darkness.

I found the gasoline lanterns I had left in the tunnel still burning; the monsters had evidently found no way of putting them out.

ON to the surface I ran. I gathered up the six lanterns I had left there—still burning brilliantly in the gathering dusk—and plunged with them back down the passage, into the huge, pillared temple.

The monsters were still inert, unconscious.

I arranged the powerful lanterns about the floor, so placed that every part of the strange temple was brilliantly illuminated. In the penetrating radiance, the monsters lay motionless.

Returning to the surface, I brought one of my full cans of gasoline, and two more of the lighted lanterns. I filled, pumped up, and lit the two lanterns from which I had drawn the gasoline.

Then I went about the black-walled temple, always keeping two lanterns close beside me, and dragged the lax, ice-cold bodies from their crouching postures, turning them so the faces would be toward the light. I found Stella, her lovely body still unharmed, except for its deathly pallor and its strange cold. And then I came upon my father. There was also the mangled thing that had been Judson, and the headless body that had been Blake Jetton, Stella's father. I gazed at many more lacerated human bodies and at the chill carcasses of wolves, of coyotes, of the gray horse, of a few other animals.

In half an hour, perhaps, the change was complete.

The unearthly chill of that alien life was gone from the bodies. Most

of them quickly stiffened—with belated *rigor mortis.* Even my father was quite evidently dead. His body remained stiff and cold—though the strange chill had departed.

But Stella's exquisite form grew warm again; the soft flush of life came to it. She breathed and her heart beat slowly.

I carried her up to the old cellar, and laid her on its floor, with two lanterns blazing near her, to prevent any return of that forbidden life, while I finished the ghastly work left for me below.

I NEED not go into details. . . . But when I had used half my supply of dynamite, no recognizable fragments were left, either of the accursed machine, or of the dead bodies that had been animated with such monstrous life. I planted the other dozen sticks of dynamite beside the great black pillars, and in the walls of the tunnel. . . .

The subterranean hall that I have called a temple will never be entered again.

When that work was done, I carried Stella up to her room, and put her very gently to bed. Through the night I watched her anxiously, keeping a bright light in the room. But there was no sign of what I feared. She slept deeply, but normally, apparently free from any taint of the monstrous life that had possessed her.

Dawn came after a weary night, and there was a rosy gleam upon the snow.

The sleeping girl stirred. Fathomless blue eyes opened, stared into mine. Startled eyes, eager, questioning. Not clouded with dream as when she had awakened before.

"Clovis!" Stella cried, in her natural, softly golden voice. "Clovis, what are you doing here? Where's Father? Dr. McLaurin?"

"You are all right?" I demanded eagerly. "You are well?"

"Well?" she asked, raising her exquisite head in surprise. "Of course I'm well. What could be the matter with me? Dr. McLaurin is going to try his great experiment to-day. Did you come to help?"

Then I knew—and a great gladness came with the knowledge—that all memory of the horror had been swept from her mind. She recalled nothing that had happened since the eve of the experiment that had brought such a train of terrors.

She looked suddenly past me—at the picture of myself upon the wall. These was a curious expression on her face; she flushed a little, looking very beautiful with heightened color.

"I didn't give you that picture," I accused her. I wished to avoid answering any questions, for the time being, about her father or mine, or any experiments.

"I got it from your father," she confessed.

I HAVE written this narrative in the home of Dr. Friedrichs, the noted New York psychiatrist, who is a close friend of mine. I came to him as soon as Stella and I reached New York, and he has since had me stay at his home, under his constant observation.

He assures me that, within a few weeks, I shall be completely recovered. But sometimes I doubt that I will ever be entirely sane. The horrors of that invasion from another universe are graven too deeply upon my mind. I cannot bear to be alone in darkness, or even in moonlight. And I tremble when I hear the howling of a dog, and hastily seek bright lights and the company of human beings.

I have told Dr. Friedrichs my story, and he believes. It is because of his urging that I have written it down. It is an historical truism, my friend says, that all legend, myth, and folklore has a basis in fact.

And no legends are wider spread than those of lycanthropy. It is remarkable that not only wolves are subjects of these legends, but the most ferocious wild animals of each country. In Scandinavia, for instance, the legends concern bears; on the continent of Europe, wolves; in South America, jaguars; in Asia and Africa, leopards and tigers. It is also remarkable that belief in possession by evil spirits, and belief in vampires, is associated with the widespread belief in werewolves.

Dr. Friedrichs thinks that through some cosmic accident, these monsters of the Black Dimension have been let into our world before; and that those curiously widespread legends and beliefs are folk-memories of horrors visited upon earth when those unthinkable monstrosities stole the bodies of men and of savage beasts, and hunted through the darkness.

Much might be said in support of the theory, but I shall let my experience speak for itself.

Stella comes often to see me, and she is more exquisitely lovely than I had ever realized. My friend assures me that her mind is quite normal. Her lapse of memory is quite natural, he says, since her mind was sleeping while the alien entity ruled her body. And he says there is no possibility that she will be possessed again.

We are planning to be married within a few weeks, as soon as Dr. Friedrichs says that my horror-seared mind is sufficiently healed.

"On, on—where the Sons of Amor press thickest!"

The Moon-Dial

By Henry S. Whitehead

SAID YUSSUF, the young son of the Maharajah of Kangalore, a hill-state in the north of India, looked down through the white moonlight one stifling night in July upon the moon-dial where it stood clear of the encompassing cypresses in that portion of the palace gardens which lay immediately under his window. Saïd Yussuf never retired without looking down at the spot where its shimmering paleness caused it to stand out clearly even on

A tale of memories immemorial sings in the silver magic of the Indian moon.

nights when only the starlight illuminated that space in the closely-shrubbed gardens.

During the day the moon-dial was only a queer, somewhat battered antique, brought from nobody knew where in the reign of the old Maharajah, Saïd's grandfather, who had remodeled the gardens. But it was Saïd himself who had named it the moon-dial. He had got that phrase from one of the works of the English writer, George Du Maurier, which his father, who had been educated at Oxford and married an English wife, had placed in the palace library. Saïd's tutor did not always approve of his private reading, but then Mr. Hampton did not know just what that included. Summers the tutor always went home to England on his three months' vacation, and then Saïd took refuge in the great library and read to his heart's content of Kipling, Dumas, Gustave Flaubert, the English Bible. Saïd, instructed for reasons of state twice a week in the Koran by the Chief Mullah of Kangalore, found the heroic tales of the Old Testament and the incidents in the life of Jesus-ben-Yussuf singularly attractive by comparison with the dry works of Mohammed, the Prophet.

Saïd had gone up to his quarters this evening, a very hot night, as usual, at about nine-thirty. Now, an hour later, he was lying on his stomach along the broad window-seat of his turreted apartment, arrayed only in a pair of European boy's "shorts," which were cooler than the orthodox pajamas these stifling nights. It was, despite the heavy heat, a really glorious night, gorgeous with the full moon, though no breath of air stirred the leaf of a single shrub or tree.

THE face of the moon-dial, like very old silver, or nickel, was overscored with curious, cryptic markings which, in daylight, Saïd was never weary of examining. This face—for the thing was movable—he had turned very slightly late that afternoon towards the west; he could not have said why he had done that. It was instinct, a vague affair like that other instinct which told him surely, because of many generations of ancestors who had believed in reincarnation, that he had lived before, many, many times!

Now, there in the window, he looked down at it, with no thought of sleep in his mind.

A French clock, somewhere, chimed eleven. A delicate, refreshing breeze, hardly more than a breath, shifted the light silk curtains. Saïd closed his eyes with the comfort of it, and the little breeze fanned his back, pleasurably, like the touch of soft fingers.

When he opened his eyes and looked back again at his moon-dial, he suddenly roused himself to full wakefulness and abruptly pushed his chin higher on his cupped hands. He gazed now with all his interest concentrated.

The dial seemed to be glowing, in a fashion he had never previously observed. A thin, lambent, eery flicker of light played over its ancient surface, moving oddly. Watching closely he saw the light take on something like form; a definite movement. Slanting rays seemed to flow down from some point above; and now, as he watched them gravely, they came down with greater and greater rapidity. The rays glowed like roses; they fell like a thin rain striking silently and appearing to rebound from the dial's surface.

Fascinated, Saïd rose to his knees and leaned far out of the window in the pure, warm night air, drinking in this strange spectacle. He was not in the least disturbed by its unusualness. All this seemed to him a recurrence of something—the

fulfilment of one of those vague, gossamer-like yearnings of his, which were wholly natural to him, but, which so seldom met their realization in this life! It seemed not unnatural that rose-colored rays should pour down—they seemed literally to pour now—and break into veritable cascades there at the moon-dial. . . .

HE had always, somehow, felt within himself some strange, subtle affinity with the moon. He had said nothing of this. It was not the sort of thing one could discuss with Mr. Hampton or even with his parents. Others than himself, he realized, would consider such an idea highly absurd.

Moonlight, and more especially the moon at her full, had always attracted his attention since his earliest recollection. Innumerable times he had watched it, cold and frosty on winter nights, pale and straw-colored in the spring, huge, orange, warmly luminous in late summer and autumn. It was orange-colored now, enormous, bafflingly exotic.

Great sheets of light seemed now to fall and shatter themselves upon the dial; light, orange and tenuous like the great rolling orb itself; light, alluring, somehow welcoming. . . .

A great longing suddenly invaded Saïd's mind. He wanted to go down there and stand in that light; reach his arms up into it and let it bathe him. He stirred uneasily. He had, many times, dreamed of floating down to the lawns from his window, levitated, supported by mysterious, invisible arms! Now the longing became an almost unbearable nostalgia, a veritable yearning. The light, where it had broken and splashed off the face of the dial was dancing luminously, softly, through the shadows of the great encircling cypress trees. It seemed to gather itself together; to roll along the ground. He shut his eyes again and buried his face in his hands.

When he looked back, for he could not for very long keep his eyes away from this spectacle, the light was hurling itself down in shafts and blocks and streams upon the dial-face, with a certain rhythm. The stream was more solid now, more continuous. It broke into whorls and sparkling, dim roulades, and swept earthward, as though redistilled from the magical alchemy of the mysterious ancient dial-face; it seemed to Saïd that it was circling, tenuously, and yet with a promise of continuity, of increasing power, about the dial's stone standard.

The light stream was interrupted now and again by blank spaces, blocks of black darkness; and looking for these and watching them descend like lacunae in the orange stream, he imagined them to be living creatures and half expected to see them take firmer form and dance there, weaving through and through the flickering maze of whorls.

He wanted to float down there, and the longing made a lump in his throat.

HE rose, silently opened his bedroom door, and listened. He could hear his father's quiet breathing, through the open door of a bedroom across the hallway. His mother slept farther down the hall, away from the great winding, pillared stairway which led below.

Silently he walked to the stair-head, turned, and went down.

He emerged on the lawn a few seconds later. He had only to unfasten a summer screen-door and cross a broad veranda. Then he was across the gravel of the drive and on the velvety lawn, and running towards the moon-dial, a little white figure in white drill shorts, his dark

hair glowing in the pouring moonlight.

He paused before pressing through the coppice of cypresses. There was no sound in the open space about the dial, but his instinct for the affairs of the moon warned him that something altogether new and strange was going on out there. He felt no fear, but knew that all this was a repetition of something, some vast and consuming happiness which somewhere, somehow, he had known before; though certainly not in his conscious recollection. It was—this feeling about something very, very old, and very lovely—no more than a recurrence or a repetition of something strange and wild and sweet which had gone before; something mellowed and beautiful because of a vast, incomprehensible antiquity.

He walked forward now, very quietly; and, for a reason which he could not explain even to himself but which he knew to be a right instinct, he proceeded, holding himself very erect, through the cypresses and out into the orange stream.

He knew even before he glanced down at them that a great black panther lay crouched, immobile, on either side of him; crystallized in the magic of the moon out of two of those black void-like things, transmuted by the power of the dial into actuality. Lightly he placed a palm on the head of each of the great ebony beasts, and the velvety touch of their fur reassured him.

ABOUT the dial softly-moving figures, erect and graceful, moved statelily, with a vast gravity. Within the circle about the dial the flat moonlight lay like a pool of oil. Tall white lilies stood about its perimeter, their calices open to the moon. Their fragrance came to him in recurrent waves, and dimly he heard the music of lutes and the delicate rattle of systra, the soft, musical clanging of cymbals, and a chorus of faint singing, a chant in rhythm to the beat of clanging salsalim. He heard the word Tanit repeated again and again, and he found himself saying it.

A cloud sailed majestically across the moon. A delicate sadness tinged the warm night. The lily scent grew faint. The cymbals slowed and dulled.

He felt the great beasts rise beside him. Their fur caressed his hands as they moved forward, gravely, majestically. A hand on each, he walked forward with them, towards his moon-dial. He looked down upon its face and at the faint outlines of mystical figures.

Then he knew a great happiness. It seemed to him that these ancient symbols, which had always concealed their inner meaning from him, were now plain. He was sure now that he had lived before, many times. . . .

The cloud passed, and now the figures on the dial-face were once more merely dim old markings. The statuesque black panthers were gone; there were no longer any dancing figures. A little breeze moved the leaves of the deodars.

He looked up, straight into the face of the moon, instinctively opening his arms wide towards that vast, far serenity. He passed a hand gently over the smooth, worn surface of the ancient dial. Then he walked back to the palace and up to his sleeping-quarters. He felt sleepy now. He got into his bed, drew in his breath in a long sigh of contentment, and fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

His beautiful mother was standing beside his bed when he awakened. It was broad day. She bent over him, and he smiled up into her face as she kissed him.

The Maharanee of Kangalore was a fanciful person.

"Your hair smells of lilies," she said.

SAÏD could hardly wait for the next night of the full moon. His sure instinct for lunar affairs told him plainly that only at the full would the moon come into conjunction with the dial.

But the experience—if it had been a real experience; sometimes, as he thought of it, he could hardly tell—lay, clear-cut, like one of the cameos in the palace treasure-room, in his alert mind. He thought over, meantime, every occurrence, all the sequences of his adventure in the gardens. He put together all its arabesque details. They crystallized into the certainty that he had been living over again something which he had known before; something very important, very dear to him.

He counted off the days and nights until the next possible time. . . .

It came on an August night of balm and spice following light rains; a night on which the tuberose and jasmine of the gardens were pouring out an ecstasy of fragrance.

Saïd had been in the palace treasury that afternoon, with old Mohammed Ali the Guardian, and his mind was full of the beauty of that priceless collection which had come down through countless generations: precious and semi-precious jewels; ornaments—armlets, elephant-ankuses, sword-hilts, jeweled post-tops for palanquins; innumerable affairs, including a vast number of ancient and comparatively modern weapons, weapons of every conceivable variety, which had served for many, many generations the fighting men of his house. He had poured rubies, the ransom of an empire, through his two hands that day; worn Saracenic helmets of light steel, swept through the air with a whistling sound the curved, jewel-encrusted scimitars of his ancestors. Now, from the window-seat, the moon-dial shimmered vaguely among the cypresses. His mind was full of vague, alluring expectations; his body trembled with the anticipation of something dimly recalled, tantalizingly envisaged, now apparently imminent. . . .

HE went down the stairs and out upon the lawn towards the moon-dial. He wanted to be there, this time, as soon as the light-stream should begin its strange downpouring. He was sure that it would come. He touched lovingly the ancient, scarred face of the dial runed with its cryptic markings. He had, for one brief, exulting moment, he remembered clearly, thought that he understood those markings twenty-eight evenings ago. But, the next day, when he had gone to the dial after eight hours' healthful sleep in between his extraordinary experience and the fresh light of a glorious summer morning, he had discovered that they were once more merely strange marks. The disillusion had saddened him. Things, in life, so often seemed like that! One imagined that success was in hand, and in the morning the gold had turned to ashes.

His mood to-night was one of quivering anticipation. Thrills of an expected gladness shook him, standing there beside his dial, his face turned to the sky where the August moon proudly dominated the heavens.

Abruptly the downpouring enveloped him as he waited there in an ecstasy of wild, unearthly glory.

He felt himself drowned, engulfed, in this utter gorgeousness of feeling which seemed to melt him, body and soul; to carry him, willingly, his arms outspread to receive it, up into itself. He felt himself suffused, as he yielded to it; something like a potent fluid in-

vaded him, drenched his utter inner-consciousness, satisfied his happy heart. . . .

HE opened his eyes, closed automatically at the sudden access of the moon's pouring power. He beheld a vast, glorious configuration, splendid, gorgeous, illuminated; growing clearer, more detailed, more utterly satisfying, like the center of all places, the consummation of all desires, the goal of all vague and beautiful thoughts. He felt, somehow, safe, with a well-being transcending all experiences; a feeling that at long last he was arriving where he had always belonged; coming swiftly, inerrantly, to the very center and source where he had, fleetingly, in occasional happy glimpses of the mind, always wanted to be; always known that he must and should be.

He stood upon a soft meadow of pale, bright grass, in the midst of a light scent of lilies, outside the slowly opening doors of a lofty temple, which towered up into the heavens and seemed to mingle its pinnacles with the nearby, friendly stars.

Now the great doors stood wide open. He walked towards them. The sense of old knowledge, of what he must do once he came within the temple, was in his mind. He slowed his pace to a formal dignified tread. He passed through the doors of the temple and stood within.

And, before he could turn his head to look about in this vastness, into his very soul penetrated the message:

"Sleep! Tanit commands."

Beside him he observed a porphyry couch, its finials glowing with complicated whorls and insets of some faintly shining metal like platinum. Upon this, without question, his mind and heart at peace, he reclined, and closed his eyes.

A sweeping, distant, heavenly-sweet breath of music, the music of viols and systra, swept his mind. He slept. . . .

* * * * *

HE strode, a tall, commanding figure, through the narrow streets of the great city where he had lived and worked for many years, the city of London. Above, a waxing moon poured down her gracious light through a black and drifting mass of storm-clouds.

It was chilly and damp, and he had drawn about himself his heavy black outdoor cloak of rich dark cloth. He picked his steps through the filth and mud of the street, while just ahead of him a man-servant bore aloft a flaming cresset-torch to light the uneven way.

He proceeded onward, moved by a strong purpose. This, towards which on this uninviting night he hastened, was no ordinary appointment. What few wayfarers were abroad seemed animated by a great and consuming dread. These glanced furtively at him and at each other as they slunk along, giving each other wide berths. And, in the hand of each, a small, sponge-like object, saturated with reeking vinegar, was held before the face.

At last the two stood before the portals of a magnificent building. The servant knocked. Two men-at-arms, gorgeous in the royal livery, recognizing him, had saluted and allowed him to pass.

The doors, in answer to the servant's knock, now swung open.

A gentleman, splendid in embroidered silks, came forward and bowed. He returned this salutation.

"A dismal night to be thus abroad, My Lord Burlinghame," he remarked, and the gentleman smiled and nodded.

"The King awaits you—anxiously," said the gentleman, and turned and led the way.

He stood now, before the King, in a small, richly-furnished apartment, its walls thick with Spanish arras.

"Come," said the King eagerly, "sit, most worthy Doctor Campalunis, and relate to me the result of your labors."

He delayed seating himself until the King himself had resumed his seat. He spoke directly, pointedly:

"I know now the cause, Sire, beyond any doubt or peradventure. A surprising conclusion, upon which the astrological art and actual experiment converge to show its actuality! To state the matter pithily it cometh down to this: It is the superabundance of rats in this your realm of England that causeth the plague!"

THE King started, half smiled; grew suddenly serious again, looked mystified, swore roundly a rolling oath:

"By the twenty-four nostrils of the Twelve Apostles! Good Doctor Campalunis, were it not thyself 'twould sound like a scurvy jest!"

He nodded, and smiling slowly, answered the King:

"It was in sooth a sorry task; one which, I doubt me, few physicians would have descended to! Yet did I demonstrate its accuracy; the 'calculation' was based upon the conjunction of our lady, the moon, with the planet Venus. And—it pointed to the rats!

"Then did I take three rats, and from them—oh, sorry task!—did remove, with these hands, their parasites. These did I transfer to three small beasts of various kinds, a hare, a stoat, and a mewing cat! Proof, Sire! Within twelve hours, upon all three—as the rat-fleas penetrated to their blood—did there appear tumors like to those upon the folk in this calamity we name 'The Plague' and which now devastates the realm. Soon thereafter all were dead, each after his nature: the hare without resistance; the stoat fighting; the cat, as though she would never pass—nine lives she hath, according to the ancient saying!

"Experiment thus doth prove the wisdom of our lady, the moon. I counsel thee, then, that all rats be hunted and destroyed, that the plague stay itself and England be not thrice-decimated."

He was driving back in a great rumbling coach. Beside him, on the silken-cushioned seat, lay the great red silk purse of gold presented to him by the King—the King who, trusting him, had, before his departure, summoned Giles Talbot, his scrivener, and was even now preparing a royal proclamation directing, upon pain of the King's displeasure, all burgesses, shrieves, coroners and mayors to cause the folk to find and destroy the swarming rats and so end the plague. . . .

He glanced out through the coach window upon the hastening figures of occasional wayfarers; and, ever and again, cressets lighting the gloomy scene disclosed bearers carrying the victims of the plague, hastily and furtively through the muddy streets to the charnel-house. . . .

Above, the moon, now clear of clouds, looked serenely down upon this theater of death and destruction, where ruthless King Plague had well-nigh replaced the reign of kindly King Charles.

* * * * *

CARRYING a small heavy package, he stepped briskly along a sunny roadway towards a goldsmith's shop. He stepped within and the apprentices raised their heads. Welcoming smiles, murmurs of pleased greeting met him; and then rapid questions in the soft Italian argot.

"What, the masterpiece? Finished at last!"

"*Ecco,* Ascanio, *fratello.* It is done, eh?"

"The Master will be pleased."

"*Per Baccho!* A purse that it is magnificent!"

He placed his burden upon the central table. The others were all crowding about him now eager to see.

"Touch it not, colt of a jackass!"

"Room for our Ascanio, the new Cellini!"

"Run—fly, Beppo! Fetch the Master."

He left the inmost wrapping, of silk, where it was, closely draped about the figurine. It stood, shapeless under the unrevealing drapery, about nine inches in height. The apprentices hopped in their anxiety to see it.

Beppo dashed back into the workroom, the Master following. All stood aside as the tall figure, dressed in plum-colored silk like a nobleman, came hurriedly into the room. The bearded face lighted.

"Ascanio! The Virgin—not finished—tell me not—"

"Finished, I believe, to the limit of my poor skill, Messer Benvenuto," he said, and gravely removed the silk wrapping.

There arose a chorus of shouts, squeals, hand-clappings, murmurs, small mutterings and sighs from the apprentices; then, this dying down, he looked at the Master. The others, too, were looking at him. His was the ultimate decision, the last opinion of the workroom, of the city of Florence, of the great world. The master goldsmith stood, motionless, silent, frowning slightly, before the figurine.

It was of red gold, the Virgin Mother of God, chaste, beautiful, cunningly wrought; glowing now in the freshness of the new metal; gleaming, exquisite.

The Master took it into his hands. He held it off, squinted at it; held it close, gazing intently, silently. He laid it down, reached into a pouch, brought out a magnifying glass, sat down on the stool Beppo had placed for him. The apprentices dared barely to breathe.

Messer Benvenuto laid it down at last. He returned, without a word, the glass to his pouch. He turned about and looked at his visitor.

Then abruptly, suddenly, he held out both sensitive hands.

"A masterpiece!" he pronounced, and rose from the stool.

