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An Irish Fantasy Fiction
Magazine

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Dave McFerran died on February 5th, 1980, a few days short of his twenty-sixth birthday. He was a popular and tirelessly irrepressible figure in British Fantasy fandom, but the two publications he hoped to edit himself, *VADHAGH* and *AIRGEDLÁMH* never appeared. Dave had been seriously ill with cancer since July 1979 but after an operation at Christmas he appeared to be recovering slowly. As close associates and friends to the posthumous editor of *AIRGEDLÁMH*, we know that Dave will be missed by a great many fans, and we offer this single issue of the magazine as a special tribute to him.

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A MAGAZINE OF THE WEIRD AND UNUSUAL

FANTASY TALES



Volume
4

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STEPHEN JONES, *Editor.*

DAVID A. SUTTON, *Associate Editor.*

"Success in battle had brought him to the king's attention."



The Other One

By KARL EDWARD WAGNER

Illustration by JIM PITTS

THERE is a story, so it is told, of certain bandits who took shelter beneath a tree, and as the darkness and the storm closed over them, they gathered about their fire and said to their leader: "Tell us a tale, to pass the night hours in this lonely place." And their leader spoke to them: "Once certain bandits took shelter beneath a tree, and as the darkness and the storm closed over them, they gathered about their fire and said to their leader: 'Tell us a tale, to pass the night hours in this lonely place.' And their leader spoke to them: 'Once certain bandits took shelter beneath a tree...'"

BLACK even against the darkening sky, the thousand-armed branches of the huge banyan swayed and soughed before the winds of the storm. Tentative spats of rain struck the barren stones beyond their shelter - streaking like the ranging shots of massed archers from the lowering thunderheads that marched toward them from across the desolate plain beyond.

Someone got a fire going. Yellow flames crackled and spat as the damp twigs caught; grey smoke crawled through the roof of banyan limbs, to be whipped away by the winds. There were more than ten of them about the fire - outlaws and renegades whose dirty mail and mismatched weapons showed the proof of hard and bloody service.

Another hundred of them might have gathered beneath the banyan, pressed between its pillared maze of limbs and roots. The tree had spread its limbs and stabbed downward its roots, growing upward and outward for imperturbable centuries. Behind - along the trail the out-

laws had followed - lay unbroken miles of tropical forest. Beyond - toward which their path led - stretched a miles-wide plain of utter desolation. Beneath the grey curtain of the approaching storm, could be glimpsed the walls of forest that enclosed the farther perimeters of the plain.

Across the jungle-girded plain, a new forest crept through where a century before had been carefully tilled fields, crawled over flattened stones and heaps of broken rubble where once had reared a great city. Of the city, no walls or towers remained; so utter was its destruction that scarcely one stone yet stood upon its base. It was an expanse of total annihilation - a wasteland of toppled stone and fire-scarred rubble. After more than a century, only scrub and vine and secondary forest had invaded the ruin. More than another century would pass before the last mound of shattered wall would vanish beneath the conquering forest.

They gathered about their fire, laying aside their well-worn gear, pulling out such as they had to make of their evening meal. Three days march, or maybe four - and their leader promised them more plunder than they might carry. This night the prospects did not bring the usual chatter of anticipation. Uneasily, the men watched the closing storm, gloomily considered the plain of ruins beside which they were camped. For these were the ruins of Andalar the Accurst, and no man cared to linger in this place.

"The greatest city of the land," one of them murmured pensively. "Nothing now but broken stone and rotted bone. Not even pickings to

tempt a vulture there now."

"Once there was pickings as rich as you'd dare dream," another commented. "Andalar was the proudest city in the world."

"And the gods destroyed Andalar for its pride," a third intoned, with less scorn than he had spoken in another place than this. "Or so I've heard."

"I've heard a number of tales," the first bandit argued. "No one seems to remember anymore."

"I remember," their leader murmured.

"Do you indeed know the tale of the doom that came to this city? Pray, tell us the tale."

Their leader laughed, as at a bitter jest, and began.

THE news of the death of Andalar's king came as no great surprise to Kane. Luisteren VII was late into his eighth decade. Nor was the news - at first - any tragic blow to Kane; for he had taken certain measures to insure that Andalar's ruler would never enter his ninth decade. Kane, as Lord Minister of Andalar, was well known to be a great favourite of the senile king's half-witted heir, and, although it was less well known, the king's youngest wife, Haeen, was a great favourite of Kane.

As the first shrill rumours of Luisteren's impending death sped through the palace, and the funeral trumpets of the priests of Inglarn howled a tocsin throughout the twilight streets of the city, Kane smiled, filled his golden chalice and drank a silent toast to the memory of the departed. The king's death had fallen several months earlier than his plans had called for. Perhaps he should have administered the powders more conservatively, or possibly the aged despot's heart had simply choked on its dusty blood. Whatever, Luisteren VII was dead. Kane's position was secure. When the king's favourite son mounted the throne as Middosron III, the new king would be only too content for Kane to manage the affairs of Andalar as he pleased.

Kane finished the brandy, leaned his massive body back in his chair, and reflected upon the past year.

It had been a heady rise to power, even by Kane's standards - but then, Andalar had been a prize ripe for the picking, and it mattered little to Kane that his course had been so formularized as to be tedious to him.

AS CAPTAIN of a band of mercenaries, Kane had entered Andalar's service not quite a year before. Success in battle had brought him to the king's attention, and his rise to general of the city-state's armies had quickly followed. Andalar's border wars victoriously concluded, Kane used the king's favour to advance to high office in the royal court. A judicious prescription of certain esoteric elixirs known to Kane restored the aged King's vigour and virility, assuring Kane's influence over Luisteren. After that, it was only a matter of cunning statecraft: after Kane's chief rivals were exposed (by Kane) to be conspiring against the king, Kane's rise to Lord Minister of the city-state was as inevitable as the king's imminent decease.

While it was hardly a novel situation for Kane, he did feel a certain pride of accomplishment in that never before had an outsider risen so fast or so far in Andalar's power structure. Andalar was the oldest and grandest of the scattered city-states that held suzerainty over this jungle-locked region, and if a pronounced obsession with traditions and a decided xenophobia accompanied that proud heritage, so had an incalculable fortune accumulated in the royal coffers over the centuries. Kane was amusing himself with idle schemes as to the use he would make of Andalar's bounty, when Haeen dashed into his chambers.

Luisteren's youngest wife had not a quarter of her royal husband's years. Haeen was slender, close to Kane's six feet of height - but neither boyish or coltish. Her figure was as precisely formed as that of a marble goddess, and she moved with a dancer's poise - for she had once been a dancer in the temple of Inglarn. She had the rare combination of bright green eyes and hair of luminous black. At the moment

her long hair was disordered, her elfin features bleak with despair. Kane wondered at her tears, for Haeen had shown no such evidence of wifely devotion during their own clandestine trysts.

"You know?" she said, coming to his arms in a swirl of silks.

Kane wondered at the lifelessness of her tone. There was no need for such convention in his private chambers. "I was told he had lapsed deeper into stupor about dawn. When the priests started their damned caterwaul a moment ago, I drank to your widowhood."

Haeen made a choking sound beneath Kane's red beard, wrapped her arms about his barrel chest. "If only he could have withstood this last fever. We might have had so many more nights from which to steal an hour of ecstasy."

Kane laughed urbanely. "Well, of course propriety will dictate a judicious interval of mourning, but after..."

She stopped his laugh with her kiss. "One last embrace, beloved! They will be coming for us in another moment."

"What are you talking about?" Kane began, suddenly aware that her despair was all too real.

But already they had come for them.

Gaudy in their flame-hued cloaks, the priests of Inglarn filed into Kane's private chambers. Their faces were pallid beneath sooty ritual designs of mourning; their expressions were unreadable as they regarded the pair.

"Come, O Beloved of the King," intoned their leader. "Your master summons you to dwell with him now in the Palace of Inglarn in the Paradise of the Chosen."

"I left orders that I was not to be disturbed," Kane snarled, groping for understanding. His personal bodyguard - all handpicked men - should have thrown these fools from his threshold, given alarm had Kane's secret designs miscarried. But a glance beyond the doorway showed Kane's soldiers calmly withdrawing from their stations.

The contempt of his tone cut through the sonorous phrases of the high priest. "You are an outlander,

Lord Kane. You hold high office such as no other stranger before has been entrusted. Yet, outlander that you are, there remains the final and highest duty that you must perform for your master."

Kane had newly come to this land, had only sketchy impressions of its innumerable laws and traditions. If they had suspected poison, why had come priests instead of armed guards?

"What is this, Haeen?"

"Don't you know?" Haeen told him dully. "It is the law of Inglarn. When the king of Andalor is summoned into Paradise, his household and his chief counsellors must accompany him. Thus they will continue to serve their master in the Palace of Inglarn, and the new king will begin his holy reign untainted by the ties that the departed king had established."

"Of course," Kane agreed blandly, while behind his impassive face his thoughts were chaotic. His knowledge of this tradition-bound land was incomplete. Inglarn was purely a local deity, and Kane had not troubled to learn the secrets of his cult. Luisteren VII had ascended the throne as a child, more than seventy years before. In his concern with court intrigue, Kane had not delved overmuch into events beyond the memory of almost everyone in the city.

"Come with us now to the temple of Inglarn," the high priest invited. His two fellows produced the ritual fetters of gold. "This night you will pay a final earthly court to your master upon his pyre. On the morrow you will pass through the flame to join him in the Blessed Palace of Inglarn."

"Of course," Kane smiled. Save for the priests, the hallway beyond his quarters was for the moment deserted. One does not intrude upon a sacred ritual.

The high priest's neck snapped with a sound no louder than his gasp of surprise. Kane flung his corpse aside as carelessly as a child discards a doll, and his open fist made lethal impact with the neck of the second priest, even as the man stood goggle-eyed with disbelief. The third priest spun for

the open doorway, sucking breath to shout; Kane caught him with an easy bound, and steel-like fingers stifled outcry and life.

Haeen raised her voice in a shrill scream of horror.

It was not the time for reason. Kane's blow rocked her head back with almost killing force. Pausing only to strap his sword across his back, Kane bundled the unconscious girl in his cloak and fled like a shadow from the palace.

DARKNESS, and the initial chaos as news of the king's death stunned the city, made possible Kane's escape. That, and the fact that Kane's sacrilege was so unthinkable that the tradition-bound folk of Andalar at first could not react to so monstrous a crime.

Kane made the city gates before Haeen had fully recovered consciousness, and before knowledge of his outrage had alerted the confused guard at the wall. He would have ridden beyond Andalar's bourne before pursuit could be organized, but forest trails are treacherous at night, and while Kane might see in the darkness, his horse could not.

Kane swore and sent his crippled horse stumbling off into the darkness. The false trail might throw off pursuit long enough to let him make good his escape. Haeen still seemed to be in shock - either from his fist or from his sacrilege - but she followed him silently as Kane struck out on foot.

They walked for a timeless interval through clutching darkness - Kane holding his pace to Haeen's - until at last a taint of greyness began to erode the starless roof of trees.

There was a muffled thunder of water somewhere ahead of them, and a breath of cold mist. In the greyness of the false dawn, they crept toward the rim of a gorge. Kane slowed his pace, uncertain how to reach the river below. He had campaigned along the borders of the city-state's holdings, and had a fair idea as to his bearings, although he did not recognize this vicinity of the forest.

Haeen huddled miserably on a

boulder, watching as Kane prowled about along the mist-lapped escarpment.

"We'll find a way down once it's daylight," he told her. "There's rapids along here, but if we follow the river father down, it flows smoothly enough to float a raft. We'll lash some drift together and float beyond Andalar's borders before the fools can guess where to search for us."

"Kane, Kane," Haeen moaned hopelessly. "You can't escape. You don't even know what sin you propose. Kane, this is *wrong!*"

He gave her an impatient scowl that, in the half-light, she could only sense from his tone. "Haeen, I have not lived this long to end my life in some priestly ritual. Let the fools burn the living with the dead, as tradition demands. You and I will laugh together in lands where Andalar is a realm unknown."

"Kane." She shook her midnight mane. "You don't understand. You're an outsider. You *can't* understand."

"I understand that your customs and sacred laws are sham and empty mummery. And I understand that I love you. And you love me."

"Oh, Kane." Haeen's face was tortured. "You scorn our laws. You scorn our gods. But this you *must* understand."

"Haeen, if you really want to die for the greater glory of a husband whose senile touch you loathed..."

"*Kane!*" Her cry tore across his sneer. "This is evil!"

"So is adultery in some social structures," Kane laughed, trying to break her mood.

"Will you listen to me! What you mock is a part of me."

"Of course."

"Andalar is the oldest city in the world."

"One of the wealthiest, I'll grant you - but far from the oldest."

"Kane! How can I make you understand, when you only mock me!"

"I'm sorry. Please go on." Kane thought he could see a path that might lead downward, but the mist was too thick to be sure.

"Andalar was built by Inglarn in the dawn of the world." She seemed to recite a catechism.



"And Andalar worships Inglarn to this day," Kane prompted her. It was not uncommon to find local deities worshipped as the supreme god in isolated regions such as this.

"When Inglarn departed in a Fountain of Flame to the Paradise Beyond the Sun," Haeen recited, "he left a portion of his sacred fire in the flesh of the kings of Andalar."

Kane had heard portions of the legend. But he had long since lost interest in the innumerable variations of the solar myth.

"Therefore," Haeen continued, "the personal household of each king of Andalar is sacred unto the fire of Inglarn. And when the Fire Made Flesh of the king transcends the Flesh and must return to the Fire of Inglarn, then so must all of those who are a part of the king's Radiance enter with their king into the Fire, to be reborn in the Paradise of the Chosen."

"There must be a way down to the river not far from here," Kane mused aloud. "It might be best if I seek it out by myself, then come back to

you."

"Kane, will you listen! This is the sin *you* have committed! You have defied the Sacred Law of Inglarn. You have sought to escape the fate that Inglarn has ordained for you. And the Law decrees that, should any of the king's household so blaspheme Inglarn as to flee their holy duty to their king and their god, then shall Inglarn come back from the fire - return to utterly destroy Andalar and all its people!"

Kane sensed her agony, listened to her anguished phrases, tried to make himself understand. But Kane was a man who defied all gods, who knew no reverence to any god or law. And he knew that they must make good their escape within the next few hours, or be encircled by their frantic pursuers.

"I have heard such legends in a hundred lands," he told her carefully. But he now understood that the people of Andalar would spare no effort to capture them for the pyre.

"But this is *my* land."

"No longer. I'll take you to a thousand more."

"Only hold me for this moment."

And Kane took Haeen then, on the moss-robed boulders of the gorge - while the river rumbled beneath them, and the skies tattered with grey above them. And Haeen cried out her joy to the dying stars, and Kane for an instant forgot the loneliness of immortality.

And after, Kane unbound their spent bodies, and kissed her. "Wait here until I return. You're safe - they'll need full light to find our trail. Before then I'll have found a path down to the river. We'll see the last of Andalar's borders and its mad customs before another dawn."

And she kissed him, and murmured.

IT WAS late morning before Kane finally discovered a path into the gorge that he was confident Haeen could traverse. They could follow the river for a space - throwing off pursuit - until he could fashion a raft to carry them beyond Andalar's territories. While this avenue of escape was by no means as certain as

Kane had given Haeen to believe, Kane knew their chances were better than even. Cautiously Kane retraced his steps to the boulders where he had hidden her.

At first Kane tried to tell himself that he had missed his landmarks, but then he found the message Haeen had scratched onto the boulder.

"I cannot let my city be destroyed through my sin. Go your own way, Kane. You are an outsider, and Inglarn will forgive."

Kane uttered a wordless snarl of pain, and turned his gaze towards Andalar.

Kane followed her trail, recklessly, hoping some fool might challenge his course, praying for a mount. He found where Haeen had met their pursuers, and where their horses turned to gallop back to Andalar.

But by the time he limped to

within sight of the walls of Andalar, the funeral pyre of King Luitsteren VII and all his household had blackened the skies...

