

LOVECRAFT'S

WEIRD MYSTERIES

\$5

#7

**THE
MAGAZINE
OF CLASSIC
HORROR!**



NEH! NEH! HELL-OOO 'DERE, ALLA YOUSE
HUMAN CRITTERS,' READY FOR ANOTHER
GULP! DECAYED DOLLOP OF LOATHSOME
LITERATURE? YALL HAVE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE,
THEN! YSEE WATCHA GOT HERE BETWEEN
YUR *GASP!* MOLDY MITTS IS THE LATEST ISSUE OF
LOVECRAFT'S WEIRD (AND I DO MEAN WEIRD)
MYSTERIES! WITHIN THESE *GAK!* TATTOOED
MUMMY SKINS CALLED PAGES LIES THE MOST REVOLTIN'
BLINCHA TERRIFYIN' TALES THIS SIDE OF
LICHWOOD -- ALL GUARANTEED TO PUT YOU
IN A *URK!* MOOD MACABRE!
SO, WHADDAYA WAITIN' FOR--
A *BELCH!*" INVITATION?

NOW, GO ON AND ENJOY
THIS ISSUE... AS YOU CAN
SEE, I'VE GOT OTHER...
THINGS TO DO!

YOU
FILTHY
BEAST!





LOVECRAFT'S WEIRD

Vol. I MYSTERIES No. 7



To those readers, writers and artists who seek and find enjoyment in the world of imagination and still believe in magic and a sense of wonder in our time of science and technology, and to the legacy of those who cast the first spells with word and vision, this magazine is respectfully dedicated.

(388)

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COVER: Illustrations like these filled the covers and pages of 1950's horror comics.



The NIGHTMARE of the SPHERES

by R. Michael Burns



Illustration by Allen Koszowski

Forgetting it all was a mercy -- not only for myself, but perhaps for a great many people. Now, however, I am starting to recall everything that transpired, and the threat is returning. The memory is not returning all at once -- if it did, it would certainly destroy me before I could write a single word of this account. Instead, it comes slipping back little by little, like a cat stealthily advancing on its prey.

I am like a man in a long, shadowy passage of doors. Behind each door lurks a new memory, a new nightmare, each more recent than the last. And, wherever the end of this passage might be, there waits the last memory, the final nightmare, and the finish for me, and possibly -- probably -- countless others as well.

The amnesia -- I suppose that word suits it as well as any -- cut off my recollection like a straight-razor, so completely that until only recently I was unaware that my recall was incomplete. It never occurred to me to wonder why I had no memory of anything that might have happened between the May of thirteen years ago and October nearly a decade past. It was a blank space in my mind that I never even pondered.

I lived in this blissful ignorance for more than nine years, and would have continued thus had it not been for the scrap of paper I came across while cleaning out my desk.

Many of my colleagues have warned in jest that my pack-rat's tendencies would one day be the death of me. I feel a chill when I think of that playful admonition -- for it shall, I gravely expect, prove to be only too true. And it may well be more than my own death.

On the day I found that accursed scrap (or perhaps it found me -- the notion seems darkly

plausible to me now) I was cleaning out my desk in quest of some document or another. I cannot recall now what it was -- the memory is a tricky thing, isn't it? What you wish to forget you cannot help remembering, and what you ought to remember escapes you utterly. In any event, I was having a miserable time finding whatever it was, and, flustered and angry, I began pulling every last paper and file out of my desk in a fever of frustration.

I almost missed the scrap.

Almost.

Dear God, if only I had missed it. Then, perhaps, none of this would be happening.

I found it when I dumped the contents of my bottom drawer out across the desk. The scrap had lodged in a crack between the bottom and the backing. I saw it out of the corner of my eye as I pushed the drawer back into its place. I reached for it, meaning to grab it, crumple it, and toss it out without giving it a look. I honestly meant to do just that. But, much though I wish I had, I did not.

I saw what was written there, and for a moment I could only stare, aghast and bewildered.

It seems now that the instant I saw it, I felt the weight of a tidal-wave of memories about to come crashing back on me, but I suppose it could simply be that I'm manufacturing that sensation only now, as I write about it. As I say, memory is a tricky thing.

I read the words on that scrap of paper three times, trying to understand why they filled me with such overwhelming dread. And that was when the memory, so deeply repressed in me that I'd even forgotten forgetting it, started to come back.

The meaning of the words didn't return to me then and has not even yet, but seeing them began a

process that I know is inexorable - the process of remembering, of crossing again into a realm of almost unimaginable peril.

First, I recalled study. I had done a great deal of it at one time, surrounding myself with books until they covered every available surface except for my own chair and the small area reserved on my desk for my notebooks.

It was not history I chose to explore, nor any of the more typically scholarly pursuits. I had covered those sufficiently during my years as an academic, both as a student and a professor.

The field which consumed my interest is what is known to some as the Black Arts.

My fascination, I believe, grew from my assertive nature. An old academic colleague of mine had once contended that if there really were such mystical tomes as the infamous *Necronomicon* -- whose title has been invoked by so many a magician and writer of pulp-fiction -- they would be published and widely circulated. I made the point that certain shops which catered to such interests were full of witchcraft and magical texts -- including a paperbound version of Abdul Alhazred's cursed *Necronomicon*.

My colleague responded (as one would guess he might) by arguing the invalidity of those books, insisting that none of the spells or formulae could be shown to work, that the whole canon of magical work was essentially worthless.

I half believed that this might be true, but wasn't about to concede his point. Rather, I suggested that it might be possible that elements of true magic were disseminated throughout the thousands of printed volumes -- not gathered together in a single book or a handful of books, but scattered throughout them all.

Could one but combine the knowledge in all of the various mystical book available, one might be able to extract from that mountain of words the few that held real value to true students of the occult. A monumental task, to be sure, but I surmised that this might be precisely the point. Anyone who has ever studied Crowley or Waite or Regardie or any of the others knows that they treat their subject matter as a tool meant specifically for those students willing to work very hard at what they do, willing to become adepts. It seemed likely, in my opinion, that they had spread the real knowledge -- the true words of power -- throughout their works, on the basis of an unspoken, unmentioned agreement which they shared despite all other bitterness, as a test for those who would follow them, to assure that only the most serious of students learned anything genuinely important. A good student, I argued, would be able to sift the true magic out of the misleading ritual like a prospector sifting flakes of gold from piles of sand.

My colleague challenged me to prove my theory, thinking that surely I should forgo such a daunting task. But, being retired and having little else with which to fill my time -- and much to my colleague's shock -- I agreed.

I immersed myself in all I could gather -- Crowley's *Magick in Theory and Practice* and *Equinox*, Turpin's *Liber Umbrae*, Waite's *Book of Black Magic and of Pacts*, Barret's *Legoricon*, Prinn's *De Vermis Mysteriis*, Turpin's *Liber Umbrae*, Dr. Dee's translation of the notorious *Necronomicon*, and literally hundreds of lesser-known works. And then I began the arduous task of gathering the hidden nuggets.

It was a long, difficult process, but every time I would think that I had come to the end of the gold, another grain or two would crop up, and I'd be motivated to continue my research.

Anyone with sufficient time and access to the books can do it, provided he is intelligent enough, discerning enough. Not that I claim to be any intellectual giant -- if I were, I would never have taken my researches so far, would never have dealt with things so terrible and unimaginable that I was driven to forget them utterly until fate deemed to drag my memories back to me.

Study those works carefully enough, and a pattern begins to resolve itself, a coherence emerging in the midst of confusion. It's rather like a pointillist work -- up close, it's a meaningless jumble. But from the right perspective, the points merge or fade and disappear to create a familiar shape, a complete picture.

I filled two notebooks with spells and formulae and incantations from the various texts. All of these had a consistent quality which I cannot readily describe but which I could identify when I came upon it.

I thought of going to my colleague with this alone, but decided against it. All that I could really offer at that point was a collection of notes and my own assurance that any continuity to them wasn't of my own manufacturing. I needed something more distinct and convincing before claiming that my theory had been vindicated. I needed proof that the rituals worked.

Thinking back on it as the memories return, I cannot believe my foolishness, my ignorance and arrogance. I had spent considerable time studying these rites, but had never committed myself to the

ideas behind them. I could argue that my foolishness resulted from the fact that I still did not truly believe in any of what I had studied -- why learn the intricacies of a theory I didn't particularly accept?

That, however, was not why I remained unbelieving. I had studied enough to sense many hints of truth in the occult philosophies. But the fact of the matter is that so many dark and abhorrent implications lurked within that material that I chose to ignore the grand scheme which had revealed itself before me. I could not then allow myself to believe that this terrible picture of reality could be true. I accepted the veracity of the rites and practices, but not of the metaphysical and cosmological framework in which they existed.

The first ritual I performed was an uncomplicated meditation on enlightenment. Very simple, and, in itself, not terribly dangerous. But -- it opened the Way in me, started me into deeper and darker things. Perhaps someone more intelligent and more careful than I could do this kind of work without risk. But I was neither clever enough nor careful enough. My ignorant folly shall, I fear, carry with it a very heavy price.

* * *

After the early rite, I could well have gone to my colleague and made my case. I might never have convinced him, but I could at least have left him something to ponder.

I did not go to him then.

My first attempts at the ritual had whetted my appetite. I needed to look further, to test my skills again. I wanted to learn how deep this dark water ran, and how well I could swim.

Eventually, I lost sight of my initial purpose in learning these
(continued on page 31)

THE GLORY HAND

by James S. Dorr



Illustration by Carl Alessi

It did work. I still could not believe it, not that I had not paid out a pretty sum on the assumption it *would* be effective. But, still, the hand -- the mummified hand, its fingers lighted like five obscene candles, the stink of its burning swirling around me, had let me pass into the castle unseen. It had let me pass through the outer ring of guards wholly invisible, just as the one I had bought it from promised.

The hand of a hanged thief -- just as I would be a thief too before the next morning. A thief and a murderer.

I, too, had murdered, but not *this* evening.

Why? you might ask me, though. What business had I, a prosperous merchant no more dishonest than others of my kind, sneaking into the sorcerer's fortress that stood like a gray hill outside our city? Why should I risk myself, even with magic help?

Why especially should, if I *must* rob, I have chosen one as my victim who was himself a potent magician?

The answer was Maia. My dear, sweet wife, Maia, whose eyes burned like coals on the nights that we made love. My wife, her hair black as the wings of ravens, her skin smooth as white silk, her breasts . . . well, suffice it to say I adored her. I worshipped at her feet -- yet what had she done to me? And all because of the wizard whose castle I silently entered.

