

\$4.50

Risque

Stories

No. 5



John Gorman in
"Hell-Cat of Hong Kong"
"The Beautiful and Damp"
by Manly Wade Wellman



Poetry by Robert E. Howard * Julie de Grandin * More

RISQUE STORIES

March 1987

*

Number Five

CONTENTS

Foreplay.	2
They Saved Rockwell's Brain by N. Leo Lancer	3
A Young Wife's Tale by Robert E. Howard	14
Hell Cat of Hong Kong by Marc A. Cerasini and Charles Hoffman	15
The Cuckoo's Revenge. by Robert E. Howard	36
The Beautiful and Damp. by Manly Wade Wellman	37
The Spicy Strips. by Will Murray	41
Julie de Grandin, Psychic Sleuth.	48
Risqué Review	51
Readers' Rendezvous	52

FOREPLAY

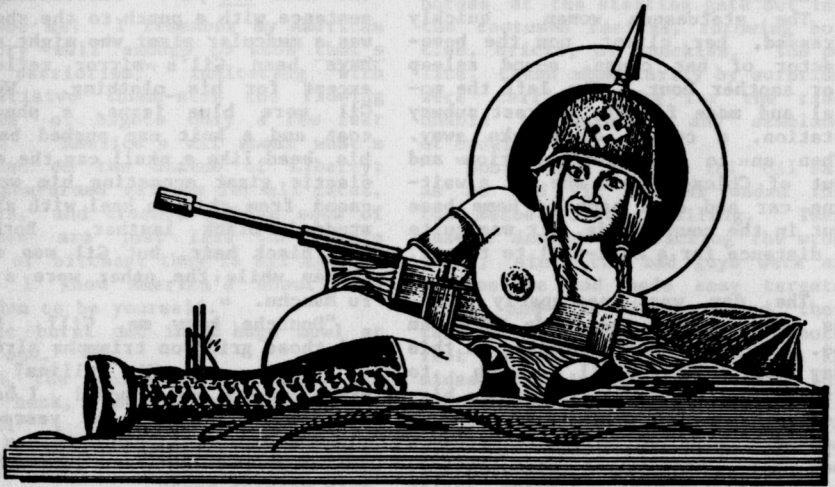
Plenty of pulp-style, sweat-bathed, knuckle-bruising action with that distinctly libidinous lilt is coming your way in Risqué Stories #5! You just sit your 97-pound toothpick frame down in your chair and imagine yourself in the place of John Gorman, a Robert E. Howard adventurer brought to new life by Marc A. Cerasini and Charles Hoffman, as Gorman merrily slugs and shoots his way through the mysterious Orient in "Hell Cat of Hong Kong." Or vicariously picture yourself in the shoes of two-fisted hero Gil Matson in N. Leo Lancer's "They Saved Rockwell's Brain," a screaming tale of patriotic paranoia in the spirit of the raunchy

macho mags of yesterday!

Better shift gears for Manly Wade Wellman's "The Beautiful and Damp," a different sort of risqué story originally aimed at Gay Book magazine, but which appears here for the first time. And of course all the prose is punctuated by vivacious verse from Robert E. Howard, two erotic poems recently discovered among the REH letters and papers in the collection of the late Tevis Clyde Smith.

No issue of Risqué Stories would be complete without another implausible exploit of Julie de Grandin, Psychic Sleuth, as well as our usual features "Readers' Rendezvous" and "Risqué Review"!

Robert M. Price
Editor



They Saved Rockwell's Brain

by N. Leo Lancer

She stood a full six feet tall, maybe a few inches more because of the spiked heels. Down her firm and shapely back flowed twin braids of golden blonde hair, ending just short of her gloriously exposed buttocks. Shortly below these began a pair of shiny black leather hip boots, the ones with the high heels. The rest of her clothing consisted simply of a Nazi armband and a swastika-crested high-peaked cap, like those worn by the SS.

She stood, but her satisfied customer still lay, drained, sprawling on the motel double bed. He focused his attention sufficiently to ask, "OK, what about what I owe?" No basking in the afterglow with the likes of this woman. Back down to earth quickly. But on second thought, maybe not; the statuesque

woman was wearing one more thing after all: a polished iron cross that hung between her ample breasts. This she took by a length of its chain and began to swing it slowly back and forth. On top of the man's sex-doped lassitude, this simple trick of hypnosis worked fast, and he virtually floated in a blissful daze.

"Ja, payment. My favorite part." She reached for the phone. "Mein Leibchen, you will now call your broker, then your banker, and you will have these figures, these shares, securities--read them yourself, here they are--transferred to this name and number. When you awake, you will think you have made these donations to charity, and it will not occur to you to think such behavior odd. Now do it."

He did.

The statuesque woman quickly dressed, her client, now the benefactor of her cause, sound asleep for another hour. She left the motel and made for the nearest subway station, a couple of blocks away. Then on to the train station and out of Chicago where she met a waiting car and sped back to home base out in the countryside. It was quite a distance for a call-girl to travel.

The day was inescapably cold, as only days in the Windy City can be. But what was happening on this day was colder still, enough to freeze your blood. It was the biggest Ultra-Right march Gil Matson had ever seen: not only more marchers but more and better organization. And representation. Every racist group he had ever heard of was there, American Nazis, Aryan Nations, White Citizen's Party, and of course the Ku Klux Klan. Even several of the splinter groups, who usually hated each other more than they did the blacks. Yet here they all were, united in their hatred of most of the world's population. Bands were playing, flags were flying, including the old Confederate stars-and-bars, the lightning-bolt banner of the KKK, the swastika, the South African and the old Rhodesian flags. Anything, Gil thought with some irony, but the plain white flag, because these crazy bastards were never going to surrender.

What with the music and the slogan-chanting, plus the insults and jeering traded between the marchers and the crowd, it took a while for Gil to notice that someone was calling his name. "Gil! Gil Matson!" Gil was only in Chicago for a few months with a temporary job and hadn't made many friends, so he was surprised anyone would know him to call him. Through the crowd lining the street he finally saw the huge form making its way toward him.

"Gil, you old son of a gun, how

the hell are ya?!" Punctuating this sentence with a punch to the shoulder was a muscular giant who might almost have been Gil's mirror reflection except for his clothing. Whereas Gil wore blue jeans, a sheepskin coat and a knit cap pushed back on his head like a skull cap, the enthusiastic giant accosting him was encased from chin to heel with silver-studded black leather. Both men had black hair, but Gil was clean-shaven while the other wore a bushy Fu Manchu.

"Dontcha know me, Gil? Forgot all those gridiron triumphs already?"

"Vic? . . . Vic Cullins? It's great seeing you, buddy! I haven't heard tell of you for years now, since before Nam! Ain't this a kick! But what the hell are you doing at this walking zoo?"

Gil's eyes wandered to Vic's chest where those gridiron colored buttons, several of them different shades of lavender, suggested an answer.

"You?! A flag!?"

Vic laughed this off. In fact, Gil's bluntness seemed refreshing; few people had ever dared address the leather-clad giant this way. So he wasn't annoyed. Before he could reply, Gil added:

"But it just doesn't fit! I mean, you never seemed like the pansy type! What gives?"

"Look, man," Vic said patiently, "does this wrist seem limp to you? You've got the wrong idea; all gays aren't the same. I'm a biker, man. I hate effeminacy so much, I even hate it in chicks. We bikers like macho so much, it turns us on sexually. Nothing else does."

"Hafta admit, I never looked at it that way," Gil admitted, reluctantly kissing a stereotype goodbye.

"In fact," Vic added, "I'm here with my Gay Rights pals today hoping for a chance to pound a couple of Nazi faces if things get hot. Say, Gil, I'm half surprised to see you're not in this parade! I mean, I remember how hyper-right-wing you always

were!"

"Not me! I remember my American history well enough to know that's not patriotism," indicating with a derisive thumb-stab the flowing stream of bigots only a few feet away. "America's all about what's written on the Statue of Liberty: an open-armed welcome for all races, colors, and creeds. These sons of bitches are just like the commie sons of bitches: they're all against what I know America's about, the freedom to be yourself."

Vic burst out in a huge howl at that one.

On the threshold of fury, Gil shot back, "What's so funny about that?!"

"Listen to yourself, Gil! First you're down on us gays, saying we're pansies and queers, then you're talking about freedom and tolerating everyone's differences! Don't you think that's funny?"

Matson's face reddened. He had nothing to say. If some other fag had said it, Gil's fist would have answered for him, but now he had no answer. Vic was living proof that Gil's views on gays were stupid, and Gil himself was caught red-handed in a whopping inconsistency. But after just a second Gil cracked a smile; it would be worth admitting he was wrong to be able to feel good about his old friend.

"OK, Vic, you got me! Anybody who hates Nazis can't be all bad, I guess. Put 'er there!"

"That's my man!"

By now Gil and Vic were actually having to shout to hear each other. The screaming of the crowd, marchers and spectators alike, was deafening. When things reached this temperature, fighting was bound to break out. Neither man would have minded.

There it was! The first bottle hit the first head!

As if this were some kind of signal, the crowds lining the streets exploded. Many fled like drowning rats, while some charged like race

horses at the starting gate out into the costumed racists, throwing bottles, bricks, or knuckles. The police, taken momentarily by surprise, were carried along for the ride, unable to maintain any semblance of order.

"Looks like this is it!" Gil said as he and Vic Cullins waded into the melee, fists flailing. There was no danger of cracking the wrong skull, since the bad guys were all in costume and made easy targets. Gil's ham-like fists found their targets on Nazi jaws, his booted feet hitting the bull's-eye in KKK midsections. He hadn't felt this good in a long time. He momentarily lost sight of Vic but felt pretty sure his buddy was doing his fair share for the defeat of bigotry.

Matson ducked a blow aimed by a sheeted Klansman and moved in to grapple with his attacker hand-to-hand. As he pinned the Kluxer's arms and struggled to hold him, he was shocked to feel first a steely sinew, then the softness of a woman's breast! Momentarily thrown off guard by his surprise, Gil hesitated long enough for his opponent to struggle free and land a dazing punch to the jaw. Then she escaped him, leaving him completely baffled. He'd always thought Klan women stayed home and laundered their husbands' sheets! Who ever taught this dame to fight like this? What the hell was going on here?

Reeling more from surprise than pain, Gil was hardly prepared for what happened next. Gunfire! And regular volleys of it! Even riot control police didn't fire like this in such close quarters! He could see the Nazis and Klansmen regrouping. His female attacker hadn't been running from him, then; she was just rejoining the troops. Gil couldn't believe his eyes. They were pulling out an attack arsenal worthy of an army! There were Uzzis, M-16's, AK-47's, you name it--not the second-hand, second-rate

hardware these boys usually used!

It was going to be a massacre! The police were getting in a few shots, but they were no match for this! Corpses began to fall like raindrops. Gil hot-footed it for cover.

He couldn't seem to get clear. It was slow work threading his way through the tangle of downed bodies, but as luck would have it, he landed on top of a fallen riot cop. The man's plexiglass shield hadn't done him much good; he had been shot in the back. But maybe Gil would have better luck with it. He hefted it and ran. The sudden impact of bullets against it staggered him, but he made it to safety just as the shield began to crack.

He had found refuge behind a car, and waited to see what was going to happen next. And who should suddenly be crouching beside him but Vic! It seemed Cullins had had much the same ideas but he had actually pulled up a sewer lid to shield himself!

"A manhole cover, huh? Pretty appropriate for you, I guess! Glad you made it, buddy!"

Vic ignored the joke. "What the hell you think's going on here, Gil? I've been in plenty of street riots before, but something tells me this is more than that!"

"Damn right, Vic. Look there!"

The noise of gunfire was being replaced by the roar of descending helicopters, transport choppers. A couple landed in the wide city streets, a couple more let down rope ladders. There was no one left to harass the racist terrorists, who now rapidly boarded the craft with crack military efficiency.

"Something big's in the works here. These White Power groups have never operated on a scale like this before! What do you say, Vic? Game to find out what's up? The way I see it, we've got one chance. Let's go!"

It wasn't too hard to find a

couple of sheeted corpses in the street. Vic and Gil stripped off the robes and hoods and donned them, then ran for the choppers. No one challenged them.

Inside, the scene only got stranger. The whole bunch of them sat silent on their benches as the air filled with what could only be called Nazi muzak: taped Hitler speeches backed up by Wagnerian instrumentals. It was in German, of course. Did these thugs understand it? Most brown shirts and white sheets Gil had known barely spoke their own language, much less German. Maybe they were just inspired by the dead Führer's voice. Lucky for Gil and Vic, none of the Klansmen had unmasked yet. Apparently the play wasn't quite over.

The flight wasn't a long one. Their destination must still be in the state.

The landing field was a large cleared square in the middle of a thick wooded area. A few low buildings were visible but most of the complex must be underground. How extensive it was, neither man could guess, but from what they had seen already this day, Matson and Cullins knew this humble facade must conceal a large and impressive operation.

The costumed army quickly and silently disembarked, filing down steps and along vast corridors to a huge meeting room. It was easy to follow the rest undetected, and Vic and Gil tried their best to memorize the path they were taking with a view to eventual escape. They passed elaborate wall murals, depicting scenes from both World Wars and even from Norse epics. Gnomes and Jews were pictured almost identically, and both were shown being put to the sword.

After some twenty minutes everyone was in place, all standing at attention. Gil had only a rough idea of how many had been in the march, but judging by how many were here, he

guessed their losses in the street battle must have been negligible. And he could guess there must be many more personnel elsewhere in the compound.

The sides of the enormous room were taken up by inlaid letters forming texts of excerpts from Mein Kampf, again all in German. In the front of the hall was a stage. The wall behind it was draped with the same variety of racist flags and banners Gil had observed in the parade. Again he marvelled at the united front achieved by these usually feuding hate groups! Who or what had been able to weld them into the well-oiled fighting machine he had seen in action today?

A speaker's lectern stood unoccupied at the front middle of the stage. Gil was waiting for someone to come to the podium, so he was surprised when the only voice to address the assembly suddenly sputtered through loudspeakers:

"Sieg!"

"Heil!" answered hundreds of hitherto-silent throats with such gusto that the barbaric cry seemed to have been waiting impatiently for hours to come forth. Vic's and Gil's voices, though momentarily hesitant with surprise, joined all the rest, as did their right arms which, with the others present, sprouted into a sudden forest of rigid limbs.

The eerily disembodied voice droned on: "Today you have struck the first blow against the gang of Jewish leeches and their black stooges who have so long usurped the birth-right of the glorious Aryan race! Today you have broken one finger of the stranglehold choking our Nordic nation! You have started the Blitzkrieg of liberation that will sweep this nation clean of inferior races. The decadent Jewish plutocrats and their corrupt bolshevik lackeys will evaporate like the morning mist before the rising sun of White Power! Sieg!"

"Heil!" thundered the hundreds of throats.

"You have earned your rest. Return to your barracks until further notice. You are dismissed."

Speaking low, the two interlopers were in no danger of being overheard, as the disbanding crowd was now talking freely and excitedly among themselves. They noticed that each contingent, Klan, Nazis, White Citizens, etc., seemed to have its own barracks area. Brownshirts went off to the left, camouflage fatigues to the right, hooded robes further down the hall. Gil and Vic stuck with the last group, straggling at the rear.

No doubt further eavesdropping would teach them much about this strange operation, but they dared not risk unmasking among the others. Their luck hadn't quite run out yet, because right outside each barracks was a large dumpster, next to soda, snack, and cigarette machines. Into the trash bin they promptly dived, after making sure they were last in the ragtag line.

"What now?" whispered Vic.

"Guess we just wait till most of them are liable to be done and out of the locker room, that's all."

"I'm with you, Matson. Y'know, I kinda feel cleaner here in the trash can than I would in their showering with that garbage!"

"Yeah, I see what you mean! Gotta admit, though, that being trapped in close quarters with a flamin' faggot isn't my number one choice either!" Both of them chuckled at that one, Gil a bit nervously.

For good measure, they allowed about an hour before they inched up the dumpster's lid, looked carefully both ways down the hall and climbed out. In the locker room a couple of newly dressed Klansmen (who looked, Gil thought, nearly human in civilian clothes) gave them an uninterested glance and left.

"Feels good to be rid of this mask," sighed Vic. "Say, what are we doing here, anyway?"

"I'm hoping there'll be some in-

formation we can use left in these lockers."

"One problem, buddy," said Vic uneasily, fingering one of the catches, "They lock these lockers."