THE skies were black with night and the lowering storm, as their leader concluded his tale. Rain sought them through the massed ban-yan limbs, hissed into the fire. They looked upon the ruins of Andalar the Accurst, and shivered from more than the rain.

"But the legend then was true?" one bandit asked their leader. "Did Inglarn destroy the city because of the sacrilege the outlander had committed?"

"No. Their *god* spared their city," Kane told him bitterly. "But I returned with an army of a hundred thousand. And I spared not a soul, nor left one stone standing, in all of Andalar."

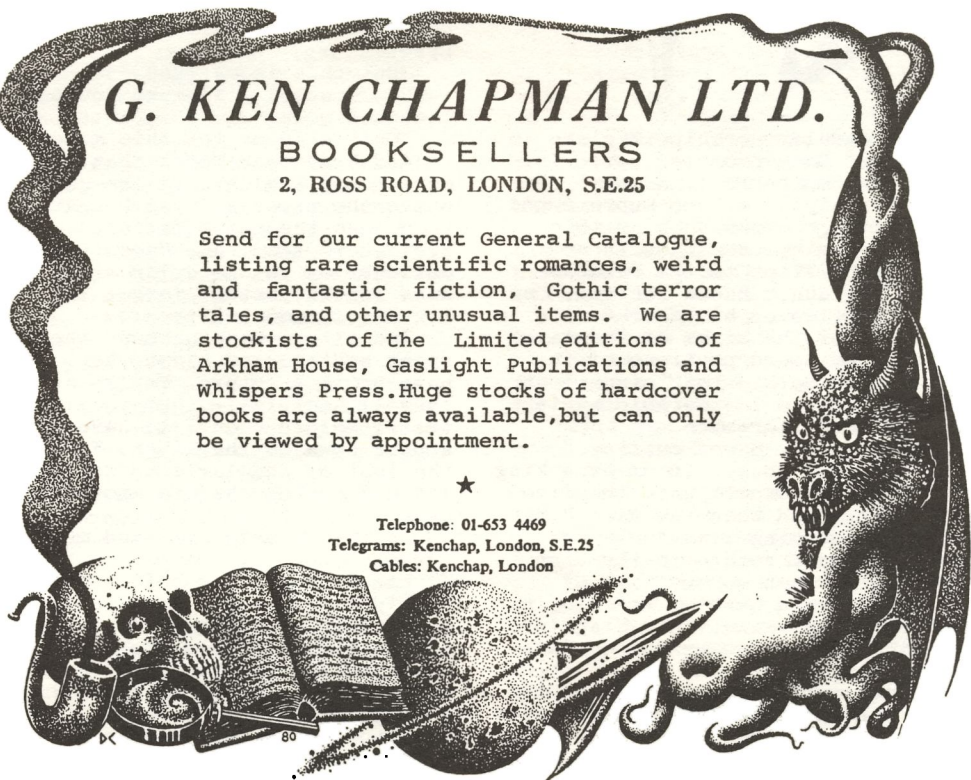
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Karl Edward Wagner's *The Other One* is published in the U.K. for the first time (it originally appeared in the U.S. magazine *Escape!* in 1977) and it also marks the first 'Kane' story to be published in the British Small Press. It will eventually be part of a collection of revenge stories provisionally entitled *The Silver Dagger*. Currently all of the 'Kane' books are being reprinted in Germany and, more slowly, in Britain, and Karl is putting the finishing touches to the long-delayed novel *In the Wake of the Night*; as Karl describes it: "It will be the earliest published episode in Kane's career when it's completed - also certainly the longest." Other projects include *In a Lonely Place*, a collection of modern-day horror novelettes, a film script, and another collection of Manly Wade Wellman's fiction to be published by Carcosa, entitled *Lonely Vigils*.

The Wedding Guest

By STEVEN EDWARD McDONALD

HE SPOKE flowers, red roses
held gently in his
white-gloved hand
and passed to the smiling bride.
She took them, sighing,
and he lifted
the brilliant lid
of his burnished and preserved top hat.
The bridegroom looked on
at this stranger
and wondered
which mystery he had stepped from.
The gentleman plucked from his eye
a polished monocle,
which he cleaned,
and used to signal back the light.
He spoke wedding gifts of gold
and brought forth
services of silver
which he considered an apology.
They danced through the night,
mixing partners
with sour duty,
man and wife wishing for their peace.
The strange man with the wagging beard
swept a suited arm
around the midnight hour
and read a warning from his watch.
With bows and apologies and profusions
he made his escape
out into the night
and quickly flew himself away.



"The entire room appeared in vivid focus."

Reflections On A Dark Eye

By PETER TREMAYNE

Illustration by DAVID LLOYD

"CAN you see anything?"
The voice came from a long way off, sounding hollowly as if echoing in a tunnel. I blinked rapidly and strained forward on the bed. Slowly the blackness began to evaporate into a mild grey and then into a pale yellow hue and, abruptly, into a blinding light. The entire room appeared in vivid focus. I shut my eyes.

"That's it," said the warm, friendly voice, sounding closer now, "that's it. Take things easy."

Cautiously I opened my eyes again and peered around in wonder. I could see every detail of the hospital room.

"I can see," I whispered.

The white-coated surgeon leaned forward and clapped me on the arm, his face a wreath of smiles. Behind him, my wife Jane, tears glistening in her eyes, smiled down at me. I had forgotten how coppery red her hair was, how it tumbled around her heart-shaped face, how her grey-green eyes could smile so warmly. A nurse on the other side of the bed began to rearrange my pillows.

"I can see!" I said more firmly.

The experience was tremendous. For five years I had lived in a nether world, a world of neither total blackness nor clear light, a world of frightening shadows. It had happened at the factory; an industrial accident, they called

it. A chemical had accidentally been sprayed at my face burning the tissue of both my cornea and causing scars to form which robbed me of my sight. The doctors had always been optimistic. Cornea grafts had become a simple operation in this day and age and all I had to do was wait for the right donor. The donor was a long time coming. But now, now it was all over and the operation a success. Yet it was a further week before the success was confirmed by the plethora of white coated specialists who hovered constantly around my bed. By the end of the month I was walking out of the hospital a new man, ready to take up my life with Jane, ready to face the world again, and thanking with all my heart the mysterious donor who had died and left his eyes to science. Where would we be without such generous-hearted people?

It was three days later, as I was entering the Employment Exchange, when the weird experience happened. I walked through the swing doors of the Exchange and, to my utter astonishment, found myself in a smoke filled, darkened corridor, the sort of corridor that are a feature of those dreary 1930s tenement houses. I blinked and looked again. The scene was real enough. The sight frightened me. You can usually judge the inside of a building by its exterior. But have you ever entered a building in which the interior in no way resembled its facade? It's like walking into St. Paul's Cathedral and finding yourself in an F. W. Woolworth department store. I just stood there, open-mouthed, looking at the drab, paint peeling walls, the flickering gas burner which cast a faint, gloomy light on the bottom of a flight of stairs, badly in need of repair, which led upwards at the end of the corridor. Somewhere, I think from a floor above, came the sound of music - the flat tones of a 1930s crooner and, above its noise, the coarse laughter of a woman's voice.

"Get a move on, mate."

A gentle shove in my back caused me to turn round and confront an irritated-looking man.

"Sorry," I replied automatically

and moved aside to let him pass. As he did so, I turned to follow his progress and that was when I went cold. The corridor had vanished; simply vanished. I was in the long, white-washed main office of the Employment Exchange, thronged with people, clerks behind their grilled counters, queues of men seeking work or dole money, and a din of countless conversations. I had to go and sit down before I could bring myself to go through the tedious formula of 'signing on' for work.

When I arrived home I could not bring myself to mention the experience to Jane. She had been so protective since I came out of the hospital that I knew she would rush me around to see the surgeon immediately. I said nothing at all. Then two days later the same thing happened; the same corridor, the same smoky atmosphere lit by the gas burner. But this time the vision had come as I was stepping into my house! This time I went to see my local doctor and explained the incidents. He was calming, reassuring. I had a mild post-operative shock which was nothing to worry about. It was nothing unusual. He could refer the matter to the surgeon but, in the meantime, he would prescribe a mild tranquiliser.

By the following week I had seen that vision of the grim tenement corridor no less than three more times. I felt that I was going mad. Maybe I was. Post-operative shock. Why? I had always enjoyed comparatively normal health apart from the accident. I was not given to flights of fancy nor did I have a reputation for being imaginative. Quite the contrary. My friends used to claim that I had no imagination whatsoever. In some quarters, people consider this as an insult. I knew that it was just a fact of life. I emphasize this merely to point out that I am in no way a highly-strung person but a stolid, perhaps even stodgy, person, certainly not given to fits of hysteria. Yet, by the end of the week, I was almost scared to open a door lest I found myself in that strange tenement corridor once again.

At the end of the week, the

hallucination began to change.

Until this time, the hallucination had merely been of that drab tenement corridor from the viewpoint of the threshold of a door. I had simply stood on this threshold surveying the corridor and the dingy flight of stairs at the far end of it. This particular weekend I was returning home late, having had a few beers at my local, and inserted the key into my front door, as I had done countless times before. Then I pushed open the door.

There it was.

The badly-lit tenement corridor.

Yet this time something different happened.

Slowly, as if compelled by some sinister force greater than myself, I began to walk across a hollow sounding tiled floor towards the stairway. Oddly-shaped shadows seemed to dance a strange ritual in the flickering flame of the gas burner.

I was conscious that I was trying to fight my forward motion. I knew that I did not want to reach those stairs and climb them. Something inexplicably evil awaited me at the top of those stairs. Yet within me I felt this strange compulsion forcing my dragging footsteps forward.

Above me came the crooning music and the shrill, coarse laughter.

Two great emotions fought within me for dominance. Fear, with its cold, clammy hands, clutched at my heart, trying to prevent my forward motion. But the urge, something forceful, malignant, with a will greater than mine, urged me onwards.

I was halfway across the stairway when the hallucination vanished.

I stood sweating, yet shivering, in the hall of my own home. Jane was already in bed and I entered the darkened lounge, switched on the light, and thanked God that I had a bottle of whisky in the house. For a long, long time I sat there, almost afraid to go to bed lest I found the hallucination returning when I closed my eyes to sleep.

In the morning I saw my doctor again. The surgeon had agreed with his previous diagnosis and did not want to examine me. I pleaded with

the doctor but all he would do was prescribe a stronger sedative. I tried to convince him that I was not suffering some form of post-operative hysteria, that the hallucinations were not the figment of my imagination, but he was adamant. I needed rest and relaxation and the visions would soon disappear.

In the next week the hallucination came three more times; each time I was left as weak as a kitten with my heart pumping wildly within me, icy fear clutching at my very marrow.

A thought had begun to register strongly in my mind; I must prevent myself from going up the dingy stairs at all costs, I must prevent myself going to the room from whence came the music and the shrill, coarse voice which now seemed to mock my very soul. Why the thought was so strong I could not say. All I knew was that something monstrous and evil would happen if I let my feet drag my unwilling body up those dank stairs.

In spite of this, each time I suffered the hallucination my feet took me further and further. At first I had stopped on the threshold of the corridor, then I had started down it, until, now, I was pausing on the bottom steps.

I knew that I was losing the fight.

Once lost, I would be prey to some unspeakable horror that awaited me above.

I could not speak to Jane about it. It would frighten her. Yet she realised that there was something wrong and tried to press me on the matter. When I refused to speak about it she became annoyed. Losses of temper and rows became frequent. Still I could not tell her what was troubling me.

I was lying awake one night, biting my nails as I let the problem nag my mind, when I realised that the hallucinations must have a connection with the cornea graft operation. No, it was not a post-operative hysteria, as the doctor claimed, it was something else. A shiver went down my spine as a thought materialised - I had to know who the donor of the cornea was! The thought be-

came an obsession.

Two days later I went to the hospital for a check-up. The surgeon had finally agreed to see me following the reports from my local doctor. I was determined to try, by some means, to find out who the donor was, yet I knew that hospitals never reveal such information. How could I find out? The problem was solved for me in the simplest possible way while I was yet pondering it.

Have you ever been in a big, busy hospital? You register with reception; a nurse looks out your file and this, without preamble, is thrust at you and you are told to wait on hard, wooden benches, until your name is called. On the large, buff-coloured folder, which is your file, there is a little notice in red print which states that at no time is a patient allowed to read these notes. But then, in a big, busy hospital, nobody seems to have time to obey the niceties of the rules. And if they did not bother to obey the rules, neither would I.

I waited until the nurse had gone to attend to other patients before I surreptitiously opened the folder and scanned its indecipherable sheaf of papers, charts and X-rays. My heart sunk as I gazed upon the mass of incomprehensible material.

Then I caught sight of a number of typewritten letters pinned together. Notes from doctors to the surgeon. There was one piece of flimsey paper attached to these which gave the date and time of my operation and the words - 'donor: L. Szymry' with a date by the side which was presumably the date of the donor's death.

The flip-flop of a nurse's flat shoes coming down the hospital corridor caused me to bundle the papers back into the file and close it.

L. Szymry! An odd name - Slavic, perhaps?

The examination with the surgeon was not helpful. With only cursory questioning he seemed to totally agree with my local doctor's diagnosis. I could not wait to leave the hospital. When I did so I hurried round to the County Hall and looked up the Register of Births,

Deaths and Marriages. A copy of L. Szymry's death certificate would, for a fee, take three days to produce. I waited with scant impatience for its arrival.

Laszlo Szymry had been Polish. He had been born in Ostrow and died in his sixty-ninth year. He had arrived in England when he was twenty and obtained citizenship after five years of residency. The death certificate provided the address of the place where he had died. It was a small suburban area not too far distant.

Early that evening I stood outside a small terraced house speaking with a harsh-faced, middle-aged woman who said she was the landlady of the rooming house where Laszlo Szymry had spent the last five years of his life.

"Are you a relative?" asked the woman and, before I could reply, added that she had a trunk of the old man's clothing in her garage which she was waiting for Oxfam to collect. I claimed I was 'distantly related' and she conducted me to the garage and stood watching me absently as I burrowed into a pile of old, musty-smelling clothing. At the bottom of the trunk was a small metal cash box whose locking mechanism had obviously been smashed.

"It was like that when I found it," the landlady said defensively as I examined it. "There's no money in it, just old papers."

She was right. There were only a few bills, Szymry's naturalisation papers, an out-dated rent book and some official letter...a prison discharge.

I put the papers back hastily and told the woman she could send the rest of the things, the old clothing, to Oxfam or where she liked. I pressed a fiver into her hands and returned home. A search through those papers told me little else about Szymry except that he had served twenty-seven years of his life in prison. Twenty-seven years seemed an exceptionally long time. A life sentence in Szymry's day was only fifteen years.

I stayed awake that night, too scared to even blink lest in that moment I found myself transported to that strange, terrifying tenement

corridor.

My wife Jane came down white-faced in the morning; instead of chiding me as usual, she seemed strangely subdued, almost guilty. It was just a passing thought for I had too much on my mind to take notice of her behaviour. I had a swift cup of coffee and went down to the local library, where I knew the librarian. I asked him how I could find out what crime caused Laszlo Szyrmy to go to jail for twenty-seven years. I gave him the date of Szyrmy's release and the date, printed on the release form, when Szyrmy had commenced his sentence. The librarian promised to make some calls that day and meet me in the pub that evening.

When I returned home for a mid-day meal Jane appeared more nervous than I had ever seen her.

"John," she said with abruptness in the middle of the meal, "what is happening to us? Since you came out of the hospital, we have been growing further and further apart. Constant rows, arguments, and squabbling."

I shrugged, I could not bring myself to tell her what was worrying me.

She raised her head and looked me squarely in the eyes.

"You know, don't you John?"

Her voice was quiet. I frowned, not understanding.

"You know about Bert, don't you?"

I just stared in bewilderment.