"And this—" he indicated the base of the statue, "no goldsmith hath so done before, Ascanio. Inspiration! Thou hast gone far—to the end of our art. The moon—as a pedestal for the Mother of God! It smacks of the perfection of art. I hail thee, Ascanio—Master!"

* * * * *

IT was very early dawn, a fresh, cool, sea-dampened dawn, just breaking to a delightful smell of dew-wet heather. He paced up and down on the rough stone flagging. He paused, looked about.

Over towards the east the sun, glorious, burst over the horizon. He had been watching for it from the wall's top, over the gate, and now in its new illumination he gazed out, frowningly, beneath the pressure of the great bronze helmet; over the gray and brown gorse hummocks and undulating prairie of rough furze, into the north. There, always concealed, always ready to strike, signaling with their fires to each other, chieftain to chieftain, lay the Picts. Against these this ultimate fortification had been built.

Behind him, to the south, under the wall, a great din arose, a noise compounded of the disassembling of *ballistae,* much hammering and wrenching as the heavy timbers were taken apart; metallic clang-

ings as the breastplates and *scuta* were stacked, in tens, a mule-load each; shouts, commands; the ringing, brief blast of a bugle.

The relief, marching briskly, the never-changing quick step of Rome's invincible legions, came now to a last routine duty. He raised to his lips a small golden whistle, fastened about his neck with a leathern thong. His men came in from east and west. He saluted the approaching centurion. The guard above the gate was changed mechanically, the two officers exchanged brief greetings. His own veteran century behind him, he marched off duty; descended towards the gate at the south side.

A vast bustle greeted him. The troops were preparing for their final evacuation of the wall. All about him this clang of weapons being packed rose to heaven.

HE was being saluted. He stopped, listened to the message. He was to go to the Emperor, at once. He acknowledged the orders, dismissed the messenger, turned to the west.

"As thou knowest, oh, Gaius, the barbarian hordes press back our legions. By sheer force of their incredible numbers, they have worn down the defences of the north. They slip through. Rome herself calls, at long last. For Rome's defence we must go.

"But, oh valiant one, these legions must go safely. It were to serve Rome ill to lose a single quaternion against these Picts. Take thou of thy men, and stay behind, then, here upon the wall. If, at the expiry of two days, thou are yet alive, then follow the legions. Yet, by all the guile and all the skill and all the love of Rome thou dost possess, hold the gate against the north until we are away. I leave thee to the bravest task of all, oh, Gaius!" . . .

With his six legionaries, he strode up and down above the gate, watching the north. For a day and a half the three legions had been marching, ever southward, towards their embarkation-points, through the fair and glorious country of Brittania which the wall had made possible; fifteen thousand seasoned veterans, returning to hold off, if might be, for another decade perhaps, the swarming barbarians who were pressing down upon the Mediterranean world.

For the first six hours nothing had taken place upon the Picts' side of the wall; only the increase of signal fires. Then had come the slow gathering of this barbarian horde. Now, on the evening of the second day, as he looked down, despite the threatenings of his sweating legionaries, with their rocks, their small catapults, and now —as a last resort—the dreaded fire-pots, he saw the Picts gathered in their thousands. A dank smell rose from these barbarians; a smell compounded of the sweat of laboring naked bodies, of furze smoke, of the skins of wolves from which they fashioned their scant garments.

ALREADY the gate was down; already, in their hundreds, the Picts swarmed down below there on the south side of the wall, the Roman side. Convinced now that the garrison had departed, that these on the wall's top were merely a scant guard remaining for the purpose of fooling them, of holding off their own inevitable attack, the leaders of the Picts were haranguing them to the massed attack up the ramps to the wall's top.

Abruptly the moon rose over the western horizon. And with its rising a message, authoritative, definite, filled his mind:

"Well done, and bravely, valiant one, friend of Tanit! And now I take thee unto myself, ere thou perish in the body."

He struggled mentally to reply, as he looked at his hard-bitten, middle-aged men, old legionaries who had remained; who were giving all for *Roma Mater.* They stood now, massed together, just within the barrier which blocked off the ramp's top, their shields interlaced, their spears in a precise row behind them, their short blunt swords in their right hands; silent, ready for their last stand. As he looked at these faithful men his heart went out to them. Their devotion, their iron discipline had never once wavered.

"Nay," he answered. "Nay, Lady Diana, grace of all the *Dii Romae,* I go not willingly, but purpose rather to stand here with these!"

He stepped towards them, his own, somewhat heavier, sword ready in his hand, his shield affixed to his left arm. The roar of the mounting Picts came bellowingly through to them now as the horde swarmed up the ramp. Now the barrier was down, crumpled before the irresistible urge of numbers. Now the short swords were in play, taking terrible toll, like flails, like machines.

Then all that space was abruptly illuminated, as a huge ball of what seemed to the stricken Picts pure incandescent fire smote the stone flooring of the great wall's top, burst into a myriad fragments of light, gathered itself together, then went out into a sudden blackness; and through this blackness the figure of their centurion showed itself to his legionaries like Mars Invictus; head up, sword raised on high, and then, as abruptly, vanished.

THE Picts had disappeared. The legionaries looked at each other blankly. One, Tertullius, looked over the edge.

"All run through the gateways into their territory," he reported to his companions.

"And Gaius?" one asked, "What of our centurion?"

"It is the high Gods! He hath gone to Odin!"

"The light swallowed him up. Hail, O mighty Mithras!"

"He is gone from among us, O invincible gods of Rome!"

"He was godlike. His was the kindness of Chrestus!"

"Olympus receives him, doubtless, O Venus Victrix! A great marvel, this!"

Within a few minutes six hard-bitten veteran legionaries were at the double on the trail of the main army, going straight south, pausing not over the various and sundry abandoned arms and supplies, jetsam left strewed along that way of retreat.

And upon the unanimity of their report and the surprise which their arrival, without their officer, had caused in the ranks of Maxentius' legions, within the year a shrine to Gaius, who had been taken up by the old gods of *Roma Mater,* was rising in the little hills above Callericum, which had been the Centurion Gaius' native village.

* * * * *

HE rose to his feet, stiff from that long reclining, and stretched himself. It was night, a night of warm and mellow airs playing about the olive trees under the full-moon of the early Palestinian spring. He gazed, grave-eyed, towards that sinister hilltop where three Roman crosses stood athwart the moon's light, dark and sinister shadows of death and desolation. He looked long at them, stooped, and adjusted a loose sandal-thong; rose again, and, turning, began to walk towards the city, beautiful upon its own hill of Zion, the temple pinnacles white and glorious in the pouring moonlight.

But on an olive-bordered slope

he paused and looked steadfastedly up into the calm moon's face. There seemed to him to be, struggling towards clear understanding, some message for him in what he had seen that day, the marvels he had witnessed, he, a Greek of Corinth, sojourning in Jerusalem with the caravan of his uncle Themistocles the merchant. The moon had always been his friend, since earliest infancy. Now, aged twenty, he felt always an inspiration, a kind of renewed vigor, when she was at full.

She was at full now, and he remembered that these Palestinians based one of their religious observances upon the lunar cycle. It was now begun. The middle-aged man next him had explained the ritual to him just before sunset, when those bodies had been taken down from the crosses.

It had been a harrowing experience. These Romans were a ruthless lot, "conquerors of the world," indeed. Greece lay beneath their heel. This Palestinian country, too, was a mere procuratorship, however; not a province like his own Hellas. This execution—he had heard of that method, though he had never witnessed it before—had, however, seemed to meet the approval of the Palestinians.

THE "message" troubled him. Something was pressing through to his consciousness. A duty was being thrust upon him. That, of course, had happened before, in much the same way—warnings, admonitions, growing in his mind. He had always followed them, for, indeed, they had been unmistakable things, matters germane to his inmost thoughts, parts of his own consciousness. What would it be this time? He opened his mind, looking up at that bright, mysterious disk, which, as Aristotle, or was it old Zeno?—he could not remember precisely; he was a merchant, not a philosopher—had taught, regulated the waters of the universe; the tides. An odd conception that! True, doubtless. Something caused the ceaseless ebbings and flowings of his own blue Aegean, of the *Mare Internum* as the Romans named the great sea about which their vast empire now centered itself.

The "message" had to do with finding someone. He lay down upon the warm grass as yet unaffected by any distillation of morning dew.

"Search—search—here in this city of Jerusalem, for one named—"

The name eluded him. He moved his feet, impatiently. There were ants here. One had crawled upon the side of his right foot. He moved the foot, and it encountered a small obstacle. He sat up, rolled over, reached down. It was a stone, a small, round pebble—*pétros*.

Then the "message" came clear like the emergence of Pallas Athene full-armed and cinctured from the mighty head of Zeus!

"Search! Find—Petros!"

It burned in his brain. He sat there, cogitating it. One named Peter he was to find, here in this city of Jerusalem. He nodded his head in acquiescence. A rich energy suffused him as he looked up once more into the moon's quiet face.

He rose, lightly, drew in a deep, refreshing breath laden with the sweet dry scent of myrtle, then he walked down the hill towards Jerusalem, in search of someone named Peter.

* * * * *

THE faint memory of an evil dream contended with a fetid odor which drifted in through the methodical row of star-shaped windows opposite his polished wooden couch with the henna-stained horsetails at its curved foot. The dream, an unpleasant, vague memory now, faded from his waking conscious-

ness, encompassed by that smell. That would be from the *ergastulum,* the slave-compound of the suffete, Hanno, whose somewhat more pretentious palace towered over his own on the upper slope of the hill. Hanno, now in the field against the revolting mercenaries, was badly served at home. He must send a peremptory message to the keeper of the *ergastulum!* This was intolerable. He rose to a sitting posture, throwing off the linen coverlet with its embroidered horses and stars thickly sewn upon it, and looked down his long body.

There were unmistakable evidences of emaciation, loss of weight. No wonder, with the scarcity of food now prevalent in Carthage. He rose and clapped his hands together.

Through a curtain entered instantly a huge Nubian, Conno, the bath-slave. Conno's soot-black arms were full of the materials for the bath; a red box of polished enamel containing the fuller's powder, large squares of soft linen, several strigils, a cruse of rose-colored oil.

He followed the slave to a far corner of the lofty room, five stories above the roadway below, sweating now, like Conno himself. The early morning heat poured in dryly through the many windows. He cast himself down on a narrow couch of polished marble, and Conno poured a thin stream of the hot water from a small amphora along his back, spreading it about with the palms of his muscular, yet soft hands. Conno was a very skillful bath-slave. He was dumb, too, which, despite the deprecated savagery of a former owner who had had his tongue removed to gain this desirable end, was, somehow, an advantage on a hot and blistering morning like this!

CONNO sifted reddish-brown powder onto his back, working it with the water into a paste. When the paste was set he rolled over and Conno repeated his ministrations. Then he stood up, and the slave rubbed the thin paste into his muscular arms, down his thighs, about his neck, delicately on the smooth portions of his face where his beard did not grow.

After this preliminary kneading, Conno thinned the paste with more hot water, and began to use the strigils. Then Conno skilfully rinsed him from head to foot, the red-stained water running down into an opening in the floor whence a pipe led it away.

Conno kneaded his muscles with oil, and, at last, gathered his paraphernalia together and walked out of the room.

He returned to the part of the room where his bed stood. Here, awaiting him, stood a slender, dark Numidian, a young girl, who deftly dressed his hair, pomading it with great skill.

Two more slaves entered with the garments of the day. They were green, a cool color which he liked to wear. Dressed, he continued to sit, frowning thoughtfully. That dream! Thoughtfully he attempted to reconstruct it, to bring it back to his conscious mind.

In the process his eye lighted on an ornament on the stand beside him, a serpent carved cunningly in ebony, and polished to brilliance, a coiled serpent, its tail in its mouth —emblem of the endlessness of the universe, a symbol of Tanit, goddess of the moon, one of the city's ancient, traditional, tutelary divinities. She was somewhat neglected now in the stress of this famine, result of the mercenary-troops' revolt which had been going on now for five months. Yes, there were even certain rumors that the college of priests which had served from time immemorial the temple of Tanit, was breaking up; these men, or half-men as he con-

temptuously thought of the white-robed hierophants, were slowly deserting the gentle Tanit for one or another of the severer deities, representing the male principles; *Baalim,* violent gods, requiring a more sanguinary ministry.

Tanit—the dream! A message, it had been: "Go to the northeast, to where the main aqueduct runs underneath the wall's top. Drive out from there—"

HE rose and clapped his hands violently. He strode towards the doorway with its silk curtains wrought in flowers and stars and horses, emblems of the Carthaginian timocracy, and met the hurrying slave.

"Swiftly, Bothon, my litter and a light spear!"

The slave ran. He stood, awaiting his return gazing pensively out of a window, open to the scorching African sunlight drenching the world of Carthage; up to that magnificent location, the finest in the city, where, near the hill's summit towered the vast palace of Hamilcar Barca, sea-suffete of the republic. If Barca would only return! No man knew where he was, save that with a few galleys he was at sea. Barca's return, if, indeed, he should return, must mean a turning-point in this campaign, so far ineffective, against the revolted troops, now compassing the city from the scorching, desert plain below; the campaign of the evil old suffete, Hanno, whose lifetime of debauchery had left him treacherous, ineffective, and leprous.

The slave announced the litter and handed him a light spear. He balanced it in his hand, thoughtfully, then descended to the entranceway. Here, again, the fetor of that slave-compound assaulted his nostrils. He laid the spear carefully lengthwise of the litter's edge and stepped within. He could feel its hardwood joints creak, even though they were oiled daily; even oil dried quickly in this drenching heat. He heard the muffled grunts of his four burly Nubians as they shouldered the litter. Then he was swaying lightly in the direction of the aqueduct. . . .

He stepped out, looked about him. He was not sure what it was he was to search for, even though the "message" had been peremptory. In the scorching sunlight, and here atop these smoothed stones the squaring and piling of which had consumed the lives of countless war-taken slaves a generation past, seemed almost unbearable, he walked along, slowly, contemplatively, now and again sounding with his spear's polished butt the hollow-sounding stones. Down below there lay the encampment of the mercenaries, their numbers augmented now by revolting desert tribesmen, arriving daily, a vast configuration, menacing, spreading, down there on the sand which danced in the heat-waves. . . .

HE slowed his pace, stepped softly, now, more slowly. Now he paused, a tall, slender figure, atop the aqueduct. He listened. Ahead there—a chipping rending sound. Someone was concealed below, tearing out stones! The precious water, the city's very life! One of the mercenaries, undoubtedly, who had worked his way in from the broad-mouthed vents, was doing it. As he stood there, listening, he remembered that he had himself warned the Council of that danger. If the water supply were diverted, destroyed, the city would perish! He lay down flat on his side, his ear against the smooth masonry, listening. Ah, yes—it was plain enough now, that chipping, grinding noise of breaking stonework. . . .

He rose, ran lightly forward, on

his toes, the spear poised delicately. He paused above a large square block of the hewn stone. He laid the spear down, placed both hands under the stone's outer edge, then, violently, skilfully, pulled it straight up. He let it fall against another flat stone, and, reaching for the spear, thrust once, straight down through the aperture he had made.

A groan, a gasping sigh, then the soft impacts, growing rapidly fainter, as a body was borne down, knocking against the remoter stone angles and corners down inside the great aqueduct there under the wall's top; a body bobbing and bumping its way on a last brief journey, to the vents below.

Then turning to the west, where a faint moon rolled palely in the blue, scorching African sky, he raised both arms straight towards it, a gesture of salutation, of adoration.

"To thee the praise, O Lady Tanit, tutelary of Carthage; to thee the praise, for this warning! Again, O effulgent one, hast thou saved the city; to thee all praise and thanks, adulation and attribution of power; to thee the adoration of the faithful; O perpetual bride, O glorious one, O effulgence, O precious one, O fountain of bounty. . . ."

* * * * *

HE leaned heavily against the rounded edge of the wide war-chariot, three spears in his left hand, long and slender, fresh-ground from the day before by a cunning armorer of Gilgal. He had been wounded twice, both times by hurled darts, tearing his right thigh above the greave which encompassed the lower leg, and again in the top of the left shoulder; flesh-wounds both, yet throbbing, burning, painful.

The slaughter by those confederate Amorites had been heavy, and here on the plain of Beth-Horon, the fighting still progressed, even though the rapidly descending sun had, with its decline, brought no coolness. Great clouds of dust filled the hot, palpitating air. He raised his head, and gazed down towards Ajalon. Above the fringe of distant tall cedars which marked the valley's nearer edge, the moon sailed, pale and faint. To the west the sun was now sunken half-way over the horizon, blood-red, disappearing so rapidly now that he could follow it with his bloodshot, dust-smeared eyes.

The charioteer turned, his reins lying loosely over the sweat-caked backs of the horses and addressed him:

"If but Jahveh would prolong the light, oh, My Lord Joshua!"

He raised his weary eyes to the west once more. The sun was now merely a rapidly descending tinge of brilliant carmine in the sullen sky. He spoke to his God:

"Let the light as of day continue, O Thou of Sabáoth Who rulest the up-rising and the down-setting of Thy people. Stay, light of sun, that Jahveh's host may see; and thou, too, O luminary of night, do thou, too, aid our host!"

A pink afterglow rose slowly from the west, spread far through the heavens, then, as though reluctantly, faded. The night fell rapidly, the manifold noises of the hand-to-hand conflicts grew fainter; the chariot-horses stirred as a faint breath blew up out of the tree-sheltered Valley of Ajalon. He turned to feel it on his face, and as he turned, a vast portent appeared to him.

For, from the moon, orange now, glowing enormously, there came first one single penetrating ray which seemed to reach down here to the plain of the House of Horon, and spread its radiance along the

ground; and then others and others; until the great level plain was illuminated as brightly as though by the sun himself. A breeze swept up from the valley. The horses plucked up nervous heads, their cut manes bristling. The charioteer looked about at him inquiringly. He shifted the three spears into his other hand.

"On," he cried, "on, on—where the Sons of Amor press thickest! Drive, drive, like Nimrud of the Great Valley, like the Lion of The House of Judah roaring after his prey! Drive, that we may smite afresh the enemies of the Lord, God of Hosts. . . ."

* * * * *

IT was with these mighty words in his mouth and the sense of battle in his brain that he stirred into consciousness on the porphyry couch. A roseate atmosphere filled the temple, as of approaching dawn, or some mellifluous afterglow; and to his nostrils, scorched with the smoke and dust of battle, was wafted the refreshing scent of lilies.

And into his mind drifted the gentle command:

"Up, beloved of the Moon, up; arise, for Tanit comes."

He stood upright, waiting.

Then he heard a gentle voice, like a silver bell, and yet a voice of power; a voice before which he bent his head and covered his eyes.

"Hail, beloved of Tanit, giver of kindness, fountain of power, hail, and welcome here! Thou hast been permitted to see again thy existences; yet are these but a few, for thy encouragement, oh, well-beloved. In those past lives thou hast never wavered in thy steadfastness. Carry then through all of this thy present life the certainty of power, and of my love and aid.

"Go now, beloved, and take with thee—this!"

The voice ceased, and he felt, upon his left arm, a gentle touch.

He opened his eyes, lowered his folded arms.

He stood upon the lawn, beside the moon-dial, under the moon. He gazed up at that gleaming serenity with a great, deep love in his heart. It seemed to him that he had just passed through some wondrous, now nearly-erased, experience; an experience of wonder and power. He felt tremendously happy, content, safe. He raised his arms impulsively. Something caught his eye; something that gleamed.

He completed his gesture, but his eyes were, despite themselves, drawn around to the wondrous thing sparkling upon his left arm, just above the elbow! It shimmered like the very diadem of Tanit. He brought his arm up close to his eyes, looked at the glimmering jeweled thing, an inch and a half wide, which encircled his upper arm. It was a bracelet encrusted with shining jewels; a bracelet of some metal that he had seen before, inset, somewhere; pale, beautiful metal, like platinum. He moved it, slightly, up and down his arm, with his other hand. It moved, freely, and when he tried to draw it past his elbow—for there seemed to be no clasp to it—it came freely, and off over his hand and into his other hand. He held it close to his face and peered at it lost in a maze of wonderment mingled with faint recollections of brave happenings; not quite clear, yet somehow sure and certain in his mind.

THEN, carrying it, and looking lovingly up again at the moon, he turned, for he felt, suddenly, quite tired and sleepy; and walked back to the house through the cypresses, to the murmur of countless tiny whirrings and pipings of insects in the hedges.

He carried it into his bedroom

and lighted the electric lamp on his bureau, and looked at it in the artificial light, closely, admiringly. It reflected this strong light in millions of coruscations; green, yellow, burning red, pale blue, every shade of mauve and lavender and deeper purple, all the manifold shades and variations of the gamut of colors.

He sighed, instinctively, and placed it in one of the smaller bureau drawers.

Then, strangely happy, contented, he went over and climbed into his bed. He stretched himself out and rolled over on his left side, for he felt very tired, although very happy and contented, and almost instantly fell asleep; but into his dreams of heroic deeds and great daring, and faithful vigils, and honorable trial, he carried the strange conviction which had come to him when he had turned the magnificent armlet about under the light.

The markings on the smooth inside of that clear, pale, heavy metal, were the same as the ancient marred runes, on his moon-dial, down in the garden; those runes which he had studied until he knew them by heart, could draw on paper, with a pencil, unerringly.

And now that he knew in his deep inner consciousness what the runes meant, he was ready, with a heart unafraid, to live his life, free, and full, and clear, and honorable, and beautiful; a life in union with the moon, his beloved. . . . He would know how to rule, when The Destroyer of Delights and the Sunderer of Companies came and took his father away—might it be a long day, in the mercy of Allah!—and he, Saïd Yussuf should reign in his father's room over the great hill-state of Kangalore.

"Hauntings" and the Trivial

PROBABLY most of the houses and localities that are said to be haunted get their reputations through mysterious noises heard, rather than mysterious things seen, and there are violent differences of opinion as to what percentage of these audible manifestations are the result of the normal working out of such laws of nature as are commonly known. Certain it is that time after time ghosts and haunted houses have been able to be explained entirely away, and the causes of the "haunting" removed, by those who have had the intelligence and courage to make a careful search for the cause of the disturbing vision or sound.

Mr. Jenkin's ghost is a case in point.

