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Winter No. 11

STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

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UNUSUAL - EERIE - STRANGE

Jules de Grandin in

THE VENGEANCE OF INDIA

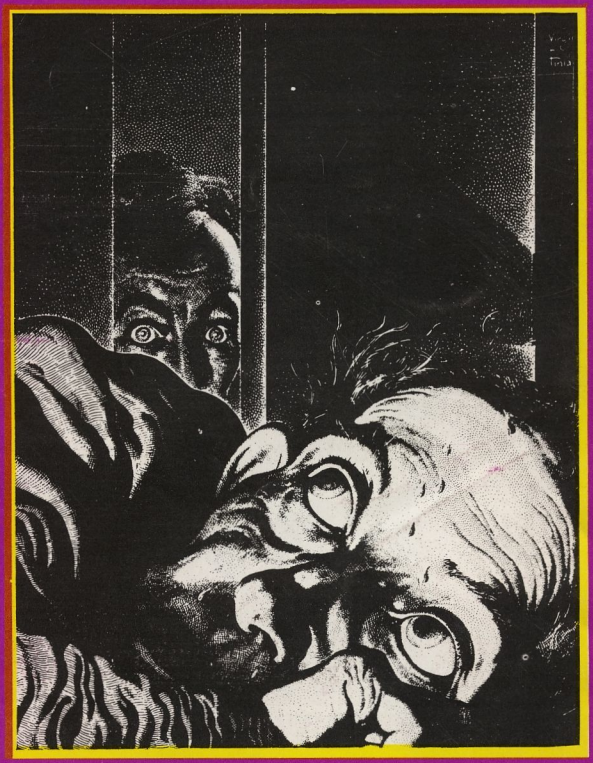
by SEABURY QUINN

WOLF HOLLOW BUBBLES

by DAVID H. KELLER

AFTER SUNSET

by PHILIP HAZLETON



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by PHILIP M. FISHER

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STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

Volume 2 *CONTENTS FOR WINTER* *Number 5*

Robert A. W. Lowndes, *Editor*

STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES, Vol. 2, No5, Winter 1968/69 (whole number 11). Published quarterly by Health Knowledge, Inc. Executive and editorial offices at 119 Fifth Avenue, N. Y., N. Y. 10003. Single copy 50c. Annual subscription (6 issues) $2.50 in the U. S., Canada, and Pan American Union. Foreign, $3.00. Manuscripts accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelopes will be carefully considered, but the publisher and editors will not be responsible for loss or damage. All payments for accepted contributions are made upon publication.

the editor's page

No one, least of all Mr. August Derleth, imagines or pretends that the Solar Pons stories are superior or equal to the Sherlock Holmes stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. And, really, there is no need for either superiority or equality here, in order to achieve what Derleth set out to do and succeeded in doing: produce a series of entertaining mystery and detective stories reminiscent of the Holmes-Watson tales.

Five collections of Solar Pons stories have appeared, under the imprint of Mycroft and Moran: *"In Re: Sherlock Holmes"* (12 tales: 1945); *The Memoirs of Solar Pons* (11 tales: 1951); *The Return of Solar Pons* (13 tales: 1958); *The Reminiscences of Solar Pons* (8 tales: 1961), and *The Casebook of Solar Pons* (12 tales: 1965). A small volume entitled *Three Problems for Solar Pons* contains three stories which appeared later in the "Return" collection; and 3 of the stories appeared in magazines before their hard-cover debuts.

Forewords to the hard-cover volumes are written by such staunch Sherlockians as Vincent Starrett, Ellery Queen, the late Edgar W. Smith, and the late Anthony Boucher; certainly it is not the feeling of these gentlemen, or of many other devotees of The Master, that Solar Pons is a poor or easily forgettable imitation.

In 1966, on the 12th of June to be exact, some West Coast devotees of Doyle and Derleth founded the Praed Street Irregulars, following the general pattern of the Baker Street Irregulars and other Sherlockian socities. The PSI distributes to its members a handsome, four page, letter size publication known as *The Pontine Dossier,* published irregularly; and you can obtain information about both the publication and the society from Luther Norris, 3844 Watseka Avenue, Culver City, California 90230. As is proper, the content is well written and of considerable interest to the person who has read the Solar Pons stories, and enjoys speculative essays relating to Pons and the relationships between these stories and the Sherlock Holmes tales; it is frankly a journal for an elite, but an open elite.

Interest in Solar Pons then exists widely enough for August Derleth to have brought forth *A Praed Street Dossier* (Mycroft & Moran, 1968; 108pp; $3.00), which consists of "writings about the writings", although three Solar Pons adadventures, new to the M & M series, are included. Two of these are science-fiction type adventures, written in collaboration with Mack Reynolds: *The Adventure of the Snitch in Time,* and *The Adventure of the Ball of Nostradamus.* (I find the first slight, but nonetheless enjoyable, while the second is a real chiller.)

This time, all the material about

the writings is by Derleth himself. The first section, is headed, "Solar Pons: Marginalia", and contains *The Beginning of Solar Pons, The Sources of the Tales, Concerning Dr. Parker's Background,* and *The Favorite Pastiches;* the second section, headed "From the Notebooks of Dr. Lyndon Parker", is, for me, the most fascinating section of the book (and how I wish Doyle had gathered a volume of similar fragments by Watson!) and includes one account of a complete case, *The Adventure of the Bookseller's Clerk.* The final section, "Solar Pons, Off-Trail" contains the collaborations mentioned above.

It is not, of course, necessary to have read *all* of the Solar Pons stories in order to enjoy this little volume, but I don't think it will be of much interest to the person who has read no Solar Pons stories at all.

The Praed Street Irregulars and their studies, are not likely, by themselves, to attain either the stature or interest of the Sherlockians, partly because we are dealing with openly admitted imitations (pastiches) in the first place, and partly because Mr. Derleth is a much more careful writer than was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle when he penned the Holmes/Watson tales. Imperfections and errors will be found in any series of stories, of course, but Doyle's were something wonderful in their prolificity–as well as the fact that somehow they never really seem to spoil the stories.

Nor is it possible to get quite the feeling about Solar Pons and Parker, even though both are characters in their own right, that one can have either for Holmes and Watson, or for a completely independent present-day team like Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin. Mr. Derleth has wisely put Pons and Parker into a "present" which will be familiar to those of us who think of the 20's and 30's are "our times", but is not quite 1968; and this is all to the good. I say this not in any way to demean what Derleth has done, but rather to suggest why the PSI, when confined to Pons and Parker, just cannot have the scope of BSI, etc., even though there are now as many Solar Pons short stories as there are Sherlock Holmes short stories, and the first novel is expected to appear this year. And another collection of short stories is due to follow; happily, Mr. Derleth did not decide to stop when he had reached the same number of short stories that Conan Doyle attained with Holmes and Watson. Those of us who enjoy his pastiches will find new ones something to look forward to, so long as the author maintains his interest in writing them.

If this comment has aroused your interest, I don't think you'll be disappointed in *A Praed Street Dossier;* the publisher's address is Sauk City, Wisconsin, 53583. And reading it has aroused my desire to go through the Pons canon yet again.

From Luther Norris comes a well-made booklet of 41 pages containing *The Problem of the Purple Maculas,* A Sherlock Holmes Adventure by James C. Iraldi, and illustrated by Henry Lauritzen. In his foreword, the author states: "In keeping with Baker Street Irregular tenets, the plot has been based upon a remark made by Sherlock Holmes in the course of his investigations of the case entitled *The Missing-Three Quarter.*

(Turn to Page 124)

Wolf Hollow Bubbles

by David H. Keller M.D.

CHARLEY YOUNG, MAYOR OF STROUDSBURG, lazily stretched his lean body and and looked out of his office window at the monument of a crouching World War soldier which graced the little square in front of the county courthouse. For years he had been deeply involved in Monroe county politics and his attainment of the coveted mayoralty had turned into a Pyrrhic victory. He was bored by routine duties. He was tired of making speeches in neighboring cities, tired of telling Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Clubs that at last Monroe County had become the playground of the Middle Atlantic States.

He saw a party of dignified businessmen walk up Seventh St.

"Oh, fiddle-faddle!" he exclaimed. "Some more hotel men seeking some more publicity."

However, he was as smooth as cream when they finally arrived, listening to their story with the greatest of interest. Before they finished their statements his sympathy was more than a pose.

"I agree with you," he said at last, "that this is a real menace to the prosperity of the county, and something must be done at once to investi-

What did Dr. Hallowell keep confined in cages on his property? All the animals he had imported had disappeared . . .

The Summer 1928 issue of *AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY* presented a series of four science-fiction detective novelets about a "black power" conspiracy, under the over-all title of *The Menace.* It was here that DAVID H. KELLER's best-known character, Taine of San Francisco, made his debut. Dr. Keller would continue to send stories to *AMAZING STORIES* and *AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY* after Hugo Gernsback lost these titles, but Gernsback retained the loyalty of many of his authors, and it was to *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES* and *SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY* that Keller sent most of his subsequent "Taine" stories. The little detective was last seen in the magazines, however, in the February 1935 issue of *AMAZING STORIES,* where he solved the riddle of *The Island of White Mice.*

Internal evidence shows that the Taine stories were not published in chronological order, for *Wolf Hollow Bubbles* includes reference to three cases that had occurred earlier (all three appeared in the Gernsback detective titles), and we find in the present story that Taine is not yet married; while the series of stories published in 1928, and *The Feminine Metamorphosis,* published in 1929, all have references to Mildred as Taine's wife. Whether the stories were *written* in chronological order is another question, as is whether the present story might have appeared in *AMAZING DETECTIVE TALES* if the magazine had lasted longer.