"Don't pretend with me, John,"

she rushed on, a trifle breathlessly. "That's the meaning of all this tension. You've found out about Bert. Well, it's all over now, believe me. It happened when you were blind - five years of looking after you, John, and I was going mad. Bert came along. He was kind, sympathetic, understanding. You had gone into hospital for tests. It happened so - so naturally. But now it's all over. You must believe that, John."

I stared at June nonplussed. I did not know how to react to her sudden confession of infidelity. I had never suspected her of that. Yet now...now, strangely, it did not seem to matter. It did not seem important compared to the

horror of my hallucinations, to the urgency of finding out why Laszlo Szyrmy had been in prison for twenty-seven years. I can't recall what I said. I must have mumbled something, stood up and left the house leaving June with her head bent in remorse.

I wandered the streets for the entire afternoon, my thoughts whirling like a kaleidoscope until evening brought me to the public house where I was to meet my librarian friend. He was there sipping a beer.

"Quite a character this Polish friend of yours," he greeted me.

"Did you find out then?" I returned, eagerly.

He nodded and pulled from his pocket two xerox copies of newspaper articles.

"I found these in the newspaper files at the time of Szyrmy's trial."

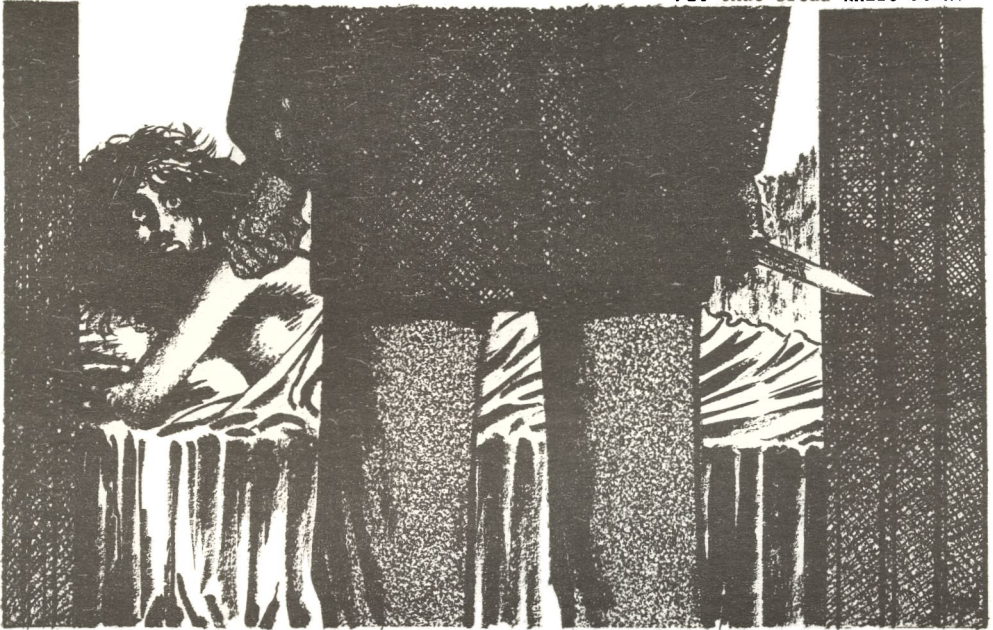
I read the articles with a growing horror.

Laszlo Szyrmy was a Polish seaman. He had settled in the city and had fallen tempestuously in love with a girl on whom he lavished all his money during the periods he was on leave. What he did not know was that this girl, whom he worshipped as a goddess, aspired to membership of the world's oldest profession. Although she lived with Szyrmy during his leaves, in a small apartment he rented, when Szyrmy was gone she removed herself to a brothel where she plied her trade.

Normally, the girl kept track of the movements of Szyrmy's ship because she knew him to be possessed of an overpowering jealousy. The day came, however, when the ship put into port a full two days ahead of schedule. Szyrmy took a day to track down his girlfriend; track her down to the dingy tenement block where she pursued her career; track her down with rage boiling his mind and soul so that he was denude of all reason.

He crossed the tenement hall drawing his big sailor's clasp knife and mounted the stairs to her room. And there, there in the dingy tenement, the young Polish sailor savagely ripped his girl-

"Put that bread knife down!"



friend to pieces with his sailor's clasp-knife.

He was tried and sentenced to death. But a strong argument of temporary insanity was presented on appeal, and the Home Secretary of the time commuted the sentence so that Szyrmy was detained at His Majesty's pleasure. Twenty-seven years passed before the prison authorities approved of his release - the release of an old, broken man. No more was known of him except that *I knew* that he had died five years later and donated his eyes to medical science. Further, I knew that I now had his cornea - his eyes! Sweet Christ! *His* eyes...burning the awful memory of that dark deed into my own mind and soul, forcing me to relive that horrifying agony!

I sprang up with a wild, inarticulate cry, leaving my friend staring after me in astonishment. I tried to telephone the surgeon at the hospital, to order him to operate again, to take Szyrmy's cornea from me. I would rather be blind than suffer this awful terror. The dark soul of Szyrmy was forcing me to relive his experience - but

his experience was not mine, not mine! The calm, imperturbable voice of the hospital receptionist was telling me to ring back in the morning when my surgeon would be there. No, she could not give me his home telephone number. I put down the telephone in a cold panic. What would happen when the malignant soul of Szyrmy finally forced me to climb those dingy stairs - who would I find waiting for me at the top? Some unknown girl who had been hacked to death over thirty years ago? Or was my reality becoming fused with Szyrmy's reality? Did I see my reality with Szyrmy's eyes?

Unwillingly, I returned home, my footsteps dragging as I entered my front door.

I half expected the scene that met my anxious vision; the dark tenement corridor, the smokey atmosphere, the flickering blue-yellow flame from the gas burner. Futilely I fought each step as I found myself crossing the rough tiled hallway, moving towards the dingy stairway and commencing my ascent on its creaking, rotten

wood boards. Something hard and cold was in my right hand. My mind registered an oddly-shaped knife. I struggled hard, trying to return to the reality I knew.

It was useless.

I stood on the landing, the sweat pouring from my face. I kicked savagely at a paint peeling door. It swung open. The woman turned - a coarse, dark-haired woman, who stared at me in terror. From her open, red gash of a

mouth, a voice was shouting - an oddly familiar voice. I paused a moment. It seemed like Jane's voice

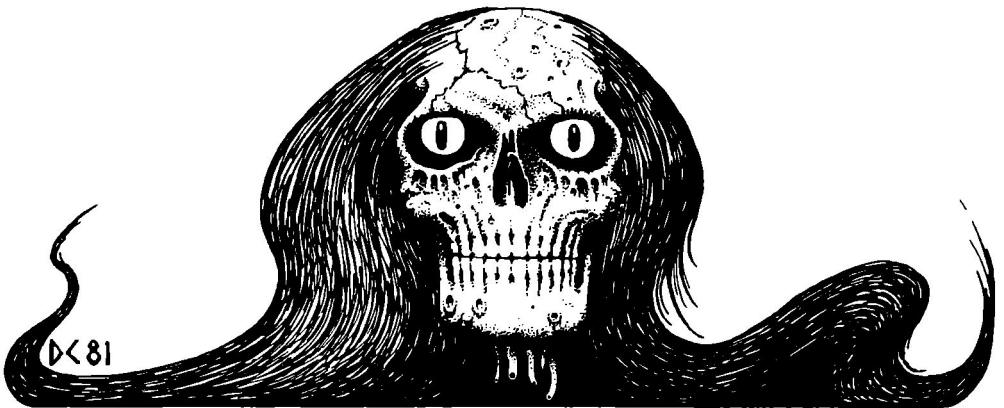
"John! Oh Christ, John, no! What are you doing? Put that bread knife down! John...no!"

But the malignant compulsion had control over all my limbs and the scream died in a sudden gurgle.

And afterwards?

Will they believe me when I tell them that Laszlo Szyrmy had killed again?

Peter Tremayne could be said to have 'exploded' into the fantasy field. Unknown prior to 1977, he has received much critical acclaim in only four years as a prolific novelist. His first major book in the field, *Dracula Unborn* (Bailey Bros. and Corgi Books 1977), explored the Dracula myth and extended Stoker's original concept. (In the U.S. it was published under the title *Bloodright*). The Count Dracula Society of New York elected him honorary member for "maintaining the image of and interest in the memory of Stoker's Dracula" and he was invited to be Guest of Honour at their 1980 annual dinner. Two more Dracula novels followed, *The Revenge of Dracula* (Bailey Bros. and Magnum Books 1978) and *Dracula, My Love* (Bailey/Magnum 1980). The last has been optioned for filming by Gerry Sherlock Productions. Other horror novels include *The Hound of Frankenstein* (1977), *The Vengeance of She* (Sphere 1978), *The Ants* (Sphere 1979) and *The Curse of Loch Ness* (Sphere 1979). Peter has also published two anthologies: *Master of Terror: William Hope Hodgson* (Corgi 1977 - the introduction to which was also used in the British Fantasy Society's centenary tribute booklet to Hodgson), and *Irish Masters of Fantasy* (Wolfhound Press, Dublin 1979). His fantasy works set in a pre-Christian Celtic Cornwall have begun to appear, with *The Fires of Lan-Kern* (Bailey/Magnum 1980) and a second volume, *The Destroyers of Lan-Kern*, is scheduled for this spring. More horror/fantasy is due as well, *When the Dead Awake* and *The Morgow Rises!* (both Sphere Books, spring and autumn respectively). The author has also written an Edwardian spy and murder mystery featuring E. W. Hornung's famous character, *The Return of Raffles* and Magnum will issue this in the autumn. As a short story writer, Peter has been much less prolific, so it has been an especial pleasure to have published *Reflections on a Dark Eye*, which is the story's first appearance anywhere...





"He saw that atop each of the stones was a nameless, blasphemous creature."

Payment in Kind

By C. A. CADOR

Illustration by ALAN HUNTER

THE cowered figure glided silently across the thronged Square of the King's Mercy, past the Platform of Execution at its centre, and paused by the Temple of the Seven Vilni, which is called the House of Wrath, until his eyes rested upon the man he sought. Walking quickly past the great bronze doors of the Temple, cast in a thousand shapes of nightmare, he dropped a small black stone into the outstretched bowl of one of the beggars there, and moving quickly into the teeming crowds, was lost to sight before the beggar's bored "Blessings on thee, Lord" turned to a string

of highly imaginative curses when he saw what the latest addition to his bowl was. He picked it up to throw it away, but stopped for a moment to examine it, for it was not merely black, but shining like a mirror, and jagged - no such stones were found near Khoros the City. A sudden noise attracted his attention, and he tossed the curious stone to the ground and went back to his business, nor did he think again of the Stone, or of the cowered man.

SHEN the beggar was crossing a desolate valley. The sun beat upon his head, and the black stones

of the valley floor held enough of its heat to cause discomfort even to his calloused feet, which had here and there been slashed when he stepped on a particularly jagged stone. The fiery air was torture to his lungs. As far as he could see, there was no living thing save himself - not a flicker of motion that might indicate a lizard, not even the spiny desert plants grew there. Yet he felt himself the object of an unpleasant scrutiny, and had a sense of waiting, and gloating. The worst of it was that he had no desire to be there, was fighting desperately against the compulsion dragging him across that fearful valley - to what? He prayed fervently to all his gods he would never find out.

Shem the beggar awoke screaming, bolt upright upon his sweat-soaked pallet, and sat, shivering, in a heap upon the floor 'til morning.

BOAZ was in the shop of Nissan the barber, being shaved. There were dark circles beneath his eyes, and a haggard look to his face that fitted ill with his image as a hired thug.

"...And since Shem told me of that dream which came to him night after night, I have had the same dream, but by last night I had nearly crossed the valley, awakening near two great standing stones at its far end. Truly it is a terrible place. That misbegotten son of Eriq has put a curse on me!"

Nissan laughed, and said, "The mighty Boaz, frightened by a dream! Well," he added quickly, seeing the growing scowl on Boaz's face, "such a dream might frighten many. My advice is, go to Shava's House of Pleasure and have your fill of wine and women - you'll forget your ill dreams there soon enough, I'll wager."

Boaz smiled, and lifted one foot. "That may be as it may be, but look at this -" His feet were crisscrossed with slashes, some starting to heal, others fresh and raw.

A FEW days later, Nissa the barber was a badly frightened man. He hobbled to the square of the King's Mercy and found his way to the tem-

ple of Anahita, a river Goddess who was patroness of his tribe, and was soon closeted with a priest.

"...And so I passed between the standing stones Boaz spoke of, and beyond them into a valley much like the first, save that it was rimmed with cliffs, and at its far end I could see a half ring of standing stones against the cliff face. Holy One, you must help me - to have your own body moving against your will...and every night it grows worse. Nor can I fight off sleep. I'm not a young man, my health is poor, and then this..." he said, lifting a foot which was cut and burned.

The priest recoiled in fear and said, "Surely this is no ordinary dream, but the work of a necromancer! Had this Boaz any grudge against you?"

"None, Holy One. He is one of Balthok's hirelings, who take a tithe of the earnings of beggars and pickpockets and temples..." He stopped in confusion, then began again. "He has come weekly to my shop to be shaved, for two years. In all that time, I have not so much as nicked him."

"Wait here," the priest commanded. He returned after a time with an amulet and a wand. First he used the latter to draw a circle around the barber, invoking the power of Anahita, then shook it thrice on him so that Nissan was sprinkled with water out of its tip, then placed a silver amulet about his neck, saying, "Take this, and wear it thus always; it is a holy charm, blessed by the High Priest himself, and graced with thrice holy symbols of protection. With it you are safe The Goddess will accept an offering of twenty zard."

The barber pressed thirty on the priest, who was speechless at this indication of how truly frightened Nissan had been. He did not, however, neglect to pocket ten zard more than the five he had earned, before passing the remaining fifteen on to the temple treasurer.

Once out of the temple, Nissan heaved a deep sigh of relief. He felt so much restored that he stopped by the Platform of Execution to watch the King's Mercy.

When the dream did not return, Nissan was voluble in his praise of Anahita and her priests, filling his customers' ears with her praises for weeks, without even asking payment from the temple for his proselytizing.

Shamash the priest was not so jubilant. After the fourth night, he decided, in a sudden and unwonted fit of religiosity, that the Goddess had cursed him for pocketing the full ten zard, and decided to make a confession to Gudea, the chief priest.

He entered the sumptuous quarters of Gudea, who looked up from his desk, whose top was carved from a single slab of malachite, and said in a bored tone, "They say you wish to confess a fault. Have you sinned against the Goddess?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I withheld ten zard from the treasury, because they were given me in excess of the customary fee. The Goddess has cursed me with..."

"Stop. The curse is between you and the Gods. Repay twenty zard to the Temple and seek peace with the Gods and the lifting of the curse from the priests of the House of Wrath."

"As you order, Holiest."

SHAMASH approached the Temple of the Seven Vilni, which is called the House of Wrath, with trepidation. He had always hated the place because of the swarms of beggars who hovered around it like flies, knowing that those who go to make their peace with the fearful wielders of divine wrath who dwell therein were more than commonly generous, as if they hoped their almsgiving would soften the anger of the Gods.

In consideration of his rank as a priest of Anahita, Shamash was not kept waiting, but was ushered into the main chapel to brood for a time upon the fearful visages of the Vilni whose huge statues reared above the altar in awful splendour - they had each eight arms, holding whips and swords, flaying knives and the arrows of pestilence, severed heads and torturers' pincers. They had the wings of bats. One had

the head of an eagle, another of a vulture, of a boar, a tiger, a dog, a kite, a dragon.

After a suitable time, he was ushered into a tiny cubicle where waited one of the seven priests of the temple.

"It is not often a priest must come here to lift the curse of the Vilni from his shoulders." He smiled grimly. "What God have you offended, and have you attempted to make any amends?"

Shamash explained his fault, and the restitution he had made.

"So. It is well. Now describe the curse."

"It is a dream..." Shamash began, describing it with great feeling, "...and the fear I felt within the ring of standing stones I cannot describe. I know that if I do not rid myself of this curse, I shall enter the cave in the cliff, and I shall never return from there. Holiest, I know not what dwells in that cave but it is a thing of evil, and terror."