Oh, yes, I was subtle. Mice made more noise than I as I slipped beneath the raised portcullis that let the last of the day servants exit. I slunk with care across the dust-covered yard of the bailey, making sure no footprint betrayed my presence. I entered the inner gate, cringing to be sure, forcing

myself to creep as slowly as freezing ice lest some movement of air mark my passage, yet enter it I did. Beneath the guards' noses.

Did only I *smell* the hand, fuming and sputtering in the gloom as I held it before me? Apparently, yes -- as its seller had promised.

The seller. Ah, now, you ask of the seller. There, too, I was cautious, finding a man in a distant city who was an outlaw from the magicians' guild and, hence, would have no love for nor commerce with our local sorcerer. And even with him I gave no hint of my intended victim.

Simply I asked him, "Have you some charm that one like I might use to enter a fortress unnoticed? Some talisman, perhaps, that brigands might use to aid in their doings?"

The seller nodded, a gray, bearded man, older than *our* wizard. Older in looks, in any event -- ah, *that* had been my downfall, that our local sorcerer is vain and perfumed, and those who have seen him account him as handsome. That women swoon for him.

Or so I had been told. Or so . . . but no matter -- it mattered not then as I faced the wizened man, flinching as he thrust a corpse's hand toward me.

"The ancients called this a *Hand of Glory*," he said as, steeling myself, I took it. "The hand of one who died on the gallows -- it must be one killed thus -- kept safe and dry until the fat of its flesh has turned to tallow. The vulgar nowadays call it *The Thief's Friend*." He paused, then smiled. "But it will cost dearly."

I took out my purse and shook it gently, letting the old man hear the clink of gold. "What does it do?" I asked.

The old man took the hand back. "I will show you," he said, then he whispered some words that he taught me later. "Mind you," he muttered as he lit the first finger, "that, like most talismans, it works best by itself. That is, the magic it holds is natural" -- he lit the second -- "and, once in force, no other spell can prevail against it. Yet" -- he lit the third as I gagged from the growing stench of its foul smoke -- "magic can sometimes build on magic."

He lit the fourth finger now. Was it illusion, or could I see *through* him the hangings and shelves of his shop's rear wall as if through dirty water?

He lit the fifth finger -- the corpse's thumb -- and still his voice droned on. "Effects can pyramid, at least in theory. Power can be increased sympathetically so, even if one should try to counter it" -- *I could not see him! I could not see now where the voice was coming from as, apparently, he moved around me so first I heard it whispering on my left, then in my right ear* -- "perhaps the Hand will just grow all the stronger, its effects the more profound. . . ."

I heard a *whoosh* then of sharply exhaling breath, just as I felt my purse snatched from me. I sensed . . . a darkening . . . of the shop's interior and then, just as suddenly, everything once more appeared as normal.

I heard the sound of a cough behind me.

I whirled, drawing out my knife. My purse had been *stolen*! But then the man grinned at me, holding it out to me, holding in his other hand the fingertip-blackened limb of the hanged corpse.

"You see, then," he went on, "that all I was saying was that there's just one way to be detected

-- to be seen as I am now. And that's by you yourself blowing the flames out."

"I see," I muttered, visibly shaking. I am not a brave man, nor do I pretend to be. Slowly I thrust my knife back in my belt as the old man still held my purse out to me, still held the mummified hand in his other hand, waiting for me to choose.

I hesitated. Like most men I feared magic -- especially that kind which plays in graveyards -- and yet, my whole body trembling so hard I could scarcely control it, I reached out and chose . . . the Hand of Glory.

* * *

I held the Hand out from me, bathed in its cold light as I crept into the castle's dungeon. I had to train myself even to light it, finger by finger, over the next months before I could bring myself to the point where I might actually *use* it. Yet train myself I did. And more than train myself. I also paid men, nameless vagabonds, to keep a watch on the sorcerer's castle.

I found out his movements -- his comings and goings. Frightened by the old outlaw's talk, although he had seemed to end up saying that all would be safe enough, I would take no chance on counter-magic. Rather, I would learn my victim's habits, to know when he was at home and when not at home. What guards he left behind in his absence. Even what weapons these guards would be armed with.

You see, I had no intention of entering the sorcerer's home when he was present.

And yet I still feared -- especially the weapons, earthly as they might be. Especially now as, still unseen by the guards, I found myself in the castle's armoury.

And worse. Another room. Another passage. I had to go

downward before I could go up. And now I heard groaning. The torture chamber!

Others had tried, too, to enter this castle. Perhaps to steal, as I hoped to steal, the wizard's *Book* - the Book of his greatest spells -- that rumor had it was housed in the castle's central high tower. But unlike the others, whose broken bodies I now passed among, some still living -- barely -- flesh flayed from their bones, I did not mean to *use* this black grimoire. Oh, no. As I say, I, like most men of a churchgoing nature, am fearful of magic.

I *just* meant to steal it, to take it away. To possibly throw it into the river or maybe to burn it, but, however I should finally dispose of it, just to *take* it. To take the sorcerer's most prized possession.

Just as he took mine.

I shuddered -- did I say I saw men's flayed bodies? One was a *woman*. Others, bones audibly cracking on wheels as they moved and shifted, trying in vain to find some new position that might at least dull their pain, added their voices to the foul keening. My nerve broke. I ran. I found the door to the tower steps and ran full tilt upward, not caring about noise, until, panting huskily, I finally collapsed on a narrow landing.

One was a woman.

A woman like Maia and yet, I knew, not Maia. Not *my* Maia, the woman I loved, whom the wizard stole from me.

I quieted myself, lest there be guards above me, little knowing that worse was still to come. *Earthly weapons*, I think now -- now I laugh at them. But at that time, crouched on the tower stairs, all I could do was continue upward.

And think of Maia. The comfort her arms gave. Until . . . until,

while I was away on a journey to foreign lands, the demon wizard came down from his castle and ravished my Maia.

Oh, yes, she confessed to me when I returned home and found, in her love, a certain coolness. Tears streaming, she told how the sorcerer came by night. How first he came disguised in *my* body, then, later, in his own form. How he seduced her.

How he abandoned her. Yes, he abandoned her when he was finished -- this thought was on my mind as I crept upward, my grisly torch sputtering in the darkness.

I heard, above, voices. The guards of the tower, guarding the wizard's room.

"When will the Master be back?" one was asking.

"Not until cock crow at the earliest," answered the other. "He goes on an errand in the city."

There was a brief silence until the first spoke again. "He seeks a new lady?"

I heard the guards snickering, quietly, furtively. They too had fear lest something should happen in their master's absence. And well they *should* fear, I thought. Taking advantage of their sudden merriment I was able, slowly and silently, to sidle past them.

And then -- I was through a curtained archway and found myself within the sorcerer's workroom. I found the Book quickly -- how could I not? It was on a reading stand in the room's center, glowing softly with a blue light from the power within it.

But my light was stronger.

I snatched the Book to me and saw its glow eclipsed by the tallowed light of my burning Hand. Turning, I crept back out through the archway, hearing the wizard's soldiers still joking. Laughing about women -- women

like Maia. About their Master and what he did to them.

What he did to *my* Maia.

I dashed down the stairs, albeit on tiptoe to preserve my silence. I took a different turn than before to come out in the main hall, wishing to avoid the cellars and the moans of the sorcerer's victims.

Yet there was sound here too. Sound *worse* than moaning!

I heard a scream -- Maia's! The same sound she made after, sobbing, she told me she still loved the wizard, despite what he had done; when she confessed she carried his child now.

The sound when I struck her.

The sickening *crack!* when her head struck the stone fireplace of our once joyous home.

The Hand burned brighter now, sputtering orange sparks. Shadows began to take form around me.

I clutched the Book tighter and ran from the main hall, out to a courtyard.

I felt myself *changing*.

I made noise now, heedlessly, barreling out through the courtyard gate, through the soldiers who guarded it, through yet another gate and into yet another courtyard. And more shadows followed. Shadows that shrieked, as the tortured souls keened in the chamber below, but this time forming words I could half-understand.

"Join us!" they shouted. They pressed around me. "*You're one of us. Join us!*"

I breathed in their stench as I shouldered through them, seeing the very stone of the castle walls starting to soften, to shift shape around me.

I felt my hands prickle, my legs grow heavy. The shadows pressed closer. The fortress walls arched

over, forming a maze that would trap me for all time.

And yet. . . .

And yet, before me, I now saw the castle gate. Beginning to open. I realized -- the Book. The Hand of Glory. Magic on magic. Building together. The shadows behind me, that built yet more magic. The screams, now deafening, hinting of tortures that made those I passed through beneath the tower seem now more like pleasures. . . .

And yet, ahead, in a lead-colored pre-dawn, the gate was now fully open. The soldiers were withdrawing on either side as the great portcullis was raised.

A gate I could pass through, simply by running, even if the guards *should* see me.

I blew on the Hand, hard, as the old man had done, as shadowed claws clutched the air behind me. If I could put it out -- just end its magic. And yet still it spouted flame, drawing its increasing strength from my own fear. No longer needing even the Book to add to its power.

I blew again, harder. I tried to fling it as far from me as I could. Yet it flared still brighter.

Letting me see now, *beyond* the shadows. . . .

"Oh, God!" I shouted -- the Hand was my own! *And try as I might, it would not be extinguished!* ☛





Diabolique

VOLUME TWO - - COMING IN 2004

The INHERITANCE of



Illustration by Linda Navroth © 2003

BARNABAS WILCOX

by Sarah Monette

CHAPTER I.

Some four months after I attended the fifteen-year reunion at Brockstone School, I received a letter from Barnabas Wilcox. I was puzzled, for there was no love lost between Wilcox and me. But, instead of doing the sensible thing and throwing the letter, unopened on the fire, I read it.

*Dear Booth (Wilcox wrote):
I'm writing to you because you know all about old books. The case is that I have recently inherited a house in the country from my Uncle Lucius, and there's a stipulation in his will that his library catalogue should be made up-to-date. Would you care to come down with me this weekend and take a look at it? I don't know anyone else who would even know where to begin.*

Yrs,

And then an involved squiggle in which a "B" and a "W" were dimly perceptible.

