The Death Of August Derleth
(1909-1971)

Wisconsin winds are chill:
Hawk and whippoorwill
Are mourning in the skies
When their poet dies.

And at the Lonesome Place
Spirits fill the space
With whispers on the breeze
Billowing the trees.

Wisconsin winds will blow
Summers into snow,
But winds of Fame will sing
Evening in Spring.

JOHN BREDON

Illustration: RICK HARRISON
REGULAR FEATURES

Editorial...A.B. Clingan....4
DAW Book Nook....Laura Campbell/Wayne hooks....11
Caveat....C.C. Clingan....52

FICTION

Mr. Bauer and The Atoms....Fritz Leiber....7
The Mist....Emil Petaja....15
Beneath The Vaults of Sumarus...Phillip C. Heath....21
The Thing That Collected Bloch....Randall Larson....35
Farwell Kiss....Carl Scott Harker....45
The Opener of The Crypt....John Jakes....47
The Wind....Ray Bradbury....55

ARTICLES/REVIEWS

Weird Tales A Call To Action....Joseph Payne Brennan....17
Rambling Memoirs....Carl Jacobi....30
The Monster And The Saint....H. Warner Munn....61

POETRY

The Death Of August Derleth....John Bredon....2
The Eldest Dead....Billy Wolfenbarger....51
The Shadow Shade....Billy Wolfenbarger....60

COVERS

Front Cover....Ron Wilber
Inside front Cover....Rick Harrison
Inside Back Cover....Joe West
Back Cover....RICK HARRISON

CENTERFOLD ART by GENE DAY

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The Diversifier: Vol III #5 whole #21. Published bi-monthly:
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SUBSCRIPTION RATES: Two Years(12 issues)...$10.00 One Year
(6 issues)....$5.75 Single issue....$1.25

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A. B. Clingan

Due to the lateness of the first WT issue of TD some of you are no doubt still reading it. There were unforeseen problems with our new printer whereas a few of the pages had to be reran. These sort of things can't be avoided, but I do apologize for the inconvenience. Too, the inevitable happened, and as we expected it to after the deluge of material started rolling in; we are going to have an overlap of WT material into the September issue. The length of Jack Williamson's story makes it necessary to put it back one issue. An interview with C.L. Moore by Dee Doyle, a story by Charles Saunders and one by Michael Kellar will also be overlaps. This is nice? In a way, yes. It makes for a good lineup for our September issue, but it also causes some of those people with material scheduled for September to be put back until the November issue. Again we apologize for the inconvenience, but we just could not get everything we wanted into the two issues without them running close to a hundred pages. For that many pages we would have had to charge more, which initially is against our policy. We hope all of you will bear with us on this. We do not foresee an extensive backlog here, and we will print your material just as fast as we can. However, if there are any of you who would care to pull your material rather than wait the extra month or so, please notify us and we will be happy to send it back.

We regret that there were authors from the WEIRD TALES era that we were unable to publish for one reason or another. We wanted to bring you one of Ed Hamilton's tales, but unfortunately all three of them that we received were exceptionally long and would have required too many pages. We requested material from Frank Belknap Long and others, which may come in late and see print in a future issue. All in all, we think our tribute to WEIRD TALES and its writers has been a rousing success... let us know what you think.

We requested that an individual who was very close to Dale Donaldson write up a short dedication liken to that which was done for Ed Hamilton in the last issue. The person (who I will not name) waited an exceptionally long time, then wrote that he was unable to do the dedication. I respect this person's feelings and I'm sure his reasoning is justified at this time. However, due to the lateness of his response to our request we did not have time to ask someone else. I only hope that the family and friends that were so close to Dale will enjoy the following which I have so hastily prepared.

I never met Dale Donaldson. There were a couple of planned meetings that fell through for one reason or another; due to his illness and mine and other... 

RON WILBER
unforeseen happenings. I have a small packet of letters from him in which he discussed our respective magazines, prospective newcomers to the field, and various personal things concerning his life. But most of all, and that which I treasure, I have the cassette recordings he sent in answer to mine.

I played these recordings prior to sitting down to the typewriter in hopes it would give me a better idea of what I wanted to write. There were several things he said, of which I paid little heed to the first time I heard them; at least in my conscious mind. In hearing them repeated now, I realize that in my subconscious I had heard and heeded his words.

Dale (in his first tape, with a cup of coffee in front of him and a lighted Doral) told of a fanzine entitled SLOTHFUL THING which he put out in 1950.

"A.B., although Slouthful Thing was only a mimeo-zine, and 50% of the artwork was done by me, I was as proud of it as I am Moonbroth today...."

Dale went on to expound on the 1950s and the Nor-wesCon which was hosted in Portland, Oregon, and saw Robert Bloch as guest of honor, with other big names such as Ray Bradbury and Forrest Ackerman being in attendance. He went on to tell that he had been reading sf since the 1930s, but that this was the only convention that he had ever attended.

"I'm not hostile to people, A.B., I just don't mingle. I'm not a recluse, I'm a loner. You are one of the very few people who have got me through a letter so I respond in detail, and frequently. And, I must say, it's a delight to sit here and talk a letter rather than type it."

Dale referred to himself on several occasions as the "Great Silent One of the Northwest" and gave a short list of people with which he corresponded regularly. It's possible that few people really knew Dale Donaldson well, for the above was just one of the few times he mentioned not liking to be with a lot of people at one time, or even holding a great deal of correspondence.

From the very conception of Moonbroth to its last issue Dale stuck to his guns; that MB was to be a launching pad for new and upcoming writers and artist. This was just one of the many things that stuck in the back of my mind, later emerging as one of the policies of The Diversifier.

As I recall, my correspondence with Dale started on rather a sour note. I was new to fandom and Chet and I had just put out the first few issues of TD. Dale, unknown to me did not loc zines and I couldn't understand his not critqueing our publication. When he did finally write expressing his views, they were unsatisfactory to me and I wrote back telling him so. A few letters were exchanged in which we became good friends, and he suggested that he would start sending me MB from issue #1 until I was updated.

Moonbroth was unique in that it was the only zine to be published in a do-it-yourself format, whereas each issue was mailed loose-leaf with holes drilled for mounting as you wished. In a notebook etc. Up until #7 the pages were only printed on one side; as Dale related, "this being a quirk of the editor". You were never really quite sure just how many pages you would receive for a dollar, but personally I was never disappointed; they generally ran from 12-15 pages in 8x11" format. On the most part the artwork and story material was quite good, and as was promised, he offered up tales from the unknowns and the new wave of writers coming upon the scene.

Dale was in part responsible for quite a few of the first contributors to The Diversifier, especially the artists. Due to the format he printed ie., "I try to hold to the old WT format, and there are a lot of polished manuscripts that just don't fit in; I'll send them your way..."

Dale also stated that more than likely few people in fandom knew of his writings as he had done so little that had been published in fanzines; he mentioned Wild Fennel, Starfire and of course he wrote a reg-
ular column for The Diversifier for a few issues until his illness forced him to quit.

In answer to one of my letters in which I praised a story by Hugh Malvern, Dale wrote: "So you think Hugh Malvern is really good eh. Tsk. Tsk. What judgement. While I really don't spread it around neither is it a hush-hush subject. Hugh Malvern is... me. As is Frances Aldrich in MB #1. And Demic and Pauline McTavish in MB #2."

He went on to explain that in the first few issues he had no writers and only Jeff Birkhill as an artist, therefore he used his own material under several different names.

"While I do write under about 10 different names, most of it is for free. I sell now and then just to keep my pro standing, but I have no desire to make my living as a writer." Although I never read any of Dale's pro stories, if they compare anything at all with his PISCAMUSK in issue #3 of Moonbroth, I know I'd enjoy reading them.

My correspondence with Dale terminated rather abruptly due to both of our illnesses. I received one letter from him while I was hospitalized in March of '76; it was to be the last one I received until Oct, 1976. On an oversized card he wrote: "...you'll probably outlive Jane and I and we figure on waiting until we are 80 before we take another check on when we want to pass over."

He said he hadn't receiving a copy of TD #16 as yet, and told of MB #26 being at the printer. He ended the card thusly: "...and yeah, some day you'll be getting this from me. Whenever I write something in TD's line. Life is good. Don't despair."

It was a shock when I heard of Dale's passing in January. At times I wonder why I felt so close to a man I had never met. I feel regret that I was never able to shake his hand and talk to him face to face. I feel sad that so many have lost so much by the passing of the "Great Silent One of the Northwest."

The period of time elapsing since I started my editorial being a couple of weeks, I was fortunate enough to have received the final installment of Moonbroth just this day. Along with MB #29 was also a bonus treat; forty-six pages of excellent reading in the form of Dale's THE RELUCTANT WARLOCK.

The editorial this issue is put together by Bill Breiding, Dale's step-son. There is within this editorial some of what I have previously mentioned and some I did not know about Dale. I don't have information on the availability of MB #29, but I'm sure Jane Donaldson would give the information readily. Her address is Jane Donaldson 316 N.E. 118th Street, Portland, Ore. 97220. I'm sure she would appreciate you send a self-addressed stamped envelope when inquiring.

I'd like to take what little space I have left here to thank all of you for your continued support of The Diversifier over the past three years. Yes, this month marks our third year at printing TD. We couldn't have done it without the many writers and artist who so willingly gave their work for free at first, then went on and did stuff for token payment. We hope in time we can compensate for your continued loyalty, but for the present... thanks people! And let us not forget the loyal subscribers. Some of you have been with us since issue #2. We have come a long ways since then, and we couldn't have begun to make TD a better magazine without you. Over the past few issues we have been fortunate enough to attain the help of quite a few bookstores handling our magazine; to these people we also offer our gratitude.

Knowing fully well by this, our third year, that we are going to make it in the publishing field, we can look to the future with most of the hardships behind us. We will from time to time be doing other special issues, hopefully one a year. We would very much like to do a combination Henry Cuttner/C.L. Moore dedication issue in 1978. It may seem a bit far in the future to express a need for this material, but to put out an issue of this sort takes much planning. So, if you have any ideas, write. A.B....
In last issue we presented a short introduction to Mr. Leiber, so except to say that this is one of his several short stories which were published in WEIRD TALES MAGAZINE in the 40's and 50's, Mr. Leiber needs no other introduction. Mr. Bauer and the Atoms copyright 1946, permission to reprint by the author.

Illustration: CRAIG ANDERSON

Mr. Bauer and the Atoms

Fritz Leiber
Dr. Jacobson beamed at him through the thick glasses. "I'm happy to tell you there is no sign whatever of cancer."

Mr. Bauer nodded thoughtfully. "Then I won't need any of those radium treatments?"

"Absolutely not," Dr. Jacobson removed his glasses, wiped them with a bit of rice paper, then mopped his forehead with a handkerchief. Mr. Bauer lingered.

He looked at the X-ray machine bolted down by the window. It still looked as solid and mysterious as when he had first glimpsed a corner of it from Myna's bedroom. He hadn't gotten any farther.

Dr. Jacobson replaced his glasses. "It's funny, you know, but I've been thinking..." Mr. Bauer plunged. "Yes?"

"I guess all this atomic stuff got me started, but I've been thinking about all the energy that's in the atoms of my body. When you start to figure it out on paper—well, two hundred million electron volts, they say, from just splitting one atom, and that's only a tiny part of it." He grinned. "Enough energy in my body, I guess, to blow up, maybe... the world."

Dr. Jacobson nodded. "Almost. But all safely locked up."

Mr. Bauer nodded. "They're finding out how to unlock it."

Dr. Jacobson smiled, "Only in the case of two rare radioactive elements."

Mr. Bauer agreed, then gathered all his courage. "I've been wondering about that too," he said. "Whether a person could somehow make himself... I mean, become... radioactive?"

Dr. Jacobson chuckled in the friendliest way. "See that box at your elbow?" He reached out and turned something on it. The box ticked. Mr. Bauer jerked.

"That's a Geiger-Müller counter," Dr. Jacobson explained. "Notice how the ticks come every second or so? Each tick indicates a high frequency wave. If you were radioactive, it would tick a lot often."

Mr. Bauer laughed. "Interesting."

He got up. "Well, thanks about the cancer."

Dr. Jacobson watched him fumble for his panama hat and duck out. So that was it. He'd sensed all along something peculiar about Bauer. He'd even felt it while looking over the X-ray and lab reports—something intangibly wrong. Though he hadn't thought until now of paranoia, or, for that matter, any other mental ailment, beyond the almost normal cancer-fear of a man in his fifties.

Frank Bauer hesitated at the corridor leading to Myna's apartment, then went on. His heart hammered enragedly. There he'd gone chicken again, when he knew very well that if he could ever bring himself to state his fear coldly and completely—that crazy fear that a man's thoughts could do to the atoms of his body what the scientists had managed to do with uranium 235 and that other element—why, he'd be rid of the fear in a minute.

But a man just didn't go around admitting childish things like that. A human bomb exploded by thought! It was too much like his wife Grace and her mysticism.

Going crazy wouldn't be so bad, he thought, if only it weren't so humiliating.

Frank Bauer lived in a world where everything had been exploded. He scented confidence games, horses, faddish self-deception, and especially (for it was his province) advertising-copy-exaggerations behind every faintly unusual event and every intimation of the unknown. He had the American's nose for leg-pulling, the German's contempt for the non-factual. Mention of such topics as telepathy, hypnotism, or the occult—and his wife managed to mention them fairly often—sent him into a scoffing rage. The way he looked at it, a real man had three legitimate interests—business, bars, and blondes. Everything else was for cranks, artists, and women.

But now an explosion had occurred which made all other explosions, even the greatest fakers, seem like a snap of the fingers.

By the time he reached the street, he thought he was beginning to feel a bit better. After all, he had told the doctor practically everything, and the doctor had disposed of his fears with that little box. That was that.

He swabbed his neck and thought about a drink, but decided to go back to the office. Criminal to lose a minute these days, when everybody was fighting
tooth and nail to get the jump. He'd be wanting money pretty soon, the bigger the better. All things that Grace would be nagging for now, and something special for Myna—and then there was a chance he and Myna could get away together for a vacation, when he'd got those campaigns lined out.

The office was cool and dusky and pleasantly suggestive of a non-atomic solidity, every bit of stalwart ugliness, every worn spot in the dark varnish, made him feel better. He even managed to get off a joke to ease Miss Minter's boredom. Then he went inside.

An hour later he rushed out. This time he had no joke for Miss Minter. As she looked after him, there was something in her expression that had been in Dr. Jacobson's.

It hadn't been so bad at first when he'd got out paper and black pencil. After all, any advertising copy had to make Atomic Age its keynote these days. But when you sat there, and thought and thought, and whatever you thought you always found afterwards that you'd written:

INSIDE YOU... TRILLIONS OF VOLTS!
You wouldn't think, to look at them that there was much resemblance between John Jones and the atom bomb. UNLOCKED!
THE WORLD IN YOUR HANDS
JUST A THOUGHT—
Frank Bauer looked around at the grizzly street, the windows dusty or dazzlingly golden where the low sun struck, the people wilted a little by the baking pavement and he saw walls turned to gray powder, their steel skeletons vaporized, the people became fumes, or, if they were far enough away, merely great single blisters. But they'd have to be very far away.

He was going crazy—and it was horribly humiliating. He hurried into the bar.

After his second bourbon and water he began to think about the scientists. They should have suppressed the thing, like that one fellow who wanted to. They shouldn't ever have told the people. So long as people didn't know, maybe it would have been all right... But once you'd been told...

Thought was the most powerful force in the world. It had discovered the atom bomb. And yet nobody knew what thought was, how it worked inside your nerves, what it couldn't manage.

And you couldn't stop thinking. Whatever your thoughts decided to do, you couldn't stop them.

It was insanity, of course. It had better be insanity! The man beside him said, "He saw a lot of those Jap suicide flyers. CRAZY as loons. Human bombs."

Human bombs! Firecrackers. He put down his drink.

As he hurried through the thinning crowd, retracing the course he had taken early in the afternoon, he wondered why there should be so much deadly force locked up in such innocent-looking, inert things. The whole universe was a booby trap.

There must be a reason. Who had planned it that way, with the planets far enough apart so they wouldn't hurt each other when they popped?

He thought he began to feel sharp pains shooting through his nerves, as the radioactivity began, and after he had rushed up the steps the pains became so strong that he hesitated at the intersection of the corridors before he went on to Myna's.

He closed the door and leaned back against it, sweating. Myna was drinking and she had her hair down. There was a pint of bourbon on the table, and some ice. She jumped up, pulling at her dressing gown.

"What's wrong? Grace?"

He shook his head, kept staring at her, at her long curling hair, at her breasts, as if in that small hillocky, yellow entwined patch of reality lay his sole hope of salvation, his last refuge.

"But my God, what is it?"

He felt the pains mercifully began to fade, the dangerous thoughts break ranks and retreat. He began to say to himself, "It must have hit a lot of people the same way it hit me. It's just so staggering. That must be it. That must be it."

Myna was tugging at him. "It's nothing," he told her. "I don't know. Maybe my heart. No, I don't need a doctor."

She wandered into the bedroom and came back with a large waffle-iced metal egg which she held out to him, as if it were a toy to cajole an alliling child.

"My cousin just landed in San Francisco," she told him. "Look at the souvenir he smuggled in for me."

He got up carefully and took it from her.

"Must be your dumb cousin, the one from Downstate."

"Why?"

"Because, unless I'm very much mistaken, this is a live hand
grenade. Look, you'd just have to pull this pin—"

"Give it to me!"

But he fended her off, grinning, holding the grenade in the air.

"Don't be frighten, he told her,:

"This is nothing. It's just a flash in the pan, a matchhead. Haven't you heard of the atom bomb? That's all that counts from now on."

He enjoyed her fear so much that he kept up his teasing for some time, but after a while he yielded and laid the grenade gingerly away in the back of the closet.

AFTERWARDS he found he could talk to her more easily than ever before. He told her about the Atomic age, how they'd be driving around in an airplane with a fuel-tank no bigger than a peanut, how they'd whisk to Europe and back on a glass of water. He even told her a little about his crazy fears. Finally he got philosophical.

"See, we always thought everything was so solid. Money, automobiles, mines, dirt. We thought they were so solid that we could handle them, hold on to them, do things with them. And now we find they're just a lot of little bits of deadly electricity, whirling around at God knows what speed, by some miracle frozen for a moment. But any time now—" He looked across at her and then reached for her. "Except you," he said. "There aren't any atoms in you."

"Look," he said, "there's enough energy inside you to blow up the world—well, maybe not inside you, but inside any other person. This whole city would go poof!"

"Stop it."

"The only problem is, how to touch it off. Do you know how cancer works?"

"Oh shut up."

"The cells run wild. They grow any way they want to. Now suppose your thoughts should run wild, eh? Suppose they'd decide to go to work on your body, on the atoms of your body."

"For God's sake."

"They'd start on your nervous system first, of course, because that's where they are. They'd begin to split the atoms of your nervous system, make them, you know, radioactive. Then—"

"Frark!

He glanced out of the window, noticed the light was still in Dr. Jacobsen's office. He was feeling extraordinarily good, as if there were nothing he could not do. He felt an exciting rush of energy through him.

He turned and reached for Myna.

Myna screamed.

He grabbed at her.

"What's the matter?"

She pulled away and screamed again.

He followed her. She huddled against the far wall, still screaming.

Then he saw it.

Of course, it was too dark in the room to see anything plainly. Flesh was just a dim white smudge. But this thing beside Myna glowed greenishly. A blob of green about as high off the floor as his head. A green stalk coming down from it part way. Painter greenish filaments going off from it, especially from near the top and bottom of the stalk.

It was his reflection in the mirror.

Then the pains began to come, horrible pains sweeping up and down his nerves, building a fire in his skull.

He ran out of the bedroom. Myna followed him, saw him come out of the closet, bending, holding something to his stomach. About seconis after he'd gotten through the hall door, the blast came.

Dr. Jacobsen ran out of his office. The corridor was filled with acrid fumes. He saw a woman in a dressing gown trying to haul a naked man whose abdomen and legs were tattered and dripping red. Together they carried him into the office and laid him down.

Dr. Jacobsen recognized his patient.

"He went crazy," the woman yelped at him. "He thought he was going to explode like an atom, and something horrible happened to him, and he killed himself."

Dr. Jacobsen, seeing the other was beyond help, started to calm her.

Then he heard it. His thick glasses, half dislodged during his exertions, fell off. His red-rimmed naked eyes looked purlblind, terrified.