"So. Perhaps in the future you will be more reluctant to rob the Gods. They care for their own. Go and bid the acolyte before the altar to nick a vein in your arm and drain off a cupful of blood, and burn it mixed with incense before the Vilni, and make the temple an offering of twenty zard. The curse will be lifted as your blood is burned."

That night Shamash the priest slept well, and afterwards was a most devout man - for the space of a month.

ZADOK the Priest of the Children of Wrath was walking through a land of fire. His feet burned on the black stones, and their tender soles were so gashed he left a trail of bloody footprints behind him. His lungs shrieked agony with every breath, and the pounding of the sun upon his head was an unending torment. He had been walking forever.

With each step he struggled to stop, to turn around and go back and away from this fearful place, but his body followed another will than his own. He felt the presence of an unseen watcher, gloating, in an almost physical way, and some-

thing worse - he felt its hunger.

As he passed within the circle of standing stones, dragged inexorably towards the square opening in the cliff face, it was as if a veil had been lifted from his eyes. He saw that atop each of the stones was a nameless, blasphemous creature, nearly human in shape, but black and shining as a piece of obsidian, with curiously elongated ears and long, pointed teeth, hands that were like talons with vicious, tearing claws, on arms that reached down past their knees, and long tails, naked and hairless as the rest of their bodies. He heard their obscene titterings, and the music that some played on long flutes carved from human leg bones.

When he turned his eyes from this hideous spectacle, he saw before him, not a cliff, but a great palace of black stone, old...old...covered with carvings of myriad nameless beings of a thousand different forms moving in great processions, worshipping strange gods, dancing, and...feeding.

Another step...and another...and he was within the hideous gateway. He felt a thousand unseen eyes upon him, heard slitherings and rustlings and breathings, and once a hissing voice that made him dwell for a moment on the lizard-like nature of some of the beings carved on the palace facade.

Step by step he moved down that black corridor towards a great bronze door, behind which lay - what? He knew only that it was the master of this place, and that it would be more pleasant to serve the anthropophagous inclinations of the beings he had already seen than to pass through that door.

Zadok the priest awoke, and his terrible shrieks brought frightened acolytes running from all directions. As reason returned to him, he drank from the pitcher of wine by his bed and looked in disgust at the elaborate pentagrams drawn on the floor with silver and blood and flour ground from holy grain grown in the fields of the Corn Mother; at the candles, red and black and green; the censers belching forth clouds of incense smoke; at the Names and Signals; the seals of the Seven whose servant he was; and the four

Great Seals of Protection; and cursed, long and elaborately.

For Zadok was more than a priest - he was a wizard versed in all manner of lore; yet every protection he had been able to devise, every attempt to break the curse, had failed. His power had served only to reveal to him that which had been hidden to others not so gifted. He knew, as he stared down at the useless paraphernalia of his craft, that there was but one way to save himself.

That day there came to Zadok the Priest many people. To each he strove to tell his dream, that it and its doom might pass from him, but his tongue was locked in his head when he strove to speak of it. And that night was bad - very bad.

The next day there was but one man he was to see - Poros the merchant, one of the richest men in Khoros the City and a frequent visitor to the House of Wrath. He remarked on Zadok's condition, for the priest could hardly walk, and, incongruously for one who dwelt within the walls of the temple, his face and hands were burnt a brilliant red by the sun.

"What is it that you wish?" asked Zadok wearily, ignoring his questions. "Is it again the guilt for your wife whom you slew slowly, when you caught her with her lover?"

"No," said Poros. "That ghost is laid to rest and troubles me no more."

"Is it then he who as a young man you left to die in the desert, although he had saved you from thieves in Zalit?"

"**A**YE, priest, and more, I fear. My luck has been too good. A month gone I cast a great ruby into the desert, the finest gem I owned, to break the chain and restore the balance; but it came back to me last night in the belly of a wild goat that was roasted for my supper."

"Truly the Gods are not mocked, neither are they deceived by such tricks." Zadok the Priest felt his tongue move of its own accord, and his voice was harsh. "What will be, will be," he said, and he poured forth his terrible dream to the

merchant, who sat paralyzed, powerless to move, face gone white with terror, until the priest was finished. Then he fled without a word. And no more was the sleep of Zadok the Priest troubled by bad dreams.

BUT of the state of Poros the merchant, when a few days had passed, little need be said.

Now at heart Poros the merchant was not a bad man. True, he had drugged and robbed one who had saved him from thieves in the dives of Zalit, and left him bound in the desert to die of thirst, helped along by the efforts of the vultures, always eager to please, and none too inclined to wait until one is quite dead to begin their supper.

But he had robbed him of the precious gems he carried because to win the hand of Bharyeela the Beautiful he must needs be a wealthy man, a very wealthy man indeed; so her father had decreed. And, he reasoned to himself, he was in love, and are not all things forgiven in the name of love? Besides, who but the most beautiful woman in Khoros the City, and hence the world, was worthy to be his bride?

True, he had slain Bharyeela the Beautiful, slowly and with many torments, so that she had pleaded for death long before it was granted, but then was not the death he gave her at the end a most magnanimous act of mercy? After all, she had betrayed him. Worse, she had shown herself to be less than perfect. So she had died, painfully, for the pain she had caused him, painfully for deceiving him, painfully for being thus imperfect, who had been the fairest gem of all. It was, Poros felt, only just.

Poros knew that he was loved by his slaves - they were never beaten, for to thus mar a slave was to render it unworthy of his ownership. And there was the care he took that each had his own perfection, unmarred - for example the boy Nat, who sang to him at supper - he had been gelded, that he might never lose the perfection of his voice, so sweet and high. True, such slaves as fell short of his expectations by fault of error, or accident, or a stubborn blindness to his benevo-

lence, were sold - frequently to those who bought slaves for the mines. Poros treated all his property well, so long as it did not displease him.

Poros found one peculiar thing; try as he might, he could describe his dreams to none, try he ever so hard, beyond saying that they were frightening.

In desperation, he sent a servant to a certain house in a less than reputable zone of Khoros the City, and had brought to him the shabby figure of Nasirkhand the Magician. In a terrified torrent of words he poured out to the magician his tale of woe and fear, stopping short, time and again, when he strove to speak of the dream.

"IT IS apparent to me what has happened, Poros. This is no chance occurrence; this is *your* dream, sent to you by some enemy who is a sorcerer of great power. It will be your death, and, I think, something more than merely your death, and soon as well, if its power is not broken."

Poros shivered. "I know that well enough. Can it be done?"

"Perhaps. First I must trace it to its source. But the cost will be great - as great as the danger you are in. For I am no starveling hedge-wizard to use my talent for a few coppers, as well you know. Nor is this a matter without danger to me. Remember, if it pleases me to walk with pimps rather than with princes, and wear rags rather than velvet, it is the concern of none but myself."

"I will pay. Tell my steward to give you anything you want. Here -" said Poros, drawing the seal ring off his finger, "give him this. But tell me how I may be saved."

"I must trace the dream to its source, as I said, and send it back along the path it has travelled until it returns to him who sent it, and then, if I am able to do so much, he will suffer the doom he meant for you. I begin with Zadok the priest in the temple of the Seven Vilni."

In reality, though, Nasirkhand began by extracting a truly prin-

cely sum in gold and jewels from the steward of Poros the Rich.

It was the work of all that day and night to trace the dream from Zadok to Shamash, to find Shamash in the brothels and trace it from him to Nissan, and from Nissan to Boaz, and from Boaz to Shem. Many hours were spent finding Shem, who had been absent from his place outside the Temple of the Seven Vilni, which is called the House of Wrath, since he had had an unpublicized encounter with Boaz, and with his knife.

On being told that if he wished to seek Shem, it would not be in the house of Yeza, his former landlady, but in the House of Irkalla which is the House of Death, Nas-irkhand returned to his lair and worked the true necromancy, which is the raising of the spirits of the dead, and was presently rewarded with the thin, reedlike voice of that which had been Shem the beggar.

Long was the struggle, but at last he compelled that which once had been Shem the beggar to pass into a tiny bottle, and placed a seal upon it which the dead cannot break, for it is the seal of Life,

and made his way with the bottle to the house of Poros, to transfer the dream to that which was in the bottle, and thence to him who had placed the curse on the beggar.

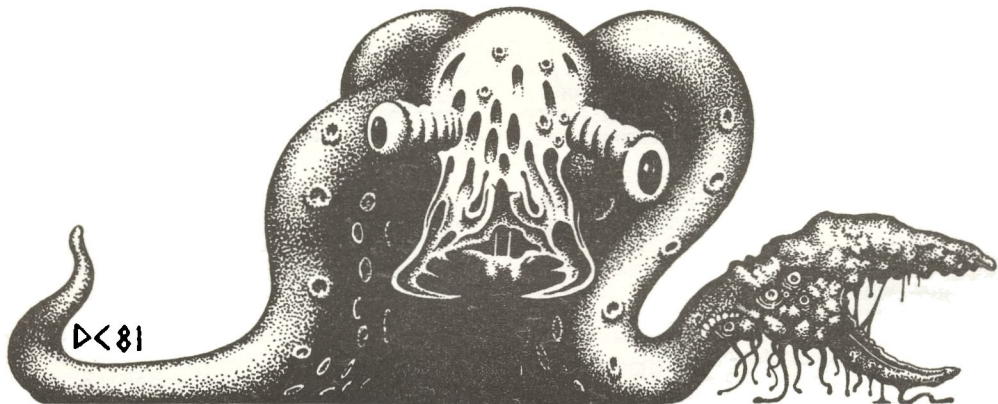
When he came to the house of Poros the Rich, he saw that the door stood open, unguarded; and when he passed within, he saw that the floors were strewn with precious things, and surmised that the slaves had departed suddenly, without more than perfunctorily looting the wealth of the house.

He came finally to the room of Poros, fearing what he would find within. And it was as he had feared, for there, sprawled on the bed, was the torn, headless, body which had been Poros the merchant, whose very bones had been cracked for their marrow.

He shook his head sadly, released that which was in the bottle, and made his way home, pausing as he went out to select a few choice items of value from the disordered shambles which had been the house of Poros the Rich.

IN A QUIET corner of a tavern in Zalit, a cowed figure laughed.

"It is exceedingly difficult to come up with a really new kind of curse..." So runs the introduction to *Payment in Kind* when it was originally published in the occult newspaper *Gnostica* (August 1975). That Mr. Cadour succeeded so well is reflected in the story's subsequent appearance in Lin Carter's *Year's Best Fantasy 2* from DAW Books and its first U.K. publication here in *Fantasy Tales*.



A

Death-Song for Gondath

By MARION
PITMAN



("He can't be," said Raoul, "Just tell me how it could happen." "What does it matter?" said Chadrach, "Let's have a drink and another song." "Why not all three?" said the Dragon, and began.)

IN THE cellar of the citadel lies Gondath,
Gondath the black god, Gondath the deathless.
Mindless and malevolent is Gondath,
Dreadful is the doom that overtakes the faithless.

Dark below the citadel lives Gondath,
Gondath who is worshipped, Gondath the adored one.
Silent are the worshippers of Gondath,
Pale and impassive they bow before the feared one.

Loathsome is the worship of Gondath,
Obscene and unnatural the acts of adoration.
Great is the power of Gondath,
All who oppose him contract the corruption.

In the depth, where festers Gondath,
A juggler from Ghaishan whispers of Imazaz.
The whisper is a jagged knife to Gondath;
Poison to the black gods is the name of Imazaz.

Now below the citadel dies Gondath,
Swift and silent is his dissolution;
Nought but the name of Gondath
Lingers to breathe his abomination.

Wrapped Up

By RAMSEY CAMPBELL

Illustration by RANDY BROECKER

AS THEY neared the camp the archaeologist began to sing. Twill started violently and tried to hush him, but Long shook his head. The rheumatic groaning of their jeep on the cliff road must already have woken the camp. "That's your tent, isn't it?" Long demanded loudly of the archaeologist. "Over there, by the tomb?"

"There's my tent," the man said, pointing amid the camp; then, as he began to doze as if the effort of squinting had exhausted him, he added "We're just passing the tomb."

Driving, Drabney smiled at Long's cleverness. Now they knew exactly where to go. The swaying headlights fastened on the tents and coaxed from the darkness behind them the outlines of palms like split and splintered poles. He made to switch off the lights, but restrained himself; it would look suspicious.

They were helping the archaeologist out of the jeep when a shadow rose up stiffly in one of the tents, like a joke-shop mummy. "All right," the archaeologist shouted, without slurring. "It's only me and some friends in need." They half-carried him to his tent, where he commenced singing at the darkness and offering it a drink. Then they hurried back to the jeep, whose motor was still running.

As they passed the place where he'd said the tomb was, Long and Twill jumped from the vehicle, clutching the sacks on which they'd been sitting. At once Drabney accelerated and drove loudly away,



"The wrappings looked less like bandage than thick dry skin."

grinning. He couldn't believe it was going to be so easy.

When they'd seen the archaeologist in Cairo they had been dumbfounded by their luck. They had been sitting in a sidewalk cafe, so downcast they were almost prepared to drink. They'd had to flee Britain and America, where their faces were known. That had infuriated Drabney. All right, so they took wealth from people who were gullible enough to part with it. But it was because the people were susceptible to alcohol or other drugs that they left themselves so open. They were the ones to blame. The three had decided that a long time ago.

They'd heard that Cairo was full of drugs, but none of the susceptible people had seemed worth the effort. Then Twill, gazing dully on the packed dusty street, had recognized the archaeologist. The man whose last expedition had almost been ruined by his alcoholism! Who could only be here on another dig!

Twill knew something of archaeology, and it had taken only half a bottle to pry loose the location of the dig, and the other half to make the man forget he'd told Twill. Then they'd merely had to camp nearby before the archaeologist and his party arrived, to become known locally as geologists on their own expedition, and to greet the archaeologist eventually as someone he vaguely remembered. "What a coincidence!" Twill had exclaimed. But even they hadn't expected their second encounter to coincide with the day the dig reached the tomb itself.

Once he was out of earshot of the camp Drabney parked the jeep and began to walk back, carrying his sack, checking his path intermittently with his torch. It had sounded as if the archaeologist was even going to leave his tomb open for them, the fool. "We aren't worried about the workers pilfering," he'd said. "I told them the mummies were those of magicians."

"That was clever," Twill had said.

"True, as well. The people who made this tomb for themselves blas-

phemed the whole Egyptian concept of life after death." Then he'd drifted off, muttering about tomb-robbers not daring to touch this tomb.

That's natives for you, Drabney thought as he walked. Gullible. Believed us when we said we were geologists. Full of drugs, probably, all of them. The rough cliff-top bit bluntly into his soles through his shoes. He reached the place where the tomb should be, and blinked his torch down the dark cliff at a faint glow. In a moment the torch-beams turned outward from the tomb twenty feet below and winked slyly at him.

They lit the stepped path while he clambered down. Then, as he entered the mouth, the beams swung about and gouged a rough narrow passage of tawny limestone brightly from the blackness. Rubble gnashed underfoot.

"Whoever they were, they must have impressed the people of their day," Twill whispered. "Notice there are no false doors, no pitfalls. They were sure nobody would dare to venture in. Still, it must have been easy enough to frighten people then."

Thirty feet into the cliff a stone door stood ajar. "We managed to move it a little," Long said. "They must have closed it again in case the air harmed anything."

Dust billowed thinly about them as they strained at the door with crowbars. Dust swarmed in the bowls of light balanced on the upturned torches planted on the rock floor. As the three heaved at the stone, chafing themselves against rock and against each other, their tethered shadows struggled overhead, bloating as if air were being squeezed up into them. When the door gave, a sudden blacker shadow engulfed Drabney's. They inched out from behind the partly open door, then Drabney probed the gap with his torch.

