

The Howard Collector

Spring 1965



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All Fled—All Done from *The Cross Plains Review*, dates as indicated.

Who Is Grandpa Theobald? from a letter, Robert E. Howard to Tevis Clyde Smith, no date.

The Thessalians from *The Yellow Jacket*, January 13, 1927.

Knife, Bullet and Noose from the original ms.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

"All Fled -- All Done" is my titling for the series of articles that appeared in The Cross Plains Review following Howard's suicide. I have omitted the lengthy newspaper titles; the date of publication of each individual article follows it. The Yellow Jacket is a paper published by the students of Howard Payne College. Howard was a feature writer -- short stories -- for the paper from October 1926 through April 1927.

The stanza of verse in the letter is not by Howard but he was fond of it, according to Smith. It is from a poem about Francois Villon but poet and title are not known. Fear Dunn (Howard) and Fear Finn (Smith) are Celtic terms; roughly translated they mean respectively, "the brown (or dark) man" and "the blond man".

Grandpa Theobald was H. P. Lovecraft, who used the pen name Lewis Theobald in certain amateur journal appearances.

Ace Books has recently published Howard's novel ALMURIC in paperback form. This story is quite unlike his usual weird fiction and I would guess that it was an experiment with the type of story that

Otis A. Kline (his agent) and Edgar Rice Burroughs popularized. The final draft had not been completed when he shot himself, so the final pages are the rough first draft.

ALWAYS COMES EVENING is now out-of-print. L. Sprague de Camp informs me that Lancer Books will publish the Conan stories in paperback. They will appear in chronological order, including the posthumous collaborations. The first two volumes, CONAN and CONAN OF CIMMERIA, are due in March, with the other five to follow later.



ALL - - FLED ALL DONE

Despondent over the lingering illness of his mother, Robert E. Howard, young Cross Plains author, walked from the sick room to his automobile which was parked in rear of the Howard home, in the Southwest part of town early Thursday morning and fired a pistol shot through his brain.

He was still alive at two o'clock Thursday afternoon (as the Review went to press) however, attending physicians gave little hope for his recovery.

Robert E. Howard died shortly after four o'clock Thursday afternoon.

He had remained at his mother's bedside almost constantly for the past three days, sleeping little, if any, and eating virtually nothing.

Mrs. Howard was reported to be in a coma Thursday morning and knew nothing of the tragedy.

Neighbors who were close by told the Review that the young man asked a nurse if she thought his mother would ever recognize him again. Sympathetically the nurse replied that she was "afraid not".

He rose from a seat beside the bed and walked

to his car which was parked near the back of the house. Apparently he got inside and closed the door. The bullet entered the right temple and came out the left side of the head.

As a writer of fiction, Robert E. Howard was internationally known. His stories have been appearing in the Street and Smith publications for the past five years. The June issue of "Cowboy Stories" contains a 12 page story -- "A Man Eating Jeopard" -- written by the Cross Plains man. Local magazine agencies, however, report that their supplies of the number are exhausted.

In England too his work had been recognized and less than two years ago a British publisher attempted to purchase his entire output. A number of his stories did appear in English publications.

Robert E. Howard is 30 years of age. He has resided in Cross Plains virtually all of his life, coming here with his parents when just a boy. He graduated from Cross Plains High School and later attended Howard Payne College, where his literary achievements gained him wide prominence.

Mrs. Howard's condition was reported unchanged at two o'clock Thursday afternoon.

Scores of neighbors and friends were present at the Howard home, each hoping to be of some service to the well loved Cross Plains family.

June 12, 1936

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Cross Plains' first double funeral was held Sunday morning when rites for Mrs. I. M. Howard, 61, and her son Robert E. Howard, 30, were conducted from the Baptist tabernacle. The service was in charge of Rev. B. G. Richbourg, of Big Spring, former Cross Plains pastor. He was assisted by Reverends, J. C. Mann, S. P. Collins and V. W. Tatum, of the local churches. Interment was made in the Greenleaf cemetery at Brownwood Sunday afternoon.

Friends crowded the tabernacle beyond capacity in a final, parting tribute.

Mrs. Howard expired Friday night about 10:30 after an extended illness. She had been in a coma for days. Robert E. Howard died shortly after four o'clock Thursday afternoon of a self inflicted bullet wound. Despondent over his mother's condition the young man, an internationally known writer of fiction, took his own life when it was known that Mrs. Howard would never recover.

Surviving is Dr. I. M. Howard, husband of the deceased lady and father of Robert. He is one of Callahan County's oldest practitioners, from the standpoint of service. He told this newspaper Monday morning that his plans for the future were not definitely mapped but first of all he intended to re-

turn to Missouri with Mrs. Howard's sister, Mrs. W. P. Searcy, for a visit with kinsmen.