He could tell that she heard it too, although she didn't know its meaning. A sound like the rattle of a pygmy machine gun.

The Geiger-Müller counter was ticking like a clock gone mad.
SUPERMIND  A.E. VAN VOGT

Reviewed by  Laura E. Campbell

I am, unfortunately, extremely fond of finding some sort of logic in the books I read. It doesn't have to be a logic necessarily having anything to do with what we call "reality." I can enjoy, just as well, a logic consistent only within the bounds of the narrative itself. But loose ends and things starting and stopping nowhere, without their own explanations, reasons, or underlying connections, drive me batty. And this is exactly what has spoiled Supermind--many unexplained, inconsistent events.

Van Vogt's writing is so completely competent otherwise, that the unraveled threads hanging out of this novel seem all the more apparent. If they are the result of a maximum number of pages set by DAW, thereby leaving Van Vogt without enough room to get the job done properly, they should perhaps review their policies. If they are the result of the deliberate attempt on the part of Van Vogt to lend the story a stronger sense of intrigue, they failed.

The story itself deals with the invasion of our solar system by the Dreaghs, an immortal race of vampire-like creatures bent on taking dinner on Earth. The solar system supposedly has a Galactic Observer in it to warn off other beings so they do not interfere with the development of the young race of Homo saps. Somewhere out in the universe there are also the Great Galactics, the protectors of the status quo who have set up the rules for the place (Including this non-interference with emerging intelligences). But the Dreaghs are outlaws, so what are rules to them?

So here we have a not unusual basis for a good old time space yarn, which Van Vogt goes beyond by adding interesting but strange characters, and some potentially intriguing ideas.

The book is roughly divided into three parts. The first deals with William Leigh, a reporter who gets wind of the invasion and tries to find the Galactic Observer in order to secure help. It is a jumpy section, full of rapidly changing scenes with lots of confu-
ing events. Some of it does get explained later, and some of that in a round about way, but that does not help while you are reading. Some of it never gets explained. For instance, some papers appear early on, supposedly to entice Leigh to join forces against the Dregs. But he is already on his way to a meeting with the person who wishes him to help the Good Guys, so they serve no purpose. On top of that, Van Vogt chooses to point out that they exist out of the proper time sequence with Leigh's world, but never bothers to say how or even why. This is a totally useless section which could have been left out to allow room for more important and needed things later.

At any rate, by the end of this first part it is shown, of course, that Leigh himself is a Great Galactic.

The second part deals with Hanardy, a freighter pilot who picks up Leigh's vibes after his true Galactic self. This lends Hanardy a certain importance in fighting the remaining Dregs. This section is heavy with explanation. Some of it is clear enough and makes its own kind of sense, and some of it is so convoluted and obscure, that at times you are not even sure what is being explained. You do learn the nature of the Dregs, the Galactic Observer, Hanardy, and even Leigh, however. Leigh turns out to be a flash in the pan—a one time rapid ascension to the status of Great Galactic and then a return again. To what, we don't know.

The third and best section deals with three people who were supposedly contacted by Leigh in the first part when he was trying to learn more about the coming invasion. But you never learn why (especially the why), when or how he did this. Just where. It covers the evolution of two of them. One of these seems to be destined to become the wife of the Great Galactic Leigh, although I thought he was over and done with and gone the way of all used Galactics.

Perhaps I am making the book sound worse than I mean to. A lot happens to a lot more people (and other things) than I could possibly indicate. By the same token, a lot more loose ends exist than I would wish to go over. But by and large, the yarn moves rapidly most of the time and you never really get bored. Just confused. Perhaps this serves its own purpose, but it does leave you with a certain sense of dissatisfaction. You never can say, "So that's how it all hangs together." With a little rewriting problems could have been remedied and the book would have been a lot better.

THE WARRIORS OF DAWN

M.A. FOSTER

Reviewed by:

WAYNE HOOKS

The most important part of any book is its beginning pages. No matter how well written a book is, or how entertaining it may later prove to be, if the beginning does not hold the reader's interest, the book will probably not be finished. The beginning is the major fault of the WARRIORS OF DAWN by M.A. Foster. For the first few pages there is almost no dialogue. The reader is informed of everything by the author, instead of the author using action and dialogue.

THE WARRIORS OF DAWN is primarily a science fiction adventure story, with an overlay of intrigue. The main character is Han, a Terran apprentice trader and Liszender, a Ler.
Ler are a type of test tube human. Instead of one thumb, they have two opposing thumbs and are physically stronger than humans. However, they lack the creativity and imagination of humans. Basically pacifist, Ler could be fierce fighters in hand-to-hand situations. Because they refuse to use any weapon which leaves the hand or fires projectiles; they have developed martial arts to a high degree. Their most fearsome weapon is an invention which can cause a sun to go nova. Most interesting of all is that while sexual activity begins at adolescence, Ler are not fertile until age thirty. Thirty to forty is the childbearing age. After menopause, Ler become asexual. Because of the short childbearing span, Ler have a very limited population and a limited gene pool. Therefore, the braid developed, where two Ler choose each other as partners. Then they bring two other Ler into the braid. Each pair of Ler bears a child. Then they switch partners and bear children again. In this way, there is the greatest use of the available gene pool. Foster gives much information on Ler society, but sometimes, it is very reminiscent of Ursula Le Guin.

Anyway, invaders have attacked a Ler world. Han and Liszender are dispatched to investigate. A good many pages are given to the trip to the Ler world. Since the Ler and the humans long ago fought a war and matings between Ler and humans are infertile; it is taboo for Ler and humans to have sexual contact. However, it is close quarters on the ship. It is almost boring, so many pages are given to the budding romance between Han and Liszender and their soul searchings. Finally, to the relief of all concerned, they fall into bed together.

Upon reaching the Ler world, they bumble and stumble around until they are finally captured by the invaders. Surprises of surprises, the invaders, who are long lost cousins of the Ler, come from a faraway world called Dawn. Taken to Dawn, Han and Liszender manage to escape. On Dawn, they find humans as well as the long lost Ler. After stumbling around some more and falling into bed repeatedly, they are recaptured. However, the Dawn Ler want Han and Liszender to help them in their plans to conquer the universe. To buy time, Han agrees.

The Dawn Ler breed humans as pets. Han is given Usteyin, a redhead as a pet. They fall into bed and Han quits sleeping with Liszender, though they remain friends. Then the real villains emerge. Dawn's sun is going nova and will destroy Dawn and all the Ler and humans. In the meantime, using the Dawn Ler in their evil plans to start a war between humans and Ler are insect-like aliens. Han points this out to the Dawn Ler and they attack and destroy the aliens. However, one alien escapes and threatens Han and Liszender. Then it comes out that Usteyin and some of the human pets have psychic powers, which Usteyin uses to defeat the alien. Han and Usteyin can then return home to live happily ever after and Liszender also returns with them to mate with another Ler and start a braid.

THE WARRIORS OF DAWN is a good adventure story, with all the faults of an adventure story. The characters are almost comicbook. It relies heavily upon coincidence, not overly bright villains, evil aliens who explain all their plans for conquest to the hero before they try to kill him, soft core porno romance almost to the point of being nauseating and the villains being doomed from the very beginning. M.A. Foster does pose some interesting questions with the Ler society, but they remain just that, unanswered questions. Most of the information comes from monologues and the author's descriptions. The attempt at romance stifles the action. Despite these flaws, WARRIORS OF DAWN does provide enjoyable light reading and would be quite good for whiling away a couple of hours but only that, nothing more.
To quote from a letter of Mr. Petaja's: "In my old files I came across a story I wrote in the thrones of sadness at the death of H.P. Lovecraft, with whom I had corresponded for three years (27 letters from him, 5 of which were used in COLLECTED LETTERS Vol V Arkham House). He indeed encouraged and helped me in my abortive efforts to be a writer, as he did so many; always positive and gentle in his comments, never adversely critical however bad. The quotes from HPL's letters are in part authentic. Perhaps it is time for this story to surface again. "THE MIST" was printed in PHANTASMAGORIA (ed. John J. Weir) July 1937.

The Mist

EMIL PETAJA

David's pen slipped from his fingers to fall and spatter blackness on the page he was writing. He brushed his hands over his face, and his lips quivered in an agony of mental upheaval.

"What's the use?" The question burned itself through his mind like a inextinguishable torch trail.

There on the shabby desk before him was the greater portion of his new book-unfinished. And unfinishable.

This realization, sprouted months before, and growing in his mind as the work progressed—in the desperate weeks in which he had seldom eaten because there was no food, seldom left his meager room because he had no decent clothes and dared not face the landlord, was now inexorably thrust upon him. He had managed thus far to keep up the pretense that he was confident of success, this time. He told himself that this book was to be a masterpiece of the outer and ethereal that would hold the world spellbound at his youthful genius; that would change his life.

With hopes in the stars he had begun it. That he had little money, and no friends in the big city—what did that matter?

He was alone in a marvelously private realm, from which he would call forth mystic creatures and dreams that would enchant the mundane world!

Even now after three colossal attempts, and three bitter failures, he sensed—he knew—that if the legions of characters and thoughts that beat against the chained doors of his creative mind could be set free he must succeed. But—oh, God!—he had not the words with which to loose them. His book characters were only pale ghosts of his mind—beings, there speeches were vapid and lifeless.

Dressed in a ragged, once white shirt and frayed corduroys, he sat motionless for some time. Then his hot tired eyes sought about him, stopping on a neat pile of letters that lay on top of the desk.

"Philip Croft," he thought, his agitated mind soothed a little, "What a wonderful author—and splendid man! He's so freely and unstintingly helped so many struggling authors like me!"

He picked up the top letter dated February twenty-ninth.

"Reduced to the hated type-writer by a sudden spell of bad health...which has rendered my script illegibly shaky..." it began.

Later on, David read:

"When I received and read through the manuscript copy of Behind the Veil, I was struck by its genuineness and persuasive grace. It is really splendidly written and no one would ever suspect that it was your first effort. The second was even more sure and well-handled. I anticipated with much pleasure the persual of your latest book upon its completion. Rest assured, David, that I desire intensely to aid you with your new volume and I promise you that I will do so, no matter how busy or far away I may be..."

David had counted on Philip Croft's appraisal and criticisms of his new effort, it was better than the first two: he knew it was. But it still lacked all the power and 15-sweep of Croft's own great works.
He knew that Croft's praises of the books were far in excess of their worth—that it was his kindly way of encouraging a young writer.

The letter concluded:

"Later; this damn grippe has got me down at last! Doc has me taking three nostrums at once and I can't stay up very long at a time."

Placing the letters carefully in a folder and into a drawer for safe keeping, David muttered half aloud, "He can't be dead. How can such a fine generous master-artists die?"

He reflected in poignant reverie on the one occasion when he had actually met and talked with Philip Croft. He remembered vividly the quite charm and impressive serenity of the man. They had strolled together over the cemetery hill above the waves mildly surging up on the sand and rocks, and dark clouds bounding above in the wind. After that visit David had felt uplifted, certain that now he could write something fine, inspired by the long, intimate talk with the author he revered.

The failure of his first book had brought with it crushing disappointment. But he had plenty of courage in store, then. Even after the second, nearly two years of fruitless effort, he had been able, though badly battered, to take up his pen and try again. But a third—

"I guess I'm no good," he told himself, in a curiously calm despair. "Three strikes--out."

Slowly he lifted to his feet, and walked with mechanical steps to the window. Then he went back, extinguished the desk light and returned and stood looking out into the rain.

A tracery of tears weaved itself over the many small panes. The night wind swirled in shrill ululations through cracks somewhere in the high attic walls that covered flimsy boards clapping together.

Six stories below ran a squalid narrow street, through which incongruously ornate cars whizzed. Somewhere in the West Side Addition had been an important evening event, and traffic back to town was heavy.

"How like stars are the street lights—stars too large," mused David, watching through the diffusion of rain on the window. And the earlight reflecting on the glossy pavement! There aren't any there."

He looked upward at a sky that was covered with ugly clouds, like dark dripping bags.

His eyes wandered off to the distant slumbering hills. They were unseen in 16-the night, but he knew they brooded out there beyond the city.

And that beautiful grey cloud of mist against them. How light it is! Strange, I can see it from so far."

He looked down again and wondered vaguely how the wet asphalt would feel against his cheek.

His face was pale in the gloom, his black hair tousled. His fingers were smeared with ink, but he was quite calm.

Tap...tap...tap.

Cold rain fingers were striking on his window.

He grasped the knobs on the door windows and pulled them open.

The curtains shook angrily. Icy drops struck his hot, white face.

He lifted a foot to the ledge...

The mist...in a formless phantasmal swirl of grey that shimmered as though the hidden moon's light was caressing it...was closer now, and it had been so far away, near the mountains. So close soon he could almost reach out into the night and touch it. It gathered and floated toward him in a sheen of silver. It was enveloping him, now, in a tingling cool veil that bathed his feverish body— that seeped into his skin, his nostrils, and halted the throbbing pain in his mind.

He stood poised on the ledge in ecstasy, while the vapour floated into the room...

Suddenly, sickeningly he realized what he had been about to do—the wet pavement and the rushing cars...He murmured, "My God!" and jumped into the room, and closed the window quickly.

Briskly he ran to the desk, snapped on the light and took up his pen...

It was six weeks later that David stood again at the open window, dressed in a smart brown suit, his black hair immaculately brushed back. He held in his hand a letter.

His eyes passed rapidly over the dismal little room he was now leaving. It was quite bare; his belongings had already been moved to the new apartment early in the afternoon.

Now in the late evening, he looked out at the bright sky's stars and thought of that other night. That April night when he had (To Page...18- )
Mr. Brennan is known both for his stories and his poetry collections. He was born 1918 in Bridgeport, Connecticut and now lives in New Haven. Many thanks to Mr. Brennan for some valuable information and ideas on WEIRD TALES.

WEIRD TALES
A Call To Action

Joseph P. Brennan

I can scarcely qualify as "a regular contributor" to WEIRD TALES. My first story in "The Unique Magazine", The Green Parrot, appeared in the July 1952 issue; my last, The Calamander Chest, in the January 1954 issue. In between there were two others, Slime, March 1953 (featured on the cover with art by Virgil Finlay) and On the Elevator, July 1953. Four stories in all. And before the end of 1954, WEIRD TALES had ceased publishing...

In spite of the fact that my association with the periodical was so brief and so late however, it remains my favorite magazine. I treasure the few issues which I have managed to hang onto down the years, and I was keenly disappointed when the revived WEIRD TALES survived only four issues in 1973-74.

Today WEIRD TALES is a gold mine for anthologists. Many WEIRD TALES authors have become headliners--before or after their deaths. Copies of the magazine, even in poor condition, bring high and ever-escalating prices.

I am convinced that a strong and increasing demand for WEIRD TALES as a resurrected and on-going magazine exists. I believe that the revised WEIRD TALES failed to flourish because of poor distribution. I located copies of only one issue on newstands in New Haven. Many of my correspondents--scattered throughout the U.S.--complained that they were unable to find issues on the racks in their own areas.

While I was--and am--fond of the magazine's pulp-style format, I now feel that the revised WEIRD TALES might have continued if it had changed its format to that of a standard-sized paperback book. Issued as a quarterly (at least at the beginning) it would not have dated quickly and would have been given rack space on the stands along with other paperbacks. In its old-style format, even if it appeared on a stand all, it was, I am sure, often left lying flat under piles of other publications. WEIRD TALES was the only long-term magazine in the field in which science fiction did not consistently overshadow all other kinds of fantasy. It is my belief that no professional magazine today can claim with validity that it fills the need...
In my opinion, if readers, writers, fans, editors and collectors who enjoy horror and supernatural fantasy would speak out more strongly, more determinedly and more persistently, WEIRD TALES might yet live again.

Perhaps an association of writers and editors could be formed--The Association for the Revival of Weird Tales. A publisher with imagination and resourcefulness might be found. A reliable distribution might be located. Certainly, once an association was formed, plenty of free publicity would be virtually guaranteed.

Rights to the WEIRD TALES title might be assumed by a flourishing paperback house which already possesses a strong distribution network.

It is my prediction that if this happens, WEIRD TALES would appear on the racks with regularity once again.

--Joseph Poyer Brennan

(From Page...16-)

been so desperate...how he had gone to the window...the coming of the mist...then, the mad rush of writing that had resuscitated his book completely. That had transformed it into something spiritually fine and great.

He looked down at the letter from the publishing company that was to print it.

"It is the most stupendous, yet simply and gently styled, book we have been privileged to read in many years. Although in some parts it is curiously reminiscent of the work of the late Phillip Croft, it is above his finest, we believe. Shadows in the Mist seems, in some occult way to go beyond mortal experience. It is as though the author had caught a brief glimpse into Eternity..." 

David's eyes were bright and brimming as he turned far into the night, to watch the sheen of mist that coughed against the dim blue mountains.

"Phillip Croft," he whispered, "you are not dead."
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We wish to thank Phillip Heath for allowing us to use his story in two parts, and you the reader for bearing with us. So read and enjoy now as we give you part two and the conclusion of Vaults!

Illustrations: STEPHEN RILEY

Beneath The Vaults Of Sumarus

Phillip C Heath

There in the gloom before us rose the image of Barsoth—a huge, brooding statue sculptured grotesquely from black, burnished obsidian, and reared dominatively behind a low altar stone. In shape it assumed the naked body of a man such as the doctor had described earlier, but the hulking shoulders and barrel-like chest were partially hidden by a thick, shaggy mane flowing downward from the head of a baboon. Its facial features were nothing short of fiendish. There were such distinct simian characteristics as the low-bridged nose, the wide, flaring nostrils, and the protruding lower jawbone. The mouth itself gaping open to serve as a mocking reminder of its horrible hunger, and the cold lips were pulled back in a savage snarl; a kind of insane grimace displaying proudly the jagged canine fangs of the lower jaw and the two long, stiletto-sharp tusks of the upper. A gray layer of dust had settled thickly upon the receding brow where beneath two deeply set eyes of emerald glistened feebly from within their shadowy covert. It was almost as if they 21-peered curiously down at us, watching warily...knowingly.

Suddenly I was blinking in sober awareness, silently cursing myself for pondering such foolish fancies. The eyes of this ancient idol were made of stone like the rest of its senses, and they surveyed only darkness, for they were as blind as the sable emptiness of death.

Dr. Stafford scanned the room with a slow, deliberate sureness, as if deeply absorbed in thought. I too, glanced around, and noted the queer shadows which were caused by the flickering flames of our carbide lamps now seeming to take on a strange semblance to living beings; formless and misshapen things that wildly capered about, first drawing in close on all sides as if curious of our presence, then quickly scampering back in sudden fear.

As before, I forcibly shook myself awake from my outlandish dreaming. No doubt the umber eeriness of such a place was prone to play mischievous tricks on the mind.

"This is the room," the doctor said abruptly, his voice
unconsciously lowering to a hushed whisper due to the oppressing silence which lay all around. "This is the very room where the rites were held. It was here that human blood was spilt and time and time again in sacrifice to this stone image of their god Barsoth. Yes, look here." He pointed to a silver-handled dagger lying atop the altar beside a large dark stain. I didn't need a second guess at what that stain was.

Sir Charles gazed up at the idol and began to mumble.

"Well I don't mind telling you chaps, this thing gives me the bloody creeps."

I looked at it and nodded faintly, half-shuddering my agreement.

The doctor approached and examined the small opening in the floor—a cramped shaft leading down into a sepulchral darkness which I assumed was the actual burial chamber of the long-dead priests.

My guess had been correct; the room was a crypt, and a very large one at that. It was here the entire clergy of this wicked brotherhood had been secretly entombed. The place was filled with a smell of death so heavy that I almost gagged.

Arranged in the very center of the room were seven richly adorned sarcophagi, each marked with a strange manner of hieroglyphs. They were neatly positioned side by side in a circular fashion, yet there was something very peculiar about their general appearances—something that immediately attracted our attention. The jeweled lid of each mummy-case was unfastened and lay on the floor, revealing the contents within. There was nothing. Every sarcophagus was empty!

"I don't like it," the doctor intoned deeply as he studied one of the vacant caskets. "It's just not right. Where could they be? Who could have stolen them, and why? It simply doesn't make any sense...I mean, what grave-robber would break into a sacred temple to take the rotted remains of seven mummies, and leave behind all this wealth?"