It took no great leap of intuition to guess that Wilcox's "Uncle Lucius" had to be the noted antiquary Lucius Preston Wilcox, and that lure overcame my dislike of Wilcox. Friday I took a half-day, packed my bag, and met Wilcox on the platform at quarter of three. He was a big, square, red-faced man, with thick, blunt-fingered hands and smallish, squinty hazel eyes. Despite my

white hair, he looked easily ten years older than I; when we shook hands, I smelled liquor on his breath.

"How are you, Booth?" he said when we were settled in our compartment. "It's good of you to come."

"I, er," I said. ". . . I like libraries."

"Well, old Uncle Loosh should keep you happy then. I remember, my brother and I used to think the books had to be fake, he had so many."

I recollected in time that Wilcox's brother had died in the war, and asked instead, "When did your uncle die? I don't remember reading an obituary."

"Daft old coot. He wouldn't have one written. It was the first stipulation in his will, and he'd told his lawyer and his housekeeper and everybody about it. And, after all, there's no law that says you have to publish one. It's just that people usually do. But Uncle Loosh was crazy."

". . . Crazy?"

"He got into some weird things. He used to write me these long letters saying he'd figured out how to cheat death and was going to live forever. I couldn't understand half of what he said."

"That's not a very pleasant occupation."

"Uncle Loosh wasn't a very pleasant person. I can't think why

he left everything to me. We didn't get along."

The train began to move. With a muttered apology, Wilcox dug some papers out of his attaché case and settled in to work. I stared out the window and watched as the train left the city behind.

CHAPTER II.

The estate of Wilcox's uncle was called Hollyhill and was accurately named in both respects. The house stood on a prominence among the farms and woods of the gently rolling countryside, and was surrounded by as thriving a stand of holly trees as I had ever seen.

"I shall have those cut down first thing," Wilcox said as we turned through the gates. "I don't know what Uncle Loosh was thinking of, letting them grow like that."

In the rearview mirror, I caught the eyes of the driver; his name was Esau Flood, and he had been Mr. Preston Wilcox's groundskeeper. He was small, very tan, with a head of thick white hair. His eyes were gray and reminded me strongly of the sort of smooth, round pebbles one finds in a swiftly-moving stream. He said, "Mr. Preston Wilcox was very fond of the holly, sir."

"That doesn't surprise me," Wilcox said disagreeably. "I'm not."

"I'm sure not, sir," said Flood, too politely.

The house itself was remarkably unattractive, with an aggressively square façade and windows that seemed too small for the proportions. Inside, I was oppressed to discover that the entire house was paneled with dark-varnished oak, and that the windows gave as little light as one would expect. They had uncommonly thick curtains. Wilcox seemed uncomfortable as well; he said several times over dinner that he did not know why

his uncle had left him the place, and he was not sure but that the best thing to do would be to sell it—"not that I could find a buyer," he added.

"It might be more pleasant without the, er, the paneling."

"Oh, but that paneling's valuable. They don't make stuff like that any more."

"Yes, but it's quite dark."

"Better lights would solve that," he said, staring up at the chandelier with disapprobation. "Well, *that* I can take care of tomorrow. I fancy I'll have to leave you on your own most of the day, Booth. There's quite a list of things that need buying, and for some reason Flood hasn't done any of it."

"Perhaps," I said, because I did not want to be a witness to what already seemed like an alarming escalation of hostilities between Wilcox and Flood, "perhaps he didn't like to do anything without . . . that is, without asking you first."

"Good God, it takes no more than common sense to see that I shan't kick over buying enough plaster to repair a great gaping hole in the cellar wall!" Wilcox stared at me; for a moment he was the bully I remembered from Brockstone. Then he said, more mildly, "I daresay you're right. Flood and I have rubbed each other the wrong way a bit, but we'll get along all right soon enough. I know Uncle Loosh couldn't speak highly enough of him."

I managed to mutter something about "time," and Wilcox turned the conversation to bridge, of which he appeared to be an addict. I do not play, myself, disliking any form of activity which requires a partner, but Wilcox needed no encouragement to discourse at length.

After dinner, he said, "D'you want to look at the library now?"

"I, er . . . yes, while you're here to . . ."

He rolled his eyes. "Come on, then."

The doors to the library--vast, carved things like cathedral doors--were locked. While Wilcox, grumbling, sorted through his key-ring, I examined the carvings. They were crude, almost primitive, in design and execution, and their crudeness bothered me because I could not quite tell what the reliefs were meant to represent. There were trees--I was sure of that--and there was one figure, always holding a box and thus easy to identify, that seemed quite reliably to be human, but the rest of it was disturbingly muddled, so that I could not determine whether the other shapes were persecuting the human shape or obeying its commands.

"Hal!" said Wilcox and unlocked the doors.

In the library, at last, we found a well-lit and comfortably appointed room. It was quite large, large enough that it disrupted the severely square proportions of the house by jutting out into the back garden. Although the windows were still small and mean, in the library it seemed almost reasonable that they should be so, since every inch of wall space, including both above and below the windows, was taken up with bookshelves, themselves crammed with books. Where the shelves were deep enough and the books small enough, the books had been double-stacked; everywhere, books had been shoved sideways on top of the rows, and there were stacks on the floor in front of the bookcases, stacks on the desk, stacks on the two small tables--so that the impression was less of a col-

lection and more of an explosion of books.

"Good God," Wilcox said faintly.

After a moment, I said, "You mentioned a catalogue. Do you know . . . er, can you find it?"

"I don't know," Wilcox said, staring around helplessly. "I just know it's mentioned in the will."

"Flood might . . ."

"Or the lawyer, Dropcloth or whatever his name is. But I'll ask Flood." There was a bell-pull, conveniently situated by the desk; Wilcox pulled it briskly.

Flood appeared in the doorway, and I thought again how round and flat his eyes seemed. Wilcox put his question, and Flood said, "Oh, yes, sir. I believe you'll find the catalogue in Mr. Preston Wilcox's desk. He was making notes just before his last illness." Flood did not come into the library; it struck me, perhaps unjustly, that he regarded the massed books with some distaste. Wilcox started opening desk drawers, and said, "Thank you, Flood, that was all I wanted," without looking up.

"Yes, sir. Good night, sir," said Flood, and I did not like the expression in those round, flat eyes. He vanished as silently as he had appeared.

"How long was he, er, with your uncle?"

"Flood? Ages and ages. I remember him from when I was a boy, looking just as he does now. Why?"

". . . No reason. He just . . . that is, I don't . . ."

"He gives you the creeps," Wilcox said, resorting to the lowest and deepest desk drawer, which seemed to be crammed to the brim with paper. "He does me, too. I don't expect I'll keep him on. Get my own people in. New blood and all that."

". . . Yes," I said, although I found myself wishing he had not

used the word "blood," and then did not know why it bothered me.

"This must be it," Wilcox said; he dragged a leather-bound ledger from the bottom of the drawer, sending sheets of paper flying in a kind of fountain. "Blast. Here, you take a look at this, and I'll get this stuff back in the drawer." He shoved the catalogue into my hands.

Lucius Preston Wilcox's rigidly legible handwriting marched across the pages of his catalogue like a conquering army. I noted the careful descriptions of the books, including provenances and conditions, and then, obedient to the signs of Wilcox's growing impatience, allowed myself to be herded out of the library and up to bed.

CHAPTER III.

I slept badly that night. In itself, that was not surprising. I am an insomniac—I rarely sleep more than six hours a night, frequently no more than four, sometimes not at all—and I am always nervous in strange bedrooms.

I had not expected to sleep at all, had come prepared with a book on forgers' techniques. But my eyes grew heavy, and finally the book slipped out of my fingers entirely, and I found myself in a dream.

Even at the time, I knew it was a dream, which was some comfort. I was dreaming of being a boy again, thirteen or fourteen, the age at which I had most hated Barnabas Wilcox. I was standing on a staircase; in the dream, it was the main staircase at Brockstone School, but I recognized it as the staircase here at Hollyhill, the one I had just climbed in Wilcox's company on the way to our respective rooms. I was on the landing, by the newel-post, and two boys came running past me down the stairs. I recognized one

as Wilcox, and tensed, clutching the banister. But they did not notice me; I wondered hopefully if I was invisible.

I followed them downstairs, where they had been caught by a master and were being scolded for something. He was an old man, with bright, piercing eyes. The dream insisted that he was Dr. Smayle, the Greek master, but I kept thinking that he was really someone else, although I did not know whom.

"Useless the both of you!" he was saying. "Senseless as stones. Can't lift your heads above the animal reek of the world, can you, lads?"

"But, sir," said Wilcox, "Tony's dead."

At that I recognized the other boy as Wilcox's older brother, the one who had died in the war.

"Makes no difference," said the old man. "Alive or dead, you just can't see. Your friend would be more use than you are. What's your name, boy?"

Then I'm not invisible, I thought sadly, and said, "Booth."

"Booth?" said Wilcox, twisting around to look at me, his face sneering. "What are *you* doing here?"

"You brought him, you lunk," the old man said. He wasn't Dr. Smayle now, and he never had been. "Brought him right into the middle of something you don't have the motherwit to understand." I fell back a pace under the hammerfall of his eyes. They were not Dr. Smayle's kind blue eyes; they were black and hard. "Booth, you said your name is. Stay in the library, Booth. Don't let Barney drag you out."

"That's right," said Wilcox. "Don't come out of the library, or I'll make you sorry."

The dream changed then, became a different dream, a dream

of Wilcox chasing me through Brockstone School, Wilcox and his thuggish friends. I ran until I woke up.

CHAPTER IV.

At breakfast, Wilcox looked as haggard as I felt. He did not look like the Wilcox of my dream, but I still felt edgy, as if the fourteen-year-old boys we had been were watching us, each horrified at the perceived betrayal in our eating breakfast together. I was grateful that he did not speak.

He disappeared promptly after breakfast, with a mutter about "business." I went into the library and settled down to work.

There was no great difficulty. The catalogue was carefully kept and accurate in all its details. My worst trouble was in finding each volume; the shelves looked to have undergone at least two partial reorganizations, so that the volumes wedged in sideways might as easily be among Mr. Preston Wilcox's first purchases as among his last. I ended up making stacks of my own on his desk, and it was inevitable that around two o'clock that afternoon I knocked one stack over, sending books sliding across the desk and onto the floor.

I gave a yelp of dismay and dove after them. Happily, none had been damaged; it was as I was crawling out from beneath the desk, having retrieved the last of them (*Life among the Anthrophagi of the South Pacific*), that the corner of a piece of paper caught my eye.