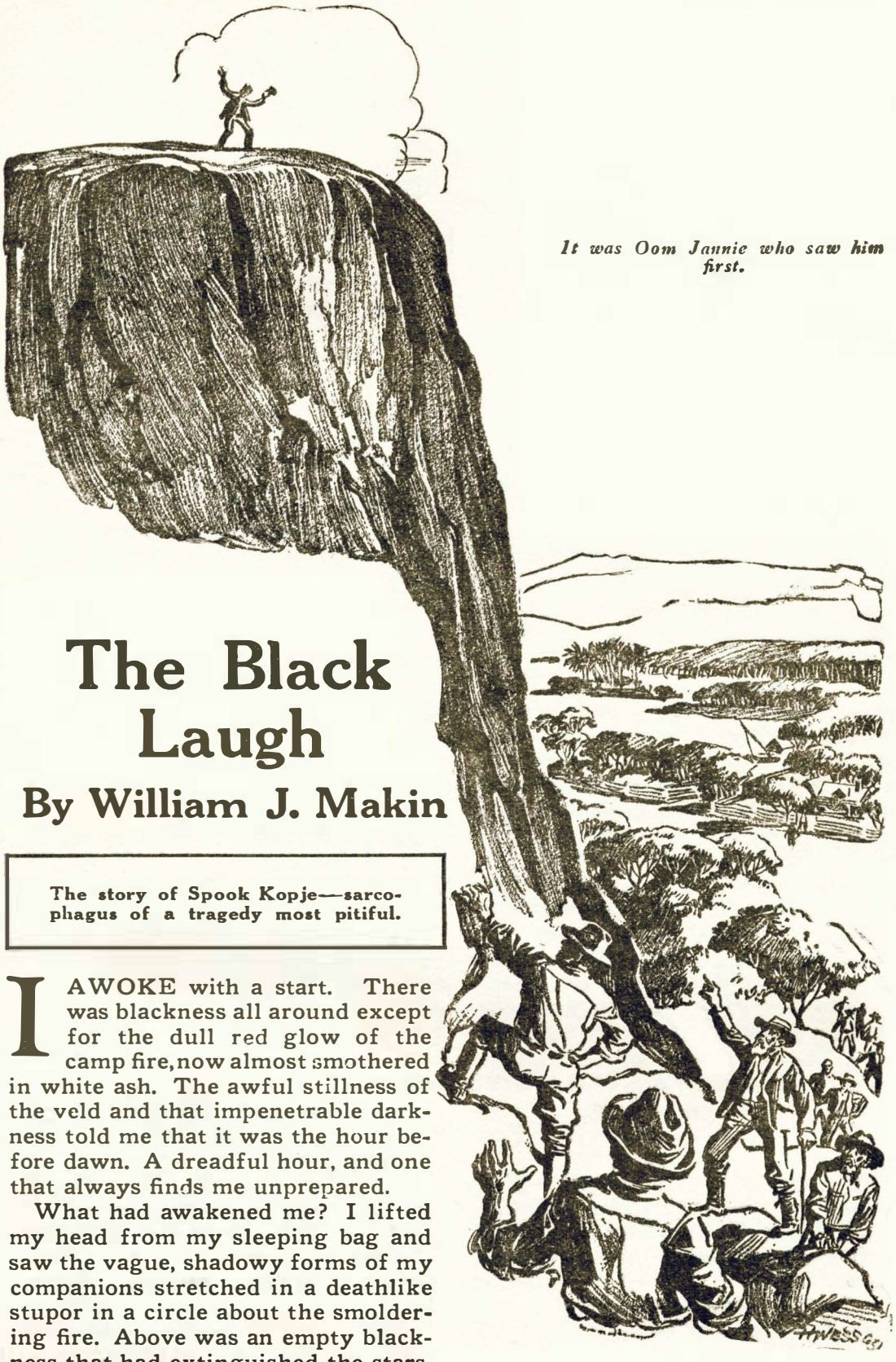
Mr. Jenkins, a man devoid of all superstitious feelings, and living in a house free of all gloomy associations, heard night after night in his bedroom a most singular noise, one unlike any he had ever experienced. He had slept in the same room for years without hearing it, and he attributed it at first to some change of tension or circumstances in the walls or ceiling of the room; but after the most careful examination the cause could not be found.

What he would hear would be a sort of dull sound resembling the note of a drum. It occurred only once in the night, and was heard almost every night. It was over in a second, and it never took place until after Mr. Jenkins had gone to bed. His wife, too, always heard it distinctly, and its sounding never bore any relation to the time she went to bed. It depended on the man alone; and it followed him to another room with another bed, on the opposite side of the house.

Mr. Jenkins had a logical mind and was accustomed to such investigations, but, though he made a most diligent search into the cause of the noise that haunted him, his efforts were fruitless. In time the consideration that the sound had a special reference to him alone operated on his imagination, and he did not hesitate to admit that the recurrence of the sound began to work on his emotion of fear.

And then, many months later, it was discovered by accident what caused the sound. It arose from the partial opening of the door of a wardrobe which was within a few feet of his head and which had been taken into the other bedroom. This wardrobe was almost always opened and then closed before he retired to bed, and, the door being a little too tight, it gradually forced itself open with the mysterious drum-like noise. As the door only left its place by less than half an inch, its change of position never attracted attention. The sound, indeed, seemed to come from a different direction and a greater distance.

Anti-climax? A trivial explanation for an absurd "haunting"? But most of those that are solved reduce to just such things.



It was Oom Jannie who saw him first.

The Black Laugh

By William J. Makin

The story of Spook Kopje—sarcophagus of a tragedy most pitiful.

I AWOKE with a start. There was blackness all around except for the dull red glow of the camp fire, now almost smothered in white ash. The awful stillness of the veld and that impenetrable darkness told me that it was the hour before dawn. A dreadful hour, and one that always finds me unprepared.

What had awakened me? I lifted my head from my sleeping bag and saw the vague, shadowy forms of my companions stretched in a deathlike stupor in a circle about the smoldering fire. Above was an empty blackness that had extinguished the stars.

And, about me, that awful stillness that emphasized the miles of wilderness.

Then, tearing the stillness, came that rumbling laugh, a laugh that began in the depths and cackled to hysterical heights. A black laugh. It was that which had awakened me.

Again that laugh rose in its crescendo. I twisted my head in the direction of the camp fire round which were grouped our native "boys." A shadow moved. One of the natives was cackling horribly.

"For God's sake, stop that laughing!"

Maxwell, his fair hair all tousled, had leaped from his sleeping bag and was shrieking his command into the night.

"Stop it, I say! Stop it!"

Dead silence followed. The laugh was lost in the stillness. One of the sleeping forms grunted uneasily. That was all.

But I was astounded at the appearance of Maxwell. Standing there in shirt and shorts, he was trembling like a man with a bad attack of malaria. He shook his fist into that empty blackness, and cursed. I half rose from my sleeping bag.

"What's the matter?"

His eyes glinted at me, savagely. He did not speak, but walked to the camp fire, kicked some of the ash away, flung some logs into the embers, and then returned to his sleeping bag to sit upon it. He was still shaking as he sat there, all hunched up, as though expecting some terror would launch itself out of the darkness like a leaping leopard.

"That laugh!" he muttered. "You heard it?"

"Yes. One of the Kaffirs, damn him. Something funny came into his queer black mind, I suppose. I wish it hadn't. There'll be no more sleep for me."

"Nor for me," groaned Maxwell.

"Man, you're shivering."

"I know. That laugh comes to me like a curse. A black laugh. Ugh!"

AS one of the logs in the fire began to crackle and blaze I could see the tense look in the face of Maxwell.

"Well, if you're going to be upset by a laughing Kaffir," I began jocularly, "the sooner you get out of Africa the better. These Kaffirs are always laughing. They're happy, even though they are carrying the white man's burden."

But Maxwell refused to come out of his serious mood. He stared into the fitful blaze.

"Ever trekked in the Drakensberg district?" he asked suddenly.

I shook my head.

"I know it only vaguely," I replied. "Somewhere on the borders of Natal, eh?"

"That's it," said Maxwell eagerly. He obviously wanted to talk. Men do become communicative round a camp fire, and this hour before the dawn invited confidences.

"I used to know the country round there very well five years ago. Five years ago! I've never been back there since."

There was such intensity in the tone of his voice that I looked up quickly from the filling of my pipe.

"Why?" I asked. "A girl?"

He shook his head, slowly.

"No. It was a laugh, a black laugh, that drove me out of the Drakensberg."

I think I must have chuckled.

"Really, Maxwell," I said, "are you serious?"

"Deadly serious."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I can't imagine—" I began.

"Have you ever seen that peculiar kind of kopje that slopes up like a gentle hill for about five hundred feet and then shoots up a straight wall of rock for another five hundred feet?"

"Of course," I nodded. "It's not really peculiar, that kind of kopje.

You will find it in different parts of the veld. But I know the kind you mean—rather like a giant sarcophagus on a huge mound, eh?"

"A sarcophagus!" muttered Maxwell. "Yes, at sunset this looked like an enormous coffin. Horrible!"

"Had it a name?"

He turned his eyes towards me. They were lit up by the flicker of a flame.

"It was called—Spook Kopje."

THERE was silence for a moment. The breathing of our companions in their sleeping bags sounded regular and sonorous.

"I was staying in a Boer homestead, not half a mile from that kopje," went on Maxwell, hesitantly. "I was doing nothing in particular—not even prospecting. I rather enjoyed the quietness, the humdrum life of the farm, the unbounded hospitality of the Boer family with whom I stayed. A real rest."

I nodded.

"A colored girl from the Cape, Olivia, looked after me. Brought the morning tea, prepared my meals, mended my socks, and so on. A good girl, and quite attractive as far as colored girls go. Something of a beauty for the neighborhood, and courted by all the black farm boys in the vicinity. But she looked down upon them. 'Dis black trash not good enough for me,' she said decisively. And having said this she would go back to her pots and pans, humming an old missionary tune.

"She certainly seemed in no hurry to get herself a sweetheart. And a good thing, too, for the Boer, Oom Jannie, and his family. They depended more and more on Olivia. She was undoubtedly a household treasure. But when Johannes came into the district, she changed. Johannes was not the sort of man to let himself go unnoticed."

"And who was Johannes?" I asked, puffing away at my pipe, determined, now that Maxwell had launched upon his story, that I would hear all the details.

"Johannes was a young buck, a colored man, also from the Cape," explained Maxwell. "He arrived in the Drakensberg district in a checked suit, a red beret, and a monocle stuck in his eye. He lived in Cape Town where he owned three hansom cabs that did a flourishing business after midnight. And he knew how to talk about himself and his hansom cabs, too. He had drifted to these parts for a holiday, apparently.

"HE had not been in the district three hours before he discovered Olivia. And he began to court her. Needless to say, Olivia fell blindly for the red beret, the monocle, and the three hansom cabs. At the end of the second day she possessed the red beret. It seemed certain that before another week had passed she would possess the three hansom cabs as well. The black farm boys of the district hated this successful interloper."

I smiled at Maxwell, but his face still had that serious, intent expression.

"But although Olivia was practically conquered from the beginning, she still had a lurking feminine desire to see her cavalier of the red beret perform some doughty deed. Three hansom cabs were worth having, but Olivia also wanted a man. In her days at the Cape she had regularly visited the cinema, and her hero of the screen was Douglas Fairbanks."

"I should think it would be Valentino," I murmured.

"Not with Olivia. She adored the leaping antics of her hero, she thrilled when he flung himself to the top of a wall and crashed down again upon his pursuers. This was a man, and the sort of man that Olivia had decided to marry. Johannes was hardly that. Probably he had never

climbed higher than the driver's seat of one of his own hansom cabs. But his talk was dizzying enough, and Olivia's mention of her hero encouraged his boastfulness. 'I can jump, I can swim, I can climb,' he announced to her. 'Why, each Sunday on Table Mountain I have climbed where even der Europeans will not go. *Allemagtig*, I—'

"'Could you climb that?' asked Olivia carelessly. They were out on the veld, walking within a hundred yards of that sinister-looking kopje, Spook Kopje.

"Johannes gave it one glance, and laughed. 'Why, dat is nothing,' he said. 'I could climb dat in half an hour. Now, on Table Mountain, I once climbed and—'

"'You certain dat you could climb dat kopje?' persisted Olivia.

"AGAIN Johannes laughed. He was so certain that he did not even turn his head to look at the kopje again. Instead, he gazed boldly into the soft brown eyes of Olivia.

"'In half an hour,' he repeated.

"Olivia looked at him. 'No one has ever climbed dat kopje,' she said quietly. 'No one.'

"'No?' Johannes was not disturbed. 'When I take you back to Cape Town, I—'

"'Will you climb dat kopje for me?' asked Olivia, excitedly.

"Johannes looked at her, and then decided he had better look at this kopje again. He turned his head and regarded it. In the stark sunlight it looked forbidding enough—the gentle slope, and then the granite cliffs climbing straight for the blue silk of the sky.

"'Of course I will,' he said, carelessly. But he didn't mean it. Olivia did, however. She saw Johannes in a blaze of glory. She was quite right in her assertion that no one had ever climbed that kopje. In the memory of all in the district there had been only three attempts to climb Spook Kopje, and all had failed. One man had killed himself. Sheep had strayed up the slopes and failed to find their way back again. They had perished miserably from hunger. Since the last fatal attempt, Spook Kopje had been left severely alone.

"'Climb dat kopje, and when you come down I marry you,' said Olivia. And she meant it.

"Again Johannes regarded the kopje. He was beginning to feel uncomfortable about the affair. But somewhere deep down in him, beneath that boastfulness, there was a strain in his mixed blood that urged him to live up to the hero-worship of his sweetheart.

"'All right, I do it,' he said.

"'When?' persisted Olivia.

"'When you like.'

"'To-morrow morning, at ten?'

"'Yes.'

"AND so it was settled. Olivia told me the gist of this conversation, excitedly, as she served me my supper. Here was a hero worthy of the films—and of Olivia. 'My man is some man,' she told me definitely. Oom Jannie shook his head over this folly. 'Aach! Vhy do you want him to climb a kopje?' he asked testily. Olivia did not reply, but brought him his huge Bible that he read regularly each evening by candle-light."

Maxwell stopped talking. The night was still dark and soundless. He walked over to the fire and kicked another log into the blaze. Then he came back and sat on his sleeping bag again.

"Did Johannes climb the kopje?" I asked at last.

Maxwell nodded.

"Yes, he did. Incredible. But it took him more than half an hour. Five hours, in fact. One has to admire the achievement. The Lord knows how he did it. But there, in the late afternoon, we could see him on the top of that granite wall wav-

ing the red beret which Olivia had given him as a talisman. We grouped ourselves to watch him—Oom Jannie and his family, two neighboring farmers, three black farm hands, and myself. And among us strutted Olivia, proud of her hero, proud of his achievement, and not a little proud of herself. We waved back to the hero with the red beret."

Again silence.

"Well? Did they live happily ever after?" I asked.

Maxwell turned his brooding gaze upon me.

"Johannes never came back," he said briefly.

"But if he climbed to the top," I said, "surely he could—"

"He never came back," repeated Maxwell, monotonously. "Olivia waited for him, we all waited for him to give him the welcome he deserved. But he did not come."

"But you could see him," I persisted.

Maxwell nodded.

"We watched that red blob of a beret trying to find a way down those granite cliffs for the rest of the afternoon. We watched until a saffron glow in the sky silhouetted Spook Kopje and made it once again a long black coffin. The glow changed swiftly into night, and still Johannes had not returned. Obviously he had not found it as easy to descend as to climb. He may have missed his way or, what is more likely, lost his nerve. But he did not return that night although Olivia sat whimpering with a lighted candle, waiting for him until the dawn.

"IN the early morning we watched the mist smoking away from the kopje. Again the granite cliffs were lit up by the stark sunlight. We searched anxiously. It was Oom Jannie, old as he was, who saw him first. He pointed a gnarled forefinger at the kopje.

"'*Daar is hij!*' he muttered.

"We followed his pointed finger. At last I saw him. The red blob of a beret. Johannes had clung to that throughout the night. He was still on the heights, still on the sinister summit of that kopje. But he had traversed the top from one end to the other. He was still seeking a route to descend.

"At this glimpse of him we shouted and waved. Olivia shrilled and screamed. 'My man, my hero!' she yelled. But the figure with the red beret took no notice. Not at first. But, as the sun climbed higher he saw us. He waved in reply; waved the red beret. But it was a tired gesture; the last *panache*. He was dispirited and anxious. For the rest of the time he held the red beret limply in his hand.

"Olivia completely abandoned her pots and pans. She stood in the doorway of the farmhouse, staring into the sunshine at that restless red blob on the kopje. We tried to comfort her with assurances. 'He'll be down for dinner, the young fool,' grunted Oom Jannie in her hearing. It helped her a little, that remark. But she refused to leave her post in the doorway.

"All through the afternoon, with my field glasses, I watched Johannes trailing desperately about the kopje. Yes, I could see he had become desperate. The owner of the three hansom cabs at the Cape had to get down or he would die of hunger and exposure. At first, I let Olivia watch him through the field glasses, but as the man became more and more desperate in his efforts to find a way down to earth I kept them to myself. Olivia began to weep. But she was not weeping, she was crooning those missionary hymns to herself. 'Lord, bring him back to me,' I heard her saying, over and over again. There was no use trying to comfort her, and, disheartened, I went inside.

"LATE that afternoon, I went myself up the slopes of that cursed kopje in the hope that I might help Johannes in some way. I toiled with two farm boys to the foot of those granite cliffs that went sheer into the sky. I marveled that the colored youth from the Cape had found a foothold of any kind. I traversed those cliffs from end to end, on each side of the kopje, but retired baffled again and again to the slopes. I tried three crevices, but each led to more sheer rock. I nearly broke my neck twice on that expedition. I returned in the darkness to the farmhouse and the weeping Olivia."

A log fell noisily into the fire. Sparks shot upwards to the black sky.

"How long did this last?" I asked.

Maxwell shivered again.

"I think it must have been the third night that Johannes went crazy. I was awakened in the silence of the night by a horrible yelling laugh that resounded again and again across the empty veld. I never heard such a blood-curdling laugh, coming from the depths and ending in a scream. A black laugh! The laugh that wakened me half an hour ago. Ghastly!"

Maxwell covered his face with his hands. It was some moments before he could continue.

"When I first heard that mad laugh I rushed out of the house onto the veld. Instinctively I looked towards Spook Kopje. Moonlight bathed it, so that the granite cliffs looked black and slimy. But there, on the top, was a prancing figure, a figure that laughed and yelled, and danced. It was Johannes. He was mad, and half naked, but still clinging to the red beret. I heard a stifled scream at my side. It was Olivia. She also had heard that black laugh, and realized at once the full horror of it all.

"'My man! Johannes! I so sorry,' she whimpered, and then crumpled into a faint at my feet.

"Oom Jannie, too, looking like a stern ghost in his old nightshirt, had wandered out of the house.

"'This is terrible . . . terrible!' he muttered. He stared at the kopje in the moonlight. 'Something must be done,' he muttered again.

"THE next day five of us, all white men, made a desperate assault on the kopje. We tried again and again to scale those damnable cliffs, and again and again we failed. Baffled and dispirited we returned to the plains in the evening. And the mad, naked figure on the kopje kept up its yelling and screaming and dancing throughout. We all hoped that, mercifully, in this mad state Johannes would pitch down the cliffs and kill himself. But the man seemed to be possessed of an amazing amount of endurance. He lived, and kept up his black laughter throughout the night.

"Of course, every farm in the vicinity was terrorized by that horrible laugh at night. It kept us all awake, and the women folk were hysterical. Olivia had not slept since Johannes climbed the kopje. We were all waiting for the poor devil to die, and he refused to die. The madness seemed to have given him a new lease of life.

"At last, Oom Jannie called the other farmers to a conference in the *eetkamer* of his farmhouse. I will not weary you with the discussion that took place there. But a terrible decision was made. We all emerged from the eetkamer with rifles under our arms. All except Oom Jannie. He carried a Prayer Book. Outside the door of the eetkamer crouched Olivia. She gazed at us dumbly. Her sad dark eyes traveled from our faces to the guns under our arms. At once she understood the terrible thing we

were about to do. With a shriek she flung herself at the feet of Oom Jannie. He gazed down at her with a stern face, but tears were in his rheumy eyes. 'God's will be done,' he muttered, and gently thrust her aside.

"We all proceeded to the foot of that kopje with its mad, naked figure in a red beret still shrieking defiance of death and dancing hysterically on the edge of those granite cliffs. Slowly and deliberately we toiled up the slope, and at last we came to the sheer granite. Oom Jannie sat himself on a boulder. The others took up their positions. I sprawled on the ground and rested my cheek against the stock of my rifle.

"'Sight. Three hundred yards!' I muttered mechanically to myself.

"The mad, prancing figure of Johannes was an easy mark. The red beret which still covered his head helped. I groped for cartridges in my pocket. I heard the 'click—click' as the others slipped the cartridges into the magazines of the rifles which were being trained on the mad, laughing man.

"SITTING on the boulder, Oom Jannie deliberately opened his Prayer Book. We had to wait while he adjusted his spectacles. He could never read without his spectacles. Then in a firm and reverent voice he began slowly to read the burial service in Dutch.

"'*Daar het de almachtige God, de Heer van leven en dood, behaagd heeft de geest van onze ontslapen broeder te doen weder keren tot God. . . .*'

"You know how it goes in English: 'As it has pleased the almighty God, the Lord of living and dead, to let the spirit of our deceased brother return to God. . . .'

"'Crack!' The first rifle had spoken.

"'. . . *die hem gegeven heeft, en die gesproken heeft. . .*' continued Oom Jannie deliberately.

"'Crack! Crack!' Two more rifles spoke almost simultaneously.

"The naked figure in the red beret continued to dance and shriek madly.

"'*Allemagtig!* My hand shakes,' cursed one Boer.

"I sighted on the red beret. Crack! I had missed.

"'. . . *stoft zyt gy, en tot zult gy wederken. . . .*'

"'Crack! Crack!'

"And so it continued in the stark sunlight. We must each have fired five rounds before the end came. We saw the figure in the red beret stagger, and then pitch down.

"'. . . *bevonded moogt worden in vrede,*' concluded Oom Jannie, softly, and closed the Prayer Book.

"Half an hour later we were back in the homestead."

A long silence followed. The campfire blazed merrily. The sky was paling. Dawn had come. Maxwell sat hunched on his sleeping bag. Neither of us spoke for some time.

"And you never went back there again?" I asked.

Maxwell shook his head.

"Never. I left the next day."

"And Olivia?"

"I heard she went back to her pots and pans. She is now a silent, moody woman. She will never marry. Each evening she walks to that kopje and stares at the heights where lie the bones of the man she loved. And they do say," added Maxwell, "that a mad laugh is often heard coming from those strange heights of Spook Kopje. And that laugh portends evil."

I heard a deep chuckle behind me. Startled, I turned. The black face of my Kaffir servant grinned at me.

"Good morning, baas!" he said. "Coffee!"

The sleepers began to awake.

The man was swinging gently to and fro in the sky.

The Shadow on the Sky

By August W. Derleth

SIR HILARY JAMES saw the thing first at dusk, while returning from a stroll on the fens. He said, half aloud, "I am tired," and passed his hand over his eyes; but the thing did not vanish. Then he looked at the thing steadily for a moment, and decided at last that it was one of those inexplicable optical illusions, similar to a mirage, which have come to so many tired wanderers. And though he was not at all tired, this explanation gave him a certain satisfaction, and his vague uneasiness fell away from

A curse lies over the House of Furnival, and the face of heaven shadows forth its doom.

him. When he got home, he forgot about it entirely.

Then, in the middle of the night, Sir Hilary awoke in sudden, unaccountable terror. He felt that he was stifling, and threw back the covers. Then he got up and raised the window. At that moment, he saw the thing for the second time. There it was on the slate-gray sky —a great black shadow, fixed upon the gray and white of the clouds, the shadow of a gallows-tree, and a man hanging from it.

A gigantic thing it was, an utterly impossible thing, and he continued to watch it in fascination. It struck him suddenly that the thing rose out of the fens and up into the sky. But he knew there was nothing on the fens. Now he saw suddenly that there was a movement about the shadow, and as he watched, he saw that the man hanging was swinging gently to and fro in the sky. Then, abruptly, Sir Hilary reached up and pulled the shade across the window. A moment later, he turned up the light.

SIR HILARY JAMES was not a model English gentleman. The countryside was rather soured on him, and he, while not an unpleasant gentleman, cared not a whit for the opinions of his neighbors. Most of them were simple country people, but there were not a few titles among them. Sir Hilary was himself a baronet of a rather obscure family. To the unfounded irritation of his titled neighbors, he refused to attend their social functions. To add to this, he strove noticeably to cut short their friendly calls, so that in time they stopped entirely. Nor did he ever return their visits. His general attitude was not conducive to intimacy, or even to a sort of vague friendliness. It was not that he was a disagreeable person, and his neighbors seemed somehow to realize this, but that for some reason their presence disturbed him.