The doctor's stammering questions remained unanswered. We were all too bewildered to conjure up even a half-logical explanation—if in fact there was one. Instead we just shrugged it off for the time being, though there was indeed something inexplicably sinister about the whole thing which left us all somewhat dissatisfied.

After a few minutes Sir Charles and I began to explore the fartherest end of the room, momentarily ignoring the doctor who stooped silently in the flaxen glow of his lantern, trying in vain to decipher a curious inscription cut into one of the stone platforms upholding the sarcophagi. In a gloomy corner behind a basalt pilaster, Sir Charles discovered a low archway leading again to some unknown vault beyond. Hurriedly we called to Dr. Stafford and then together entered into the thick wall of awaiting blackness.

We stood in awed stupor as the doctor held the light high above his head, dimly illuminating a small cavern grotto which divided into a elaborate labyrinth of tunnels retreating in all directions.
"This is fantastic!" the doctor exclaimed. "Absolutely incredible! Never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined Sumarus extended to such a great depth. Why, the entire lower portion of this hill must be honeycombed with these passageways. Where could they all lead?"

"I don't know," I answered, "but I think we should go back and find some way out of this place before we explore any farther. It's obvious we'll get deeper if we keep going this way."

For a few seconds Dr. Stafford said nothing but continued to marvel at the cave with a professional fascination.

"Ahh, there's really no need to worry," he finally returned. "My lantern battery is still good for another hour or more, and we have an ample supply of carbide left. But if you and Sir Charles want to head back to look for an exit then go ahead. I just want to stay here a bit longer and look around. Perhaps with a little time I can even interpret that strange
inscription in the burial room." He lowered his eyebrows in a puzzled visage and shook his head. "You know, I've never seen one like it before."

"To hell with that inscription," I said. "Let's find our way out of the temple first. Earlier you remarked that we should keep moving, and I agree, but we'll never get out of here going this direction. If there is a secret tunnel leading to the outside like you said, then I strongly suggest we find it while we still can. Without light we're dead, and it's foolish to take any chances."

"No," the doctor snapped, "I'm staying here, for a while anyway. Look, you two go ahead; I won't proceed any further and we can easily find each other again so long as you stay in the main corridors leading from room to room. There's hardly a chance of any of us getting lost."

Sir Charles moved closer and suddenly interposed. "Maybe it would be better if we didn't separate—in case there are more traps."

"It's quite all right," the doctor insisted. "I'm sure if there had been any more traps we would have encountered them by now. Besides, this temple was very sacred, and it was presumed that the sleeping spirits could reawaken at the presence of any intruder in order to summon Barsoth who would then—"

"Well, at any rate, this common belief was no doubt considered much more persuasive a warning than the installment of mere traps."

"I don't know," Sir Charles said, "it still sounds pretty risky to me. In fact, I think I would just as soon stay here and stick with the doctor since he's the only one of us who's familiar with these Egyptian tombs and such."

Again I voiced my views concerning the danger of our lingering too long, and seriously urged them to go back with me in search of an egression such as the doctor had mentioned earlier. I argued vigorously for some time, but they both remained obstinate in their decision to stay behind.

Before I left them Dr. Stafford once more assured me they would not venture beyond the cavern's initial chamber, and that we would later rejoin somewhere along the main passage or in one of the preceding rooms.

Alone then, I slowly retraced our route back through the burial vault and altar room, crossing over and into the hallway leading to the chapel. As I did so a number of disturbing questions crossed my mind... Why had Dr. Stafford been so eager in his proposal to remain behind while Sir Charles and I returned to seek a way out? Was it really an archeological interest that kindled this enthusiasm, or was it something else? Suppose he knew the whereabouts of a secret passageway all along but was reluctant for some reason to divulge to us its actual location? And why was Sir Charles himself so insistent to stay behind with the doctor instead of accompanying me? Was it his fear of the possibility of more traps which influenced his decision, or was it some malevolent scheme whose execution made it necessary for him to be alone with the doctor? I suddenly felt like both spectator and victim trapped in the midst of an avaricious plotting.

Once having at last trudged my way back to the chapel, I immediately began rummaging around for a concealed panel or disguised trapdoor. For a long while I searched both this room and the ante-chamber leading into it but all my efforts proved futile. Deciding I would more carefully explore the original corridor that first led us to the chapel, I did so and presently discovered a thin crevice in the rocks we had previously overlooked due to the surrounding shadows which hid it. Once inside, the opening quickly grew larger to form a passage lined with large slabs of carved limestone. At first I thought this might serve as the secret entrance to a way out but the sharp winding of the tunnel soon led me to believe that it circled back and passed beneath the chapel and
serab, possibly terminating then somewhere in or near the burial chamber where I had left Sir Charles and the doctor.

Still, I had to be certain. I continued cautiously and at length the slope began to rapidly descend, becoming so steep in fact, that the prodigiously worn floor abruptly angled into a short flight of crudely chiselled steps ending at a point where the passage sharply turned and leveled out. After having proceeded perhaps ten yards past this stone stairway, I fancied that I heard a mumbling of voices somewhere not far ahead of me. Thus quickening my pace, I noted they became gradually more distinct and soon recognized them as belonging to Dr. Stafford and Sir Charles. So I was right after all; this tunnel did lead to the burial chamber.

The voice of the doctor was the most audible, quickly growing louder and louder though all I could catch were broken sentences such as, "No stay away— get back!" and, "Madness... that's what it is, mad." All at once then his voice became hysterically shrill and giddy, breaking suddenly into several short shrieks followed by an awful silence.

A few moments later I was running, or rather half-stumbling down the gloomy corridor which slowly tapered until it expired just outside the crypt, giving access to its interior by means of an extremely narrow opening in the wall. With fearful anticipation, I squeezed through and viewed the scene.

The room was black; only the light from my own lamp probed the inky darkness. Sir Charles and the doctor were nowhere to be seen. Everything was still... quiet.

I began moving carefully among the empty sarcophagi when my boot suddenly knocked against something metallic. Glancing down, the lamplight revealed the doctor's electric lantern, smashed into small splintered fragments as if having been forcefully hurled against the slab of stone by which it lay. Near these bits of glass and metal were the re-

mains of still another object— Sir Charles carbide lamp—and beside that, protruding from around the edge of a stone platform, a human leg.

Attached to this leg was a body... the body of Dr. Stafford. And it was by no means a pleasant thing to look at. He had apparently been thrown or shoved violently against the rock wall directly behind him; an assumption grisly verified by a small bloody patch where his head had struck. His tortured eyes were open and coldly glazed in death; two glassy orbs bulging from a face frozen into a horrible grimace of both fear and bewilderment. The gray beard below was partially stained with a fine trickle of blood which still oozed from the slack jaw. The head was arched back to such a degree as would be only possible if his neck were broken, and his arms and legs were sprawled wildly in a grotesque fashion.

All my fears had been realized. Sir Charles had purposely remained behind with the doctor in order to carry out his scheme, and from looking at the ugly corpse on the floor his intentions appeared quite obvious. Greed was the sole motivator now; here, deep within the bowels of a subterranean temple where all laws had long since died away with those who made them, and where the only governing factor was instinct alone. Of course there was enough wealth here to last the three of us a long time, but why settle for being rich when you could be richer? Dr Stafford had been in the way of this, but now he was dead, and I, no doubt, was next. But fortunately, the odds were in my favor. In the scuffle Sir Charles had evidently ruined his own light as well as the doctor's. He was somewhere in the temple, either waiting patiently or wandering frantically, but in total darkness.

I immediately made up my mind to go back to the chapel the way I had come and then search once more for a way out before moving on to another room. I would have to be very cautious. Sir Charles couldn't have gone far. Too, the situation was much more criti-
cal now that my lamp was the only one left, for without it he couldn’t possibly hope to ever get out of the place alive.

Before leaving the room, I gathered what little carbide was left in Sir Charles’ lamp, then hastily made for the breach in the wall, eager to get away from that place of death. As I was just about to pass through the opening my lamp forced me to pause momentarily to tighten its handle, and it was in this brief silence that I first heard the sound.

It seemed so far, far away—just barely audible to the ear. And even though it was greatly muffled by the distance, I could hear it nonetheless; of that I was certain. Let me describe it as somewhat of a flowing, rhythmic sound, one which rose and fell in harmonious intonations, like that of chanting.

I cut across the vault toward the arched doorway leading out into the cave, and there stood listening. The eerie mumbling unmistakably came from within, floating up from one of the dark tunnels at the edge of the grotto.

Curiosity was my inevitable downfall. The sound was haunting and somehow strangely hypnotic, compelling me without reason to venture forth and seek out its source. The whole thing was too enigmatic. I simply couldn’t resist.

I entered the shaft and was soon shuffling my way deeper and deeper into a stifling darkness, on through spidery tunnels untrod for countless centuries. And always the ghostly cadence lured me on, growing both louder and clearer as I slowly progressed. Before long the enunciations had become quiet distinct, though heavily accentuated in a tongue entirely unfamiliar to me.

The passage eventually began to widen, and shortly after veered to the left at a right angle. Before turning the corner I stopped and peered stealthily round at what appeared to be a dead end in the corridor only a short distance away. Near this, on the right side of the passage, I observed a shadowy doorway where the lambent glow of a fire within illuminated a dim portion of the outer hallway.

The sound was very loud now, coming undoubtedly from beyond that door.

As I quietly moved closer a highly offensive odor suddenly assailed me. It was the spicy tang of strange, near suffocating gases, lingering in and around the doorway. I momentarily staggered back and cupped a handkerchief over my nose and mouth, but was not unable to surpress a loud, retching cough.

The chanting stopped.

I peeped inside, and an icy gasp froze in my throat.

What I saw, or rather what I thought I saw was not a wholesome sight to see. I say “thought” in uncertainty, because the gray wisps of smoke from the fire rendered the scene somewhat hazy, and the odors of the place made me stuporously dizzy. Too, I must also consider the fact that my first impression was one of fearful awe, and I remained in the doorway for only a few fleeting moments before turning away to rush off down the corridor in the direction I had come. But wait my vision did take in, was this:

A large, crudely burrowed chamber, and in its center, a black crucible filled with some sort of burning liquid which gave off the sharp, pungent smell of incense. Forming a circle around this were seven squatting figures, each silent and motionless, with eyes focused gravely upon the flickering flames in the cauldron. And that’s when I noticed. There were no eyes, only black, shriveled sockets — They were all mummies!

As I have already said, such a bizarre spectacle left me quite unnerved, so that I wasted little time hurrying back through the labyrinthine network of passages, but not without difficulty along the way. It seemed there were several similar tunnels from the original which I had been following, and twice I almost became lost by mistakingly wandering down the wrong fork. On one of these occasions panic nearly got the best of me, but by carefully retracing my steps I was able to return to the proper passage, quickly spurred on
again by the dreadful thought of what lay not far behind.

When I had at last worked my way back to the tunnel's entrance, the unearthly chanting once more began to drift up from the swarthy depths below. My nerves were still much too shaky, however, to dare ponder the true source of that sound, or to reason out how seven ancient mummies could be moved such a great distance without apparent damage, or how it was possible that they could be placed in such natural positions, or for what outlandish reason they were put there to begin with. I repeatedly forced away the tormenting question as to who had recently lit the black, liquid-filled crucible in that room, who indeed, when there was no one in the temple but myself and—

No, I couldn't afford to let my imagination wander. That could be very dangerous to my safety. If ever I was to find a way out of this horrid place, I would have to stay calm and keep a clear head. Self-control was imperative.

It is easy to build false courage, and even ignore the unexplainable, but it is something else altogether to remain perfectly composed when staring into the naked face of fear. This I learned soon enough.

I crossed the grotto to the vaulted doorway opposite me. Just upon entering the crypt I heard a sort of shuffling noise somewhere in the shadows. Slowly raising my lamp, the sudden movement of a figure at the far end of the room caught my eye. It was Sir Charles!

He was half-crouched in a corner, trembling visibly. I bucked off a few feet and then broke the silence with a stern but disheartening question.

"Why did you do it, Charles? Why did you kill him?"

He said nothing but continued to stare at me.

I lifted the lamp higher and observed him carefully. There was something very odd about his appearance and behavior. Even from a distance it was evident that his face had lost much of its healthy color, now taking on a pale, bloodless hue. Aside from this unnatural 27-

blanching of complexion, other notable changes were of a physical nature, including the dark, sunken eyesockets and the wizened cheeks. The latter were drawn tightly over protruding jawbones, giving the general contours of the face a sickly, cadaverous emaciation. His hair too, was wild in its appearance, both tangled and scrappy. But did the quivering lamplight play tricks on my vision, or was his dark brown hair now tinged with gray?

For some time I merely looked at him curiously, and all the while he remained strangely silent, still huddling in that dark, dusty corner. As I watched him I grew less and less afraid, and so began to move then very slowly in his direction. After having advanced four or five steps he suddenly jumped to his feet and started gibbering incoherently in a cracked, vertiginous tone of voice. The look in his eyes became one of delirious frenzy, and his face contorted into a grotesque grimace of fear or of alarm. His reaction had been so unexpected that I was startled into a state of bewildered numbness, and could only watch stupidly as he turned and scurried up the ladder behind him, his gaunt profile swiftly disappearing into the darkness of the shaft leading to the altar room above.

It was then an overwhelming realization struck me. My earlier assumptions as to Sir Charles' guilt had been untrue all along. It was not greed that had caused him to lose control of his senses and reason, it was fear! But was it simply a fear of being lost alone in total darkness which had given him that crazed, haggard look, or was it something else? My skin began to crawl, and I did not stay to ponder.

With little hesitation I passed through the thin opening in the crypt wall and proceeded back along my newly discovered tunnel, nervously glancing over my shoulder every few yards. Small beads of perspiration broke out on my forehead, and a creeping apprehension seeped into my bones. The air now seemed more stale than ever; the darkness more clammy and confining. I began to ache desperately for
fresh air and sweet sunlight.

Fate was kind to me. I had followed the meandering passage almost to where it joined into the initial entrance corridor, when my attention was arrested by a particular slab of limestone carved in the wall. All these panels I have mentioned earlier were cut into both sides of the passage in a definite arrangement, but there was one that protruded a good three or four inches from the rest. Also unlike the others, it was bordered on all sides by a thin, almost invisible crack. Using all my strength, I applied inward pressure. It moved.

The aperture was rather narrow but passable, extending perhaps fifteen feet to where it reopened to the outside, probably among some rocks which served to camouflage it. The glint of the afternoon sun and the sudden influx of fresh air was a great lift to my spirits.

Now that I had found a way out, my thoughts once again turned to Sir Charles. It was painfully easy to imagine him wandering around in the temple, blindly groping his way from room to room in a mindless but determined effort to escape that ever present blackness. He would never find the exit alone, and even if I left now and sent someone back later, it would be well over a day before they could arrive to get him out. No, I would have to go back, but it would have to be soon; my carbide was almost gone.

I entered the original passage which led to the chapel. The encroaching darkness was waiting there. I moved quietly along the corridor, once or twice thinking I heard a strange sound like that of a low, throaty grunting coming from somewhere down the hallway. From then on there was only silence, and I began to wonder if it had all been my imagination—until I stepped into the chapel. For several seconds I stood frozen on its threshold, then turned and ran screaming back through the tunnel where I had just come. I
never looked back. My memory remains mercifully obscure as to what happened after that. I do vaguely recall however, clambering into the tiny passageway which took me to the outside. I also remember staggering along the banks of the nearby Nile until a passing boat happened by and found me there, well near total exhaustion and half out of my mind with fright.

After my recovery I hurriedly returned to Boston and destroyed all my books and research work dealing with Egyptian lore and legend, burning particularly that delving into the secret animal cults.

Soon, I think, the authorities will trace me here, and if they do find me, what then should I tell them? That it was I who killed both Sir Charles and Dr. Stafford? After all, we were the only ones who dared enter that accursed temple, and only I had come out of it alive. But no, I cannot confess to murder because I am innocent. The truth then. That's it, the simple, unaltered truth...the truth which would condemn me to life imprisonment in some madhouse. No, I dare not explain what actually happened, for they would never believe me. I cannot tell them what I saw standing in that room, feasting noisily in the darkness; the slobbering, drooling creature hovering over Sir Charles' crushed and broken body, plucking hungrily at his blood-smeared throat...blood that dripped from the living jaws of the statue of Barsoth!
A sincere thanks goes out to Carl Jacobi for his fine piece, which is quite informative. Carl lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota and keeps quite busy with his writing. His credits to the literary field are quite numerous, and well worth delving into.

Rambling Memoirs

Carl Jacobi

One of my first recollections of WEIRD TALES was the issue that featured on the cover Paul S. Powers’ spider story, MONSTER OF THE PIT. And I well remember many of those early stories: Munn’s WEREWOLF OF PONKERT, Price’s STRANGER FROM KURDISTAN, Burke’s BLACK MEDICINE, Arnold’s NIGHT WIRE, Owen’s WIND THAT TRAMPS THE WORLD, Lovecraft’s THE RATS IN THE WALLS, and a novelette I’ve never seen or heard of since, UNDER THE N RAY.

Later when I was an underclassman at the University of Minnesota I tried my hand at writing my own fantasy fiction. I sent the first to Editor Farnsworth Wright, and his letter of acceptance bore only the last name of his signature. I didn’t know at the time that Wright had Parkinson’s Disease and had extreme difficulty in signing his name. Later acceptance letters had no signature at all.

At Minnesota I contacted writer, Donald Wandrei and mentioned that I was interested in the WEIRD TALES stories of one August Derleth and also his Solar Pons detective stories which I had spotted in DRAGNET and UNDERWORLD. Don arranged a dinner meeting which was to pave the way for an exchange of correspondence that lasted more than three decades.

Since his death a number of readers have been inclined to make disparing remarks about those Cthulhu Mythos stories which purportedly were Lovecraft Derleth collaborations, and indeed some of these tales are not above criticism. What these readers forget is that Derleth regarded them as potboilers, as he did to a certain extent with all his weird fiction. At best they played a secondary part in his creative efforts. It is only when one looks at the many facets of his writing career that the stature of this Wisconsin writer can be appreciated.

He wrote the Judge Peck mystery novels; he wrote the Solar Pons detective yarns in which he successfully emulated Conan Doyle; he wrote serious regional novels which rank with the best; he wrote juvenile novels (boys’ books) ten of them, which are minor classics; he wrote nature studies such as Walden West and journals of the bucolic people he knew as COUNTRY GROWTH. And in addition to all that he contributed columns to the MILWAUKEE JOURNAL.
and OUTDOORS Magazine and was the guiding genius behind the foremost fantasy publishing house in the country.

I came into contact with another WEIRD TALES writer who also was destined to span the literary field. If there is any U.S. or Canadian periodical which at some time has not published the fiction of Hugh B. Cave, I don’t know what it is. Forty of his stories appeared in the SATYREPOST alone, not to mention COSMOPOLITAN, REDBOOK, LADIES HOME JOURNAL and GOOD HOUSEKEEPING and practically every pulp from Adventure to Dime Mystery.

In the book field too Cave has distinguished himself with novels, juvenile novels and excellent travel books on Haiti and Jamaica. He lives the life of a baron now on his Jamaican coffee plantation.

In comparison to these two writers, consider H.P. Lovecraft who wrote in one field only, principally the macabre. Is it any wonder that with such specialization he should surpass all other contemporary writers in the genre. Only now is he being raised to the high literary position he deserves.

But going back to WEIRD TALES, Farnsworth Wright was both a shrewd and an erudite editor. Like all men he had his peculiarities. Not only did his rejection letters have no signature but they also utilized several stock phrases in his reason for turning the manuscript down. His favorite was "unconvincing". If he rejected a story I would hold it several months, then send it back to him untouched but with a little white lie notation that it was "completely revised". Invariably, if the story was any good at all he would accept it on its second (or third or fourth) submission.

In its very early days WT had a man named Hugh Rankin as its illustrator. His grease pencil drawings were quite effective. Rankin was followed by Brosnach. As for covers, the early ones by Senf were terrible. In the late '30's Martha Brundage did a series of nude covers that were considered quite daring. Today they wouldn't raise an eyebrow. Also in the '30's Allen St. John who was known for his book jackets for the Edgar Rice Burroughs books did some attractive covers for WT. Then came Virgil Finlay who of course was tops in his field.

Many of the old WT writers have passed on, but some are still around. Robert Bloch has been writing for Hollywood. E. Hoffman Price has a handsome collection recently published by Carcosa House. If you like fantasy with exotic backgrounds then this is a book for you.