"I could be wrong, Vic, but I have a hunch they only locked them after they got back because they don't trust each other. I know I wouldn't trust these scumbags even if I was one of 'em! Anyhow, I'll bet they leave the key in the locker while they're all out on a mission and then lock it and take the key once they get back. I've seen that arrangement before, among mercenaries. I bet we'll find the lockers of the two guys who belong to these suits unlocked."

"Maybe, but how we gonna find 'em? You take that side and I'll take this one."

"No, wait, that's not necessary. When I was taking the robe off my man I noticed a number on the neck band. It probably corresponds to the numbers on the lockers. Let's check."

In a few minutes each man was rifling through the contents of an open locker. Gil's contained miscellaneous personal effects, including a thick stack of bondage porn magazines. About what he'd expected, but disappointing anyway. Vic had better luck.

"Get this, Gil! My guy's a 'Klee-gle'! Brother, where do they get these names? Anyhow, he was some kind of bigwig, and he's got a notebook here with all sorts of charts and stuff."

Gil took the binder and began scanning the pages.

"Most of it's in code, and the diagrams don't mean anything to me. I guess you'd have to know more about the layout of the place. There doesn't seem to be a floorplan for the whole compound. But . . . hey, look at this . . . yeah, it's a timetable of their next attacks!"

Vic's eyes ran down the page.

"Yeah, here's today's march. I

guess the whole thing must have been a kind of trial run, to see how they'd do in urban combat conditions. Most of these others involve big robberies or assassinations—I can't believe this operation! These guys have always been a bunch of stumble-bums before! What gives?"

"Hey, Vic, you notice this? They're sending out another group tonight, and they're going to clean out a bank under the cover of a restaurant bombing a couple of blocks away. I know that place; it's in the heart of the Loop. Hundreds of people will die!"

"OK, Gil, how're we gonna get word to the authorities in time? If we managed to sneak back out of here, we'd never be able to get back to the city in time."

"Yeah, that's right. We're going to have to get to a phone, a radio or something."

"They're not liable to have private phones in a place like this. They'd monitor any communications. The only thing I can see to do is to try and find the communications center and risk breaking in. So let's not waste any time. Guess we better put the hoods back on."

From one of the diagrams in the notebook, they had decided the communications center must be in a particular hall of Sector N, if they could just find that. The trick was to keep moving through the corridors looking like you knew where you were going when all the time you were looking high and low for some clue to just where in hell you were. In their wanderings they noticed that some few of the wall murals showed figures in robes like their own, lynching blacks and torching shanties, but by far most of the scenes were Nazi-related. Clearly the Nazis were the main force in this alliance of paranoids.

Apparently their luck was still running, for they finally found Sector N without interference. Once

there, they knew the pattern of halls and doors from the diagram, and they quickly found their way to the right room. It wasn't locked.

Stepping in as quietly as they could, the two big men still managed to startle the man at the switchboard.

"Who are you two? What are you doing here? Don't you see I'm in the middle of something here?"

Neither of them had thought of this: if they disrupted some broadcast it would be known instantly all over the compound, and they'd have security down on them like hornets out of a nest.

"We'll wait. Sorry." The number of screens, jack plugs, and glowing lights on the panel in front of the man impressed Vic and Gil even more with the complexity and organization of the secret White Power operation.

Behind them, a voice purred, "Have you seen enough, mein Herren?" The gun barrels pressed into their spines were nothing to the surprise in store for Matson and Cullins as they slowly turned to face their captors.

Each submachine gun was held by a tall, beautiful and nearly naked woman! One was a blonde, the other a redhead. Both men gaped wide-eyed and slack-jawed for a moment.

With a contemptuous smile, the redhead resumed. "Your clumsy attempt to explore the compound marked you instantly as intruders. We followed you secretly to discover your objective. Too bad we could not have waited to hear you radio your message, but for obvious reasons that would have been out of the question. There are of course other ways to find out who sent you."

Gil could not keep his eyes from scanning the voluptuous forms before him. And there was plenty to see! Besides black gloves, shiny jackboots, Third Reich armbands and ammunition belts, the women had no costume at all! Their tall figures were crowned with spiked, World War I German helmets. And beneath the exposed expanses of skin were trim

and powerful muscles. He thought at once of the female Klansman he had struggled with earlier. Did this White Power empire have a whole troupe of Aryan Amazons? And what could possibly be the point in having the babes walk around stark naked?

The tall redhead's next words partially answered his last question: "We are the Leader's elite guard, and it is to him we will now take you." So that was it. Mr. Big kept these broads in a state of undress for his own amusement. Probably had them parade around that way just to gloat over his underlings and show them who was boss. These gun-toting cuties were definitely roses with thorns; no one would be stupid enough to touch them. Gil certainly didn't intend to. He was going to come along quietly. Besides, he couldn't wait to find out who their mysterious Leader was.

Heads turned as the Aryan eye-fuls marched their unmasked prisoners at gunpoint down hall after hall. Of course it might be the naked women they were ogling. The little party finally arrived at a huge door made of massive oaken boards. Someone was trying for a little atmosphere. A sign on this antique portal read, in script lettering: BERTCHESGARTEN. Neither Gil nor Vic spoke German, but both knew what that word meant. It had been the name of Hitler's mountain eyrie, and this more humble retreat must be his would-be successor's equivalent. With a warning knock, they entered.

The room was dimly lit, but it was easy to see the general theme of the decor. There were beautifully polished Mausers and Lugers on plaques and racks and in cabinets. Iron crosses hung by ornamental ribbons in many a display case. There was a life-size statue of Hitler so well executed that even in immobile stone it managed to convey a little of the Führer's insidious charisma. There were on pedestals and atop bookcases busts and paintings of various Nazi notables. A

brief sweep of the walls showed a veritable rogues' gallery of Nazis: Josef Goebbels, Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, Heinrich Himmler, Kurt Waldheim, George Lincoln Rockwell, the slain founder of the American Nazi Party. There were others not so easily recognizable.

They were brought to a halt facing a huge desk set between gothic columns reaching up to the ceiling, no doubt stage props just for effect. Behind the desk was a plush pale leather chair, and behind that a curtain, in fact one huge Nazi flag. In this expanse of red cloth there seemed to be a ripple of movement. It turned out to be a curtain, for someone suddenly stepped out from behind it, parting it just to the right of the white circle bearing the sacred swastika.

The two men's eyes widened. Still another naked woman, but so different from their armed captors! No less beautiful than they, she was far more bizarre in appearance. She wore the same long gloves, armband, and jackboots, but a black leather choker enclosing her throat bore a silver swastika. Above this pouted moist red lips, a small and slightly hawklike nose, and icy gray eyes. Her figure was a shapely hourglass, but her build was that of a lady weightlifter: heavily muscled and tightly defined. She wore a monocle in her right eye, and her hair was black or dark brown. It was severely chopped in an exact replica of Adolf Hitler's haircut, practically shaved on the sides, draping half the forehead and one eyebrow. She carried no gun, but instead a sceptre. Gil had seen one like it before, in the West Point museum: the golden sceptre of Reichmarshall Hermann Goering, encrusted with inlaid silver iron crosses and German eagles. Only this one had a difference--it was shaped like a phallus! A gold-plated Nazi dildo!

The strange newcomer waited a

moment before she sat behind the desk, then kicked her booted heels up on top of it. She seemed to be allowing time for the shock of her appearance to sink in, so none of her words would be lost.

"I am Brunhilde, captain of the Valkyries, two of whom brought you here. No, I am not the Leader. You will meet him presently.

"At first we thought you were sent to spy on us but we have just pieced together the facts of the matter. A check of the bodies on the site of our recent victory reveals the presence of those fallen heroes whose uniforms you filthy carrion assumed. How like the Jews! Stripping the dead! We can surmise what happened. You are beer-hall rowdies who became too curious for your own good. I was going to have you sent to the labs, made into window shades or soap, or perhaps even upholstery," she ominously fingered the leather chair arm as she said this, "but the Leader wished to see you. Of course his will is law. And it is fitting that you have a brief chance to see the one whom all your fellow Americans will soon hail as their beloved Leader."

With that, Brunhilde reached across the desktop to press a button. The curtains pulled back to either side of the room, and it could be seen that the same decorative theme continued into this new half of the large chamber as well. On one side was a large fireplace with a massive elkhead over the mantel; on the other was yet another curtain, presumably leading to another compartment. But all this one hardly noticed at first. One's attention was immediately drawn to the Leader.

On a marble dais carved with elaborate swastika and eagle designs sat a large glass tank filled with translucent greenish fluid, more or less like a fishbowl, linked by metal hoses and wires to a bank of generators and other odd-shaped

machines, including a large speaker cabinet. From the speaker issued the voice Gil and Vic had heard earlier in the assembly hall. Within the glass bowl was the source of that voice: a severed yet animated human head! The head whose face matched that of a portrait Gil had just noticed in the front half of the room: the face of George Lincoln Rockwell!

The eyes bulged, the lips worked feverishly, and the head itself seemed to strain against its mooring with jerking motions, as if forgetful that it was no longer joined to a body beneath. The horrifying effect was vaguely like the strutting of a bantam rooster.

It was hard for Gil and Vic to credit their senses; it all seemed like a grotesque scene from some cheap science fiction film. The head had been speaking for some moments before the shock subsided enough for its words to register.

"... yes, the Jewish bankers hired their assassins to kill me, but like another victim of these Christ-killers, I rose again! The Aryan victory may be deferred, but it cannot be averted! Immediately upon my assassination, my followers contacted our loyal sympathizers in Washington, D.C. Many of the German rocket scientists kidnapped by the Jew-controlled American government at the end of the War remained loyal to the Reich, and they were quick to come to my aid. Alas, even their powers were limited, and it was too late to save most of my bodily tissue. Only what you see here . . . and in Brunhilde's hand. I can still love her, you see!"

God almighty!, Gil thought. What a madman! Or had he himself gone mad to be seeing and hearing this? He exchanged incredulous glances with Vic. If it were all some delusion, at least the both of them were sharing it!

"My agents have been spreading the truths of Aryan superiority and the creed to expunge the inferior

racess. New generations are awakening from their Jew-induced stupor and joining the White Power crusade! And with new funds secured by my Valkyrie legions we have amassed an arsenal with which to gain power at last! The prospect of final victory has knit into one all the scattered forces of White supremacy! The decadent mongrels will never withstand the roused Nordic juggernaut!"

What was left of Rockwell apparently liked to make speeches; after all, what else was there for him to do? Let him rant on, it gave his captives time to think. Suddenly Gil had an idea, a desperate one, but it just might work.

"I don't know what you planned on doing with us, Leader, but I have a proposal. Back in the first Reich, the Romans used to enjoy gladiator games. Why not pit my friend and I against some of your guards? If you're right, even your Aryan women ought to be more than a match for us 'inferior' types." Actually Gil would probably have qualified for membership in Rockwell's master race, but he was hoping the Leader wouldn't notice that, or his bluff would fall flat.

The metallic voice buzzed as the head contemplated. "That might indeed be interesting! I will be generous. If you two win, I will not kill you, not today. You might be the source of much amusement! Brunhilde, show them to the training room."

Swinging her legs down off the desk, the Amazon motioned to the two warrior maids to follow her, their captives in tow, as she strode across the room, past the Leader, to the curtained wall. Pressing another button, she waited for the drapes to part, then directed them into the newly revealed compartment.

"The Leader personally supervises the combat training of the Valkyries." (Gil could understand that: he'd been to a few nude mud-wrestling shows in his day.) You will try

your skills against Kriemhild and Sif here. If they lose, which I doubt, they will undergo further training. If you lose, you will die, for they fight to the death. If you win by killing them, you will die. Otherwise, perhaps we may keep you to use in the training of our warrior maids. A more hopeful prospect than you might have expected. No weapons will be used. Sif, Kriemhild, leave them here. I will attend to the Leader."

As the murderous goddesses began circling their male foes, Gil thought he heard a low-volume exchange between Brunhilde and the Rockwell-thing. He couldn't make any of it out but was fairly sure it meant trouble. You just couldn't trust Nazis.

Gil had already dodged a couple of kicks when Vic's voice came, "Watch your groin, buddy! Nazis don't know how to fight fair!"

In the ensuing mayhem, Vic fared better than Gil. Almost immediately Vic had the advantage, diving in with blow after crippling blow, though absorbing a few respectable chops and punches himself. He pummeled his opponent with elbows to the back, payloads to the jaw, kicks to the stomach. Still she kept coming back for more. No punishment was too much for the machine-like Valkyrie, as she pressed on relentlessly.

Gil was not doing nearly so well. He had been caught twice by his foe's spiked heels and was bleeding from two deep cuts in the forehead. He had seldom performed so ineptly.

Vic's voice came again, gasping this time: "Forget they're women, Gil! You've naturally got a softer spot for them than I do--kick her shapely ass!"

Of course Vic was right. As long as Gil thought of his opponent as a woman (and with that body, it was hard not to!) he just couldn't let go. He just couldn't feel comfortable striking a woman! The trick

was to think of her as a damn Nazi!

It was beginning to work! There was more fire, more aim, too, in Gil's punches. Soon he had her reeling. Her long hair cracked like a whip at the recoil of her head from one of his blows.

Again that buzzing from Rockwell's tank. More Valkyries came piling into the room! Seven more, just as the tide had begun to turn. But at least they were weaponless. Gil guessed their Leader wanted to test their hand-to-hand fighting skills.

Adrenaline flowed, and it wasn't the instant massacre Gil feared it might be. After all, the girls had nothing worse than more practice hanging over their heads if they lost, but Gil's and Vic's lives were on the line. Soon they had actually managed to knock three of the seven out, including one of the original pair. The others could not get a clear shot at the men because there were too many crowded into these small quarters, designed for one-on-one combat.

Two jumped Gil, one from each side, forcing him to the floor, but he managed to fall sideways, landing on one of them, while grabbing the long hair of the other and smashing her head to the floor. Using her dazed body as a shield, he struggled back to his feet. Beside him, Vic had picked up another, one arm over her shoulder, the other between her legs, his chest to her back, and used her as a buffer to knock two more into the wall.

Out of the corner of his eye, Gil saw one of the girls step back to the doorway, her eye on one of the pair of discarded weapons. He knew she had tired of the game and was about to risk disobeying the Leader's orders.

With a desperate leap, Gil was on top of her, wresting the gun from her grasp, clubbing her skill with the butt of it. Before the others knew what was happening, Gil lunged out of the combat room on legs un-

steady with exhaustion, aimlessly spraying the Leader's chamber with machine gun rounds.

Crackling with static, the as yet unharmed head of Rockwell shrieked out, "Fools! We have been tricked!" And in the background, Brunhilde's throaty cry, "More Valkyries! Quickly!"

Here they came, more of the storm-trooping nudes, on the double, and all armed.

Gil knew the rest of the women in the training chamber must be at his back. Desperately he wheeled about. As Vic leapt to safety, Gil opened up, mowing down the beautiful bodies. But the clip was exhausted, and so was Gil. He knew this must be the end. The fresh Valkyries trained their weapons on him, unaware of Vic's presence amid all the confusion.

"The other one!" croacked Rockwell. "There was another! Where--"

Seemingly from thin air, Vic Culins' leatherbound form popped up in front of the dais, holding the Uzzi the other Valkyrie had dropped. The thunderstruck guards froze in terror as Vic fired directly into the glass canister. For a split second the "bulletproof" glass managed to hold together, deflecting the rounds, as a fantastic spiderweb of shatter-marks spread over its surface. The eyes of the thing within widened in mortal terror, and then both glass and head splattered into a million tiny fragments. Red blood and green fluid splashed everywhere.

Both Gil and Vic knew their own death must surely follow now, but they could at least die knowing they had finished the job an assassin had begun twenty years ago.

But the air did not explode with the fusilade of machine gun fire they expected. The Aryan Amazons stood there, guns held listlessly, like naked mannequins in a store window. They could not take in what had happened, were utterly at a loss.

But what about their mistress? Where was Brunhilde?

There she was, standing back at the desk, taking something from one of the drawers. She had pulled out a Luger. Was she going to take revenge for her fallen Führer?

Holding the gun before her, but aiming it at no one in particular, Brunhilde slowly stepped out of the dimly lit front half of the room into the area where the rest of them congregated. She took a confused look, eyes unfocussed, at the shattered dais and croaked a single word: "Götterdämmerung." Then she placed the Luger barrel between her full lips and fired. Blood and brains sprayed the nearest wall as the beautiful, strangely androgynous body collapsed.

Still the leaderless Amazons stood motionless, expressionless. Vic and Gil roughly shouldered their way through the now-meek throng to get a better look at the sickening sight.