An earlier and slightly different version of *Wolf Hollow Bubbles* appeared in pamphlet form during the 30s.

gate it and arrive at a correct estimate of its real importance. If even a hint of your suspicions became noised about our hotels, they would remain guestless for the next twenty five years. At the same time, you realize that any investigations we may make must be conducted so quietly that no one will even suspect the reason for them. Another thing is important. You gentlemen may not know it, but I can tell you that Dr. Hallowell is a rich man. He is probably the richest man in the country. Dunn and Bradstreet rate him as being worth over a hundred million. So, unless your suspicions are absolutely founded on fact, we had better go very slow. He could institute suits against us that would be rather unpleasant, to say the least."

"There must be no publicity," growled Broadson, of the Water Gap. "Business has been bad enough as it is."

"Business is very good up in the Poconos," purred the manager of one of the most select resorts on the mountain tops, "but with our in-

vestment of over ten million, we do not want it to be in any way disturbed. People come to the mountains for rest, relaxation and pleasure, and it would not take much to send them to some other summer resort. I hope that it will be possible for Mayor Young to put a stop to the very disturbing rumors that are beginning to circulate throughout certain parts of the county."

"I will do my best," promised the politician. "Being a heavy stockholder in several of the banks, I am naturally personally interested in anything that is apt to influence the depositors. I suppose you gentlemen will be willing to pay any expense I may incur?"

They one and all assured him that they would foot the bill.

It was a rather puzzled politician whom they left in the Mayor's office. He had come into personal contact more than once with Dr. Hallowell. He had used his influence in seeing that the doctor's request was complied with, and the county roads leading into and out of Wolf Hollow were abandoned and closed. He had helped the doctor buy farm after farm at sheriff's sales for overdue taxes. In more than one way he had done the scientist favors, and each time the rich man had overpaid him for those pieces of professional courtesy. There were some things that Mayor Young did not care to have the public acquainted with. Between the hotel men on one side and the millionaire on the other side, the politician felt that he was liable to be caught between the Devil and the sea. No wonder he sighed.

His period of worry was interrupted by a light, almost timid knock at his door. "Come in without knocking and go out the same way" he cried.

A little nondescript man came into the room, with an almost apologetic walk, and sat down, uneasily, on the edge of a straight back chair. Fanning himself with his stiff straw hat, he wiped his wet brow as he introduced himself. "I am Taine of San Francisco."

"Glad to meet you Mr. Taine," boomed the mayor. "Welcome to the center of the greatest summer resort region in America. The Poconos lead, Florida follows, and California imitates. Have a cigar?"

"Thanks, but I never smoke. Nicotine is very injurious to the enamel of the teeth, and, once that is gone, decay soon follows."

"Is that so? Never heard it put that way. What can I do for you? Going to be here long? Have some of our resort literature? Finest playground you ever saw. How do you like the climate?"

"The climate is not to be compared with that of California," replied the little man with a slight glare in his blue eyes. "I think also that you are wrong in saying that California imitates the Poconos. I believe that

the average Californian never even heard of them. Besides, they are just foothills in comparison with the mountains of California."

"But our mountains are covered with forests."

"Our mountains do not need any covering to complete their grandeur, and, besides, trees could not grow on their snowclad tops. But while all this is very pleasant, it is taking your time and mine also. To put the matter in a few words, I am in your city hunting for ancestors."

"You have come to the right place," cried the mayor. "We have all kinds of ancestors in Monroe County, and some of them were mighty fine people. Of course, Franklin found fault with some of them, but then old Benny was not beyond reproach himself. You have come to the right place to find ancestors."

"My problem is a rather hard one," sighed the little man. "I am a detective, and my chief has a lovely daughter by the name of Mildred. We are—well, we are rather interested in each other, but she refuses to commit herself till I find out about my ancestors. She says she would be humiliated beyond expression to find that her children were descended from a horsethief—perhaps you know about women and can understand how she feels?"

"She need not worry about that if your family came from Monroe County. None of our ancestors were horsethieves. I will introduce you to some men who know all about the past history of Monroe County. In fact, they are so much interested in the Revolutionary period that they have no time to even be sociable with their next door neighbors, and do not even speak to their own cousins. But did you say you were a detective?"

"Yes, I am Taine of San Francisco."

"Never heard of you."

"Perhaps not. I have not been in many cases, and they have all been rather quietly conducted. You would not have much chance of hearing about the cases of the Scientific Widowhood, Burning Water or the Menacing Claws. They were all unusual, and very different from the work of the average detective."

The politician looked at the little man rather carefully. The mayor owed much of his success in life to his ability to read the true personality of each man with whom he came in contact. At last he said, in an almost apologetic tone. "You will forgive me if I say that you do not look very much like a detective?"

"That is the usual comment, but that is really my business."

The mayor kept looking at the Californian. Suddenly he jumped from

his chair and pounded the table with his fist. "How would you like a job?"

"Fine," whispered Taine. "When do I begin?"

"Right this minute," answered the mayor, unfolding a map of Monroe County on his flat top desk. "Here is the Blue Ridge separating Monroe from Northampton. It has some gaps in it. Here is the Delaware Water Gap. Next comes Tat's Gap, named after the Indian Chief Tatamy. Farther along comes the Wind Gap. On this side of the mountain range is Cherry Valley, which begins at Buzzardsville and ends at the Water Gap. But right along side of the mountain and separated from it by a rather sharp spur is a little valley, called long ago Wolf Hollow. Lately the city people changed the name to Poplar Valley, but the oldtimers always held to its old name. Down at the end a rather steep country road ran up from the Water Gap into the Hollow and at the other end a winding, almost precipitous road ran down along the side of a ravine called Sal's Crotch and came out into Cherry Valley.

"There is a very difficult road running through Tat's Gap, but I do not suppose anyone has used it for fifty years. That is the geography of Wolf Hollow. In times past it was a rather well populated region but the young people would not stay there and the old folks died, until at last hardly anyone lived there and all the farms were being sold for taxes. Before we knew what was going on, at least before the general public knew anything about it, all these farms were bought up by a man from New York. He would buy a farm and the first thing he would do would be to level the barns and houses, take down the fences, and, as far as possible, restore the farm to a condition of nature, plant trees and wild flowers and do all that sort of thing.

"In no time at all he owned all of the Hollow. He built a sort of a house in the woods and lived there with some servants, but all the rest of the Hollow was just deserted. Then he asked to have the country roads abandoned. With all his money, and a word here and there from me, he easily proved the roads were useless; so we closed them. He put up iron gates and fences and 'No Trespass' signs, so, as long as he paid his taxes, we could not see that there was any harm in it. Peculiar, of course, but any man who is worth a hundred million can afford to be peculiar.

"Now, here is the trouble. He is a mystery. He tends to his own business, and asks everyone to do the same. But, at the same time, he has become a subject of conversation, as far as the guests at our hotels are concerned. Lately rumors of a serious nature have been circulated. They may not be true but it does not take very much to alarm people.

So, we want to know what this man is doing. We want to be in a position to say positively to our friends that there is nothing unusual or harmful in his researches, that, for example, there would be no possibility of the water's or air's, from Wolf Hollow, affecting the health of the neighboring resort regions. How would you like to go in there and find out what he is doing?"

"Sounds interesting."

"Will you do it?"

"Yes."

"What do you charge per day?"

"I do not work that way. I take a case and finish it, and then I expect to be paid in proportion to the value of the service to my client."

"Rather indefinite, Mr. Taine."

"No doubt, but so far I have given one hundred percent satisfaction."

"Go ahead with the job," ordered the mayor, "but, for Cat's Sake, do not tell anyone what you are doing."

For the first time in the interview Taine laughed.

"That simply shows that you do not know Taine of San Francisco. I will see you later on."

Three days later he made another visit to the mayor's office.

"Find out anything?" asked his honor.

"Yes, one ancestor. He was living over in Cherry Valley during the Revolution. They called him to sixty days active duty, but he simply paid his fine of forty pounds and stayed on his farm. It seems that a number of Monroe County patriots were that kind of soldiers."

The politician looked at the detective and sighed. "What has all that got to do with Wolf Hollow?"

"Nothing, but I forgot my real reason for calling on you. I had a few pictures made of the place from a plane. Here is one. Does that look like Wolf Hollow? Shows everything rather well, I think. Now, here is an interesting one. What does that look like to you?"

"Why, they look like a lot of captive balloons, or big toad-stools, something like that. What did you make of it?"

"Not much. But this is what I think. Dr. Hallowell has built a lot of huge wire cages and he has something inside of them. Of course, if those things are wire cages, it means that the things inside are alive. He would not build cages to put balloons in, would he? Now, here is one more thing I found. A year ago he was buying mice from pathological supply houses. Then he started to buy rats, by the hundred. Then cats. And six months ago he took over a hundred sheep into the Hollow and

a little later on, as many young steers. Here is an interesting fact. We took serial pictures of the whole Hollow. I have had an expert study these pictures and we cannot find a sign of the sheep or the steers. Just went into the Hollow and disappeared. Of course, the cats might have eaten the rats and mice but the steers could hardly have eaten the sheep."

"You found out a lot in three days," commented the mayor.

"That part was easy," whispered the little detective. "Anyone could have found out about the animals. But there are no signs of herds of cattle or sheep; in fact there is not enough grazing area to support so large a number of animals as he imported. Neither is there any indication of farming, so I want to know the meaning of the advertisements he placed in the Philadelphia papers for the immediate employment of two hundred experienced farm hands. Already there are a hundred forty-four men waiting orders to report for work. White mice and even cows might be fitted in somewhere, but so many humans—and for what? Why didn't he advertise in the local papers?"

"What are you going to do next?" asked the mayor. "Is there any way I can help you?"

"I am going to try and get into Wolf Hollow ahead of those men," was the Californian's reply, "and you can help me best by keeping quiet about the whole affair till you hear from me again."

"But you might get killed."