This spring that same publisher is bringing out Hugh B. Cave's MURGUNSTRUM which also promises to be an event in the fantasy field. Mary Elizabeth Counselman whose THREE MARKED PENNIES has been translated into a dozen languages is busy, both writing and publishing. Her Arkham House collection is now in galley form; it too should satisfy the lovers of fantasy fiction.

Surprisingly few WT writers used pseudonyms. Francis Flagg's real name was Weis, and Hugh B. Cave sometimes wrote under the name of Geoffrey Vance but I believe he did this only in WT's companion magazine, Oriental Stories(later Magic Carpet). Ralph Milne Farley was a writing name, but Greye La Spina was not a nom de plume, though many readers thought it was.

Kirk Mashburn in his early pieces wrote as W.K. Mashburn Jr. Henry Kutner used a lot of pseudonyms but to my knowledge none for WT. Some of August Derleth's weird fiction appeared under the name of Stephen Grendon which he later used for an autobiographical character in his juveniles.

My own choice was Stephen Benedict which I used as both a by line and a detective character in stories in SECRET SERVICE, TERROR TALES and other magazines.

Sometime in the '40s I began receiving some very strange fan letters from a WT reader. The first two or three paragraphs were devoted to favorable comments on my work. Then he would launch forth into some philosophical or scientific tracts in which he displayed amazing
erudition. His statements were profound. But gradually, slowly they would begin to wand-er from his subject until by the fifth or sixth pages he was miles away. From then on they became incoherent. Reading them, you would say to yourself: "Am I crazy or is he?" I wrote Wright and I still remember his reply: "Pardon the mixed metaphor," he said, "but that bird is a com-plete nut. He's been pestering a lot of our writers." Cave, with probably tongue in cheek, said he was keeping the fellow's letters on file as potential story gems. Derleth, tiring of being bothered wrote him that he was really Count d'Erléet and future correspondence to him should be addressed to the Vat-ican, Rome.

Browsing through a book store recently I came upon some copies of WEIRD TALES carefully sealed in cellophane wrappings. The price nearly floored me. $25.00. If collectors will pay that much for a vintage pulp, then the thieves and vandals who broke into my lake cabin a year ago must have realized a nice profit on the things they stole. Not only did they make off with a record player and some antique records but they also took a large part of my WEIRD TALES, ADVENTURE, and SHORT STORIES collections. Inci-dently my cabin which I am now in the process of selling is in rural Carver county, and that area was the setting for COCOMACOUQ, TEST CASE THE UN-PLEASANTNESS AT CARVER HOUSE, THE SINGLETON BARRIER and other fantasy stories. I built the place as a studio where I could write in the quiet I thought was conducive to creative work. I should have known better. As a former newspaper reporter on a metropolitan daily I was accu-stomed to the noise, bustle and confusion of the "city room". The cabin was too quiet. I never wrote a single story out there.

Besides Cave and Derleth I was in correspondence for a time with quite a few other writers, though I never made letter writing a major part of my hours at the typewriter as some scribes did. I exchanged letters with Clark Ashton Smith, and he was kind enough to send me a copy of his privately printed THE DOUBLE SHADOW. (I sold it recently to a collector for $25.00) Robert Howard, another correspondent was filled with lore of his native Texas, which in a way is rather odd for most of the fiction that brought him to fame was not laid in that state. When Lovecraft wrote me his letters were of course in long hand and in very small pen-man ship. In that respect, how-ev er, the letters I received from Rafael Sabatini were prize winners. The script was so small it looked as if it had been done with an electric stylus and actually needed a magnifying glass to decipher. Sabatine of course was the author of Cap-tain Blood, Scaramouche and a host of excellent historical novels. My letters to and from Nelson Bond had to do with a radio show, HOT COPY, several episodes of which I collabor-at ed with him on, episodes which incidentally never reached the air waves.

Since this is to be a paper on personal recollections my good friend, Joseph West, globetrotter, illustrator, has insisted I include an incident of my somewhat distant past. It has nothing at all to do with writing or fantasy fiction. But in those days my circle of acquaintances included one at-tractive girl who was devoted to dancing, and since this form of entertainment was not my long suit she insisted I take some lessons. Accordingly, with re-luctance, I called at a local studio. The lone attendant was busy, so I lit my pipe and waited. Five minutes later when she was free I knocked the ashes from my pipe out the window and was presently engaged in the intricacies of the latest dance step. Abruptly I heard sounds of confusion outside. And then a helmeted fireman burst in the door and demanded to know who had been smoking cigarettes. With a perfectly blank face I assured him I never smoked cig-a rettes. After he had gone I looked out the window. In the street below were several fire rigs and a network of hoses. And I saw with horror that the whole damned awning of the shop below was consumed by flames.
Joe West has made me tell that story half a dozen times and each time he almost rolls on the floor with laughter. It's better entertainment he says than our mutual visits to the Belmonte Club or the Bunny Patch, which are places with the suffix, "less", in the description of the attractions they present.

Speaking of laughter or at any rate, humor, I might close this paper with a tale that does have an association with the literary world. It's a "shaggy dog story" and it may be old and you may have heard it, but it was new to me.

Seems that this fellow entered a movie theatre and presently noticed that the next seat to him was occupied by a dog. When the picture on the screen was exciting the dog would bark. When the picture was sad the dog would whine and growl. Later the man saw the dog and its owner in the theater lobby.

"That's a smart dog you've got there," he said to the owner. "He really seemed to enjoy the picture."

"Yeah," the dog's owner replied, "and that sort of surprises me. He didn't like the book."

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Editor & Publisher: Randall Larson
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For those of you that have read Bloch extensively, you will have little trouble with the phraseology Randall uses in his tale. For those of you new to Bloch, forget looking for references and enjoy the tale.

The Thing That Collected Bloch

Randall Larson

The old house stood high on the hill behind the motel, thin wisps of fog settled about it like a ghostly cowl. From a distance the building looked quite normal, it was only when one trudged farther up the hill that the ruin became apparent.

Although the house was charred black, its frame stood mightily as it had for many years, only slightly weakened by the flames which had recently fed upon it. Windows were gone, as was the detail in the wooden walls.

Norman turned his eyes from the house and looked back at the trail behind him. Alfred's large form was just appearing through the dew-covered underbrush. He stopped next to Norman and gazed at the old structure. The early morning stillness clung about it protectively, the mist lending a cool dampness to the air.

"We finally made it!" Alfred wheezed, his eyes wide as he looked toward the old house. He sighed, "The infamous House That Dripped Mud."

"So named," Norman added, his tone also conveying an element of awe, "Because of the sod roof which, in heavy rains would occasionally trickle the water-soaked dirt onto the ground below.

"At least that's what Clay-orton said." Alfred added, noticeably skeptical.

"Don't be too quick to doubt Richard's work, Alfred. He'd had a strange fright when he visited this house before it burned; one which eventually led to a horrible death. The things he told me fit perfectly with the legends."

Alfred shrugged, then both of them looked again toward the old house.

"In any case," Norman said as he began to climb the final rise of the hill, "we'll find out there."

Within, the house was a shambles. The staircase had caved in and most of the second floor to which it led had also fallen through. Stilled ashes rested in mounds, flaking hung from charred walls, furniture and bannisters. The harsh stench of the burned wood drifted through the skeletal corridors, mingling with the scent of the cool mist.

Norman and Alfred made their way through the ruins, stirring up ashes and kicking broken boards out of their way. The morning sun shone through the roof in places causing the black of the walls to stand out like the monolithic stones of some ancient druid temple; a hint of warmth could be felt as the sun slowly drove away the fog.

"This is all ruined," Alfred noted. "We won't find anything
"Are you mad?" Norman snapped. "What's up here isn't important! Remember what Richard said about the basement? That's where we'll find the manuscripts!"

"If it's true."

"Alfred, how can you be that way? You know what you saw on your trip to New England—the old books and newspaper files in Arkham. And those queer eggs I showed you in the Wisconsin Aquarium; you yourself admitted that the legends were true."

"Yes, I know," Alfred shook his head. "I cannot dismiss the existence of such ancient beings any longer. I believe that ages ago the earth was ruled by creatures who are still alive elsewhere in the universe, and who are plotting to regain their stronghold here. But what I cannot believe is, the creature you suggest, that Richard suggested—this thing that is even more fearsome than the monstrous Yog-Sothoth—could exist in the guise of a mortal human."

"You've believed everything else so far, and it's been proven to be true. Everything thus far backs it up."

Norman shrugged, his eyes resting on a blackened door partially hidden by fallen timbers and piled ashes. "I know the manuscripts are here, Richard said they were."

Norman walked over to the door and cleared away the debris from around it, coughing as a cloud of ashes swirled up into his face. The door was locked, but it had been weakened enough by the flames so that Norman was able to kick it in. The sunlight that streamed down through the torn roof revealed a staircase beyond the door, its steps leading deep into darkness. Norman shined the flashlight he had taken from his pocket into the blackness of the cavernous hallway, but the beam did little to penetrate it. He glanced back at Alfred, who was at last becoming more interested.

Norman crouched and stepped through the broken wood of the door, proceeding in the obscure beam. After about ten steps the descending hall made a sharp turn to the right, and Norman's flashlight played upon a small room which had been spared by the consuming flames.

A kerosene lamp extended from the wall. The lamp when lit shown the room to be in good order; only the upper timbers of the walls and ceiling were scorched, while some water marks stained a far corner. The room appeared to be a storehouse for some vast collection of what appeared to be esoteric materials. Books crowded walls of shelves, cinema posters adorned a far wall, a small typewriter sat on a well-organized desk and an extremely old and bizarrely detailed rug lay on the floor.

Alfred spotted an armchair in the corner and promptly sat in it, looking about the room with wide eyes. On the same side of the room as the chair were two ornately-carved cabinets, one at either end. All four walls contained a series of shelves, rising above a large floor panel. Norman gazed at the bookshelves—here were volumes upon volumes of rare, and fantastic writings. Alfred opened one of the cabinets to discover stacks of aged magazines within.

"Norman!" he cried, carefully removing an old, but plastic-sealed volume. "A copy of the first Tee'ar Belief! That's been unknown for years!"

"And here," Norman indicated one wall of shelves. "These are all Bloch books!"

Alfred looked at them hesitantly, with a worrysome expression. "Just as Richard said."

"No wonder Richard aged so rapidly," Norman mused as he examined the Bloch collection. "If the rest of what he said is true..."

"Norman, here!" Alfred called, as he opened the second cabinet. "Good Lord, here are the tomes!"

Norman glanced quickly into the cabinet; a stack of dusty, brittle manuscripts lay within. Norman muttered an excited gasp as he lifted out one of the loosely-bound volumes and carefully thumbed through it.

"Alfred, this is a handcopied version of Prim's De Vermis Mysteriis..."

The two of them were astounded by the age and rarity of the book, for this was one of the most famous of the legend-
haunted tomes that spoke of the fearsome Old Ones. And, despite some worm holes in the binding, it looked to be in good shape. Their astonishment did not end there, for as they inspected the other books and manuscripts that lay within they discovered more items of untold age and priceless rarity.

They found books such as Peery's Notes on the Necronomicon, Harrison's The Sea and Sacrifice, young Collier's Deserted House Notebook, worn editions of works by Edgar Gordon and Barnaby Codd, hand-scribbled notebooks filled with passages taken from other antiquated books. A number of roughly-stapled and poorly-printed periodicals were also found, some in many pieces—these appeared to be products of some sort of organization or collection of individuals and they too, were devoted to the same dark subjects as the older manuscripts.

At last they had emptied out the cabinets of their wealth of material; Norman looked at the stacks and marveled.

"Wait a minute, what's this?" Alfred indicated the bottom shelf within one of the old cabinets. It was an unusually thick shelf and as Norman looked closer he found it to be hollow; a thin slat of wood along the outer edge was pried off and within the small space Alfred withdrew yet another manuscript, this one a stack of hand-written pages held together by two rubber bands.

"My God, Norman! I've heard rumors of this for years but I never dreamed I'd ever—"

"Ointments From the Land of Blue Sky," Norman read, his eyes darting toward Alfred, his voice wavering with excitement as he spoke, "I don't believe there are more than two copies of this in existence!"

"Fantastic!" Alfred wiped his forehead with his shirt sleeve. "Richard hinted at an incredible find of ancient books, but this is more than I'd ever thought possible. And especially this, one of the most brutal, of all secret tomes!"

"What fearsome secrets did the owner of this ruined house know, and what strange rites did he practice?" Norman gazed about the room. "And how did he build up such a collection of books? And what became of him?"

"Reading all of these books probably drove him mad," Alfred suggested with a smirk. "We all go a little mad sometimes." Norman replied, shaking his head. "I believe this collection was more than the hobby of an eccentric kook, and more than the study of some passive occult researcher."

"You're referring again to what Richard said, aren't you?"

"Yes, and a collection of this size hints at his truth. Whoever, or whatever, as Richard ventured, amassed such a collection of specifically esoteric materials must have been searching for one certain answer. He must have been on the verge of some diabolical discovery involving the Old Ones just before his untimely death. And Richard had almost learned what that discovery was, but he could only hint of such things, as if he were afraid to reveal everything too plainly. He alluded to Nyarlathotep and spoke of a strange Sign of the Skull."

"That is rather a skeptical riddle," Alfred said, frowning. "I wonder what he meant."

"I don't know, but I do have a bone to pick." Norman walked over to the bookshelves and pursued their contents one more time. "These books puzzle me; they're almost all by Bloch."

Norman stood for a moment, contemplating, before he went on. "Why Bloch of all writers? Little of his work dealt directly with Cthuloid concepts."

A slight breeze swirled a wisp of ashes down the stairway and into the room, causing Alfred to sneeze abruptly. Norman paid no heed, having turned his attention to studying Ointments.

"Why, this book deals with what Richard spoke of! The same whispered legends, and one terrible being..." Norman's eyes widened as the eldritch and agelessly evil name came to his lips as he read. "Rbr'r'blog..."

Alfred's gasp caused Norman's eyes to dart from the book to a strange black cloud that was forming at the bottom of the stairs. Thin whisps waivered to-
ward Alfred who was sitting, speechless, in the armchair. Alfred crouched as far into the dusty cushions as he could squeeze; the dark billous and silent shape crept closer. Norman's eyes returned quickly to the book, recalling a section he had previously noticed.

"...the guardian and minion...preparer of the way...doom to interferers...again the Sign of the Skull..." he mumbled aloud.

"What are you reading?"

Alfred cried, as the cloud pulsed and quivered, a coldness chilling the room.

"This section from Ointments--it speaks of a demigod called Sc't-Merdigh who prepares the way for the Awesome One." Norman's eyes turned to Alfred's and his too became wide with apprehension.

"Alfred, I believe what we're seeing is Sc't Merdigh!"

The black shape continued to quiver and pulse as it slowly moved closer, filling the doorway completely and spilling its gray wisps along the floor. The room began to darken, as if the throbbing cloud were draining the light as well as the heat from the room. Alfred whimpered and took a paperback book from the stack. He flung it into the darkening mass, causing it to throb spasmodically.

"Don't bait him!" Norman shouted. "It will only enrage him!" His eyes returned to Ointments. "There must be a spell to return him to his night world." In the dim light Norman's eyes raced through Ointments as he tried to learn more about the being that was drawing dangerously closer.

It was no longer a cloud now but had turned to a quivering mass of blackness, it had begun sending out dark appendages which slithered their way about the bookshelves and towards the two men. A frigid tendril fingered Alfred's nose, causing him to cry out and flatten himself into the armchair.

"Ah!" Norman cried, triumphantly. And without any further explanation he stood up and read loudly from the passage he had found.

"Sc't Merdigh! Ia! Ia!"
glanced about the room curiously. He noted that there were four things open in the room; the bedroom door, the adjoining bathroom window, a box of crackers on the end-table and the book which Alfred's lifeless hand still clutched. Norman stifled a scream in his throat as he saw the title of the book, it was Bloch's The Skull. He then wheeled and ran from the room as fast as he could.

The Professor's home was small and quaint. It was set back behind some trees near to the Hungry House coffee shop. Norman was a bit hesitant about visiting the professor, for the man was quite eccentric but his knowledge of Cthulhoid things was invaluable. He walked up the steps slowly, trying to put out of his mind such thoughts as how the Professor rarely slept and was known to his friends as a night-walker, and how his lack of sleep once sent him into a hallucinatory fit, confinement in a straight-jacket and a stay at Castle's Sanitorium. Some folks had even feared he was a psychopath.

But the Professor never walked that path; the doctors had corrected his sleeping habits, gave him some counseling, and everything had seemed to work out alright after that. There were those who still felt he was out of his skull for collecting such a wealth of material and knowledge on the dark subjects in which he was interested. But it was this knowledge which drew Norman to his door now. He knocked, hoping the Professor could help answer his questions, or at least point him in the right direction.

"Good afternoon, Professor," Norman said as the tall man opened the door and showed him in.

"You needn't be so formal, Norman. Just call me Jack," his host replied with a friendly gleam in his eye.

Jack led Norman down a hallway toward the living room. Along the way Norman stumbled on a pair of roller skates and nearly fell.

"That takes talent..." he muttered as he straightened himself.

"Damn that child!" Jack spat, as he picked up the skates and put them on a shelf. "My daughter, Juliette, she can never put things away," he explained as they proceed on down the hallway. "Always leaves her toys out. Practically kill myself on them every day. Sometimes I'm sorry I even bought those toys for Juliette. Oh well, I'll just keep telling her to put them away. Maybe in time she'll get the point."

Norman chuckled to himself. The Professor always was a stickler for organization.

When they reached the living room and were seated, Norman decided to cut the small talk.

"Jack, what do you know about Sc't Merdigh?"

The Professor started, then stared at Norman for a serious moment. "You know of Sc't Merdigh?"

"Yes," Norman replied. Then he told the Professor of the letter which had been given to him after Richard's quiet funeral. The letter from Richard which hinted at his findings in the burnt house, and which led Norman to contact Alfred and inspect the house themselves. He told the Professor of what they had found there, and of Alfred's death, and the Black book he'd been clutching when found.

"I, too, have heard of Richard's work in the field. It is a shame that he had to ride that Hell-Bound train, and so suddenly." The Professor shook his head. "But that sounds like an amazing find, complete with Ointments and the Tec-ar Be'ef. Norman, those two rare tomes are virtual histories of one of the most fearsome of the Old Ones, the awesome Rbrr 'blog, He Who Keeps Heart of Small Boy In Jar!"

Norman's heart thudded against his chest as the sound of the name filled him with an icy dread, just as it had when he first read it the previous day in the old house.

"Sc't Merdigh is merely his minion!" The Professor stood up as he continued. Norman listened intently. "Rbrr 'blog is more deadly to humankind than the
Deep Ones of Great Cthulhu himself, more awesome than the hordes of far-off Yuggoth, more mysteriously terrible than the ghostly legions of dog-faced Zander.

An apprehension hounded at Norman, a feeling he couldn't define nor could he disregard. "I had guessed at it--from the hints Richard left--even before I visited the burnt house. But I guess back then it wasn't as real because it was only speculation." He thought for a moment. "If this Rbrr'blog is so awesome, why hasn't he been written of more?"

"Apparently his purpose is more suited to his being unknown. Most people will scoff at the existence of Nyarlathotep, Cthulhu, Azathoth and the others, saying they are merely the creations of writers like Lovecraft and the rest. But there are those who have seen, who know in their fear-trodden hearts that these Old Ones exist and that their purpose is terrible." The Professor sat down and rubbed his chin. "But Rbrr'blog is different. I do not know his purpose in the scheme of the Old Ones, but from what I've learned by pursuing certain ancient manuscripts--and there aren't many in which he is mentioned--is that he does not want his presence made known. Those who threaten him in that way, he must destroy, and I believe that is what happened to the owner of the burnt house."

"What about all the Bloch books," Norman asked. "How do they fit in?"

"I can't really say. Perhaps because much of Bloch's Cthulhold writing dealt with Nyarlathotep, the messenger of the Old Ones."

"I don't understand," Norman leaned closer.

Nyarlathotep is an immensely powerful and dreaded Old One, who has many avatars, many incarnations. Each one different in its role, each terrible to behold, and all horribly clever in their purpose. Rbrr'blog is one of these avatars, as is Sc't-Merdigh. The Professor stood and walked to a nearby cabinet, from which he withdrew a bottle of scotch and hastily poured two glasses. Handing one to Norman, he continued. "Many stories have been told of occasions where men have faced Nyarlathotep, and usually with disastrous results for them. But that is all small potatoes compared to Rbrr'blog, the most fearsome avatar of all!"