Other survivors include: Mrs. Searcy, of Exter, Missouri; Mrs. Henry Stith, Ponca City, Oklahoma; Mrs. Grover Baker, Rogers, Arkansas; Mrs. Howard Doyle, Exter, Missouri, sisters of Mrs. Howard; Wynne Ervin, Oklahoma City, a brother of Mrs. Howard and nieces and nephews, several of whom were present for the funeral and interment services.

Mrs. David Howard, wife of Dr. Howard's brother of Mart, Texas, was also here for the funeral, as well as scores of friends and possibly other relatives from distant points.

Mrs. Howard was born July 11, 1874, in Missouri. She was married to Dr. I. M. Howard, January 12, 1904. They moved to this section nearly thirty years ago. Robert E. Howard was born January 22, 1906, at Peaster, in Parker County. He was the only child of Dr. and Mrs. Howard. He was graduated from Cross Plains High School with the class of 1922. The following year he attended Brownwood High School, completing the eleventh grade, which was not offered here at that time, finishing with honors. Later he attended Howard Payne College. He began writing early in life and at the age of 17 was producing acceptable stories and poems for outstanding publications.

Until Thursday of last week the young Cross Plains author had maintained an almost constant vigil at his mother's bed side. When her death became imminent he asked a nurse if she thought his mother would ever recognize him again.

Sympathetically, the nurse replied: "I'm afraid not".

Stoically, he rose from beside the sick-bed and walked to his automobile which was parked to the side-rear of the Howard home. He got inside, closed the doors and fired a pistol bullet through his brain. Neighbors said the tragedy happened a few minutes after eight o'clock. He lived until four that afternoon.

Mrs. Howard never regained consciousness and was not aware of her son's death. She expired about 30 hours later; shortly after 10 o'clock Friday night.

Pall bearers for Mrs. Howard were: Tom Bryant, F. R. Anderson, Benton Jones, J. P. Smith, Paul V. Harrell, Taylor Bond and Dr. J. R. Dill. Pall bearers for Robert were: Dave Lee, Lindsey Tyson, Winifred Brigner, Russell McGowen, Earl Baker, Mack Underwood, Jap Adams, R. Elliott Bryant, Dr. T. G. Edwards, Dr. J. Henry McGowen and J. C. Huntington.

Funeral arrangements were in charge of Higginbothams, Cross Plains.

June 19, 1936

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It is with a great deal of pride that we announce to readers of this newspaper that we are able to produce in today's issue Robert E. Howard's last published story.

Permission of the copyright owners to use the story -- "A Man Eating Jeopard" -- was secured after telegraphic contact with the publishers Tuesday.

Howard was one of Texas' better known writers of fiction. He was a native son of Cross Plains, yet we feel sure there are a few local people who never read one of his stories. If so, we invite your attention to "A Man Eating Jeopard" in today's Review.

We take this means of thanking Street & Smith, publishers of a number of well known magazines, for their courtesy in permitting our use of this interesting feature, which first appeared in their June issue of Cowboy Stories.

June 19, 1936

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Authorities from Howard Payne College at Brownwood came here Wednesday afternoon to receive the library of the late Robert E. Howard, which had been given by his father, Dr. I. M.

Howard, to the institution to be maintained as the Robert E. Howard memorial collection.

Included in the collection were several hundred volumes, evidencing that the late writer was a student in many fields.

June 26, 1936

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Howard Payne College received last week from Dr. I. M. Howard of Cross Plains the gift of the library of his son, Robert E. Howard, former Howard Payne student, whose death occurred recently.

The library consists of some 300 books, the great majority of which deal with history and biography. More than 50 volumes of current drama and current poetry also are included in the collection.

Along with books, the college acquired a complete file of all the magazines which carry the literary contributions of Robert E. Howard. Included in this file are short stories, novelettes and book length novels and many poems.

The library is being prepared for cataloguing and circulation and is to be known as "The Robert E. Howard Memorial Collection".

Efforts are being made by the friends of the late author to augment the collection by regular contributions. An effort also is being made to collect

and publish a volume of young Howard's poems.

July 3, 1936

* * *

Just before walking from his home to his automobile at the side of the house, where he fired a pistol bullet through his brain, Robert E. Howard, talented Cross Plains writer, dashed off the following poem:

All fled -- all done, so lift me on the pyre
The Feast is over and the lamps expire.

Dr. I. M. Howard, father of the young man, gave his own interpretation of the short poem to a representative of the Review but requested that it be not published, in order that readers might affix their own opinion.

July 3, 1936

* * *

Dr. I. M. Howard, former physician for this community for some 35 years, died at his home in Ranger, Sunday, November 12, at 8:30 p.m., from a heart ailment. Doctor Howard was born April 1, 1871, being 73 years, 8 months and 12 days old at the time of his death.

He, with his wife, moved to this community from Palo Pinto County some 35 years ago, settling first in Cross Cut. He later moved to Burkett and then to Cross Plains where he lived until three years ago.