He was unmarried, and lived in his house on the fringe of the fens with his four servants. The secret of his attempts at isolation was variously interpreted by his neighbors. There were some who thought of him as hiding from the law, and some who looked upon him as a man with some dark secret to cloak. It had never occurred to these simple people that there might at some time be in the house near the fens a James who had no interest in them. As a matter of fact, Sir Hilary James was writing a book, a sort of history of his family, and, with some journalistic experience behind him, he realized that interruptions of any kind might be fatal to his end. He took his recreation in lonely walks over the fens and in short runs up to London.

JAMES had almost completed the history of his line when the apparition came upon him. After the occurrence on the fens, he took no more strolls and after what he saw from the window, he avoided the windows at night. But he could not escape the thing as easily as that. It was very difficult to keep from looking out the windows, and the sky was very easy to see. Besides, the shadow had about it a disconcerting irregularity in its appearance. He was not long in discovering that the shadow had no stationary form, but seemed designed, rather, to catch his eye. The history of James' line was destined not to be finished soon, and Sir Hilary James realized that the shadow on the sky was the distracting influence. When the thing began to appear by day, he yielded to his better judgment and called in Sir Halstead Massingham, the famous nerve specialist and authority on psychic disorders arising from the nervous system.

Sir Halstead, somewhat of an austere individual and the owner of a nature similar in many respects to that of Sir Hilary James, found his patient on the verge of a nervous collapse—not so much for fear of the shadow as from an inner knowledge that he would not be able to complete his history, on which task he had set his heart and mind.

Sir Halstead, with the air of the specialist who is reasonably certain of what his first analysis will disclose, made a preliminary examination of his patient, together with a thorough inquiry into his daily habits. The examination disclosed scarcely anything abnormal, a discovery which so disconcerted Sir Halstead that he suggested to Sir Hilary the advisability of calling in a consultant. James readily consented. Consequently, Sir Halstead wired to London for Dr. Robin Davey, the alienist. Dr. Davey, in the midst of his rise to prestige, could not very well afford to disregard Sir Halstead's request. He arrived within twelve hours after his receipt of Sir Halstead's wire.

TOGETHER, the two of them gave James a rather rigid and uncomfortable cross-examination. This brought them nothing more than Sir Halstead had already learned from his patient. The tale of the shadow on the sky was regarded somewhat skeptically. Sir Halstead had been unable to see the shadow the preceding night, and that night Dr. Davey was likewise disappointed.

James assiduously avoided the windows, though in the middle of the night he called out, and, when Sir Halstead came to him, told him that the shadow had been reflected in the mirror opposite the window, and that he had seen the man hanging, and that the man was laughing silently and horribly. He had called, yes. Could the shade be lowered?

The immediate result of this incident was a consultation between the two psychiatrists. Sir Hilary James was regarded as suffering from a most peculiar illusion, brought on perhaps by his isolation, added to the intense mental stress of his studies. In the end it was thought best to suggest to James that he force himself to face the shadow and watch it carefully as long as he could stand up under the strain of the thing. After some persuasion, James submitted hesitantly and the following night was fixed upon for the experiment.

It was decided that James was to watch the fens from the window of his chamber; he was to sit and stare steadily at whatever seemed to appear, and with the specialists on either side of him, try to convince himself that the thing was an optical illusion. To this arrangement Sir Hilary agreed with less reluctance than he had shown when the plan was first proposed. Eight o'clock that evening found the three of them sitting at the window, James gazing earnestly out across the lowlands, and the doctors closely observing their patient. It was to be expected that nothing would occur for the first hour or two. After an early excitement, James became amazingly calm, and toward ten o'clock took to joking with the specialists.

HE had taken his eyes from the fens for a moment, and was looking at Sir Halstead when the thing came. When he turned again to look from the window, he stiffened perceptibly.

"It's there," he murmured.

Sir Halstead shot a quick glance at Dr. Davey; they nodded to each other, and began to watch their patient with redoubled vigilance.

"You will watch it carefully, and report every movement to us," said Sir Halstead in a low voice.

"Do not forget," put in Dr. Davey, "that it is in all possibility an optical illusion."

"But surely you can see it?" asked James in a distressed voice.

The specialists looked at each other again.

"It does seem—" began Dr. Davey, but Sir Halstead cut him short.

"There is nothing there!" he snapped.

"The man is swinging," said James, as if he had not heard.

Involuntarily Dr. Davey shot a quick glance out upon the lowlands, pale in the light of the full moon. There was nothing save a vast expanse of grass, and the sky was clear.

"He is swinging . . . faster and faster."

Sir Halstead reached forward and opened the window; a refreshing breath of air entered the room.

"It seems he is coming closer . . . closer. He is!" Sir Hilary James involuntarily jerked himself backward. At once he felt the strong hands of Sir Halstead pushing him forward again; and he had a short flash of the psychiatrist's determined face.

"Go on," hissed Sir Halstead.

"He is very close now," said James jerkily. "I am horribly afraid of him."

SIMULTANEOUSLY both specialists reached out and touched him; Sir Hilary appeared reassured.

"He is laughing in a silent voice —Oh! this is ghastly. I cannot stand it much longer."

"Go on," repeated Sir Halstead inexorably.

"He is just outside the window now, swinging to and fro . . . like . . . like a pendulum." At this point James became strangely silent

"Watch him," persisted Sir Halstead "Watch him closely."

"He is waving his hands now. . . ."

Sir Hilary paused again, but presently he went on. "Now he is putting them up to his neck . . . and he is taking the rope from his neck. He is laughing. He is pointing at the looped rope in his hands. . . . He seems to be beckoning to me." Sir Hilary leaned forward suddenly; then he gave vent to a horrified scream: "No—no! My God, the window . . . the window. . . ."

Neither Sir Halstead nor Dr. Davey had any clear conception of exactly when happened then. Both agreed that with one accord they had risen to lower the window at James' frantic scream; then both of them had been felled to the floor by a blow. They thought that James had got up with them, and, in flinging out his arms violently, had felled them. They were not hurt, but when they got up to look about them, James had vanished utterly. The window was still open. Together the two of them ran to the window and looked out; but James was not below the window, as they had supposed he might be. There was no movement upon the fens, save the slowly undulating whiteness of the mists that were beginning to rise.

THEN suddenly Dr. Davey looked up into the sky. He stumbled backwards and laid a trembling hand on Sir Halstead's arm. "My God, Massingham. There *is* something swinging in the moon —a man, think."

Sir Halstead snorted and looked from the window up at the face of the moon. There was nothing there. "Nonsense," he snapped. "Seems to have got you, too. I think—"

But his sentence was never finished, for suddenly out of the night came two faint cries, one following close upon the other. They came from somewhere out over the fens,

and they were unmistakably cries of "Help!" Then there was complete and awful silence.

For a moment the two men stood there; then Dr. Davey rushed from the room, Sir Halstead in his wake.

"Rouse the servants, Massingham," shouted Dr. Davey. "Hounds, too. I'm going to search every blessed inch of that bog land out there."

But Sir Halstead needed no urging. He had been struck by the same preposterous thought that had come to Dr. Davey.

Sir Halstead and the servants, most of them only half clothed, were out upon the fens before Dr. Davey appeared. There was no inclination to wait for the specialist, and Sir Halstead set out at once with the servants. Sir Halstead was soon outdistanced by the younger servants, but he could hear the dogs running aimlessly about ahead of him, whining softly, not quite certain of their quarry.

Sir Halstead had paused for breath, when Dr. Davey caught up with him.

"Massingham," he jerked out, "look at this."

HE had a flashlight and he turned this on the paper that fluttered in his hand. Sir Halstead saw that the paper was quite yellow with its age, but the writing was still clear. He read silently:

> "On Ye Knoll this year, 1727, hath Ye Lord of Furnival, Guy James, condemned and hanged one Hamish Inness, for poaching, who, dying, pronounced this curse upon ye line of Furnival: 'Thy line shall pass in ye seventh generation, when I shall come unto him in this generation in his thirty-seventh year and hang him here upon this tree. This by Ye Branches of Ye Inverted Cross, by Ye arm of this Gallows-tree, and by Ye all-knowing Trinity.'"

"Where did you find this?" asked Sir Halstead, when he had finished.

"In the library. Right among all those papers he'd been using for his book." He took a deep breath. "What do you think?" he asked.

"Nothing. I don't want to think," snapped Sir Halstead.

"But, Massingham, the shadow on the sky—the gallows-tree—the man hanging—then this. And James is in his thirty-seventh year!"

Whatever Sir Halstead might have said was cut off by the sudden baying and howling of the dogs in the distance, at a point to which the bobbing lanterns of the searchers were slowly converging.

"They've found him," shouted Dr. Davey, and he was off. Sir Halstead was not far behind.

THEIR passage over the fens was necessarily slow, but after some minutes, the men got there. Sir Hilary James was lying face downward in the long grass on a small knoll that rose out of the marshy land.

"Has anyone touched him?" asked Sir Halstead.

There was an unanimous shaking of heads.

"Who found him?"

"The hounds, sir. They made for Gallows Point right off."

There was a sharp exclamation from Dr. Davey, and a muttered repetition, "Gallows Point!"

Sir Halstead affected not to notice, and went on. "Dogs strike a trail?"

"No; the wind, sir. Seems there was no trail, sir."

Sir Halstead nodded and bent to examine the body. He looked up after a second, his face yellow in the lantern light. "Heart failure," he said dully. "Someone go for a stretcher."

"Already gone, sir," said one of the servants.

"Very well; we'll wait here. No one touch him, please."

"Dead, is 'e, sir?" came a quavering voice from the small knot of servants.

Sir Halstead nodded.

When the improvised stretcher came, Sir Halstead and Dr. Davey carefully arranged the body of Sir Hilary on it. Then the servants took it up and went ahead; the two specialists walked a short distance behind.

"What are we to do?" asked Dr. Davey.

Sir Halstead took a deep breath. "This is the very first time that I am glad of my prestige, and yours, Davey. We must do all in our power to prevent an examination of the body. We shall have to call in the necessary officials, but I am sure they will take our statements at face value. Sir Hilary James ran out upon the fens during treatment for his heart. Here his heart gave out. That must be the substance of our statement. Under no conditions must we allow anyone to see his neck."

"His neck!" exclaimed Dr. Davey in surprise.

Sir Halstead grasped his companion's wrist in a vise-like grip. "Be more discreet, Doctor. Mr. James' neck is broken, and there is a mark there. *The man has been hanged!*"

Voices from Hell

VENTRILOQUISM to-day is an art used only for entertainment in the theater, but the awe and dread it must have evoked in ancient times, in the hands —or mouths—of priestly devotees of primitive religions, must have been tremendous. Nowadays even the school-child knows that it is not a kind of magic; but when it was still a supernatural manifestation it was a powerful device for arousing the wonder and fear of ignorant worshippers and keeping them devout.

An amusing example which shows the power that ventriloquism could sometimes exert on the superstitious is furnished by Louis Brabant, who was at one time valet-de-chambre to Francis I. Having fallen in love with a rich and beautiful heiress, and being rejected by her parents as an unsuitable match for their daughter, he decided to turn his poly-voice powers to profitable account. On the death of the young woman's father, Brabant paid a visit to the widow, and he had no sooner entered the house than she heard the voice of her deceased husband addressing her from above. "Give my daughter in marriage to Louis Brabant, who is a man of large fortune and excellent character," the voice said. "I endure the inexpressible torments of purgatory for having refused her to him. Obey this admonition, and give everlasting repose to the soul of your poor husband."

This awful command could not be resisted, and the widow announced her compliance with it.

But the ventriloquist required money for the completion of his marriage, so he resolved to work upon the fears of one Cornu, an old banker of Lyons, who had amassed immense wealth by usury and extortion. Having obtained an interview with the miser, he introduced the conversational topic of demons and spectres and the torments of purgatory; and during an interval of silence the voice of the miser's deceased father was heard complaining of his dreadful situation in purgatory, and calling upon his son to rescue him from his sufferings by enabling Louis Brabant to redeem some of the Christians that were enslaved by the Turks. The awe-struck miser was also threatened with eternal damnation if he did not thus expiate his own sins. But such was the grasp that the man had on his gold that the ventriloquist was forced to extend his campaign over another visit.

On this second occasion not only the banker's father but all his deceased relatives appealed to him in behalf of his own soul and theirs, and such was the loudness of their complaints that his spirit was finally subdued, and he gave the ventriloquist ten thousand crowns to be used in liberating Christian captives.

It is said that when the miser was undeceived he was so mortified that he died of vexation.

He thrust his sword between two plates of the horny mail.

The Door To Saturn

By Clark Ashton Smith

WHEN Morghi, the high priest of the goddess Yhoundeh, together with twelve of his most ferocious and efficient underlings, came at morning twilight to seek the infamous heretic, Eibon, in his house of black gneiss on a headland above the northern main, they were surprised as well as disappointed to find him absent.

Their surprise was due to the fact that they had every intention of taking him unawares; for all their plots against Eibon had been carried on with meticulous privacy in underground vaults with sound-proof bolted doors; and

Beyond sea and sky the wizard Eibon pursues his outlandish wanderings.

they themselves had made the long journey to his house in a single night, immediately following the hour of his condemnation. They were disappointed because the formidable writ of arrest, with symbolic flame-etched runes on a scroll of human skin, was now useless; and because there seemed to be no early prospect of trying out the ingenious agonies, the intricately harrowing ordeals which they had devised for Eibon with such care.

Morghi was especially disappointed; and the malisons which he muttered when the emptiness of the topmost room had revealed itself, were of truly cabalistic length and fearfulness. Eibon was his chief rival in wizardry, and was acquiring altogether too much fame and prestige among the peoples of Mhu Thulan, that ultimate peninsula of the Hyperborean continent. So Morghi had been glad to believe certain malignant rumors concerning Eibon and to utilize them in the charges he had preferred.

These rumors were, that Eibon was a devotee of the long discredited heathen god, Zhothaqquah, whose worship was incalculably older than man; and that Eibon's magic was drawn from his unlawful affiliation with this dark deity, who had come down by way of other worlds from a foreign universe, in primeval times when the earth was still no more than a steaming morass. The power of Zhothaqquah was still feared; and it was said that those who were willing to forego their humanity by serving him would become the heritors of antemundane secrets, and the masters of a knowledge so awful that it could only have been brought from outlying planets coeval with night and chaos.

THE house of Eibon was built in the form of a pentagonal tower, and possessed five stories, including the two that were underground. All, of course, had been searched with painstaking thoroughness; and the three servants of Eibon had been tortured with a slow drip of boiling-hot asphaltum to make them reveal their master's whereabouts. Their continued denial of all knowledge, after a half hour of this, was taken as proof that they were genuinely ignorant.

No sign of a subterranean passage was unearthed by delving in the walls and floor of the lower rooms; though Morghi had even gone so far as to remove the flagstones beneath an obscene image of Zhothaqquah which occupied the nethermost. This he had done with extreme reluctance, for the squat, fur-covered god, with his bat-like features and sloth-like body, was fearsomely abhorrent to the high priest of the elk-goddess, Yhoundeh.

Returning in renewed search to the highest room of Eibon's tower, the inquisitors were compelled to own themselves baffled. There was nothing to be found but a few articles of furniture, some antique volumes on conjuration such as might be owned by any sorcerer, some disagreeable and gruesome paintings on rolls of pterodactyl parchment, and certain primitive urns and sculptures and totem-poles of the sort that Eibon had been so fond of collecting. Zhothaqquah, in one form or another, was represented in most of these: his face even leered with a bestial somnolence from the urn-handles; and he was to be found in half the totems (which were those of sub-human tribes) along with the seal, the mammoth, the giant tiger and the aurochs. Morghi felt that the charges against Eibon were now substantiated beyond all remaining doubt; for surely no one who was not a worshipper of Zhothaqquah would care to own even a single

representation of this loathsome entity.

HOWEVER, such additional evidence of guilt, no matter how significant or damnatory, was of small help in finding Eibon. Staring from the windows of the topmost chamber, where the walls fell sheer to the cliff and the cliff dropped clear on two sides to a raging sea four hundred feet below, Morghi was driven to credit his rival with superior resources of magic. Otherwise, the man's disappearance was altogether too much of a mystery. And Morghi had no love for mysteries, unless they were part of his own stock-in-trade.

He turned from the window and re-examined the room with minutely careful attention. Eibon had manifestly used it as a sort of study: there was a writing-table of ivory, with reed-pens and various-colored inks in little earthen pots; and there were sheets of paper made from a kind of calamite, all scribbled over with odd astronomical and astrological calculations that caused Morghi to frown because he could not understand them.

On each of the five walls there hung one of the parchment paintings, all of which seemed to be the work of some aboriginal race. Their themes were blasphemous and repellent; and Zhothaqquah figured in all of them, amid forms and landscapes whose abnormality and sheer uncouthness may have been due to the half-developed technique of the primitive artists. Morghi now tore them from the walls one by one, as if he suspected that Eibon might in some manner be concealed behind them.

THE walls were now entirely bare; and Morghi considered them for a long time, amid the respectful silence of his underlings. A queer panel, high up in the southeastern side above the writing-table, had been revealed by the removal of one of the paintings. Morghi's heavy brows met in a long black bar as he eyed this panel. It was conspicuously different from the rest of the wall, being an oval-shaped inlay of some reddish metal that was neither gold nor copper—a metal that displayed an obscure and fleeting fluorescence of rare colors when one peered at it through half-shut eyelids. But somehow it was impossible, with open eyes, even to remember the colors of this fluorescence.

Morghi—who, perhaps, was cleverer and more perspicacious than Eibon had given him credit for being—conceived a suspicion that was apparently baseless and absurd, since the wall containing the panel was the outer wall of the building, and could give only on the sky and sea.

He climbed upon the writing-table and struck the panel with his fist. The sensations which he felt, and the result of the blow, were alike astounding. A sense of icy cold so extreme that it was hardly distinguishable from extreme heat, ran along his hand and arm and through his whole body as he smote the unknown reddish metal. And the panel itself swung easily outward, as if on unseen hinges, with a high sonorous clang that seemed to fall from an incomputable distance. Beyond it, Morghi saw that there was neither sky nor sea nor, in fact, anything he had ever seen or heard of, or had even dreamed of in his most outrageous nightmares. . . .

He turned to his companions. The look on his face was half amazement, half triumph.

"Wait here till I return," he commanded, and leaped headlong through the open panel.

THE charges that had been brought against Eibon were indeed true. The sagacious wizard, in his lifelong study of laws and agencies, both natural and supernatural, had taken account of the myths that were prevalent in Mhu Thulan regarding Zhothaqquah, and had thought it conceivably worth while to make a personal investigation of this obscure pre-human entity.

He had cultivated the acquaintance of Zhothaqquah, who, in the desuetude of his worship, was now driven to lead an existence wholly subterranean; he had offered the prescribed prayers, had made the sacrifices that were most acceptable; and the strange, sleepy little god, in return for Eibon's interest and his devotion, had confided to him certain information that was more than useful in the practise of the black arts. Also he had presented Eibon with some autobiographical data that confirmed the popular legends in more explicit detail. For reasons which he did not specify, he had come to earth in former aeons from the planet Cykranosh (the name by which Saturn was called in Mhu Thulan); and Cykranosh itself had been merely a way-station in his travels from remoter worlds and systems.

As a special reward, after years of service and burnt-offerings, he presented to Eibon a large thin oval plate of some ultra-telluric metal, instructing him to have it fitted as a hinged panel in an upper room of his house. The panel, if swung outward from the wall on open air, would have the peculiar property of giving admittance to the world Cykranosh, many million miles away in space.

According to the vague and somewhat unsatisfactory explanation vouchsafed by the god, this panel, being partly wrought from a kind of matter which belonged to another universe than man's, possessed uncommon radiative properties that served to ally it with some higher dimension of space, through which the distance to astronomically remote spheres was a mere step.

ZHOTHAQQUAH, however, warned Eibon not to make use of the panel unless in time of extreme need, as a means of escape from otherwise inevitable danger; for it would be difficult if not impossible to return to Earth from Cykranosh—a world where Eibon might find it anything but easy to acclimate himself, since the conditions of life were very different from those in Mhu Thulan, even though they did not involve so total an inversion of all terrene standards and norms as that which prevailed in the more outlying planets.

Some of Zhothaqquah's relatives were still resident in Cykranosh and were worshipped by its peoples; and Zhothaqquah told Eibon the almost unpronounceable name of the most powerful of these deities, saying that it would be useful to him as a sort of password if he should ever need to visit Cykranosh.

The idea of a panel that would open on some remote world impressed Eibon as being rather fantastic, not to say far-fetched; but he had found Zhothaqquah to be in all ways and at all times a most veracious deity. However, he made no trial of the panel's unique virtues, till Zhothaqquah (who maintained a close surveillance of all underground doings) had warned him of the machinations of Morghi and the processes of ecclesiastic law that were being instituted in the vaults below the temple of Yhoundeh.

Knowing as he did the power of these jealous bigots, Eibon decided

that it would be injudicious to the point of folly if he were to let himself fall into their hands. Bidding a short and grateful farewell to Zhothaqquah, and collecting a small parcel of bread and meat and wine, he retired to his study and climbed upon the writing-table. Then, lifting aside the crude picture of a scene in Cykranosh with which Zhothaqquah had inspired some primeval half-human artist, he pushed open the panel it had served to conceal.

EIBON saw that Zhothaqquah was indeed a god of his word: for the scene beyond the panel was nothing that could ever find a legitimate place in the topography of Mhu Thulan or of any terrestrial region. It did not altogether appeal to him; but there was no alternative, save the inquisitorial cells of the goddess Yhoundeh. Envisaging in thought the various refinements and complications of torture which Morghi would have now prepared, he sprang through the opening into Cykranosh with an agility that was quite juvenile for a wizard of mature years.

It was only a step; but turning he saw that all trace of the panel or of his dwelling had now disappeared. He was standing on a long declivity of ashen soil, down which a sluggish stream that was not water, but some liquescent metal resembling mercury, ran from tremendous unscalable shoulders and horns of the mountain heights above, to debouch in a hill-surrounded lake of the same liquid.

The slope beneath him was lined with rows of peculiar objects; and he could not make up his mind whether they were trees, mineral forms or animal organisms, since they appeared to combine certain characteristics of all these. This preternatural landscape was appallingly distinct in every detail, under a greenish-black sky that was over-arched from end to end with a triple cyclopean ring of dazzling luminosity. The air was cold, and Eibon did not care for its sulphurescent odor or the odd puckery sensation it left in his nostrils and lungs. And when he took a few steps on the unattractive-looking soil, he found that it had the disconcerting friability of ashes that have dried once more after being wetted with rain.

HE started down the slope, half-fearing that some of the equivocal objects around him would reach out their mineral boughs or arms to arrest his progress. They seemed to be a kind of bluish-purple obsidian cacti, with limbs that ended in formidable talon-like spines, and heads that were altogether too elaborate for either fruits or blossoms. They did not move as he passed among them; but he heard a faint and singular tinkling with many modulations of tone, that preceded and followed him along the slope. Eibon conceived the uncomfortable notion that they were holding converse with each other; and were perhaps debating what should be done with him or about him.

However, he reached without mishap or hindrance the end of the declivity, where terraces and ledges of decomposing trap, like a mighty stairway of elder aeons, had rimmed the sunken lake of liquescent metal. Wondering as to the way he should now take, Eibon stood irresolute on one of the ledges.

His train of conjecture was broken by a shadow that fell suddenly athwart him and lay like a monstrous blot on the crumbling stone at his feet. He was not prepossessed by the shadow: it was outrageously defiant of all known esthetic standards; and its malfor-

mation and distortion were no less than extravagant.