The Professor sat down and took a drink, swallowing hard before speaking again. "There is a curious poem in an obscure, almost nonsensical journal written in the fourteenth century, entitled Revelations L'Feep, which reads: "Nothing happens to Nyarlathotep, but Rbrr'blog clutches the end of your rope'."

"I'll be henpecked," Norman sighed, shaking his head. "What a foul creature this Rbrr'blog must be. I didn't know Nyarlathotep had so many fingers in the pie, so to speak."

"You don't know the half of it," The Professor said, smiling. "But we shouldn't take it so lightly, the Old Ones are not mocked." His face returned to a concerned frown, and he looked hard at Norman. "You know these creatures exist, and Nyarlathotep is one of the most powerful. You described Sc't-Merdigh as a smoky, shapeless mass, which is one of the forms Nyarlathotep is most referred to having. Certainly you recall the black winged manifestation which was invoked from the Shining Trap-ezhedron in New England? And the dark Arbo-Ghosts of Ireland's Cthulhu sect legends? And there is the Dark Demon of medieval Europe's witch-covens, the Faceless God of Egyptian myth, the Guardian of the Earth Gods in Kadath, the Black Messenger of Karneter, and countless others. Each one is an avatar of Nyarlathotep, but in Rbrr'blog he assumes his greatest incarnation, for as subtle as it may be, his power is great because of that subtlety." The Professor stood up and sat his glass on the counter. "Well, that's really all I know. I haven't been able to sharpen up my knowledge any further in that area, researching more along the lines of human sacrifices and the search for immortality. But I do hope I've been of some help."

"Yes, Jack," Norman stood up
and shook his hand. "Very much so. I'm still somewhat puzzled about many things, but you've pieced together much of what I was after." At the door he turned and looked at the Professor. "It's mind-boggling, isn't it? That these things actually exist and are threatening our whole world. And yet we go on with our petty lives as if they weren't there at all."

"I know what you mean, Norman." The Professor replied, nodding. "But I suppose they have their own way of making themselves known to certain individuals."

"Yeah," Norman turned and walked down the steps.

That night Norman returned to the House That Dripped Mud. Weary from a long drive but anxious to again pursue the library, he made his way up the hill past the run-down motel, through the charred ruins and down the stairway into the small room. As he entered the dark room, it hit him. Neither he nor Alfred had extinguished the lamp, and as he lit it he wondered who had. He was relieved to find the room still in tact and the Ointments on the floor where he had dropped it. Going to the cabinet he inspected the collection in further detail, then left the manuscripts in a stack before the cabinet, intending to get to them later. He stepped to the bookshelves and scanned the rows of books, reading the titles of the Bloch volumes. He pulled a number of books off the shelves and sat down in the armchair.

He searched through novels like The Black Notebook and American Gossip, story collections such as Blood Runs Molly, smaller pamphlets like Vocabulary for S.F. Critics, a terrific scientific journal for the average writer, which seemed to make a lot of sense. He thumbed through hardback collections, skimmed over stories like "The Girl Who Turned Into a Drugstore" and scholarly articles such as "Doing Away With Studio Executives."

Hours passed but Norman wasn't aware of time, he was only aware of what he was reading. He was no longer an aloof observer, moving his eyes across the printed page, rather he was drawn into each story. He shared the horrors encountered by the protagonist; he gasped in real surprise at the grasping arm, the groping tentacles and the slashing knife. He groaned in enjoyable loathing at the puns and wished he could strangle the author for some of them. Norman read, with bated breath, stories of killers and lunatic criminals and their justified ends; tales of weird, other-worldly horrors; punful stories of noodnick inventors; far-off adventures in space and down-home occurrences with the neighbors next door.

And it wasn't long before everything became crystal clear. These stories, though only very few concerned the Cthulhoid themes themselves, did have a very definite and deadly connection with the Old Ones. Norman recalled Jack's statements of the many avatars of Nyarlathotep, and the implications shocked him. For no matter how different styles and genres they covered, and despite the pen-names, the writings could be nothing else but the writings of Rbrr'blog!

Norman swallowed hard and set the books aside. He had found half the answer—what he needed now was the reason, the sinister purpose for this grim charade. He found that in the Ointments.

Norman read how Rbrr'blog dwells in the hidden world of Tl'fiske, driven there by the rat-demons who ate his younger sister, and there he giggles insanely as he skillfully construes his writings. Norman read how he waits for the day when he and all the other Old Ones shall return from Tl'fiske, from sunken R'lyeh, from far-off Yuggoth, from the Cavern Worlds, from all the other dwelling places at the rim of space and time, and shall again take hold over the earth. And he read how Rbrr'blog is aiding in that goal, and how the owner of the burnt house was only one of many who figured in his plan.

For the owner of the burnt house did not collect Bloch.
It was Bloch, or Rbrr 'blog that collected him!

Norman felt a pang of sharp horror as he thought of the many other Bloch fans and collectors he'd met over the years. He recalled Hall's ageless essay "Blochitis" from Tae 'ar Be'ef and now knew just how true those words were.

Sighing with the revelation heavy on his shoulders and pounding in his heart, Norman gazed at the books written by Bloch; those sorcerous writings which thrill and amaze—and then, unbeknownst to the reader, ensnare and entrap until there is no escape. There was an awesome power in those words and Norman could almost see it glowing now that he knew the truth. An awesome power which feeds on all those who have read the words. Even now Norman could feel the urge to grab a Bloch novel and read it unceasingly, babbling in delight, captivated by its brilliant design and hidden spell, unable to put it down. His stomach knotted with worry and horror as he thought of all the other unsuspecting Bloch readers becoming entangled in the spider-web of Rbrr 'blog's sinister purpose. And he knew it wouldn't be long before the legion of possessed Bloch fans would rise up with Rbrr 'blog, becoming the opener of the way for the return of the Old Ones.

Suddenly Norman felt a desire to escape, a desire to warn others, perhaps save some of them, if not a whole world. He pushed aside the ancient manuscripts and ran up the stairs, out of the burnt house and down the hill away from the motel. He ran down the street until, exhausted, he came to a stop, clutching at a lamp post. As he panted, a pang of hopelessness gripped his heart.

How could he hope to escape the wrath of an old one, He Who Clutches At End of Rope, He Who Keeps Heart Of Small Boy in Jar? He wiped the sweat from his forehead with his backhand, his eyes darted about the street. A feeling inside him urged him to remember something, but he wasn't sure what it was. A quote from Ointments, what was it? Norman clinged to the lamp post as he exhaled loudly. He looked about without really seeing, his mind whirling in thought and terror, as gradually the light began to darken.

Something about the Sign of the Skull...

Then it dawned on him, the book Alfred had been reading, the book which probably even now lay grasped in his lifeless hands. Bloch's The Skull!

Norman threw himself away from the lamp post and darted down the street. He stumbled off the curb and fell headlong into the deserted street. Lurching to his feet, he ran on. Suddenly he stopped in his tracks, his eyes open wide, his mouth wet and panting. He glared at the theatre marquee which glowed across the street, with the grinning skeleton advertised on it.

"The Skull of the Marquee," he said. "The Sign of the Skull!"

Norman fell to the ground, the darkness became darker, he tried to scream as the black wisps fingered out, slithering toward him.

The Living End
Farewell Kiss

Carl Scott Harker

Why will you say that I am insane? True, I am nervous, very nervous; and the throbbing and pounding of my heart ever increases. It is just that misfortune has plagued me like the padding of black cats. But I am not yet ravin' mad. If only the steel and glass clock upon the mantel did not constantly tick and tock of her death, a week ago this hour.

"She is gone," is the thought which ever echoes in the chamber of my brain. And my brick emotions, wailed in and chained forever to my despair, have taken me to the brink whose fall ushers in the house of madness. But still I refuse the eerie music and do not yet dance at the Masqued Ball in the wings of this cracked house.

"Oh, she is gone!" is the shriek uttered throughout the maelstrom to the world, in the anguish of my aloneness. This must end. But how? Ah, with a kiss, and say goodbye to the lost Leonore, goodbye to the lost Leonore. Too long have I tarried from her marbled masoleum, her tent of interment, where she lies the sleeping Leonore. Make haste!

I enter now her greasy crypt. Panning the scene, gazing at the wilted spicy flowers, I go down the battered and baked steps, touching the oaked and crumbling walls of her prison. A chill enters me, iced my bones. And I know, no matter what happens, the ingredients of my eternal recipe will change. I shall never be the man I was!

A movement, she lives! No! But a gold bug which I crush beneath my heels. There she lies, pale, motionless, as if dreaming of fairy lands and the crystal palaces of Paliden. To awaken soon, and tell my trembling ears of the flickering spectral dances of the spirits of her soul.

I reach out my hand to touch her, Leonore's form is firm. And now for the kiss. Wait! What is this? A foul, mouldy reek slips out from her faded lips. A fetid and malodorous breath oozes towards me, a gray and slimy fog from her mouth, a thing unclean.

What terror is this that festers and corrupts the body and discolors my mind? My brain is melting at the thought of touching this abomination of life. To be defiled, to become impure, to be swept into the cesspool of unholy deeds, the vortex of the breaking seeds of insanity.

I, too, am lost, caught between the pits of my original despair and this pendulum of perpetual changing horror. Still, give not my hope a premature burial. For from the books of the Necromancer, Delenda Est Mortius, comes a secret solution, an elixir of miraculous powers to sweeten and stay the taste of death. Here in this crystal vial, is this amber liquid, this mouthwash, Nevermore®. Guaranteed to refreshen and disinfect, so one doesn't have to be concerned over close contact.

I pour in the contents of the fragile container, I always carry with me. It is working, as a green froth is bubbling up from her mouth, destroying the tint of corrupt flesh. I kiss her, fresh as a day in spring. I am at Peace, thanks to Nevermore®.
I first read the story when I was very young. Even then it seemed real in a way none of the other stories I read were real. As I grew up I tried to tell myself that it was nothing but a boy's imagination which gave me that sense of reality. But then I would read the story again and it wouldn't be a story any longer. It would become a real and vital truth, distorted somehow, but still real. A voice at the back of my mind always spoke to me then, whispering with a hollow solemn softness.

"This is truth," the voice would say. "This is fact. This is not imagination or legend." And I believed it. It filled every part of me, and as a grown man I was more aware of the truth than I had been as a child. And so I worked at my job on the Gazette and led my life along the streets of Paris. But I read the story again and again, until it was part of me, until I knew that somewhere, sometime, it had existed.

Of course, I wanted to prove it to myself, to justify that quiet voice in my mind, but for years I never had the chance. And then one summer evening when the sky over the city was filled with a pale twilight, I had dinner with Dr. Armand, a good friend of mine and a historian of high standing. I remember how it was as we sat smoking our cigars and sipping our brandy. How I came one step closer to the realization of the truth that lived in my mind.

Dr. Armand reached over to a small table beside his chair and picked up a letter. He nodded his white head at me. "This ought to interest you, Paul."

"What's that you have?" I asked.

He glanced at the finely written script. "A letter from a friend of mine in Rome. It seems he was touring the seacoast last month and he ran across a highly interesting house in a small village."

I took a puff on the cigar. I tried to be calm, but something stirred inside me. "What's so interesting about this house?"

"Well," said Dr. Armand, his gaze going out the window to the peaceful evening sky, "it's quite an old house, and almost fallen to the ground, but one of the inkeepers said it once belonged to a family named Montresor."

I sat there stupefied. Dr. Armand waved the letter again. "Coincidence, of course, but I thought you might be interested." He chuckled quietly.

Illustration: AL SIROIS
and continued his talk on various topics. But I didn't hear. The voice was in my mind again, speaking softly to me. "He does not believe. But you know the truth."

"Yes!" my voice was intense. "What did you say?" Dr. Armand looked at me, puzzled.

I made up a hasty excuse and left him, after I had pressed him for all the details. When I got back to my flat, I couldn't go to sleep. There it was!

Something to prove what I believed. This bit of news made me want more proof. When morning came I went to the editor of the Gazette and quit my job. I took my savings out of the bank, bought a small motor car and started south.

I drove rapidly. A desire filled me and pulled me toward Italy, toward that small village, toward the proof of the legend that was for me a living truth. It was more than a desire, because I felt vaguely that a force outside myself was pulling me there. I slept at the roadside slumped over in the seat of the car, and ate only when the growing in my stomach became painful. The countryside raced by and I was in Italy, roaring across the plains, through the river valleys, across the rivers, disturbing the sleepy plazas and throwing up dust behind me. I had to know!

I got tired, of course. Very tired. By the time I had gotten lost once or twice, found my way again and at last reached the coast, I was sore all over. My face felt dirty and I knew my beard had grown out quite a bit. But it was worth it. With each kilometer I drove, I knew I was getting closer to the truth.

It was early evening when I finally reached the town. I had been driving along the coast for two hours with the sea spread out to my left in a glistening sheet, when at last I pulled over the top of a small hill. I stopped the car. The town lay before me at the foot of the hill. Music and shouting drifted up from below. The streets were brightly lit. My hands gripped the steering wheel. A skyrocket shot up into the air over the town and exploded in a shower of red stars, and I knew it was carnival season!

I drove down the hill. The streets were jammed with people dressed in costume, singing and dancing and running in every direction. I pushed my way through those streets on foot, paying hardly any attention to the people, watching the houses for the name of the inn mentioned in the letter. At last I found it. I think I was a little crazy then, feeling so close to my goal, because I shoved my way through the crowd and a couple of young men turned to look at me, their eyes glaring darkly through slits in their masks. I went through the door of the inn, ignoring them.

The landlord's name was Giacomo. He looked me up and down, his ancient tanned forehead wrinkling into a frown. I was a foreigner and I was not in costume. He must have felt that something was certainly wrong. And from the way I must have looked, bearded and dirty, my clothes rumpled, I suppose I couldn't blame him.

"What does the signor wish?" the old man asked me. He poured himself a glass of wine and downed it quickly.

I could hardly say the words. Excitement had made me tense, nervous. "I... I am looking for an old house."

He laughed loudly. I could tell he though I was mad, and it made me angry. I wanted to lean across the table and choke the words out of him. "We have many old houses, signor. This town is full of old houses."

"This is a particular house. It belongs to a particular family. The family's name was Montresor."

He thought a minute, staring into the wine dregs. Then he nodded. "Yes, the Montresor house is in this town. It is a ruin, signor, tumbling to the ground. No one goes there at all any more. Why do you wish to find that particular house?"

"Never mind. Where is it?"

He gave me directions. The southern edge of the village...
table and hurried out. This time I shoved people brutally out of my way, pushing against the sticky tide of humanity roistering through the streets. The rockets blazed above me, the noise dinned in my ears, but I pushed on, driven by my desire. People hurled angry curses at me but I did not heed them. At last I broke free of the crowd and found myself in a deserted street, quiet dark, with immense patches of purple shadow hiding the walls of the houses in inky impenetrability. I hurried along the street, which suddenly became a dead end. My heart fell. I stopped at seemed to be an iron gate and took out a match. I lit it and held it up, the reddish light flickering in an eerie manner. And my heart pounded within my chest.

For there, blazoned on the stone, was a coat of arms that I knew only too well. The large human-foot grinding down upon a snake as the snake sank its fangs into the heel of that same foot. Above the symbol was the motto, and I had only to glance at the first word.

Nemo. My match was suddenly extinguished by a gust of stale wind. With trembling hands I lit another. Nemo! I impune laces. And below the coat—I felt a force seize me and transform me into a wildly quivering creature of fear and anguish. The name, carved in capital that were heavy and ponderous: Montresor!

The second match flickered out into darkness. My heart thudding wildly, I pushed at the gate. There was a horrendous screeching noise, and I stepped quickly backward as the gate came free of its hinges and fell with a mighty clang onto the stone of the courtyard. This was the very house, and I was close to the heart of my secret! I raced across the courtyard, conscious within myself that soon I would know the reason for which I had been drawn over the years to this dark and malignantly brooding place. I would know what strange and demonically real impulse made me believe the legend as truth and made me seek proof.

The oppressive air of obsolescence and decay filled my nostrils as I stepped through the front portal into the first of the dark rooms. I knew the way... oh, God! I knew the way and could not turn aside! For here was the place to which I had been destined to come. Why I had been so destined, only the spirits that brooded here could explain.

I reached up to the wall and found a torch resting in its socket. With violently trembling hands I applied a match and soon had a flickering reddish light to guide me. My feet clattered hollowly on the cold and hoary stone. I paced quickly through the various suites of ancient rooms, each with its own particular odor of decay and desolation. The entrance to the staircase loomed before me and I hurried on, plunging downward at a rapid rate, watching as the shadows unfolded in the guttering torch glare, watching as I saw the reality of my brain becoming the reality of matter itself. Then the air became suddenly colder and I stood on damp ground. Around me stretched endless rows of wine racks, long empty of their casques, deserted and left to the scurrying rodents and the webs of dust and age that spread like grotesque mantles over the empty tiers.

The voice called to me now, surging through my brain, whispering on and on and I could not resist its mighty power. Come, come, make haste, make haste, the task must be performed. What task I knew not, but I raced on nonetheless. I was will-less now, a creature drugged by the commands of an unknown preternatural force. The nitre depended from the vaulted ceiling in strangely deformed shapes, and the torchlight danced and whirled on the primeval stone of the walls. I felt the chill of the air pierce to the very marrow of my bones.

Again the vaults descended and my light fell upon the hollow black sockets of ancient skulls, scattered askew on mounds of human remains, and new terror thrilled through me as my mind signaled that I was descending the river. Droplets of moisture trickled over the yellowed
skulls, and rodents scratched and chittered among the piled bones. The voice spoke again, its volume increased now, its tone imperious and sonorous. Come; make haste to perform the task!

I passed through the low arches, descended once more, pursued my way through another lengthy passage, stepping over piles of those grisly remains, and once again hurled myself down an incline, until at last I realised with a start of overwhelming terror that I was in the deepest crypt, far in the bowels of the dark earth. My torch was seized with a gust of fetid air that made it dim and lose its intensity, so that an unearthly light of a bluish color pervaded the crypt. Here the bleached relics of human life had been mounded up to the very roof. And directly before me was a wall of masonry, and lying before it upon the ground was an ancient tool with which the masons plied their trade.

I stood in wonder and awe, realizing that here at last I had found the utter actuality of that which I had once only sensed vaguely. The speaker thundered his monstrous tones into the remotest crevices of my brain, and I realized that he was lodged behind the wall of masonry, imprisoned, yet powerful in all of his fiendish strength.

Break the masonry! The command echoed and re-echoed in my confused brain. I reeled dizzily and nearly dropped my light. I staggered forward, no longer a mortal, but an agent of some weird and terrible force from the great dark guls of supernatural power that lie far beyond the ken of mere human knowledge. I knelt and placed my torch in a heap of grisly bones, propping it up as best I could, and then I took the mason's tool into my hand and gazed at it wonderingly, my brow hot and feverish. I leaped forward, and with a fury that approached madness I attacked the masonry.

I have no conception of how long I labored. The torch dwindled slowly and I battered at the ancient stonework, chipping it away fragment by fragment, until the blood streamed off my injured hands and stained the stone with its red color. I worked feverishly, emitting whimpering sounds, howling insane curses to unknown gods, exciting myself to a pitch of brutal mindless automatism. At the end of this period of madness, I had created an opening in the masonry scarcely a foot square. I took my torch with faltering hand and thrust it before me into the aperture. And my demented eyes saw the speaker who had sought me.

There in the flickering illumination I beheld the figure floating, as in mist, above the floor of the smaller crypt. I grew cognizant of the garb of motley, of the delicate tinkle of bells on the peaked cap, of the almost overpowering reek of wine. From out that spectral face two orbs burned, intense as the innermost fires of the underworld. The voice that spoke to me issued from that unearthly apparition.

"You have fulfilled the obligation placed upon your family by your ignoble ancestor. You have released me from my prison and set my spirit free to roam the outer spheres. The debt is paid."

"Who is speaking?" I shrieked in frenzy. "Who addresses me? thus?"

"Fortunato," was the reply. "My tortured spirit has survived my flesh."

"Fortunato!" I cried. "But why have I been chosen? Why has it been my task and mine alone to free you? Who am I to be called here thus? In God's name, speak!"

"You are Montresor," came the shade's reply.

"Montresor!" This I shrieked in a voice completely and utterly saturated with a wild madness.