Mrs. Howard, along with their only son, preceded him in death by eight years.

Dr. Howard retired from practice five years ago but resumed it again in 1942 when the demand, due to the war, became so great for doctors. He joined the Ranger Hospital staff at that time and remained there until his death.

Services were held at 11:00 a. m. Tuesday from the funeral chapel at Ranger with burial in the Brownwood cemetery, beside his wife and son.

November 17, 1944

KNIFE BULLET AND NOOSE

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

Steve Allison, also known as the Sonora Kid, was standing alone at the Gold Dust Bar when Johnny Elkins entered, glanced furtively at the bartender, and leaned close to Allison's elbow. Out of the corner of his mouth he muttered: "Steve, they're out to get you."

The Kid showed no sign that he had heard. He was a wiry young man, slightly above medium height, slim, but strong as a cougar. His skin was burned dark by the sun and winds of many dim trails, and from under the broad rim of his hat, his eyes glinted grey as chilled steel. Except for those eyes he might have been but one more of the army of cowpunchers that rode up the Chisholm yearly; but low on his hips hung two ivory-buttled guns, and the worn leather of their scabbards proclaimed that their presence was no mere matter of display.

The Kid emptied his glass before he answered, softly.

"Who's out to get me?"

"Grizzly Gullin!" Elkins shot an uneasy glance toward the door as he whispered the formidable name. "The town's full of buffalo hunters, and

they're on the prod. They ain't talkin' much, but I got wind of who they're stalkin', and it's you!"

The Kid rang a coin on the bar, scooped up his change and turned away. Elkins rolled after him, trying to match his friend's long stride. Elkins was freckled, bow-legged, and of negligible stature. They emerged from the saloon and tramped along the dusty street for some yards before either spoke.

"Dawggone you, Kid," panted Elkins. "You make me plumb mad. I tell you, somebody in this cowntown is primin' them shaggy-hided hunters with bad licker and devilishness."

"Who?"

"How'm I goin' to know? But that blame' Mike Connolly ain't got no love for you, since you took some of the boys away from him that he was goin' to lock up when we was up here last year. You know he was a buffalo hunter too, once. Them fellows stand in together. They can pot you cold, and he won't turn a finger."

"Nobody asks him to turn a finger," retorted Allison with the quick flash of vanity that characterized the gunfighter. "I don't need no buffalo-skinmin' cowntown marshal to shoo a gang of bushy-headed hunters off of me."

"Le's ride," urged Elkins. "What are you waitin' on? The boys pulled out yesterday."

"Well," answered Allison, "you know we

brought in the biggest herd that's come to this town this year. We sold to R. J. Blaine, the new cattle-buyer, and we kind of caught him flatfooted. He didn't have enough ready cash to pay for the herd in full. He give me enough to pay off the boys, though, and sent to Abilene for more. It may get here today. Yesterday I sent the boys down the trail. They'd blowed in most of their money, and with all these buffalo hunters that's swarmin' in to town, I was afraid they'd get into a ruckus. So I told 'em to head south, and I'd wait for the money and catch up with 'em by the time they hit the Arkansas."

"Old man Donnelly is so blame sot in his ways he's a plumb pest sometimes," grumbled Elkins. "Why couldn't Blaine send him a draft or something?"

"Donnelly don't trust banks," answered the Kid. "You know that. He keeps his money in a big safe in the ranch house, and he always wants his trail boss to bring the money for the cows in big bills."

"Which is plumb nice for the trail boss," snarled Elkins. "It ain't enough to haze four thousand mossy horns from the lower Rio Grande clean to Kansas; his pore damn' sucker of a trail boss has got to risk his life totin' the cash money all the way back. Why, Hell, Steve, at twenty dollars a head, that wad'll make a roll that'd choke a mule.

Every outlaw between here and Laredo will be gunnin' for yore hide."

"I'm goin' to see Blaine now," answered the Kid abruptly. "But money or not, I ain't dustin' out till I've had a show-down with Gullin. He can't say he run me out of town."

He turned aside into the unpainted board building which served as dwelling place and office for the town's leading business man.

Blaine greeted him cordially as he entered. The cattle buyer was a big man, well-fed and well-dressed. If not typical, he was a good representation of one of the many types following the steel ribbons westward across the Kansas plains, where, at the magic touch of the steel, new towns blossomed over night, creating fresh markets for the cattle that rolled up in endless waves from the south. Shrewd, ambitious, and with a better education than most, the man was the dominating factor in this new-grown town, which hoped to rival and eclipse the older cowtowns of Abilene, Newton and Wichita. Blaine had been a gambler in Nevada mining camps before the westward drive of the rails had started the big cattle boom. Though he wore no weapon openly, men said that in his gambling days no faro-dealer in the west was his equal in gun-skill.

"I guess I know what you're after, Allison," Blaine laughed. "Well, it's here. Came in this

morning." Reaching into his ponderous safe he laid a bulky roll of bills on the table. "Count 'em," he requested. The Kid shook his head.