"No. You see, I am a Presbyterian, and I am sure that I will not die till my time comes. Besides, how can I marry Mildred if I pass out in Wolf Hollow? Goodbye. See you later."

"I cannot decide," almost moaned the mayor to himself. "I used to think that I could pick them, but this man Taine is either a fool or a great man—dinged if I can tell which. Hell's bells! Mice, cats, steers, and gigantic mushrooms in cages, and over a hundred men! What is the man trying to do?"

Taine, as usual, did the unusual. Preparing himself for certain emergencies he walked out through Long Woods and, crossing Humphrey's Ridge, dropped down into Cherry Valley at Stormsville. Then he crossed the Valley, and, evading the iron gate at the end of the road leading up through Sal's Crotch, finally entered Wolf Hollow. With a sureness that was almost uncanny he made a bee-line through the underbrush to the clearing which accommodated Dr. Hallowell's new buildings. He met no one, so he entered the main building, and walked through it slowly, opening doors till he found what he was looking for, a laboratory.

In that laboratory, bending over a microscope, was a white haired man, hardly an inch taller than Taine.

"Good-afternoon, Dr. Hallowell."

The aged scientist turned around to see the cause of the disturbance. If he was displeased at the unwarranted intrusion, he did not in any way show it. "You have me at a disadvantage," he murmured. "You appear to know my name, but I do not know yours."

"I am Taine of San Francisco. My business, I trust, is one that will be of mutual interest."

"I cannot imagine what it would be that would be of such importance as to excuse you for calling on me without first making an appointment."

"Salesmen can be pardoned for such behavior, Dr. Hallowell. I represent a new pathological supply house. We can positively furnish you anything you need in way of culture material for any experiment. Your name was handed to me as a scientist who occasionally bought supplies in large quantity. My firm wants to have a chance to compete for your future business."

"Sorry, but I am not in the market. There is the door."

"How about work? Honestly this selling stuff on a commission is perfectly rotten. I am a rather fair technician, and any sized salary will interest me."

"I do not want a technician."

"Do you need a good day laborer, one able to do all kinds of farm work, tend to the garden, chop wood or feed the animals?"

"No. Yes. What I mean to say is that I could use you to feed the animals." At this point the white haired man came nearer Taine, so near that he could have touched him. "Yes," he repeated, "I certainly could use you to help feed the animals. How much would you work for a week?"

"Almost anything you thought I was worth," answered the other little man. "You see, times are hard and work is scarce. I would almost be willing to work for my bed and board."

"How would twenty a week and your keep suit you? Would you stay for that sum?"

"I would stay for less than that."

The scientist walked slowly back to his microscope. Not till he was again seated and looking through the bi-focal eyepieces did he again speak.

"You will find some bedrooms on the first floor. Take any of them for

yours. I will see you at five when we will have supper. Meantime, you will pardon me if I resume my work?"

Taine left the room with a happy little smile on his almost childish face. He thought to himself:

"This will be a game well worth playing. What a clever man that is! Talk about chess. Now, what does he know about me? And why is he so anxious for me to stay? And why the emphasis on my being able to feed the animals? I think, Taine of San Francisco, that if you ever want to see the Golden Gate again, you had better either start doing some rapid thinking or beat it over Tat's Gap as fast as your little legs can take you."

He located a bedroom and made himself at home. It was four in the afternoon. Looking out of the window he found that he had selected a room the windows of which faced the wire cages. He saw that what had looked like wire from the skies was in reality bars of iron. It was also easily seen that every other cage was empty. In alternate pens were the things which in the pictures were like balloons, or giant toadstools. At a shorter distance they looked like beautiful iridescent soap bubbles, their white, glistening walls reflecting the sunshine. Taine estimated that they were about fifteen feet high, almost spherical, and the transparent walls showed peculiar internal markings. He took his field-peice from his pocket and carefully examined the alternate cages. As he did so, his body grew more tense.

"Bones!" he whispered to himself. "Just bones."

At five the Californian left his room and wandered back to the laboratory. There he found Dr. Hallowell, through with the day's work, washing his hands, and carefully shaving.

"I always shave before supper, Mr. Taine," explained the rich scientist. "It helps me to keep fit and enables me the better to enjoy my supper. My cook is an aged negro, very trusty, and from years of experience perfectly able to follow my slightest gastronomical whim. I seldom have company, and she was rather astonished when I told her to prepare supper for two."

The meal was really excellent. Dr. Hallowell was the perfect host, and Taine, almost forgetting his caution, started in to thoroughly enjoy his peculiar adventure.

"As a technician, have you had any special openings which permitted you to study cancer, Mr. Taine," the old man asked.

"Nothing unusual. I am at home with the microscope, but I really know but little concerning cancer."

"Then you may be interested in my life work. Years ago I started in to see what I could find out about it. It has been my life task."
to study cancer. At that time no one knew anything about the disease. It was more than a study with me; it was a battle. Thirteen in my family had died from the disease, and I felt sure that I would also have to yield. So, I started in to see what I could find out about it. It has been my life task."

"Did you win out?" asked Taine.

"Indeed I did. You will be astonished at my story. When I started I had no idea where my studies would lead me, but, to quote Emerson, 'Nature, the kind old nurse, took the child upon her knee; and sang him songs of the universe and stories of mystery. And wherever the way seemed long, or his courage began to fail; she sang a more wonderful song, or told a more wonderful tale.' So, I won out, and tonight, you see a conqueror, one who has won success," and there his voice sank to a low whisper, "and not only that. I have done what no scientist before has ever done. I have created a new form of life. Not life itself, you understand, but a new form."

"That is fine, Doctor," cried Taine, enthusiastically. "No wonder you are proud. You have reason to be. I wish you would tell me all of the story."

"I will. Suppose we go out on the gallery? I like it here in Wolf Hollow. Not a sound except the music of the birds. I had to have a quiet place and I at last found it."

"The name is hardly appropriate any more, is it?"

"No. I guess I am the only wolf here anymore, and my fangs are almost out. But sit down and let me tell you the story. I suppose that is what you came for, Mr. Taine?"

"Well, I came to get a job."

"You have one. A real one. Feeding the animals." The old man laughed, but at last controlled himself.

"The Rockefeller Institute started it all," he began, "by their work on the piece of muscle from the embryonic heart of a chicken. You know they kept the piece alive for years in a test tube, feeding it on normal saline and glucose and every week washing it off and trimming the surplus with a manicure scissors. I studied their work, and duplicated it, and at last I could do it as successfully as they could. That was years ago.

"The thought came to me: If that could be done with heart muscle, why could it not be done with cancer cells? In a way, they are embryonic cells also. So, I started in. My failure made my hair turn gray

and then white. But at last I succeeded, and I had a perfect cancer colony growing in a test tube and in every way duplicating the performance of a cancer growing in the human body.

"Now here I had cells that had been transmitted for millions of years from one human body to another, forming, for the first time, new generations outside of the body. I could study them as a colony, their respiration, metabolism, habits. But they were so small that much of the work was unsatisfactory, and then the great thought came to me. Why not grow colonies with larger units, macroscopic instead of microscopic cells? We know the basic factors that control growth in the human being; so, I started in to feed my pets various combinations of internal glandular secretion, and also irradiated them with a type of X-ray of my own invention.

"It is a long story. In fact, you would not be interested in the details, but at last I had to keep my colonies in large glass retorts rather than in test tubes. And not only the colonies grew but also the individual cells. They grew so fast that I had the satisfaction of being able to see the individual unit with the naked eyes. But they died too quickly; so, I had to do something to prolong their life. There was some interesting work being done about that time on the fruit fly. Perhaps you know about it? By raising the temperature in which it lived, its life cycle could be prolonged nine hundred times. I tried heat, and it worked as well on the individual cell as it had on the flies.

"I was ready for the final step; the isolation of the cancer cell. At last I was able to do that. I was able to separate one cell from the group and make it lead an independent life. By selection I developed a strain with harder, more resistant walls. Finally I had cells that were six inches in diameter, the most beautiful little bubbles you ever saw. Up to that time I had fed them on glucose solution, but I started to wean them. Gradually, starting in with worms and little bugs, I taught them to eat mice."

Here his voice died away into a low whisper. It seemed as though he almost fell asleep. Taine looked at him carefully. There was no doubt that he was an old man. At last Dr. Hallowell shook himself and stood up.

"That was a while ago," he said. "They started to eat mice. For millions of years they had lived on human beings and now they were living a separate existence and eating mice. It was not so long ago either, less than a year. Suppose we go to bed? Oh! I forgot to say that I never have been able to decide how much they know. For years

they have detroyed my family. These very cells I am working with have a very personal family history. It would be very interesting if they knew who I was, wouldn't it?"

Taine did not sleep well that night. It was full moon and all of Wolf Hollow was flooded with light. For some hours he stood at the window of his bedroom, looking out over the cages. He could see the chrystalline globes.

"He is either telling me the truth or he is not," the little detective said to himself as he went to sleep. Dreams came. He saw the cage doors opening and the balls rolling out. As they came, they budded, and each threw off little bubbles which grew with startling rapidity. Down Sal's Crotch they rolled and came out into Cherry Valley. Here they started to eat every living thing that they touched by the simple process of enclosing it in a pouch of their wall and in some way sliding it inside their globe. They seemed to be able to chase the cows in the field, the sheep in the pasture. They grew more numerous till all the valley was filled with them, like a basin filled with soap bubbles, and then they started to go up to Saylorsburg and down to the Water Gap and over Godfrey's Ridge to the town of Stroudsburg. Taine tried to cry a warning, but could only make a little squeaking noise. He tried to run and found his legs to be leaden. Desperate, he at last awoke and found it to be daylight. His pillow was wet with sweat.

Dr. Hallowel was rather uncommunicative that morning.