"Damn shame!" cursed Vic. "Y'know, that was one bitch who could've made me turn straight! A real man's woman."

"But why'd she do it, Gil? Why not seize control of the operation herself? If these poor broads are any example, their movement's about to die on its feet."

"I think you're right, Vic. The hate groups will still be a thorn in the side, but I think they've just lost the one thing that made them, just momentarily, a force to be reckoned with. I guess leaders like Rockwell, Hitler, and all the rest have to pay a high price for the slave-like devotion of their followers. They're all robots, and robots are only good for taking orders. These schmucks wouldn't be Nazis in the first place if they wanted to do their own thinking. And they don't want anyone else thinking for themselves, either."

Continued on p. 52

A Young Wife's Tale

by Robert E. Howard

My husband's brother's wife is a woman I fear and hate.
My husband does not understand how I feel toward his brother's mate.
A tall dark strong young woman like an Egyptian queen,
With motions slow and cat-like and eyes with a brooding sheen.

My husband does not understand and he thinks that it is not right—
He does not know what she did to me in her bedroom one night.
She lifted me in her strong round arms; the room was dark and still.
The only light was the moon that gleamed over the window sill.

Her kisses were eager and lingering, hinting of strange dark thrills
Till I thought somehow of Grecian nights and the moon on Egypt's hills.
Her voice was like the purr of a cat, so lazy and sure and slow
Till I grew afraid in that darkened room and begged her to let me go.

She only laughed a low soft laugh—her eyes held a brooding light,
As crushing my struggles in her cool arms she stripped me as naked as night.
She placed her lips between my breasts, her kisses burnt my skin.
Her cold arms lapped my shivering form like the touch of a nameless sin.

Sudden she stood and with one move let all her garments fall;
Her terrible beauty caught my breath, so dusky and strange and tall.
Naked and regal she stood there like a nude queen of the Nile
With her dusky breasts and ivory legs and her faint alluring smile.

Then a sinuous step she made toward me as leopards rise from their crouch.
She drew me shrinking into her arms and laid me upon a couch.
My husband does not understand my hatred and my fright.
He does not know what she did to me there on her couch that night.



Hell Cat of Hong Kong

by Marc A. Cerasini and Charles Hoffman

1. Midnight in Hong Kong

Crimson light shed by paper lanterns cast a lurid glare on many scenes of violence and intrigue in Hong Kong by night. From the dives and gin-mills jumbled together along the clogged waterfront the rude clamor of drunken seafarers from many nations echoed and re-echoed, the din pierced frequently by the shatter of breaking glass and the sound of blows. In dimly lit back rooms clandestine meetings were held and bloody pacts were sealed. On the waterfront, the oily waves lapped against grimy piers, concealing many a grim secret.

A maze of twisted alleys, some clotted with heaps of refuse and puddles of congealing filth, trailed away from the harbor towards higher ground. One traversed these by-ways

at one's peril, for all manner of furtive figures slunk through their shadowy lengths. Some, who searched for women or opium, roamed the winding streets seeking entry at darkened doorways that lined the alleys; others lurked in the black shadows, waiting to prey on the unwary traveler.

Far beyond the untamed waterfront district of Wan Chai, beyond the crowded tenements, warehouses, brothels and sweatshops, as if existing in another world, was a quiet residential district that was home to officials of the British government and Hong Kong's wealthy elite. In this placid oasis sprawled the townhouse of the Mandarin Ho Yen.

The house itself, a stately but inconspicuous four-storey structure, was set apart from the other palatial homes on the street by high

stone walls. Between the walls and the main house a courtyard and garden nestled. These open areas, now bathed in soft moonlight, were patrolled constantly by sentries chosen for their expertise in the Oriental arts of dealing death.

Inside the townhouse, spacious chambers were opulently furnished in the manner of a Sung dynasty emperor. The Mandarin Ho Yen held a poor province in southern China, but from here in Hong Kong he controlled a vast commercial empire dealing in tea and raw materials from Malaysia, as well as opium, firearms, white slaves and various other marketable commodities.

Save for his most trusted guards and a few servants, the Mandarin dwelt alone in the great house. He little feared his many enemies, however, for the hallways of his home were patrolled as carefully as the grounds outside and the house itself was constructed as securely as a Pharaoh's tomb. Yet this night the Mandarin Ho Yen's home knew the stealthy tread of intruders.

On the topmost floor, in the Mandarin's ostentatious study, three figures stole furtively, groping in the shadows for the treasure they had come up from Wan Chai in search of. Two of the invaders were men, Chinese, and by their bearing formidable street fighters. The third was a young white woman.

At first glance, she would have seemed an attractive, smartly groomed young lady and nothing more. It took several moments of contemplation to fully appreciate the pale smoothness of her skin, as flawless as fine porcelain; her thick hair black as a raven's wing, or her full, red lips that looked at once sensuous and cruel. Her figure was lithe and girlish, her physical stature unassuming. Yet she was known, and feared, in all circles of this Crown Colony. It was not the young woman's physical stature, but rather her feral craftiness, her fierce pride,

and the influence she wielded in high and low palces, that had caused her to be known among the Chinese as "the White Tigress."

Wherever criminals and tongmen gathered from Shanghai to Singapore, the White Tigress was known. And though none knew from whence she came or how she first gained dominion over the dregs of the underworld, the rumors about her were many. Some said she was a Mandarin's mistress, while others maintained that she was a spy for a major European power. Her name was linked with numerous incidents of piracy, blackmail, and murder, but in all cases the connection remained unproven. Little about her was truly known, but her reputation for ruthlessness and cunning was without peer in the Orient.

Among the many secrets she possessed was the hour when the Mandarin Ho Yen habitually retired to a secret chamber to wrap himself in opium dreams. While the two Chinese streetfighters remained alert for the tread of approaching guards, the Tigress quickly searched the study. Ignoring a veritable treasure-trove of priceless artifacts, she converged unerringly on the one object she had come for--an ornately carved box of Fei Tsui jade.

Leaning over the jade box, the Tigress caressed it lightly with small, slim-fingered hands, releasing latches concealed in the carvings while deftly avoiding decoys that hid tiny needles coated with poison. At length, the lid sprang open to reveal the box's sole content, a jagged half of a broken coin. The Tigress's light gray eyes burned with intensity for a second as she removed the seemingly worthless object and examined it. Then she pocketed the curious half-coin and closed the jade box, hoping the theft would go undiscovered.

Turning to her two men, the Tigress motioned them towards one of the walls. At the touch of a hidden fixture, a panel slid silently open,

revealing a secret passage that led to a tunnel that ended several blocks away. It was through this passage that the Tigress and her men had entered Ho Yen's townhouse. She had learned of the tunnel some years earlier, and had held the knowledge in reserve until she could best make use of it. The secret of opening the jade box she had acquired only recently, with bribes from a trusted servant of Ho Yen. This man was now held by other members of her gang who awaited her safe return. Every man has his price and his breaking point. Her uncanny knack for discerning both was partly responsible for the power the White Tigress had come to possess.

As she vanished once more into the Hong Kong night, the woman reflected gleefully that now, at long last, even the Old Hag herself was helpless in the grip of the Tigress!

2. An American Comes Ashore

With dawn, Hong Kong stirred and came to life. The stock market opened, and fortunes were made and lost. In the crowded streets, colorful, noisy throngs teemed past hundreds of tiny shops where merchants hawked wares of all descriptions and shouted curses at jugglers and fortune-tellers who vied for space along the thoroughfare. Rickshaw pullers wended their ways skillfully through the masses. In the vast harbor between the island and Kowloon, cargo-laden ships docked and departed every hour.

One such ship was the merchantman Narwhal, anchored near Wan Chai. On its dock a one-man mutiny was in progress and bloodshed appeared imminent. Two men glowered at each other across the poop while the crew and mates hung back. One of the men was the captain, "Mad Dog" MacKenzie, a hulking gorilla of a man whose bestial countenance and vicious temper caused the crew to shun him

as a demon from hell. The crewman who faced his commander was as tall as the captain and no less muscular, but built more economically. Where the captain's muscles bulged and knotted like the sinews of an ape, the younger man's thews were as smooth and supple as those of a mountain lion.

Mad Dog MacKenzie's brutish, vice-ridden face was contorted by a rage that made it hideous. His bloodshot eyes held the wild look of a madman. The captain was a brooding, sullen despot who had, for some reason, taken a dislike to the newest crewman.

"Gorman, you young pup!" he bel-lowed, "I'm gonna whip your scurvy ass!"

"Banana oil!" the young man shot back immediately. Gorman had worked the ship twice as hard as any of the other crewmen, and had had his fill of the captain's undeserved abuse. He dared not rebel while the ship was at sea, but now . . .

"If anyone's gettin' a lickin', it's gonna be you, old-timer!" the youth spat defiantly.

With an incoherent roar of rage, the captain lurched forward. The more squeamish of the crew closed their eyes. They figured that Gorman, barely out of his teens, was just too young to know better than to cross Mad Dog MacKenzie. The captain lunged at Gorman with his huge hairy hands extended. Those sinewy meathooks had in times past broken strong men into pitiful cripples.

Gorman danced away from the lunging captain with embarrassing ease, grinning all the while. The captain made another clumsy lunge. Gorman ducked and, laughing, sprang back up to crash a roundhouse right against the captain's jaw. Blood splattered as the brawny youth's blow connected, unhinging the captain's jawbone and scattering his teeth across the deck like rice at a wedding. The crew stared in amazement

as Mad Dog MacKenzie's stunned form first swayed, then crashed to the deck.

For a second there was neither sound nor movement on the deck of the Narwhal, then one of the mates sprang forward to ascertain that the captain was still breathing. The other mates clutched clubs or bailing hooks as Gorman glared back defiantly. When the first mate fingered a revolver tucked in his belt, Gorman turned away coolly and strode down the gangplank.

"Stay away from this ship if you know what's good for you, Gorman," warned the first mate. Without looking back, Gorman casually tossed an obscene gesture over his shoulder and stepped onto the wharf.

Leaving the waterfront behind, the youth called John Gorman wandered about aimlessly, taking in the sights and sounds of Hong Kong. The incident on the Narwhal was soon forgotten. On every street peddlers haggled with prospective customers and exotic foodstuffs simmered on open grills. In shop windows, the carcasses of ducks and chickens, glistening in sauce, hung from meathooks with heads and feet still intact. The pungent odor of marine life clogged Gorman's nostrils as he passed the fishmongers, their baskets overflowing with live crabs, squid, and shellfish. Men with cleavers cut steaks from sharks, dolphins and stingrays. On all sides the colorful mass of humanity was like an unending circus parade.

Gorman found the spectacle enthralling and mused briefly that he stood at the gateway of the mysterious Orient. The fact that he was alone in a strange land thousands of miles from his own country, with no money and unable to speak the native language, troubled him little. He would find another ship eventually; until then perhaps he would get a job as a bouncer in one of the seedy waterfront bars.

Turning up Cat Street, the white man shouldered his way through an even denser throng, the air about him made stifling by the body heat of so many. As he ascended the steep incline, Gorman became aware of some commotion in the densely packed mob ahead of him. The yellow horde of humanity was crammed into the alley like sardins, yet amazingly the crowd parted to permit the passage of some object moving against the current in the human river. Gorman looked on, puzzled, as a palanquin carried by four bearers came into view.

From the deference shown the procession by the crowd, Gorman imagined that the Emperor of China was being borne through their midst. Yet when the palanquin passed closely enough to afford a glimpse at the occupant, the figure within seemed not a living being at all, but a withered mummy draped in black. Only a subtle movement of the figure enabled Gorman to decide that it was not a mummy, but an incredibly old woman.

When the curious procession had passed, Gorman shrugged and continued on his way. Had he not expected to see many strange sights in the Orient?

3. The Battle on the Waterfront

The setting sun painted the sky a deep red as five sinister figures gathered in a deserted alley near the waterfront. A burly bullet-headed German and a furtive, dark-eyed Russian were met by an Australian and two Chinese. The latter were the pair of streetfighters who, a week earlier, had accompanied the White Tigress in the raid on Ho Yen's.

The Australian spoke first: "Name's Hogan. This 'ere's Li Kwo and Chu Min."

"Where's the Tigress?" snarled the German, his voice edged with suspicion.

"The Tigress sent us. You bring

the goods?"

After a moment's hesitation, the Russian proffered an envelope containing photographs of an eminent Hong Kong banker in compromising positions. Hogan chuckled appreciatively as he examined them, then asked, "What about Clancy?"

"Clancy's dead," the Russian replied softly. "Always he made like the big man, the mastermind. But he was a loser, a little man . . ."

"So we croaked him," broke in the German, causing the Russian to wince. "We're throwin' in with you and the Tigress. So when do we meet the hussy?"

"Real soon," answered Hogan. "But a word of warning, mate. Don't be callin' 'er a 'ussy to 'er face. She cut the feet off the last cobbler what done that. And you'll lose more than that if you try to double-cross 'er. Now let's go."

The ill-met gang proceeded up the alley towards the harbor, unaware that slanted eyes watched their every move from a window high above. The hidden one signaled a companion on a rooftop across the alley, and the second figure scurried silently down a rickety wooden ladder to join others who awaited him. By the time Hogan and his cronies had reached the street facing the harbor, more than a dozen enemies trailed them in the shadows or lay in wait in alleys and doorways in their path.

The Russian was the first to sense something amiss. Turning abruptly, he gasped to see two of those trailing them dart back into the shadows. Alerted to the danger, Li Kwo and Chu Min quickly discerned the hiding places of the rest. Hogan and the others froze as a dozen or so ragged Chinese emerged from alleys behind and in front of them, fanning out and cutting off possible avenues of escape.

Bystanders on the wharves made themselves scarce, ducking into bars that were just opening for the evening. Hogan recognized some of the

Chinese as former members of rival tongs broken by the White Tigress. Doubtless they had planned to follow him and the others to the Tigress herself, but had been discovered prematurely. The beleaguered criminals formed a small circle fanning outwards, protecting each other's backs. As the desperate tongmen rushed towards them, brandishing hatchets and lengths of chain, Hogan palmed a heavy blackjack even as the German and the Russian drew daggers. Li Kwo and Chu Min, both adepts of the Oriental fighting art of gung fu, assumed "the stance of the waiting tiger."

As the first of the tongmen reached them, Li Kwo and Chu Min exploded into a blinding flurry of hands and feet, downing some of their foes and driving others back. Hogan's blackjack thudded against the skull of an enemy, laying his scalp open and sending him down for the count. The Russian screamed hideously as his rat-like face was split by a tongman's hatchet; he fell away, blood spraying from his ruined features. The German wheeled about, disemboweling the Russian's attacker with his dagger even as his huge, ham-like hand swatted another Chinaman to the ground.

Elsewhere, Li Kwo blinded an enemy with a "monkey paw swipe" in order to deal with another closing in from the side. This one he dispatched with a crippling kick to the groin, ducking low to avoid the chain swung by yet another. Hogan was making jelly of a tongman's face when he felt the bite of a hatchet tearing through his side. Feeling his life ebb, he lashed out furiously, no longer seeking to avoid blows. Chu Min fought off several unskilled attackers with a series of "splitting cobra" blows, but a whirling chain glanced off his temple, stunning him. The others closed in, finishing him off with their hatchets.

Less than five minutes had now

elapsed since the start of the fight. Both Hogan and the Russian were dead, their mutilated bodies lying in widening pools of blood. Seven of the tongmen were down, either dead or incapacitated.

The German, bleeding freely from a score of grisly wounds, reached down and grabbed two of the crazed tongmen who were hacking Chu Min to pieces. Growling like an enraged beast, the big kraut hurled one, then the other through the window of a nearby bar, then sprang through the broken window after them.

Leaping free of some corpses that were tripping him up, Li Kwo kicked an assailant in the face, driving him through the tavern's door. Without pausing for breath, he followed the man inside to intercept the tongmen streaming through the broken window after the German.

Inside the bar, Joe Murphy, the tavern's proprietor, had scrambled back for cover when the first of the bodies came crashing through his window. Ducking the flying shards of glass, he turned towards the back room and bellowed, "Hey Gorman! Trouble!"

Emerging from the back room where he had been washing glasses in a steaming vat of soapy water, John Gorman tore off his apron and vaulted over the bar even as Li Kwo, the German and the tongmen swarmed in. Such incidents had helped break up the monotony during the previous three days Gorman had worked for Murphy. He had no idea who these trouble-makers were, but they'd soon wish they'd taken their quarrel elsewhere.