"The last of the Montresor line. I have kept alive within you the spirit of the first Montresor, that infamous spirit which fed upon its own guilt and transformed itself into the spirit of a man inflamed with guilt. I have placed a compulsion upon you to free me, and you have answered."

And then I was aware of what I had only sensed before, that the immaterial substance of
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By now, all of you have probably read the May Caveat Column and have had time to formulate your own ideas and views on the basic form of SPWAQ.

I've received several letters that were against the three issue requirement for a semi-pro magazine to qualify; and some that agreed with me. However, since last issue, I've had time to study and evaluate both pro and con of the three issue requirement and have come to the conclusion that perhaps it would be in the best interest of SPWAQ to lower it to one issue per year. This would allow those semi-pro magazines that only come out once a year to join, but would also make SPWAQ stronger by having these editors and their magazines backing SPWAQ.

I've decided that a once a year mag wouldn't have that much of an advantage over the bi-monthly or the quarterly magazines, even though their quality of fiction, artwork, layout and page count might be superior to that of the more frequent publications. I feel that the bi-monthly and quarterly magazines have a greater following than the once a year publication, therefore giving them the same chance for awards that the annually or semi-annually magazines have. If you feel you agree or disagree with me on this, let me know, as I feel this issue is one that should be clarified as soon as possible.

As to how SPWAQ is coming, we are about to reach our first fifty members, half of what we need to send out ballots for nomination of officers.

In his last letter to me Paul Berglund, who is a member of SPWAQ, said that his wife has offered to count the nomination ballots. I asked someone to do this in order to get a complete impartial tabulation of the votes. I want to thank Paul and his wife for their help, along with others who have offered help beyond the norm.

Illustration Ron Wilber

Just to give you an idea of the diversity of our membership so far, I would like to list a few of the members we have. I'm sorry I can't give a complete listing, but due to the greater number of pages this time around, my space is limited. As soon as our one hundred members is reached, I will send out a flyer to all members of this complete list plus other information about SPWAQ.

We have so far, several members of Science Fiction Writers of America, including Mary Schaub, and Grant Carrington, who is an established pro, having sold at least a dozen stories to magazines like AMAZING AND FANTASTIC. We have editors, including John Diprote of Black Lute, Ken Hahn of Jet, Gene Day of Dark Fantasy, who has also sold art to pro magazines. Artists, including Joe Treacy ed of Dead- spawm, Rick Harrison, Gary Kato and A.B. Cox. We also have Jon Inouye, who is now the editor of a pro paperback book publishing co, Randon Books. I thank all those listed and those not for helping make an idea into a reality. I hope the second fifty comes in as fast as the first.

However, enough of SPWAQ, let us get on to what this column was intended for.

First, I have the job of announcing the sad news on the demise of what was one of the finest and fastest growing semi-pro magazines in the field, Astral Dimensions has folded. I received a letter from Mark Jacobs, informing me that after AD#6 there will be no more. All manuscripts, art and subscription money will be returned as soon as possible. Mark states that both he and Chris loved putting out AD, but lack of money, plus the fact
that both will be going to different colleges next fall, make it almost impossible for them to do so. Mark ask me to mention that back issues are still available.

I'm going to drop the Recommended and Not Recommended rating on this issue, due to the fact that most of my information is unchecked at present.

Ken Huff sends along another couple of markets, ENIZNAF(formally Triton, which I tried to get in touch with, but never received an answer when they were Triton) address 66 N. Virginia Ct, Englewood Cliffs N.J.07632. Ed Jim Huang. Payment is 1¢ a word and they are rumored to report in about two months. The second market is ROTHIUM, editor David Hull, Box 471, Owen Sound, Ontario, N4K 5P7. Wants short fiction, pays 1¢ a word and reports in a short time. This information is taken directly from Ken's letter, and neither market has been contacted by me as yet.

MIDNIGHT ELF PRODUCTIONS, editor Mike Swanson, p.o.Box 344, St. James N.Y. 11780 is paying 2¢ a word for stories up to 10,000. They favor short stories, and the payment rate is based upon the likeability of each story. They want SF, Fantasy and Comics, in both fiction and articles. This information was taken from Space & Time.

A new magazine called ESCAPE is getting ready to put out its first issue. The editor is Charles Melvin, and he is paying 2 jaw word, the latter reserved for big names, payment upon publication. They lean heavily toward escapist literature, such as Fantasy, heroic, but will also cover straight SF and horror. I will not list his address now, as he has just notified me that he is moving soon, so I'll list his new address as soon as he sends it to me.

I received a couple of copies of Chacal, along with a letter from the Editor Arnold Fenner. Arnold states that he will be glad to support SFWA. Payment for fiction starts around 1¢ per word, payment for artwork is negotiated privately with each illustrator. A.B. just received word back from them on one of his stories, and I have one in to them, but have as yet heard from them. There are a couple of problems I would like to get straightened out with the editor before I recommend this market though. I have received two or three letters from different people claiming that Chacal has ripped off stories without paying people, and also printed stories without an author's knowledge. As you know, I never take any information like this at face value, but always check it out with the source if possible. I have written Arnold Fenner about these letters, and hope to find out the answers by next issue. Until that time I suggest you hold off sending any material to Chacal.

In his last letter to me, Darrell Schweitzer ask about MIDNIGHT SUN and Multitude. He states that neither will answer his letters and one returned a story which they had already bought. I myself have tried to get in touch with MULTITUDE, but cannot get an answer from Wayne Martin the editor. He bought two of my stories over a year ago. Darrell also ask if SPWAO will handle complaints against Ted White now that SFWA refuses to recognize Amazing or Fantastic. All I can say to that, is if a SPWAO member has a problem with them, we will do our best to try and solve it.

Last issue I mentioned a magazine called OOFER TOASTSTOOL. I received a letter from the editor stating that C.S. is not a semi-pro magazine.

I also received a nice magazine called ALWAYS COMES THE TWILIGHT, however, editor Gary Groth stated in his editorial that it was the first last and only attempt. Too bad, as this magazine would have been a fine addition to the semi-pro field.

Just received a card from Wayne Warfield, editor of PHANTASY DIGEST. Wayne says that PD is backlogged and overflowing. Anything accepted would be in holding much too long. Until that backlog is exhausted, they will be a closed market. Wayne has hopes (too early to discuss in detail) of using much on file material elsewhere, so this closing may be quite temporary.

The last issue of Moonbroth is now out, as is Dales Novelllet, THE REDUANT WARELOCK; illustrated by Gary Kato.

I know it's a little early, but unless something comes up, I will be attending OCTOCON #1 for October 22 & 23 in Santa Rosa Calif. Guest of Honor will be Paul Anderson, with other pros such as C.L. Moore, George Barr, and Robert Heinlein. Also present will be Bob Wilkins, of Creature Features.

Have run out of space, hope to have more next time around on SPWAO and Caveat.
To quote Mr. Bradbury: "WEIRD TALES was a grand place to survive, write, and grow, without inhibition, all through the time from my 21st birthday until I was about 26. They encouraged me to move in new directions which resulted in my first book DARK CARNIVAL. My debt to WEIRD TALES' various editors is immense." THE WIND Copyright 1943 by Ray Bradbury, permission to reprint granted by the author.

THE WIND
RAY BRADBURY

ILLUSTRATION
JIM McQUADE

JOHN COLT was awake and listening.

Moonlight sluiced into his room by the huge triple window fronting the upstairs window of the house, fell across his sharp, questioning features.

The wind moved far away in the night, and Colt's lips worked as he listened to it; moving stealthily and mournfully from the sea, approaching the house as surely as mighty horses hooves.

Colt's body shivered, hairs stood erect upon his neck, and goose-pimpls clustered on his limbs. He knew why he felt this way. After he could believe nothing else.

He knew the wind was coming toward him—and he slipped from bed, thrust himself tremblingly into a robe, found carpet slippers and ventured downstairs to await its arrival.

He went to the phone, thinking, "This is what I've waited for, calmly at first. Curious, Alert. Sure of most factors. But I don't know how much I can stand. I keep losing my grip, gaining it, and losing it again."

His hands shook as he dialed the call through. "Hello, Herb? This is Colt."

"John—how are you?"

"Not so good. And, like a fool, I dismissed my servants today. I'm alone...."

All the while he talked, Colt listened. The weird music of the wind was muted by distance. It waxed louder.

"My writing routine for the last week's been shot to hell, Herb. Been trying to get some rest early tonight, but—"

What was that? Colt winced. A tiny breeze, preamble to the wind now on its way, rattled a shutter. Colt thought, did I lock every door, check every-

thing?

"Sorry to hear that, John—"

Herb Thompson was talking. Colt gave ear, then:

"Herb, I'd like to have you come for the night. Can you arrange—"

"I'll have to ask the little woman, John. Hold on."

A pause. Thompson was conferring with his wife. And far off the wind rose steadily. "Sorry, Colt, Alice says we've company coming."

"Oh," Colt swallowed, "Look Herb, it's important. I've got theories about—well." He stopped, groping for words.

"Sounds like a case of nerves," said Thompson. "Why don't you come over here?"

"That wouldn't help." Colt shook his head. "I don't know what would, I—well I'll call back in half an hour."

He hung up. What could herb do? Nothing. It wouldn't be fair to drag an innocent into this set-up. And, anyway, how explain to Herb about the wind? Police help? They'd send a sof-pad squad.

Colt deliberately opened the front door. A lopsided frame of moonlight stroked across the gleaming floor, picked out his wine-colored robe and slippers. He stood, shivering, waiting.

The great wind could be only a mile away now, soughing through a long high, dim corridor of swaying elms, plunging down the arboreal path toward Colt's lonely country manor.

Colt lit a cigarette, but his dark eyes fastened on the tree lane, eyes that had seen Rangoon, Stockholm, swept from Nairobi to the
Amazon

It was a dark, meaningful wind. Others might have been amused by Colt's wild thoughts. Thompson, for instance, would laugh uproariously.

But Colt was not amused. Alone out here, the nine o'clock countryside steamed in a vast tide of shimmered, eerie silence, this fortress of a house his final refuge, the last roll of dice forced on him, Colt could only wait.

The last stand. Decks cleared for action. Colt dragged on his cigarette, flicked it away, thinking; if I scream no one will hear me. No one. I'm far from town. Too damned far.

He'd phone Herb in twenty minutes. What to say? Something like this: "Herb, it began ten years ago when I was investigating phenomena. I'd been around, seen hurricanes, typhoons and whirlwinds. I knew what wind could do."

"Well, I was in Tibet. I heard of a mountain called the mountain of Winds; the space where the dark winds from all over earth congregate at one time or other. It's a vast evil mountain, gray and jutting; hard, bony rock without a hand or foothold. Blasphemy to touch it."

"I touched it, Herb, More, I scaled it. Up thousands of sickening, dizzy feet, climbing where only madmen climb to probe into what's better left undissected. I gained its crest—raw and wounded."

Of all the high, wild places I've seen this was the most terrifying. On its very peak cleft a scar of valley through which a tide of wind rushed shrieking; not one wind but millions, small and large, light and smoke—hued.

Snow, rain, sleet and hail raged all about on the rocks. The blunt flesh of the mount sustained it all, and I perceived this from a niche, protected.

"Oh, how the clouds shot by there, high up, like creamy shreds torn from some huge and Belabored wool—skin."


"Now I snaked up or down, or escaped, I don't know. Call it luck, fate, the will of an intervening God. But I cleared like a lichen, hung, dropped, picked myself up, dropped again, scrambled and ran, afraid of what I'd seen."

"I got to Bombay. From time to time, after that, there were suggestions of what would follow. Nothing definitely singing me out for action, but general disturbances that occurred with ungodly precision wherever I traveled. Then, they ceased. I thought I had it licked. Until this week, six nights ago."

"I lay sleepless and listening. I heard a wind that night, Herb. Chuckling and laughing about the house, just for an hour or so, not very long and not very loud. Then it went away."

"But I will never forget the sounds it made."

"The second night the same thing happened. Only, this time, Herb," he thought Colt, "the wind slammed shutters, spilled down my chimney throwing soot, whisking out the fire in a flood of sparks."

"The first two nights weren't bad. I cocked my head, listened, amused to think I heard faint voices on the wind. But the third and fourth nights I changed my mind. It grew worse. The fifth night the wind returned and stayed on and on, blowing and blowing until dawn. I remember what happened when I dared to open the door a moment."

"The wind came eagerly in..."

Colt stanced himself resolutely. He was not old. Thirty, moonlight mantling his lean, intent face, his thick black hair and dark eyes. For the present he did not recognize fear, he rubbed shoulders with curiosity, but tired resignation was its bed companion.

Eventually it would have snared him no matter what he did. He'd had plenty of warning to flee. But, he shrugged, why bother? He'd make his stand here.

The wind was almost tangible, rushing from tree to tree, faster, and yet faster. Rising, roaring, rising like a great translucent fist, ready to crush down upon the house, ready to sweep it all away. But that was not its purpose, it didn't want the house at all. It wanted Colt.

The wind went up. It elevated, freeing itself like an invisible prehistoric bird from the eams. Great tidal waves of atmosphere punched trunks and worried branches aside.

It screamed earthward, down to the open door. Straight for the door, straight for Colt!

Instantly, Colt's arm flicked up, snatched the door, slammed it. Locks thunghed sharp into niches. Bolts rapped home!

A second late, the wind fell in
a lethal avalanche, titanic and bone-shaking. The house heaved, groaned, as the air flung hard shoulders against it!

Colt staggered, the laugh from his lips crippled at birth. "Damn you, damn you! I fooled you. I fooled you again!"

He limped against the door, gasping. His brain was a steaming riot; what would have happened if the locks had failed, if he had not moved with a snap...?

Eyes distended, he pinned the door unnecessarily with spread-eagled body, laughter not his own dropping from his mouth.

"You thought I'd let you in tonight, didn't you?" he choked. "Thought I was through. But I had everything ready, waiting. You won't get me, by the gods. You can't—you won't!"

The fury flanked the house with resounding echoes. A great vacuum machine nuzzled at the gables. Shutters leaped open, clattered; tiny breaking wings—clipped off. Trees doubled up as if attacked, struck in the vitals.

Colt abandoned the door, hurried to a window. The wind followed. It was all about the house, but its volcanic head looked after Colt, pressed a hard shifting face against the panes.

The window glass whined a crystal song of strain and stress.

"You can't break it!" jeered Colt. "You can't. It's new, unbreakable! I made sure of that yesterday."

The intangible thing outside followed him from window to window and then from room to room, pressing and mourning.

Colt stopped, struck by a strange thought. He gave it to the wind:

"You're a big hound run amuck," he cried. "You're the damnest, biggest prehistoric killer that ever hunted prey. A big sniffling hound, trying to smell me out, find me. You push your big cold nose up to the house, taking air, and when you find me in the parlor you drive your pressure there, and when I'm in the kitchen you fling your power there. A big invisible beast with the muscles of the mad winds, damn you!"

In reply, the night shrieked with all the agony of death. The wind seemed to razor the very gown of night, ripping it to shreds, shaking stars, trembling the shaded earth.

It tore at the roof with quick, hard fingers, quested under the house to hiss through floor chinks. A whip of cold flicked Colt's legs.

"Get back, curse you!" he blundered away from a side door.

He ran from room to room, upstairs and down, switching on lights; and the wind watched him, moved with him. The house flamed with light, brilliantly garished amidst a whirling pool of night.

Colt stopped long enough, coming down the hall stair, to light his pipe. He made a rigid ceremony of it, trying to steady his fingers. The flame fluttered. A cold draft snuffed it out.

Colt tried again, succeeding. The pipe glowed. He blew smoke and the draft whisked it away in a quick billow.

The wind smote the house again and again. It fell, it leaned, it thrust. It whined through the screen door, but Colt made no move to satisfy it, so it jerked a screen off in a frenzy of strength, shattered it across the dark lawn.

A strong house, thought Colt, and he was glad he had ordered reinforcements for certain portions of it; new wood, new steel, new locks.

The harried trees were flung one way and another, riding whips cracked by a Jovian fist.

Back in the living room, before the warming electric fire, log, Colt picked up a book. One of the books he had written on hurricanes, typhoons and other colossal forces. He thumbed through it, stopping at the dedication:

"This book is written by one who has seen, but who has always escaped. It is dedicated to those who lost the game of elements...."

Always escaped? No—not always. To night....

The printed page misted, flowed, garbled. Colt's pipe went out. When he tried to light it again he could not. He set the book on his lap and began reading.

And then a draft of wind, small, almost imperceptible, fingered the pages. It turned them idly, thoughtfully, one by one. Over and over and over. Colt watched it work its will with the pages, stiffened and hypnotized. His fingers jerked. He seized the book and dashed it to the hearth, cursing.

The wind mocked him, tenderly stroking his brow with a slim finger.

Colt flung himself into the hall, tore down a huge drapery, jammed it against door, under which the draft came hissing and
laughing.

"I'll throttle you—I'll stop your tongue!"

And then, tired: "Go away, damn you." Weakly. "Go away. Let a mortal live."

A grinding noise. Something crackled like thick dry bones. A pause. A rustling, thumping terrific crash. The lights went out—the room plunged into a howling dark-pit. The power poles lay slaughtered by the wind. The electric gate, glowing faintly, died too, in the black room. The words Colt babbled were meaningless, like an hysterical child.

Fumbling, Colt struck a match, light played over a face aged twenty years. The lonely flame threw light over something that gleamed dully. The phone! Maybe—The phone wires had been connected to other poles. If the line was still intact...

"Operator!" Colt waited. Response, "Yes, sir?"

"Thank God, thank God, thank God—operator, give me Trinity 9929."

"Trinity 9929?"

"Yes. And hurry, for Lord's—"

A pause. The phone on the other end was ringing. It was ringing. It was ringing! Click.

"Herb Thompson speaking."

"Herb? Herb!" Insane with relief. "Yes. Who's this?"

"Herb—Herb, this is Colt—"

"John? Your voice, I didn't recognize—"

"I haven't time! Listen, I want you to do something for me—"

"Anything. What's wrong? You sound—"

CLICK!


Silence.

The wind moved outside. It had won again. Won again. First the lights—now the phone.

"Operator. I've been cut off! Operator, oper—it's no use. NO DAMNED USE! God curse you, damn you, kill you—take this!" He ripped the phone from its wiring, heaved it at a window. He realized his error too late to stop it. The phone struck only partially, splintering glass into a crystal web, breaking a small hole.


"You want me alive, don't you? Alive. You don't dare knock the house down in one fell blow. No, that would kill me, and you want me alive—so you can rip me apart finger by finger and muscle by muscle. Or do you want what's inside me—my mind—my brain—my mind—"

He faltered to a stop, shocked by truth. He put a hand to his brow. "My mind. That's it. You want it, don't you?"

"You don't care for the husk that cradles the mind, but you want the intellect. You covet my thought, my life power, my ego. The psychic force, the power of thought and existence—you want all those because that is what you are, aren't you?"

"He drew in a long, aching breath. His eyes coursed tears and his cheeks were wet. And he cursed the wind.

"That's what you are, a big cloud of vapors, atoms, winds from every corner of the earth—the same wind that ripped the Celebs ten years ago, the same pampero that killed in Argentina, the typhoon that fed well in Hawaii, and the hurricane that devastated the coast of Africa last year! You're all of them, part of each, part of those tempests I escaped.

"Only, something happened to give you a start in the direction of alien life. Or maybe the Winds have always been this way; more than hot and cold currents. You want power, like mine. You want intellect. I could do you more good or harm than others, for I know your feeding ground, I know where you are born and where you expire. You don't want death, like other winds. You want life, to get me out of the way because I know."

"I can tell the world of your cruelty, tell them how to parry and defeat you, as I have done in books! But you don't want my preaching any more. You can use me for your own purpose! Incorporate me into your huge cold carcass, give you knowledge, purpose, direction! You want me on your side!"

COLT laughed again, lungs tired and broken from laughing and shouting against the dinning. The house shook like a slipper in a puppy's mouth.

"You'll have to tear the house
down bit by bit! And I'll duel you tooth and nail all the way-like I fought you in Ceylon. When I started a forest fire, the one thing that survives and feeds on wind, combating it. I licked you then, and I'll do it again!"

The house shook once more and the crumbling started.

The front wall bulged in. Glass splintered but did not break. Colt, face swollen from emotion, turned, scrambling for the kitchen.