He turned to see what manner of creature had flung the shadow. This being, he perceived, was not easy to classify, with its ludicrously short legs, its exceedingly elongated arms, and its round, sleepy-looking head that was pendulous from a spherical body, as if it were turning a somnambulistic somersault. But after he had studied it a while and had noted its furriness and somnolent expression, he began to see a vague though inverted likeness to the god Zhothaqquah. And remembering how Zhothaqquah had said that the form assumed by himself on Earth was not altogether that which he had worn in Cykranosh, Eibon now wondered if this entity was not one of Zhothaqquah's relatives.

HE was trying to recall the almost inarticulable name that had been confided to him by the god as a sort of password, when the owner of that unusual shadow, without seeming to note Eibon's presence, began a descent of the terraces and ledges toward the lake. Its locomotion was mainly on its hands, for the absurd legs were not half long enough for the steps it had to take.

Arriving at the lake-edge, the creature drank of the fluid metal in a hearty and copious manner that served to convince Eibon of its godship; for surely no being of an inferior biologic order would quench its thirst with a beverage so extraordinary. Then, re-ascending to the ledge where Eibon stood, it paused and appeared to notice him for the first time.

Eibon had finally remembered the outlandish name for which he was groping.

"Hziulquoigmnzhah," he sought to articulate. Doubtless the result was not wholly conformable to Cykranoshian rules; but Eibon did the best he could with the vocal organs at his command. His auditor seemed to recognize the word, for it peered at Eibon a little less sleepily than before, with its inversely situated eyes; and even deigned to utter something which sounded like an attempt to correct his pronunciation. Eibon wondered how he was ever to learn such a language; or, having learned it, how he was ever to pronounce it. However, it heartened him a little to find that he was understood at all.

"Zhothaqquah," he said, repeating the name three times in his most orotund incantatory manner.

The topsy-turvy being opened its eyes a trifle more, and again admonished him, uttering the word Zhothaqquah with an indescribable abbreviation of vowels and thickening of consonants. Then it stood regarding him for a while as if in doubt or cogitation. Finally it raised one of its ell-long arms from the ground and pointed along the shore, where the mouth of a low valley was discernible among the hills. It said distinctly the enigmatic words: *"Iqhui dlosh •dhqlonqh;"* and then, while the sorcerer was pondering the significance of this unusual locution, it turned away from him and started to re-ascend the higher steps, toward a rather spacious cavern with columned opening, that he had not heretofore perceived. It had hardly passed from sight into the cavern, when Eibon was greeted by the high priest, Morghi, who had readily followed him by his tracks in the ashen soil.

"Detestable sorcerer! Abominable heretic! I arrest you!" said Morghi with pontifical severity.

EIBON was surprised, not to say startled; but it reassured him to see that Morghi was alone.

He drew the sword of highly tempered bronze which he carried, and smiled.

"I should advise you to moderate your language, Morghi," he admonished. "Also, your idea of arresting me is slightly out of place now, since we are alone together in Cykranosh, and Mhu Thulan and the temple-cells of Yhoundeh are many million miles away."

Morghi did not appear to relish this information. He scowled and muttered:

"I suppose this is some more of your damnable wizardry."

Eibon chose to ignore the insinuation.

"I have been conversing with one of the gods of Cykranosh," he said magniloquently. "The god, whose name is Hziulquoigmnzhah, has given me a mission to perform, a message to deliver, and has indicated the direction in which I should go. I suggest that you lay aside our little mundane disagreement, and accompany me. Of course we could slit each other's throats or eviscerate each other, since we are both armed. But under the circumstances I think you will see the puerility, not to mention the sheer inutility, of such a proceeding. If we both live we may be of mutual use and assistance, in a strange world whose problems and difficulties, if I mistake not, are worthy of our united powers."

Morghi frowned and pondered.

"Very well," he said grudgingly, "I consent. But I warn you that matters will have to take their course when we return to Mhu Thulan."

"That," rejoined Eibon, "is a contingency which need not trouble either of us. Shall we start?"

THE two Hyperboreans had been following a defile that wound away from the lake of fluid metal among hills whose vegetation thickened and grew more various as their height decreased. It was the valley that had been indicated to the sorcerer by the topsy-turvy biped. Morghi, a natural inquisitor in all senses, was plying Eibon with questions.

"Who, or what, was the singular entity that disappeared in a cavern just before I accosted you?"

"That was the god Hziulquoigmnzhah."

"And who, pray, is this god? I confess that I have never heard of him."

"He is the paternal uncle of Zhothaqquah."

Morghi was silent, except for a queer sound that might have been either an interrupted sneeze or an exclamation of disgust. But after a while he asked:

"And what is this mission of yours?"

"That will be revealed in due time," answered Eibon with sententious dignity. "I am not allowed to discuss it at present. I have a message from the god which I must deliver only to the proper persons."

Morghi was unwillingly impressed.

"Well, I suppose you know what you are doing and where you are going. Can you give me any hint as to our destination?"

"That, too, will be revealed in due time."

THE hills were lapsing gently to a well-wooded plain whose flora would have been the despair of Earthly botanists. Beyond the last hill, Eibon and Morghi came to a narrow road that began abruptly and stretched away in the distance. Eibon took the road without hesitation. Indeed there was little else to do, for the thickets of mineral plants and trees were rapidly becoming impenetrable. They lined the way with serrate branches

that were like sheaves of darts and daggers, of sword-blades and needles.

Eibon and Morghi soon noticed that the road was full of large footprints, all of them circular in form and rimmed about with the marks of protruding claws. However, they did not communicate their misgivings to each other.

After an hour or two of progress along the yielding ashy thoroughfare, amid the vegetation that was more horrent than ever with knives and caltrops, the travelers began to remember that they were hungry. Morghi, in his haste to arrest Eibon, had not breakfasted; and Eibon, in his natural hurry to evade Morghi, had committed a like omission. They halted by the wayside, and the sorcerer shared his parcel of food and wine with the priest. They ate and drank with frugality, however, since the supply was limited, and the landscape about them was not likely to yield any viands that were suitable for human sustenance.

With strength and courage revived by this little refection, they continued their journey. They had not gone far when they overtook a remarkable monster that was plainly the originator of the numerous footprints. It was squatting down with its armored haunches toward the travelers, filling the whole road for an indeterminable distance ahead. They could see that it was possessed of a myriad short legs; but they could form no idea of what its head and forequarters were like.

Eibon and Morghi were much dismayed.

"Is this another of your gods?" asked Morghi ironically.

THE sorcerer did not reply. But he realized that he had a reputation to sustain. He went boldly forward and cried out: "Hziulquoigmnzhah" in the most resonant bellow that he could summon. At the same time he drew his sword and thrust it between two plates of the horny mail that covered the monster's hindquarters.

Greatly to his relief, the animal began to move and resumed its march along the road. The Hyperboreans followed it; and whenever the creature slackened its pace Eibon would repeat the formula which he had found so effective. Morghi was compelled to regard him with a certain awe.

They traveled on in this manner for several hours. The great luminous triple ring still over-arched the zenith, but a strangely small and chilly sun had now intersected the ring and was declining toward the west of Cykranosh. The forest along the way was still a high wall of sharp metallic foliage; but other roads and paths and byways were now branching off from the one that the monster followed.

All was very silent, except for the many-footed shuffling of this uncouth animal; and neither Eibon nor Morghi had spoken for miles. The high priest was regretting more and more his rashness in pursuing Eibon through the panel; and Eibon was wishing that Zhothaqquah had given him the entrée to a different sort of world. They were startled out of their meditations by a sudden clamor of deep and booming voices that rose from somewhere in advance of the monster. It was a veritable pandemonium of unhuman guttural bellowings and croakings, with notes that were somehow suggestive of reproof and objurgation, like shrewish drums, as if the monster were being scolded by a group of unimaginable entities.

"Well?" queried Morghi.

"All that we are destined to behold will reveal itself at the proper time," said Eibon.

THE forest was thinning rapidly, and the clamor of termagant bellows was drawing closer. Still following the hindquarters of their multipedal guide, which was crawling on with reluctant slowness, the travelers emerged in an open space and beheld a most singular tableau. The monster, which was plainly of a tame and harmless and stupid sort, was cowering before a knot of beings no larger than men, who were armed only with long-handled goads.

These beings, though they were bipeds, and were not quite so unheard-of in their anatomic structure as the entity which Eibon had met by the lake, were nevertheless sufficiently unusual; for their heads and bodies were apparently combined in one, and their ears, eyes, nostrils, mouths and certain other organs of doubtful use were all arranged in a somewhat unconventional grouping on their chests and abdomens. They were wholly naked, and were rather dark in color, with no trace of hair on any part of their bodies. Behind them at a little distance were many edifices of a kind which hardly conformed to human ideas of architectural symmetry.

Eibon strode valorously forward, with Morghi following discreetly. The torso-headed beings ceased their scolding of the fawning monster and peered at the Earth-men with expressions that were difficult to read on account of the odd and baffling relationship of their features.

"Hziulquoigmnzhah! Zhothaqquah!" said Eibon with oracular solemnity and sonority. Then, after a pause of hieratic length: *"Iqhui dlosh odhqlonqh!"*

The result was indeed gratifying, and was all that could be expected even from a formula so remarkable; for the Cykranoshian beings dropped their goads and bowed before the sorcerer till their featured bosoms almost touched the ground.

"I have performed the mission, I have delivered the message given me by Hziulquoigmnzhah," said Eibon to Morghi.

FOR several Cykranoshian months the two Hyperboreans were the honored guests of this quaint and worthy and virtuous people, who called themselves the Bhlemphroims. Eibon had a real gift for languages and made progress in the local tongue far more readily than Morghi. His knowledge of the customs, manners, ideas and beliefs of the Bhlemphroims soon became extensive; but he found it a source of disillusionment as well as of illumination.

The armored monster that he and Morghi had driven before them so valiantly was, he learned, a domestic beast of burden that had strayed away from its owners amid the mineral vegetation of the desert lands adjoining Vhlorrh, the chief town of the Bhlemphroims. The genuflections with which Eibon and Morghi had been greeted were only an expression of gratitude for the safe return of this beast; and were not, as Eibon had thought, an acknowledgment of the divine names he had quoted and the fearsome phrase, *"Iqhui dlosh odhqlonqh."*

The being that Eibon had met by the lake was indeed the god Hziulquoigmnzhah; and there were dim traditions of Zhothaqquah in certain early myths of the Bhlemphroims. But this people, it seemed, were most regrettably materialistic and had long ceased to offer sacrifice and prayer to the gods; though they spoke of them with a sort of distant respect and with no actual blasphemy.

Eibon learned that the words *"Iqhui dlosh odhqlonqh"* doubtless

belonged to a private language of the gods, which the Bhlemphroims no longer understood; but which, however, was still studied by a neighboring people, the Ydheems, who maintained the ancient formal worship of Hziulquoigmnzhah and various related deities.

THE Bhlemphroims were indeed a practical race, and had few if any interests beyond the cultivation of a great variety of edible fungi, the breeding of large centipedal animals, and the propagation of their own species. The latter process, as revealed to Eibon and Morghi, was somewhat unusual: though the Bhlemphroims were bisexual, only one female in a generation was chosen for reproductive duties; and this female, after growing to mammoth size on food prepared from a special fungus, became the mother of an entire new generation.

When they had been well initiated into the life and customs of Vhlorrh, the Hyperboreans were privileged to see the future national mother, called the Djhenquomh, who had now attained the requisite proportions after years of scientific nourishment. She lived in an edifice that was necessarily larger than any of the other buildings in Vhlorrh; and her sole activity was the consumption of immense quantities of food. The sorcerer and the inquisitor were impressed, even if not captivated, by the mountainous amplitude of her charms and by their highly novel arrangement. They were told that the male parent (or parents) of the forthcoming generation had not yet been selected.

The possession of separate heads by the Hyperboreans seemed to lend them a remarkable biologic interest in the eyes of their hosts. The Bhlemphroims, it was learned, had not always been headless but had reached their present physical conformation through a slow course of evolution, in which the head of the archetypal Bhlemphroim had been merged by imperceptible degrees with the torso.

But, unlike most peoples, they did not regard their current stage of development with unqualified complacency. Indeed, their headlessness was a source of national regret; they deplored the retrenchment of nature in this regard; and the arrival of Eibon and Morghi, who were looked upon as ideal exemplars of cephalic evolution, had served to quicken their eugenic sorrow.

THE sorcerer and the inquisitor, on their part, found life rather dull among the Bhlemphroims after the first feeling of exoticism had worn off. The diet was tiresome for one thing—an endless succession of raw and boiled and roasted mushrooms, varied at rare intervals by the coarse and flabby meat of tame monsters. And this people, though they were always polite and respectful, did not seem to be greatly awed by the exhibitions of Hyperborean magic with which Eibon and Morghi favored them; and their lamentable want of religious ardor made all evangelistic endeavor a thankless task. And, being fundamentally unimaginative, they were not even duly impressed by the fact that their visitors had come from a remote ultra-Cykranoshian world.

"I feel," said Eibon to Morghi one day, "that the god was sadly mistaken in deigning to send this people a message of any sort."

It was very soon after this that a large committee of the Bhlemphroims waited upon Eibon and Morghi and informed them that after long consideration they had been selected as the fathers of the

next generation and were to be married forthwith to the tribal mother in the hope that a well-headed race of Bhlemphroims would result from the union.

Eibon and Morghi were quite overcome by the proposed eugenic honor. Thinking of the mountainous female they had seen, Morghi was prone to remember his sacerdotal vows of celibacy and Eibon was eager to take similar vows upon himself without delay. The inquisitor, indeed, was so overwhelmed as to be rendered almost speechless; but, with rare presence of mind, the sorcerer temporized by making a few queries anent the legal and social status which would be enjoyed by Morghi and himself as the husbands of the Djhenquomh. And the naive Bhlemphroims told him that this would be a matter of brief concern; that after completing their marital duties the husbands were always served to the national mother in the form of ragouts and other culinary preparations.

THE Hyperboreans tried to conceal from their hosts the reluctance with which they both regarded the coming honor in all its stages. Being as usual a master of diplomatics, Eibon went so far as to make a formal acceptance on behalf of himself and his companion. But when the delegation of Bhlemphroims had departed he said to Morghi:

"I am more than ever convinced that the god was mistaken. We must leave the city of Vhlorrh with all feasible dispatch, and continue our journey till we find a people who are worthier to receive his communication."

Apparently it had never occurred to the simple and patriotic Bhlemphroims that the fathering of their next national litter was a privilege that anyone would dream of rejecting. Eibon and Morghi were subjected to no manner of duress or constraint, and their movements were not even watched. It was an easy matter to leave the house in which they had been domiciled, when the rumbling snores of their hosts were ascending to the great ring of Cykranoshian moons, and to follow the highway that led from Vhlorrh toward the country of the Ydheems.

The road before them was well marked; and the ring-light was almost as clear and brilliant as full day. They traveled a long distance through the diversified and always unique scenery which it served to illumine, before the rising of the sun and the consequent discovery of their departure by the Bhlemphroims. These single-minded bipeds, it is likely, were too sorely perplexed and dumbfounded by the loss of the guests whom they had chosen as future progenitors to even think of following them.

THE land of the Ydheems (as indicated on an earlier occasion by the Bhlemphroims) was many leagues away; and tracts of ashen deserts, of mineral cacti, of fungoid forests and high mountains intervened. The boundary of the Bhlemphroims—marked by a crude sculpturesque representation of the tribal mother beside the way—was passed by the travelers before dawn.

And during the following day they journeyed among more than one of those unusual races who diversify so widely the population of Saturn. They saw the Djhibbis, that apterous and Stylitean bird-people who roost on their individual dolomites for years at a time and meditate upon the cosmos, uttering to each other at long intervals the mystic syllables *yop, yeep* and *yoop,* which are said to express an unfathomed range of esoteric thought.

And they met those flibbertigibbet pygmies, the Ephiqhs, who hollow out their homes in the trunks of certain large fungi, and are always having to hunt new habitations because the old ones crumble into powder in a few days. And they heard the underground croaking of that mysterious people, the Ghlonghs, who dread not only the sunlight but also the ring-light, and who have never yet been seen by any of the surface-dwellers.

By sunset, however, Eibon and Morghi had crossed the domains of all the aforementioned races, and had even climbed the lower scarps of those mountains which still divided them from the land of the Ydheems. Here, on a sheltered ledge, their weariness impelled them to halt; and since they had now ceased to dread pursuit from the Bhlemphroims, they wrapped themselves more tightly in their mantles against the cold, after a meager supper of raw mushrooms, and fell asleep.

THEIR slumber was disturbed by a series of cacodemoniacal dreams in which they both thought they had been recaptured by the Bhlemphroims and were forced to espouse the Djhenquomh. They awoke shortly before dawn, from visions whose details were excruciatingly vivid, and were more than ready to resume their ascent of the mountains.

The slopes and cliffs above them were desolate enough to have deterred any travelers of inferior hardihood or less cogent fears. The tall woods of fungi dwindled ere long to tiny growths, and soon they lessened to forms that were no bigger than lichens; and after these, there was nothing but black and naked stone. The wiry and slender Eibon suffered no great inconvenience from the climb; but Morghi, with his sacerdotal girth and bulk, was soon winded. Whenever he paused to recover his breath, Eibon would say to him: "Think of the national mother," and Morghi would climb the next acclivity like an agile but somewhat asthmatic mountain-sheep.

They came at noon to a pinnacle-guarded pass from which they could look down on the country of the Ydheems. They saw that it was a broad and fertile realm, with woods of mammoth mushrooms and other thallophytes that excelled in size and number those of any other region they had yet traversed. Even the mountain-slopes were more fruitful on this side, for Eibon and Morghi had not descended far when they entered a grove of enormous puff-balls and toadstools.

They were admiring the magnitude and variety of these growths, when they heard a thunderous noise on the mountains above them. The noise drew nearer, gathering to itself the roar of new thunders. Eibon would have prayed to Zhothaqquah, and Morghi would have supplicated the goddess Yhoundeh, but unfortunately there was no time. They were caught in a mighty mass of rolling puff-balls and toppling toadstools overthrown by the huge avalanche that had started on the heights above; and, borne with increasing momentum, with vertiginous speed and tumult amid an ever-growing heap of shattered fungi, they finished their descent of the mountain in less than a minute.

ENDEAVORING to extricate themselves from the pile of thallophytic debris in which they were buried, Eibon and Morghi noticed that there still seemed to be a good deal of noise, even though the avalanche had stopped. Also, there were other movements and heavings than their own in the

pile. When they had managed to get their necks and shoulders clear, they discovered that the commotion was being made by certain people who differed from their late hosts, the Bhlemphroims, in that they possessed rudimentary heads.

These people were some of the Ydheems, on one of whose towns the avalanche had descended. Roofs and towers were beginning to emerge from the mass of boulders and puff-balls; and just in front of the Hyperboreans there was a large temple-like edifice from whose blocked-up door a multitude of the Ydheems had now tunneled their way. At sight of Eibon and Morghi they suspended their labors; and the sorcerer, who had freed himself and had made sure that all his bones and members were intact, now took the opportunity to address them.

"Harken!" he said with great importance. "I have come to bring you a message from the god Hziulquoigmnzhah. I have borne it faithfully on ways beset with many hazards and perils. In the god's own divine language, it runs thus: *'Iqhui dlosh odhqlonqh.'*"

Since he spoke in the dialect of the Bhlemphroims, which differed somewhat from their own, it is doubtful if the Ydheems altogether understood the first part of his utterance. But Hziulquoigmnzhah was their tutelary deity; and they knew the language of the gods. At the words: *"Iqhui dlosh odhqlonqh,"* there was a most remarkable resumption and increase of activity, a ceaseless running to and fro on the part of the Ydheems, a shouting of guttural orders, and a recrudescence of new heads and limbs from the avalanche.

Those who had issued from the temple re-entered it, and came out once more carrying a huge image of Hziulquoigmnzhah, some smaller icons of lesser though allied deities, and a very ancient-looking idol which both Eibon and Morghi recognized as having a resemblance to Zhothaqquah. Others of the Ydheems brought their household goods and furniture forth from the dwellings, and, signing the Hyperboreans to accompany them, the whole populace began to evacuate the town.

EIBON and Morghi were much mystified. And it was not until a new town had been built on the fungus-wooded plain at the distance of a full day's march, and they themselves had been installed among the priests of the new temple, that they learned the reason of it all and the meaning of: *"Iqhui dlosh odhqlonqh."* These words meant merely: "Be on your way;" and the god had addressed them to Eibon as a dismissal. But the coincidental coming of the avalanche and of Eibon and Morghi with this purported message from the god, had been taken by the Ydheems as a divine injunction to remove themselves and their goods from their present location. Thus the wholesale exodus of people with their idols and domestic belongings.

The new town was called Ghlomph, after the one that the avalanche had buried. Here, for the remainder of their days, Eibon and Morghi were held in much honor; and their coming with the message, *"Iqhui dlosh odhqlonqh,"* was deemed a fortunate thing, since there were no more avalanches to threaten the security of Ghlomph in its new situation remote from the mountains.

The Hyperboreans shared the increment of civic affluence and well-being resultant from this security. There was no national mother among the Ydheems, who propagated themselves in a far more general manner than the Bhlem-

phroims; so existence was quite safe and tranquil. Eibon, at least, was really in his element; for the news which he brought of Zhothaqquah, who was still worshipped in this region of Cykranosh, had enabled him to set up as a sort of minor prophet, even apart from the renown which he enjoyed as the bearer of the divine message and as the founder of the new town of Ghlomph.

Morghi, however, was not entirely happy. Though the Ydheems were religious, they did not carry their devotional fervor to the point of bigotry or intolerance; so it was quite impossible to start an inquisition among them. But still there were compensations: the funguswine of the Ydheems was potent though evil-tasting; and there were females of a sort, if one were not too squeamish. Consequently, Morghi and Eibon both settled down to an ecclesiastic regimen which, after all, was not so radically different from that of Mhu Thulan or any other place on the planet of their birth.

SUCH were the various adventures, and such was the final lot of this redoubtable pair in Cykranosh. But in Eibon's tower of black gneiss on that headland of the northern sea in Mhu Thulan, the underlings of Morghi waited for days, neither wishing to follow the high priest through the magic panel nor daring to leave in disobedience of his orders.

At length they were recalled by a special dispensation from the hierophant who had been chosen as Morghi's temporary successor. But the result of the whole affair was highly regrettable from the standpoint of the hierarchy of Yhoundeh. It was universally believed that Eibon had not only escaped by virtue of the powerful magic he had learned from Zhothaqquah, but had made away with Morghi into the bargain. As a consequence of this belief, the faith of Yhoundeh declined, and there was a widespread revival of the dark worship of Zhothaqquah throughout Mhu Thulan in the last centuries before the onset of the great Ice Age.

Cormoran and Cormelian

SOME of the most interesting of the folk legends which have come out of England concern themselves with the doings of the Giants who, it is said, for a long time inhabited the bleak and inhospitable hills of Cornwall. To this day, scattered about that region, one finds many rude masses of rock which it would seem impossible were ever placed there by the hands of ordinary mortals. On every side one finds a Giant's Chair, a Giant's Punch Bowl, or perhaps a Giant's Castle or a Giant's Pulpit.

Some of the legends woven around these remains have been preserved. One of these has to do with a giant named Cormoran, who desired to build a home in Land's End above the trees, so he could keep watch over the surrounding countryside. For a long time he worked, toiling mightily to carry and pile up huge masses of squarish granite rocks found nearby, and compelling his wife, Cormelian, to help him. The labor of lifting and carrying these great stone masses from their primitive beds was titanic, and Cormoran saw to it that the heaviest loads of stone were borne by his wife, who carried them in her apron.