"I want you to take the wheelbarrow and pitchfork and clean out the cages," he ordered. "It is about time to feed my pets and I like the cages clean. I am preparing for the final steps of my experiment and, as far as possible, I want everything sanitary. In a few weeks I am going to feed them a slightly different meal and there must be nothing on the ground; all the bones must be removed. So, start to work. The cook will give you overalls."

Taine looked for all the world like a farmer boy as he wheeled the barrow to the first cage, opened the door and started filling the wheelbarrow with bones. He rapidly studied the bones as he worked. There was no doubt in his mind now as to where the sheep and the young steers had gone. As he worked in the empty cage, he saw, with a shudder, that the bubble in the next cage was rolling toward the intervening bars. There was a large gate there and mechanism to lift the gate. Taine began to understand. The steer was driven into the empty cage and then the gate was raised, and that was the end of the steer. He paused in his work and scratched geometric figures on the ground with one of the tines of

the pitchfork. One hundred and fourty-four men waiting in Philadelphia for further orders. Suppose they were sent for, twelve at a time?

All that day and all the next Taine picked bones and burned them on a fire some distance from the house. That night and the next night he had to go and water and feed twelve steers that were housed in a building that looked like anything else than a barn.

The second night Dr. Hallowel seemed even more depressed.

"Are the steers all right, Mr. Taine?" he asked.

"Just as fine as can be, Doctor."

"We will use eleven of them tomorrow. I am not ready for the last steps of the experiment. We will feed eleven of my pets at noon tomorrow. I will have you take them in, one at a time, to the alternate cages. I guess you know how I feed them?"

"I will attend to everything, Doctor, don't you worry."

"I cannot help worrying, Mr. Taine. Of course, you have probably guessed the rest of my story. I had the cells eat mice and then rats. They kept on growing. I had to use cats and then sheep. At last only cattle could satisfy their hunger. But they don't bud. They keep on growing, but they do not propogate. I hated to admit, but at last I was forced to see that they could not bud because they did not have the right diet. I have arranged for that, but suppose I fail? And if they should start to bud, how could I care for a thousand or ten thousand giant cells?"

"Don't worry, Doctor, I am here to help you now."

"I know, Taine, and I'm going to use you to feed the animals."

It took a certain self control on the part of the detective not to shiver, as he replied. "Anything I can do to help with the experiment I will be glad to do. I am really very much interested in your work."

"Well, you can use eleven of the steers tomorrow, Mr. Taine."

"But there are twelve steers and twelve cells, Doctor."

"We will feed the twelfth cell something else, Mr. Taine."

That night Taine went to his room and carefully locked the door. He hung his hat over the door knob so no prying eye could look through the keyhole. Then in the light of a shaded candle he looked over his Luer syringes and hypodermic needles. Not till he was positively satisfied did he undress and go to sleep. That night he found it easy to sleep. He simply said to himself,

"No one can tell what will happen tomorrow, but I have prepared for every possibility; and I must have a long sleep to steady my nerves. I do not know what is in store for me, but I am not at all pleased with

the way the Doctor keeps referring to the fact that I will feed the animals. It sounds almost personal."

At eleven he started to lead the steers, one at a time, from the barn to the alternate cages. Each steer had a halter and a ring in his nose, so they were not hard to lead. By noon they were all ready for the feeding. Some of the eleven steers were lying down, others walking around rather restlessly; all seemed restless. Starting at one end, Dr. Hallowell went from one section to the next, starting the mechanism that raised the gates and made a single cage out of each pair of communicating cages. The old colored cook had come out of the kitchen to see the performance. At last they came to the last pair of cages, a giant cell in one cage and nothing in the other.

"Suppose we go in there, Taine?" suggested Dr. Hallowell. "I want to show you some details of histological structure that you will be ininterested in."

They stepped in. By that time the giant cancer cells at the other end of the cages were beginning to envelop the bellowing steers. Taine felt that he was in an inferno greater than Dante had ever dreamed of. But the kindly old Doctor, interested in nothing but science, talked on and on about nucleus and chromomosones and pigments until Taine was almost hypnotised at the flow of words. Then, as though in a dream, he heard the Doctor shout, "Raise the gate, Nancy!"

And at the same time the kind old gentleman hit him on the head with a blackjack and started to run for the door.

It may have been Providence. It may have been Taine's thick skull. The blow simply brought him to his senses, and, with a flying leap, he caught the aged scientist by the ankle just in time. The communicating door was going up and the giant cancer cell was trying to press through the opening which was constantly growing larger. Then began a wrestling match getween two pygmies, each one made desperate for reasons peculiarly personal. At last Taine got his hold and literally threw the scientist through the air so that he landed on the sloping wall of the cell. He hit the bubble wall feet first, and as Taine staggered back he saw that the cell was already starting to enfold its food. The man was sinking into the bubble as a man would sink in quicksand.

The scientist showed in every way his keen appreciation of his danger. He cried for help. "Taine! Taine! Please help me. I will give you a million, ten million, all I have if you will help me. There is a chemical in the laboratory that will kill the cell if you will only run and get it. Don't you see that it is eating me? It will only take a few minutes more.

Suppose you take my arms and try to pull me out? Please, Mr. Taine, don't let me die this way. I was just playing with you when I hit you. I was not going to harm you."

He knew that he was lying and he knew that Taine knew it. But Taine, throwing caution aside, took him the arm and tried to pull him loose. The strength of the man, however, was as nothing compared with the powerful suction of cancer cell.

"I cannot help you, Doctor," cried the detective. "If I could, I would, but I cannot." Then he turned and ran out of the cage to save his own life. Passing through the outer gate he stumbled over the body of the aged negress. The excitement had been too much for her. Bending over her, Taine felt her pulse and satisfied himself that she was dead. He reached in his pocket, took a syriage out of its wooden box, injected the contents of the hypodermic into the dead body, picked it up, threw it into the cage, came out, shut and locked the door—and, for the first time in his life, fainted.

It was well along in the afternoon when he recovered consciousness and stood up. Everything looked the same as it had, except that the twelve giant cancer cells had disappeared. In each cage there was simply a rapidly decaying empty shell, completely collapsed, but surrounding a partly digested carcass of a steer. In one cage the empty shell surrounded parts of what had once been two human beings. A peculiar sweetish smell arose on the summer air. Nauseated, Taine started to carry firewood to the different cages. From the house he brought several pails of gasoline. In a little while he had twelve fires briskly burning. By evening there was not much left except smoldering embers and white ash. He decided that he had better stay there till morning to prevent the possibility of a forest fire. Before he left the place he released the twelfth steer and took the doctor's notebooks from the laboratory.

Three days later, by special invitation, three of the greatest experts in cancer study gathered in the office of the Mayor of Stroudsburg. Two hotel men were there, one representing the Water Gap interests and the other the Pocono hostleries. A court stenographer was present as well as the judge of the county.

Taine asked that he be sworn. He stated that the details were so far reaching and so important that he felt it to be necessary legal form. Then in simple language he started to tell the story. At last he came to the fatal hours.

"I knew when I made the exploratory trip in the airplane, gentlemen,"

he said, "that there were twelve of the unusual things. I felt that in some way they were dangerous or else they would not be confined in cages. So, I prepared twelve doses of one of the most deadly poisons to toxicologists. I determined in some way to use the poison on those twelve things, those Wolf Hollow Bubbles. I do not know to this minute how much the doctor suspected me. He must have thought me a fool or a wise man. At least, we played a nice game of chess. When he ordered to feed the eleven steers to eleven of the giant cells, I supected that he would try to feed me to the last one, but even then I was in doubt, and he was so gentle in his manner that I could not really make myself acknowledge the fact.

"Before I led each steer out I gave it a hypodermic injection of the poison. I figured that the final action would be delayed for at least a half hour, but, at the same time, I knew that I had given each steer at least ten times the lethal dose. What I did not know and what I had no way of telling was the effect the poison would have on the giant cancer cells.

"There is no doubt that the doctor tried to kill me. It was just an accident that he did not succeed. It was also an accident that when I threw him over my head he landed on the side of the twelfth cell. Once it started to engulf him, his case was hopeless. When I found that the old cook was dead, I decided to use her body as a poison bait; so, I gave her the same dose as the steers.

"It all worked very nicely. When I recovered from my faint I sterilized the whole grounds with fire. I do not think that there is any danger of ground contamination, though, of course, you can send out a clean up squad if you wish. I would advise that the cages be taken down and the doctor's executors be asked to clean out the house and place the property on the market. I regret that I am the only witness of these happenings, though such is the case. Here are the old man's notebooks. Thousands of pages in an almost microscopic hand, covering scientific work of many years."

The county judge stirred uneasily. "Just what right have you, Mr. Taine, to expect us to believe all this?"

"I expected that question, Judge, and I am willing to admit that the whole story sounds like a dream. But Dr. Hallowell really did use the mice and rats, cats, sheep and steers. You can see the bills-of-lading at the Water Gap station. And here is the data on one hundred and fourty-four farm hands, waiting for further orders. Then here are the notebooks. The cancer experts who have been listening to my story can check up

the details from the doctor's own notes. There is one thing more." At this point the Californian turned and faced Mayor Young.

"You knew Dr. Hallowell very well, did you not?"

"I certainly did.

"Did he have any peculiar physical defect that you knew of?"

"He did. He only had one eye. On the other side he wore a glass eye."

"Correct. Now, here is the eye. When I started to clean up. I found it and I thought it might be of importance."

He placed the glass eye on the table. One of the cancer experts picked it up and looked at it, and then handed it to the judge.

"What is your opinion of all this, Doctor?" asked His Honor.

"I knew the man very well," was the reply. "We always considered him brilliant, but at the same time, a decided psycopath. He may have done all that Mr. Taine says, but I think that it would be best for all of us to keep very quiet about the matter. Otherwise, people will think us as great liars as we are tempted to think Mr. Taine. We will work over Hallowell's experiments. It may be that out of this catastrophe will come a cure for cancer. If you will excuse us, we shall be going. May we take the notes?"