He was expecting walls crowded with bright figures, the looming lustre of golden coffins. Instead, his abashed torch revealed only rough limestone coffins with cracked lids, eight in all. The walls, when he turned to them, were muddily

plastered but otherwise almost bare. In the corners, or what passed for such in the crudely-hollowed room, stood dark vague shapes like half-opened buds. Drabney wavered, disappointed and bewildered. It seemed less like a tomb than a cave-lair.

"He did say they didn't believe in possessions," Twill said anxiously.

"If you'd been him," Long retorted, "what would you have said? He wasn't that drunk."

Drabney realized why he'd thought of a lair. The hot, unpleasantly musty air which hung in the tomb reminded him of a zoo. The air, and something else. There was a faint creaking rustle in the depths of the room, beyond the dim edge of the light, as of something crawling torpidly in its lair.

"Go on," Twill said impatiently, and pushed him into the tomb. The light of his torch staggered forward as he did. The figure standing in the darkness, against the furthest wall, seemed to step forward jerkily to meet the light. It creaked softly, like leather.

Drabney felt as if a pitfall had opened in his stomach. Only the others, pressing close behind him, prevented his instinctive flight. When his torch-hand steadied, when the figure's wrappings of shadow had ceased to flap and writhe, the three stepped forward between the two ranks of coffins to see what was standing there.

It was a mummy, featureless and brown with wrappings. Yet somehow it was unlike the mummies Drabney had seen. The wrappings looked less like bandage than thick dry skin. He was sure he'd seen something like them before. The entire tall body creaked. As Drabney bent closer and the erased face peered blindly above him, he saw that the wrappings were minutely but perceptibly shifting, as if filling out.

"That's the change in temperature," Long said. "Come on. He's no use to us."

But Twill had stooped to pick up an object near the mummy's feet. It was a gilded sceptre two feet long, surmounted by a stylized pair of spread wings. "This is a symbol of power," Twill said. "A high

priest's, I'm sure it is. Why's a high priest standing there?"

"Maybe he put them all to bed and then couldn't tuck himself up."

"Come on, come on," Long said. "Time enough to joke when we're out of it."

Drabney hadn't intended his remark entirely as a joke. He watched Twill wrap the sceptre and put it in one of the sacks. Now it looked as if Drabney were playing the fool instead of filling his sack. Just because he didn't twitch like Twill didn't mean he couldn't equal him.

He shone his torch on a coffin and began to prise the lid apart along the crack. The lid was lighter than he'd expected; it parted easily, and the halves smashed on the floor. Drabney froze, trying to hold the silence still, as the others glared in speechless disgust. At last, when he was sure nobody at the camp had woken, he dared to move. He sank his light into the dustily fuming coffin.

The mummy within was clasped in wings of gold. The golden case which contained the body was almost featureless. The golden head was round and entirely blank, the feet were merged into a tapering tail. The rest of the case embraced itself with two enormous ribbed wings. Otherwise the coffin was empty. Shadows stirred the ribs of the wings as Drabney's torch moved.

"This one's the same," Long said when Drabney told him what he'd found. "The bastard, he was telling the truth. They weren't interested in anything but their religion. Look there."

He jabbed his light at the walls. In the centre of each, faded and crumbling now, a stylized series was painted: a man, a mummy, a winged figure poised to fly. "And there," Long said, snatching the shapes in the corners forward with his light. They were carved stone wings, about to open and reveal their ill-defined bodies.

"Maybe this is where the idea of angels came from," Drabney said.

"No need for that kind of talk," Twill said.

"No need for you to shout just because you can't find anything.

What's wrong, is your friend there upsetting you?"

The mummy behind Twill was still creaking, with a sound like the stealthy flexing of disused leathery muscles. "Yes, it is," Twill said harshly. "How long is it going to make that row?"

He strode challengingly to the figure and thrust his torch at it. "Sometimes you act as if you need a shot yourself," Drabney said.

As Twill whirled furiously, brandishing a huge vague club of light, the end of his torch caught the mummy's neck. There was a sound of tearing.

All three lights seized the figure, like nooses. A long ragged strip of wrapping hung down its chest; the head, with its rudimentary face, was tilted askew. With a rush of horror, unable to bear the grotesque parody of what might lie beneath, Twill began to rip the wrappings from the mummy. Before Long could restrain him he had uncovered the head.

Perhaps they'd tried to make it look taller than it was. Or perhaps it hadn't been wrapped properly, and had partially decayed. Whatever the cause, the bald yellowed head within was barely half the size of its wrappings. It must be decay, Drabney thought, because the face looked sucked into itself, its features half-absorbed into the skull. Their lights wavered over the face, disturbing its shadows.

The face was moving. It wasn't the shadows at all. The head was shrinking, the eyes were collapsing into the skull. The head withdrew into the shoulders of the wrappings, and as it sank it fell back for a moment, as if with a soundless jagged-tooth laugh. It was the exposure to air, Drabney thought, the mummy was hurriedly decaying. Yet he felt uneasily that it was less like decay than like something else he'd once seen.

"I don't know what that achieved," Long said, hurrying through a capering of shadows to the door. "Come on, let's get these sacks filled and go."

"How?" Twill demanded shakily.

"Like this, since we have to." Long had removed the lid from the

coffin nearest the door; now he plunged in a crowbar and began to wrench free pieces of the golden mummy-case. Twill recoiled, but Long said "We've no time to be delicate now. We want to be finished and out." Drabney hurried to help him, looking away as he shook out the contents, which the crowbar had crushed and broken.

From the back of the tomb came a large incessant rustling. Drabney imagined the figure collapsing entirely within its wrappings. Sweat crawled on him; the inert air pressed close. All three men fastened their lights determinedly on the coffin and the sacks.

They glanced toward the camp as they emerged, but it was dark and silent. They forced themselves to walk slowly, so as to hush their rattling sacks. Ahead was an inkling of dawn which had yet to touch the rock underfoot. At least, Drabney thought, they weren't so loaded that he would have to risk driving the jeep back to the others. He walked automatically, musing. Now he was out of the tomb he wanted to remember what he'd almost recognized in there.

He was still pondering when he heard the sound on his left, away from the cliff-edge: a faint creaking rustle. He peered, but sky and rocks had seeped together. Twill had heard it too, and started, jangling his sack. "Palms," Long explained. "That's all, for God's sake." But they could feel no wind. They began to hurry, heedless of the loud sacks at this distance from the camp.

Drabney struggled to unlock his mind. The dry leathery case of the mummy, the way its head had writhed and shrunk within - these were the things he recognized. But from where? He strode faster, shaking his head violently to dislodge a dark blot which it carried at the edge of his eye, seeming to pace him where sky and rock were dimly separating.

When he heard the creaking again he was sure it came from beyond the cliff-edge, from the void, moving leisurely with them. It was an acoustic effect, Drabney thought, an effect of the air which was con-

gealing hotly about him as if it had clung to him from the tomb. That was all. For God's sake, he was fighting panic as if he were drugged. And all because of something he couldn't even remember, buried deep in his mind.

A dim form stood ahead, against the hint of dawn. It was not a rock. It was the jeep. "There was something not right about that tomb," Twill chattered, relieved, panting. "Those mummy-cases. Mummy-cases were a kind of sympathetic magic, you know. They were made to represent what you hoped to be after death."

"That wasn't what struck me as wrong," Long wheezed. "I'll tell you what I want to know. If that mummy standing against the wall really did attend to all the others, then who wrapped him?"

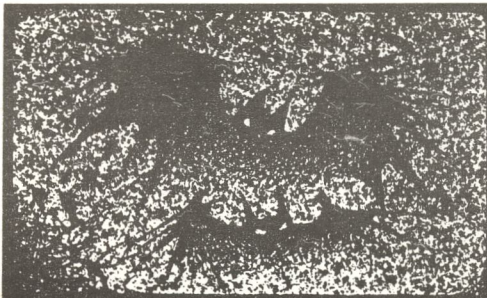
Suddenly Drabney remembered what he'd forgotten, and his heart began to thump him, urging him faster,

faster. He ran, the treasure in his sack scraping harshly together. Somewhere, beyond the vast perspectiveless grey that hung close to his eyes, he heard a slow rhythmic creak and rustling, not at all like the sound of palm-trees. It was drawing swiftly nearer.

"Come on!" Drabney shouted wildly, grabbing at the jeep, bruising himself cruelly as he struggled in, cursing the ignition key as it squirmed out of reach in his pocket, cursing the others as they fumbled into the jeep. He could see nothing but the memory that had jarred loose at last, of what he'd once seen that had been like the mummy: a chrysalis, writhing in the throes of its final transformation.

He was still scrabbling at the ignition when the shrunken glaring wide-mouthed head pressed itself against the windscreen, smearing the glass as it clambered over and enfolded them all beneath its wings.

There's certainly not much we at *Fantasy Tales* can add about one of this country's horror story prodigies. In fact, a look at the recent *Fantasy Readers' Guide to Ramsey Campbell* by Mike Ashley sums up his enormous popularity, the regard in which his fiction is held and his prolific output. The next issue of Stuart Schiff's magazine *Whispers* is a tribute to the author, with three of Ramsey's stories plus an interview by Jeffrey Elliott. Recent books include his latest novel, *To Wake the Dead* (re-titled *The Parasite* in the U.S. and with a different ending), and as editor, *New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos* from Arkham House and *New Terrors*, an ambitious two-volume anthology, published by Pan Books. Additionally, 1980 saw his short story *Mackintosh Willy* tie for first place in The World Fantasy Awards. 1981 will also be a busy year, with Ramsey's new novel *The Nameless* and a collection, *Dark Companions*, both from Macmillan in September. At present he is working on a new, long novel, *The Incarnations*. With all this talk of novels and anthologies, let's not forget the medium in which the author developed his haunting and evocative style: the short story. We hope you enjoyed *Wrapped Up*, which was hitherto unpublished and which the author describes as an attempt to recapture the EC Comic qualities in fiction.



NEXT ISSUE

THE DARK COUNTRY

by Dennis Etchison

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"Gretch stared pensively into the bubbling murk of the cauldron."

The Woodcarver's Son

By ROBERT A. COOK

Illustration by RUSSELL NICHOLSON

GRETCH stared pensively into the bubbling murk of the cauldron; thoughts, faces, and events swirled there in an ever-changing tapestry of grey mist. He blew lightly into the rising steam and waited as the vapours crowded aside to form a pool of emptiness; into this void he sprinkled a few grains of an indeterminate herb, muttering arcane words as he did so.

The heavy liquid bubbled once, swallowing the herb, and the sorcerer waited.

"Come, come, my children," he said after several moments, "why do you fret and tease me so? Come forth that I may know those secrets

you guard so carefully."

From all manner of places about the room darted small giggles of laughter, high and tinkling like faerie bells, never coming from the same place twice.

Gretch leaned back a trifle from the cauldron, the corners of his mouth turned up in the beginnings of a patient smile, as he waited for the merriment to subside.

At last, amid a chorus of crystalline laughter, a bright, silvery voice spoke. "What is it you would know, Earth-father?"

"Only how the unicorns fare," he replied, smiling.

A renewed chorus of excited laughter followed; from within

came the rustle of many tiny voices, like the breath of a summer breeze through quiet trees.

Eventually, the voice returned, giggling excitedly, expectantly.

"The unicorns are hungry, Earth-father."

The ageless sorcerer considered this for a moment, leaning heavily on his staff; he stared deeply into the void above the cauldron, absently rubbing his chin and frowning.

After a few moments, he chuckled thoughtfully and slowly nodded his head.

"Yes... I see." He paused for a moment, then continued. "Very well then, my children; I have an errand for you."

"Yes, Earth-father," the voices giggled in unison; "we hear and obey."

"Excellent; you are good children. Now, get you to the house of Aeol, son of Berchta the woodcarver, and whisper in his ear, as he sleeps, that something very wonderful awaits him in the little valley of the Humber; and he need only go there to have it."

Again the chorus of tinkling laughter broke out around the room; one of them replied, "Yes, Earth-father; we shall." Then, the laughter vanished.

Gretch smiled to himself and went off to look after some matter that demanded his attention. The rising vapours swirled momentarily about, filling the void above the cauldron, and finally settled down into vague, drifting mists.

That night Aeol, the woodcarver's son, had strange dreams.

AEOL awoke restless and ill-at-ease; the usually secure, if solitary, comforts of his house and shop, nestled safely in the village, were anything but contentment for him today.

It was certainly not his custom to wander about in the lonely hills and valleys of UMBERLAND; sticks and sharp stones were the least of a traveller's worries and pinpoints of light often gleamed furtively out from the shadows. Yet, this day, it ill became him to keep his house and shop. Suddenly, he wan-

ted to know what lay beyond the village, to explore distant places his foot had never trod and behold sights his eyes had never seen.

So, off he went, food pouch at his side, staff in hand, and his footsteps leading him unwittingly toward old Father Humber.

As the sun slipped quickly toward the western hills, Aeol found himself far from the village. On setting out, he hadn't planned to spend the night away from home; apart from those things of the darkness against which he had charms and talismans, there were wild beasts to make the wanderer cautious. Some, it was said, would not shun the flesh of a sleeping man. Yet, despite this, he had no inclination to return, and found, to his surprise, that his food pouch contained enough for two or three days instead of one as he'd planned.

He stopped on a low crest as the gathering gloom hid the faces of the trees and covered the gullies with shadow. He needed someplace to sleep, but he shied from the glades and thickets for what they might contain and from hilltops that would betray him to sinister eyes. For a moment, he hesitated; but the night was not so dark nor its denizens so cruel as to outweigh what he felt he might find there. So thinking, he took a deep breath, gripped his staff a little tighter, and set off down the hill.

At last, he came upon a small dell through which flowed a quiet stream. Angling away from the water was a large rock, a cubit's length taller than himself, that rose gradually into a low hill behind. Together with the stream, they formed two natural barriers and made a small, protected area in which to camp. On the open side, he built a fire and set about to make himself secure for the night.

After he had eaten, he leaned comfortably back and gazed about. The fire cast vague shadows and wavering forms on the rock and his imagination made creatures of little comfort from them. Disquieting sound filled the night from the trees and brush about the dell, suggesting the presence of uncanny

beasts. He gazed uneasily at the shadows, hoping it was just his imagination.

Suddenly he froze, and fixed his gaze on the white, horse-shaped head that had appeared on the rock above.

The amber eyes reflecting the firelight were gentle; the ivory horn that stood up from its forehead had never drawn angry blood, he knew. Its whole presence seemed one of curiosity, not violence, as though it had seen the fire and come to learn its meaning.

He stared at the unicorn for long moments, until his eyes began to water. Then, she moved. He blinked once and she was gone. He leapt up to follow, but stopped.

There was no need to chase her through the darkness; when morning came, he had only to climb the nearby hill and descend into the little valley of the Humber. There he would find her.

THE dawn found him looking down from the hilltop into the lush valley through which flowed old Father Humber. Everything seemed quiet and serene, yet he had the distinct impression of being watched. Nor was that his only odd feeling. Although he couldn't see her, he knew exactly where she was; and ... it almost seemed as though she were waiting for him.

At the base of the hill, he entered a dense thicket made nearly impassable with brush and low-hung branches. Twigs caught in his clothes and leaves caught in his hair as he forced his way through; and, more than once, he had to stop to free his foot from a maze of gnarled roots.

At last he came to a place where he could see green fields just beyond the next curtain of leaves. He twisted sideways, pushed the foliage apart and forced himself through. As the thicket closed behind him, he turned his head and looked across the open field.

He stopped; his mouth fell open and he stared as if in a trance. There, at the water's edge, she stood.

Surrounded in a cloud of golden sunlight she was, seeming to reflect that very light at twice its

own glory. Purer than the newest fallen snow, shimmering and glistening like gem-woven satin, her coat caught the morning light and hurled it back in a rainbow of crystalline white, while her mane ruffled in the breeze like an unwoven tapestry of feathered silk. Rising straight away from her forehead and tapering to an infinitely delicate point, her single, ivory horn glittered and sparkled like polished pearl. And, from luminescent pools of white, two orbs gazed at him, not crude yellow, not tawdry amber, not even gaudy gold, but brilliant, radiant sunlight.