He dared look once as the kitchen door sealed behind-saw the parlor wall buckle, spew in as if rammed by an artillery shell. The wind stabbed through, howling in triumph.

The kitchen door barely shut before the wind's shoulder was against it. The frail lock could not hold. Colt fought against straining hinges. Giving up, he jerked the cellar door agap, leaped down, bolted it.

Bomber fragments of kitchen door shrapnel everywhere. Gas mains tore loose, spurted gas that blazed into fire.

The upper floor of the house tore away like the simultaneous ripping of ten million yards of muslin.

Colt gritted his teeth, held to the door. Blood ran from his nostrils. He fought idiocy, fought the wind with his mind.

"You can't get me-you can't! I'll hide until you rip the door up, board by board-then I'll burrow in the ground like an animal and escape! Like I did in Alexandria years ago, like I did in Nairobi! I'll burrow!"

The wind paid no heed. There were voices in it. Voices of the gale, bora and layamuc. Wretched calling, pleadings of the sioocos and tempests. They pleaded with Colt, commanding, telling, urging, ordering him to give himself up.

These were the tongues of ten thousand killed in a typhoon, seven thousand slaughtered by a hurricane, three thousand engulfed by a cyclone. Twisted and tortured and flung from continent to continent on the backs and in the bellies of monsoons and whirlwinds. Wandering in rains and showers, in snows and hails, racked by thunder, pelted by water, fettered and bodiless.

Moulded. Molded from one million disenfranchised spirits into one voice. And that voice, one of darkness and power, now demanded but yet another sacrifice.

In respite, the wind slowed. It quelled over the conquered rubble of wood, plaster and shattered glass. It roved through the crippled ruin, biding time. It languished outside the cellar, singing a blank verse melody in a score of keys.

And the singing was only broken by the sobbing from the cellar. There was a great silence after the maelstrom. A silence punctuated by weeping and the anxious hiss of the wind.

Colt would not come out.

The cellar floor was dirt. He lay on it, looking up, face streaked with dirt, sweat, lined and haggard. "Come and get me," he husked.

Scrambling at the soil, raking a shallow trench for his body, he attempted to burrow to crouch in. His fingernails tore and bled. He ached. He longed to rest.

Finally, he could stand it no longer. A coil of rope lay in a corner. He clutched it, threw a snake of it up over one quivering rafter. The kitchen flooring gave, creaking, bit by bit. In five minutes...

As the rope came raveling down, Colt tied a quick noose in it, hard and sure. Just far enough off the floor to...

Next, a keg of nails, rolled and rocked into place. Colt stepped up. This was escape. He reached for the noose.

The wind flicked the noose away from his fingers. A small hand of wind somehow had crept into the cellar from above, and now it flung the rope wildly in circles.

"Give it to me! The rope, you fool, the rope!" Colt tried to catch the madly dancing hemp-line. But the wind threw it out of reach, zig-zagging it from side to side and back and forth. A lurch from Colt-the rope flew away, came back to rap his face, then out again.

Desperation. Colt snatched, cursed, snatched again. Time grew short. So little time to escape. A snatch—a miss. And...

He caught the rope. The wind died. Died as if only playing a game. It waited. Colt wondered why. But taking advantage of the cessation, he thrust his head into the noose.

"You can't have me alive, you can't have my life-foe!" he cried. "I'm getting away—I'm getting away—NOW!"

Colt leaped, kicking the nail-keg with frantic feet. The rope sang, wiring his throat in
strangulation.

"I have won," his misting brain exalted, "I have won!"

But immediately, the rafters upon which the rope depended, sagged inward, shrieking, slowly, slowly, certainly.

With cracking thunder the rafters, pulled by Colt's weight gave way, opening, opening an entrance for the wind.

The rafters collapsed, the floor caved and flew apart. Colt fell, sprawled, choking in the dirt.

"All right, God damn you!" He stiffened up, raging. "Here I am—take me!"

The wind howled...

"THE LINES ARE DOWN SR."

"Are you sure, operator? I was cut off in the middle of my call."

Herb Thompson laid the phone back in its cradle and leaned against the writing desk, shaking his head. "I can't figure it out. No storm. A little wind, maybe, but—" He took his coat off an armchair and shrugged into it. "Think I'll drive out Colt's way, have a look-see. He sounded strange. But, that's his way. May be on his way here now, with another of his cracked theories. Liable to pop up any time."

Herb Thompson was undecided. He stood, wavering, considering, hat in hand. Faintly, a rapping came, on the front door. " Eh?" Herb started, listening. The knock was repeated. "Who's knocking at this time of—"

Thompson hurried across his den, out into the hall, where he stopped again, alert. "Huh." Faintly, he heard laughter. "Of course." Herb grinned hugely. I'd know his laughter anywhere. It's Colt. He came when he was cut off, couldn't wait till morning to tell me his confounded tall-tales." Thompson chuckled as he marched to the front door, "Glad he's here. Probably brought some friends with him. Sounds like a lot of other people laughing."

Thompson opened the front door. "Come on in Colt!"

The porch was vacant.

Thompson showed no surprise, his face grew amusedly sly. He laughed. "Colt? Now none of your tricks! Come on." He switched on the porch-light and peered out and around. "Where are you, Colt?"

No answer.

Thompson waited a moment, suddenly chilled to the marrow. He stepped out on the porch and looked uneasily about, very carefully.

A sudden wind caught, whipped his coat, disheveled his hair. He thought he heard laughter again.

The wind died down, sad, mourning passing away, away, going back far out to the sea, to the Celebes, to Nairobi, to Sumatra and Cape Horn. Fading, fading, fading. Laughing.

Thompson shrugged. He went in and closed the door shivering. "That's funny..." he said.

The Shadow Shade

For Robert E. Howard

Light poured out through the old Texas house, Though shades were pulled down, So the vast world outside might only see The shadow of a young man's head;

Then the shadow of the head changed position, To make room for the long shadow gun Poised and ready, and fired! And the drop of all shadows.

Only thirty years old, The mighty blast of death Gave spaces through which his lonely horrors, Like his life, might flee.

And from the littered pages at his desk, Barbarians, demons, ships, wenches and gods And much, much more, died a little, In the morning the shades were lifted.
H. Warner Munn writes: "In response to your request for a contribution to your double issue tribute to Weird Tales, I am enclosing an article which I wrote for that magazine many years ago. Unfortunately, following the death of Farnsworth Wright, the policy of the magazine was changed under the administration of Editor Dorthy Macilwraith. The article was returned to me and it has never been sent anywhere else."

We hope you enjoy Mr. Munn's article and we are proud to publish it in its long over due entirety.

The Monster & The Saint

H. Warner Munn

The Monster was born in an ominously named Black Tower in the Castle of Champaotce on the borders of Brittany and Anjou. It was the year of Our Lord, 1404, and because he was of noble birth there is no doubt about the year.

He was christened with honor and rejoicing in the castle chapel, before the local nobility and peasantry with lighted candles in their hands and happy words of congratulation on their lips for the young mother. It was a resplendent affair as the infant Gilles de Rais was solemnly initiated into the Catholic Church.

A little candle lights a dark room; so the life of a saintly person shines in a wicked time. The darker the shadows, the more brilliant the light.

Without the light some of the shadows would not be there at all. Can we then imagine that great evil can possibly spring from good? That without a Christ there could have been no Judas? That, had there been no Joan of Arc, there might have been no Bluebeard?

When the Saint came into this world to bless it for a little while with her presence and her shining example of courage, love and faith, there were no fanfares of trumpets. Maybe a few friends attended her christening, sharing with relatives a simple repast. There was surely wine; there must have been similar congratulations. The fourth child of a poor farmer could not expect much more recognition than this.

Gilles was then eight years old, pampered and petted, already aggressive and destructive, well educated and undergoing intensive training to become a soldier and a noble lord. He was a first son of an aristocratic family, heir to great riches - a little prince with expectations greater than any other child of his age in France, or Europe.

The little girl was schooled at her mother's knee, learning - as she said later, in her mother's praise, "My 'Our Father', 'Hail Mary', and 'I believe.' And my teaching I had from her, in my faith, and from no one else."

She never learned how to read or write more than her name and that in order to sign the letters she later dictated to Kings, Generals and Noble Lords.

She liked to go to church. The sound of bells made her happy. She had girl friends. She ran races with them and danced, as they did, at festivals and feast days, and hung wreaths of flowers on the Ladies Tree at the end of Lent.

For this was where the fairies were said to have danced in olden days. When she was thirteen - 'or thereabouts' in her own words, she saw a vision. It has never been satisfactorily explained, but she was in no doubt that Saint Michael came to her, as a Messenger of God to help and guide her toward her destiny. "He said I must be a good girl and that God would help
me. He told me of the pitiful state of the Kingdom of France and he told me that I must go to succor the King of France. And so I put away my childish plays - as little as I could."

Truly, this must be one of the saddest lines in any such self admissions.

In that year of 1425, all was changed for Joan - and because of this, the history of Europe was changed.

It was a bad year for France. After some uncertain years of armistice, the Hundred Years War was renewed. Defeat followed defeat and in the midst of national disaster, Gilles improved his fortune by a wealthy marriage and his reputation by brilliant feats of arms. At 21, he was now one of the richest men in France, although after a brief honeymoon he set his 16 year old bride aside and it is not said that ever afterward he became devoted to any other woman but one.

This one he met on February 23, 1429, coming there out of curiosity with his cousins, Guy and Andre de Laval, to see what all the excited rumors were about. He immediately made himself her friend and champion.

Before this, in his battles, he had displayed brutality and arrogance - and great courage. It was a cruel age and he was a man of his time, so in judging him this must be taken into account. What little purity of soul he later retained was nurtured chiefly by his devotion to Joan - "his Angel." What chivalry he observed in as dispassionate and callously cynical a society as ever lived was in her honor.

After her martyrdom, both vanished forever.

It may be that he recognized a chance of salvation in clinging thus to a pure soul, more noble than his own could ever hope to be. On Joan's side, it is obvious that she was drawn toward Gilles, if only in gratitude for his friendship. When the Dauphin finally entrusted her with a command, Gilles at her own request, was made her protector.

on the field.

To get this command, she had come to Chinon by quite a different road.

That France was much smaller than ours, most of it under control of the English or the Burgundians, each fierce fighters. However, in Burgundian territory, there was one little island of free France, the walled town of Vaucouleurs, held by Robert de Beaudricourt, a tough character who had been fighting ever since he was old enough to carry a sword and expected to go on doing so as long as he lived.

He did not waste much time on a pretty, pensive dark-haired farmer girl of sixteen who dropped in one day, from the neighboring village of Domremy and asked him to send a message to Dauphin. "Let him guard himself well and not offer battle to his foes, for the Lord will give him succor by mid-Lent." She casually added that, by God's will, she herself would lead the Dauphin to be crowned!

About the last thing that Dauphin Charles had in mind was resistance. When all of France was taken he would be a royal prisoner and the life he would live would not be much different than the one he was living. His prison would be smaller, - that was all.

Knowing this, Sir Robert sardonically asked where she got her information.

She replied, earnestly, that Saint Michael had told her so.

"Indeed! Most interesting! Did she see him often?"

"Quite often. Also Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret."

That was enough for Sir Robert. A joke was a joke, but he was a busy man. He also had worries.

Some biographers say he threatened to give her to his soldiers if she ever bothered him again, others omit this snappish remark.

He was a good man at heart.

Noticing perhaps, a quivering lip, he merely told Durand Lassois, Joan's cousin by marriage, who had come with her, to box her ears and take her home to her father.

She had known better than ask her father's help in this venture. Two years before,
Jacques d'Arc, had dreamed that he saw her going away with men-at-arms and had told her brothers: "If that should happen, you must drown her, or I will."

He loved her dearly. It is said that after her death at Rouen, he also died -- of a broken heart.

A little daunted by her callous reception, she went home, but her visit and the purpose of it became widely discussed around Domremy. Old prophecies that a virgin would save France were repeated and the general feeling was that Joan had been chosen to be of help to France -- nobody was quite sure in what way.

The attack on Vaucouleurs did not come, but there was fighting elsewhere, in which, as usual, the Dauphin's armies came off second best. It was quite customary for a thousand or so well armed French soldiers to sight a couple of hundred English in the distance and to turn and run without firing a shot.

In October, 1428, an English army attacked the strong city of Orleans after seizing and garrisoning Meuno and Beaugency on one side and Jargeau on the other. From these points they commanded the River Loire above and below Orleans and began building strong forts -- thirteen, in all -- in front of every point of entrance or exit from the city.

When these were finished, and the city starved into surrender, the English and Burgundians could operate from this great base against the remaining few cities till all was gone and he was a miserable fugitive or dead.

It was imperative, Joan's voices advised, that she act at once. In December, she left Domremy to visit her cousins, the Lassois, again. She stayed with them about six weeks and then visited friends, Henri Royer and his wife, Katherine, in Vaucouleurs, where she hoped to be within easy reach of de Baudricourt, whose resistance she did indeed in time wear down.

It is said, he finally gave in, when she scolded him bitterly for delaying her mission, saying: "In God's name, you are too slow in sending me; for this day -- a great disaster has befallen the gentle Dauphin and worse fortune he will have unless you send me to him!"

Some days later, when this statement had been proven true, de Baudricourt brought a priest to the Royer's home where the priest exorcised her to discover if she were a witch. After being satisfied she was not, Sir Robert decided she was truly sent by God and blessed her and her mission.

He gave her a sword and an escort of six men; the people of Vaucouleurs took up a collection and bought her a horse and in the clothes of a page she set out for Chinon, on the Martyr's Road.

By the way Joan and her escort traveled, using back roads wherever possible, it was about 325 miles through bandit infested and enemy held country. They accomplished their journey in eleven days and came to Chinon without mishap.

Throughout, the men treated her with the utmost respect, which in those times was most unusual.

Once, indeed, they were menaced. But the men who were lying in wait for them, knowing in advance that they were coming, saw them and let the little party go by. Why? -- no one knows.

In Chinon, she went to church and prayed there. She was weary, but would have gone to Dauphin at once, had she been permitted. Word had gone ahead; she was expected, the people believed in her mission, but she was kept waiting while more time was added to that which had already been lost and there was so little left.

Indeed, one is struck with almost every utterance of the Maid, before her capture, of the fearful need for haste, of her desperate attempts to impress upon everyone who could possibly help her, the immediate urgency for prompt and decisive action.

After four days, she obtained an audience. She had never seen the Dauphin or a picture of him, but she tuned away from the throne where a man sat in borrowed finery, perhaps a better man than the one who loaned the robes, and ignoring the sham prince, she
glanced over the crowd gathered to test her. She went directly to the
real Dauphin, hiding in the thick
of them and fell on her knees be-
fore him, although he was dressed
in the clothes of a poor courtier.

He asked her for a sign that
she was truly sent by God to the
deliverance of France and in pri-
ivate conference she gave him his
assurance, one that satisfied him
and he declared to all the court
that she had told him of a secret
which he and God alone had known
before and for that reason he had
complete confidence in her.

But there was no real hurry! Was it actually so important to
move at once to the relief of
Orleans? If it fell, would it
matter so much?

Let us discuss the matter at
length -- with the priests to find
out whence she came -- his politi-
cal sycophants, why she came --
his military advisors to explain
what she could do, where she could
go, -- with what force -- in what
direction -- at what time.

In the end, the Maid told them
and they did as she said -- at
Orleans and thereafter.

It was Joan's task to raise an
army, to take a beleaguered city,
to carry out a complicated cam-
paign -- and then crown an almost
unwilling, doubting king in a city
-- Rheims -- now held by the enemy.

Even this seemed not so dif-
ficult as to instill confidence in
a man like the cowardly Dauphin
-- but to march in strength, to carry
him to the one place where Kings
of France must be crowned. Im-
possible!

The whole project might have
daubed any experienced general at
the head of a well-found force. It
already had. They did not even
have a proper flag to fly above
their pitiful effort. The orif-
lamme -- the great, the holy, war-
flag of France which had been
carried to victory by her armies
in past centuries -- was locked
away in Paris, and Paris was, at
this time, an English city.

She said later; "I asked my
Lord's messengers what I should do.
And they answered me, saying,
'Take up the banner of your Lord.'
And therefore I had a banner made."

So under this banner, the last
hope of France marched to do bat-
tle against the powerful English
army encamped around Orleans. Its
commander-in-Chief was a girl. She
was seventeen. But she was
Joan of Arc.

She had arrived in Chinon
on the 6th of March. At the
dawn of April 27th, 1428, the
assembled convoy - 600 wagons
400 head of cattle -- and some
2-3,000 men, accounts differ,
left for Orleans -- a slow,
desperate, sacred effort, 3
miles long.

The command was divided
between two Marshals of
France, La Hire and de
Boussac, profane, hard eyed
men. Joan was in plain armor,
carrying her white banner,
sprinkled with golden fleur
de lys, and beside her that
dashing young calvary captain
Gilles de Rais, showy and
elegant in jet black steel,
his beard dyed a bright blue
put on vanity and his well
known taste for the unusual.

Side by side, they rode
out as comrades -- she who was
to become a Saint and the man
who would be known in infamy
as the Vampire of Macheoul.

When she arrived in
Orleans she dictated a letter
to the Commander of the in-
vesting army.

By at least one carping
biographer, Joan has been
criticized for her lack of
literary style!

She could not read and
that little hand was never
meant to wield a pen, yet it
could carry a battle-flag
forward where no clerk dared
to follow! And style?

Listen to the words of
her famous letter. They are
meant to be read aloud, hurled
like bullets against the
invader, not to be preserved
in ink. Joan did not write
them -- she shouted them.

Across five centuries of
time the phrase a ring with
their original power.

There is the crash and
clang of an unsheathed sword
here -- the cry of a challeng-
ing trumpet. France has her
mighty champion at last -- a
girl of seventeen!

Oh! France could have
used a hundred Joans -- she
never had but one.

THE LETTER . . .
"King of England, and, you, Duke of Bedford, who call yourself Regent of the Kingdom of France; you, William Pole, Earl of Suffolk; you, John, Lord Talbot; and you, Thomas, Sire d'Escales -- who call yourself lieutenants to the said Duke of Bedford; I call upon you to make submission to the King of Heaven, and to yield into the hands of the Maid, who has been sent hither by God, the King of Heaven, the keys of all the fair cities which you have seized and ravished in France. She is come in the name of God to lay claim to the Blood Royal.

Most gladly will she make peace with you if you be willing to harken to her demands, which are that you shall leave France in tranquility and pay what you owe. And as to you bowmen and companions in arms, whether of high or low estate, who are now sat down before the city of Orleans, go back to your own lands, in the name of God.

And if you do not, you shall hear news of the Maid, who will, before long, come upon you to your much grief.

King of England, if you, too, do not do thus, know that I have armies at my command, and in whatever place of France I may come upon your soldiers, I will make them leave it, whether they will or no, and that if they give not heed to my words, I will have them all slain.

I have been sent here by God, the King of Heaven, being charged in my own person, to drive you from all the land of France. And if your soldiers be obedient to me, then will I show them mercy. And do not think that you shall hold the Kingdom of France in trust from God, the King of Heaven, Blessed Mary's son, but know that King Charles shall hold it, who is its true heir.

And if you will not harken to the words of God, as given to you by the Maid, know that in whatever place we come upon you we will make so great a battle cry as has not been heard in a thousand years, if you heed not. Know well that the King of Heaven shall send the Maid such strength that you shall not prevail in your assaults against her and her soldiers; and in the strife it shall be seen to whom the King of Heaven will give the victory.

You, Duke of Bedford, the Maid begs and requires that you seek not to be destroyed.

And you must make answer whether it be your wish that there shall be peace in the city of Orleans; and, if it is not, then great misfortune shall fall upon you, which you shall soon remember to your cost."

This may not be the polished style of a professional writer, but it conveys an unmistakable meaning; a meaning put there by a born leader of soldiers. Today, the meaning might be compressed into telegram length, but it could be no plainer.

SURRENDER — GET OUT OF FRANCE — OR DIE.

The arrogance of the order would be retained, but not the flavor of it -- not the elegance -- not the wonder.

The challenge was ignored. The following day she went in person to carry her own message, as her heralds had been held against all chivalric customs. She walked out on a broken down bridge to within hearing distance of the English, promising only that their lives would be spared upon their surrender. Glasdale, the English commander, had prepared an answer for that. He called her a trollop and told her to get back to her cows.