In the front of the saloon, Li Kwo lashed out at several foes with blows and kicks, even as the German fended off others with a broken bottle. Gorman tore through the thick of the action like a typhoon, hammering down three tongmen before they even realized he was upon them. Reaching the German and the tongmen he grappled with, Gorman grabbed

each by the back of the neck and slammed the hun's close-cropped skull against that of the Chinaman with bone-crunching force. The two dropped as if pole-axed, but Gorman had already found himself facing fresh opponents.

Springing between Li Kwo and his adversaries, Gorman knocked the combatants reeling away from each other. The tongmen lost their footing and toppled to the floor, while Li Kwo spun into a table, upsetting it. When the two tongmen assayed to rise, Gorman jumped onto the pair, the weight of his muscle-packed body grinding them into the broken glass that littered the floor. Behind Gorman, Li Kwo flung aside the table that had fallen on him and screeched like a maddened panther.

As Gorman wheeled about, Li Kwo launched into a "flying dragon stamp-kick." Leaping through the air, the Chinaman's feet struck Gorman squarely in the chest, propelling him backwards into the bar with a sickening thud. Cursing sharply as though stung by a hornet, the American quickly regained his feet and flew at his adversary in a blinding flash that even the martial artist's highly conditioned reflexes could not check. Arms pumping furiously like well-oiled pistons, Gorman caved in Li Kwo's rib cage with a flurry of brutal jabs. This was followed by a devastating uppercut that surged from Gorman's waist and impacted under Li Kwo's chin, snapping the Chinaman's neck and catapulting him against the wall. Li Kwo's broken body, colliding with such impact that several framed pictures were knocked loose, slid down the wall, leaving a trail of blood, to lie in a crumpled heap with the other still forms strewn about the floor.

Joe Murphy, eyes wide with amazement, looked about him and swore, "Judas! I've watched you give guys the bum's rush in the past couple days, but I never dreamed you were

this good a scrapper. You oughta be in the ring!"

Gorman, breathing no more heavily than a man climbing a flight of stairs, smiled and replied, "Gimme a beer, Joe. Knockin' these China-boys around, I've kinda worked up a thirst." As Murphy turned to the tap, Gorman took stock of himself, checking for knife wounds that might have gone unnoticed in the heat of battle. Finding none, he leaned back against the bar and quaffed the cold brew Murphy proffered him. It was then that he noticed the woman.

She was sitting on a barstool near the back, lighting a cigarette in a long holder as she studied the young American. Gorman's first impression was of a typical flapper, but then he noticed the arresting quality of her large gray eyes, which seemed almost to shine like a cat's in the room's shadowy recesses. Gorman smiled and raised his glass. The girl smiled back. He hadn't noticed her earlier; she must have slipped in the back door during the fight. Gorman motioned for Murphy to get her a drink, puzzled by the barkeep's curious expression--as though the girl were someone he recognized and wished to avoid.

Murphy set a highball before the strange young woman and, in response to her icy glance, vanished into the back room. Gorman was pleased when the girl rose and glided towards him. Like most men his age, he regarded a woman's favorable attention as the ultimate accolade, and he was confident that his fighting prowess had duly impressed her.

As she approached, Gorman noted with appreciation the pale beauty of her features and the luster of her silky hair, which was even blacker than his own. He was still smiling when she sat down at the bar next to him and said, "Some of that mob you just made has of were my men."

The girl's unexpected remark

catching him off guard, Gorman choked on a mouthful of beer. "Sorry, Miss," he replied presently. "If I'd known those men had belonged to you, I would have taken better care of them."

"No matter. What's your name?"

"Gorman. John Gorman."

The girl's cat-like eyes scanned the American from head to toe, subjecting him to an intense scrutiny that he found not unpleasant. His tight shirt, damp with sweat, clung to him like a second skin. The girl studied the youth's broad shoulders and bull-neck; the thick, muscular chest that tapered to a pantherishly lean waist, with open admiration. She noted with appreciation his long well-formed legs and sinewy, sun-bronzed arms, the muscles rippling like steel cables beneath a light coating of lacquer. Lastly she studied his face, seeing there an animal-like vitality complemented by exceptional strength of character and guided by an alert intelligence that illuminated the man's features.

"If there's anything in this world I understand," the woman said, "it's men. I've not seen your like. A man like you should not waste his life toiling like an ant. Come. We should leave here; by now the authorities will have decided that all the trouble is over and it's safe to investigate. Rise and follow me."

4. Oriental Intrigue

In the weeks and months that followed, it was whispered throughout China that the White Tigress had taken a mate. In Canton, in the interior, and as far north as Peking, stories were told of a savage young giant as dangerous as a killer beast. Thieves gathered in their dens to swap tales of the man, an American of whom it was said that all the fighting skills of the Orient could not prevail against his great

strength and blinding speed. That such killing ferocity served the matchless cunning of that she-devil, the White Tigress, caused many a rival bandit to rue his misspent days.

In Hong Kong, John Gorman took well to his new life as the consort of the White Tigress. She had taken him from the gutter, dressed him in fine clothes, houses him in style. In return, he crushed her enemies and helped break other men to her will. Together they made quite a team; it mattered not at all to him that she was the brains and he the muscle, nor did it bother him that he had become a ringleader of an international crime cartel.

Since joining the Tigress, Gorman had been involved in gun-running, blackmail, extortion, smuggling, and many other dirty dealings. When occasionally troubled by a nagging conscience, he had only to consider the alternative. Gold coins felt good in hands calloused by oil rig drills and ships' bullropes. The Tigress's fierce love-making was that much sweeter when he considered other bosses he had broken his back for--miserable bastards, every one, all Mad Dog MacKenzies to a greater or lesser degree. To hell with honest work; there was no future in it. In Hong Kong, the world was his oyster.

Such were John Gorman's thoughts as he stretched lazily on a large brass bed, the slim naked figure of the White Tigress curled against him. They lounged in a richly furnished apartment, spacious by Hong Kong standards, that was one of several hideouts known only to Gorman and the Tigress herself. Concealed within the ugly walls of an abandoned tenement, the elegant suite on the top floor served them well as a secure retreat.

To this eyrie they had retired in the wee morning hours, after a profitable night's commerce. The

Tigress had then changed to a thin robe of fine silk, the diaphanous material clinging to the supple curves of her girlish form, and together she and Gorman counted the stacks of paper Hong Kong currency that were the evening's spoils. After relaxing over drinks, the girl had abruptly gathered the money into her arms and strewn it over the white satin sheets that covered their bed. Having cast off their garments, she and Gorman had tumbled onto the mattress, the paper bills crackling beneath their thrashing bodies . . .

Gorman smiled at the memory and rose, brushing away a few damp bills that clung to his sweat-slicked torso. As was usual during their savage coupling, the Tigress's raking nails had dug deep furrows in his back, and he could discern the marks of her small, sharp teeth on his chest and limbs. It was now late afternoon; soon the sun would set and their business day would begin. Gorman awakened the Tigress with a resounding slap to her firm buttocks, and went to wash and dress.

A short time later, a rickshaw carried Gorman and the White Tigress toward a secret rendezvous at the waterfront district of Aberdeen. Their progress was slow owing to the thicker-than-usual crowds that clogged the streets, shouting and making merry. It was Chinese New Year, and the colony's native population had turned out to celebrate the Year of the Ox.

Gayly dressed mummers danced through the streets, leading processions of jugglers and musicians. At the parade's center, a dozen individuals manned an elaborate dragon costume consisting of a huge papier-mâché head attached to a long, snake-like tail. Shops were decorated with banners that the Tigress translated for Gorman: "Kung hei fat choy! --May you be blessed with prosperity!" On every corner firecrackers

exploded in unending cacophony, littering the streets ankle-deep with shredded paper.

Gorman and the Tigress arrived at length at the docks of Aberdeen. This was the site of the floating city of the Shiu Sheung Yan--boat people. Here thousands made their homes on junks and sampans jammed together along the piers like so much driftwood, their congealed mass reminiscent of a coral reef skirting the island's southern shore.

Alighting from the rickshaw, Gorman followed the Tigress down the length of the rotting wharf. She had been curiously reticent about this new operation, but had hinted that its rewards would far exceed those of any previous caper. Gorman knew only that they had come here to await delivery of some object of great value, to be handed over by the most dreaded river pirate of the Canton delta.

A month earlier, the White Tigress had sent Gorman and a gang of her hatchet-men inland to perform a service for this same man. A rival bandit had become a threat to the old pirate; his spies kept the river crew under constant surveillance and enabled their chief to appropriate the crew's spoils. Gorman and the hatchet-men had fallen upon the bandits in the darkest hour of the night. Now it was New Year, when by tradition all debts must be paid.

"I'd keep my weather-eye cocked for trouble," quoth Gorman. "How do you know that old monkey won't pull some sort of double-cross?"

"I've made allowances for that," the White Tigress replied tranquilly. "Some of our men are concealed around here. It's not him I'm worried about, though. He doesn't know the value of the item he's acquired and couldn't take advantage of it if he did."

"Don't you think it's about time you told me what this 'item' is?"

"Wait! He's here . . ."

At the seaward end of one of the piers, the old pirate had disembarked from a sampan and beamed a toothless grin at the Tigress. A younger man, who appeared to be a son, followed carrying a brightly colored valise. As the pair moved towards land, Gorman and the Tigress headed out to meet them halfway, as previously arranged.

Suddenly Gorman's ears were stung by a staccato cracking distinct from the still-constant din of New Year's fireworks. The old Chinaman and his son fell, blood splattering their ragged clothes. The valise tumbled from the young pirate's clutching fingers. Gorman seized the Tigress and dived off the pier into a sampan, to the distress of the family within, even as bullets tore into the grimy planks where they had been standing a split-second earlier.

Glancing up from his place of cover, Gorman's keen eyes instantly picked out the source of the gunfire that now held them pinned down. Men with rifles occupied a junk and several sampans tied along a pier parallel to the one under fire. No longer concerned with concealment, the marksmen were swarming forth in search of an advantageous spot from which to riddle the tiny sampan where Gorman, the girl, and an innocent Chinese family were trapped.

Just then, new gunfire broke out, cutting down some of the emerging riflemen and forcing others to scramble back to cover. The Tigress's instincts had once again proven sound, and her hidden henchmen had saved her and Gorman. Firing from an abandoned junk anchored at yet another pier, the Tigress's men traded shots with their foemen.

Caught underneath the crossfire, Gorman reflected that the prize they fought for must be great indeed for the Tigress and her unknown adversary to bring so many guns into play. Firearms were banned in Hong Kong and much frowned upon by the British authorities. He knew the Tigress

would not risk forcing their hand for anything less than the most fabulous booty of her criminal career.

After silencing the terrified squeals of the sampan family with threats, the White Tigress peered over Gorman's shoulder and thanked her stars that the valise had fallen onto the pier and not in the water. Then, shouting orders in Cantonese, she urged her men on the other pier to redouble their efforts. "Get ready to make a grab for the suitcase," she hissed in Gorman's ear. "There's an opening!" But the American was already on his way.

Crouching low to keep level with the pier, Gorman hurried to the front of the tiny sampan and stepped onto the one tethered beside it, the rocking and wobbling of the vessels making his footing unsteady. From there he moved on to the next small craft, ignoring the cries of those within. As quickly as possible, he made his way from one bobbing sampan to another, leaping the gaps between them when necessary.

The valise was now almost within Gorman's grasp. Another few feet and he could fling himself onto the pier and roll back off clutching the satchel, he hoped, before enemy gunmen caught him in their sights. Gorman tensed his body to spring, but before he could do so a yellow arm snaked over the opposite side of the pier, grabbed the case by the handle, and yanked it over the side.

Cursing, Gorman bounded onto the pier, reaching the opposite side as fresh gunfire sprang up around him. He spotted the culprit fleeing in a small boat and, without pause, launched himself from the pier with all the strength of his powerful legs. Landing within the boat, his additional weight threatened to capsize it. As Gorman struggled to regain his balance, the boat's terrified pilot snatched up the valise and hurled it spinning through the air to land back on the wharf. En-

raged, Gorman snapped the thrashing Chinaman's neck in one deadly motion.

Meanwhile, on the wharf, several figures darted forward to retrieve the case. The Tigress's gunmen tried to pick them off, but the sun had set and daylight was fading fast. Gorman had already dived from the boat and was surging through the filthy water propelled by rapid, powerful strokes.

By the time Gorman clambered onto the wharf, streaming water and shaking loose clinging bits of garbage, one of the desperate figures had reached the case and was making off with it. The bodies of several others lay where they had fallen. Without pause for breath, Gorman set off after his adversary, who had the advantage of a considerable headstart.

Both Gorman and his quarry sought safety from the gunfire in the deepening shadows. The battle was already breaking off, however, the gunmen deserting their posts before the authorities could arrive on the scene. Squinting into the darkness, Gorman spotted his man headed for the alleyways that led from Aberdeen to the heart of the city. Gorman followed, striving to narrow the gap between them.

Leaving the waterfront behind, Gorman pursued the fleeing figure onto the main streets where throngs of New Year's revellers cavorted. Here the headlong flight and pursuit were checked by the teeming masses. Doubtless the man hoped to melt into the crowd and give Gorman the slip during the commotion. Gorman decided to hang back, keeping his quarry in sight while remaining hidden and working his way closer.

The American was aware that his height and white skin made him more conspicuous in the crowd than the Chinaman he trailed. He marvelled at the Tigress's foresight in arranging her prize to be delivered in a brightly colored valise with a distinctive pattern; it enabled him

to keep track of its thief far more easily than he could have done otherwise. Now he had to stay close enough to prevent his quarry from discarding it in favor of a plainer carrying case . . .

Furtive backward glances told Gorman that his prey had him spotted. The man maneuvered his way skillfully through the crowds, always managing to keep a squirming wall of humanity between himself and Gorman. He zigzagged, backtracked, wandered in circles, changed his course abruptly, but was unable to shake the determined American.

Gorman cursed softly under his breath. His drying clothes clung to him uncomfortably and the constant commotion of snapping firecrackers was fraying his nerves. Moreover, this fencing with his opponent was growing tiresome. He longed to plough through the yammering horde that trameled him and put an end to this game.

It was then that his foe made a sudden move, ducking into a narrow arcade when he thought the white man wasn't looking. Gorman's simmering anger flared abruptly into full, turbulent life. The Chinese revellers uttered cries of surprise and annoyance as the white man came surging through their midst, knocking some of them to the ground in his haste.

Gorman reached the arcade's entrance in a matter of seconds; of his quarry there was no sign. Racing to the alley at the other end, he cast quick glances in either direction. Again, no trace of a fleeing figure greeted his burning gaze. There had been no time for the man to reach either end of the alley. The pedestrians who had strayed into the arcade and alley were too few to provide sufficient cover.

The American turned his attention to the shops that lined the arcade. These were mostly tiny curio shops with little or no storage space in the back. The most likely place

of refuge for a fugitive was a puppet theater whose large, ornate doorway was the arcade's most prominent feature. Gorman paused before the arched gateway and pushed the stout wooden door open. Ignoring the wizened old proprietor, the American entered the theater warily.

The door swung silently shut behind Gorman, cutting off the commotion from outside. Now the only sounds heard were the dull chimes of tinny music that drifted through the cavernous, dimly lit chamber within. In the shadows, a few dozen figures squatted on crude benches, asleep or staring with sullen eyes at a screen in the front of the theater. There a puppeteer manipulated paper cut-outs before a lantern, casting silhouettes that depicted warriors, maidens, sorcerers and other characters.

Gorman paced up and down the aisles, studying the patrons row by row. None was the man he searched for. Moving towards the theater's rear, Gorman could detect a pungent scent that burning joss-sticks could not completely mask. He looked knowingly at the old proprietor, who knew the American by reputation and feared him. Nodding in recognition, the old man led Gorman past a sliding panel in the back wall and together they traversed a short hallway.

At the end of the hallway, the old man held aside the strings of beads that hung in the doorframe, admitting Gorman to the secret chamber beyond. It was nearly as large as the theater itself, sparsely furnished, and occupied by perhaps a score of bleary-eyed dissipated who reclined in blissful oblivion on rude bunks arranged in tiers along the walls. Candles and oil lamps cast wan illumination through clouds of blue smoke that floated to the rafters high above. On a low table in the room's center were a number of pipes fashioned from stout lengths of bamboo and packages of a gooey, black substance Gorman recognized

immediately--opium!

Gorman circled about the chamber in such a way as to cut off the escape route of any who, feigning stupor, might suddenly bolt for the back exit. Moving slowly past the tiers of bunks, he looked closely at each occupant. The elusive thief he trailed had either taken refuge in the opium den or was far away by now. Most of the drugged riff-raff were Chinese, but there were white men as well--both common seamen and Hong Kong businessmen. All smiled with resin-stained lips, their dilated gaze fixed on nighted abysses and star-strewn gulfs beyond normal ken. Occasionally the hoarse, croaking voice of one of the drug fiends would call for the pipe.