"I'll take your word for it." He drew a black leather bag from his pocket, stuffed the bills into it, and made the draw string fast. The whole made a package of no small bulk.

"You mean to tote all that money down the trail with you?" Blaine demanded.

"Clean to the Tomahawk ranch house," grinned the Kid. "Old man Donnelly won't have it no other way."

"You're taking a big risk," said Blaine bluntly. "Why don't you let me give you a draft for the amount on the First National Bank of Kansas City?"

"The old man don't do business with no banks," replied the Kid. "He likes his money where he can lay hands on it all the time."

"Well, that's his business and yours," answered the cattle buyer. "The tally record and the bill of sale we fixed up the other day, but suppose you sign this receipt, just as a matter of form. It shows I've paid you the money in due form and proper amount."

The Kid signed the receipt, and Blaine, as he folded the paper for placing it in safe-keeping, remarked: "I understand your vaqueros pulled out yesterday."

"Yeah, that's right."

"That means you'll be riding alone part of the way," protested Blaine. "And with all that money - "

"Aw, I'll be alright, I reckon," answered the Kid. Because he was naturally reticent, he did not add that he would be accompanied by Johnny Elkins, a former Tomahawk hand who had remained in Kansas since the drive of the last year, and now, wearied of the northern range, was riding south with his old friend.

"I reckon the trail will be a lot safer than town, maybe," said Allison; "so I'm goin' to leave this money with you for safe-keepin' for awhile. I got some business to 'tend to. I'll call for it sudden-like, maybe, late tonight, or early in the mornin'. If I don't call at all -- well, I can trust you to see it gets to old man Donnelly eventually."

As he strode from Blaine's office, his spurs jingling in the dust, a ragged individual sidled up to him and said: "Grizzly Gullin and the boys want to know if you got guts enough to come down to the Buffalo Hump."

"Go back and tell 'em I'll be there," as softly answered the Kid.

The fellow hurried away in the deepening dusk, and the Kid went swiftly to his hotel, thence to a livery stable. Presently he again came up the street, but this time astride a wiry mustang. The

cowtown was awake and going full blast. Tinny pianos blared from dance halls, boot heels stamped on the board walks, saloon doors swung violently, and the yipping of hilarious revelers was punctuated by the shrill laughter of women, and the occasional crack of pistols. The trail riders were celebrating, releasing the nervous energy stored up on that grinding thousand-mile trek.

There was nothing restrained, softened or refined about the scene. All was primitive, wild, raw as the naked boards of the houses that stood up gaunt and unadorned against the prairie stars.

Mike Connolly and his deputies stalked from dance hall to dance hall, glared into every saloon, into every gambling dive. They maintained order at pistol point, and they had no love for the lean bronzed riders who hazed the herds up the trail men called the Chisholm.

There were, indeed, hard characters among these riders. It was a hard life, that bred hard men. At first the trail drivers came seeking only a peaceful market. Fighting their way through hostile lands swarming with Indians and white outlaws, they expected to find rest, safety and the means of enjoyment in the Kansas towns. But the cowtowns soon swarmed with gamblers, crooks, professional killers, parasites that follow every boom, whether of gold, silver, oil or cattle. An unsophisticated

cowboy found the dangers of the trail less than the dangers of the boom-towns.

They began to ride up the trails with their guns strapped down, ready for trouble, ready to fight Indians and outlaws on the trail, gamblers and marshals in the towns. Gunfighters, formerly limited mainly to officers and gamblers, began to be found in the ranks of the cowboys. Of this breed was Steve Allison, and it was because of this that old John Donnelly had chosen him for his trail boss.

The Kid tied his horse to the hitching rack by the Buffalo Hump, and strode lightly toward the square of golden light that marked the doorway. Inside glasses crashed, oaths and boisterous laughter crackled, and a voice roared:

"It wuz on a starry night, in the month of July,

"They robbed the Danville train;

"It wuz two of the Younger boys what opened the safe,

"And toted the gold away!"

A shadowy form bulked up before the Kid, and even as his right hand gun slid silently from its scabbard, Johnny Elkins' voice hissed: "Steve, are you locoed?"

Johnny's fingers gripped the Kid's arm, and Allison felt the youngster trembling in his excite-

ment. His face was a pale blur in the dim light.

"Don't go in there, Steve!" his voice thrummed with urgency.

"Who-all's in there?" asked the Kid softly.

"Every damn' buff-hunter in town! Grizzly Gullin's been ravin' and swearin' he'll cut out yore heart and eat it raw. I tell you, Steve, they know it 'uz you that killed Bill Galt, and they craves yore scalp."

"Well, they can have it if they got the guts to take it," said the Kid without passion.

"But you know their way," protested Johnny. "If you go in there and get into a fight with Gullin they'll shoot you in the back. Somebody'll shoot out the light, and in the scramble nobody'll know who done it -- or give a damn."