Then, one day while her husband was sleeping, Cormelian, seeing no reason why a nearer patch of greenstone rock would not do as well as the granite, gathered an apronful of such boulders and carried them to the castle, now nearing completion. It chanced that the sleeping Cormoran woke in time to see that she was carrying, contrary to his wishes, green stone instead of white. At this he was exceedingly angry, and he rose, rushed to her, and with an awful curse gave her a kick. Cormelia's apron string broke from the jolt, and the boulders fell from her apron to the ground.

And there the greenstone remains to this day, not far from the nearly completed white stone castle. No human power is sufficient to remove it. At Cormelia's death the pile of greenstone became her monument, and it still may be seen resting on clay slate rocks where she dropped it. Later this famous rock came to be considered as sacred, and a little chapel was built on it.

"Never have I seen human face express such rapture."

The Smell

By Francis Flagg

THE famous physician, a noted member of the Society of Psychical Research, pulled thoughtfully at his pipe. "During all the years of my investigation of strange phenomena, have I ever run across anything that defied what we please to call natural explanation? Well, that is hard to say; I don't know. Only years ago—" he paused and lit a match. "Perhaps I had better tell you about it.

"At the time I was a young doctor practicing medicine in a small town in Nova Scotia. That was before I became a member of the Society, but not before I had become interested in spiritualism and kindred subjects. At college I had

Out of some coincident Other-World comes to Lemuel Mason a visitation, intangible, ecstatic — and deadly.

studied under Munstenburg, and witnessed some of his unique experiments in relation to hypnotism. Munstenburg also conducted some other peculiar inquiries into what is called occult or secret wisdom, but this latter fact is known to but few. It was under him I matriculated in psychology—and in some other things which colleges neither recognize nor give degrees for.

"Naturally I acquired an assortment of bizarre facts and experiences, and a large library composed of other than dry treatises on medicine. It was my good fortune to possess a small income independent of my practice, and this enabled me to devote more time to reading and study than to patients. I had an office in what was called the Herald Building, and rooms at the 'Brunswick,' a rooming and boarding house of the old-fashioned type. I not only lodged at the 'Brunswick,' I took most of my meals there.

"ONE evening I was sitting in my room after dinner, enjoying my pipe and a book of Hudson's, 'A Hind in Hyde Park,' when a hasty knock sounded at the door. 'Come in,' I called perfunctorily, and there entered a young man of slender build, pale face and indeterminate features, with dark hair and eyes. He was a recent boarder at the 'Brunswick,' Lemuel Mason by name, and only a few days before the landlady had introduced me to him at the breakfast table. I gleaned the fact that he was (though he did not look it) of fisher stock down Lunenburg way. He was a graduate of a normal school, and expected, within the month after summer vacation, to take a position as teacher in a local private academy. A quiet young man, he appeared, in the middle twenties, commonplace enough. Only with the observant eyes of a physician I had noticed at the dinner table that he looked quite ill; his pale face was unusually haggard, even distraught. His first words were startling enough.

"'Doctor, tell me, am I going mad?'

"'Probably not,' I answered with what I hoped was a reassuring smile. 'Otherwise you would scarcely ask the question. But tell me, what is disturbing you?

"Almost incoherently he talked, and I studied him attentively as he did so. Afterwards I gave him a thorough examination.

"'No,' I said, 'you are not mad; you are perfectly normal in every way. All your reflexes and reactions, both physical and mental, are what they should be. There is a little nervous tension, of course, some natural excitement from the strangeness of the experiences you say you have undergone, an experience, I again assure you, that will prove to have a simple and scientific explanation.'

"I SAID all this, being certain of nothing, but only desirous of calming my patient at the moment. I realized that it would take a longer period of observation to determine his mental condition.

"'Tell me, what is your room like?' He had already informed me that he lodged in another house about two blocks away.

"'It is a small room, Doctor; about as large as your ante-room out there.'

"'And how is it furnished?'

"'With a single iron bed, a bureau, desk and two chairs.'

"'Tell me again of your experience, slowly.'

"'I took the room because it was cheap; and because of its reputation I got it for a nominal sum.'

"'Reputation? What do you mean?'

"'I don't know exactly. Some girl

died there, I believe. But I have never been a nervous individual; I don't believe in ghosts or such nonsense. So I leapt at the opportunity to be economical.'

"'And what did you see?'

"'Nothing. That's the curious part of it.' He laughed huskily. 'But I've smelt—'

"'Is there any opening from your room that gives on another chamber?'

"'No. Only the door and the transom above it, opening on the hall.'

"'Does anyone else mention smelling anything?'

"'Not that I know of.'

"'And the window?'

"'Opens on the rear garden. There is a plum tree outside the window, and a bed of flowers, pansies and rose bushes.'

"'Are you sure you do not smell them? On a warm sultry evening the perfume can sometimes be quite overpowering.'

"'No, Doctor, it was nothing at all like that. Let me describe again what happened. I moved into the room yesterday afternoon. At nine o'clock I went to bed. My window was open, of course, and the transom over the door ajar. For perhaps an hour I read—maybe longer. Even while reading I was conscious of sniffing some subtle perfume, and once or twice I got up and went into the hall, but, when I did, the smell vanished. However, it was only the suggestion of a smell; so finally I turned out the light and went to sleep.

"'WHAT time it was the smell awakened me, I do not know, but the room was full of it. It was not a fragrant smell—not the odor of damp earth and breathing flowers—but rather, of something unpleasant; something, I am sure, that was rotten. Not that I thought so at the time, for during the experience I was intoxicated by the odor. That is the ghastly part of the whole business. I tell you I lay on the bed and luxuriated in that smell. I actually rolled in it, rolling on the mattress, over and over, as you may have seen dogs rolling in carrion. My whole body seemed to gulp in the foul atmosphere, every inch and pore of it; my skin muscles twitched, and from head to foot I was conscious of such exquisite rapture and delight that it beggars description.

"'All night I lay on the bed and wallowed in that delicious sea of perfume; and then suddenly it was daylight and I could hear people stirring in other rooms. The smell was gone, and I was conscious of being sick and weak; so sick that I retched and vomited and could eat no breakfast. And it was then I realized that all night I had revelled in the odor of rottenness, of something unspeakably foul, but at the time desirable and piercingly sweet. So I came to you.'

"HE leaned back, exhausted, and for a moment I was at a loss what to say. But only for a moment. You will remember that I was reading Hudson's book, 'A Hind in Hyde Park,' when interrupted. If you have ever read the book, you will recollect that a portion of it deals with the sense of smell in animals. By a strange coincidence—if anything can be termed merely a coincidence—I was reading that section, and also several passages devoted to a dissertation on dreams. Taking refuge in an explanation quoted by Hudson, I said soothingly:

"'The condition is evidently a rare but quite explainable one. I suppose you know something of the nature of dreams. A sleeping man pricks his hand with a pin and a dream follows to account for the prick. He dreams that he is ram-

bling in a forest on a hot summer's day and throws himself down in the shade to rest; and while resting and perhaps dozing, he is startled by a slight rustling sound, and looking around is terrified to observe a venomous snake gliding towards him with uplifted head. The serpent strikes and pierces his arm, and the pain of the bite awakes the man. You see that the serpent's bite is the culmination in a dramatic scene which had taken some time in the acting; yet the whole dream, with its feeling, thoughts, acts, began and ended with the pin prick.'

"'But what has that to do with my case?' he asked.

"'Everything,' I replied, with more confidence than I felt. 'In your case the pin prick is an odor. Some strange perfume strikes a sensitive portion of your nostril and instantly you are thrown into a dream, a nightmarish condition, to account for the smell. Since the case of the dream is an odor and not a pin prick, the time of the dream was of longer duration, that is all.'

"A little color came back into his face.

"'It seemed to me that I was wide awake through it all,' he said slowly, 'but that was doubtless an illusion. Doctor, you relieve my mind of a great fear. You are sure—'

"'Certain,' I said briskly, feeling certain of nothing but the psychological effect of my words in calming his mind. 'The weather is somewhat cool now, and you had better sleep with your window and transom closed to-night, to shut out the disturbing odor. I shall give you a prescription for a sedative to insure sound sleep. Don't worry yourself any further about it.'

"A queer case, I thought, as he went away, but how queer I did not realize until. . . ."

THE doctor paused and relit his pipe. "If I had only known then what I know now! But I was young and inexperienced. It is true that I possessed the book. But much of it was a sealed mystery to me. Besides, it seemed absurd to connect. . . . Despite the witnessing of many queer experiments, the deep study I had already made of strange manuscripts on ancient wisdom, I did not as yet realize the terrible reality that lies behind many occult symbols and allegories. Therefore I had almost persuaded myself that Lemuel Mason's experience had indeed been the result of a nightmare, when I was startled to have him break into my rooms the next morning with a ghastly face and almost hysterical manner. I forced him to swallow a stiff whiskey. 'What is the matter?' I asked him.

"'My God, Doctor, the smell!'

"'What?'

"'It came again.'

"'Go on.'

"'In all its foulness and rottenness. But this time I not only smelled it, I *heard* it, and *felt*—'

"'Steady, man, steady!'

"'Give me another drink. Oh, my God! It whispered and whispered. What did it whisper? I can't remember. Only things that drove me into an ecstasy of madness. Wait! There is one word. I remember it.'

"With shaking lips he uttered a name that made me start. No, I will not say what that name was. It is not good for man to hear some things. Only I had already seen it in the book. I shook him roughly.

"'And then, then. . . .'

"'I felt it, I tell you, all night. Its body was long and sinuous, cold and clammy, the body of a serpent, and yet of a woman too. I held it in my arms and caressed it. . . . Oh, it was lovely, lovely—and unspeakably vile!' He fell, shuddering, into a chair.

"AND now," said the doctor, "I must tell of the criminal thing I did. Yes, though I sensed the danger in which the man stood, I persuaded him to spend another night in his room. I was young, remember, and it came over me that here was an opportunity to study a strange phenomenon at first hand. Besides, I believed that I could protect him from any actual harm. A little knowledge," said the doctor slowly, "is a dangerous thing. I did not then know that beyond a certain point of resistance there is no safety for man or beast, save in flight and that Lemuel Mason had passed that point.

"I was agog with excitement, eloquent in my determination to delve further into the matter. Lemuel Mason's one desire was to flee, to never again cross the threshold of the accursed room. 'It is haunted,' he cried, 'haunted!' God forgive me, I overcame his reluctance. 'You must face this thing; it would be madness to run away.' And I believed what I said. I fortified him with stimulants, prevailed on him to put his trust in me, and that evening we went to his room together; for I was to stay the night with him.

"The house that held the room was an old one, one of a street full of ancient dwellings. People of means, of fashion had inhabited it thirty years before. But the fashionable quarter had shifted southward, the people had died or moved, and the once substantial mansion had fallen on evil days. The wide corridors were dark and gloomy, as only old corridors can be dark and gloomy; the painted walls faded and discolored, and as I followed Lemuel Mason up two flights of stairs, I was conscious of a musty odor, an odor of dust and decay.

"The room was, as he had described it, at the end of a long hall, in the rear, designed doubtless for the use of a servant; it was rather small and stuffy, with nothing distinctive about it except its abnormally high ceiling. Yet was it real, or only my imagination, that something brooded in the room? Imagination, I decided, and lit all three gas jets.

"IT was nine o'clock. Mason collapsed on the bed. I had administered a powerful sedative. In a few minutes he was sleeping as peacefully as a child. Seated in one chair with my feet propped up on another, I smoked my pipe, and read, and watched. I was not jumpy, my nerves were steady enough. The book that I read was the strange one by that medieval author whose symbol is the Horns of Onam. Few scholars have ever seen a copy of it. My own was given me by—but that doesn't matter. I read it, I say, fascinated by the hidden things, the incredible, yes, even horrible things hinted at on every page, and by the strange drawings and weird designs.

"I heard other people mount the stairs and go to their various rooms. Only one other room was occupied on this floor, I noticed, and that was at the far end of the corridor. Soon everything became very still. I glanced at my watch, and saw that it was twelve-thirty. There was no noise at all, save the almost inaudible creakings and groanings which old houses give voice to at midnight, and the little sighing sounds the air made as it bubbled through the gas. These noises did not disturb me at all. I had watched in old houses before, and my mind automatically classified them for what they were.

"But suddenly there was something else, something that. . . . I sniffed involuntarily; I surged to my feet. The room was full of a

strange odor, an odor that was like a tangible, yet invisible, presence, an insidious odor that sought to lull me, overcome my senses. But I was wide awake, forewarned of my danger. Three gas jets were burning to give me added confidence, and I fought off the influence of that smell with every effort of will.

"Almost I felt it recoil before the symbol I drew in the air with my finger; but even as the odor grew faint and remote, I saw Mason straighten on the bed with a convulsive sigh, roll over and sit up. I sat by him again. His eyes were shut, but his face— Never have I seen human face express such emotions of delirious rapture and delight. And it was written not only on his face. His whole body writhed and twisted and *squirmed* in an abandonment of ecstasy that was horrible to watch. With a cry, I leapt to his side.

"'Mason!' I shouted, 'wake up! Wake up!'

"But he paid me no attention. His hands went out in sensuous gestures, as if they handled something; fondled it, caressed it. I shook him roughly. 'Mason! Mason!'

"'Oh,' he crooned, smoothing the air, his body writhing under my touch, his lips forming amorous kisses and endearing words.

"'For God's sake, man!'

"But the evil spell held him; it was beyond my frantic efforts to arouse him. The smell came in waves that rose and receded. Then, calling on every atom of occult lore upon which I depended, I drew around us the sacred pentegram. 'Begone!' I cried, uttering the incommunicable name, and that name which it is tempting madness for the human tongue to utter. 'By the power of Three in One, by the Alpha and Omega, by the Might of The Eternal Monad—back!' I commanded.

"I FELT it go from myself, but not from Mason. Still his body writhed and twisted with voluptuous ecstasy. His face radiated unhuman lust and joy, and his hands, his hands. . . . With a feeling of unutterable horror I realized that he was beyond the protection of any magic I could invoke to save him.

"'Oh,' he crooned, with that smoothing gesture. 'Oh, oh, oh.' He went on like that, mumbling occasionally, 'The feel of your skin, the fragrance of it. Closer, beloved, closer. Whisper, whisper. . . .'

"And then in a thrilling undertone that made my scalp prickle on my head, he said, 'I have felt you, heard you. Let me see you, let me *see* you.'

"BUT he must not see! I knew that. I must drag him beyond the room before he could see. With both hands I seized his body. Only I seemed to be dragging not only his body but another that clung to it, resisted my efforts, disputed every inch of the way to the door. My senses reeled; once again the smell poured in on me like an invisible fog.

"Fear, blind, corroding fear had me in its grip. Like a man in a nightmare I struggled. Would I never reach the door? The invisible antagonist tugged, pulled. Three feet to go; two; one. With a last desperate effort I crashed against the door with the full weight of my body. Fortunately the door opened outwardly and the catch was weak. With a splintering of rotten woodwork, it gave under my lunge and I went staggering into the hall, still clinging to Mason. And even as I did so I heard him shriek terribly, once, twice, and then go limp in my hands.

"All over the house doors banged, voices shouted, and the lodger in the room at the farther end of the

hall came rushing out in a night-gown that flapped at his bare shanks. 'For God's sake,' he cried, 'what's the matter here?'

"But I did not answer. For staring down on the face of Mason on which was frozen a look of such stark horror that it congealed the blood in my veins, I realized that I had dragged him from the accursed room a second too late.

"He had seen!"

THE doctor stared at his listeners. "Yes, he was dead. Heart failure, they called it. 'That expression on his face,' said the landlady with a shudder; 'it is like the look on the face of the girl who died there two years ago.'

"'For God's sake, woman,' I cried, 'tear that room to pieces! Board it up, lock it away! Never let anyone sleep there again!'

"Later, I learned that in the great explosion of 1917, the house was destroyed by fire!

"And now," said the doctor, sucking at his cold pipe, "what about a natural explanation? Is the weird occurrence I have related open to one? In a sense, nothing can be unnatural, and yet . . . yet. . . ." He tapped the bowl of his pipe on the ash-tray "For twenty years I have studied, pondered, dipped into the almost forgotten lore of ancient mysteries, of the truth behind the fable, and sometimes I think, I believe . . . that there are stranger things in heaven and earth. . . ." He paused. "Long ago primitive man was an animal and his sense of smell must have been highly developed. Perhaps through it he cognized another world; a world of subtle sounds and sights; a world just as concrete and real as the one we know; an inimical world. The 'garden,' perhaps, *and the devil in the garden.*" He laughed strangely.

"Perhaps certain odors generated in that room; perhaps the invisible presence there of something alien, incredible, caused Mason (and in a lesser degree, myself) to exercise a faculty the human race, thank God, has long ago outgrown. Perhaps—"

But at sight of his listeners' faces the doctor came to an abrupt stop.

"Ah," he said; "but I see that this explanation is not *natural!*"

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Co ngressof August 24, 1912, of Strange Tales of Mystery and Terror, published bi-monthly at New York, N. Y., for October, 1931.

State of New York, County of New York, ss.:

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared W. M. Clayton, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Strange Tales of Mystery and Terror and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.) The Clayton Magazines, Inc., 80 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y.; Stockholders: W. M. Clayton, 80 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y., and Nathan Goldmann, 80 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y.

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4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

W. M. Clayton, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 23rd day of September, 1931. E. A. Boasi. (My commission expires March 30, 1933.)

My unsuspecting guide was still ahead of me.

The Door of Doom

By Hugh B. Cave

THE great mansion, rising out of the depths of the moor before me, seemed to be a thing endowed with life-in-death. In spite of the immense height of its crumbling turrets, it seemed to be crouching with outstretched arms, waiting for me to come within reach. I stood there in a clump of stubble, staring at it uneasily.

The "Deathless Four" defy a threat macabre—and each, in turn, finds what lurks behind the mansion's grim Iron Door.

For the better part of an hour I had been groping my way across desolate miles of barren country, through the enveloping darkness. Back in the little village of Norberry, where I had inquired my

way, the native Britons had peered into my face and cringed away from me, muttering maledictions and whispering among themselves. The tottering old inn-keeper, as ancient and as wise as the moor itself, had seized my arm in one trembling hand and pointed off into the lonely, terrifying expanse of waste-land that lay before me.

"There ain't nobody lived there for years," he mumbled. "It's the house of the undead, it is. Ain't nobody ever goes there, neither tradespeople nor travelers. Folks passin' near in the night-time has heard horrible things—things that ain't, by no manner o' means, human. Voices from the grave, they be, singin' death chants. . . ."

Now, having trudged my weary way across the moor and finally arrived before my destination, I hesitated to step within reach of those ancient walls. Yet I feared the ridicule of my comrades more than I dreaded this repulsive, malignant pile. With heavy feet I groped the last hundred paces. Passing through the stone gateway, I climbed to the topmost step and let the iron knocker fall into its worn grooves.

Above me the twisted walls of the house hung in a menacing mass, resembling nothing so much as a giant vampire bat with outflung wings. Behind me, as I stood there, lay the flat, bleak expanse of scrub through which I had come.

THE door swung open as I waited. For thirty seconds I remained motionless, staring over the threshold into the slanted, expressionless, deep-rimmed eyes of the Oriental servant who had opened it. Then the servant said softly:

"Who are you?"

"Captain Reed," I informed him. He drew the great door a foot wider and flattened against it to permit me to pass.

"You go inside," he said impassively. "The others, they are all here, waiting for you."

I let him lead the way. As I paced along behind him, marveling that his sandalled feet made no sound on the thick carpet of the hall, I glanced about me and shuddered.

I had hardly expected this sort of thing, even after the three-hour drag on a once-a-day train and the four-mile tramp across an untraveled moor. Perhaps I should have been somewhat prepared, knowing the peculiar whims and idiosyncracies of James Lamoran, and after listening to Rojer Macon's quiet exclamations in the Army and Navy Club the preceding afternoon. Yet of all the possible places for the annual reunion of the Deathless Four, this was certainly the most gruesome, the most dismally black and horrible, that Lamoran's acute imagination could have conceived!

Worse than that, Lamoran had actually taken a two-year lease upon this ghastly structure, and intended to live here. Macon had run across him in Soho, and learned the news; and then later, in the smoking room of the club, Macon had chanced upon David Pell and me, and passed the word along.

"What kind of a place is it?" Pell had demanded, and both he and I leaned close to catch every word.

"What kind of place? Precisely the sort of place you'd expect it to be, old man, when Doctor Jim Lamoran rents it! Lamoran wouldn't live in a *house,* you know. He has to have a haunted graveyard or a ruined abbey replete with vampires and all the necessary horrible creeping affairs. I haven't seen the place, of course; but Jim informed me that it's out Norberry way, sunk in the center of the deadest, blackest, loneliest stretch of moor in Cheshire. It's been there, he says, for half a million years or so, allowing for exaggerations. At any rate, it has neither date nor postmark on it."

NOW, as I trailed silently after the corpse-faced Oriental, I began to feel that Macon's dry comments were more fact than mockery. Moreover, I could hear Macon's modulated voice emanating from a closed door at the far end of the corridor along which I paced.

"He'll be here," Macon was saying. "Eddy Reed might be late once in a while, but he always arrives eventually. I don't envy him his walk across the moor at this hour."

"Quite possible," this in Lamoran's voice, "that he thinks we're all quite mad. He probably asked directions in the village, and listened to the fantastic tales that surround this place. He'll be here, though."

The Oriental opened the door. I stepped over the threshold into a huge reception chamber where my three soldier friends were seated at one end of the long table. Instantly the three faces turned toward me, as the Oriental droned my name. Then, scrambling out of their chairs, Macon, Lamoran, and Pell swooped down upon me, making me welcome and besieging me with questions.

A strangely mingled feeling of joy and sadness came over me at that moment, as they led me to the table. We four had been through the great war together, side by side, from start to finish. We alone, of the members of a certain squadron of the Royal Flying Corps, had returned to tell of the horrors. They had named us —the newspapers and the men of the Army and Navy Club—the "Deathless Four," and we in turn strove to perpetuate the memory of our companions by coming together at least once each year for twenty-four hours of companionship.

WE were a strange lot, and yet the chains which bound us together have bound many a stranger group of men under the same circumstances. Doctor James Lamoran, the oldest among us, was a tall, finely formed gentleman of infinite knowledge, eternally studying some intricate phase of occultism which happened to meet his attention. Pell was the portly, overstuffed, altogether prosperous banker. Rojer Macon, our youngest member and hero, since he had brought down more enemy Fokkers than the rest of us combined, was once again a smiling, irresponsible sportsman of the blue blood—happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care, and ready for anything with a tinge of adventure in it!

As for myself, I am an American. My father and my father's father were soldiers before me. It is in my blood. In the spring of 1916, despairing that my countrymen would ever see action in the great combat, I threw my lot with the R. F. C. Now, to-night, fourteen years later, I found myself sitting here in this most sinister of ruined houses, in company with the three dearest friends I had in the entire world.

"Why," I demanded of Lamoran, "did you lease this ghastly house?"

He smiled before he replied. Then:

"You asked your way in the village?"

"Yes, of course."

"And you heard nothing?"

"I heard enough," I frowned, "to send me back to London as if all hell and the devil were on my tail. The yokels hissed at me and whispered like gibbets, calling this place the—"

"The House of the Undead, eh?"

"Yes," I shuddered.