Whether for moments or ages he stood, Aeol didn't know. Her beauty spun in his thoughts, filling every corner of his mind and leaving no room for anything else. How such a creature could exist was beyond his comprehension. Legend and myth paled beside her and even the Gods, themselves, were but shoddily clad mimics in her presence.

How he came to take that first step he didn't know. His mind aswirl with her beauty, he never felt the lush, soft grass beneath his feet. He didn't feel the spring breeze as it gently caressed his frame, drawing him forward. He was deaf to the twinkling whispers that urged him onward step by step. And he didn't see the green of the meadow and the blue of the sky as they lay a path for him to where she stood.

And then he stood beside her, looking into her eyes. He could actually feel her beauty, as though it were, itself, a living thing that, even as he stood there, surrounded and submerged him in a sea of unthinking awe.

He would never have thought to touch the unicorn; nay, by the Gods, not he! Not a mere mortal, clothed in the rags of his own shabby world, unfit to praise the blades of grass she bent beneath her hooves! Yet, seemingly of its own volition, his hand rose.

Aghast, he watched as his fingers fell slowly toward the silken forehead. Had he been himself, he would have stopped, but no power on earth could have wielded force enough to stay his hand.

Then, he felt it; like no gos-

ling's down, like no lamb's wool, not calm water, nor new blade of grass, not even spring thistle down. His fingertips began to tingle, sparkling like frozen nerves beginning to thaw. It spread to his arms and shoulders, his chest and legs, countless bursts of ecstasy everywhere at once.

Just as he hadn't been able to prevent that first touch, he couldn't end it; his fingers seemed held there by some uncanny power. Then, his amazement redoubled as he found himself laying his whole hand against her and the ecstasy grew equally.

In utter confusion, he stroked that incredible form. Each caress grew longer; each stroke drawing him further away from her head, down her silken neck, her mane wrapping and unwrapping about his fingers. And on he went until he found his hand upon her back.

Then, she knelt.

Her intent was quite clear to him, but it wasn't real. His leg swung slowly over and he settled down onto her back.

Again, there was nothing to describe what he felt. It wasn't flesh; flesh is coarse and rough. This was form, perfect form, held in place by the will of the owner and shaped as she wished it, fitting perfectly to his own lines and sacrificing none of her own to do so.

Slowly, he felt changes beginning. Could he say it was the bunching of muscles, the tautening of sinews? Not by all the Gods! There was no change of form, no altering of curves and lines, no movement at all. It was a gathering of energy, a summoning of uncanny strength and unearthly power...

And they were gone!

She didn't rise; she didn't leap. She didn't even seem to move. In one fluid motion they were away, flying with a grace and ease no Heaven-sent wind could have. All about him was a mist of green and brown, while beneath him coursed a sea of emerald.

Over the lands they went. Over the hills and brakes, through field and forest and thicket alike and with never the tiniest breath of a thought. On through the land, on

through a dream, over the leagues to the village ere even the farmers had reached their fields.

Aeol the woodcarver's son was no fool. He knew the envies and prejudices of his kind too well, so he dared not take the unicorn back to the village. Yet, he refused to leave her alone for fear of losing her. Thus it was that, that night and ever afterwards, he slept with her in one of the many glades and thickets in the woods about Wednestown.

When he awoke one morning, she was gone. He leapt to his feet and ran frantically through the trees, calling and searching. A short while of this brought him around a small knoll where he found her staring curiously at him as though wondering what all the excitement was about. After that, he never again feared losing her.

As the days turned into weeks, Aeol came to love the unicorn as he had never loved anything before. She was unearthly, magickal; she made the reality of his life a dream from which he resolved never to wake. Boredom vanished in a world of delight and his dreary life of before faded into an abstract memory which he recalled as though belonging to someone else.

He abandoned his house and shop in the village to live with her in the woodlands, seldom leaving her side. Every day with her was special; she showed him strange and wonderful sights, bearing him countless leagues away from home, far beyond the boundaries of his knowledge.

She took him to where the land ended and he, alone of all his kin for a hundred years, watched as the relentless water beat against the sand. In a bright summer sunrise, he stood on the massive wall the Romans had built against their Pictish foes. And, on a clear afternoon in early fall, he gazed across a wide expanse of water and beheld a land completely foreign to him.

When they were not travelling, they would walk quietly along shaded paths, listening to the sigh of summer winds or watching the scamper of brown squirrels. Sometimes, they sported and played in the mead-

ows where the grass was thick and soft underfoot; and sometimes, they would just lie still in a cool glade, he with his head upon her shoulder, and taste of the quiet.

GRETCH waited patiently for the laughter to subside as the steam from the cauldron wove strange tapestries about his ancient, ageless face.

"So, my children," he said when all was quiet again, "how fares our young woodcrafter?"

The days had flown swiftly away; spring had become summer and summer had become autumn. The air had cooled, the days grown shorter and it was All-Hallows Eve.

"Oh, very well, indeed, Earth-father," the twinkling voice replied. "Just yesternight he stole the last gold ring he needed to complete his secret work."

"That is well; all transpires as I expected. Now, I have an errand for you."

The voices giggled.

"Go to Aeol where he naps in a glade with his unicorn and whisper to him that tonight is the night; to delay longer would be folly."

Excited laughter filled the room.

"We hear and obey, Earth-father."

AEOL gazed with pride at the marvelous thing he had wrought; it had taken him half the summer to make it. By night, he had crept into the village to steal what he needed; by day, he had hidden himself away and spent endless hours carving, sewing, and fastening. The result was truly something to wonder at.

He reverently stroked the carvings of the leather straps and delicately caressed the gold rings that held them together. He had laboured endlessly and tirelessly so that each part would be perfect, each detail exactly to the measure and meaning of its intended use. Only this would be proper for what he felt; only this was worthy of the wonderful creature which would wear it. Only this was right for a unicorn...his unicorn.

He turned in the moonlight and

stepped forward, holding out the halter with its reins of carven leather and its rings of pure gold.

"And now, my beautiful one," he said, "you shall wear this thing I have wrought for you. It will be a sign, a mark, that all who look upon you shall know that I am your master, that you are mine."

The horn slid easily into his chest, as though his body were made of air. He tried to back away, but he couldn't move his legs. He hesitantly touched the silken forehead and looked uncomprehending into her eyes; those depthless pools of sunlight gazed back at him softly, tenderly, and without malice.

His vision swayed and the meadow reeled before him, swirling in a maelstrom of midnight grey and silver.

Then, the agony began; not from his chest and spreading outward, but through his entire frame in one instant, spinning and swirling as it grew until it blotted out everything else.

His senses were drowned, obliterated in a raging sea of pain. Greater it grew, faster it went, faster and greater until it became an ecstasy not even his soul could contain. Then, it was devoured by darkness, darkness blacker than a moonless night.

And, at last, even the darkness was gone.

WHAT is this place, Learned One?" the apprentice asked. "And why have we come here on All-Hallows Eve?"

The seasons had spun many times round, but had not greatly changed the appearance of the meadow.

"One of great magical power," the sorcerer replied. "For the spell we have come here to do it will be invaluable."

"How can that be, Wise Teacher? I behold nought but the remains of an old halter and a pile of bone chips."

"Note the advanced corruption of the leather; it has lain here many years. Yet, the bits of bone remain neatly stacked in their cone-shaped pile, undisturbed by vultures and other scavengers."

"You speak truly, Master. A most powerful weird must here abide to

cause so strange a thing."

Gretch smiled, remembering the night that Berchta the woodcarver had, at the behest of the Christian monks, led the rampaging villagers over the hill and up the mountain to ravage his home.

"Aye, Gremlit, a most powerful weird, indeed; a unicorn has fed

here."

"A unicorn, Learned One? I knew not that they fed at all; what is it that they eat?"

Again Gretch smiled and, this time, chuckled softly to himself.

"Only their masters, Gremlit; only their masters."

We hope you have enjoyed Robert Cook's unusual fantasy, *The Woodcarver's Son*, appearing here for the first time, and we look forward to publishing more of Mr. Cook's fiction in future issues of *Fantasy Tales*.

It is to our great regret that we announce the death in January, at the age of 77, of H. Warner Munn. Harold is remembered very fondly by the editors of *Fantasy Tales*, both from meetings with him and through correspondence. It was always a pleasure to hear of camping expeditions he took in his 1955 Pontiac station wagon, or seeing his friendly face behind a huckster's table at the World Fantasy Conventions. One of the *Weird Tales* writers (he knew and met Lovecraft), Harold was undergoing a revival of interest in his work over the last couple of years, in both professional and amateur markets - to which he was ever an obliging contributor. Indeed, it was our particular joy to have been able to feature his work - verse and fiction - in our pages. Harold's quiet personality and his distinguished writing will be sorely missed by aficionados of Fantasy and Horror...

Limbo

By H. WARNER MUNN

NO DAWN upon this darkling plain,
 Gleamed only by one icy star.
 No light of moon to wax or wane.
 No birdsong here to ease - or mar
 Its solitude. Stilled ocean,
 Burnished by abrasive wind,
 Lies rippleless, a place to shun.
 This coast, where wander those who sinned
 Unknowing, is a shore to fear
 By we - who have no night, no day.
 Heaven - that you are with me, dear -
 And Hell - that you must stay.



"I hear the flapping of leathern wings!"

The Last Horror Out of Arkham

By DARRELL SCHWEITZER

Illustration by DAVE CARSON

PROFESSOR Latham Knucklebury was a bent, grey-haired little man with a penchant for bizarre theories, and a tendency to lecture on them, as if he were in front of a class, to anyone he could corner. I shared an office with him at U. Mass. (pronounced You-Mass by its denizens) and I suppose I heard more of his ideas than anyone else in those days. His arguments were uniformly as strange, incredible, and seemingly ridiculous on the surface as they were, if you stopped to listen to all the reasoning behind them, logical, brilliant,

and backed by evidence overlooked by everyone else. Knucklebury often compared himself to Copernicus, Galileo, and other persecuted scientific greats of the past, and perhaps this wasn't entirely inappropriate, because his mind was undeniably first rate, but in the end that didn't save him. He had no tact at all, and thumbed his nose at the Chairman of the Anthropology Department visibly, publicly and with a personal vindictiveness matched only by that directed against him by the late Professor Chambers.

It was obvious that Latham wouldn't last long at the University and it came as no surprise when the axe finally fell. The immediate cause was the publication of his article, *Evidence of Fungoid Phallic Worship Among the Early Fire Islanders*, despite statements of disapproval and outright threats from Chambers in the Spring 1978 issue of the *Squammos Review*. It made a laughing stock out of the department as I had feared it would, and when it appeared the Chairman consulted with the President of the Board of Directors, and it was agreed that my colleague had to go. He did. The next morning Latham found a note of dismissal in his mailbox and, true to his nature, his first impulse was to rush into the Chairman's office, interrupt a long-distance phone call and demand an explanation. Now the Anthropology Department's office consisted of a large centre room with the individual offices of the chairman and the various teachers opening into it, and this meant that anything said in a loud voice behind one door could be heard behind all the others. I was at my desk that morning grading some exams, so I heard the whole thing. Before long Chambers was shouting like a barrage of cannon fire, and Knucklebury had degenerated into a shrill screech. Latham sounded hurt, indignant, and furious all at the same time, as if the most cowardly and treacherous thing imaginable had been done to him. He played the martyr-to-science role well.

"I don't need to remind you," he said, "that when I was teaching at Miskatonic they never treated me like this. There I was given respect!"

"And that's why they closed the place down!" retorted Chambers.

"Nobody wanted to go to a place filled with lunatics like you!"

"That's not true! They lost a government grant!"

"Hallelujah! Maybe Nixon was a good guy after all!"

"Just because your own curiosity has dried up, because you haven't functioned as a scientist in decades, because your sterile little mind

can't appreciate anything new --"

"You ought to be locked up, Knucklebury. You might be dangerous. Delusions of grandeur, hallucinations, I don't know what. But in the meantime, get out of here. The matter is settled. You're fired. Talk it out with the Board or the President, but leave me alone. I never want to see your face in here again!" With that Professor Chambers broke into a stream of language unbefitting a scholar speaking to another scholar. Latham realized that there was nothing he could do and left the room. He came over to my office and I dropped the test paper I had been hiding behind during the battle.

"Jesus Christ, what brought that on?"

"Just make sure that you don't rock the boat around here Richard," he said. "If you write anything more than stale rehash you won't have your job very long."

"Anything I can do for you, Latham?"

"No. Just watch and wait. I swear to you that I'll vindicate myself. I'll prove every one of my hypotheses to be a fact, not just conjecture. Watch and wait, and I promise you, unusual things will begin to happen."

He refused to explain what he meant while he packed a few papers into his briefcase. He left the office and that was the last I saw of him for months.

AN UNUSUAL thing did happen almost immediately, within a week in fact, but at the time there was no way I could connect it with Latham Knucklebury.

Even though anthropology is my profession, I have always maintained an avid interest in literature. It was my undergraduate minor and my wife Peg teaches English, so between the two of us ours is a very literary household. Both of us are incurable bibliophiles. We collect rare editions, old periodicals, and publishing oddities, so we were both fully equipped to appreciate the uniqueness of the volume that came in the mail the following Saturday morning, four days after my friend's dismissal.

I was sitting at the table finishing my coffee while Peg tidied up the kitchen, when the doorbell rang and the mailman left off a large parcel marked "fourth class - book." When I picked it up I was surprised, the thing must have weighed a good fifteen pounds. I looked for a return address but there wasn't any, and the stamps were obscured by a black smear of a postmark.

"What was that?" Peg called.

"A package."

"What is it?"

"A book, but I don't know who it's from. You didn't order anything, did you?"

"No. It might be freebies from some textbook company."

"I don't think so," I said as I began to unwrap it. "No, it's an old book, a very old book - *God!*"

She dropped something and came running.

"Well? What is it?"

I showed her the title page:

Mr. William
SHAKESPEARE'S
Comedies
Histories &
Tragedies.
Published according to the
True Original Copies
((an engraved portrait here))
London
Printed by Isaac Jaggard and
Ed. Blount, 1623

"It's got to be a fake," I said.
"It must be a fake."

Peg picked up the book gingerly, with a half religious awe. She paged through it, checking certain points, then sniffed the binding.

"No," she said. "I think it's the real thing. This is a genuine First Folio. The paper's old enough. Smell it."

I did. Every book collector knows what musty old books smell like, and very old ones, prior to the invention of wood pulp paper, have an odour all their own, and you get to recognize it after a while. This one smelled right.

"Isn't there any way you could fake it?"

"Have you got any idea how much trouble it would take to forge a book of this size? You'd have to

make all the plates, get specially aged paper, get the watermarks right, get the typos right, the corrupt lines, the smears, the wormholes, everything accurate enough to fool an expert. The expense wouldn't be worth it. You could only make one or two copies without raising suspicion, and this book isn't all that rare. A hundred and fifty copies are known to exist, and that's pretty good for an Elizabethan book that isn't a bible."

"How much do you think it's worth?"

"A lot. A hundred and fifty thousand dollars maybe. But wouldn't it be easier to rob a bank than to counterfeit something like this? And then why would anyone send it to you anonymously in the mail, real or fake?"

"I don't know. Maybe they'll come to collect a pound of flesh later, but when they do I'll make them explain that inscription first."

"What inscription?"

I pointed out the handwriting in the upper right corner of the title page, in a nearly illegible hand and faded ink. It read:

To my dear friend, R. B.
- William Shakespeare.

"Your initials," Peg said.
"Isn't that funny. But wait a minute, didn't Shakespeare die in 1616, and wasn't the first edition of his plays posthumous?"

"Touche! Now you see why it can't possibly be real. Shakespeare couldn't have autographed it if he was already dead."

"One minute. Let me check something." She left the room and came back a minute later with a book on Shakespeare, in which were reproduced the four extant signatures of the Bard. Ours matched one of them almost exactly.