"I know." None knew the tricks of the cowtown ruffians better than the Kid. "That's the way some of these tin horns got Joe Ord, trail boss for the Triple L, last month. Robbed him, too, I reckon. Leastways, he'd been paid for the cows he brung up the trail, and they never found the money. But that was gamblers, not hunters."

"What's the difference?"

"None, as far as stoppin' a bullet goes," grinned the Kid. "But listen here, Johnny -- " His voice sank lower, and Elkins listened intently. He shook his head and swore dubiously, but when the Kid

turned and strode toward the lamp-lit doorway, the bowlegged puncher rolled after him.

As the Kid framed himself in the door, the clamor within ceased suddenly. The fellow who had been singing, or rather bellowing, broke short his lament for Jesse James, and wheeled like a great bear toward the doorway.

Allison's quick gaze swept over the saloon. It was thronged with buffalo hunters, to which the establishment catered. Besides the bartenders, there was but one man there not a hunter -- the marshal, Mike Connolly, a broad built man, with a hard immobile face, and a heavy gun strapped low on either hip.

The hunters were all big men, many of them clad in buckskin and Indian moccasins. All were burned dark as Indians, and they wore their hair long. Living an incredibly primitive life, they were hard and ferocious as red savages, and infinitely more dangerous. Hairy, burly, fierce, their eyes gleamed in the lamp light, their hands hovered near the great butcher knives in their belts.

In the midst of the room stood one who loomed above the rest -- a great shaggy brute who looked more like a bear than a man: Grizzly Gullin. This man gave a roar as Allison entered, and rolled toward him, small eyes blazing, thick hairy hands working as if to tear out his enemy's throat.

"What you doin' here, Allison?" His voice filled the saloon, and almost seemed to make the one kerosene lamp flicker.

"Heard you all craved to meet me, Gullin," the Kid answered tranquilly. His eyes never exactly left Gullin's hairy face, but they darted side-long glances that took in all the room.

Gullin rumbled like an enraged bull. His shaggy head wagged from side to side, his hairy hands moved back and forth, without actually reaching toward a weapon. Like most of the other hunters he wore a gun, but it was with the long broad-bladed butcher knife strapped high on his left side, hilt forward, that he was deadly.

"You killed Bill Galt!" he roared, and the crowd behind him rumbled menacingly.

"Yeah, I did," admitted the Kid.

Gullin's face grew black; his veins swelled; he teetered forward on his moccasined feet as if about to hurl himself bodily at his enemy.

"You admit it!" he yelled. "You killed him in cold blood -- "

"I shot him in a fair fight," snarled the Kid, his eyes suddenly icy. "Last year he stampeded a herd of Tomahawk cattle just out of pure cussedness -- run a herd of buffalo into 'em. They went over a bluff by the hundreds, and took one of the hands with 'em. He was smashed to a pulp. When we come up

the trail this year, I met Bill Galt on the Canadian, and I blew his light out. But he had an even break."

"You're a liar!" bellowed Gullin. "You shot him in the back. A man heard you braggin' about it, and told us. You murdered Bill and let him lay there like he was a dog."

"I wouldn't have let a dog lay," answered the Kid with bitter scorn. "When I rode off Galt was buzzard meat and I didn't feel no call to cover him up. But I didn't shoot him in the back."

"You can't lie out of it!" howled Gullin, brandishing his huge fists.

The Kid cast a quick look at the hemming faces, dark with passion, the straining bodies. It was something more than the old feud of cow-puncher and buffalo-hunter. Mike Connolly stood back, aloof, silent.

"Well, why don't you start the ball rollin'?" demanded the Kid, half crouching, hands hovering above his gun butts.

" 'Cause we ain't murderers like you," sneered Gullin. "Connolly there is goin' to see fair play. You're a gunman; you got guts enough to fight with a man's weepens?"

"Meanin' a butcher knife? Gullin, there ain't no weapon I'm afraid to meet you with!"

"Alright!" yelled the hunter, tearing off his gun belt and tossing it to Mike Connolly. "You ain't

wearin' no knife; git him one, Joe."

The bartender ducked down into an assortment of lethal weapons pawned to him at various times, in return for drinks, by impecunious customers, and laid half a dozen knives on the plank bar.

The Kid, drawing both his guns, handed them to Johnny Elkins, who casually backed toward the door. Allison, after a brief inspection, took up a knife with a heavy hilt and a narrow, comparatively short blade -- a weapon of unmistakable Spanish make.

The hunters had drawn back around the walls, leaving a space clear. The Kid had no illusions about what was to follow. He knew his own reputation; knew that the whole affair was a trap, planned to get his deadly guns out of his hands. If Gullin's knife failed, it would be a bullet in the cowboy's back. The Kid stamped in the sawdust as if trying the footing, moving near an open window as he did so. Then he turned and indicated that he was ready.