"Maybe they're right," Macon grinned. "Ever since we got here I've been hearing the most gruesome creaks and groans and—"

"Where did the Chinese chap come from?" I demanded, ignoring his banter.

Lamoran's eyes narrowed very slightly, as if I had touched upon a vital point. He looked straight at me and said simply:

"That I don't know."

"What? You mean you didn't bring him?"

"He was here when I came, Reed."

"But they told me in the village—"

"That the house has been uninhabited for fifteen years? That is true."

"Then how the devil," Macon exclaimed, "did the fellow—"

"People who have lived in this place," Lamoran said quietly, "have either vanished utterly from the face of the earth, or have fled in terror. Off and on, for many hundreds of years, the house has been abandoned. For the past fifteen years it's been empty. And yet—"

HE stopped to light a cigarette, shrugged his shoulders in resignation, and finished softly:

"When the estate agent escorted me here to look the place over early last week, the door opened in our faces and Tai-tse-Kiang stood on the threshold to welcome us!"

"That's his name?" Macon scowled.

"Yes. Tai-tse-Kiang."

"It's easily explained, of course," I suggested. "The fellow was out of work in London, heard you intended to take over this place, and slipped in before you to sort of establish himself, eh?"

"On the contrary," Lamoran smiled, "he says he has been here—always."

"What?"

"Always."

"But that's pure rot!" Pell sputtered, rubbing his hands together.

"Perhaps. We shall learn the truth in due time, I dare say. Meanwhile—"

Lamoran stopped speaking. The service door at the opposite end of the hall had opened abruptly, and the Chinaman, Tai-tse-Kiang, was pacing mechanically forward with four wine glasses on a tray. I had an opportunity, then, to see the fellow more closely and in a better light, though the light, of course, consisted of nothing more inspiring than a massive candelabrum suspended by an iron chain from the ceiling.

Unquestionably there was something peculiar about the Oriental's stolid face. The eyes, in particular, harbored no definite light or color; they were like the eyes of a dead creature, with a suggestion of some filmy substance masking the pupils. But that, I believe, is the rule rather than the exception with people of the Far East. They are renowned for their stolidity and lack of emotion; and this man was evidently merely significant of his race.

He said nothing as he placed the glasses before us. When he had finished, he retired quietly and closed the connecting door. Lamoran glanced at me, smiled queerly, and lifted the glass to his lips.

"To our less fortunate companions who cannot be with us to-night," he proposed, rising to his feet. Then, under his breath, so that only I, who was closest to him, could have heard it: "And to the succeeding events of this evening of madness!"

WE sat down again. Lamoran pushed his empty glass aside and bent forward.

"I have a bit of a treat for you," he smiled, "and for myself. As yet I've not made a complete inspection of my new home. To-night, with you three to accompany me, I propose to do so. There are rooms and rooms and rooms; half a hundred or more of them. What they contain I haven't the vaguest notion. Perhaps we shall find something, eh?"

"Maybe we'll uncover some ghosts," Macon grinned.

"So our ace of aces believes in the supernatural? Not you, Rojer!"

"Well—"

"A place like this," Pell said eagerly, "ought to contain some pretty valuable art treasures. That's my hobby, you know. Oriental stuff,

in particular. If your everlasting Chink weren't so infernally alive, I'd stuff him and put him in my London house, Lamoran!"

"Good! And you, Reed?"

"Ready for anything," I grinned, "providing we all stick together. I don't believe in ghosts unless I'm left alone. Then I'm like the rest of humanity. I don't say there aren't any, because some damned thing might overhear me or read my thoughts and swoop down to offer proof that there are."

Lamoran laughed easily. Rojer Macan, too, began to grin; but the grin vanished with uncanny abruptness. He was sitting nearest the service door. I saw him stiffen suddenly in his chair and twist about as if something had brushed past him. His laugh ended in a gurgle.

I confess that I did not see the thing take place. I was busily staring at Macon at the moment, wondering what had come over him. Then Pell's rasping voice brought me about again.

"My God, what's this!"

Pell and Lamoran were both peering at the table top. Macon, too, lifted his head at that hoarse outcry and looked in fascination. There, lying on the silken cloth precisely in the center of the four empty glasses, lay a flat square of white paper, with written words scrawled over its surface! It had *not* been there before!

"Something—something brushed by me!" Macon whispered sibilantly. "I felt it!"

PELL said nothing. He reached out with nervous fingers to pick up the paper; then withdrew his hand and licked his lips. Lamoran, more calm than any of us, lifted the thing and read the message aloud:

"The Iron Door on the lower corridor must not be opened. All other rooms in the house are yours; but the Iron Door bars the secret of the Master, and death is the penalty for intrusion. There will be no other warning."

Lamoran let the paper fall again. The last word he had uttered—the word *warning*—seemed to hiss in a double crescendo through the chamber in which we sat.

"Where did it come from?" Pell said huskily.

"Something went past me, I tell you!" Macon muttered again.

"Nothing came into the room," I said feebly. "Yet, the paper was not here when Tai-tse-Kiang brought in the wine."

Lamoran's critical glance passed from Pell's face to Macon's, then to mine, and finally back to the damning sheet of paper. Suddenly, with thin lips and hands clenched, he lurched to his feet, scraping his chair out from beneath him.

"Kiang!" His voice seared across the room with the intensity of a lash.

The service door opened slowly. Once again the Oriental paced forward with automatic steps, looking neither to right nor left. He came to a motionless stop in front of the man who had summoned him.

"Yes, sir?" he said unemotionally.

"Did anyone enter this room just now?"

"No, sir."

"Where were you?"

"Outside the door, sir, in the event that you called."

"This bit of paper," Lamoran said stiffly, "was dropped on the table less than five minutes ago. Have you ever seen it before?"

He jabbed the paper abruptly into the Chinaman's hand. The Oriental glanced at it, nodded, and passed it back.

"It has been given to every new master of this house, sir, for the past thousand years. Many have disobeyed it, and died."

"How do you know that?" I demanded.

"I have seen them go, sir," he said, turning to face me.

"How long have you been here?" I pressed, trying to smile knowingly at Lamoran.

"Always, sir."

"Always, is it? How old are you?"

"I was born," the Oriental said quietly, "hundreds of years before the coming of Christ, at the time of K'ung Tsze and the Chon dynasty. It was I who assisted K'ung Tsze, whom you call Confucius, to inscribe the Ta Hsueh. I was, and I am, the servant of him who rules the universe."

THE man was mad. There was no other plausible explanation. Lamoran, however, insisted on putting further questions, evidently for the purpose of confounding him. Lamoran knew more about ancient Chinese lore than any of us.

"What is this Ta Hsueh?" he demanded.

"It is the third of the four books, sir. The first is Lun Yu, containing information about K'ung Tsze; the second is the Book of Mencius, a disciple of K'ung Taze; the third is the Ta Hsueh, dealing with social and political matters; the fourth is Chung Yung, a thesis on conduct written by K'ung Chi."

"Hm-m. And where did you work with Confucius?"

"In the city of Chung-tu, sir, when the master was made magistrate in the year 498 B. C."

Lamoran nodded, with a half concealed smile, and waved the fellow aside. Turning about with a positive lack of expression, the Oriental retraced his steps to the service door, and passed through.

"Stark mad," I shrugged. "Else he thinks we are utter fools."

"What he said about K'ung Tsze —was it right?" Macon demanded. "It's a bit over my head."

"It was right," Lamoran admitted. "However, any educated Chinese could supply the same information."

"And this infernal paper?"

"That," Lamoran said darkly, "is beyond me for explanation. Unless—"

But he left the thought unfinished. Thrusting the sinister threat into his pocket, he turned about with a dry laugh and said:

"Come on. Let's have a look at the place. For the time being we'll just let the Iron Door alone. The rest of the house ought to provide enough to keep us occupied."

We walked into the main hall together. Lamoran led the way, with Rojer Macon pacing close beside him. Pell and I stepped into the gloomy corridor with our shoulders rubbing, and Pell, leaning close to mutter into my ear, said significantly:

"It's a damned hoax, Reed, instigated by that bloody Chink. He's got something in that room that's worth money—some priceless art piece or something. I tell you I'm going to have a look before I leave this place!"

I grinned at that. It was like Pell to be belligerent about such an affair. Whenever Pell's nose caught the scent of an art secret, nothing in heaven or hell could hope to keep him quiet!

I thought little of his threat then. Later I remembered it—acutely. Meanwhile, we set about our tour of inspection.

THE hour was long after midnight when we finally returned from our tour of the immense structure. We found nothing; nothing, that is, beyond a most amazing and confusing labyrinth of unused passages and abandoned rooms. The house was constructed in four tiers, with a narrow, evil-smelling tower leading up from the rear. Only those rooms on the lower floor were furnished and revealed any signs of recent occupancy; and of those, only

the library held any interest for me.

We were tired and, I imagine, somewhat disappointed, when we filed into the reception chamber. Once again the Oriental servant, Tai-tse-Kiang, fetched drinks for us.

"I suggest we turn in," Lamoran said quietly. "I, for one, am about done for."

"A sign of weakness," Macon grinned. "You should ask the Chinaman how he remains awake for five hundred years!"

"You, Reed?"

"I'd like to have a look at the library," I confessed. "I'll turn in later."

Lamoran stood up, emptied his glass, and nodded.

"Felt that way myself," he smiled. "I think you'll find something—interesting. Try the right hand shelf against the farther wall, second from the bottom."

I stared at him. He laughed, then turned away.

"You can take one of the candles from the candelabrum here," he suggested. "The sleeping chambers are on the next floor. I pointed them out to you, you'll remember."

He went out then, with Pell and Rojer Macon groping after him. When they had gone, I lifted one of the candles and, holding it face-high before me, prowled through the tomb-like corridors to the library door.

The library itself was a room of huge dimensions, lined completely around with shelves of dust-covered volumes. My boots made rather a thump-thump as I paced across it toward the particular section which Lamoran had mentioned, since the highly polished floor—dusty, of course, but solid nevertheless—was for the most part uncarpeted. A circular rug lay before the dead fireplace, supporting two deep leather chairs. Farther back stood a claw-legged table. Other than that there was nothing.

THE unsteady sputter of the candle cast my shadow in grotesque outlines before me as I advanced. I remember looking back and noticing the almost fantastic footprints, like the trail of a ghost-creature, made by my advance. There was another line of them, as well, leading in and out of the room, caused, no doubt, by Lamoran's boots when my host had been here before me. Beyond that the dust was unbroken. I went down on my knees beside a row of stolid bindings and set the candle on the floor.

I intended to have a look at Lamoran's significant shelf first, then seek the books I had come for. In short, I was eager to learn more of the history of this gaunt house and the strange folk who had inhabited it. But as I leaned forward, drawing out one of the large volumes, I saw that my own quest and Lamoran's suggested books were one and the same. The volumes he had told me to have a look at, because they would excite me were the very volumes I desired to examine!

I opened the book at random, scuffing the pages under my thumb and shifting the candle so that it might throw a better light. In a little while I came upon the following pages:

"Lord Burgell . . . mysteriously vanished during the hours between midnight and dawn. The servant, Tai-tse-Kiang, who had been a devoted guardian of the family for sixty years or more, discovered that Lord Burgell was . . . missing. This occurred on December 4th, 1732."

I read it again, quite unable to believe what I had stumbled upon. Tai-tse-Kiang—1732. It was impossible! That would make the man more than two hundred years old!

IT was, I reasoned, not the same man. Perhaps another of the same name, but most assuredly not the same individual who had poured

wine for the four of us less than half an hour past. Many English families kept their servants for generations and—

My head came up with a sudden jerk. Behind me, the library door, which I had cautiously closed upon entering, had swung half open under the pressure of some freakish draft from the outside corridor. Nevertheless I turned on my knees, with my shadow projected on the floor in front of me like a prostrate bat, and watched in fascination.

Then my blood chilled. I heard footsteps—heard them as distinctly as I heard the throbbing of my own heart—and yet there was no living thing within the radius of the candlelight! The book remained clutched in my hands as I crouched rigid. Step by step, mechanically, with deathlike rhythm, the unseen thing advanced across the floor toward me. Then, very abruptly, it halted. The hellish feet were directly beside me. Whatever it was, it stood above me.

I would have moved—would have lurched to my feet and fled from the room in terror—had not the next occurrence happened with such terrifying swiftness. The book was snatched from my fingers and replaced in its niche. A second book was drawn from the shelf, flung open, and placed in my rigid hands. Something indistinct, like a thin pencil of fog, indicated a line halfway down the left hand page.

My eyes fixed automatically on the indicated line, and I read the words. I remember now that the page was done in script, not in print, and that the book was incredibly old. I saw only two things: the name Tai-tse-Kiang and the significant date 1247. Then I heard a soft, throaty laugh at my shoulder, and the book was returned to its place.

HAD I wished to then, I could not have risen to my feet. My body was numb with something akin to complete horror. I know that the footsteps receded across the floor with that same damned tread. I know that I stared after them and saw—nothing. Then the door swung shut, clicked, and I was alone.

For an eternity I remained there. My face must have been a ghastly color, stained with sweat. I do not know. I do know that I trembled violently with a sense of cold more intense than any I have ever experienced in the highest roof of the heavens. I do know that when I finally got to my feet, the candle had burned itself to within an inch of the floor, and only a flickering stump, with hanging wick, remained.

I had to walk slowly from the room, in order to keep that feeble light alive. The darkness, had it overwhelmed me at that moment, would have brought a scream from my dry lips. And I noticed one thing more as I paced across the floor—that the undead thing which had crept upon me, and thrust that infernal book into my hands, and laughed at me, had left no footprints in the heavy layer of dust.

When I closed the door of that room of horror and turned back along the corridor to go to my own chamber, there were but four tracks of footprints marring the even surface of the library floor. They were the impressions of my own boots, one set trailing in, the other trailing out, and the older prints made by the boots of James Lamoran.

I SLEPT but little that night. My room was a small one, with a single window and only one door, which opened on the narrow corridor that ran along the second-floor landing. The chamber was stuffy, yet I dared not leave the door wide lest that unnamed, formless inhabitant of the house should creep upon me. I did not stop to reason that if the thing were truly of another world, a closed door would hardly hinder it

—in fact, would only hinder my own escape. When a man is afraid, he seeks to confine himself as securely as possible.

I cannot say how many hours passed before I heard the thing approach. Perhaps two, perhaps three—but no more. This time, when the footsteps drew near along the corridor, they came, not from the direction of the stairway, but from the opposite end of the passage, where lay the rooms of my companions.

I lay quite still, flat against the wall, my fingers twisted around the wooden bedposts in preparation for the sudden leap that would bring me upright. Outside, those hellish footsteps came nearer and nearer—now at the door of my room—now hesitating before entering.

My nerves were on edge. I think I should have screamed to the high heavens if my door had opened at that instant. But the door remained closed. The footsteps began again, moving away, continuing to promenade down the passage. I heard them descend the great staircase; then they grew softer and softer and finally passed from the realm of my hearing.

For another long moment I lay tense. The footsteps did not return. I waited for an eternity, and nothing disturbed the complete silence of the house. In the end, I think, I dropped into a fitful sleep.

I dreamed that I heard a sing-song voice, an Oriental voice, moaning a soft, faraway chant. The sort of monotone that one hears occasionally in distant China, in the temples of Confucius or the shrines of Lao-Tze. After the ordeal I had gone through, the chant was soothing and almost beautiful. But then I did not know the significance of it.

MORNING came eventually. The warm sunlight, streaming in a straight line across my bed from the oblong window, woke me. I looked about me then, at the mellow friendliness of the chamber, at the flat, shimmering expanse of moor outside, and laughed at the fears that had gripped me. I lighted a cigarette, dressed without haste, opened the door of my room.

There were footprints in the passage. They were my own, of course, and Lamoran's and Pell's and Macon's, made by us when we had climbed to our rooms on the previous night. I did not expect to find the prints made by the feet of the invisible thing that lurked among us. There were none in the library; there would be none here.

Lamoran and Macon were awaiting me in the reception chamber, which room had been set aside as our dining room. Pell, evidently, had not yet come down.

"Did you—inspect the book-shelf I recommended?" Lamoran said dryly.

I nodded.

"I want to talk to you about it," I said.

"Yes? I think I know your questions, old man. I don't know the answers."

"What answers?" Macon demanded, frowning at the one-sided conversation.

"Nothing, Rojer. A little historical matter. Where the devil is Pell?"

"Not down yet?" I asked.

"No. He's not used to staying up nights, I reckon."

"Want me to drag him out?" Macon proffered.

"Well—yes. You might as well."

Macon left us. We sat down, Lamoran and I, and I looked at him quizzically.

"I found the books," I said. "While I was reading one of them, something came into the library and lifted it from my hands, and laughed."

He didn't smile. On the contrary, he leaned abruptly forward, scowling at my words.

"Something?" he said slowly.

"Something," I shrugged, "is all I can call it. It possessed a voice; it made audible footsteps; yet it had no substance and left no prints in the dust of the floor. I heard it again after I had retired. It crept along the corridor, paused at my door, then descended the stairs."

"I wonder...." Lamoran said grimly. "Reed, do you know anything about the supernatural? That is, beyond the imbecile ideas of the ordinary layman?"

I WAS about to answer him, about to say that I knew something of Eastern forms of life after death, embracing vampires, mafui, voodoos, and some obscure claims of India's interior, when Rojer Macon returned. Macon's voice, flung out of a crimson, excited face, stifled my reply.

"He's gone! Pell's gone!"

Lamoran stiffened abruptly in his chair. I half rose, then fell back again, staring at Macon's excited, trembling figure.

"What are you saying?" Lamoran demanded in very curt. precise words.

"He's gone, I tell you! His bed hasn't been slept in!"

Lamoran's hands clenched on the edge of the table, crumpling the cloth in their grip. I saw his face lose color and his eyes dilate. He got to his feet swiftly and stood to his full height, with one hand still holding the table.

"Come with me, Reed," he said grimly. "I think I know."

I followed him. Rojer Macon, trailing along behind me, muttered and sputtered to himself in an undertone, demanding to know where we were going. Lamoran said nothing more. I thought I knew our destination, but I was in no mood to offer explanations.

We passed through four narrow corridors, all of which we had traversed the night before. At the end of the last one we turned aside and entered a passage which was strange to me. I noticed a single line of footsteps in the dust, leading us deeper and deeper into the gloomy abyss of the great manse.

Finally we reached it: the Iron Door designated in that ghostly message which had been flung upon our banquet table the preceding evening. The trail of footsteps led directly to its massive barrier, and there ended. Lamoran swung about with a grim military precision and faced me.

"You heard the—thing—descending the stairs last night?" he demanded.

"I did."

"The thing you heard was Pell. He came here."

I nodded heavily. Lamoran was right; there was no argument. I watched with a strange sense of foreboding as Lamoran flattened himself against the door and seized the latch.

THE door was immense. It filled the entire end of the corridor, forming a block of ancient, solid iron more than eight feet in height and at least five in width. How thick it was we could not guess. The latch securing it was as heavy and thick as a bludgeon; it was so ponderous that Lamoran found difficulty in raising it from its grooved runway.

"Give me a hand," he grunted.

I moved forward to assist him. There was room on the bar for both of our hands without crowding; yet, in spite of our combined exertions, we could not raise the thing from its grooves.

Lamoran stepped back, wiping his sweating hands on his trouser legs.

"Damned thing is locked somehow," he grunted.

He surveyed the door bitterly, as if he would have liked to smash it down.

"Hadn't we better call out?" I sug-

gested. "If Pell is locked in there—"

He nodded. Flat against the door, I called Pell's name in a loud voice, shrill enough to penetrate beyond the barrier. Then I waited—we all waited—for a reply. There was none, unless—was it my imagination, or did I actually hear that same uncanny, mocking laugh that had terrified my senses in the library during the preceding hours of darkness? No, it was not imagination, for as I turned quickly to confront Lamoran I saw him whirl about, with a snarl on his lips, to peer at Rojer Macon.

"What the hell are you laughing at?" he snapped.

"Laughing?" Macon muttered, recoiling. "Good God, Jim, I didn't—"

It came again, cutting into Macon's mumbled protest. Rojer stopped short, with ashen face, and fell back against the wall. Lamoran took a step forward, hesitated, and raised his arm savagely. I did not move.

"The same thing," I said heavily, "I heard last night."

FOR a full moment no movement passed between the three of us. We stared blankly, fearfully, into each other's tense faces. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, in the corridor with us. Yet those two successive laughs had come from our midst, mocking us, from somewhere within reach of our hands!

Lamoran's uplifted hands fell slowly to his sides. He turned about. His face had faded almost to the bleached whiteness of Macon's. Then, very suddenly, he snapped at me.

"Get away from that door!"

I moved quickly, with my eyes fixed on him. The instant my body was away from the barrier, he flung himself forward. His thick-set shoulder crashed against the metal with the force of a flung battering ram.

The sinister door withstood his attack without so much as a protesting groan. The very force of his onslaught hurled him away from it. He tried again and again with the same lack of results until, holding his shoulder in pain, he staggered back and leaned against the opposite wall of the corridor.

"Nothing — but dynamite — will move it," he gasped.

He seized my arm abruptly.

"We've got to get some!"

"But—it will take hours."

"Damn it, man, don't you know the truth of this thing yet! Some infernal supernatural force is at work in this house. Pell is in there, under its influence. We've got to get him out!"

"There's a train at noon, from the village," I said weakly, realizing that we could not possibly obtain an explosive nearer than London. "I could leave at once and make it back here by midnight, on the late train."

"Not you. I need you here. Macon!"

"I'll go," Rojer said curtly. "By God, that's more in my line—action. I'm nothing but a damned parasite if I stay here."

"It's dangerous," Lamoran frowned. "There's the moor to cross. It'll be pitch black, full of pitfalls."

"I'll make it," Macon said grimly.

"Good! Get enough of the stuff to blow this infernal door to hell!"

Rojer nodded silently. Without a word, he turned his back on us. We stood there, Lamoran and I, beside the door that barred its dread secret, and watched our companion hurry down the passage. When he had vanished, Lamoran said dully:

"We can't do anything here, Reed, until he returns. Suppose we give the house a thorough once over, top to bottom, and pray to God we find something to work on."

WE made a systematic job of it, as we had been trained to do in the army. Starting at the tower, we searched every nook and

crevice of the upper floors, every abandoned tunnel, every blind room. We found nothing in those upper recesses, except the marks of our own footprints of the last evening. It was far into the afternoon when we reached the ground floor again.

There, in the reception chamber, we found Tai-tse-Kiang, the stolid Oriental, methodically arranging the table for our delayed luncheon. The sight of food, I think, took some of the grotesquery out of our souls and made us remember that we were, after all, human beings in human surroundings. We sat at the table and devoured the stuff in silence. More than once our glances met in strained silence. More often we found ourselves staring at the empty chairs which had so recently held the jovial grinning faces of Pell and Macon.

The repast over, we scoured the lower floor and the horrible, inky-black pits of the sunken cellars. Here again we found nothing; nothing but the inevitable silence and darkness which brooded over the entire manse. When we finally groped up the stone steps from the pits, night had fallen and the servant had dinner ready for us.

We began it in silence. From the dead, resigned glare of Lamoran's eyes, I did not in the least expect any such outburst as developed. But develop it did, when the Oriental servant was bending over Lamoran's shoulder.

Lamoran reached up suddenly to grip the man's arm.

"You know what happened here last night?" he snapped.

"I have guessed, sir," the Oriental shrugged.

"Do you know the reason?"

"Yes."

LAMORAN swung a livid face upwards. The entire affair had whipped all sense of reserve and all desire of caution out of his system. He was completely, thoroughly angry at that moment.