"Somebody is one hell of a good forger," I said.

We kept the book as a curiosity. I took it to a rare book dealer once when the lure of a hundred and fifty thousand dollars became too much for me, and he went over it carefully. He asked me how I had come across it, and when I couldn't

tell him he became very suspicious. Books like that don't drop out of the blue. Usually an individual copy has a known history with a long line of owners who can be traced. Eventually he refused to even make an offer on it, convinced that I was some sort of crook, and the book rested on our shelves ever after. I took it down to glance through occasionally, and that was how I chanced to notice something written in quite modern ballpoint on the blank page following *Troilus and Cressida*. The handwriting was not my wife's, but it looked somehow familiar. The message was:

TEST RUN. ONLY THE BEGINNING.

THAT summer Peg and I went on vacation for all three months. One of the wonderful things about teaching is that if you live modestly, hoard your money, are married to another teacher, and don't have any kids, you can afford to take the entire summer off sometimes and travel. That year we drove west to California, up through Oregon and Washington, then all the way across to Canada and down into Maine. When we got there we indulged in one of our quaint hobbies of dubious legality.

The backwoods areas of northern New England were cleared and farmed once, but the principle crop turned out to be rocks and the farmers went broke. They left their land and moved away, the result was a region of declining population scattered with empty farmhouses and barns, many half in ruins among overgrown fields and re-encroaching forests. Many of these were left partially furnished, filled with whatever the owners thought not worth taking or couldn't carry. Values change over the years, and what was junk in 1890 is often today a much sought after antique. So what Peg and I have done more than once is find a particularly isolated abandoned house, break in and help ourselves. Sheriffs frown on it, but I don't think there's an antique dealer in the business who doesn't do the same. They don't see anything wrong with taking old books, plates, and furniture that have been left to the elements and

neither do I. Call it an informal type of archeology.

We went treasure hunting in our station wagon at a place called Appleton Ridge which is off Route 1 near Rockland, atop miniature mountains. The view is spectacular on a clear day, and where the cliffs drop away you can see for miles across a wide green valley to the opposite slopes where another row of hills rise. Roads wind in long dusty lines, occasionally stirred by the speck of a car; houses are white matchboxes, and the cows in their pastures look like ants.

We spent a lot of time bouncing along the narrow rocky path that was the local excuse for a road. We stopped and looked at the scenery, picked blueberries where they grew wild among barren slabs of boulder, and finally we found the house. It stood alone with weeds up to the windowsills facing a barn on the other side of the way with its roof fallen in. I knew there would be nothing in the barn that the wind and rain hadn't ruined long ago, but the house appeared to be in good shape. I parked the car out of sight behind the wreckage of the barn, perilously close to the edge of a cliff, and then Peg and I went around to the back of the house, found an open window, and climbed in.

The place had been looted before. Most of the furniture was gone or smashed, and there were empty liquor bottles scattered about, left by passing derelicts or the local teenagers. Broken glass was everywhere, and in many places plaster had fallen from the ceiling in heaps. We dug around in what must have been the kitchen looking for china plates - the kind they used to use as ballast on clipper ships and now sell for two and three figures - but came up with nothing. It was only when we got upstairs that the pickings got any better. There we found a laboratory the vandals never touched.

All the upstairs rooms were empty save for one, which was locked, but it wasn't hard for me to break the door in. The first thing we noticed was that there was a

statue in the middle of the room, a huge, extremely crude man-like figure with bat wings on its back and the trunk of an elephant for a face. Two deep holes represented eyesockets. Whoever made it hadn't been much of a sculptor, obviously.

Around on tables were pieces of chemical equipment, glassware, tubing, beakers with a gummy residue in them. These I passed over quickly, and forgot them entirely when I noticed what books were on the shelves that lined the walls.

"Peg! Look at this! It's impossible!"

The shelves were packed with crumbling leatherbound volumes. I picked one up and the spine left a brown smear on the palm of my hand. I opened the book and it cracked. When I saw the title page I couldn't believe my eyes. It was a book of magic, the *Grimoire* of the sorcerer Honorius, and it was one of the most sought after books in the occult field. It was worth a fortune. Peg opened another at random, and it was something similar. "The guy must have been a wizard," I said. "And I halfway believe the lump of rock over there is in fact the original Golem, brought from de ghetto of Prague to vork new ewils in dis land."

"The what? What are you talking about?"

"The Golem, dear, is, or maybe I should say was, a stone robot built by Rabbi Loew in medieval Prague to protect his people from persecution. He wrote the word for "life" on its forehead and that turned it on, and the only way to stop it was to erase the word. Unfortunately the thing didn't like having its word erased, so it got loose. Like Frankenstein's monster.

"I hope you're not serious about this. Besides, this writing doesn't look Jewish." She handed me a thick, squat volume in black leather.

"Hebrew, dear, and no I'm not serious. As for this book, it's in Latin, and it's a copy of Alhazred's screwy gibberings, collectively known as the *Necronomicon*. It's worth a mint, and I'm quite serious about that. We're rich, you know, and maybe sometime we can come back and have the statue made into a

birdbath for the lawn of our estate. I mean, look at these books!"

And look we did. There was another copy of the *Necronomicon*, John Dee's English version, carefully sewn into what looked like late 18th century deluxe leather. The original was just unbound sheets, you recall. Also stuffed on those shelves, covered with cobwebs and filled with worm toothmarks were such rarities as Ferdinand de Schertz's *Magia Posthuma*, Morryster's wild *Marvels of Science*, the mind blasting *Sonnets on Time* by the crazed medieval monk Donaldius of Grathstead, Borellus' *De Motu Animalium*, *The Book of Eibon* bound in some sort of reptile hide, the *Complete Works* of Scott Edelstein, *Magia Naturalis* by Della Porta, the 1720 edition of Mason's *Observations on Superhuman Natures*, *The Stone from Mnar* undated, and perhaps five hundred more.

As we were carrying the books out of the house I remarked, "You know Peg, the guy who lived here must have found the philosopher's stone. Where else would he have gotten the gold to buy all these? This house hasn't been abandoned for more than fifty or sixty years. *Necronomicons* didn't come cheap even then."

"Your friend Latham was interested in this sort of thing, wasn't he?"

"Yes, he was."

"Well, I was thinking, now that we have so many, that we should send him a couple as a gift."

"Yeah, that would be nice."

We had intended to spend a couple more days vacationing, but after we got the books loaded into the wagon we decided to head home right away. This cargo was too valuable to risk theft in a hotel parking lot. We made it to Amherst Massachusetts a few hours later, with only a few odd looks from the toll booth attendants on the turnpike.

The two of us spent the following week taking inventory of what we had, comparing them against prices in catalogues and reading some. The name of Latham Knucklebury came to me again in a very odd way, as I found another message written in a book, in the same hand that had

marked out Shakespeare. It was on the flyleaf of an edition of Van Prims and read:

HAVEN'T YOU EVER WONDERED WHY THESE BOOKS ALWAYS TURN UP, DESPITE THEIR ALLEGED RARITY?

LK

Latham Knucklebury! It had to be.

"I have to be going dear."

"Why? Where?"

"To Arkham," I said. "I'll tell you more about it later. Hold the fort for me in the meantime. Bye."

And I was gone. West of Arkham the hills rise wild, and the roads are narrow, steep and treacherous through those deep woods that no axe has ever cut. Still I drove like a maniac, spewing dust and gravel in my wake. I showered a bearded old man and he raised his hand to make an odd sign against me, but I was gone around a bend in an instant.

"SO YOU have come at last. Good,"

Latham Knucklebury said as he met me before the locked gates of the Miskatonic University campus. "I knew you would be here. Your curiosity would force you to come."

He walked away from the gate, over the grass and along the wall.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"I know a way in. I still have a key. Several keys in fact."

He took me through a tiny gate around the back, and we walked briskly across the empty campus, past rows of dormitories with gabled roofs and fanlighted doorways, until we came to a large brick building the size of a barn with no windows on the first floor. It had only one opening, a massive slab of metal which slid aside after Latham had inserted and turned a six-inch key.

"Now you see my work, and I hope you'll understand," he announced.

Inside was a single room, almost completely filled with a fantastic array of machinery of completely alien design. There were huge globes of translucent glass, coils of tubing, cyclopean columns of a greenish metal, gigantic cubes, pyramids and cylinders, rhomboid-sided solids of impossible crystals, blue, red, and yellow, and some shapes defying any geometry I knew altogether. In front of all of it stood the image

of what I took to be an animal, perhaps an incomplete specimen. It was as tall as an elephant, with four long, tapering legs, and covered all over with a rope-like hair of a vaguely purplish colour. It had no visible head or tail, and I wasn't sure which end was the front.

Latham Knucklebury climbed in among the machines, onto a three-pronged operator's pedestal obviously designed for anatomies other than human.

"Behold around you," he said, waving his hand showmanlike, "the innermost secret of Miskatonic University."

There was a faint humming sound coming from the hardware, which seemed to get a little louder as he spoke.

"Some secret! What's the hairy thing?"

"That's the builder of this apparatus, Richard, a being from beyond the Earth. Alone it came from distant Shaggai in centuries past. It transported all this machinery here and assembled it, then went into suspended animation when the task was completed. It is actually a low form of Shaggaian life, more like a dog than anything else in the ecology of that world."

"A Shaggai dog built *this*?"

"Yes. You see, the Old Ones are so advanced and incomprehensible to mankind, that they never lower themselves to touch mechanical objects at all. But this device was a vital part of their overall plan, so they sent the creature you see before you to set it up."

"Now wait a minute! This mutt looks stuffed to me." I tried to touch the thing with my finger, but suddenly a blue light arced over it, and I felt a strong electrical shock. I drew back, and found that my arm was numb past the elbow.

"Not stuffed," said Knucklebury. "It's in a kind of time stasis. The beings of Shaggai have long since harnessed Time."

"Tell me more," I said, nursing my arm.

Latham was no longer merely conversing. He began to take on a fanatical tone, like a soapbox preach-

er ranting for revolution. He got down from his stool and began to shout and point.

"The Old Ones are the masters of all cosmic forces, Richard, and they have bided their time while the superstitious rabble forgot them and went on to new hysterias. The men who first discovered this equipment were persecuted as witches. Later others came, and to hide the frightful object from view they built this hall around it and locked the massive door, after the Shaggaiian machinery proved indestructable despite all the childish efforts of the Puritans to smash it as a work of the Devil. Eventually braver and wiser souls arrived, men who understood. They built Miskatonic University on this site to mask their true activities. Only a few of all those who have studied here ever came inside this building. When I was here in my last year there were only nine professors and three graduate students who were part of our brotherhood. We alone knew, and had the power -"

"What power? What does this gizmo do?"

"Have you never heard of the Great Old Ones, who came to this world ere mankind was even an idea in the mind of a deranged amoeba? The Old Ones are; the Old Ones were; the Old Ones shall be. They came from the stars and ruled over the Earth in Their mysterious ways, until they were cast down by forces even more terrible. But They shall come again and drive the human scum from the globe. I tell you -"

"You tell me just what all this is about, because I still haven't the slightest idea. What has this contraption and that - that whatever it is - got to do with anything? Where did those old books come from, and how did you know we would come to that particular house? We didn't know ourselves until we got there."

"Like I said, the Old Ones have made Time their servant. I merely looked ahead, saw that you would go there, and deposited what I wanted you to find. By our science such a thing is inconceivable, but to the Old Ones it is nothing."

"Well thanks, but I really

couldn't take them all from you -"

"Richard, you *will* take them and you *will* read them and you *will* -"

"I won't do anything unless you tell me where they came from."

"Alright then, if you must know, this device here bends the fabric of space. When you do that something coexists with itself. I merely took the extra copy each time."

"Huh?"

"Did you by chance notice the stamps on the wrapping to the Shakespeare book?"

"No, I didn't."

"Well you should have, because they're all 1856 British Guiana one cent magenta, the rarest stamp in the world, worth easily \$75,000. Only one copy is known to exist, and you have six. And that is a demonstration of my power. It has nothing to do with my true purpose."

"Tell me, did you get Shakespeare's autograph with your space bending machine?"

"Of course. I took the book back, asked him to autograph it, and brought it to our own time again. He took me for a magician, and said I had inspired him to write a play about a magician."

"*The Tempest.*"

"Maybe so, but in any case, They of Shaggai and Yuggoth have no interest in Shakespeare. This machine was designed to mass produce mouldering and unquestionably authentic copies of the *Necronomicon*, the *Book of Eibon*, and all the rest, so they would get wide circulation and inevitably fall into the hands of those who know how to use them."

"Wouldn't it be a lot simpler just to publish the *Necronomicon* in paperback?"

"What? No, don't be silly. It would vanish into the occult racks without a ripple. People would think Lin Carter wrote it. I want these copies to be *believed.*"

He was clearly mad, or at least half mad. I didn't understand half of what he said, but what was clear was simply more of his screwball ravings magnified enormously. I didn't feel like humouring him any more.

"Is this your idea of a joke?"

At that he grew wild with rage.

"*Joke?* Do you take me for a prankster? No, I tell you it is my plan to bring the Old Ones back *in our own time!* When I am done every occultist, every satanist, every teenaged witch, every person on the planet with the slightest amount of curiosity will have a copy of *Alhazred*. They'll read it aloud, speak spells they don't understand, and the gates will be ripped back, and the Old Ones will come through and clear the world of all human garbage. Nothing will be left of what was!"

This was ridiculous. I didn't know whether to laugh or feel sorry for him. I tried to show him the illogic of his fantasy.

"Yes, but if that happens, won't everybody be killed, *including you, Latham Knuckleberry?*"

"No, I shall not die, for the blood of Dagon and Cthulhu runs deep in me. Those who are touched by Them and who serve Them shall live on in new and glorious life."

"You really are crazy. Chambers was right."

"No, I am not crazy, Richard. I am not entirely human, nor are you."

"Me? What do you mean I'm not human?"

"Through my machines I know more than you think, about the world, about you, Professor Richard Brown. What happened to those tentacles on your chest?"

"How did you ever -? The doctor cut them off when I was a baby! A birth defect."

"Your tail, Richard! The scales down your back. What of them?"

"What the hell are you, some kind of peeping tom?"

"*Richard, I know you have webbing between your toes!*"

"Shut up you madman! Shut up!"

"Ia Hastur! Tonight the stars are right! The time of Their return is at hand!"

I turned and fled from that place in blind terror. Behind me the machinery began to whirl and clank. As I passed a copy of *Cultes des Ghoules* slid down a chute and fell into a basket. The blue light arced again and the nameless creature from Shaggai began to stir. I glimpsed over my shoulder - God, that I

had not! - and saw that the creature's head was not at the front or the back, *but in the middle!*

The last thing I heard was the shrill voice of Latham Knucklebury cackling in hideous, obscene triumph.

"Run you coward! Run and die! You won't escape Them. Ia! Ia Hastur! We want a touchdown! Ia! Harken ye, O Dark Ones, to the ancient words! Ia Shub-Niggurath! Yog-Sothoth! *Yog-Sothoth!*"

THREE months have passed since that frightful spectacle at Miskatonic University, and I know now that I should not have run away. I should have allied myself with Latham Knucklebury and the demonic forces he served, for then I would have had some hope of survival.

Since last I saw him there have been signs and wonders, reports of strange lights in the sky, unheard of shapes rising out of the seas, monsters roaming the countryside, and even a walking winged statue haunting New England.

This morning the sun did not rise. There are no stars, and a black shroud has fallen over the world. I can hear nothing but static on the radio and my watch has stopped, so I know not what hour it is, but I know that all over the globe cities are in flame, and humankind reels before its last, irresistible nemesis. The Old Ones *have* returned and again they walk the face of their ancient home!

I shall not live long now! The last news bulletin was two days ago, and Professor Chambers has been found murdered in his office, with inhuman three-toed footprints in blood on the ceiling. A similar doom awaits me -

God! Downstairs! My wife is screaming. Something has shattered the living room window! I hear the flapping of leathern wings! Outside in the hall! The house is filled with smoke! Terrible stench! Hellwind!