I realized that it had to be one of the papers Wilcox had dropped the night before. It had slid all the way under the bottom drawer, so that no one who did not crawl entirely beneath the desk, as I had done, would ever see it. I put *Life among the Anthrophagi* on the desk and went back after the paper.

It was a page of notes, clearly belonging to Mr. Preston Wilcox. I recognized the handwriting from the catalogue, and the contents matched up with Wilcox's description of his uncle's obsessions. Elliptical and oblique, they were notes to jog the old man's memory, not to enlighten anyone else. There were references to the holly trees, and to something he called "the Guide" and something else he called "the Vessel." It did not make sense to me, but I was troubled by a feeling that it *ought* to, that I had seen something like this somewhere before. But every time I tried to track that feeling down, I found myself remembering my dream of the previous night--Wilcox chasing me through endless hallways, calling me "freak" and "coward" and worse things. In the end, I put the paper on the desk and returned to the catalogue.

When Wilcox returned, he came to the library and apologized for being so late. Startled, I looked at my watch and saw that it was past eight o'clock.

Wilcox laughed, not pleasantly to my ear. "Same old Booth. Come on and eat."

I went to turn the lamp off before I followed him, and the paper on the desk caught my eye. "Oh! I found this under the desk."

I handed it to him. He glanced at it, said, "More of Uncle Loosh's nonsense, looks like to me. Thanks." He stuffed it in his pocket, and we left the room.

Dinner consisted of sandwiches and soup. Wilcox was restless, fidgeting even as he ate, getting up periodically to stride over to the windows and stare out at the darkness. Finally, I said, "Is something the matter?"

"I'm having those damn trees down tomorrow!"

"Oh," I said, not usefully.

"I'm sorry. They get on my nerves, and it seems like every time I turn around, there's Flood telling me how much Uncle Loosh loved the hollies. All the more reason they should go."

"There was, er . . . there was something about them on that paper I found."

He raised his eyebrows in a disagreeable sneer, but did not comment.

"It looks like . . . however he thought he was going to, er, cheat death, it looks like the hollies . . ."

Wilcox stared at me, his brows drawing down in an ugly, brooding expression. Then, all at once, he burst out laughing. "My God, Booth, don't tell me you believe in that nonsense!"

I felt my face flood red; I could not answer him.

"I bet you do!" Wilcox hooted with laughter. "You're as crazy as Uncle Loosh!"

I stood up, said, "Good night, Wilcox," with what vestiges of dignity I could, and walked out of the room. I would have liked to return to work in the library, but I was afraid Wilcox would find me there. I went up to my bedroom and locked the door. I could leave tomorrow afternoon--maybe even tomorrow morning. I could ask Flood about trains before breakfast.

I did not expect to sleep at all, but I changed into my pajamas and climbed into bed. If nothing else, I could read comfortably. About half an hour later, I heard Wilcox come upstairs. His footsteps stopped outside my door, but he did not knock or speak. I was just as glad.

I read long enough to quiet my nerves. When I looked at the clock, it was five minutes past midnight, and the house was perfectly still. No one would notice or care if I went back down to the

library for a couple of hours. I would feel better about leaving--less like I was running away--if I had at least completed the task Wilcox had asked me here to perform.

I got up, put my book carefully back in my valise, and put on my dressing gown, already rehearsing my story should I run into Flood or Wilcox. I needed something to read--what better reason to be found creeping downstairs to the library in the middle of the night?

But the house might as well have been deserted, for all the signs of life it showed. I made it to the library without incident and shut the doors carefully behind me before I turned on the light. In that single moment of darkness, I suffered the horrible conviction that there was someone sitting behind the desk, but when I turned on the light, no one was there.

I worked peacefully for almost five hours, slowly restoring order to the chaos of Mr. Preston Wilcox's library. The darkness beyond the windows was softening to gray, the sun's first rays reaching up above the brooding hollies, when I pulled a book out of the lowest shelf of the bookcase behind the desk and with it fell a second book, which flipped itself open to its title page.

I stared at that second book for a long time, perfectly still, just as I would have stared at a tarantula that might or might not have been dead. The book was not listed in Mr. Preston Wilcox's catalogue. I had only ever seen a copy once before. But now I knew why those notes referring to "the Guide" and "the Vessel" had looked familiar. It was *The Book of Whispers*--not the nineteenth-century fake, but the genuine edition from 1605. I could not bring myself to touch it.

And while I was standing there, staring at that small, fragile volume, I heard Wilcox coming down the stairs. I clutched my dressing gown closed at the neck. I could not let him see me like this: in my pajamas with my hair uncombed and my face stubbled. He would never believe me then, and the matter had suddenly become much larger than our enmity, preserved like an ant in amber, and my wounded pride.

Then I thought, He'll go in to breakfast. I can get upstairs and get decent without him seeing me.

At the same moment at which I remembered it was only a quarter after five, far too early for breakfast, I heard the front door slam. I knew then, and the knowledge made me cold. He intended to have those hollies down today; he was going out to look at them, to plan his attack.

I had seen *The Book of Whispers*; I knew what was waiting for him among the holly trees.

"Wilcox!" I shouted uselessly and plunged for the door.

The door would not open. I tugged and rattled, but the latch stayed jammed. The first part of my dream from Friday night came back; I remembered the old man saying, "Stay in the library."

But whether I liked Wilcox or not, I could not leave him to his fate, to the terrible thing Lucius Preston Wilcox intended.

"Flood!" I shouted and then caught myself; Flood had his own role to play among the holly trees. I shouted for the housekeeper instead, Mrs. Grant, and pounded on the door in between my frantic assaults on the doorknob. I could feel the old man's black eyes watching me from behind the desk. I did not turn around, afraid that I would find the feeling to be more than just nerves.

The library was not far from the kitchen, and Mrs. Grant got up at dawn to bake the day's bread. Although it felt like hours, it was no more than ten minutes--maybe only five--before I heard her on the other side of the door, saying, "What on earth--?"

"The door's stuck!"

"Stuck? It's never been stuck before."

For her, the door swung smoothly open. I wasted no time in explanations, apologies, or curses, but bolted past her. The front door did not resist me; I threw it open just in time to see Wilcox disappear into the close-serried ranks of holly.

"WILCOX!" I shouted and started running.

I lost both my carpet slippers within ten feet, but ran on regardless. Stones and sticks and shed holly leaves hurt my feet, but there was still a chance. If I could get to the hollies, get Wilcox out of the hollies . . .

I reached the trees, ducked between them as Wilcox had, and came face to face with Flood.

"Where's Mr. Wilcox?"

"Mr. Wilcox has met with an accident," he said smoothly, well-rehearsed, "but I think--"

"Let it go, Flood."

Those smooth, perfect pebbles stared at me.

"Let *him* go."

"I don't understand you, Mr. Booth."

"You're the Guide, aren't you? And poor Wilcox is the Vessel. I found the book."

His face twisted; I remembered how he had stood in the doorway of the library, refusing to come in. And I remembered the carvings on the library doors; that thing I had taken for a box could just as easily be a book. I wondered, distractedly, my hackles rising, just what Flood had been before Mr.

Preston Wilcox had used the book to command him.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Booth," he said. "I think you misunderstood me. Mr. Wilcox--"

"What on earth are you doing out here, Booth?"

I whipped around, my heart hammering in my throat. Wilcox was approaching through the trees.

"Wilcox?" I said weakly.

"Good God, man, you look like you've seen a ghost. What's the matter?"

"N-nothing." I could not stop staring at him, his ruddy face and aggressively square body, his rumpled hair and-- "What happened to your hand?"

Flood said, "I was trying to tell you, Mr. Booth. Mr. Wilcox met with an accident."

"Bumping around like a bull in a china shop," Wilcox said cheerfully. "Fell over and bashed my hand on some damn rock. I was just going back to the house for some mercurochrome. Come on, and we'll get Mrs. Grant to make you some tea."

"All right," I said, numb and bewildered, and we started back toward Hollyhill. I could feel embarrassment rising, washing over me like a tide. "I'm done in the library, and I, er . . . that is, is there a morning train?"

"Ten o'clock," Wilcox said. "Capital work, old man. I'll have Flood drive you. Oh, and Flood!"

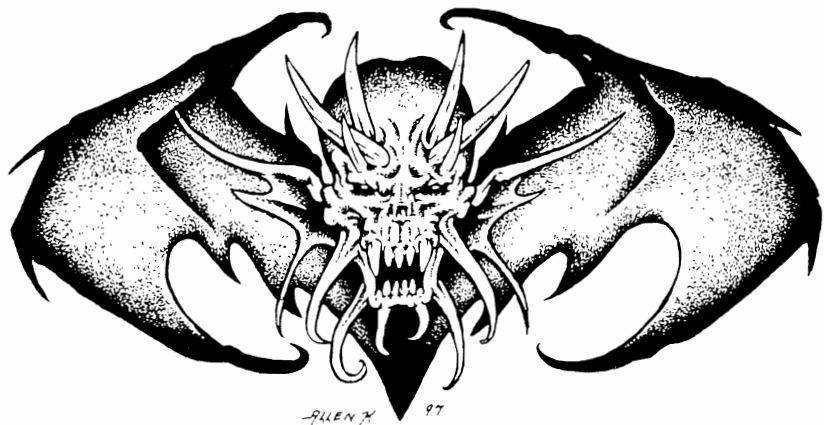
As he glanced over his shoulder at Flood, I saw his eyes plainly in the clarifying dawn light. They were Wilcox's little, sandy-lashed eyes, but surely Wilcox's eyes had been hazel, not that obsidian-hard black.

"Tell the men not to bother about the hollies," Wilcox said. "They're starting to grow on me."

* * *

I left by the ten o'clock train. Flood and I said nothing to each other. What could we say? We both knew what had happened; we both knew that no one would believe me if I tried to tell them the truth, and even if I were believed, there was nothing that anyone could do. After he let me out at the station, I saw him hiss at me like a cat through the windshield before the car pulled away.

I have not heard from Wilcox since. ✱



TOMB

COMICS



**ILLUSTRATED TERROR
FROM THE GOLDEN AGE
OF HORROR COMICS!**

• SPECIAL PREVIEW EDITION •

TOMB COMICS

A MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER . . .

Hi, there! Do you remember when comic books were fun to read? I sure do! Don't get me wrong, some of today's comics are worth reading, but most of 'em aren't in my opinion. It's just that today's "funny" books really aren't that funny, or even very entertaining for that matter. I'll have to admit, tho, they have become visually striking, especially with the advent of spiffy computer graphics. But they're kinda starting to look like they were all drawn by the same 2 or 3 artists, you know what I mean? And, as for the stories, well, outside of a few good tale-tellers, the rest of the writers in comics today seem to be too busy setting you up for the next issue and not worrying much about what's going on in the current one. The payoff for the time and money invested can make the reader feel ultimately ripped-off when it's all over.

Not so in the comics of yesteryear! One thin dime bought a lot o' comic. Especially, in my opinion, with the so-called "Pre-Code" horror comics that reigned supreme on the magazine racks from about 1950 until late 1954, when one Dr. Fredric Wertham's black book of indictment entitled, *The Seduction of the Innocent*, literally brought to trial comic books, and, in particular, horror and crime comics, claiming they led the misguided youth of the time to juvenile delinquency, and, *gulp!* . . . worse!

Anyway, submitted herewith for your edification and entertainment is a sample of the kind of books Wertham was railing about! They seem quite tame by today's standards, even a little crude, but I don't think they are any less fun to read as back then. As for the title? Well, consider these horror-ific tales of the terrible resurrected from their . . . tomb!

Let me know what you think, will you? And in the meantime, enjoy!

John Navroth
Editor and Publisher, Tomb Comics

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NOTHING HE COULDN'T DO!

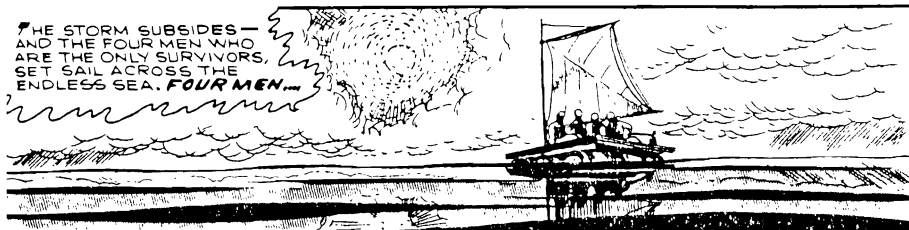
DON'T BE MISLED BY THE TAME TITLE! THIS TALE STARTS WITH A VIOLENT STORM AT SEA — TOWERING WAVES, THE WIND HOWLING LIKE A THOUSAND BANSHEES, A LINER SINKING — AND ENDS WITH A JOLT THAT MADE EVEN MY HAIR STAND ON END!

The Thing



AYERS

TOMB COMICS



ERMAN JONES — SHIP'S MECHANIC...

JOE BARTOLL — ESCAPED CONVICT...

AL MARCUS — CROOKED GAMBLER...

AND MIKE RAMMER — GUNMAN FOR HIRE!





EIGHT DAYS PASS—
EIGHT SLOW DRAGGING
SUN PARCHED DAYS—
AND THEN

AN ISLAND!

I-I CAN'T
WAIT TO GET
MY FEET ON
SHORE!

STEER HER
STRAIGHT IN,
JONESY!

HAVE TO BE
CAREFUL—
THERE MIGHT
BE



BUT THE FOUR
SURVIVORS HAVE
BEEN SIGHTED
FROM THE
ISLAND!



AND WHEN THEY
NEXT OPEN THEIR
EYES

YOU ALL RIGHT NOW.
WE PULL YOU FROM
WATER.







TOMB COMICS

BY DAWN, THEIR
ESCAPE PLAN IS
ALMOST COMPLETE!
BUT THEN—

YOU THREE
COME NOW.



WH-WHAT DO YA THINK
THEY WANT ALL THREE
OF US FOR?

GUESS THEY WANT US TO WATCH
WHAT THEY DO TO JONESY....



BUT
THEN—

J-JONESY!
WH-WHAT
HAPPENED?!



THAT ONE CAN DO ANYTHING
WITH TOOLS AT FIRST HE SAY
NO WHEN I ASK HIM TO SHOW
US HOW TO DO WHAT I
WANT. SO MY WARRIORS
TORTURE HIM — TAKE
THEM TO
KETTLES!



AIEEEE!

LEMMIE GO!
LEGGO! LEGGO!

TH-THEY'RE
GONNA BOIL
US.



TH-THIS CAN'T BE!
CANNIBALS NEVER
BOIL MORE THAN
ONE HUMAN AT A
TIME! HUMAN MEAT
SPOILS TOO FAST!
JONESY, TELL US
WHAT'D YOU SHOW
THEM HOW TO DO?!

HE NO TALK— HIS
TONGUE CUT OUT.
I TELL YOU WHAT
HE SHOW US....



HE SHOW US HOW
TO MAKE CANNED
MEAT, SO IT NOT
SPOIL!



JOLTED
EH...?
The Thing

(continued from page 7)

things. Making a point to my esteemed companion paled in comparison to what now seemed ever more available to me. I was becoming a magician. If I could continue to progress as I had thus far, devoting my every waking moment to study and practice and sleeping less and less, I could become an adept.

I locked myself into my small house and accepted no interruptions whatever. My family, my friends, I ignored universally. My pursuit alone mattered to me. I meant to have the kind of power that the modern world of science and skepticism had all but forgotten. I accomplished far too much for anyone's good.

I found many spells for achieving certain purposes -- securing the love of a chosen woman, bringing pressure to bare on an enemy, gaining riches, et cetera. These, however, held little interest for me.

I enjoyed exploration.

To those who are unfamiliar with the bulk of "true magic," it might be surprising how much of the literature is devoted to this subject. The mages tell us that the physical world we inhabit is only one of many which exist -- and not even the foremost of those. An adept has the responsibility, above all else, to learn. And travel, it is said, broadens the mind.

I taught myself how to traverse the astral plane. I discovered how to plumb the uncharted depths of my own dark mind. I learned, after much practice, how to move through the outer dimensions.

And there I first encountered the threat.

The outer dimensions are dark places, and certain ageless things dwell there, beyond the common scope of mankind -- things so strange and nightmarish that

mere contact with them can snap one's sanity like brittle kindling. I possessed considerable skill, however, and knew the secrets for traveling among these horrid things unnoticed as I explored that nether-realm.

Adept though I had become, however, none of my previous study or experience could really have prepared me for what I was still to encounter.

The texts held warnings, none-too-subtle caveats, stating frankly that an adept must know his limits, must know when to stop exploring and come back to himself. But I had grown increasingly arrogant. Those warnings were not meant for one as skilled as myself. There are no creatures in the beyond with which I cannot cope.

Even now, I cannot remember all of that encounter, the final act before my memory was obliterated and my studies of the Black Arts forgotten. Even with that scrap of paper in my hand, baring its recall-jarring words, I can remember only shadowy sensations. I will, soon, recall everything, to the minutia, and when I do, something terrible will happen, something I cannot yet even contemplate.

I had stretched myself too far, gone too deep into the outer dimensions. I foolishly assumed that nothing there would startle me, nothing would exceed my capacity.

I could not have been more wrong.

* * *

For the moment, my mind sees only impressions.

Something lurked there, in the boundless darkness, a thing vast and shapeless, ever-shifting. I can recall seeing it as a nightmarish conglomeration of sparkling, transparent spheres, always changing, globes merging and dividing, all of it moving and glowing

with an abhorrent, malign unconsciousness. It was powerful, infinitely more so than the other beings I had encountered in the outer dimensions, its energy clearly focused. It hated, despised all things other than itself -- the whole of its mentality was devoted to that singular task. Loathing exuded from it in a way virtually tangible in the Beyond. Its rancor animated it, gave life to its spheres.

It has a name, which I somehow knew when I met it but which is now one of the few memories which still eludes me.

What occurred after this initial encounter I can more deduce than truly remember.

It attacked me, though not with the intent to kill me, or I'd surely -- and mercifully -- be dead. It meant, rather, to use me. It wanted me for its vessel, its passageway into the solid reality inhabited by mankind. Our world would serve as the perfect killing-ground for this nightmare, billions of lives gathered on one small planet for it to hate and destroy.

Somehow, though, I stopped it. I used every power available to me and I stopped it.

I am only now remembering how I managed to do that.

My own mind was the middle-ground through which it had to pass to go from the outer dimensions to the physical plane. I was its conduit, its gateway from the nether regions into the solid world inhabited by frail humanity.

By methods which are now lost to me, I trapped that murderous thing in the middle ground.

Somehow, I managed to capture it in my fragile mind, in the hollow places reserved for unremembered dreams and unborn thoughts.

I returned from this excursion in a sort of stupor. I could scarcely

think, but acting on a deep and obligatory urge, I bundled my books and notes into the fire place in my living room and burned them in a fire which lasted a full night. And then, quite simply, I forgot everything.

I do not mean merely that my mind was so tortured by the creature I had encountered and by thoughts of the terror I had almost let into the world that I repressed the memories for the sake of my own sanity. The more it comes back to me, the more I become certain of one thing: I forgot that encounter and all that had led up to it because, if I ever remembered it all, the prison I had created would collapse and the nightmare in my mind would be unleashed.

I believe that it all hinges on the name. If -- I might well say when -- I recall the name, the key will turn in the lock and the beast will be freed. If I could prevent its becoming by the simple act of ending my own life, I would not hesitate to do so. But I fear that would change nothing. In the instant before my death, I would recall that abhorrent name and then the beast would spring free in defiance and mockery of my self-sacrifice.

That scrap, the one portion of my notes which I failed to burn (which I think I was not allowed to burn,) hints at that name.

The words written there are what others call it: Tawil at'Umr, the All In One, the Terror Between the Stars.

The name which it calls itself is the last thing which remains hidden from me. As soon as it comes, so too will come the beast.

I know I shall remember it any moment now.

Any moment now. ☉

[Originally published in Cthulhu Codex number 16, Eastertide 1999.]

MORDECAI GRIMSLY'S CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

PRESENTS...

The Weird World of SHRUNKEN HEADS!

Warning, dear readers! Prepare yourself for shock before you enter Mordecai Grimsly's Cabinet of Curiosities! In this installment he provides you with a ghastly glimpse into the strange rites and customs of the mysterious Amazon's legendary Jivaro Indians, whose bizarre practice of head shrinking has horrified and mystified the curious for centuries!