Gullin ripped out his knife and charged like the bear for which he was named. For all his bulk he was quick as a cat. His moccasin-shod feet were adapted to the work at hand. Opposing was the Kid, much inferior in bulk, wearing high-heeled boots unfitted for quick work on the sawdust-strewn floor. The knife in his hand looked small compared to the great scimitar-curved blade of Gullin. What the

hunters overlooked, or did not know, was that Allison was raised in a land swarming with Mexican knife-fighters.

The Kid, facing that roaring, hurtling bulk, knew that if they came to hand-grips, he was lost. He had seen Gullin, his shoulder broken by a cowboy's bullet, leap like a huge cat through the air and drive the knife, with his left hand, through his enemy's heart.

Gullin roared and charged; the Kid's hand went back and snapped out. The Spanish knife flashed through the lamp-light like a beam of blue lightning, and thudded against Gullin's breast -- the hilt quivered under his heart. The giant stopped short, staggered. His mouth gaped and blood gushed from it. He pitched headlong --

As Gullin fell, the Kid's hand whipped inside his shirt and out again, gripping a double-barreled derringer. Even as it caught the lamp light, it cracked twice. A hunter lifting a cocked sixshooter crumpled, and the lamp shattered, casting a shower of blazing oil.

In the darkness bedlam broke loose. There were wild shots, stampeding of feet, splintering of chairs and tables, curses, yells, and Mike Connolly's stentorian voice demanding a light.

The Kid had wheeled, even as the room was plunged in darkness, and dived headlong through the

nearby window. He hit on his feet, catlike, and raced toward the hitching rack. A form loomed up before him, and even as he instinctively menaced it with the empty derringer, he recognized it.

"Johnny! Got my guns?"

Two familiar smooth butts were shoved into his eager hands.

"I beat it as soon as everybody was watchin' you all," Johnny spluttered with excitement. "You nailed him, Steve? By the good golly -- "

"Get your cayuse and hit the trail, Johnny," ordered Allison, swinging up on his horse. "Dust it out of town and wait for me at that creek crossin' three miles south of town. I'm goin' after the money Blaine's holdin' for me. Vamoose!"

A few minutes later the Kid dropped reins over his horse's head and slid up to the lighted window inside which he saw Richard J. Blaine busily engaged in writing. At the Kid's hiss he looked up, gaped, and started violently. The Kid pushed the partly open window up the rest of the way, and climbed in.

"I ain't hardly got no time to go around to the door," he apologized. "If you'll give me the money, I'll be makin' tracks."

Blaine rose, still confused, hastily crumpling up the sheet on which he had been writing, and thrusting it into his pocket. He turned toward his

safe which stood open, and inside which Allison could see the black leather bag, then turned back, as if struck by a sudden thought.

"Any trouble?"

"No trouble; just a bunch of fool buffalo hunters."

"Oh!" The cattle buyer seemed to be regaining some of his composure. The color came back to his face.

"You startled the devil out of me, coming through that window. What about those hunters?"

"They took it ill because I killed that stampedin' side-winder Bill Galt," answered the Kid. "I don't know how they found out. I ain't told nobody in this town except you and Johnny Elkins. Reckon some of my outfit must have talked. Not that I give a damn. But I don't go around braggin' about the coyotes I have to shoot. They sure planned to get me cold --" in a few words he related what happened at the Buffalo Hump. "Now I reckon they'll try lynch-law," he concluded. "They'll swear I murdered somebody."

"Oh, I guess not," laughed Blaine. "Bed down here till mornin'."

"Not a chance; I'm dustin' now."

"Well, have a drink before you go," urged Blaine.

"I ain't hardly got time." The Kid was listening

for sounds of pursuit. It was quite possible the maddened hunters might trail him. And he knew that Mike Connolly would give him no protection against the mob.

"Oh, a few minutes won't make any difference," laughed Blaine. "Wait, I'll get the liquor."

Frontier courtesy precluded a refusal. Blaine passed into an adjoining room, and the Kid heard him fumbling about. The Kid stood in the center of the office-room, nervous, alert, and because it was his nature to observe everything, he noticed a ball of paper crumpled on the floor, ink-stained -- evidently part of a letter Blaine had spoiled and discarded. He would have paid no attention to it, but suddenly he saw his own name scrawled upon it.

Quickly he bent and secured it. Smoothing out the crumpled sheet, he read. It was a letter addressed to John Donnelly, and it said: "Your trail boss Allison was killed in a barroom brawl. I had paid him for the cows, and have a receipt, signed by him. However, the money was not found on his body. Marshal Connolly verifies that fact. He had been gambling heavily, I understand, and he must have used your money after he ran out of his own. It's too bad, but -- "

The door opened and Blaine stood framed in it, whiskey bottle and glasses in hand. He saw the paper in the Kid's fingers, and he went livid.