Crouching at the table in the center of the room, a little Chinaman wearing a skullcap and a sparse beard of white, wispy strands rolled the opium into tiny balls and inserted them into the bowls of the bamboo pipes. An assistant carried the smoking pipes to those who called for them. Gorman himself had handled plenty of opium since working for the White Tigress. He well knew that the port of Hong Kong had been founded on the opium trade. Yet now the American felt himself overcome with disgust and loathing, both for the wretches that surrounded him and for himself.

The sight of one of the opium smokers lying on a bunk with his back towards him snapped Gorman from his bitter reverie. He clutched the huddled figure with a sinewy hand and flipped him over, certain this was the man he had trailed from Aberdeen. Nor was the American mistaken; the thief was fully alert and came up fighting, slashing at Gorman with a keen-edged knife. Gorman grabbed the man's knife-hand and twisted; the blade dropped from his spastic fingers. As the thief struggled to rise, Gorman grabbed a bamboo opium pipe from a nearby bunk and rammed it into his foe's

mouth, splintering teeth as he forced it down the Chinaman's throat.

Gorman looked on in grim satisfaction as his victim asphyxiated. When the man had expired, Gorman pulled the now-lifeless form from the bunk and brought forth the valise his foe had endeavored to conceal. Then, without a backward glance, the American took his leave of the opium den. The dreamers he left behind were oblivious to his passing.

As a rickshaw carried Gorman back to the apartment he and the White Tigress had left that afternoon, he wondered once more about the contents of the valise resting on the seat beside him. Opening the case, he discovered a package, roughly rectangular, enveloped in what seemed like many layers of wrapping. It could be anything. Gorman sat back in the rickshaw and allowed his imagination to roam free. Was it some gem-encrusted idol? Treasure maps? Whatever it was, it could wait. He would discover the truth when he and the Tigress unwrapped it together.

Arriving at the apartment, Gorman found the White Tigress pacing back and forth, nervously awaiting his return. When he walked through the door with the case, she ran to him and threw her arms around him in an uncharacteristic display of girlish giddiness.

The package proved to be like one of those Chinese boxes Gorman had seen, which concealed a smaller box within, which concealed a still smaller box, and so on. Several layers of wrapping paper and twine were removed exposing a metal strongbox. Inside the strongbox was something wrapped tightly in heavy oilskins. The prize that Gorman had gone to such lengths to obtain was finally revealed as a thick sheaf of yellowing papers, apparently some sort of typed manuscript or collection of documents.

It was not the sort of treasure Gorman had expected. And yet the

joyful expression that suffused the Tigress's face as she examined the papers was such as he had only seen when she handled precious gemstones or other valuables. Then Gorman recalled that she had behaved similarly once when he had seen her gloat over the jagged half of an ancient coin, as if it too had been some object of great import.

Gorman shrugged, then retired wearily to the bathroom to remove his soiled clothing and cleanse himself. The Tigress would explain all when he returned.

"Hurry back," she called after him. "We'll celebrate."

Alone, Gorman stripped and scrubbed himself from head to toe. Feeling better, he slipped into a cool silk robe and returned to the elegantly furnished living room.

The Tigress lounged on a divan, awaiting him clad only in a short kimono of wispy green silk. Gorman's lust flared as his eyes devoured long dancer's legs laid bare, and other charms half-visible through the gauze-like material. Then he noticed the slender, wand-like object she was toying with.

It was a long, slim black pipe with a tiny bowl on the end. The tarry substance in the bowl was all too familiar.

"Got a light?" the White Tigress asked coyly.

5. "One Day Soon I Shall Live Like a Queen!"

The click of chopsticks and the hushed murmur of conversation floated softly through the spacious and elegantly furnished restaurant. A small army of waiters came and went silently in an unending procession, pushing huge carts heavily laden with exotic delicacies. Patrons savored such treats as curried squid and shark fin dumplings. Some new arrivals carried bird cages containing such feathered pets as they wished to

show off in public, and these cages were hung from hooks provided for that purpose.

It was mid-morning in Hong Kong, and the meal being served was Dim Sum, a traditional banquet-style Chinese breakfast. All morning long courses were brought forth and served in portions small enough to allow the diner to sample a dozen or more. Breakfasting in this leisurely manner could consume half a day, and businessmen took advantage of the relaxed, informal atmosphere to close important deals.

It was such a deal that was being discussed at a large round table near the center of the dining room. Seated around the table was an oddly assorted party of seven men and one woman. Several executives representing Hong Kong's largest trading houses were virtually indistinguishable from one another in their gray business suits. The Mandarin Ho Yen and the wealthy spice merchant Wu Sin wore traditional Oriental garb indicative of their status. Yukio Mitsumori, a prominent Japanese businessman, seemed at ease in the current western fashion. John Gorman, however, felt uncomfortable in a three-piece suit, silk tie, and spats. These men were presided over by the White Tigress, resplendent in a form-fitting satin dress the color of wine, jade earrings, and black lace gloves.

The Tigress had called the meeting to auction off the prize Gorman had fought for. The meeting was held in a public place because none present trusted any of the others. Indeed, the Tigress had informed Gorman that she suspected three of the parties at the table as the ones behind the attack at Aberdeen. Gorman could only shake his head and wonder what the hell they were doing sitting down to breakfast with them.

The item for sale was now revealed: a collection of documents tallying the natural resources of Manchuria and most of the provinces

of interior China. This survey was the most ambitious of its kind ever undertaken. There were reports by geologists citing the location and extent of large deposits of iron, coal, copper, tungsten, tin, bauxite, gypsum, and other minerals. Appendices by mining engineers detailed the most efficient means of extracting the wealth from each site. In addition, agricultural experts had provided estimates of the produce that could be yielded by each province if cultivated correctly, the exact methods carefully stipulated. The documents were extensively cross-indexed, the entire project having been completed by a small British firm many years earlier at the request of the Chinese emperor. The reports had been lost through some court intrigue, resurfacing only recently.

As the prospective buyers haggled over the details of the transaction, Gorman shifted in his chair uneasily. The American found this bandying of words irksome; his every instinct was attuned to direct action. The fine suit he wore, like all his suits, was tailored to fit him loosely so as not to hinder his movements in the event of trouble. But now he was out of his natural element, and could only sit back while the woman at his side conducted the bargaining. At length the meeting was adjourned, the Tigress stating she would consider each offer and contact the party whose bid she would accept.

Late that evening, in the penthouse they shared, Gorman asked the White Tigress, "Well, have you decided who you're going to go with yet?"

"Mitsusumi, of course."

"The Jap? He didn't have much to say for himself at the meeting."

"It's what he didn't say that I liked."

Gorman scowled. He knew what the Tigress was getting at. Mitsusumi was the scion of a leading family of industrialists, descended

from an ancient samurai clan, who had helped transform Japan from a medieval feudal society to a modern imperial power. They and the other zaibatsu--financial cartels--had accomplished this miracle in a mere two generations--overnight, as far as the annals of history were concerned. It had only been possible by close collaboration between Japanese industry and the Japanese government as part of an awe-inspiring master plan.

It was not hard for the American to guess what would happen next. Japan was an island nation; it needed the raw materials of the massive Chinese mainland. Japan was strong and China was weak--sooner or later the Japs would invade. The little British firm that had compiled those geological reports had unwittingly performed the preliminary work for any who wished to exploit the natural wealth of China. A Japanese invasion was inevitable . . . someday. But if the White Tigress sold the reports to Mitsusumi, the rape of Manchuria and the southern provinces would follow as quickly as night followed day.

Gorman resolved to sway the Tigress from her headstrong, reckless course. "If you sell to the Japs, a lot of peasants are going to lose their huts so you can live on Victoria Peak Road. Stop thinking like a crook for once. Everybody made the same basic offer; a big down payment now and a piece of the action later on. Close the deal with any of the trading houses, and you'll be sitting pretty for life."

It was the truth. In Hong Kong, anyone could form a corporation in a single day for a few measly dollars. Then contracts could be drawn up and signed, and the Tigress's share of the profits would slowly swell her coffers. She could leave the underworld behind to enjoy a lifetime of prosperity and, if she so desired, growth in legitimate business.

"No, Gorman," the Tigress remarked flatly. "My mind is made up."

"But why, goddamn it!"

The White Tigress glared at Gorman, her cat-eyes ablaze. "Because I want it all now!" she snapped. "Victoria Peak Road you say? I'm going to live in a pagoda by a waterfall, surrounded by cherry blossom trees. I'll have pretty little China-girls, like little ivory dolls, to sing me songs and wait on me hand and foot. I've dreamed of this since I ran away from a Shanghai whorehouse when I was twelve! One day soon I shall live like a queen!"

An uncomfortable silence hung in the air for several moments as Gorman mulled over the woman's passionate words. Then he glimpsed something from the corner of his eye that prickled the short hairs on the nape of his neck. At the window, a shadowy figure lurked.

"Look out!"

Gorman shouted the warning as he leaped forward, bearing the Tigress to the plushly carpeted floor. Something sharp and deadly whistled through the air and embedded itself in the wall behind them. With the appearance of sudden danger, instinct took over and Gorman had reacted with the tense alertness of a jungle cat.

Moving like greased lightning, Gorman reached the open window before the throwing knife stuck in the wall stopped quivering. Peering downward into the alley below, he wondered what manner of creature could have reached a window ten storeys up with no adjacent structures of comparable height. Then his keen eyes spotted a man-like shape clambering down the side of the building. Gripping the spaces between the bricks with fingers and toes, the mysterious intruder moved with the agility of a great ape.

Unable to pursue the fleeing figure, Gorman seized a heavy porcelain statue and sent it hurtling downwards towards the climber. The im-

proved missile struck the fugitive squarely, dislodging him from his precarious perch. The figure dropped the last two storeys, landing with a crash amid the crates of garbage.

An hour later, Gorman and the White Tigress stood in the sound-proofed basement of the seemingly abandoned building that concealed their penthouse hideaway. In the dim light of a guttering oil lamp, they studied their unconscious prisoner, whom the Tigress had tightly bound to a crude wooden chair. The man was some sort of foreigner, small and wiry with a shaved skull and dusky brown skin now covered with abrasions. A dirty loin cloth was his only garment.

"He's no Chinaman," muttered Gorman. "What the hell is he?"

"A Burmese dacoit," replied the Tigress, and in response to Gorman's puzzled expression, "An assassin."

"Who could have sent him?"

"I shudder to think."

Just then the dacoit moaned and stirred in his bonds as consciousness returned. The White Tigress seated herself in a high-backed wicker chair, crossed her legs, and lit a cigarette. As she did so, her skirt glided back along her smooth thigh, revealing the top of a silk stocking held in place by a garter belt. "Now we'll have some answers," she said, a hint of cruel menace edging her voice.

"Okay you," snarled Gorman, addressing the Burmese, "savvy English?"

"Gorman," interrupted the Tigress, "I can get by in his lingo. You hit him and I'll ask the questions. Try the places where his bones look fractured. That ought to loosen his tongue. Don't worry if he screams; no one can hear him from in here."

The American clenched his fists as sudden rage surged through him. "Look lady," he grated, "I'm no angel, but I don't torture helpless

prisoners. You want him to talk? Then you torture him!"

Furious, the White Tigress rose and strode angrily toward the seated figure. Before Gorman could react, she jammed her glowing cigarette into the dacoit's eye, grinding it out against his naked eyeball. The dacoit bit through his lips to keep from crying out as tears of blood streamed from his ruined eye.

Gorman was momentarily stunned. Then he grabbed the Tigress by the hair and struck her hard across the mouth with the back of his open hand. The woman reeled and tumbled to the cellar floor, tearing her dress and fraying her silk stockings. Gorman hauled her to her feet and struck her again with a stinging blow from his open palm.

The Tigress fell back to the floor, rolled onto her back, and lay there gasping for breath. Her small, firm breasts, now revealed where her bodice had been rent, heaved as she drank in great gulps of air. Her ripped skirt lay unfurled about her, exposing shapely legs in torn stockings and a filmy pair of black lace panties that barely served to conceal her intimate charms. She made no move to cover herself, but shifted slightly into a position that somehow seemed deliberately provocative.

Gorman, his rage spent, grasped the Tigress by the shoulders to help her to her feet. As she looked up into his eyes, the American was startled to notice a change had come over her pale features. She licked the blood that trickled from the corners of her full lips, and her cat-like eyes seemed glazed with a wild, insane stare.

"Take me now, Gorman!" she whispered huskily.

The young man was taken aback. "What?" He demanded in amazement. "Here? In front of our 'guest'?"

"Yes!" the woman hissed, her pale pink nipples now conspicuously erect. "Here! Now! He doesn't matter.

I want you to take me now!"

Gorman felt his face grow red with mingled anger, disgust, and arousal. He snarled an incoherent curse and pulled his clenched fist back to strike her once more. Then, thinking better of it, he checked the motion and turned away.

Reaching the top of the stairs that led to the street, Gorman looked down at the white girl sprawled half-nude before the dark-skinned Asian she had bound and tormented.

"I won't be back," he said.

6. Pirate's Debt

In the dark hours before dawn, John Gorman sat at the bar of one of the few waterfront taverns still open for business, drinking moodily. Earlier the saloon had been the scene of the raucous sport of drunken seamen. Now only a handful of customers remained, squatting silent and bleary-eyed over their cups. From the harbor outside came the mournful bellow of a foghorn.

Gorman had just decided that the place's gin was no better than its whiskey when he felt a presence at his side. Turning to his left, he found himself facing the wrinkled countenance of an old woman dressed in black. She wore a large-brimmed hat with a moth-eaten feather and rested her weight on a black cane with a silver handle. Gorman recognized her as the old woman he had glimpsed borne on a litter on his first day in Hong Kong.

"Do you know who I am?" the crone asked sharply.

"Yeah," came Gorman's sullen reply. He had learned much since that first day. The old woman was the aged matriarch of the colony's largest trading house. From behind the scenes she still directed the affairs of the great house, as well as pulling the strings of many another important individual. Gorman had heard the Tigress speak of her

on occasion, referring to her as the "Old Hag." She was without question the most influential person in the Crown Colony.

After a moment of awkward silence, the American asked, "What do you want with me? How did you find me?"

"I have eyes and ears all over Hong Kong," she replied. "As for what I want with you, John Gorman, can you not guess? Your little guttersnipe plans to sell those documents to Mitsusumi; of this I am certain despite a most reasonable offer made by my representative. If the Japanese get ahold of those reports, they are certain to invade China. This must not be. War is bad for business."

"Why tell me? I'm through with the bitch."

"You are the only one who can stop this. Not even I know everything; for example, I know not where and when the final transaction will take place. But I do know the consequences. If the Chinese mainland is conquered by the Japanese, the very existence of Hong Kong itself would be in jeopardy. This I can not allow, young man, for I run Hong Kong!"

"That's your problem, old woman," Gorman shot back, "not mine."

"As you say. But if the plight of the thousands, perhaps millions, of Korean, Manchurian, and Chinese peasants who would be slaughtered does not affect you, then think of this. How will the British Empire react when her colony of Hong Kong is imperiled? The result could be war between Britain and Japan. Who else could become embroiled in the conflict? Russia? Australia? Your own country perhaps? Or half the world?"

Gorman downed another shot of rotgut gin. He knew the old woman was right. Inevitably, brave soldiers would spill their blood. And all because of the childish whim of a beautiful lady pirate.

"All right," he said after a mo-

ment's thought, "I'll put a stop to it. It shouldn't be too hard. The meeting is set for two nights from now. Mitsusumi is to come alone through the Alley of Rats. I'll waylay him and steal the down payment, making it look like an ordinary robbery. That way the Tigress'll have to renegotiate with you. Fair enough?"

"That is satisfactory."

"Good. Now there's a couple of questions I want answers to. Do you know who ambushed us at Aberdeen?"

"Yes. That was Ho Yen's doing."

"And who sent the dacoit tonight?"

"I did."

Gorman started, then nodded in approval, impressed by the old woman's frankness. He raised his hand in a gesture of farewell and got up to leave.

"Wait!" The aged crone's sibilant hiss halted the American in his tracks. "Now I have a question for you," she said. "Have you ever heard your little thief mention acquiring the broken half of an old Chinese coin?"

Gorman immediately recalled the coin fragment he had once seen the Tigress handle so lovingly. "What's so important about that?" he asked.