Not very many people ever saw Joan shed tears. She commented that he was a liar, remarked that though his men would leave soon, he would stay because he would be dead and was crying when she came back -- not because of the insult, but in grief for the many that, because of his obduracy, on both sides would die.
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Her predictions were always true. This one was and another that she had made concerning herself - that she would be wounded during the attack. She was struck by a crossbow bolt, when placing a ladder against the redoubt. In the ensuing panic, she was momentarily deserted by all but Chilles, who afterward she always referred to as her 'faithful and valorous companion.'

Many died, besides Glassdale, at the Tourelles. The day after this strong point was taken, the English, still a great army, evacuated the remaining forts and marched away to their holdings of Meung, Beaugency and Jargeau.

In nine days, these fell in turn. Joan relieved Orleans and gave the army pride in itself and warmed it with her own courage.

So the road opened to Rheims. Here she led her beloved Dauphin, 'The most perfect gentle knight in all Christendom' and here she wept with joy, still bleeding from the wounds she had taken in the defence, and kissing his hand after she saw him made King. And the crowd roared, "Hail!" - for whom the question cannot be answered except by the understanding of a loving heart.

Now, what for Joan? Nothing for herself. She asked only the reward of knowing that the taxes on the people of Domremy be forever canceled. (It was so hard for them to earn a living!)

Graciously, this boon was granted. They were canceled - until 1790, when the Kings were canceled, too.

Now the King was on his throne. The great days were over. English ran away from Frenchmen now. She would like to lay away her armor. Her father was old and missed her - she would like to go home -?

Impossible! The English must be pushed completely out of France. There was Paris yet to be taken. So the Maid and Gilles rejoined the army and marched once more.

Secret intrigues undermined their valor. Parsimony reduced the size of the force, diminished supplies, hungered fighting men. Time fought against them.

Joan, against her better judgement, led the attack on one of the gates. They crossed a dry moat and came to a flooded one, its depth unknown.

Then was seen a strange sight. A young girl, accompanied only by her standard bearer and Gilles, desperately probing the water during a storm of missiles, while the rest of the army hung back to find if it was safe to advance.

She was struck in the thigh with a bolt and fell. Her standard bearer was killed at her side. Gilles remained with her all day, where the two lay, protected only by the ridge between the two moats, his body between hers and the bullets - she crying on the men to advance to the attack, with a voice that grew weaker as the day waned.

There was not enough brushwood to fill in the moat. After dark she was brought back, but the heart had gone out of the army again and they retired from Paris.

This was Joan's and Gilles last rally together. For some unknown reason the King, who had never really intended to push the attack, ordered Gilles to rejoin him. And for this reason, when Joan was captured when she was holding the rear of a sortie which was re-entered beleaguered Compiègne, Gilles was not there to fight beside his beloved little friend.

Now, for Joan, Deliverer of France, the need for haste was over. No more the charge into smoke of the bellowing cannon; no need to face again the enemy steel; the Banner she carried, rather than a sword, so she never need fear the slaying of any man, has fallen.

The coming battle she fought alone. One small friendless girl against English power, her naive wit, her absolute honesty, her fine memory, her common sense, her purity of soul, her only weapons against the combined trickery of 62 judges, skilled in all the clever tricks of civil and ecclesiastical law; her most bitter enemy, Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, promised a fortune by the English when - not if - he brings about the
death of this girl whom he
calls, 'Witch'.

She must be discredited -
defamed - for if she can be
proven a witch, then the man
she made King has gained his
throne by wizardry - and is no
king at all. So, to wear her
down - no privacy. Chained in
her cell, watched 24 hours a
day by guards deliberately
selected from the dregs of the
English army - her sleep in-
terrupted by being called out
at any moment for questioning -
she has no counsel - no ransom
to expect - no help promised.
To save expense, her King whom
she championed, has disbanded
the army.

She cannot read or write,
so must carry in her weary
brain everything that has been
previously said in the trial,
in order to defend herself. To
all this she finds herself
equal.

There are battles of the
spirit no less terrible than
those of the field. In this
campaign Joan wins them all but
one. In the end, she is tricked
into signing a document that
damns her. It is not the one
she has been shown, it is much
longer.

She had wanted women about
her, the Bishop had promised if
she would wear women's clothes
she would be placed in sanctu-
ary in a women's prison. She
did not dare to wear them under
the conditions of her confine-
ment.

They took her out into the
courtyard. The iron stake was
waiting with the wood around it
for her burning. She was weak
and exhausted. For a long time
she had been sick.

She said, "Allow me to hear
Mass, take me away from the men,
give me women's clothes and I
will be good and do what you
wish!"

'I will be good'.

As though she had ever been
anything less than good. It is
a little child's cry for pity,
love and protection to a father
-- to her spiritual father --
the iron-hearted Bishop of
Beauvais, Cauchon.

The pronunciation of the
word cochon is very similar. It
means pig or hog! The connec-
tion was not lost on the Bishop's
contemporaries.

He promised and she signed.
What had been read to her was
not more than five or six lines. What
she signed was a long de-
claration that she recanted to all
her deeds and acts. It denied her
mission and made the crowning of
Charles invalid.

The English and their tools
have won, but only by deceit. Now
let them keep their promise.

"Gentlemen of the Church,"
happily exclaimed Joan, "put me
into your prison, that I may no
longer be in the hands of the
English."

"Take her back where you
brought her from," said Cauchon.

The Church had broken its
promise within ten minutes of
making it, but not entirely.
Women's clothes were brought her,
but only for a purpose. A purpose
so dreadful that the mind can
scarcely believe it.

The English were frantic that
Joan had escaped the fire, by
unknowingly accepting life im-
prisonment as laid down in the
terms of the document.

"Do not be concerned," said
Cauchon. "You will soon get your
hands on her again!"

She must be forced to break
her promise too. To do that they
must break her spirit, break her
pride, her steadfastness.

The one thing left to her was
her honor, her chastity. In sign-
ing, she had given up all else,
now that must go.

For three nights and two
days Warwick's ruffians, aided
and abetted by an English noble-
man, at various times struck,
abused and beat her till she
bled in an effort to inflict out-
rages upon her and were cheated
by her heroic resistance.

As a family can be disgraced
by its members, a nation can be
disgraced by its citizens. This
is England's shame.

On Sunday morning, the plot-
ters used their last trick. While
she was sleeping, they stole her
dress and hid it. When she wanted
to get up, they offered her the
clothes of a man.

"Sirs," she said, "you know
that these are forbidden to me
and I cannot wear them without
being guilty of a sin." But they
would not give her any other...

By noon it was necessary that
she leave her bed and she put
them on. She begged and prayed for her dress but the guards refused. Then they reported that she had relapsed into her old ways and was damned. The Church could no longer protect her against the English and the fire.

During this six months what of her friends? Was Charles, the VIIIth moving his forces up to rescue? Was he coming to stand beside her, sword in hand, in her desperate hour of need? Was he gathering every man and boy that could carry arms to assault Rouen or at least daunt his enemies by fear of reprisal if they harmed the Maid?

Far from it. He disbanded the army. He had what he wanted. He did not move and without orders the army could not move.

But others were not far away. La Hire and d’Alençon were stationed in Louvain.

They had been Joan’s friends, Louvain was not far. It is not on record that they did anything. There is only one we know of who did.

Between September, 1429 and November, 1430, there is no trace of the movements of Gilles de Rais, but in November he reappeared suddenly in the vicinity of Lorviers, only sixteen miles from Rouen, with two armed companies. Apparently he expected help from La Hire and d’Alençon. The English got wind of the plot and threatened to throw the Maid into the Seine if an entry was made into Rouen, but for six months this puny force skirmished about and dashed itself uselessly against the mighty English stronghold.

The city was never completely closed. It was not really beleaguered. People went back and forth with messages; the business of daily life went on. Food came in. Sentries must have checked all strangers, but mistakes can be made.

Resolute men have entered hostile cities before under disguise before and for some men a disguise can mean no more than a change of clothes and the shaving of a beard. One wonders! Let us speculate a little, using such facts as exist. Let us deduce what may have happened from what we know did happen.

On May 30, Joan was led out to die. She had completely retracted what she had signed and conscious now that she had been tricked, she said to the Bishop of Beauvais, "Bishop, I die through you!" Her last words to him and her only word of blame.

As she was bound to the stake by chains around her waist and limbs, her hands were free. While the wood was being piled around her she looked out over the great crowd of common folk, dignitaries and men-at-arms. Several hundred English soldiers were stationed there to prevent any attempt at rescue for the feeling for her was high among the people.

She asked for a cross. Then a strange thing happened.

An unknown soldier, pushed through the crowd, broke a stick and bound it together to form a little cross and handed it up to her. We do not know his name, though by performing this conspicuous and dangerous act of sympathy he stood out from the crowd. We know the names of many another who did much less. Was he searched for later and could not be found because he was no longer in the city?

She smiled at him, kissed the cross and placed it in her bosom "between the flesh and the cloth" and he disappeared again into the crowd.

Mark this. Her hands were free, she could have kept the cross in her hands where she could see it, but did not. It was given to her by a friend! It was too precious to drop into the coming flames. It would stay with her to the last.

Instead she asked a priest, Brother Martin, to hold up a cross where she could see it. He hurried into a nearby church and borrowed one from the altar.

The English soldiers cried out, "Well, Bishop, how long are you going to keep us away from our dinner?" and the fire was lit.

Then all that was heard in the stillness was the roar of the flames, a steady agonized praying, a last pitiful wail of "Jesu" and it was all over at last.

Recently an actress was offered the role of Joan in a
play. She refused to play the part, giving as a reason that the play would not have much of a run, as everyone knew the end of the story. But the story did not end there, it has not ended yet -- it will never end -- for while those who are gone are remembered they are not really dead. While people can be thrilled by heroism, inspired by a stainless life to maintain their own ideals, to lift a personal banner high, the Maid still lives enshrined, not in bronze and stone but in human hearts.

There are those who felt this then. The executioner found in the ashes one remnant of the tragedy. Joan’s heart, which had beat so strongly for her King, her country and her God, had not been destroyed. With awe he told Cauchon. Another fire, fed with oil, was built upon it and still it would not burn. Then under the Bishop’s orders, he swept up the ashes and the heart and flung all into the sewer so that the people could have no relics and would forget her. Then he stumbled into the church and fell on his knees, for he felt that he was lost by what he had done and could never be forgiven.

One of the priests that had voted for her death said publicly, “I would that my soul wore where hers will be to-night.”

And a soldier, it is said, ran blindly through the streets, shouting “We have burned a saint!”

Was it that? Or was it -- "Ye have burned a saint!"

Could it possibly have been Gilles de Raia, driven almost mad by the wrong done his innocent girl comrade? Gilles who now hurled himself anywhere, out of the city -- running away from his own convictions -- Gilles who had hoped to the last for some miraculous intervention from the Voices, from Heaven itself?

If this could happen then the world was mad, purity and truth was worthless, God slept and the Devil ruled.

One can imagine that from now on he determined to let his passions lead him, to give up what he had thought before was good, to devote himself feverently to evil and do the things her lying judges had said that she had done.

He would blaspheme, try to evoke evil spirits, deal in sorcery, rejoice in bloodshed and indecency.

He had concentrated his worship, his fidelity, all that was good in him on the Maid. It was burned out of him now and morally weak, vice and wickedness took its place.

Time passed. Gilles left the army and hid himself away in his castle at Chamtoco. Here, with two accomplices, evil as he, he experimented with brutality and torture.

There were many friendless children wandering the streets and the country, made fatherless and homeless by war. These three killed forty of them, all boys, in various ways, before his blood-lust was satisfied. Then the mania passed.

He moved to his castle of Macheaul. After a time the urge came back. Again forty murders were committed. He observed the Black Mass. He worshipped Satin.

Then a revolution set in. Apparently he repented his actions and wished to do something to protect his soul.

He set up a fund to establish a Foundation to the memory of the Holy innocents.

Murder stopped. He was occupied completely by this new idea. When it was completed he had another.

If the King and the Clergy would not lift a finger to vindicate Joan, he would do what he could. He began to work on a theatrical production. It is not known if he wrote or directed much of it personally and the actual writing is uninspired. There are evidences in it, that some of the speeches which are given to the Maid in the play, may have been her actual words.

Some of the sentiments are surely Gilles’ as when one of the captains describes her thus: “Sweet she is in words and deeds; fair and white as the white rose.”

Most of the plays put on during this period were called mysteries and during 1434, the
"Mysteries du Siege d' Orleans" took to the roads of France.

This was probably the most unusual play ever presented anywhere in the world and its manner of presenting was unusual. The cast alone was over five hundred actors and the accompanying crew of stagehands, roustabouts equalled as many more, not counting Gilles' entourage which was immense. An enormous stage went with it, one which could accommodate moving crowds and calvary charges. Fresh costumes were used at every performance and the old ones thrown away. All performances were free to the public, which were fed from tables which were constantly kept supplied with food and drink. Not only was no one turned away, rich or poor, but those who were so poor that they could not afford to take the time from their work were paid by Gilles to cover the cost of the time spent at the theatre.

It was a tremendous piece of propaganda, but it was expensive. At the end of the ten months when the production closed, Gilles had become almost a pauper.

His money was gone, his castles sold or mortgaged, with the exception of Macheoul, where he now retired, perhaps wondering if the effort had been vain.

It was his last attempt at decency, Zenith had been reached -- now - Nadir.

In a mad attempt to recoup his fortune, he took up the study of alchemy and black magic, at first alone, then he gathered a number of charlatans about him, including his former accomplices in sadism and murder.

The old ways came back, were expanded, experiments followed in rapid succession, until it seemed the secret of making gold was nearly his. Days and nights of frenzied effort, sleeplessness, appeals to the Devil. Murders, sacrifices on the unholy altar, to get blood for his charms, to propitate the powers of evil.

Two hundred boys died in these experiments and were thrown into a dry well after being slaughtered in Gilles' terrible underground chapel, -- but no gold came to him.

The church he had flouted now moved against him, on evidence given by the terrified people of the surrounding countryside and he was finally brought to trial for his crimes.

When he was arrested he said, "No human power can prevent the will of Heaven from being accomplished."

Great crowds gathered to see Gilles, Lord of Rais, Lieutenant-General of Brittany, Counsellor of the King and Marshal of France led in chains to Nantes.

He was not tortured to make him admit his guilt. Perhaps Joan had destroyed the value of torture, when she told her judges, "If you hurt me, I shall of course say anything you want me to say, but afterward I shall always say it was the pain that made me say it!"

However, when at first Gilles denied everything, the Bishop proceeded to excommunicate him.

This, to people of that time was a very dreadful thing, far worse than death. It cut him off from any possibility of forgiveness and barred the gates of Heaven against him forever.

Two days later when the hearing was resumed, the judges and public were surprised to find his bluster and obstinacy were gone. He begged the pardon of the court, wept and entreated the Bishop presiding, Jean de Malestrait, to remove the ban of excommunication.

He then confessed all his crimes and they were written down in private, enough as he said, "to kill ten thousand men."

The next day, as part of his punishment, he was to read his confession publicly in court. This was a terrible humiliation for the once proud noble and he spent most of the night praying for strength to accomplish it bravely.

Before a dense crowd he began reading in a trembling voice. The crowd was deathly still, as the voice strengthened but grew hoarse as it went on and on, describing unimaginable things. Then into the silence burst the scream of a woman, perhaps the mother of one of the murdered boys. The people shuddered.
Following this came a startling incident. At one horrible part of the confession, the Bishop arose, took up a black cloth and covered the crucifix that hung on the wall above the judge's seat.

That shock him as nothing less could. He cried in an agonized voice: "Oh, God, my Redeemer, I ask pardon and mercy! Oh! parents of those innocents I have cruelly murdered, I beg the charity of your prayers. I am redeemable!"

Then, steadying himself, he finished his confession. Everybody knelt to pray. The verdict naturally was guilty, but as mercy for his obvious repentance he was granted the privilege of burial in consecrated ground.

After his sentence of death, he begged again for forgiveness and commanded his soul to Saint James and Saint Michael, the first of Joan's voices and whose intercession she had asked at her death.

He was hung, cut down before he was dead and then burned, but not to ashes. The remains were buried as had been promised.

Public prayers were held for three days in his behalf and when, on the third day, a light rain began to fall, the people praying in the streets outside the churches, went down on their knees, for they thought at the sight of that ruined soul, the angels wept.

Popular opinion is a yeasty thing. It takes long to rise, but is hard to put down. What Gilles had started working in the minds of the people, kept growing there, and twenty years after, the aging Charles, in order to maintain his right to the throne as given to him by God, through the Maid's agency, was forced to enquire into the exoneration of Joan of Arc.

Her mother, Isabelle, was still alive though very feeble and presented the petition in behalf of her martyred child. Witnesses from Domremy testified to her character, - her friends came forward, now that their lives were no longer in danger (though Joan probably knew that every man values his own life well) soldiers testified to the virtue and sublime courage of their girl leader (we would like to hear Gilles testimony) and in the end, the surviving judges at her trial reversed their verdict and legally cleared her name.

In the minds who loved her, it had never been besmirched.

It is interesting to know what became of Cauchon, erstwhile Bishop of Beauvais. His remains were dug out of his honorable and impressive tomb and hurled with curses into a public drain. Let us hope, from somewhere, he knew.

So much for the facts as are commonly known. Now we come to speculation, also bolstered by facts which may be easily misinterpreted.

Is it possible that a criminal was substituted for Joan at the burning? Could she have been secreted away - perhaps in another prison - until the English domination of France ended in 1435?

In DAYS AND CUSTOMS OF ALL FAITHS, Dr. Howard V. Harper lists these facts in support of such a theory, upon which I will comment.

(1) There are records in the city of Mentz that say Joan came there in 1436. (Rouen records state that she was burned at 6 A.M., May 30th, 1431. Unless there are relics of such tragedies which can definitely prove a death, there have been - an always will be - imposters who will try to take advantage of such doubts.)

(2) The authorities suspected that this girl was an impostor and sent for her two brothers, Pierre and Jean, who came to Mentz and identified her as their sister.

Moreover, there is still on file in the same city, a marriage contract between Chevalier Robert d'Armoise and Jeanne d'Arc, la Pucelle, d'Orleans," and a list of the wedding presents people gave to the couple. (It is possible that this could have been the girl actress whom Gilles de Rais employed in his play, obviously well-scholled for this purpose in all respects for the part. It is known
that people who saw the play were fooled, believing her the real Joan. It is possible that Gilles encouraged this thought for propaganda purposes although the play was put on to arouse anger among the people and force the King to an act of rehabilitation. It is also possible that De Rais, out of his obvious affection for his former girl companion and Chief, may have deluded himself wistfully wishing that what he imagined was truth. Already, he was becoming erratic in mind and deeds.

(3). In the archives of the city of Orleans, the city treasurer's account for 1435 shows that 11 Francs, 8 sous, were paid to messengers who brought letters from Jeanne la Pucelle to the city authorities. In 1438 the treasurer paid out 12 livres to Jean de Lys (the name given to the family in her honor, by the King) so that he could afford a visit to his sister.

In 1439, the Orleans treasurer paid the bills for the entertainment of Robert d'Armoise and his wife, Jeanne, who were feasted by the city. There are several entries for wine and banquets - and one big item. 210 livres were presented to Jeanne d'Armoise in gratitude for 'her services to the city at the time of its siege in 1429'.

(The French are pretty careful with their money. Orleans was deeply in debt to the real Joan. Nothing was too good for her. Can it be that this was really she? How wonderful if it could have been so!

It is true that there must have been many - even eight years after her supposed death - who would have recognized her, but - no word from D'Aulon, who loved her like a daughter? No remarks from Dunois? No comment from her mother - when these three and many others appeared at the proceedings of rehabilitation twenty years after the martyrdom at Rouen? And more convincing than anything else to my mind - not one word has come down to us from Joan herself?

It is incredible - unbelievable - that dear person would have allowed someone - even a prostitute of the lowest class - to die in her stead. Every moment of her recorded life - her pure mind - her sense of honor - argues against it.

If such an event occurred against her will - and it could never have occurred with her consent - the moment she was released, her voice would have been raised in a clarion cry for justice to fall upon those responsible.

I wish it could have been that she could have found happiness in the arms of Robert d'Armoise. It is our way of thought. I have no doubt that she found greater peace at the moment she cried, 'Jesus!' at the stake in Rouen - and after spoke no other word that human ears could hear.)

((Our apologies for the exclusion of a 'letters' column these past two issues. We'll try to get things back to normal next issue...A.B.))