The bottle and glasses fell to the floor with a shattering crash. Blaine's hand darted under his coat and out, just as the Texan's .45 cleared leather. The shots crashed like a double reverberation -- but it was the .45 which thundered first. The window behind Allison shattered, and Blaine tumbled to the floor, to lie in a widening pool of dark crimson.

The Kid snatched the bulky black leather pouch from the open safe, and stuffed it into his shirt as he ran from the room. He forked his mustang and headed south at a run. Behind him sounded the mingled clamor of cowtown night life, mixed now with an increasing, ominous roar -- the bellow of the manhunt. The Kid grinned hardly -- knife, bullet, noose -- all had failed that night; as well as the sinister plotting of the last man in Kansas Allison would have dreamed of suspecting.

Johnny Elkins was waiting for him at the appointed place, and together they took the trail that ran southward for a thousand miles.

"Well?" Johnny wriggled impatiently. Allison explained in a few words.

"I see it all now. Blaine figgered on gettin' cows and money too. He held up the pay for the herd, so as to get me in town alone, so he thought. He worked them hunters up to get me. He had the receipt to prove that he'd paid me the dough. Then

if I got killed, and the money not on me -- Right at the last he tried to keep me there, till the mob found me, I reckon."

"But he couldn't know you'd leave the dough with him for safekeepin'," objected Johnny.

"Well, it was a natural thing to do. And if I hadn't, I reckon Connolly would have took it off me, after I was killed in the Buffalo Hump. He was Blaine's man. That must have been how and why Joe Ord got his."

"And everybody figgered Blaine was such a big man," meditated Johnny.

"Well," answered Allison, "a few more big herds grabbed for nothin', and I reckon he would have been a big man; but big or little, it's all the same to a .45."

Which comment embraced the full philosophy of the gunfighter.



LETTER:

Robert E. Howard to
Tevis Clyde Smith, undated

Fear Finn:

I wrote Bradford a coarse rude letter full witt sneps witt snerls witt gneshes, and of course, the very next day I got the perms. A day earlier and I wouldn't have been guilty of such bad humor. Well, anyway, I have the verses and we can send them off any time; just let me know the details.

This morning I took out a big registered envelope with a "War Department" letter-head. I had visions of me shouldering a Springfield already, but it was from a gentleman named Barlow, at Fort Benning, Georgia, asking me for my autograph, for which purpose he enclosed a blank sheet of paper and a stamped self-addressed envelope. He also enclosed a 115 page ms. which he said Lovecraft had instructed him to forward me. It's the antarctic story which Farnsworth rejected, and which Lovecraft promised to let me read in the original. On the title page was written in pencil:

"Schedule of Circulation."

"Augustus Derletus to Donald Vandrei
Melmoth the Wanderer to Klarkash-ton
Klarkash-ton to B'ra-Dwi-yhah
Bernardus Diverius to Grandpa Theobold."

Which of course are August Derleth, Donald Wandrei, Clark Ashton Smith, and Bernard Dwyer; but who is Grandpa Theobold?

"Let it rest with the ages' mysteries,
And but recall the day
I was wont to go where the cannikins clinked,
Not caring who should pay."

(Here follows the poem, originally untitled, and published elsewhere in this issue as "Who is Grandpa Theobold?")

Fear Dunn

WHO IS

GRANDPA THEOBOLD?

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

Cities brooding beneath the seas
Yield their chalcedon and gold;
Ruthless hands the treasures seize,
Rending the ages' mysteries,
But who is Grandpa Theobold?

Secret of the eternal Sphinx
Is a story worn and old,
Like a tale too often told;
All the ancient unknown shrinks--
But who is Grandpa Theobold?

Fingers turn the hidden Keys,
Looting wealth from lair and hold;
Cast what shapes in what dim mold?
Question now the Eternities.
But who is Grandpa Theobold?

Prince, before you snare the stars,
Speak, before the sun grows cold
Scowling through the morning bars,
Who is Grandpa Theobold?

THE THESSALIANS

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

Some acting clubs might have it over the Thessalian Artists for fancy stuff, but when it comes to straight acting, no fakes nor hitting in the clinches, we took the celluloid frying pan. Hipurbilee Jones was our manager and the old fellow was as slick as any in the country. We put on a few performances at Millford and then started on a tour of theatrical engagements. It was high class stuff, no second rate vaudeville; we played Shakespeare, Marlowe, Goethe and some of the moderns. Also we put on some original plays, designed by our leading lady, Miss Arimenta Gepps. Two of these, "Was it Love?" and "The Crimson Red Scarlet," always went over big and we used one of them for our last night's performance.

Things didn't always run so smooth though, and just now I'm thinking about a performance we gave in a bush league town in Nevada. "One Night Only" it was billed, and it was a good thing for us. We were playing "The Woman of the Mask," an original play of four acts, written by Ephraim Jube, our poetical "heavy." It was a hot sketch, full of mystic doings, secret loves and sudden murders, all about

kings and lords, with countesses and princesses mixed in with reckless profusion.