"It represents an ancient debt," the Hag muttered cryptically. "Long ago, when I was but a girl, the colony of Hong Kong was founded by members of my family. They were adventurers, opium pirates. One of them made a pact involving that coin and others like it. My house is honor-bound to grant the bearer of one of those coins whatever he may desire."

So that was it, thought Gorman. Such a boon was not to be used lightly; that is why the Tigress held it in reserve. Perhaps she intended to use it to check any move the Old Hag might make against her, now that she had sealed her bargain with the Japanese. If so, he mused, she had already waited too long.

The old woman seemed to study Gorman's face as she awaited some comment. "Well, this is all news to me," he remarked truthfully. "The Tigress never told me a thing about it."

As the American turned and strode away, the crone called after him, "Remember, John Gorman! Should you ever find one of those coins, return it to me and whatever you desire shall be yours . . ."

Thick curtains of fog hung in the air, making the dark night even darker. In the Alley of Rats, John Gorman crouched awaiting his prey. Hidden in a damp crevice between two crumbling tenements, he hoped the wait would not be a long one. The alley was unlighted and finding one's way was difficult even on a clear night. The wan, yellowish light that escaped through gaps in curtained windows high above provided only scant illumination.

Gorman was dressed as an ordinary seaman once more. He felt more comfortable, but no less guilty. The American well knew that there had never been a time when the White Tigress would have hesitated, even for a second, to sacrifice him if the need had arisen. But that still didn't make it any easier for him to betray her now. He told himself once more that it was for her own good, and the good of the world. Such decisions did not rest lightly on so young a pair of shoulders.

Presently, Gorman heard footsteps. Cloaked in deep shadows, he was able to observe unseen the one who now traversed the alleyway. As the fog-enshrouded figure came into view, Gorman was able to recognize it by shape and gait as Mitsusumi. As the Japanese passed, Gorman glided from his place of concealment and struck his victim down with a heavy blow to the back of the neck. Catching the sagging figure, the American dragged the unconscious man into a small patch of

light from one of the windows.

A quick but thorough search of the man's pockets revealed a deringer and an envelope. The envelope contained the Tigress's down payment: a few bills of large denominations. Discarding the envelope, Gorman rolled the bills into a small wad and jammed it deep into his pants pocket. Then he placed Mitsusumi behind some crates to conceal him from any other who might be prowling the alleyways this night. In a few hours the Japanese would awaken with no more ill effects than a headache and loss of face.

Having accomplished his mission, Gorman now decided that he must confront the White Tigress one last time. He knew she waited not far distant in a shabby hideaway they had used as a clandestine meeting place in times past. At least he could explain what he had done and why. After spelling out her options, he would then be happy to leave her with most of Mitsusumi's money, retaining only enough to get away to some other part of the world. Thus resolved, the American set off down the alley towards the hideout.

When he arrived there moments later, however, he was taken aback to discover several Chinamen lingering near the entrance. Gorman shoved his way past these, kicked open the door, and stepped boldly into the room.

The place was filled with perhaps a dozen sinister figures. Chinese bandits with pock-marked, sin-pitted faces mingled with savage outcast sailors, the dregs of the South Seas. The Tigress was absent. Gorman swore in surprise; it was the old woman in black who awaited him in her stead. At her side was another; one who wore a wide-sleeved robe of green silk and a skull-cap topped with a tiny coral ball--the Mandarin Ho Yen.

"What's going on here?" the American demanded in no friendly tone.

"Greetings, youngster," cackled

the crone. "I believe you've met the Mandarin. He, too, has spies throughout Hong Kong. From your mention of the Alley of Rats, he was able to locate this hideaway. The Mandarin is beholden to me, and was happy to cooperate. Now he has a hated enemy--your 'bitch'--where he wants her, and I too have a prize." The nails of her bony fingers tapped the yellowing pages of the geological survey.

"You can keep your papers, Hag," retorted Gorman, "but I want the woman. And I'll have her if I have to batter my way through these goons and wring your scrawny neck!"

"Perhaps you could do that; perhaps not. If you do, you won't last twenty-four hours in Hong Kong. In any case you will never see your little slut again."

Gorman fumed helplessly. He knew that the harriidan was right. Then he remembered the strangely broken coin, and the old woman's queer debt of honor. He remembered in what apartment the Tigress had toyed with the coin, and the hiding place in which she secreted it.

By an intense effort of will, the American unclenched tightly balled fists that trembled with the urge to smash and destroy. He turned sharply on his heel and strode from the room, his deep voice booming, "I'll be back!"

Outside, Gorman hastened through deserted, fog-choked streets to that other apartment. Ascertaining that he was not followed, he retrieved the coin and hurried back to the Alley of Rats.

Less than an hour had elapsed when he stormed back into the room where the cutthroats waited, brandishing the coin and shouting, "I've come to buy you off, old witch!"

"My coin!" The cry burst from Ho Yen's lips as his eyes narrowed to burning slits. The criminals under his command tensed, awaiting the order to spring into action. Of the old woman there was no sign.

"Give me my coin!" hissed the Mandarin.

Gorman held the coin before the Chinaman's gaze before enclosing it in his clenched fist. "Not on your life, you slant-eyed son of a bitch. Try and take it."

The Mandarin's reply was an incoherent screech of rage, but his men understood it well enough. The horde thronged about Gorman with murder in their eyes, a big Polynesian taking the lead. Gorman gleefully caved in his map with the fist that clutched the coin. Others sprang in to take their fallen comrade's place. Gorman instinctively dropped into a boxer's crouch, ducking wildly thrown blows. As the cutthroats closed in, the American used quick venomous jabs to drive back any who got too close while laying about him with sledgehammer punches that always found their mark.

Most of the Chinese stayed down when struck squarely, but others staggered back to let their comrades take up the battle while they cleared their heads or got back their wind. Some had had time to become fearful of Gorman's fighting fury, and sought to wear him down by attacking in rotation. But the young giant was a constantly moving blur, and the few ill-timed blows his opponents managed to land had so far sapped none of his fierce strength or vigor.

Gorman had just taken out another Chinaman with an uppercut when a brass-knuckled fist glanced across his cheek, cracking the bone and filling his eyes with stars. The American, who had been pacing himself to conserve strength, now cut loose with a flurry of powerful but erratic blows in order to gain space to shake his head clear. Surprized, his opponents backed off momentarily.

"Miserable cowards!" hissed the Mandarin. "Get the coin!"

At the sound of their master's voice, the cutthroats abandoned all caution and swarmed over Gorman in

a yelling, screaming melee. Those directly in front of him paid for their recklessness with broken noses, shattered jaws, and cracked ribs. The rest assaulted the beleaguered American with kicks, gouges, and low blows.

Suddenly a heavy leaden sap thudded across Gorman's skull, laying his scalp open. Stunned, he crashed to his knees, the room whirling before his dizzy gaze as he fought to remain conscious. His enemies, emboldened by his predicament, stepped up their vicious attack. Their fists pounded him relentlessly while savage kicks crashed painfully into his groin and kidneys.

Lashing out in sheer desperation, Gorman struggled to regain his feet. Foes piled on his back, seeking to force him to the floor with their weight. Gorman thrashed about to dislodge them, like a great hound shaking loose a pack of mangy rats, even as he fended off kicks and blows. His enemies hung on tenaciously while others added their weight to the assault. A hobnailed boot caught Gorman in the face; blood sprayed from his nostrils as his nose broke. He was forced onto his hands and knees.

More kicks struck at Gorman's groin and kidneys, as well as his face, neck, and temples. His enemies struck at will now; he could defend himself no longer. He toppled under their onslaught, and sought to curl into a ball. The rain of kicks and blows continued unabated. The grueling punishment Gorman had undergone so far would have already killed a lesser man. Only the iron bands of muscle that sheathed his vitals saved him from internal injury.

Throughout his ordeal, Gorman had clutched the coin in a vise-like grip. Now the Mandarin's men labored to break that grip. While the rest held him down, two Chinese thugs struggled to pry the American's fingers apart, ripping the flesh

of his hands with their talons, but to no avail. A new series of kicks and blows likewise failed to loosen that iron grip.

Gorman's face was now a white mask of agony. His lips writhed back to bare clenched teeth. Sweat streamed from every pore, running rivulets through blood that oozed sluggishly from his broken flesh.

"Break his fingers, you fools," ordered the Mandarin. "Cut his throat if you have to."

While others held the clenched fist steady, one of the thugs stomped on the hand again and again. Still the American would not give up the coin. The Mandarin drew a knife from within one of his wide sleeves and stepped forward. Gorman writhed frantically beneath the bodies that held him pinned, but could not escape.

"Stop!" A sudden command from the doorway halted the Mandarin Ho Yen in his tracks. The old woman in black had returned. "Release him!"

Without looking to their master for approval, the Mandarin's men freed Gorman and stepped back. The American rose unsteadily, his body a black and blue mass of welts and abrasions. His clothing hung on him in bloody tatters as he hobbled towards the Hag.

"Where . . . the hell . . . were you?" he croaked in a hoarse whisper.

"It was necessary to secure the documents in a safe place at once. You'll be happy to know they'll be used wisely in the coming decades. Now I believe you have something for me." The old woman extended her hand. Gorman placed the jagged coin fragment, from which a single drop of his blood hung, in her wrinkled palm.

"Name your boon!" the ancient one commanded.

"All . . . I . . . want . . . is . . . the Tigress," Gorman replied with considerable effort.

The withered crone looked at him with a mixture of bewilderment and sympathy, but neither admiration nor respect. "You are a young fool," she cackled, "but an incredibly tough one, nevertheless. I do believe you are the toughest bully-boy to swagger through Hong Kong in many a year." She paused for an instant. "But now, I think, you've learned that no matter how tough you are, the world is tougher by far.

"Go in peace while your legs can still carry you. Fear not; the girl will be released unharmed."

An hour later found Gorman walking along the waterfront at Wan Chai, trying his best not to limp. In some places the pain had subsided, but in others--throat, abdomen--it was much worse. His broken nose spread a mask of numbness across his face. He needed medical attention and knew where to get it. There was an elderly Chinese doctor in the area who owed him a favor. The old doc would be happy to tend his injuries, and would hide him until he recuperated. Then he could slip quietly out of Hong Kong.

Gorman sighed and looked out over the harbor. The fog eddied up from the stagnant water in a swirling miasma. Ships came and went, as always, but now only their lights were visible, moving slowly across the water like ghosts. The foghorns moaned an accompanying dirge.

It was late. The wharves were quiet and all but deserted. For the first time Gorman could feel the fog's clammy dampness; it chilled him to the marrow. He was about to continue on his way when he heard footsteps behind him--the click of a lady's high heels.

He turned in time to see the wisps of vapor part as the White Tigress

stepped into view. She said nothing as she approached, until she was a foot or so away from him. Then she gasped when she saw the appalling extent of his injuries. Her large grey eyes looked sorrowful.

"Oh, Gorman," she said softly, "you came back for me."

Gorman shrugged. He couldn't help but smile. With his one eye not swollen shut, he could see that the Tigress looked none the worse for her captivity. She had probably done some fast talking and wouldn't have needed him after all.

The girl reached up and lightly caressed Gorman's cheek with her small, slim-fingered hand. He winced in pain at the contact. Then, steeling himself, he swept her into his aching arms. For a moment there was passion as the man's rude embrace made her catch her breath, and her hands roamed over his broad back and down his sides.

They gazed deeply into each other's eyes, and she gently kissed his pulped lips.

"Forget about me, Gorman," she whispered. "I'm poison."

With those words, she slipped from his embrace and melted back into the fog. His last sight of the White Tigress was the delicious sway of her hips and buttocks as she walked away from him . . .

A short time later, Gorman reached into his pocket and discovered that the wad of money he had acquired earlier that night was gone. Perhaps he had lost it in the fight, but he felt sure that the Tigress had picked him clean with the consummate skill of a born pickpocket. The American allowed himself a short, self-mocking laugh. Live and learn, he mused philosophically. The world is, indeed, a very tough place.

The Cuckoo's Revenge

by Robert E. Howard

I plastered rolls with Belgian cheese
For an honest livelihood;
A haughty flapper turned me down
But my revenge was good.

I lay in wait by the meadow gate
Until I got my chance;
I did not hit her, I only bit her
In her passionate pink silk pants.

I laughed at her bleat as her panties' seat
Gave way most utterly,
And I sank my teeth in the flesh beneath—
Revenge was sweet to me.

You, proud beauty, will marry some sap,
And I will laugh with a right good cheer—
How will you account on your honeymoon
For those teeth-prints on your rear?

The Beautiful and Damp

by Manly Wade Wellman

Derek Marshall hated to shut himself up in his lonely house. The night was clear and balmy, with not a mosquito discernible, and the silver slice of moon overhead made Derek wish he had a pretty girl, all to himself on these forty wooded acres. Thus dreaming, he strolled through the pines to the clearing where the lily-pond lay. And there was just such a girl as he had always wanted, divesting herself of her clothes.

Derek stared and dropped his cigarette, then walked quickly into view. "No swimming here," he ventured in a clear, diffident voice, "under penalty of the law."

The girl kicked off her slippers and threw aside a semi-transparent garment. Then she faced him, dressed only in silk stockings, filmy panties and an inadequate wisp of lace that hugged her young breasts. She was a tall specimen with pleasant roundures, crowned with mahogany-colored hair. Her oval face might have been classic in its beauty save for the nose-tilt and the slant of the large, dark eyes.

"You don't look like a policeman," she objected in a voice like a world-weary violincello, and lifted a foot to draw off the stocking.

No more he did. Bright of eye, tawny of hair, with tweed jacket and flannel slacks well-cut to his lengthy body, he had nothing night-sticky or broken-archy about him. He cleared his throat.

"I'm no policeman, but this is my property," he informed her. "I forbid you to swim in that pond."

She tossed her mahogany mane and removed the other stocking. "But I'm not swimming," she reminded him, her cello-voice even more weary.

"You're going to be in a minute. And when you come out, I'll turn you over to the constable."

She laughed, shortly but melodiously, and stepped forward into the water. It came to the mid-point of her sweetly turned thighs. The oval of her face, like a silver mask in the moonglow, registered superior pity of his denseness.

"I don't intend to come out," she explained, as though to a dull child. "I'm committing suicide."

And she slid herself under water like a very lovely muskrat.

Derek goggled more than ever, swore, then tore himself out of the tweed jacket. He raced across four yards of grass and dived headlong in. As he did so, he meditated savagely on how wet the water would be. Half a second later, cleaving the surface, he noted that it was not only wet but distinctly cool. And the half-second after that he meditated and noted nothing, for some hard object smote his head as a hammer smites a nail, and his five senses slipped away like so many fair-weather friends when your money gives out.

Agas passed, and then he felt himself rising into some sort of dim consciousness. He was flying or floating, and it seemed very restful and convenient. Was he dead? Probably. In heaven? Probably not, or his sins had been in vain. He sighed deeply and comfortably.

"I hope you're satisfied," spoke the cello-voice from above, not weary this time but deeply exasperated. "You've completely spoiled my suicide."

He shifted his head at last. It was resting on a firm, soft pillow.

His shaky hand, creeping upward to investigate, touched bare flesh like wet satin. She was holding his head in her lap. Something slapped his fingers away.

"You'd better not be that type," she admonished him bleakly.

He made shift to sit up, gently rubbing his aching forehead, blinked water from his eyes, and felt better. "Sorry," he apologized. "I didn't mean to paw. What happened?"

Her face, near his in the dim wash of light, permitted itself to smile thinly. Her mouth was full and red, as though slightly and becomingly bruised. "You dived into the water after me," she told him, "and landed on a big stone. Almost broke your neck. I dragged you out."

"Thanks, awfully."

"Not at all." She rose to her feet, a silvery, shapely statue that made his eyes swim with admiration. "And now I'll take up my own unfinished business."

She faced toward the water. Derek, still groggy, could not rise to prevent her, and so he groaned his hol-lowest. In a trice she was back on her knees beside him.

"Aren't you all right?" she demanded anxiously.

"Don't drown yourself yet," he begged. "Take care of me first." She was sitting on the grass again, drawing his head into her lap as before. "What are you dying about, anyway?"

"It's one of those stories that simply isn't told," she demurred, then broke off to shiver. Even to Derek's blurred vision, it was one of the most delicious shivers achieved since the dawn of history. "I'm getting cold."

"There lies my jacket," pointed out Derek. "Put it around your shoulders. Now, let's start with introductions: Derek Marshall this end. Twenty-nine. Writer. Income--modest. Future--brilliant."