In a few minutes only the two hotel men, the mayor and Taine were left in the office.

"Well, that job is done," said the Water Gap man, "and our guest industry is saved. After this we can positively tell everybody that there is nothing to those rumors. I think it would be a good idea to buy that land from the Hallowell estate and put a golf course out there. I bet we could buy it cheap. As far as we are concerned, the incident is closed."

"Not completely, gentlemen," murmured Taine.

"Have we forgotten something?" asked the Pocono man.

"The bill," said Taine, "is exactly fifty thousand dollars."

"And I think," commented the mayor, "that there is a bill that will have to be paid. How about your ancestors, Taine? Did you find any horsethieves among them?"

"My personal opinion is," commented the Water Gap man, as he started to write a check, "that he is a direct descendant of Captain Kidd."

Mrs. Kaye

by Beverly Haaf

(author of *Aim For Perfection)*

MY NEIGHBOR'S VOICE WAS STRAINED as she asked, "Jane, have you ever known a person so frightening it was like knowing you were having a nightmare, yet, you could not awaken?"

I stared at Karen. Nightmare? Unable to awaken? What an odd question, but then, she was an artist and exceptionally sensitive to moods and auras. At the time, I thought of myself as practical and unimaginative.

My answer came quickly: "No, Karen. I never met anyone who made me feel that way."

As soon as the words left my mouth, I shuddered. My sentence had a mocking echo that was ominously significant—as if someday I would recall my reply with horror, wondering how I could have been so blind. Hastily I reached for the coffee Karen pushed across the table, glad she was busy with her own thoughts and unaware of my strange premonition.

Her yellow-brown eyes held a vague stare as she spoke again, more to herself than to me. "Mrs. Kaye makes me feel I'm living a nightmare."

> There was something about Karen that frightened me . . . yet, she herself lived in endless terror . . .

I waited uneasily for her to continue, considering what an odd person she was. She specialized in portraits, however, ceramics was a hobby, and she'd made the cups we drank from—black cups. On the lustrous jet sides were painted curious flower designs: designs which on close inspection proved to be minature portraits of a child, a girl with masses of petal-like fair hair.

Suddenly I had the mad impulse to snatch up my small daughter, Beth, from the next room and run home. My senses seemed sharpened: the coffee too bitter, the doughnut too sweet, the very air of the room charged with menace. But, I heard myself ask calmly. "Why does this Mrs. Kaye give you so horrible a feeling?"

I had to strain forward to hear the whispered answer. Her pale lips moved slowly, as if speaking caused her pain. "I met Mrs. Kaye before moving here. She upset me badly, yet I would have found it impossible to explain just why. Then, a few days ago I saw her again. I'd been shopping, and as I glanced into a store window I caught her reflection. She moved closer to me, and I was helpless—I could see her advancing and I wanted to run away—yet I was paralyzed, held as if by invisible hands, forcing me to stay and listen to her." Karen's eyes widened, recreating the panic she'd felt. "Jane—she claimed she was a werewolf."

Werewolf! Something grotesque and unworldly was dredged up at the mention of that name, and then, dissipated.

I tried to laugh. "But—this woman was joking with you—trying to frighten you with a weird joke. She had to be!"

Karen smiled without humor. "No, she was deadly serious. She claimed she had been afflicted with the malady since childhood and bore the mark."

"The mark? Come now Karen. Certainly you don't . . . "

She cut me off with a voice as thin and sharp as the blade of a knife.

"Don't argue about legends. My grandmother was from Germany, and while she pretended to take the old tales lightly, I had to promise never to be without my gold cross. You see, if a child was unprotected by this emblem, a werewolf might pad up softly from behind and sink its teeth into the nape of the child's neck, dooming it to carry on the curse."

"And you believed this?" It was sickening to imagine a little girl forced to brood on such horrors.

"Of course I didn't believe it—not really. I was sometimes went without it for days before Grandmother noticed and fastened it back."

I fought with the illogic of her statement until a thought cleared my

puzzlement. "Could you be so upset because this Mrs. Kaye recalled your childhood guilt at deceiving your grandmother?"

My neighbor shook her head furiously. "No, no! Don't you understand? I'm afraid of this woman! Her eyes have such a strange light—you could see it even in the reflection. I think a wolf must glow like that when remembering something it killed. It makes me wonder if she too had a grandmother who gave her a cross, but she took it off while playing, and something crept behind her . . . "

"Stop it, Karen!"

My shrillness shocked me, and my neighbor threw back her head as if struck, tears springing into her eyes. Immediately I softened. How could I have forgotten she was preparing for an important art show in New York? She was capable of feverish intensity in her work and was no doubt near exhaustion.

I set about soothing her in a sympathetic but brisk way. Surely the eerie situation she spoke of was greatly exaggerated because of the high pitch of her nerves, I said, and my efforts were rewarded by a wan smile. By the time Beth and I left, she was calm, and I was sure her bad experience would fade quickly.

Despite my sureness, I half expected to dream of werewolves myself that night. I am a widow (but not alone, for I have my dear Beth) and my temperament is steady; however, there was something terribly unnerving in the manner Karen had told her story. Thankfully, my dreams were were all of a fair haired child dancing in a meadow ringed with a lush forest. Even during my sleep I smiled in misty recognition of the child—the one whose image was upon the black ceramic cups.

It was not until very late at night, a week later, that I saw Karen again. Since I must work (leaving Beth in the care of Agnes, my housekeeper) I have little chance to meet with my neighbors during the week and so, I was started when Karen's frantic knock pounded at my door.

I let her in, surprised at her appearance. Never had she appeared less than fastidious, but she stumbled into the room I saw her hair hung in tangled strands and her hands, which clutched at me, were smeared with oil colors.

"I saw her—I saw her again," she moaned, holding me with surprising strength. "It happened at the train station. No one was there but me—and then—Mrs. Kaye!"

I helplessly tried to soothe her, managing to get her into a chair despite her wild sobbing. And all the while I murmured comforting things I was aware of a coldness in the air. It was warm outside, the windows

were open, but the chill crept about the room like an uninvited guest.

I patted Karen's shoulder. "Perhaps Mrs. Kaye didn't see you," I fumbled.

Karen gave a short laugh and looked up. Her yellow-brown eyes were clear and unswollen, the tears slipping down as coolly as drops from an icicle. A shudder wracked her slim body. "Yes, she saw me. I was all alone—the train had gone—and when I passed the phone booth on the station wall, something moved. When I turned, there she was."

There she was. My hand fell from Karen's shoulder as I stepped back. Her tone made the experience sound inevitable, as if nothing could change what was happening . . . I shook my head with confusion. Did I believe Karen was being threatened? And even if she was, why did I feel I was also involved?

"Did she ask where you lived?" I said, and then, before I could halt the words I rushed on, "You didn't tell her, did you? You didn't tell her where you lived?"

The answer was slow, almost measured. "I think that she already knows."

Her words died away as a terrible vision crept over my mind.

I could see Mrs. Kaye, her features indistinct except for the gleam in her eyes and the white edge of teeth which showed between parted moist lips. Coarse gray hair fell across her narrow shoulders, and while her form was that of a woman, it was distorted so she could glide on all fours. I saw her lope with malevolent grace through the shadowed streets, sniffing at each path: sniff, sniff, sniffing, hunting for the trail which led to the house next door. And most horrible of all, I saw her pause, not at Karen's—but at my house, at my door . . .

"I think you better go home," I said to Karen, trying to hide the tremor in my voice. "It's late and you're upset. Things will look better in the morning."

She did leave, thanking me for my kindness. I wanted to tell her to call me if she became frightened during the night, but I couldn't. I didn't want her to call—no matter what—I just wanted things to go on as they had always, Beth and me together—with no fears, no threats.

The next few days were blurred. As I had predicted to my neighbor, things did look better in the morning, but there lingered a haunting sensation of uneasiness. Then, when I returned from work one afternoon and Karen greeted me with a cheerful airy wave, I relaxed. I saw she was spraying fixative on paintings lined against the fence, apparently

involved in nothing but her work. She certainly had recovered from her upsetting experiences, so why should the matter trouble me?

I was humming happily when Agnes met me at the door. She looked over my shoulder and into the yard. "Did you see the weird pictures out there?" she asked.

I smiled at my housekeeper. I knew well what she thought of what she called my neighbor's "queer paint-brushings". I'd tried to tell her it was the modern way to paint, but Agnes always insisted no one with normal eyes could choose the color combinations Karen did.

"You may not care for them," I replied tolerantly, "but since they're for a show in New York, they must be good."

"A show? Well, I hope she don't end up where I heard she went after the last show of hers."

"What do you mean?"

Agnes shrugged. "They say her nerves got her. She was sent to an asylum, but of course, they prettied it up by calling it a 'rest home'. She was only put away a few months, but when I saw the crazy pictures she carried into the yard, I wondered if maybe she shouldn't have been kept locked up."

As wonderful as my housekeeper was, she was inclined to prattle. "I didn't know you were a gossip," I said sharply. A woman alone in the world has enough problems without loose tongues making trouble. This rest home which conveyed such dark meaning was probably a health resort where Karen vacationed after the exhaustive strain of the show. "Gossip is harmful," I added, "I've often left Beth with Karen when I've gone out unexpectedly. Would I do that if I had doubts?"

Agnes flushed at my scolding, and feeling sorry that I spoke so sharply, I changed the subject, asking about her married daughter, who was expecting a baby.

By the time Agnes's son-in-law arrived to drive her home, we were again on excellent terms. But in the back of my thoughts was my statement about leaving Beth with Karen. I'd said I had no doubts . . . was it true? The vision of Mrs. Kaye hunting for Karen, yet stopping before my house taunted me. Then, I shrugged the mood away and strolled to Karen's yard to look at the paintings.