"*Help me! The three-lobed burning pustule...*"

The versatile Darrell Schweitzer made his first appearance in *Fantasy Tales* in our last issue. The novel mentioned in the introductory notes, *The Shattered Goddess*, is part of a six-book deal the author has made with Starblaze Books. The first of them is *We are all Legends*, a collection of stories which will appear early this year illustrated by Stephen Fabian. Other are, *Legends of Randalcaine* (stories using the same settings as *Shattered Goddess*), a general collection called *A Host of Furious Fancies*, a further novel and an anthology culled from the pages of small press magazines. Two short stories are due to appear in *Amazing/Fantastic: Raving Lunacy* and *Continued Lunacy* (sequels to the previous *Tom O'Bedlam's Night Out*), plus two stories are scheduled for publication in the Italian magazine, *Kadath*. Finally, Borgo Press are to issue a further book of interviews and readers interested in Darrell's non-fiction works should refer themselves to the author notes in the last issue of this magazine. The preceding Lovecraftian pastiche was originally published in Jonathan Bacon's *Fantasy Crosswinds*, number 3 (1977).



Bleak December

By DAVE WARD.

WINTER in the bleak buildings. The gypsy woman is selling pins. At the top of the spiral staircase an old man sits listening at the window. He hears sounds drift in from the street where he has never been.

In the room at the back the blind twins and their silent mother play a game with one another, taking turns to describe the many different faces they have learned to call their father.

Winter wind squeezes like disease under doors, crawls through broken shutters, whining like the crazy accordian man found dead three nights ago, though no-one in this house of nameless doorplates notices he's gone.

16~27 March 1981

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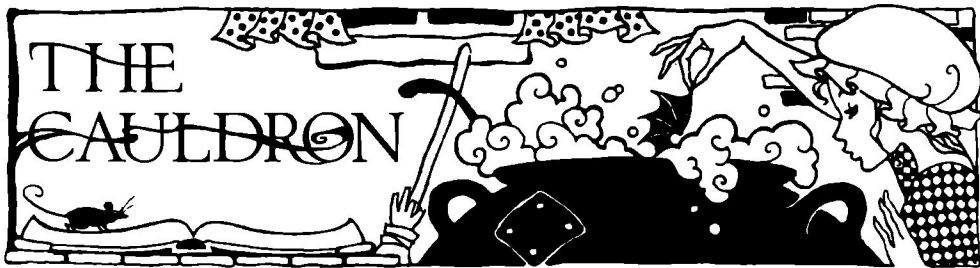
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launch date 12 January - 6 February 1981



NEWs this issue is dominated by our obvious increase in cover price. *Fantasy Tales* is now 75p/\$2.50 (plus postage) per copy. May we emphasise that this is the *very first* increase in our basic cover price since the magazine's inception in the summer of 1977! That fact and our determination to continue publishing a regular value-for-money magazine in the fantasy genre will, we sincerely hope, encourage all our readers to stay with us during future issues. As always we would prefer you to buy your copy direct from the editorial address, as this gives us that little bit extra cash to utilise and will help us to increase the number of pages per issue. Even though there has been yet another increase in postal charges since the last issue, we will not be passing it on to direct subscribers for the time being.

We were again delighted to win *The British Fantasy Award* (1979) for 'Best Small Press'. The presentation of the hefty and suitably grotesque statuette, newly designed and sculpted by artist Dave Carson, was made at the sixth British Fantasy Convention held last October in Birmingham. The 1979 award makes it a hat-trick for *Fantasy Tales*!

Future delights to watch out for in the magazine are stories by Brian Lumley (a Cthulhu Mythos novelette called *House of the Temple*), Peter Tremayne (one of his infrequent forays into the short story form with an unpublished Lan-Kern yarn, *The Storm Devil of Lan-Kern*), Hugh B. Cave (one of America's master fantasy writers, with a voodoo story, *A Place of No Return*) and a bizarre new novelette, *The*

Dark Country by one of the brightest lights in modern horror, Dennis Etchison.

Finally, do keep those letters of comment rolling in, and remember to vote for your favourite stories in this issue.

WELL-BALANCED ISSUE

Regular contributor Alan Hunter, Bournemouth, writes: "I do not agree with those who say that the cover was a failure because it should have been in full colour. It gives the *impression* of full colour, with the minimum of expense which is a worthwhile feat in these financially restrictive times. My imagination can supply the colour, which is probably more satisfying than the final appearance would be when the colour printers have finished with it. The caption boxes are a great nuisance, but I suppose we have to endure them for the sake of customer appeal. A well-balanced issue, well illustrated (with an excellent debut by Andrew Smith). I think it ranks amongst your best issues to date. It does seem a pity, however, that to achieve this standard you have to rely so much on material from the U.S. There are so many outlets in the States for the fantasy writer and artist that it seems wrong for them to be taking over such a big share of the British genre. Your aim, surely, is to present the best of British talent in a magazine which has a style of its own. The fact that you are so far from achieving this must be a reflection on the dearth of good British material."

COVER DOESN'T WORK

Brian Lumley, a regular FT auth-

or, writes from Bedhampton, Hants: "First the bad news. The cover is beautiful but it doesn't work. Last issue's cover looked black and white, (the theme was monochrome), but this one looks coloured; and the white blocks are too big and seriously detract from the artwork. Turn the page: Contents Page is laid out (as always) superbly - and wasted because the eye is drawn straight to the Forbidden Planet ad! I believe you're using Fabian because he's there, like climbing a mountain. For my money Fabian is the greatest, but these reruns aren't. Substandard Steve, these. All others: very stylish. I don't ever recall seeing a bad Alan Hunter. The Smith on p.21 is particularly good, as is the Carson on p.10. Verse: the Don Herron and Steve Eng pieces are fine, though the latter is very slight. As for your third piece: this guy must be a Cthulhu freak... Stories: Schifino is improving. I liked this one. I would list the stories thus: 1. Wellman, 2. Garfield (fascinating!) 3. Schweitzer, 4. Schifino, 5. Munn, 6. Reeder. But the last is not the least. All the stories were good."

NOT UP TO STANDARD

From, Dave Morris, Woking, Surrey: "Just a short note concerning *Fantasy Tales* no.6 - I thought this issue wasn't quite up to the standard you have set with your earlier ones. That isn't to say I disliked it, but when you publish so infrequently it is best to make each issue as strong as possible. H. Warner Munn's story was the best in the issue. Reading a story like this, it is impossible not to recognize Munn as a real master craftsman! I'd rate *The Story of the Brown Man* second...an original and excellent idea realized in a nicely matter-of-fact style I found slightly reminiscent of E. F. Benson. The rest of the stories were not so good, and it's difficult to decide on third place. The normally reliable Mr. Wellman gave us a rather poor offering this time, so I'll plump for *The Last Trick*. A mood piece, as you say - but it would have been more successful if

the author hadn't named the woman in the story. The theme of *Lair of the White Wolf* had already been explored more originally by John Wysocki in *The Lean Wolves Wait*. It impresses me not at all that you have more Lupolius stories upcoming, nor that we will be getting more Conanish fare in the form of a Kane story. *The Elementals* was peculiar. A children's horror story, really - and I do not mean that insultingly, because it was well written, but I just do not think that it belonged in *Fantasy Tales*. Poetry-wise, I really liked *Bone-Yowl* (what a marvellously gruesome bard you have in Steve Eng!), and *The Blades of Hell* was good and powerful."

WELLMAN EXCELLENT

Steve Eng, Nashville, Tenn., writes: "No, you lose nothing really with the black and white cover. The magazine is very tidy and laid out compactly and I hope you don't embark on luxuries that will drive the price up, and decrease your frequency: this is how so many fine magazines "improve" themselves out of existence. Wellman's story excellently-written as to style. The monster would have been trite in almost anyone else's hands - I wouldn't have read it if I'd thought that was up ahead! - but he makes you believe and accept the Whatever in the house. I liked the human relationship - desire thwarted - usually missing in horror-fantasy. *Lair of the White Wolf* was a superb little tale, and the ending caught me off guard. Herron's little poem has virile verbs that move it along (so much fantasy poetry is passive); as much gore as an Elizabethan, and same tone (Webster, Tourneur, *et al.*) Munn's tale was easy to read but sure gave me claustrophobia, like a nightmare where just when you've got one dream figured out you're in a new one: a masterpiece of little boxes-within-boxes. I like short stories and Reeder's worked fine. Artful style. *The Elementals* would have been trite if not from the cat's point of view. But as a cat-lover to a fault, through their eyes I believed it. Though the tale is similar to *Ever*

The Faith etc. which is not a criticism. Schweitzer's tale pleasant if pagan; especially to those liking Machen and Dunsany, though it's his own story."

NOT ENOUGH FANTASY

From, Brian Mooney, Dover: "From previous comments in *The Cauldron*, I gather that I was about the only person in the world who enjoyed Joe Schifino's *Bloodgold*. Other readers made the valid comment that the story was swords without sorcery, that in fact it was a non-fantasy tale. This was true, but I liked the character for his blatant and caddish self-interest. It had also occurred to me that as you were prepared to use the story in FT, then you must have been certain that other Lupus tales contained a strong fantasy element and I certainly looked forward to seeing more of his work. Well, now I have, and what a dreadful letdown it has been. *Lair of the White Wolf* is overlong, overwritten and what little fantasy there is is held coyly until the final paragraphs. Fantasy calls for a suspension of belief, and with good (or even moderate) fantasy the suspension just happens without the reader being aware that it is happening. *White Wolf* doesn't call for a suspension of belief: it calls for a downright bludgeoning of belief. I regret that after Lupus Lupolius had hacked a whole village of people to death (a whole damned village!) I just fell about laughing. My cup of disbelief just flowed over. You hint in your editorial preamble to the tale that you have more Lupus stories tucked away. Unless they are a vast improvement on this one, leave them like that, tucked away. Other than that, a lovely issue with generally good stories and generally good artwork. I liked Manly Wellman's tale with its Jamesian climax, and Frances' delightfully whimsical story (the Jim Pitts illustration for this was the best in the magazine). But for me the greatest pleasure in the issue came when I read Darrell Schweitzer's *The Story of the Brown Man*. For a religion supposedly based on the concept of love, Christ-

ianity has been sadly repressive (and others: what is it about monotheistic religions that makes their believers so intolerant?). The author brought this unfortunate truth home so very well. As with Barrie's fairies, the old gods had to die because people were persuaded, or coerced, into not believing in them. It's perhaps the best story in FT to date. My congratulations to yourselves and Darrell Schweitzer."

TOO MANY REPRINTS

Peter Bayliss, of Rugby, Warwick, comments: "I think the cover of no.6 looks very smart indeed. I agree with Jim Turner's comments that the sort of artwork favoured by the fantasy genre lends itself to monochrome treatment. The red-and-yellow FT logotype certainly makes more of an impact than it did on the full-colour covers. What concerned me most about the cover was that it didn't illustrate any of the stories contained in the issue. With the exception of no.3 all previous issues have used a picture on the cover to illustrate a story inside - personally, I would like to see this trend restored. Concerning the contents of no.6, I do agree with Brian Lumley's review of FT in *Fantasy Media* about the excellence of Joe Schifino's story, *Lair of the White Wolf*. I, too, disliked Joe's first story, *Bloodgold* in no.4, which introduced FT readers to the character of Lupus Lupolius. I must admit that although *Lair of the White Wolf* is a darned good story, I don't much care for Lupus Lupolius - I prefer my character with rather more humanity. My two other stories in order of preference must be *Ever the Faith Endures* by Manly Wade Wellman; *The Elementals* by Frances Garfield. I would like to take this opportunity of saying about no.6 that I was rather disappointed that out of six stories three of them were reprints and, in fact, H. Warner Munn's story, *Dreams May Come*, has apparently been in print twice! I appreciate that it is a great boost for FT to get "Weird Tales veterans" into the magazine, but what about the young up-and-coming writers strug-

gling to get into print? I am worried in case FT should publish stories simply because they are by well-known authors, even though the fiction itself may not be up to FT's high standards. Finally, I would like to see a little more SF printed in *Fantasy Tales*. I very much enjoyed *The Last Sleeping God of Mars* in no.3, and would very much like to see more of this type of fiction in the future. Despite all my criticisms, I am a definite fan of FT! It's a pity there aren't more small magazines of its ilk in this country."

JOY TO READ

Alex Jellema, from Almkerk, The Netherlands, writes: "To put it simply: *Fantasy Tales* is a joy to read. There is an appeal to it, a sort of ambience brought about by the consistently excellent artwork and the very carefully done layout and design. In a word, it's fascinating. The magazine isn't Lovecraftian, it isn't Howardesque, it is, instead, *Fantasy Tales*. And that's an essential point, really. *Fantasy Tales* no.6 was a fine issue, though perhaps a little less attractive than no.5. The cover, although a nice piece of work in its own right, was completely overwhelmed by the gigantic heading in fiery red and yellow. The FitzPatrick drawing is far too subtle, far too complex. It's beautiful, but its beauty goes unnoticed. *Ever the Faith Endures* is a rather trite story, which, though written competently and with élan, disappointed me a bit. And it is, of course, a reprint. So is *The Story of the Brown Man*, but I found this far more enjoyable. Schweitzer's an author, whom, for some reason, I care for: I like nearly everything he's written. *Dreams May Come* was a pleasant surprise. Though 'twas written a little muddledly (at least, that was my first impression), there's a sort of gentle sadness about it which moved me. Dave Reeder's *The Last Trick* is precisely what you say it is: a short, atmospheric piece, and quite well written at that. It'd be nice to see something more lengthy from him. *The Lair of the White Wolf* is a reasonably entertaining tale balancing shakily

teresting tale balancing shakily upon a very weak plot. Schifino will have to learn how to condense his writing; at the moment he's writing novel-wise, which, when penning down shorts, isn't wise at all. Frances Garfield's *The Elementals* will surely turn out to be the most popular story in this issue. It certainly deserves the honour: it's an excellently written little tale. Its style is perhaps a bit juvenile, the sentences a bit clipped, but on the whole it was charming. As for the verse: the longest piece (which isn't very long: it might be a good idea to mix in a longish piece of verse every once in a while) is also, unfortunately, the worst. The rhythm, which is essential for such a poem, is, at best, clumsy; the rhyme didn't work, due to the length of the individual lines. Still, Herron can obviously 'poetize', and I hope he keeps at it. The Lumley poem is very well-wrought, but gave a curious lopsided effect, since the question asked is so much longer than the answer given. Steve Eng's bit of verse - *Bone-Yowl* - was nice, but there's very little else one can say for it.

MOST POPULAR STORY

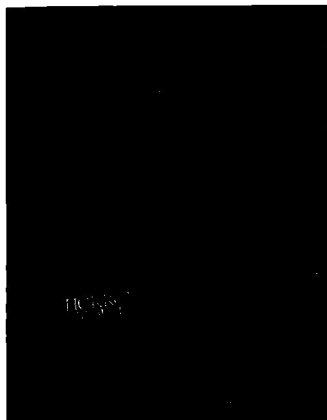
Let us know which three stories you liked best in this issue of *Fantasy Tales* and why. Your criticism of the stories we print will help us to keep the magazine as you want it. In the last issue there was a tie for popularity between the lead story, *Ever the Faith Endures*, by Manly Wade Wellman and H. Warner Munn's *Dreams May Come*. In third place was *The Elementals* by Frances Garfield. Address your correspondence to The Cauldron, FANTASY TALES, 33 Wren House, Tachbrook Estate, London SW1V 3QD, England.

ARTISTS IN THIS ISSUE

The illustrations on pages 17 and 23 are by Dave Carson. Stephen E. Fabian produced the artwork for *A Death-Song for Gondath*, and the illustration on page 44 is the work of Alan Hunter. The heading for the *Contents* page is by Jim Pitts and John Grandfield produced the heading for *The Cauldron*.

weird and fantasy fiction
KADATH

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BRIAN LUMLEY
ISSUE**



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