The girl had found a comb in his breast pocket and with it was fight-

ing at her dripping hair. "Dru Connatt," she said in turn. "Twenty-one. Bitter girl graduate. Income--too much. Future--nil."

Derek was fast recovering. He sat up again but, to guard against further attempts at self-destruction, he slanted his supporting arm across Dru Connatt's knees. Nice knees they were, too--round but graceful, with full thighs above them and trim shanks below.

"What," he pursued, "are you doing forty miles from New York and three miles from the railroad? And why not explain comfortably, over a drink up at my house?"

"No drinks," she said definitely. "Not for all the peaches in Georgia, Mr. Marshall. And we're wasting each other's time."

She began to get up, and he quickly clamped her legs with his arm. "No, don't pop into the pond again," he pleaded. "A cigarette first--you'll find them in my side pocket."

She dug them out and held a blazing match. Her face, tinted a trifle by the little scrap of flame, had more of an expression of serenity than before, and looked even sweeter. She blew two rings through the round red O of her pursed lips. Then she began:

"Do you know Anson Hughes?"

"The portrait painter." Derek shook his head. "I've seen his work, but I never had the honor--"

"Oh, it's no honor." The cello voice struck a venomous note. "He's meaner than the meanest flower that blows. I'd like to gouge the eyes out of his wooden head."

"I gather," said Derek, "that he turned you down." He paused to scan, with well-bred approval, her proud, sorrowful face and her rich but firm body-curves. "Mr. Hughes," he added, "doesn't know a good thing when he sees it."

Dru Connatt drew her lips tight and gathered the jacket together at the front.

"I met him at one of Charlie Steuben's parties," she elaborated, "and he went into raptures about my figure." She set her teeth and spoke through them. "He was all that a romantic artist should be--wavy hair, luminous eyes, swooning voice. Over the third cocktail he begged me to come to his studio."

Derek spouted smoke at the heavens. "And you?" he prompted.

"I spent all the next day thinking it over. It would be a tremendously serious step, I felt--one that would change my life-direction to a thousand separate points of the compass. Unconventional, impractical, unpredictable--and dazzling. So, after dinner tonight, I went to his studio." Another pause. "You see, I'm an orphan. I have only lawyers, and they advise me about my money--nothing else. There was nobody to argue me out of it."

"I'd have argued you out of it," Derek assured her.

The girl did not comment. Her hands were fluffing her hair. "Do I look a fright?" she asked. "But wait, let's stick to the subject of Anson Hughes. What do you think he wanted of me?"

Derek moistened his lips. "I daren't guess."

Her eyes blazed, her nostrils dilated, and she snorted like the most seductive of horses.

"He wanted to paint me as the Spirit of Architecture!"

"No!" ejaculated Derek.

"Yes. After I'd argued myself out of all my pride and virtue and had come to him, grinning like a passionate piano, he wanted to paint me!"

Derek could think of nothing appropriate to say.

"To paint me!" Dru Connatt's voice rose in an outraged wail, as if the cello strings were drawn too tight. "My legs, to him, were only things to stand on! My body inspired him only to daub color on canvas! And my heart--he was too

stupid to hear it break!"

Derek emitted a sympathetic tongue-click. "My offer of a drink still stands. It's only a short walk to my house."

She shook her head emphatically. "Nothing doing. I came up here to die, miles away from him. I got off at your junction, and this was the first drownable water I found." She turned yearning eyes upon the lily-pond. Somewhere along its far edge a little frog began to trill a song of love.

Derek puffed on his cigarette. "Why not just ignore the swine?" he suggested.

Dru Connatt's eyes glittered in the moonlight. "He seared my soul," she replied, biting off each word with small, even, white teeth, "and I want to sear his--sear it until the steam rises up to the North Star."

"So you're going to kill yourself. How will he even know you're dead?"

"In my pocketbook, yonder beside my dress, is a single scrap of writing--his name and telephone number. The authorities will call him here to look at me."

"Now wait." Derek tried hard to make his good-humored face seem wise and earnest. "Your heart isn't broken, young Dru Connatt."

"Oh, isn't it?" she almost shrieked at him. "It's been pulverized into its separate atoms, that's all."

"Not a bit," insisted Derek. "You're angry and hurt, but not heart-broken."

"Is that so? Well, then, why do you think I came--"

"You came here to spite him. Your sub-conscious mind knows that he'll have a forty-mile trip, and that the sight of your soggy remains at the end of it will give him a bad half-hour. Now add the conscious realization that, when his bad half-hour is up, you'll still be dead. Yes, and for a half-hour after that, and for a long string of half-hours, to the end of time."

She flipped her cigarette stub into the pond. "I thought," she said, "that psychoanalysis was out of all civilized small-talk, like mah jong and other passe amusements."

"If I'm old-fashioned, make the most of it. What I'm trying to get over is that suicide would be the most futile--silly--"

She slapped his face resoundingly. Rising to her feet, she threw his jacket upon the ground.

"Goodbye, Mr. Marshall," she bade him, in a tone chilly enough to keep all summer. "Thanks for the use of your pond."

As she stepped toward it, he scrambled up and seized her.

They wrestled on the turf near the moonlit water. Dru Connatt's near-naked body was lithe and strong, and Derek had all he could do to subdue her without hurting her. Twice she broke away, and he dragged her back from the very edge of the pond. Then he locked her in his arms, pinning her elbows to her sides.

"Let me go," she panted.

"Not for a second," he wheezed back.

"Let me go, I tell you!" She thrust her face close to his, trying to menace him. She succeeded only in being too lovely to resist. Forgetting his rescue work, Derek kissed her.

"You dare!" she cried wrathfully, and tossed her head like a wild thing in a trap. Her brow connected solidly with Derek's chin dimple.

Where, he wondered suddenly, had all the fireworks come from? Spirals and stars of light blazed all around him. No, they were fading far away. And he fell backward, fell about a thousand miles.

Again he awakened, laggingly and lazily. He was sprawled half on the grass, half on Dru Connatt's bent knee, and his buzzing head was

supported on her shoulder.

"I didn't mean to do it!" The cello quality was back in her voice as she sobbed into his ruffled hair. "I--I don't even know how it happened."

With pardonable low cunning he let his face sag, as if he still swooned, against the cool smoothness of her half-bare bosom. Suddenly he kissed a particularly appetizing curve. Dru Connatt stiffened abruptly, said three words that nice girls only learned in the last three months, and thrust him away. Chuckling, he dropped back on the sward.

"That's twice I've come to in your arms," he sighed. "Shut off the meter again--I love waking up."

For a moment she tried to keep an outraged face, then smiled. "I'm so glad you're not hurt," she said honestly.

"It's worth the trouble, having you take care of me," he replied gallantly.

"Taking care of you has become quite a career in my past twenty minutes."

"Want to keep it up?"

She laughed the same short, melodious laugh she had once voiced on the brink of suicide. "I've an idea," she announced.

"A good one?"

"I hope so." She leaned toward him. "If I may reopen an early phase of this discussion--"

"Yes?"

"How about going to your place and having that drink you mentioned?"

"Come on," he cried. Springing up, he caught her hand and drew her after him. "We'll have three drinks. And then we'll go on from there, eh?"

Her smile was tender, happy and excited, all at once.

"As far as you like," she agreed.

The Spicy Strips

by Will Murray

One of the features that made Culture Publications' Spicy pulp line stand out from its competition--other than its policy of displaying female pulchritude in all its "creamy alabaster" splendor--was the inclusion of regular comic strip features among its pages and pages of cold type and hot prose.

"Sally the Sleuth" was the first Spicy--er--strip, and she appeared in the very first Spicy, Spicy Detective Stories, in the November 1934 issue. Her premier adventure was but two pages long, and subtitled "A Narrow Escape."

The plot was serendipitously simple. Sally, dressed in a Mae West-style 30s outfit, is conferring with her boss who, for the nearly twenty-year run of the strip, is known only as "Chief." One has the impression that Sally is a detective. Whether she works with the local police, the Justice Department or a private agency is never exactly clear.

Anyhow, in panel one the Chief informs Sally that "The Dusty Gang has just gotten in a shipment of dope. See if you can get the goods on them."

"O.K. Chief," Sally gamely says, adding, "I'll take Peanuts along as usual."

Peanuts is a scruffy little kid who might have escaped from the Little Rascals. He was Sally's junior sidekick for most of the 30s.

Spying on the gang's hideout, Sally sneaks in through the transom of a back door, incidentally showing a bit of leg and frilly panties in the process. Once inside, she comes across a closet full of disguises and decides if you can't spy on 'em, join 'em.

"I'll just slip out of these feminine things and in a minute you won't know little Sally."

This last must have been directed to the reader, because Sally is alone as she strips down to her foundation garments. But not for long. The gang stumbles upon her in mid-strip. (That's a double-entendre, folks!)

"OO-hi!" Sally says, covering her bare chest with delicate hands.

The thugs drag hapless Sally to the "Big Shot," who says, "Say--I know that little *!#!#!" Unquote. He orders Sally chained in the cellar, for no more apparent purpose than to display her charms in a bondage scene. Somehow, in the excitement, Sally's bra has reappeared on her chest. One would suspect it was the result of the kindness of some sensitive thug, except that as the gang leave her spread-eagled against a wall, one of them chortles: "Wait til the rest of the mob get here and then we'll have some fun."

No sooner are they gone than Peanuts appears in the barred window. "Buck up--we'll get you out," he promises.

Sure enough, the Chief and his men roust the Dusty Gang, and in the last panel a rescued Sally receives a warm hug from the Chief--while a disappointed Peanuts grumbles in the background. "Some guys have all the luck!"

I've never wanted to be a comic strip character, but if I did, next to maybe Superman, I wouldn't mind being Peanuts. In the many years he was associated with Sally, he saw more naked female flesh than any ten-year-old has the right to imagine exists. Most of it Sally's. More than once, the kid found himself

hogtied to the nude but nonplussed lady sleuth. Not a bad way to while away one's formative years.

As for Sally--whose last name was apparently confidential--she wasn't always so cozy with the Chief. In one story, he, after rescuing her half-naked body from yet another evil fiend, remarked: "Sally, you get dumber every day."

The Spicies may have celebrated the female form, but not the feminine mind. Even Sally had a low opinion of herself, remarking at the climax of another adventure--in which she narrowly avoided being turned into a Living Dead Woman--"They could never make a zombie out of me--Chief says I never had a brain."

The Chief may have said that, but you have to wonder if he meant it. Every month, like clockwork, he assigned her the most dangerous and impossible cases to cross his desk. And she solved them. Usually. Peanuts was a big help. And the Chief was often the rescuer. But it was Sally who went where no man ever did. Or woman. She was a definite pioneer of the sexy comic strip heroine. Playboy's "Little Annie Fanny" couldn't have existed without her.

Sally was the first sexy comic strip to appear in a pulp, a cross between the notorious Tijuana Bibles and the vaguely risque strips that appeared in vaguely risque mags like College Stories and Paris Nights. The Spicy strips differed from those in that where the earlier features were consecrated to the exploration of sexy situations, the Spicy strips fused sexy situations with genre action and adventure, adding dollops of mild bondage and masochism in the mix.

Now tame, it was revolutionary for its time. Simply put, sex mag editors, believing that sex was its own justification, had never thought of it before.

Sally grew over the course of her paper lifespan. In the 30s,

an occasional two-part story surfaced. In the 40s, she had grown up, slimmed down, and turned into a typical 40s heroine. She lost her clothes less often, and as a reward was promoted to longer stories. By the late 40s, her adventures were eight pages long and, with some color, could have appeared in any comic book. Censorship problems forced Sally to clean up her act. She grew less interesting, but the stories became more realistic, with recognizable plots, where before they were just vehicles for a little sappy burlesque.

Sally--as with the rest of the Spicy Strips--was the work of an artist and later Spicy editor Adolphe Barreaux. It was his real name. He hooked up with Spicy executive Frank Armer in the late 20s, and somewhere along the line he formed an art shop called Majestic Studios to produce features like Sally.

Majestic Studios eventually employed a string of artists and perhaps only one writer, a gent named Worth Carnaham, who later got into the comic book publishing business. It's not clear if Carnaham was the author of the early Sally the Sleuth strips--Barreaux himself was capable of scripting the simple two-page adventures. In fact, my grandmother and/or my eight-year-old nephew could have handled the work. It was not exactly heavy lifting. Not with dialogue like the following:

Cops to crooks: "Stick em up! Where's Sally?"

Crooks to cops: "You win!"

Once Sally proved herself, other strips were introduced into the Culture titles. They were definitely a mixed bag.

The second major Spicy strip was "Diana Daw," who debuted in Spicy-Adventure Stories in December 1934. Diana started out as your basic girl explorer, galavanting around the globe with her boyfriend Ted. By 1940, when Spicy-Adventure got on a Science Fiction kick, Diana and

Ted were sent off-world. One strange sequence had Diana hopping from planet to planet. Escaping one scrape on Venus, they head back to earth only to be hit by a meteor shower and knocked off course toward Mercury. That's a hell of a deflection, but logic and science only got in the way when the stories were a mere four pages long.

On Mercury, things are a little different--as Diana and Ted discover. There, the women rule and effeminate men are kept in harems. Xala, Queen of Mercury, takes a shine to Ted and wants to add him to her harem. But the warrior woman who first captured Ted lays prior claim. They end up fighting for him in a gladiatorial arena. The Queen wins, but then Diana, bare-breasted and carryign sword and shield, steps in to claim Ted as her own.

That's where the February 1941 installment ended. Unlike Sally the Sleuth, "Diana Daw" was a continuing serial. By the time it was over, Diana had been to all seven continents, sailed every earthly sea, and visited most of the solar system's heavenly bodies--even as she displayed her own. Any excuse would do. In the Mercury sequence, when her spaceship gets too near the sun, Diana complains, "I've got to take off some of these clothes--the heat is becoming unbearable." And removes her space suit to reveal bra and panties. It was broad, obvious, even dumb, stuff.

The artist signed that strip "Clayton Maxwell," but he was really Max Plaisted, who did the spot illustrations to most of Robert Leslie Bellem's Dan Turner stories in Spicy Detective and elsewhere. Later, he got into comic books.

Over at the tamer Trojan side of the Culture line, a comic strip called "Betty Blake" was introduced in Super-Detective Stories in late 1934 or early 1935. Drawn by H. L. V. Parkhurst, who went on to do many Spicy covers and interior art,

it was a weak, unappealing item. Probably because Betty kept her clothes on at all times. Parkhurst did the strip in wash because Super-Detective was not technically a pulp, but a bedsheet magazine on better quality paper. It didn't help. Both the magazine and the strip expired swiftly.

A very similar strip was later introduced in Trojan's tepid Spicy Detective clone, Private Detective Stories. "Sob Sister Sue" premiered in the first issue of Private Detective, dated June 1937. She was a demure reporter, a "sob sister" in 30s vernacular, who worked on a big city newspaper under an editor named Mr. Hart. Her first adventure was called "Coded in Earnest," and was patterned after the "Sally the Sleuth" formula of two-page non-continued stories.

In her first story, Sue is sent to a local nightclub where one Ginky Jones has committed suicide under mysterious circumstances. She takes a table and makes a pretense of waiting for a late boyfriend, but one of the nightclub thugs recognizes her. Their whispered plan to kidnap her is detected by the resourceful gal reporter, who is an expert lip reader. She makes a hurried call to the Gazette, seeming to natter about a new dress purchase. So the gang captures her--little dreaming that every third word of Sue's phone message to Mr. Hart spelled out: "Have the goods. Danger! Rush!!!"

When the cops swoop down, all Sue can think of to say is, "I've got enough on them to hang them, Mr. Hart."

Sue never lost her long working girl's dress, and the strip lasted only into the early 40s. The artist signed his work with only an anonymous "M", so his true identity is uncertain. He was probably Jay McArdle, one of Barreaux's staff artists.

Spicy Mystery Stories, the horror and supernatural title of the line,

didn't get around to publishing a comics feature until 1937, but when it did, it was a doozy.

"Olga Mesmer, the Girl with the X-Ray Eyes," first appeared in the August 1937 issue. Hers was a strange, convoluted story.

It began with the meeting of Dr. Hugo Mesmer and the mysterious Margot, who was to become Olga's mother. Hugo rescues Margot from jumping into a river to escape a shadowy knife-wielding assailant.

Margot doesn't remember who she is--which is fortunate because, as later developments ensure, she would not have been believed. Margot and Hugo marry, but not before Mesmer makes his bride-to-be a bizarre promise. Namely: "I am going to make you the most remarkable woman who ever lived."