My neighbor seemed proud of the display, and justly so, All the work was beautiful; if not in line, then in color. And what colors! On some, brilliant hues exploded with jagged force across the canvas as if by an electrified brush, while others were dreamlike with haunting misty shades

blended with a touch as light as a breath. I stopped before a square showing a delicate girl with hair like gossamar petals.

"This is the same child as on the cups," I said with recognition.

Karen shook her head. "No, that's your Beth."

I stared. It was Beth — but the hair, the fairy-like colors . . . The sweet vulnerability in the fair painted face was unreal in its perfection. Was this what Karen called, "capturing a soul?"

"It does resemble the child on the cups," said Karen. "I did them from an old snapshot of me. The photo was faded, giving me the idea for the treatment of the hair. I find it surprisingly effective. It gives a defenseless look, like a newly opened flower."

I returned to my house feeling vaguely upset. Perhaps it was surprise at finding a picture of Beth. Or was it — a necklace with a small gold cross.

Would I leave Beth with Karen? I did not know. I honestly did not know.

When a week of poor weather struck, leaving me no occasion to meet with my neighbor, my uneasiness ebbed and I shook my head at my earlier foolishness. And, it was in this mood that I accepted the dinner invitation of a co-worker. A hasty call to Agnes assured she would fix supper for Beth, and with a clear conscious, I stayed in town. The evening was pleasant and it was not until several hours later that I caught the train for home.

By the time I arrived at my station, it was dark, but the night air was clear. I glanced up at the moonlit sky, wondering why my contententment had fled. The lifting of the heavy rain clouds should hardly seem an omen of danger — yet, it did. I shivered, and walked on quickly, stepping on the wavering legs of my own shadow.

Then I saw it! From the corner of my eye *something moved!* A shape, a shape with a pale face and long hair. I recalled Karen's words, "I was all alone . . . then, there she was.'" *Mrs. Kaye?* My pulse pounded as a dreadful pressure rose in my ears. My lips parted to scream — then I saw what it was. Not Mrs. Kaye, but my own frightened reflection staring back at me dimly from a mirror placed on the station wall near the phone booth.

Relief winged through me. Then I paused, realizing Karen might have been stricken by the same experience. Poor Karen. I gave a helpless laugh of pity and the image in the mirror bared her teeth to laugh with me. Suddenly, my hand flew to my mouth in dread. Karen had seen Mrs. Kaye on two occasions — seen her in a mirror!

I recoiled, then whirled and dashed to my car. The starter whined, the motor caught, the car spun into the street. My racing thoughts were a jumble of images which mixed the gray loping shape of a werewolf with the misty face of a child with petal-like hair. An urgent fear pressed me on.

I must get home to Beth!

As the car roared into my street the thudding panic within me exploded. My house was dark. There was a note on the side door: "*My daughter's baby came early. I've gone to the hospital with her. Beth is with the woman next door.*"

I looked from Agnes's scrawled signature and across to Karen's house. A full moon glinted on the roof, but her house was as dark as mine.

Beth!

I slammed through Karen's unlocked door and through the kitchen, pressing on the light as I ran. "Karen!" and louder, "Beth, Beth, where are you?"

My frantic footsteps rang in the cruel emptiness of the rooms. I swept down the hall and flung open the door of Karen's workroom. My hand caught the edge of the light switch and brightness flooded the scene. I stared, then gasped as sickness struck me.

The room was filled with paintings—all of Beth!

Over and over Karen had painted my child. They were done in the style copied from her own childhood photograph, as if in Karen's mind, Beth's and her own childhood were intermingled. But as I looked about the room I saw the sweet face become more abstract, the petal hair flowing more wildly. The colors remained delicate and misty, but I could see the menace coming as the pictures changed. A menace coming nearer. The tiny face was thrown to a sun which tinged the petal hair blue—a blue coldness curling inward, reaching like jagged teeth toward the cheeks and eyes. The pale throat was bare in the final picture, the cross remembered only in a breath of yellow thrown at the canvas edge. Mad. Crazy mad!

Beth. Where was my Beth!

I flung against the last door. Karen's bedroom—locked.

"Beth! Beth!" My hands pounded against the wood. Then I stopped. There was a difference in the house. The chill within the walls waifted away and I heard sounds from behind the door.

"Jane?" asked Karen as she unlocked the door. Her eyes were blank and glazed.

"Where's Beth?" I pushed past Karen as she turned on the light. There was Beth upon the bed, a sleepy smile about her lips. Her warm arms slipped about me as I gathered her to me.

"I'm sorry," murmured Karen. "You must have been frightened to find the house dark." I lifted Beth and my neighbor moved behind me, hurrying me from the room, talking rapidly as she led me down the hall. "I was tired when Agnes brought her, so I got her to lie down with me. I locked the door so she couldn't wander out if I dozed, but I had no idea we would both sleep until dark."

"It's all right—all right," I said, resenting the fast explanation, but still so glad to be leaving the house and her. I saw she had gotten her coat and was slipping it on as we walked.

She noticed my glance and nodded. "I'm going out—really—I'm leaving for awhile." She laughed. It was an ugly hoarse sound, ending on the wrong note. "I've got to leave. I know now that Rena is back."

"Rena?" I wondered why the chill crept around me.

"Yes, Mrs. Kaye. Rena Kaye."

I murmured something which had no meaning and stumbled from the doorway, holding Beth tightly as I ran to my porch. Then, with my child still pressed against me, I turned to see Karen come from her house.

The dull illumination from the moon showed everything in muted colorless tones, and as my neighbor limped toward her car I was startled by the grayness of her—the shaggy hair, the skin, the clothes, all were gray—all but the eyes which seemed to glow with a fire of their own. It all happened in a matter of seconds, but I stood transfixed, seeing the limping loping walk, the eyes, the grayness—and most ungodly of all, the last terrible look she flung at me before she drove away. Will I ever forget the way her head threw back as she smiled, her teeth gleaming like polished quartz in the moonlight?

My numb lips moved, repeating, "Rena Kaye. Rena K, Rena-K-Rena, K-Rena, K-rena, Karena . . . Karen!"

Then I understood. *Karen was Mrs. Kaye!*

And what of the hideous transformation I'd seen, the thing which turned my blood to ice and sent my control reeling? I fought against the word, but it came unbidden, screaming within my brain: *Werewolf! Werewolf!*

I managed to get Beth inside the house where I undressed her with trembling hands. She was sleeping, her flushed face innocent of

the Karen's mad obsessions. How her sweet slumber made her resemble the child of the black cups. Had this resemblance caused the insanity Karen showed in the horrible portraits of my child?

But, insanity was not the word. I thought of the asylum Agnes told me about. Karen suffered from something far more loathsome than a shattered mind – it was unspeakable disease, an incredible sickness passed through the centuries, attacking the innocent and driving them to lives of agony and doom.

The moon waiting outside seemed to send back an echo of my voice from long ago, a mocking whisper: "Nightmare." Almost sobbing I slipped Beth's rounded arms into the sleeves of her nightgown and lifted her, smoothing down the fabric. She whimpered faintly and her drowsy head fell forward against my arm. Then, I looked down . . .

Beth's soft hair parted on either side of her small head, falling down like drooling petals. "No–" I cried, *"It is a nightmare!"*, and my tears fell to wash the smooth nape which showed a small oval of red with the barest trace of blood about the edges. A small angry oval where something had recently bitten her.

The Reckoning

Very early in the balloting this time, the stories that finished in the first three positions fell into their slots and remained there—except that the lead story never fell behind at all, nor was it tied. The second place story received the most "outstanding" votes, and only the fourth place story drew a single "dislike".

When the dust settled, here is how the stories in our 9th issue came out: (1) *The Last Archer,* Earl Pierce, Jr.; (2) *The Black Mass,* Col. S. P. Meek; (3) *Hollywood Horror,* Paul Ernst; (4) *The Sight Of Roses,* Jay Tyler; (5) *Webbed Hands,* Ferdinand Berthoud.

Some of you considered our cover the best yet, but there were others who detested it.

The Haunter Of The Ring

by Robert E. Howard

(author of *Secret of Lost Valley*)

AS I ENTERED JOHN KIROWAN'S STUDY I was too much engrossed in my own thoughts to notice, at first, the haggard appearance of his visitor, a big, handsome young fellow well known to me.

"Hello, Kirowan," I greeted. "Hello, Gordon. Haven't seen you for quite a while. How's Evelyn?" And before he could answer, still on the crest of the enthusiasm which had brought me there, I exclaimed: "Look here, you fellows, I've got something that will make you stare! I got it from that robber Ahmed Mektub, and I paid high for it, but it's worth it. Look!" From under my coat I drew the jewel-hilted Afghan dagger which had fascinated me as a collector of rare weapons.

Kirowan, familiar with my passion, showed only polite interest, but the

Was there a curse upon John Kirowan—a frightful retribution from the past, a nemisis that made his wife his executioner?

effect on Gordon was shocking. With a strangled cry he sprang up and backward, knocking the chair clattering to the floor. Fists clenched and countenance livid he faced me, crying: "Keep back! Get away from me, or "

I was frozen in my tracks.

"What in the—" I began bewilderedly, when Gordon, with another amazing change of attitude, dropped into a chair and sank his head in his hands. I saw his heavy shoulders quiver. I stared helplessly from him to Kirowan, who seemed equally dumfounded.

"Is he drunk?" I asked.

Kirowan shook his head, and filling a brandy glass, offered it to the man. Gordon looked up with haggard eyes, seized the drink and gulped it down like a man half famished. Then he straightened up and looked at us shamefacedly.

"I'm sorry I went off my handle, O'Donnel," he said. "It was the unexpected shock of your drawing that knife."

"Well," I retorted, with some disgust, "I suppose you thought I was going to stab you with it!"