"What is it, then!" he growled.

"The other white man, sir, dared to disobey the warning which was given you. This is the house of the Master. The Iron Room is the room of the Master. He who enters—also dies."

"Damned rot!" Lamoran snarled.

"You are speaking sacrilege, sir. Confucius—"

"To hell with Confucius! And with you! Of all the blasted, infernal—"

Tai-tse-Kiang listened impassively to the most furious, livid outbursts of vehemence that I had ever heard pour from Lamoran's lips. I knew, well enough, that Lamoran possessed a temper and a goodly store of invective, but never had I heard him release it with such crimson hate. In the end the Oriental said, very softly:

"That is worse than penetrating the Iron Door. The Master has ears —and hears."

Then he straightened up and backed away, releasing his arm from Lamoran's grip. As he came erect, the light from the hanging candelabrum illuminated his entire face; and I shuddered at the glittering, half subdued cruelty in his slanted eyes.

"That," murmured Lamoran, when he had gone, "will probably bring results, Reed. I'm going to turn in. Macon won't return before midnight, even with the best of fortune, and when he comes, we'll need steady nerves for the task ahead of us."

He rose from the table.

"You have a revolver?" he said suddenly.

"Yes," I said. "In my room."

"Better join it—and keep it warm," he smiled dryly.

WHEN I left Lamoran and retired to my own room on the second landing that night, I did not

remove my clothes. Perhaps it was the knowledge that I had, at the most, only two hours or so of available sleep. Perhaps it was the subtle premonition that something would happen even before those two hours had elapsed. At any rate, I threw myself on the bed without removing a single article of my garb. In fact, I added an extra burden. I removed the automatic revolver from my luggage and dropped it into my coat pocket.

I did not attempt to sleep. My thoughts mulled about in confusion. First the malignant face of Tai-tse-Kiang persisted in rioting through them; then the Iron Door in that half buried passage almost directly below me seemed to loom out of the darkness and mock me. Again I had visions of Rojer Macon groping across the blackened moor in the dead of night with his significant burden. And then, climaxing this series of nightmares, I heard something.

At first it was merely a whisper; then it increased in intensity until I recognized it as being a continuation of the soft, almost lovely Oriental chanting that had penetrated my dreams of the night before. This time, however, I knew it to be no dream, but reality. And rather than lie in my chamber, pondering futilely over the cause of it, I slipped from the bed, obtained a tiny pocket flash-light from my bag, and crept to the door.

The sound came from below. I tiptoed along the passage to the head of the great ramp, and there hesitated. I felt, then, something religious in the monotonous tone of it. It possessed the same quality of tone that I had heard more than once in far-away India, where the cowled priests of the Buddhist temples stand upon their flat housetops, with their followers kneeling in the streets below, and offer sunset prayers to their god.

I DESCENDED the ramp very quietly, making no sound that might interrupt. Following the intonations, I passed along the lower corridors, feeling my way in the dark without having recourse to the flash-light in my hand.

So I came at length to the corridor of the Iron Door. Even as I entered the mouth of that dismal tunnel, the chant ceased. I, too, stopped—and waited. A door opened in the pitch-like gloom far in advance of where I crouched. I heard footsteps, moving away from me. I followed them. They led me through a second series of short passageways to the head of the chill, black stone steps that twisted down into the pits. Undaunted, since I had traversed this same route during the afternoon, I continued.

My boots might click on those bare steps, I considered. Therefore I removed them; and as I went from step to step, deeper into the depths, I made less noise than a shadow. Far above me hung the doorway. Before me, as I reached the bottom level of the old house, extended that sinister labyrinth of subterranean pits and tunnels which Lamoran and I had so carefully inspected earlier in the day.

My unsuspecting guide was still ahead of me. I could hear him, and I guessed now his identity, for he shuffled along with an ominous scraping movement of sandal-shod feet. The man was obviously Tai-tse-Kiang.

DOWN here it was cold, with a penetrating chill that crept into my very bones. I hardly noticed it, so intent was I upon keeping track of my quarry as he paced through the network of interwoven ways. For perhaps three or four minutes I continued to creep after him, and then the sound of his progress ceased.

He was, I knew, in the most remote room of the cellars. This par-

ticular room had but one means of ingress, since it was the final chamber in a twisting chain of pits. I advanced silently to that opening and flattened against the stone. Then I saw him—or saw his indistinct form.

He crouched beside the opposite wall, twenty feet from me. His hands were uplifted. He had pushed aside a portion of the wall, revealing a secret niche which Lamoran and I had not previously discovered. Even as I watched, the Oriental slid forward with cat-like grace, and vanished within the opening.

Again I waited. I saw nothing. I heard nothing, except a half inaudible rasping sound, as of metal grating against metal. Then, with the same sinuous movement, the Chinaman reappeared and reached up to replace that section of the stone which hid his alcove from prying eyes.

I had barely time to secrete myself before he turned. Luckily, the wall beside me was irregular with protuberances, and I was able to pack myself into one of them. Almost before I had become motionless again, the Oriental shuffled past me, returning the way he had come. He looked neither to right nor left, and the light was so obscure that I could make out no detail of his features. This time, however, he walked with quicker step. Before many seconds had passed, he had vanished again.

I REMAINED in my hiding place until I could be certain that he would not hear me. Then I slipped out and drew the catch-latch on my flash-light. With the beam of yellow playing upon the floor at my feet, I advanced toward that mysterious section of wall which I had seen moved aside.

I found it. The stone slab was, to all appearances, a part of the solid whole; yet, when I discovered the correct inch upon which to exert pressure, it slid back under my fingers as easily as a square of wood. Evidently it was nicely balanced with counter-weights.

Before me lay the hidden niche. Perhaps five feet across it extended, and it could have been no more than two feet in depth. It contained nothing more, at first glance, than a long iron lever which extended down through the stone ceiling.

I inspected the thing cautiously, without touching it. I was in no mood, just then, to put my hands on anything I did not fully understand; and this peculiar stick of metal, protruding from the roof of the alcove, was seemingly inexplicable.

But was it? It was connected, evidently, with the room above it, on the main floor of the house. I strove to remember the plan of those upper corridors. I tried to organize, mentally, the many rooms and passages over my head. And then, like a sudden cold shock, I knew the meaning of this iron rod. It hung directly beneath the door of the Iron Room!

IN its present position, more than three feet of it protruded below the ceiling of the cellar. Had it been pushed up to its full length, it would have extended into the very center of the Iron Barrier, forming a lock which no mortal could hope to shatter! This, then, was the thing which had baffled Lamoran's attack. This thing, crude and almost aboriginal in design, was the lock of the Iron Door!

Still I did not touch it. The Iron Door had been locked securely. Evidently the Oriental, with some fiendish plan in mind, had come here to release the lock. Now that the door above me was open, there was nothing left for me to do but go at once to Lamoran's chamber and tell him.

I turned about to step out of the niche. The light in my hand played its beam at my feet. My groping foot struck something soft, yielding. I stared down—at a human leg.

For a moment I stood rigid, frozen. Then, gulping down my fear, I dropped to my knees and peered into the narrow fissure which concealed the rest of the limp body. I stared into the dead, upturned face of Rojer Macon. I stared at the strangler's cord which still encircled Rojer Macon's dead throat.

After that, with the flash quivering like a cobweb in my groping hand, I ran back the way I had come. I wanted to look into Lamoran's face —to hear him talk—to plead with him to flee this madhouse of horror.

HOW long it took me to reach the stone stairs leading to the main floor, I am not sure. I know that I stumbled into blind passages and scraped the skin from my hands and tore my clothing and was altogether like a blind bird in a trap. I know that I fell while climbing the steps, and was on hands and knees when I reached the upper passage.

Then caution possessed me again. I began to realize that this was no time for blundering, blubbering fear. If I were to warn Lamoran in time to prevent further horror, I must be quiet as a ghost and as soft-footed as a cat. I dropped the flash-light into my pocket, drew my revolver, and crept noiselessly along the corridor in the overwhelming darkness.

I would have to pass the Iron Door. That thought alone terrified me. Yet it would have to be faced, if I were to reach Lamoran's room on the upper landing. Consequently I trod, eventually, into the fatal corridor.

The dread passage was no longer in abject darkness. One of the candle-brackets, set at wide intervals in the grim wall of the tunnel, had been recently ignited. It sputtered perhaps a dozen yards from me, filling a certain portion of the corridor with an unearthly globule of sickly yellow pigment. I noticed, too, that only one of the brackets had been lighted, and that one was the particular candle that cast its glow directly upon the surface of the Iron Door. Obviously the Oriental had traversed this passage before me, and had created the light for some uncanny reason of his own.

I CREPT toward it slowly, with the utmost caution. There was no telling when Tai-tse-Kiang might return and find me here; no telling the consequences if such a discovery were to occur. Thus I had proceeded no more than half the distance to the Iron Door when a sudden, unexpected footfall caused me to hurl my bent body against the wall and flatten out like a clinging bat. Far in advance of me, at the very mouth of the corridor, I saw the shadowy outline of an approaching figure—a figure which came forward with dead, mechanical steps toward me and toward the door.

I watched it in fascination, until it entered the realm of light. Then, to my horror, I saw that it was James Lamoran!

I should have cried out to him, warning him, had not the expression of his tense face choked the words on my lips. His gaunt head was outthrust, his hands hung lifeless at his sides; his body was a stiff, rigid thing that moved as if some exterior force were propelling it. His eyes were wide open, unblinking, and ghastly livid in the glow of that infernal light. He was not conscious, not awake. Either he was walking in his sleep—a thing which I had never known him to be guilty of—or he was under the influence of a somnambulistic trance brought upon him by hypnotic powers.

Trembling, but fascinated beyond power to move, I crouched in my place of hiding and watched him. He went straight to the Iron Door, stopped before it, and raised his dangling hands to seize the latch. The iron rod lifted easily in his fin-

gers. The great barrier swung slowly, ponderously inward with a rasping screech. Like a mindless automaton, Lamoran paced over the threshold into the forbidden chamber, and the massive portal rolled shut behind him.

I HEARD the latch click as the door closed. Perhaps it was that sinister thud which made me realize that I was entirely to blame for whatever might happen to my friend in that chamber of horrors. I lurched from my place of concealment. I stumbled blindly forward, with a half uttered, choking cry of delayed warning. My fingers twisted about the iron rod and strove to lift it.

The thing was fast again; immovable. Though I am no anemic weakling, I could not stir the latch from its grooves. In desperation I flung my entire body against the barrier, hoping to do what Lamoran had been unable to do on that other horrible occasion.

The result was the same. The door flung me back again, and again, and again. I pummelled it with my fists, kicked at it in my stockinged feet, madly, futilely, unreasonably. Then as I fell back with a sob, I was aware of the automatic clenched in my fist.

Savagely I jammed the muzzle against that mocking lock and jerked the trigger. Three bullets thudded into the metal, into the narrow, slot-like opening which held the iron rod. The roar deafened me. I heard a rasping clash of metal, heard a heavy, significant thud under my feet as my bullets released the counter-balance and let it fall into the death-pit in the cellars below.

The Iron Door creaked open under the weight of my body.

WHAT happened from that moment on, as I staggered over the threshold, is a maze of distilled horror. It occurred with such rapidity that I can but vaguely recall it.

I saw my companion ten feet before me, his back toward me, pacing lifelessly across the stone floor. Beyond him I saw a towering, inhuman form with two glittering, greenish eyes that had the power to drag me forward.

The thing was a monstrous idol—a squatting, deformed image of the heathen Confucius. Its huge, vividly colored arms were crossed derisively over its flat chest. Its head was outthrust on a sinewy neck. Its bare feet were curled fiendishly together, like talons. And there, prone upon the floor before it, lay the lifeless figure of the man who had been missing since the previous night. Pell!

All this I saw in the feeble light that penetrated from the outer corridor. It burned itself into my memory in the space of a broken second. Then I knew, instinctively, that Lamoran had been lured into this chamber by the formless specter of the House of the Undead. The idol, squatting before me, held some terrible power of death; and Lamoran was being forced toward it!

After that, I acted. Lunging to one side, I lifted the gun in my hand and jammed the trigger until the chamber was empty. I fired in madness, in positive hate. I aimed at the very center of that leering face.

The effect was instantaneous. The dead features, rotten with age, crumpled under the impact of four bullets. Lamoran, groping toward it, twitched suddenly as if with the ague, and became motionless. Then I was running forward, the smoking automatic still gripped in my hand.

He would have fallen had not my arm gone about his middle. As it was, he sagged down on my shoulder and could not speak for a full minute. I felt the cold sweat on his white face, felt his body quiver. Then he lifted his head limply and murmured:

"Thanks, Reed. You—were just in time."

I WAITED until he could stand erect. In another moment he got hold of himself and I was relieved of his dead weight. He turned slowly to examine the horror room.

"I was lying in my room," he said bitterly, pacing toward Pell's dead body, and speaking to me in jerky phrases, "when the thing came. Footsteps—in the passage outside. My door opened. No one there. A strange force, hellishly hypnotic, took hold of me. Tried to fight it. Couldn't. It led me here. God knows what would have happened."

He was on his knees beside Pell.

"Good God, Reed," he said suddenly. "Look here!"

I groped to his side and stared down. There had been enough horror already; I will not attempt to describe Pell's body. Enough to say that some sharp instrument—a hideously long knife or sword—had slashed it nearly in twain, from skull to abdomen.

"Nasty," Lamoran shuddered. "Ugh! How the devil—"

He straightened up suddenly and stepped forward to the huge idol. I saw him poke his fingers into the shattered head. He grunted with satisfaction and called to me.

My bullets had scored four irregular holes in the thing's flat forehead, about an eighth of an inch apart, on an almost perfectly straight line above the eyes. Below that, the center of the face had crumpled in, revealing the tip of an ancient longsword which extended, apparently, the entire length of the idol's bulk. Looking closer, I saw a narrow, significant slit running perpendicularly through the mass.

"Favorite trick of the ancients," Lamoran said raspingly. "There'll be a square flagstone in the floor under Pell's body. The victim walks toward this damned thing, steps on the stone. Pressure releases a counterweight or spring of some sort. The sword flashes down and out through the groove, cleaving the intruder from head to foot. I'd—I'd have got it when I knelt beside Pell just now if your bullets hadn't put the thing out of order. Ugly death!"

HE turned away heavily. His tired face was beginning to regain its normal color; but mine, I think, must have been as white as a death's-head.

"The thing—" I said brokenly, "the thing that led you here, that inhabits this horror house. What is it, Jim? If we don't learn—"

"I think I know. Help me get Pell to the reception hall."

We lifted Pell between us and carried him to the door. As we crossed the threshold, Lamoran glanced significantly at the shattered lock and looked at me in bewilderment.

"You had to shoot your way in here?" he demanded.

I told him of the counter-balance in the cellar, and of Rojer Macon. I knew then how this infernal door was operated. Once opened, to admit a victim, it had the hellish power of locking itself as soon as it swung shut again, and could not be released until that crude balance in the pit was reset. A simple enough mechanism in itself—worked with ordinary weights and counterweights—but a device that had caused more than one unholy death in the darkness of the idol's chamber.

In silence we bore Pell to the reception hall. There we placed him on the long divan and decently covered his twisted body with an embroidered silk robe. Finally Lamoran turned to me.

"I've gone pretty deep into occultism, you know," he shrugged. "What I have to tell you is not mere twaddle."

"It is—truth?"

"I will tell you what I know. In

many of the secret cults of China and India, it is believed that every true idol of K'ung Tsze or Confucius is inhabited by the deathless spirit of one of the Master's disciples. The man who originally constructed this house—you'll find this fact in one of those books in the library—was an English nobleman who spent most of his time in the interior of China. When he came here, he brought the Confucian image with him. He himself was a member of a cult known as the K'ung Shah, now extinct. He obtained the idol in one of the most ancient temples of the Orient. He also brought with him a Chinese servant named Tai-tse-Kiang."

LAMORAN glanced at me. I said nothing, waiting for him to continue.

"That is all," he shrugged.

"Do you mean," I muttered, "that Tai-tse-Kiang is an 'undead,' that he is one of the Master's disciples, inhabiting the thing we have just destroyed? Good God, man, it is imposs—"

"Nothing is impossible."

"But such a creature, with the horrible power of assuming human form, the power of life-in-death—"

"I think you will find," Lamoran said quietly, "that the power has been destroyed. The unseen specter of this House of the Undead was last known to be in my chamber, where he came to exert his influence on me. If you will go there, you may find the reason why Tai-tse-Kiang so jealously guarded the Iron Room from destruction."

I groped to the door, confounded by his words. His own voice was almost hypnotic at that moment; it was the voice of a man who had delved deeper—far deeper—into such matters of eternal mystery than most mortals dared even to think. Mechanically I climbed the great ramp to the upper floor and paced along the passage to Lamoran's chamber.

There I stopped, and an involuntary cry came from my lips. Tai-tse-Kiang, the Oriental servant, lay full length across the threshold, with his face staring upward in death.

The lower part of that face had crumpled in decay. The forehead, smooth and flat, was punctured with four bloodless bullet holes.

The Legend of the Castle Lock

A UNIQUE legend attaches to the Giant's Castle at Treryn, one of the best examples of British Cyclopean architecture. It is said to have been built by the power of enchantment. The builder was in every way a remarkable Giant, for he was not only stronger than any other of his kind but was also a mighty necromancer. Sitting on the promontory of Treryn he compelled the castle to rise out of the sea merely by the power of his will.

This famous castle is kept in its present position by the magic of a curious Key. This Key the Giant placed in a hole in a nearby rock, known as the Giant's Lock, under the magic condition that if the Key, a large round stone, is ever taken out of the Lock, the promontory of Treryn and its castle will sink back beneath the sea again.

Few people nowadays have ever seen this famous Key. To reach it the seeker must pass at low tide along a granite ledge so narrow that a goat could hardly manage it. One false step and he will go hurtling to certain death on the rocks below. If the dangerous ledge is safely passed, he will come to a pointed rock with a hole in it—the Castle Lock. Upon reaching deep into this hole with the hand, there will be felt a large, egg-shaped stone, which is the Key. This stone is easily moved in any direction, and it seems it would be easy to take it out—but no. Though it is tried any way the visitor pleases, and tried as long as he likes, he will not be able to get it through the hole. And yet no one ever doubts but that it once went in.

In spite of all who have tried in the last few hundreds of years, no one has ever been able to remove the Key of the Giant's Castle from the Lock in which the Giant necromancer is said to have placed it when he was dying.

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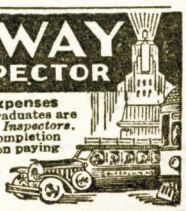
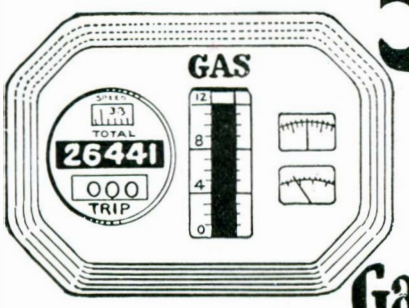
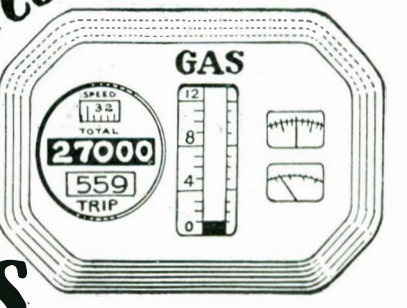


Over the Mountains from Los Angeles



559 Miles on 11 Gallons of GAS



Think of it! FIVE HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE MILES over rough mountainous country, burning only ELEVEN GALLONS OF GASOLINE. Imagine more than FIFTY MILES to the GALLON. That is what the WHIRLWIND CARBURETING DEVICE does for D. R. GILBERT, enough of a saving on just one trip to more than pay the cost of the Whirlwind.

THE WHIRLWIND SAVES MOTORISTS MILLIONS OF DOLLARS YEARLY

Whirlwind users, reporting the results of their tests, are amazed at the results they are getting. Letters keep streaming into the office telling of mileages all the way from 22 to 59 miles on a gallon, resulting in a saving of from 25% to 50% in gas bills alone.

Mark H. Estes writes: "I was making 17 miles to the gallon on my Pontiac Coupe. Today, with the Whirlwind, I am making 35 5-10 miles to the gallon. Am I glad I put it on? I'll say so!"

P. P. Goerzen writes: "I made an actual test both with and without a Whirlwind, getting 13½ miles without and 34 6-10 miles with the Whirlwind, or a gain of 21 miles to the gallon. The longer the Whirlwind is in use on the machine the better the engine runs, has more pep and quicker starting. It makes a new engine out of an old one, and starts at the touch of the starter button."

R. J. Tulp: "The Whirlwind increased the mileage on our Ford truck from 12 to 26 miles to gallon and 25% in speed. We placed another on a Willys-Knight and increased from 12 to 17 miles per gallon."

Arthur Grant: "I have an Oakland touring car that has been giving me 15 miles to the gallon average, but I can see a great difference with the Whirlwind, as it climbs the big hills on high and gives me better than 23 miles to the gallon of gas, which is better than 50% saving in gas."

W. A. Scott: "I have my Whirlwind for three years. Winter and summer it gives the same perfect service, instant starting, smoother running, and what I have saved in gasoline these last few years has bought other luxuries which I could not have afforded previously."

Car owners all over the world are saving money every day with the Whirlwind, besides having better operating motors. Think what this means on your own car. Figure up your savings—enough for a radio—a bank account—added pleasures. Why let the Oil Companies profit by your waste? Find out about this amazing little device that will pay for itself every few weeks in gas saving alone.

FITS ALL CARS

In just a few minutes the Whirlwind can be installed on any make of car, truck or tractor. It's actually less work than changing your oil or putting water in the battery. No drilling, tapping or changes of any kind necessary. It is guaranteed to work perfectly on any make of car, truck or tractor, large or small, new model or old model. The more you drive the more you will save.

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To Make Up to $100.00 a Week and More

Whirlwind men are making big profits supplying this fast-selling device that car owners cannot afford to be without. Good territory is still open. Free sample offer to workers. Full particulars sent on request. Just check the coupon.

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Dept. 758-A Station C, Milwaukee, Wis.

GUARANTEE

No matter what kind of a car you have—no matter how big a gas eater it is—the Whirlwind will save you money. We absolutely guarantee that the Whirlwind will more than save its cost in gasoline alone within thirty days, or the trial will cost you nothing. We invite you to test it at our risk and expense. You are to be the sole judge.

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WHIRLWIND MANUFACTURING CO.,
Dept. 758-A, Station C, Milwaukee, Wis.

Gentlemen: You may send me full particulars of your Whirlwind Carbureting device and tell me how I can get one free. This does not obligate me in any way whatever.

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Address.....

City.....

County..... State.....

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Jean Harlow

Jean Harlow first set the screen ablaze in **"Hell's Angels,"** the great air film, and she almost stole the show from a fleet of fifty planes. See her **"Goldie,"** a **Fox** film, and **Columbia's "Platinum Blonde."**

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THE UNIQUE HUMIDOR PACKAGE
Zip—
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"It's toasted"

Your Throat Protection—against irritation—against cough

And Moisture-Proof Cellophane Keeps that "Toasted" Flavor Ever Fresh

★Is Miss Harlow's Statement Paid For?

You may be interested in knowing that not one cent was paid to Miss Harlow to make the above statement. Miss Harlow has been a smoker of LUCKY STRIKE cigarettes for 2 years. We hope the publicity herewith given will be as beneficial to her and to Fox and Columbia, her producers, as her endorsement of LUCKIES is to you and to us.