The town "Opery House" as the yokels called it, was filled to the guards. Everything was going fine except that some windows were out and the wind kept whistling through and blowing the whiskers off Alonzo Chub who was the King of Keramusa in the play. But altogether the play was a success with the exception of a scene in the second act when Chub's crown accidentally fell off and landing on the leading lady's toe, caused her to make some remarks that weren't part of the dialogue.

As the fourth act commenced, old Hipurbilee Jones came bustling up behind the scenes, saying that we'd have to make a night run, as the town had only one train a week and that left just twelve minutes after our performance was concluded. He'd had all the luggage loaded on except what we were using and as soon as the curtain fell, we were to hurry up to change our costumes and beat it for the station. We never liked to stay in a town any longer after showing than we had to, owing to the short-changing proclivities of Hank Jepson, the ticket seller, and also to habits of Somolia States, the property man, who had a way of collecting pocket books when the owners weren't looking. So we told Belle Jimson-weed, our star dancer, to quit taking so many encores between acts, and Hipurbilee went off saying

he'd have the critters put on the train. The company had a small menagerie which was used sometimes in light comedies, including a rattlesnake, a couple of pink mice, some guinea pigs and Aurelious, the scentless skunk.

Came the dawn of a new act; the fourth to be exact. Now in this act a little light comedy was to be instilled by the king's jester soaking the villain with a stuffed shillalah. Naturally, the aforesaid shillalah had been misplaced, and as the time approached, we were forced to find some substitute. The jester wanted to use a section of curtain pole, but Ephraim waxed oratorical on the subject and as usual, Somolia States rose to heights of ingeniousness and procured a three foot length of bologna sausage. It was to be concealed behind a screen and at the moment of use, the jester would reach back, seize it and massage Ephraim Jube's poetic cranium with it. Meanwhile the rest of us were scurrying hither and yon, mostly yon, behind the scenes, packing used costumes and so on. The moment came, the audience leaned forward expectantly, scenting amusement, the jester made a grab for the bologna and swung for Ephraim's jaw -- a cat had wandered in and was nibbling at the sausage and when the jester brought it forth, she was clinging to the other end. As the bologna described the arc intended, she lost her hold and with the screech of a

lost soul, went sailing through the air, completing her flight in the mayor's face, who sat on the front row. A pitched battle ensued, from which the cat fled, routed but victorious, and the mayor got up and used language and made some wise cracks about law suits. However, we stopped the play long enough for the leading lady to apologize in her most bewitching manner and the old coot smirked and bowed and sat down again, whereupon we went on with the play. But Alonzo Chub made it a point of honor never to let a play go by without pulling some bone-head. This time he was helping Somolia do up a stage carpet behind the scenes, and he backed out onto the stage into an impassioned love scene. Unknowing, he stood there like a yap, with his back to the audience, engrossed in his task, and totally unaware that he was out on the stage. Somolia started to roast him, when a budding genius in the audience put a hornet in a slingshot and let 'er go. The hornet buzzed through air a lot faster than he'd ever flown; he hit Alonzo's pants and he hit end-on. Alonzo let out a squeal, climbed half way up the screens, made a few impassioned gestures and left via the window. His shouts of "Fire!" came floating back for seven blocks. The audience rose as one man and applauded generously, and about that time a masked figure came running out on the stage. "Holy cat!" said Algernon Repples, the hero, "What

does she mean?" For the great scene that revealed the masked lady came just before the curtain fell.

"You gotta, now," says Somolia, so Algernon rushes forward, jerks off the mask and reveals the bibulous and hilarious countenance of Augustus Buff, scene shifter, who was lit like a power plant. Just at that moment a feminine yowl from behind the screen announced that Miss Arimenta Gepps had discovered that she had been euchred out of an act, and was letting her artistic temperament go on the rampage.

Somolia likewise gives a yell and Algernon swings on Augustus who takes a nose dive into the orchestra, completely ruining two fiddles and a mouth organ.

And amidst the confusion a small demure critter saunters in the door and starts promenading up the aisle.

Somolia allows that it's Aurelious, the violet scented skunk, and goes burning the breeze down the aisle to chase him out. But a few feet away, he stops with a most curious expression on his face. Then he 'bout-faces and heads the other way. For it wasn't Aurelious, no, it wasn't.

The town people had bragged that the opera house could be emptied in three minutes but this time the record was broken by two minutes and thirty seconds.

And anyone who'd been on the streets might have been edified by the sight of a company of high-class actors breaking Nurmi's best records three jumps ahead of a ravening mob that wanted to lynch us, or some such absurdity.

The train pulled out just as we climbed aboard and I doubt if any of us ever go back there. In fact, I think it very improbable. Very.



All fled — all done, so lift me on the pyre;
The Feast is over and the lamps expire.