"Yes, I did!" Then, at the utterly blank expression on my face, he added: "Oh, I didn't actually *think* that; at least, I didn't reach that conclusion by any process of reasoning. It was just the blind primitive instinct of a hunted man, against whom anyone's hand may be turned."

His strange words and the despairing way he said them sent a queer shiver of nameless apprehension down my spine.

"What are you talking about?" I demanded uneasily. "Hunted? For what? You never committed a crime in your life."

"Not in this life, perhaps," he muttered.

"What do you mean?"

"What if retribution for a black crime committed in a previous life were hounding me?"

"That's nonsense,"

"Oh, is it?" he exclaimed, stung. "Did you ever hear of my great-grandfather, Sir Richard Gordon of Argyle?"

"Sure; but what's that got to do with—"

"You've seen his portrait: doesn't it resemble me?"

"Well, yes," I admitted, "except that your expression is frank and wholesome whereas his is crafty and cruel."

"He murdered his wife," answered Gordon. "Suppose the theory of reincarnation were true? Why shouldn't a man suffer in one life for a crime committed in another?"

"You mean you think you are the reincarnation of your great-grandfather? Of all the fantastic—well, since he killed his wife, I suppose you'll be expecting Evelyn to murder you!" This last was delivered in searing sarcasm, as I thought of the sweet, gentle girl Gordon had married. His answer stunned me.

"My wife," he said slowly, "has tried to kill me three times in the past week."

There was no reply to that. I glanced helplessly at John Kirowan. He sat in his customary position, chin resting on his strong, slim hands; his white face was immobile, but his dark eyes gleamed with interest. In the silence I heard a clock ticking like a death-watch.

"Tell us the full story, Gordon," suggested Kirowan, and his calm, even voice was like a knife that cut a strangling, relieving the unreal tension.

"You know we've been married less than a year," Gordon began, plunging into the tale as though he were bursting for utterance; his words stumbled and tripped over one another. "All couples have spats, of course, but we've never had any real quarrels. Evelyn is the best-natured girl in the world.

"The first thing out of the ordinary occurred about a week ago. We had driven up in the mountain, left the car, and were wandering around picking wild flowers. At last we came to a steep slope, some thirty feet in height, and Evelyn called my attention to the flowers which grew thickly at the foot. I was looking over the edge and wondering if I could climb down without tearing my clothes to ribbons, when I felt a violent shove from behind that toppled me over.

"If it had been a sheer cliff, I'd have broken my neck. As it was, I went tumbling down, rolling and sliding, and brought up at the bottom scratched and bruised, with my garments in rags. I looked up and saw Evelyn staring down apparently frightened half out of her wits.

"'Oh Jim!" she cried. 'Are you hurt? How came you to fall?'

"It was on the tip of my tongue to tell her that there was such a thing as carrying a joke too far, but these words checked me. I decided that she must have stumbled against me unintentionally, and actually didn't know it was she who precipitated me down the slope.

"So I laughed it off, and went home. She made a great fuss over me, insisted on swabbing my scratched with iodine, and lectured me for my carelessness! I hadn't the heart to tell her it was her fault.

"But four days later, the next thing happened. I was walking along our driveway, when I saw her coming up it in the automobile. I stepped

out on the grass to let her by, as there isn't any curb along the driveway. She was smiling as she approached me, and slowed down the car, as if to speak to me. Then, just before she reached me, a most horrible change came over her expression. Without warning the car leaped at me like a living thing as she drove her foot down on the accelerator. Only a frantic leap backward saved me from being ground under the wheels. The car shot across the lawn and crashed into a tree. I ran to it and found Evelyn dazed and hysterical, but unhurt. She babbled of losing control of the machine.

"I carried her into the house and sent for Doctor Donnelly. He found nothing seriously wrong with her, and attributed her dazed conditon to fright and shock. Within half an hour she regained her normal senses, but she's refused to touch the wheel since. Strange to say, she seemed less frightened on her own account than on mine. She seemed vaguely to know that she'd nearly run me down, and grew hysterical again when she spoke of it. Yet she seemed to take it for granted that I knew the machine had got out of her control. But I distinctly saw her wrench the wheel around, and I know she deliberately tried to hit me—why, God alone knows.

"Still I refused to let my mind follow the channel it was getting into. Evelyn had never given any evidence of any psychological weakness or 'nerves'; she's always been a level-headed girl, wholesome and natural. But I began to think she was subject to crazy impulses. Most of us have felt the impulse to leap from tall buildings. And sometimes a person feels a blind, childish and utterly reasonless urge to harm someone. We pick up a pistol, and the thought suddenly enters our mind how easy it would be to send our friend, who sits smiling and unaware, into eternity with a touch of the trigger. Of course we don't do it, but the impulse is there. So I thought perhaps some lack of mental discipline made Evelyn susceptible to these unguided imulses, and unable to control

"Nonsense," I broke in. "I've known her since she was a baby. If she has any, such trait, she's developed it since she married you."

It was an unfortunate remark. Gordon caught it up with a despairing gleam in his eys. "That's just it—since she married me! It's a curse—a black, ghastly curse, crawling like a serpent out of the past! I tell you, I was Richard Gordon and she—she was Lady Elizabeth, his murdered wife!" His voice sank to a blood-freezing whisper.

I shuddered; it is an awful thing to look upon the ruin of a keen clean brain, and such I was certain that I surveyed in James Gordon. Why

or how, or by what grisly chance it had come about I could not say, but I was certain the man was mad.

"You spoke of three attempts." It was John Kirowan's voice again, calm and stable amid the gathering webs of horror and unreality.

"Look here!" Gordon lifted his arm, drew back the sleeve and displayed a bandage, the cryptic significance of which was intolerable.

"I came into the bathroom this morning looking for my razor," he said. I found Evelyn just on the point of using my best shaving implement for some feminine purpose—to cut out a pattern, or something. Like many women she can't seem to realize the difference between a razor and a butcher-knife or a pair of shears.

"I was a bit irritated, and I said: 'Evelyn, how many times have I told you not to use my razors for such things? Bring it here; I'll give you my pocket knife.'

"'I'm sorry, Jim,' she said. 'I didn't know it would hurt the razor. Here it is.'

"She was advancing, holding the open razor toward me. I reached for it—then something warned me. It was the same look in her eyes, just as I had seen it the day she nearly ran over me. That was all that saved my life, for I instinctively threw up my hand just as she slashed at my throat with all her power. The blade gashed my arm as you see, before I caught her wrist. For an instant she fought me like a wild thing; her slender body was taut as steel beneath my hands. Then she went limp and the look in her eyes was replaced by a strange dazed expression. The razor slipped out of her fingers.

"I let go of her ans she stood swaying as if about to faint. I went to the lavatory—my wound was bleeding in a beastly fashion—and the next thing I heard her cry out, and she was hovering over me.

"'Jim'" she cried. 'How did you cut yourself so terribly?'"

Gordon shook his head and sighed heavily. "I guess I was a bit out of my head. My self-control snapped.

"'Don't keep up this pretense, Evelyn,' I said. 'God knows what's got into you, but you know as well as I that you've tried to kill me three times in the past week.'

"She recoiled as if I'd struck her, catching at her breast and staring at me as if at a ghost. She didn't say a word—and just what I said I don't remember. But when I finished I left her standing there white and still as a marble statue. I got my arm bandaged at a drug store, and then came over here, not knowing what else to do.

"Kirowan—O'Donnel—it's damnable! Either my wife is subject to fits

of insanity—" He choked on the word. "No, I can't believe it. Ordinarily her eyes are too clear and level—too utterly sane. But every time she has an opportunity to harm me, she seems to become a temporary maniac."

He beat his fists together in his impotence and agony. "But it isn't insanity! I used to work in a psychopathic ward, and I've seen every form of mental unbalance. My wife is *not* insane!"

"Then what—" I began, but he turned haggard eyes on me.

"Only one alternative remains," he answered. "It is the old curse—from the days when I walked the earth with a heart as black as hell's darkest pits, and did evil in the sight of man and of God. *She* knows, in fleeting snatches of memory. People have *seen* before—have glimpsed forbidden things in momentary liftings of the veil which bars life from life. She was Elizabeth Douglas, the ill-fated bride of Richard Gordon, whom he murdered in jealous frenzy, and the vengeance is hers. I shall die by her hands, as it was meant to be. And she—" he bowed his head in his hands.

"Just a moment." It was Kirowan again. "You have mentioned a strange look in your wife's eyes. What sort of a look? Was it of maniacal frenzy?"

Gordon shook his head. "It was an utter blankness. All the life and intelligence simply vanished, leaving her eyes dark wells of emptiness."

Kirowan nodded, and asked a seemingly irrelevant question. "Have you any enemies?"

"Not that I know of."

"You forget Joseph Roelocke," I said. "I can't imagine that elegant sophisticate going to the trouble to doing you actual harm, but I have an idea that if he could discomfort you without any physical effort on his part, he'd do with a right good will."

Kirowan turned on me an eye that had suddenly become piercing. "And who is this Joseph Roelocke?"

"A young exquisite who came into Evelyn's life and nearly rushed her off her feet for a while. But in the end she came back to her first love—Gordon here. Roelocke took it pretty hard. For all his suaveness there's a streak of violence and passion in the man that might have cropped out but for his infernal indolence and blase indifference."

"Oh, there's nothing to be said against Roelocke," interrupted Gordon impatiently. "He must know that Evely never really loved him. He merely fascinated her temporarily with his romantic Latin air."

"Not exactly Latin, Jim," I protested. "Roelocke does look foreign, but it isn't Latin. It's almost Oriental."

"Well, what has Roelocke to do with this matter?" Gordon snarled with the irascibility of frayed nerves. "He's been as friendly as a man could be since Evelyn and I were married. In fact, only a week ago he sent her a ring which he said was a peace-offering and a belated wedding gift; said that after all, her jilting him was a greater misfortune for her than it was for him — the conceited jackass!"