After battle, the fierce Jivaro would take the heads of their slain enemies and proceed to make trophies from them by boiling and shrinking the head using hot sand and stones, thereby creating a talisman which fulfilled a sort of blood-revenge! It was also thought that by possessing the head of the victim, the victor also laid claim to his soul! Fact or fiction? Open the cabinet door and...

READ ON . . . IF YOU DARE!



Slow boiling is the first step in shrinking an enemy's head after removal of skull bones

HOW TO SHRINK A HEAD



“Why does a man cut off another man’s head, shrink it to the size of his fist, and dance around it?”

It was this teasing question that drove Lewis Cotlow to leave his prosperous business, his comfortable apartment, and all the conveniences of a big city, and set out unarmed into the rain-soaked tropical jungle of South America in search of the fierce head-hunting Jivaro Indians.

He took three trips during which he lived with head-hunter tribes in the perilous jungles of Ecuador and Peru. He studied their curious customs and witnessed some of their strange, secret rites. He chronicled it all in an amazing book, *Amazon Head-Hunters*, published in 1954 by Signet Books. The following is a chilling excerpt of the process of making the coveted *tsantsa*.

Asapi took a sharp bamboo knife from his monkey-fur pouch and parted the hair of the enemy *wishinu* carefully up the back. Then he cut through the scalp neatly, from the bottom of the bloody neck to the top of the skull. Next he very carefully peeled back the skin, away from the skull, using the bamboo knife where necessary to free the flesh from the bone. In fifteen minutes he had removed the skin from the skull, which he tossed aside. With the skin inside out, Asapi then sewed the eyelids shut from the inside, after which he turned the skin right side out once more.

From his pouch the tired but happy *curaka* took three short, pointed pins of chonta wood which he thrust through the lips. He wound long chambira fibers around the pins to make certain the lips remained shut.

He then went to a jar of water that had been placed over a fire. Into it he dropped the juice of a vine that he knew would keep the hair from falling from his *tsantsa*. Holding the head by the end of the hair, he lowered it into the water. While the head cooked, Asapi went to the water’s edge looking for stones, round stones of certain sizes. As he found two or three he returned to the fire and put them in the ashes to become hot. He lifted the head from the water to see how it was coming



TSANTSAS—shrunken heads—about the size of a fist. Threads and pins hold the lips together during the shrinking process.

along and noted with satisfaction that it had already begun to grow smaller.

Asapi had to wander far up and down the stream to find enough of the stones he wanted, for there were eight other warriors going through the same process and all searched for stones. The boys who had come along helped, of course, and watched closely every operation performed by the fighters.

After about two hours of boiling the head was about a third of the size it had been originally, and with a smile of satisfaction Asapi took it from the pot of water, holding it by the hair and waving it so it would cool off enough for him to handle it. It did not look a great deal like a human face, for many of the features were out of shape and the skin was a dirty yellow. But Asapi knew he could take care of the those things. He had done all this many times before.

Holding the head in his left hand he made holes with a chonta pin along the sides of the incision, then neatly sewed it together with fiber. He now had a kind of hollow sack that had only a few hours before been scowling at him and hurling insults at him. With a forked stick, Asapi reached into the fire and found a round stone that would just fit into the neck opening of his *tsantsa*. As he dropped it in, there was a loud sizzling and a cloud of steam arose. Holding the head in both hands he rotated it rapidly so that the hot stone rolled around inside, searing away all loose flesh and drying out the skin.

When the sizzling stopped that meant the stone was cool, so Asapi dumped it out and chose another hot stone, this one a little smaller, for the head had shrunk a bit more.

During the second whirling, Asapi took up a small unheated stone with a smooth flat surface and began to rub it over the outside of the face, pushing here, pressing there, to form the features as they should be. So with stone after stone he seared the inside of the head, the heat shrinking it more all the time. And he shaped the features carefully, plucking eyebrows and eyelashes occasionally but being careful not to burn them or pull too many out. There must be just enough to look in proportion the small head.

Finally, Asapi scooped up hot sand from under the fire and poured it into the head. He whirled it vigorously, poured it out when it had cooled, put more hot sand in. The hot sand reached every crack in the inside of the *tsantsa*, drying and shrinking it. When Asapi concluded that the process had gone far enough, he bound the neck opening with fiber, poked a hole through the top of the head, and pushed a long cord of fiber through it, doubled over a pin to hold it inside. Then he struck his lance into the sand at an angle, hung the *tsantsa* in the smoke over the fire, and lay down to contemplate his handiwork.

Ads like this were found everywhere in the late 1950's and 1960's in comic books and magazines. They were sold as "curios" - right alongside X-Ray Specs and Sea Monkeys!

Amazon Jivaro **SHRUNKEN HEAD**

Amazing replica of fabled native curios with a legend that owners have good luck. A strong stomach helps, too, because these 4" heads defy detection from just a few feet away, with remarkably true skin and hair. Sensational to hang in the car, den, bar. Have fun with this guy who got pickled once too often.

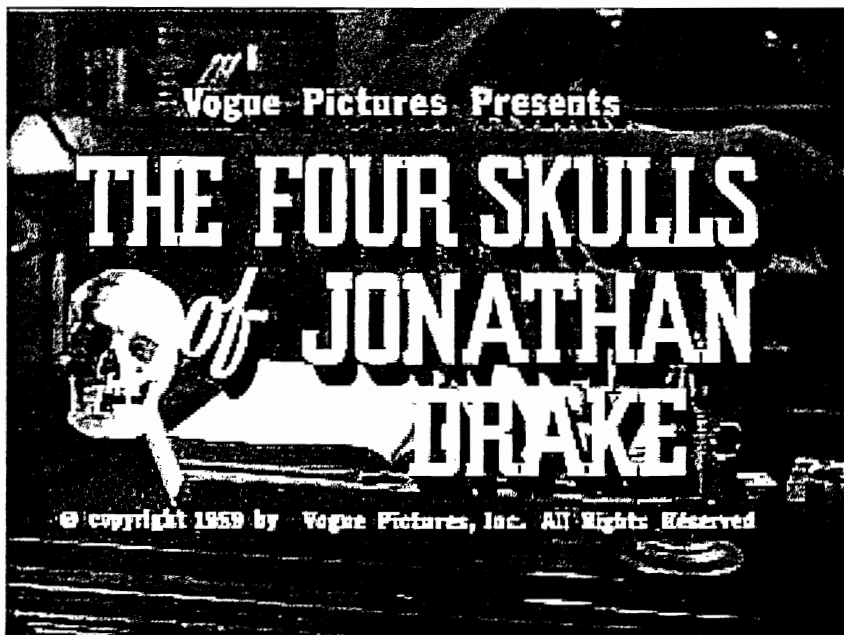
51.50 ppd.





Brother Grimsly Presents...

MONSTER VIEWER



A 200 year-old curse is upon the Drake family! Captain Wilfred Drake, upon an expedition deep in the Amazon Jungle of South America mercilessly slaughters a tribe of Jivaro Indians . . . all save one, the Witch Doctor. It is this man that enacts the curse that would last for generations!

Our tale begins with an image from the passage of a book foretelling: "The evil that men do lives after them". The scene opens with Jonathan Drake (Eduard Franz) gazing at a frightening vision: before him are two wavering skulls in the boiling air! He knows the curse is about to strike again!

He madly tries to contact his brother Kenneth Drake (Paul Cavanagh) in hopes of averting disaster -- but he is too late! His brother has died "mysteriously" on his 60th birthday, the same day on which the rest of the Drake's have met ill fate.

Jonathan Drake now realizes that he is going to be the next victim of the curse, as his 60th birthday is not long away. He finally confides in his daughter, Alison (Valerie French), and tells her of the dread family legacy. He asks, "Suppose the power of good dies after the



mind dies? Then, only evil lives." He escorts her to the Drake family crypt and shows her the vault where reside only the skulls of his ancestors. Opening the cabinet he suddenly discovers the third skull -- which can only be of his brother, Kenneth!

Meanwhile, Lt. Rowan (Grant Richards) is assigned the weird case. He doesn't get very far until Jonathan is attacked in his bed while convalescing from his troubling ordeal... faint of heart, you know. He is accosted by a menacing, ghostly Jivaro, Zutai (Paul Wexler). Zutai pricks him on the neck with a bamboo knife and is immediately paralyzed. He begins the grisly ordeal of cutting off Jonathan's head but is interrupted by Rogers (Lumsden Hare), the family servant.



Not long after, the Drake household is visited by a family friend, Dr. Zurich (Henry Daniell). The doctor professes his regards to the ailing Drake. In the meantime, Lt. Rowan has received the results back from a blood sample taken from the wound on Jonathan's neck. The blood is contaminated with *curare*, a poison found only in the Amazon!

Doctor Bradford (Howard Wendell), who attended Drake, pays a visit to Dr. Zurich, who is not only a student of the occult, but also an expert on Amazon legends. The good doctor regales him with the practice of making *tsantsa's*, or head-shrinking, by the Jivaro Indians, including his servant, Zutai, who has his own lips sewn shut and walks in sandals made from human skin! Before Dr. Bradford can leave with his information, he is killed. In the basement laboratory the viewer is treated to witnessing the process of head-shrinking in glorious black and white! (Above: Dr. Bradford loses his head. Below: Zutai strikes!)



Dr. Zurich then leaves for the Drake mansion where he intends to once again attempt to dispatch the last of the Drakes as soon as possible.

Lt. Rowan begins to put two-and-two together (finally), and decides to check up on Dr. Zurich. He enters the empty house and discovers a bloodstain on the rug. Under the rug he finds the secret passage to the underground laboratory! Zutai strikes from the shadows, and, in the ensuing struggle, Rowan pushes Zutai back into the boiling head-shrinking pot. He explodes into a puff of smoke! Now Rowan must get back to Jonathan in time to save his life!

Of course, Jonathan is saved in the nick of time. He chases after the escaping Dr. Zurich and finally catches up to him. He pulls down the collar of his shirt to reveal the white man's head on none other than the Amazon Witch Doctor's body! Drake takes Zurich's bamboo knife that was intended for him and separates Zurich's head from his body! Everything turns to dust . . . except the skull. Drake, finally free of the curse, intones: "The fourth skull!"