It seems Margot's eyes are bewitching in a supernatural sense and Mesmer recognizes this. He goes to work, subjecting the half-nude woman to strange experiments involving a "soluble X-ray"--whatever that is. When he's done Margot must remain bedridden, her eyes bandaged. Mesmer, going a little cracked, starts throwing wild stag parties in the next room. Margot, hearing one in progress, tears off her bandages and her eyes see right through the solid wall like an X-ray. The power of her gaze kills Mesmer instantly. Margot falls unconscious, then dies--but not before giving birth to little Olga.

"The babe inherits the effects of the operation performed upon her mother, together with the mother's haunting charm. Adventures unheard-of are in store for her," a caption promises at the end of the first installment.

The next issue reveals the full-grown Olga, who possesses both X-ray vision and superhuman strength. Witnessing an attempted murder, she wrings the neck of a killer and rescues young Rodney Prescott. A doctor performs an emergency blood trans-

fusion from Olga to Rod, and he too is endowed with Olga's abilities. Sounds like the beginning of a great romance, except for Olga's guardian, "Daddy" Rankin, who has lusted after Olga these many years. He captures her and chains her in the cellar. This is easily accomplished because the blood transfusion has robbed Olga of her "power-chromosomes" and her abilities are now limited to X-ray vision and brain-stunning measurements.

Well, Red clobbers Rankin and off he and Olga go to discover the source of their powers. It gets pretty weird from here on. Going to her mother's grave, they meet a strange pointy-eared being who emerges from the ground and leads them to her mother, who is still alive and the queen of a subterranean supercivilization of immortals, called Sitnaltans. But all is not well under the earth. The pointy-eared Ombo is plotting revolt. Turns out it was Ombo who had forced Margot to flee twenty years ago, which led to her encounter with Hugo Mesmer--which in turn led, as we all know, to Olga.

Margot, Rod and Olga--whose clothes slip and shred at any excuse--battle the revolt, and then take off in a rocket for Venus, the true home of the Sitnaltans. And abruptly, the strip goes Buck Rogers--but only for one installment.

Just when things are getting really outre, suddenly the art style becomes crude and rushed, and abruptly all the plot threads are hastily resolved. On Venus, Margot receives an offer from "Boris, Prince of Mars" to marry him and bring peace to warring Mars and Venus.

"Mars!" Margot cries, fainting into the waiting arms of Rod Prescott. "Peace! At Last!"

Olga just stands there looking bemused, a bit player in her own strip.

"Olga Mesmer" was the only Spicy strip to fail. The suddenness of

it all is very suspicious. The last Olga episode was published in October 1938, only six months after Superman debuted in Action Comics. Because the Culture/Trojan line was published by Harry Donenfeld, who was also the publisher of Superman, it might be that, although Olga anticipated many of Superman's powers, it was too similar close to the best-selling Man of Steel and was killed to avoid stealing from Superman's uniqueness.

Or maybe Spicy Mystery readers just didn't like to read about women who were stronger than men. Who knows? The "Olga Mesmer" strip, by the way, was credited to "Watt Dell." He's the same artist who did many Spicy interior illustrations sometimes signing them "Watt Dell Lovett." Yet some of the Olga strips were signed "Stone." In the 40s, a very similar artist signed his Trojan work Paul H. H. Stone. Don't count on that being his real name, either.

In 1940, Spicy Mystery tried again. "Vera Ray" was her name. Watt Dell was the artist, but if it was the same Watt Dell, his style had sure changed for the worse. "Vera Ray" bore an uncanny resemblance to "Olga Mesmer." She was the daughter of Dr. Hannibal Ray, who plunged into an underground world inhabited by superscientific beings who exactly resemble Sitnaltans (but are known as "animal men") to grab their radium. He's into radium. So is Vera. Exposed to her father's Green Ray since birth, she sometimes glows in the dark, and her touch will paralyze like a black widow's bite. But when she touches her boyfriend, Tom Parnell, he gains temporary super-strength from the Green Ray emanations of Vera's lush body.

And speaking of Vera's body, it's a nice one, but she seldom loses as many clothes as good old Sally the Sleuth, despite being subjected to more rugged dangers, like being nearly devoured by a giant girl-eating plant in the Amazon.

Vera Ray kept going to the bitter end--or until Spicy Mystery ceased publication.

When Spicy Western Stories was launched in November 1936, it came equipped with its own feature. "Polly of the Plains" was its name. Polly, a Western girl educated in the East, is called home to help her ill father who is beset by rustlers in the pay of the evil "half breed" Pancho. Pancho owns the deed to Polly's father's ranch and lusts after Polly.

This causes no little friction between Pancho and Polly's new boyfriend, Jack Dawson. When Pancho tries to force himself on Polly, Jack intervenes. Pancho flips a knife at him, but sureshot Polly deflects the knife in midair with a trick pistol shot. More resourceful than Sally the Sleuth, Polly lost her clothes equally as often. Hers was another continuing storyline.

The first two "Polly of the Plains" episodes were signed "Michael," and are supposed to be the work of Bill Everett, who later created the comic book character the Sub-Mariner. With the third issue, Joseph Sokoli took over the art chores. Sokoli--his last name is sometimes spelled Skokoli and even Szokoli--was a frequent Spicy story and cover artist.

When Dan Turner, long a staple of Spicy Detective, was awarded his own magazine, Dan Turner, Hollywood Detective, it featured, naturally, a Dan Turner comic strip. These were whodunits written by creator Robert Leslie Bellem and drawn by Max Plaisted. Strangely, Dan Turner never lost his clothes in all his many adventures.

"Dan Turner" was not Bellem's first comic strip effort. Back around 1935, a strip that looked exactly like a Barreaux Majestic Studios product appeared in Standard Magazines' Thrilling Adventures. It was a futuristic adventure strip called "Ace Jordan," and was signed

"Bob MacKay." The art was by one of the Spicy house artists, either Plaisted or Sokoli. Bellem scripted. Everybody kept their clothes on in this one.

As comic books grew more and more popular with young readers (and pulps less popular), more strips appeared in the Trojan lines. "Gail Ford, Gail Friday" appeared in a revived Super-Detective after the war. Those stories were signed Eugene Leslie. Super-Detective boasted a second strip, Newton Alfred's "Ray Hale, News Ace." He was a kind of male Sob Sister Sue.

Leading Western, which came along in the wake of the demise of Spicy Western, had two strips--neither one of them very memorable. They were Don Tallant's latter-day Polly of the Plains, "Wilma West," and R. Morton's "Tex Gordon."

After Spicy Detective became Speed Detective in 1943, and eventually expired, "Sally the Sleuth" leapt nimbly over to the pages of Private Detective Stories. By that time, the feature was bylined Charles Barr. Her creator, Adolphe Barreaux, had stepped up to become editor of the Trojan line and evidently felt he had to keep a measure of editorial distance from his character. Barreaux's art style had become so homogenized by that time that it is difficult to say exactly if he still drew the strip. Anyway, Sally held forth, older and wiser, until that title expired in 1950. A second feature backed her up in those declining years, Ray McClelland's "Jerry Jasper," himself a sleuth of sorts.

Of all the Spicy strips, "Sally the Sleuth," innocent and unpretentious, was the best. But only during her two-page no-plot babyfat blonde days. It should be mentioned that Sally was also the most daring of the Spicy Strippers. She was the only member of her clan to reveal her tiny pinpoint nipples. After 1935, she grew more modest, as did

the rest of the Spicy line. The censors were on the prowl.

Sally must have taken the pulp magazine industry by storm because in the mid-30s, the rival Saucy Detective ripped her off--and I don't mean her clothes. The Saucy Sally the Sleuth was a rude, crude and lewd strip drawn by someone signing himself "Paul Jason." Although this short-lived item was brazenly called "Sally the Sleuth," it wasn't even close. The fact that the Spicies never copyrighted their contents must have emboldened the publishers of Saucy Detective in this foolish attempt to duplicate the unduplicatable.

Sally (drawn by Max Plaisted), Dan Turner (by Bellem and Barreaux), and Gail Ford all reappeared in color in Trojan Magazines' Crime Smashers comic book in 1951, but their era of glory was clearly over.

They don't make them like Sally anymore--which is to say sexy, but dumb. More sophisticated versions of that character have come down the pike since 1950, but all of them, from Little Annie Fanny to Phoebe Zeit-Geist, despite their pretense at humor, are meant to titillate. So was Sally, but by modern standards her adventures are laughably dumb.

Dumbness may not be thought of as a tradition, but at Risqué Stories it's all we have. Our regular feature called "Julie de Grandin" is dedicated to faithfully copying the kind of silliness "Sally the Sleuth" started over fifty years ago. Although inspired by the quite different silliness of Seabury Quinn's Jules de Grandin stories from Weird Tales, the strip is more of a Sally takeoff--right down to the heroine losing her clothes at the stupidest moments for the silliest reasons.

They don't make them like Sally the Sleuth anymore--but that doesn't mean we can't try!

[A historical footnote of no consequence whatsoever: When the charac-

ter was originally conceived, editor Bob Price and I first called her "Hellen van Helsing." It was Bob who suggested renaming her Julie

de Grandin--which she remains--after discovering that the Marvel Comics Dracula strip had featured a female descendant of Dr. Van Helsing.]

WRITERS' GUIDELINES ISSUED BY

EDITORS OF SPICY DETECTIVE, 1934.

1. In describing breasts of a female character, avoid anatomical descriptions.
2. If it is necessary for the story to have a girl give herself to a man, or be taken by him, do not go too carefully into details.
3. Whenever possible, avoid complete nudity of the female characters. You can have a girl strip to her underwear or transparent negligee or nightgown, or the thin torn shred of her garments, but while the the girl is alive and in contact with a man, we do not want complete nudity.
4. A nude female corpse is allowable, of course.
5. Also a girl undressing in the privacy of her own room, but when men are in the action try to keep at least a shred of something on the girls.
6. Do not have men in underwear in scenes with women, and no nude men at all.

The idea is to have a very strong sex element in these stories without anything that might be interpreted as being vulgar or obscene.

—Quoted in Snobbery with Violence by Colin Watson, London, 1970.

Contributed by Sidney Allinson, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.

Julie de Grandin

PSEX
PSYCHIC
PSLEUTH

in... "Trick-or-Treat Terror"

SCRIPT: ROBERT M. PRICE
ARTIST: ROBERT H. KNOX



ONE HALLOWE'EN NIGHT IN THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM OF PSYCHIC INVESTIGATOR JULIE DeGRANDIN.....



What Now?

---HE'S RIGHT!! BUT WAIT--
I CAN SENSE IT! BUT WAIT--
THERE'S A CHANCE YET IF I CAN
JUST GET AS FAR AS THE BOOK--
CASE--THERE MAY BE SOME-
THING HE HADN'T COUNT-
ED ON---

FIRST
TO CATCH 'ER
GETS A KISS!!!!
HAW HAW HAW

BLORRCH

I THOUGHT
SO!! HALLOWE'EN IS
SAMHAIN, THE MOST POWERFUL
NEXUS OF FORCES OF WHITE MAGIC!!
...SAYS I HAVE TO BE NAKED TO
CALL ON THE CTHONIC POWERS OF
NATURE...OH, WELL: THE IMPS
HAVE NEARLY ACCOMPLISHED
THAT ANYWAY----

---HUBBA HUBBA!
THIS IS GOING TO BE
MORE FUN THAN I EVER--
WAIT! DON'T TELL
ME SHE'S----



THERE GOES
THE LAST OF YOUR PINT-
SIZED CRONIES, MONSIEUR
JACQUES-OFF-IN-ZE-LANERN- NOW
TO MAKE YOU INTO PUMPKIN
PIE, YOU GROVELLING
SQUASH-PIG!!!

YOU!!

MIDNIGHT--
TIME TO UNMASK THE
SNIVELLING PUMPKIN-LIKE
OBJECT, AY??
STRANGELY
SILENT...

HAHA
HAHAHAHEE!!
WHAT AN ULTRA-
MAROONE!!

**TROY
TROWBRIDGE!!**

WHA--BUT--YOU'RE NO
WARLOCK!!!!

I MUST DO
THIS AGAIN-SO
GOOD FOR THE
BLOOD!

MY POOR BABY-
YOU'VE BEEN
CRUELLY
USED BY
SOME FOUL,
COWARDLY AND
BLASPHEMOUS
ENEMY WHO LACKED
COURAGE ENOUGH TO
FACE ME HIMSELF---
OR HERSELF!! AH,
OUI: IT MUST BE THAT
BUXOM BLACK MAGIC
BITCH, MARA THE
TEMPTRESS, TRYING TO
PURLOIN YOU AWAY!!!

UH--DON'T
WORRY ABOUT THEM
NOW, DARLING!!

JULIE?? I WAS
OUT TRICK-OR-TREATING
WITH MY NEPHEWS AND-
HEY, WHERE ARE THEY,
ANYWAY???????

GNIQUE
GNORKK

Risque Review

Vice Squad Detective #1, The Pulp Collector Press (8417 Carrollton Parkway, New Carrollton, MD 20784). \$3.50.

It is fortuitous for pulp fans that indefatigable pulp collector Greg Brumfield happened to come by an old coverless copy of a rare pulp called Vice Squad Detective. He thought others should have a chance to enjoy it as well and allowed Pulp Collector Press to copy the magazine for reprinting. The original pulp contained twelve stories, and the beautiful facsimile reprint of Vice Squad Detective #1 is one quarter of it. All three stories are doozies: "Nudist Gym Death Riddle," "Marijuana Vice Trap," and "The Amazing Case of the Blonde Dope Queen"! All feature headlong action, wonderfully vintage clichés, and outrageous campiness galore! These stories are perfect pulp, and no reader of Risque Stories should pass this

one up!

In fact, Vice Squad Detective out-spices the Spicies. The sex element is a bit more explicit, a tad hotter. Yet it displays the naivete of the pulp era that finds scandalous what we now take for granted. "Marijuana Vice Trap" is cut from the same cloth as Reefer Madness in its wildly exaggerated idea of the effects of marijuana. The writing style as well as the protagonists are straight out of the hard-boiled detective pulps. Future reprints from the pulp seem to feature a weird menace element, at least in the upcoming #2, which will offer "Secret of the House of Horror," "The Clue of the Hunted Vampire," and "The Four White Devils of Tien Tsin." It's really too bad that the original Vice Squad Detective had a run of only one issue, but its reprint reincarnation should last four small issues. Be sure to get 'em!

Readers' Rendezvous

Risque Stories [#4] is wonderful!
Jack Adrian
Worcestershire, England

"Sixgun Hellcats from Black River" is certain to win a World Fantasy Award next year. Yes, now I have seen the future of horror, and it is . . . Oops, here comes the nurse with my next dose of Thorazine.

Karl Edward Wagner
Chapel Hill, NC

I confess the guilty pleasure of enjoying Risque #4, although I won't admit it publicly without being stretched spreadeagle over a bed of white coals and flayed with the tresses of Julie de Grandin.

Cave/Hoffman/Cerasini's Justin Case tale was a nice little homage, and Will Murray's knowledge of the pulp heroes is as impressive as hell (as usual). I've heard a rumor of a suppressed chapter from N. Leo Lancer's "Love Slaves of the Sandi-

nista Torture Squad" in which it is revealed that Mengele is using the nuns for genetic experiments that will ultimately produce offspring incapable of leaving a dental record, but . . . well, you know how these publishing rumors get started.

Stefan Dziemianowicz
Union City, NJ

As for Risque Stories #4, the stories . . . well, they were spicy stories. 'Fraid I still prefer the Weird Tales stuff, where whatever spice there was had to take a back seat to the plot. I found the Julie de Grandin story more enjoyable than anything else in the book, although "Love Slaves" was at least readable, and Will Murray's nonfiction did not fail to please. I'd rate "Sixgun Hellcats" as only fair and did not think much of the other two stories.

Charles Garofalo
Wayne, NJ

Continued from p. 13:

That's why they're totalitarians. They want their Fuhrer to take care of everything.

"That's why their kind will never win America. We're all just too independent."

"Yeah, Gil, you're right. Without

them, Rockwell didn't have a body, and without him, they didn't have a brain!"

"That about says it, buddy. Now let's find that radio and call the police about that bombing tonight."

Copyright © 1987

"A Young Wife's Tale" and
"The Cuckoo's Revenge" by
Mrs. P. M. Kuykendall

"The Beautiful and Damp" by
Frances Wellman

Cover art by Stephen E. Fabian

All other material by
Cryptic Publications
Robert M. Price, Editor
107 East James Street
Mount Olive, North Carolina 28365