Released in 1959, *The Four Skulls of Jonathan Drake*, is a bizarre little B-horror film. The small sets and lack of long camera shots, give the film an overall claustrophobic feel. Paul Wexler's Zutai is creepy, particularly when he emits a warbling, high-pitched cry from between his sewn up lips! Henry Daniell gives us just enough menace in the character of Dr. Zurich. The laboratory scenes are over-the-top for their time and show some of the more gruesome shots in 50's screen terror. Directed by Edward L. Cahn, who also helmed such 50's schlockfests as *Voodoo Woman* and *It! The Terror From Beyond Space* didn't have much to work with here, but manages to give us, with the help of a quick-moving story and an eerie film score, a couple of shudders. One thing for certain, it scared the hell out of Brother Grimsly when he was barely out of his mummy wrappings! ☺



THE FOUR SKULLS OF JONATHAN DRAKE

CAST & CREDITS

A Vogue Pictures Release (1959)

Eduard Franz (Jonathan Drake)
Valerie French (Alison)
Henry Daniell Dr. Zurich
Grant Richards (Lt. Rowan)
Paul Cavanagh (Kenneth Drake)
Paul Wexler (Zutai)
Howard Wendell (Dr. Bradford)
Lumsden Hare (Rogers)

Edward L. Cahn (Director)
Robert F. Kent (Producer)
Orville S. Thompson (Screenplay)
Maury Gertsman (Cinematography)
Edward Mann (Editing)
Paul Dunlap (Music)



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and get a Head-start on your 'friends'!

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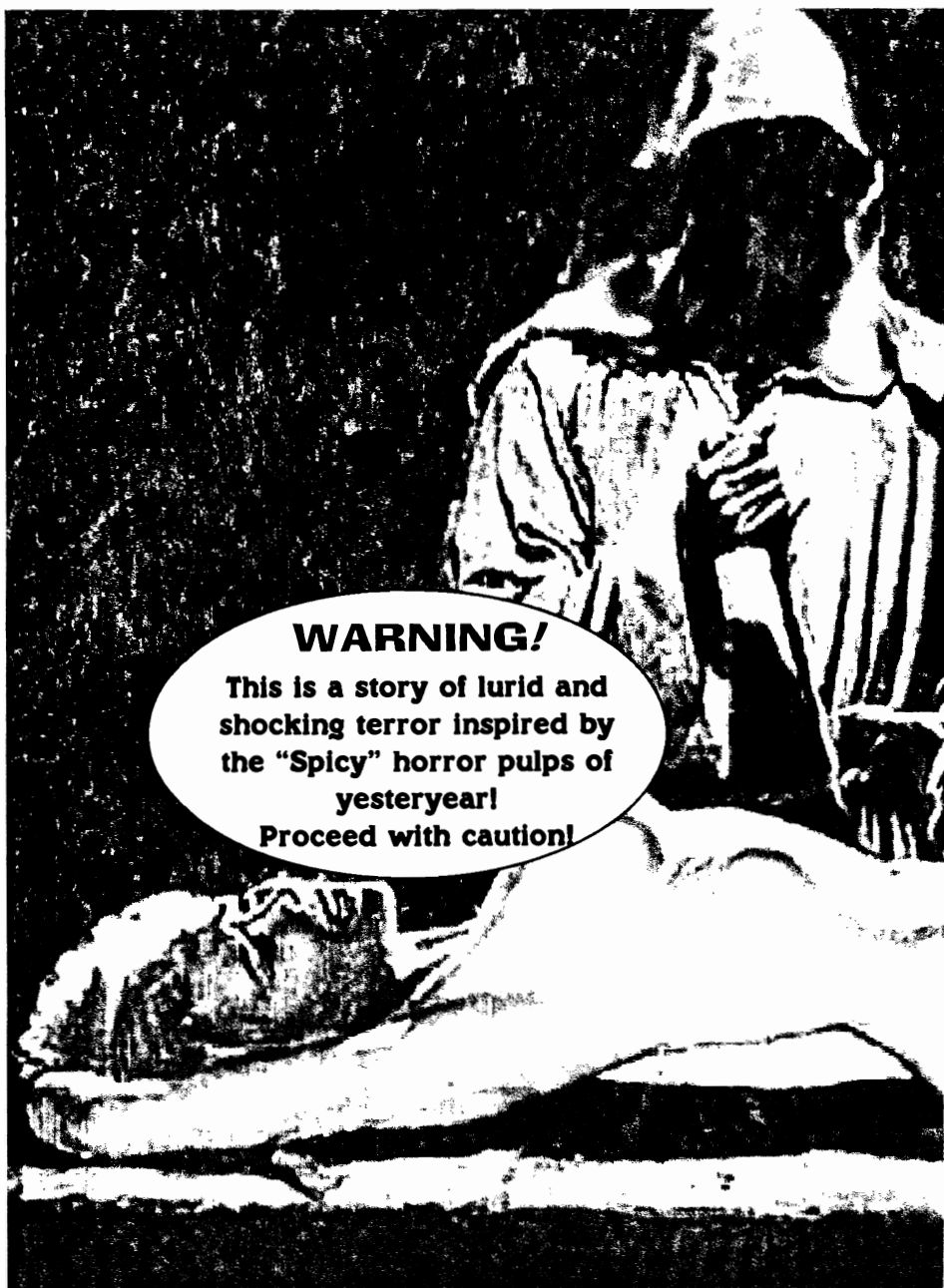
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The JEWELS of




WARNING!

This is a story of lurid and
shocking terror inspired by
the "Spicy" horror pulps of
yesteryear!

Proceed with caution!

LIVING FEAR

A Tale of Occult Horror by Magnus



THE UNDERGROUND CHAMBER was bathed in darkness save for the sickly luminous glow from five blood-red candles, each placed atop a grotesquely-wrought iron pedestal. The light from the candles cast wavering shadows against lichen-streaked, rough brick walls. Each pedestal stood at one point of a pentagram drawn on the floor. The five-pointed star had been inscribed using a mixture of black paint and a potent fluid condenser of a type known only to the most adept masters of necromancy and the dark arts.

In the centre of the unholy star was a stone dais formed by an outcropping of rock whose roots sprang from somewhere deep in the bowels of Hell itself. The rude stone was truncated at the top and had been polished smooth to expose the exotic whorls of deep malachite green.

Upon this dais languished the nude figure of a girl, her oiled alabaster skin glistening in the candlelight. Her slender arms were forced back over her head and outstretched. At each wrist was clamped a shackle fixed to an iron ring. Her splayed legs hung over the dais at the knees so that her flanks were very near the edge. Her ankles, too, were fastened to the base of the stone by the same type iron shackles as were her hands.

At her feet was yet another iron ring, fastened with a chain mottled with verdigris and which rose up to the ceiling where it ran through a wooden pulley.

The naked girl, her bleached platinum hair spread out in a nimbus around her young but distressed face, arched her voluptuous body against her restraints. Curiously, though, outside of the obvious discomfort of her bare skin against the cold stone she did not cry out. Instead, she seemed to be waiting, -- almost patiently -- for something to happen next.

In sudden answer to her unspoken question, another form made itself evident in the chamber as it stepped from its immersion in the shadows. Then, as if on cue for some solemn ritual, two more forms silently appeared. They were each garbed in scarlet robes surmounted by a hood which hid their faces from view. The effect was like someone staring into a

gaping abyss.

The girl spoke: "Mr. Seaver?"

"Yes?" came the answer from somewhere in the darkness.

The girl shivered and the soft parts of her body which were not usually exposed responded with a *frisson* in the damp air. "Can we get started soon -- I'm getting a little cold here with nothing on."

As if in reply, the hard rap of a clapboard was heard, and then the command: "Action!"

"Hey, wait a minute," said the girl. "Is the camera rolling? I'm not quite ready yet!"

The voice in the darkness replied: "I assure you, everything is as it should be, my dear."

The girl, suddenly in discomfort of her decidedly submissive position, strained at her bonds. "What is *that* supposed to mean?"

At that moment, a tall, imposing figure stepped out of the darkness and into the pallid light of the candles. He too, was dressed in a scarlet robe like the others. In one hand swayed a brass church censer from which curled thick tendrils of cloyingly sweet incense. The other hand grasped the handle of a velvet cat of nine tails.

In a booming, resonant voice, he declared: "Let the Ceremony of Summoning Forth begin!"

"Ceremony of Summoning Forth?", repeated the girl, now bewildered. "I -- I don't remember *that* line being in the script."

"Be silent!" commanded the robed one, and he struck the girl smartly with the cat.

The girl gave out a cry of surprise, then was quickly silent. Only the measured heaving of her breasts belied the fact that she was transfixed by the suddenly malignant, electrified air in the chamber.

"All Hail the Glorious Night!" came a thunderous invocation.

"Iâ! Iâ! All Hail the Old Ones Who Wait On The Outside and He Who Waits Beneath!" came the reply, and by the reverberation in the chamber it seemed the number of participants now numbered considerably more than three.

The tall figure -- the Priest of the ritual -- moved and stood at the dais before the girl. He passed the censer and the whip to one of the attendants. Another attendant came forth, bearing a tassled, black pillow on which rested a gleaming object. He picked it up and proffered it to each point of the pentagram.

"Now, in the Hour of the Dark, I call forth all the minions of the blasted earth to arise and hear the Summoning of He Who Waits Beneath!"

"Iâ! Iâ! By the Bearded Goat, by the Winged Harpy, we summon thee!" answered the throng.

Then, the Priest rose up his arms and, with hands together, pointed the object upwards. He looked down at the naked girl before him and intoned:

"Iâ! All Hail the Darkness! Demons awake! Let no earthly force now cast you asunder! By the ancient runes of Sarneth I call forth the greatness of He Who Waits Beneath -- *Zem horoba em eloan pordenda Khultu est!*"

The Priest then paused, and, as though by unspoken signal, the chain attached to the iron ring on the floor began to be pulled upward. A circle of stone lifted, grating roughly as if it had not been opened for centuries. In a moment the cover had been lifted entirely away, revealing the yawning maw of a charnel pit. From below came a phosphor effulgence, green in color, which radiated upwards and flooded the room in an eerie glow. There followed a rush of the reeking stench of death and decay.

"For aons beyond mortal reckoning, has It ever lurked beneath! In It's nest of foetid squalor, It has waited, waxing hideous and strong! Come now, crawl upwards from the pit and demand life from above!"

In answer, there rose from the hole a prodigious rumbling sound, as if thunder and steam had been joined together.

The foul stench in the air brought the girl momentarily back to her

senses. She struggled again at her bonds, gagging on the putrid air.

"Come on, you guys," she pleaded. "I don't care if we're shooting or not...this is enough. Do you hear me? This is enough! Let me out of these, now!"

The priest payed her no heed. "Come forth, Khultu! Rise up from the decay of the earth and claim the vessel of your unholy seed!"

The muscles of the girl's stomach began to spasm in dread expectation. Beads of sweat, like jewels of living fear, erupted on her quivering, oil-glistened skin.

She uttered words with each gasp of breath: "What--are--you--. bastards--going--to do?"

She started to sob, then stopped when she heard a wet slapping begin on the sides of the portal beneath her feet. Then she felt something viscous, something slimy, curling up first one leg then the other. She raised her head and saw an enormous, rubbery tentacle flailing about in the air over her, each fleshy suction cup slavering like a hungry mouth.

"God damn it, Lou! This isn't funny! Let me go, Lou!" The girl arched her back in a futile effort for freedom, then fell back against the stone, now puddled with her sweat.

Then, she saw the great bulbous head rise up. It's eyes were ichorous and filmy and it's chambered temples pulsed with the rush of new air it had not felt for a millennia.

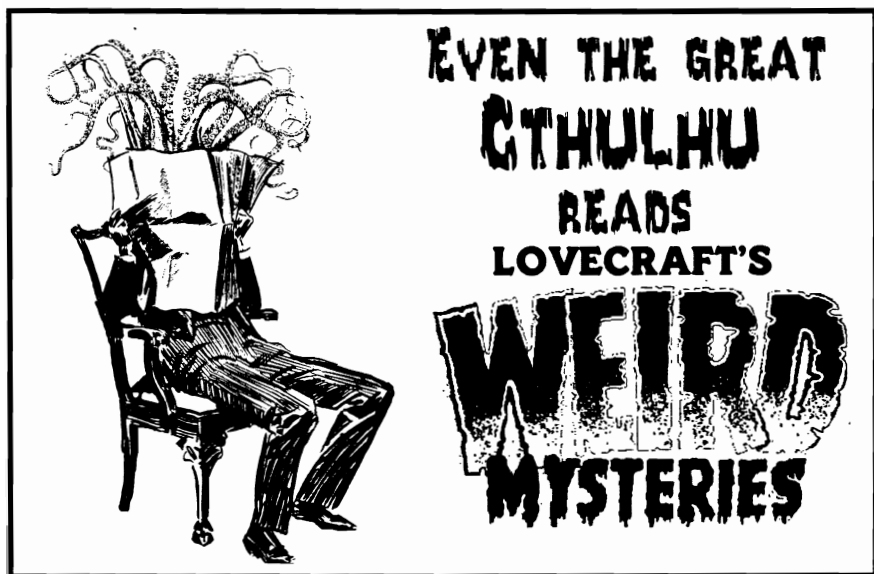
In paralysed fear, the girl gazed up to the Priest, to the gleaming thing that was a sacrificial dagger now pointed downwards.

The assemblage intoned one last time: "May the young of He Who Waits Below be succored on rotting flesh!"

She felt something cold, sticky, and slobbering begin to envelope her body.

Finally, above the girl's last shrieking screams, above the droning chant of the unholy ritual, above the sounds of blasphemous union between human and...*thing*, the director, Lou Seaver, issued his last command to the Priest: "Cut!"

And he did. ☹



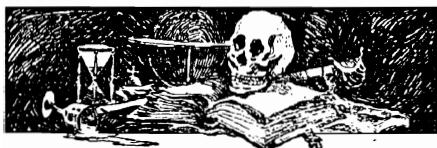
The Arkham Examiner

Vol. I No. I

Mordecai P. Grimsly, Editor

LICHWOOD EDITION

NEW YEAR OF FEAR!



THE CRYPT

Greetings from Lichwood, fellow fear fictioneers! I hope you like this issue of LOVECRAFT'S WEIRD MYSTERIES. What better way to – as Quasimodo would do – ring in the New Year with new fear from PENTAGRAM PUBLICATIONS? Brother Grimsly and his minuscule staff of morons spent extra time in the galley (that's printer's jargon, not a slave ship) to bring you the weirdest stories you have ever read. Although it's been a while since the last issue I hope you haven't completely forgotten the ghoulishly diabolical goodies that get served up here from the Sanctum.

Kickin' things off is a revoltin' revenant of a classic reprint first seen way back when in Cthulhu Codex magazine. "The Nightmare of the Spheres" by R. Michael Burns is a tale of someone who goes a little too far in his fascination of the supernatural. 'Course who ever puts the brakes on when it comes to the quest for knowledge and power? It never stopped Brother Grimsly and look where it got me! Mr. Burns spent some time in Japan teaching, but is back now in the states. He's a card carryin' member of the Horror Writer's Association and has had a story published in "Dreams of Decadence", as well as a couple of anthologies. Supplying the pic for this story is yet another masterpiece of macabre art from the Awesome Allen Koszowski. Has this man been down to the illustrator's crossroads at midnight?

Next up is "The Glory Hand" by James S. Dorr. It's not your typical tale of revenge. It's not even your typical tale. This is pulp horror action at its finest, y'all. James is quite the veteran writer as he's had work published in "Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine",

"The Strand", and a slew of others. He's been listed nine out of the last eleven years in "The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror". He was even a Pushcart Prize nominee. Now, is that something you win on Supermarket Sweep, I wonder? The illo of the claw in bad need of a manicure is by Carl Alessi.

Our next offering is Sarah Monette's "The Inheritance of Barnabas Wilcox" (no relation to another Barnabas we know). This is one of those interesting little tidbits of terror that's subtly sinister. Sarah has another story slated for release in the prestigious "Journal of the Ghost Story Society". Way to go, Sarah! The weird bit of clotted collage work adornin' the story is by Linda Navroth, the editor of this here magazine's *sister*, no less! I tell ya', genius runs in the family, don't it?

The last yell yarn is called "The Jewels of Living Fear" by Magnus. Now this little gem is a bit of a departure from other stories we've run as it's inspired by the "Spicy" horror pulps of the '30's and '40's. As a result it's a little – well – spicy! The artwork for this "tale of occult horror" is a re-work of an illustration found in one of those men's "adventure" magazines that were popular back in the '50's and '60's. So, just who is this Magnus character? To tell ya' the truth, we don't know. We like his *panache* though!

Shrunkened heads found "hanging" around office

LICHWOOD - (RIP) Never one to shy from collecting authentic relics of the subjects covered while working on one of his so-called "research projects", Mordecai P. Grimsly was found recently displaying gruesomely-real shrunkened heads in his office.

"I used them for inspiration", he explained. The still-hirsute heads of horror were acquired from a certain South American trader in tribal and indigenous curios for the purpose of adding realism to the article he

was writing for the even more curious small press magazine, LOVECRAFT'S WEIRD MYSTERIES.

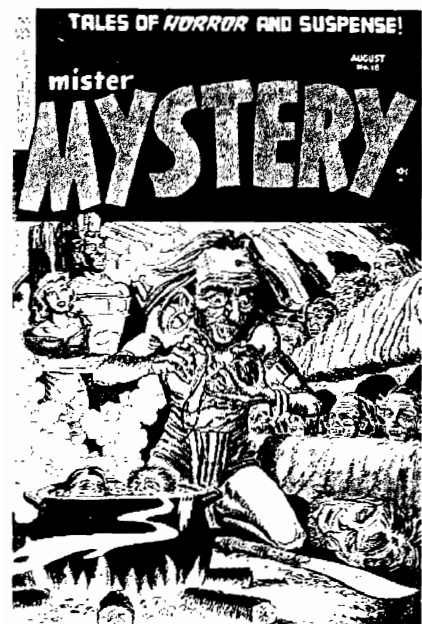
Shrunken heads, or *tsantsas*, as they are called by the Jivaro Indians, are decapitations of enemy tribesmen. The long, arduous process of "shrinking" the head is fully explained and - gulp! - illustrated in the aforementioned article.

"Makes 'pea-brained' take on a whole new meaning," quipped the always affable Grimsly. "And decidedly not the best way to get ahead in the world."

Vintage horror comics unearthed

ARKHAM - (RIP) Not to be content with just running the same old stories issue after issue, John Navroth, editor and publisher of LOVECRAFT'S WEIRD MYSTERIES, has included something different in edition #7 of the magazine... comics!

"I feel that readers may or may not know what they missed back in the early '50's,"



says editor Navroth. "For a few years, horror comics flooded newsstands all over America.. They were bloody, gruesome, and fun as hell!"

By late 1954 they all but vanished from the face of the earth after they were deemed "trash" by the reigning social moralists. Readers can now see for themselves and ask the question: trash ... or pop culture of the era? Check out LOVECRAFT'S WEIRD MYSTERIES #7 and decide for yourself!

MAIL VAULT

Think we don't get any letters here at the Sinister Sanctum? We not only get a bunch, but they're all complimentary! Can you believe it? Here's just a sample:

"Every time I pick up one of your magazines, it makes me recall FJA's (Forrest J. Ackerman-ed.) favorite cover saying on FM (Famous Monsters of Filmland Magazine-ed): "Best Issue Ever," because each issue is better than the previous one. I really enjoyed "Shifted" and "Born on the Island." And "Willow Wood Tavern" was a pretty darn good ghost story. "The Strand" is the only thing in the mag that I haven't read yet—I have been kind of "savoring" the magazine by not reading everything at once. I'll probably read "The Strand" tonight. The Cave interview and the Witch's Tale article were both really interesting. Anyway, if I didn't tell you before—or even if I have—your Lovecraft magazine is really excellent.

... Read "The Strand" last night; it was outstanding! I'm hard-pressed to pick my favorite story of the issue. The mummy theme of "Shifted" appeals to me, but I would probably lean toward "The Strand" as my favorite. I can really visualize "The Strand" as a story in an EC comic, or maybe one of EC's grosser imitators!" - D. Brown, Thousand Oaks, CA

How do you like that? Somebody not only buying LWM, but actually reading it, too! Now that's gross! -Ed.

"I like magazine, but how come it shrunken? You come down here, I shrink your head!" - Anonymous email

LWM has always been "digest-sized" because it's easier - to digest. And by the way, my head's already shrunken - I spent years in therapy! -Ed.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

Creeping your way in just a few months is the next Lovecraft's Weird Mysteries filled with the weirdest stories you have ever read!

The Sigil
by Robin Spriggs

A Breath of Magik
by David Cowdall

The Legacy of Morvidus
by Christopher M. Cevasco

-Also-

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by David Hopewell

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"If I were alive, I'd buy one!" - EAP