"A ring?" Kirowan had suddenly come to life; it was as if something hard and steely had been sounded in him. "What sort of a ring?"

"Oh, a fantastic thing — copper, made like a scaly snake coiled three times, with its tail in its mouth and yellow jewels for eyes. I gather he picked it up somewhere in Hungary."

"He has traveled a great deal in Hungary?"

Gordon looked surprised at this questioning, but answered: "Why, apparently the man's traveled everywhere. I put him down as the pampered son of a millionaire. He never did any work, so far as I know."

"He's a great student," I put in. "I've been up to his apartment several times, and I never saw such a collection of books — "

Gordon leaped to his feet with an oath. "Are we all crazy? I came up here hoping to get some help — and you fellows fall to talking of Joseph Roelocke. I'll go to Doctor Donnelly — "

"Wait!" Kirowan stretched out a detaining hand. "If you don't mind, we'll go over to your house. I'd like to talk to your wife."

Gordon dumbly acquiesced. Harried and haunted by grisly forebodings, he knew not which way to turn, and welcomed anything that promised aid.

We drove over in his car, and scarcely a word was spoken on the way. Gordon was sunk in moody ruminations, and Kirowan had withdrawn himself into some strange aloof domain of thought beyond my ken. He sat like a statue, his dark vital eyes staring into space, not blankly, but as one who looks with understanding into some far realm.

Though I counted the man as my best friend, I knew but little of his past. He had come into my life as abruptly and unannounced as Joseph Roelocke had met him at the Wanderer's Club, which is composed of the drift of the world, travelers, eccentrics, and all manner of men whose paths lie outside the beaten tracks of life. I had been attracted to him, and intrigued by his strange powers and deep knowledge. I vaguely knew that he was the black sheep younger son of a titled Irish family, and that he had walked many strange ways. Gordon's mention of Hungary struck a chord in my memory; one phase of his life Kirowan had

once let drop, fragmentarily. I only knew that he had once suffered a bitter grief and a savage wrong, and that it had been in Hungary. But the nature of the episode I did not know.

At Gordon's house Evelyn met us calmly, showing inner agitation only by the over-restraint of her manner. I saw the beseeching look she stole at her husband. She was a slender, soft-spoken girl, whose dark eyes were always vibrant and alight with emotion. That child try to murder her adored husband? The idea was monstrous. Again I was convinced that James Gordon himself was deranged.

Following Kirowan's lead, we made a pretense of small talk, as if we had casually dropped in, but I felt that Evelyn was not deceived. Our conversation rang false and hollow, and presently Kirowan said: "Mrs. Gordon, that is a remarkable ring you are wearing. Do you mind if I look at it?"

"I'll have to give you my hand," she laughed. "I've been trying to get it off today, and it won't come off."

She held out her slim white hand for Kirowan's inspection, and his face was immobile as he looked at the metal snake that coiled about her slim finger. He did not touch it. I myself was aware of an unaccountable repulsion. There was somethng almost obscene about that dull copperish reptile wound about the girl's white finger.

"It's evil-looking, isn't it?" She involuntarily shivered. "At first I liked it, but now I can hardly bear to look at it. If I can get it off I intend to return it to Joseph – Mr. Roelocke."

Kirowan was about to make some reply, when the door-bell rang. Gordon jumped as if shot, and Evelyn rose quickly. "I'll answer it, Jim – I know who it is."

She returned an instant later with two more mutual friends, those inseparable cronies, Doctor Donnelly, whose burly body, jovial manner and booming voice were combined with as keen a brain as any in the profession, and Bill Bain, elderly, lean, wiry, acidly witty. Both were old friends of the Ash family. Doctor Donnelly had ushered Evelyn into the world, and Bain was always Uncle Bill to her.

"Howdy, Jim! Howdy, Mr. Kirowan!" roared Donnelly. "Hey, O'-Donnel, have you got any firearms with you? Last time you nearly blew my head off showing me an old flintlock pistol that wasn't supposed to be loaded – "

"Doctor Donnelly!"

We all turned. Evelyn was standing beside a wide table, holding it

as if for support. Her face was white. Our badinage ceased instantly. A sudden tension was in the air.

"Doctor Donnelly," she repeated holding her voice steady by an effort, "I sent for you and Uncle Bill—for the same reason for which I know Jim has brought Mr. Kirowan and Michael. There is a matter Jim and I can no longer deal with alone. There is something between us—something black and ghastly and terrible."

"What are you talking about, girl?" All the levity was gone from Donnelly's great voice.

"My husband—" She choked, then went blindly on: "My husband has accused me of trying to murder him."

The silence that fell was broken by Bain's sudden and energetic rise. His eyes blazed and his fists quivered.

"You young pup!" he shouted at Gordon. "I'll knock the living daylights—"

"Sit down, Bill!" Donnelly's huge hand crushed his smaller companion back into his chair. "No use goin' off half cocked. Go ahead, honey."

"We need help. We cannot carry this thing alone." A shadow crossed her comely face. "This morning Jim's arm was badly cut. He said I did it. I don't know. I was handing him the razor. Then I must have fainted. At least everything faded away. When I came to myself he was washing his arm in the lavatory—and—and he acused me of trying to kill him."

"Why, the young fool!" barked the belligerant Bain. "Hasn't he sense enough to know that if you did cut him, it was an accident?"

"Shut up, won't you?" snorted Donnelly. "Honey, did you say you fainted? That isn't like you."

"I've been having fainting spells," she answered. "The first time was when we were in the mountains and Jim fell down a cliff. We were standing on the edge—then everything went black, and when my sight cleared, he was rolling down the slope." She shuddered at the recollection.

"Then when I lost control of the car and it crashed into the tree. You remember—Jim called you over."

Doctor Donnelly nodded ponderously. "I don't remember you ever having fainting spells before."

"But Jim says I pushed him over the cliff!" she cried hysterically. "He says I tried to run him down in the car! He says I purposely slashed him with the razor!"

Doctor Donnelly turned perplexedly, toward the wretched Gordon. "How about it, son?"

"God help me," Gordon burst out in agony; "it's true!"

"Why, you lying hound!" It was Bain who gave tongue, leaping again to his feet. "If you want a divorce, why don't you get it in a decent way, instead of resorting to these despicable tactics—"

"Damn you!" roared Gordon, lunging up, and losing control of himself completely. "If you say that I'll tear your jugular out!"

Evelyn screamed; Donnelly grabbed Bain ponderously and banged him back into his chair with no overly gentle touch, and Kirowan laid a hand lightly on Gordon's shoulder. The man seemed to crumple into himself. He sank back into his chair and held out his hands gropingly toward his wife.

"Evelyn," he said, his voice thick with laboring emotion, "you know I love you. I feel like a dog. But God help me, it's true. If we go on this way, I'll be a dead man, and you—"

"Don't say it!" she screamed. "I know you wouldn't lie to me, Jim. If you say I tried to kill you, I know I did. But I swear, Jim, I didn't do it consciously. Oh, I must be going mad! That's why my dreams have been so wild and terrifying lately—"

"Of what have you dreamed, Mrs. Gordon?" asked Kirowan gently.

She pressed her hands to her temples and stared dully at him, as if only half comprehending.

"A black thing," she muttered. "A horrible black thing that mows and mumbles and paws over me with apish hands. I dream of it every night. And in the daytime I try to kill the only man I ever loved. I'm going mad! Maybe I'm already crazy and don't know it."

"Calm yourself, honey." To Doctor Donnelly, with all his science, it was only another case of feminine hysteria. His matter-of-fact voice seemed to soothe her, and she sighed and drew a weary hand through her damp locks.

"We'll talk this all over, and everything's goin' to be okay," he said, drawing a thick cigar from his vest pocket. "Gimme a match, honey."

She began mechanically to feel about the table, and just as mechanically Gordon said: "There are matches in the drawer, Evelyn."

She opened the drawer and began groping in it, when suddenly, as if struck by recollection and intuition, Gordon sprang up, white-faced, and shouted: "No, no! Don't open that drawer—don't—"

Even as he voiced that urgent cry, she stiffened, as if at the feel of something in the drawer. Her change of expression held us all frozen, even Kirowan. The vital intelligence vanished from her eyes like a blown-out flame, and into them came the look Gordon had described as blank.

The term was descriptive. Her beautiful eyes were dark wells of emptiness, as if the soul had been withdrawn from behind them.

Her hand came out of the drawer holding a pistol, and she fired point-blank. Gordon reeled with a groan and went down, blood starting from his head. For a flashing instant she looked down stupidly at the smoking gun in her hand, like one suddenly waking from a nightmare. Then her wild scream of agony smote our ears.

"Oh God, I've killed him! Jim! *Jim!*"

She reached him before any of us, throwing herself on her knees and cradling his bloody head in her arms, while she sobbed in an unbearable passion of horror and anguish. The emptiness was gone from her eyes; they were alive and dilated with grief and terror.

I was making toward my prostrate friend with Donnelly and Bain, but Kirowan caught my arm. His face was no longer immobile; his eyes glittered with a controlled savergy.

"Leave him to them!" he snarled. "We are hunters, not healers! Lead me to the house of Joseph Roelocke!"

I did not question him. We drove there in Gordon's car. I had the wheel, and something about the grim face of my companion caused me to hurl the machine recklessly through the traffic. I had the sensation of being part of a tragic drama which was hurtling with headlong speed toward a terrible climax.

I wrenched the car to a grinding halt at the curb before the building where Roelocke lived in a bizarre apartment high above the city. The very elevator that shot us skyward seemed imbued with something of Kirowan's driving urge for haste. I pointed out Roelocke's door, and he cast it open without knocking and shouldered his way in. I was close at his heels.

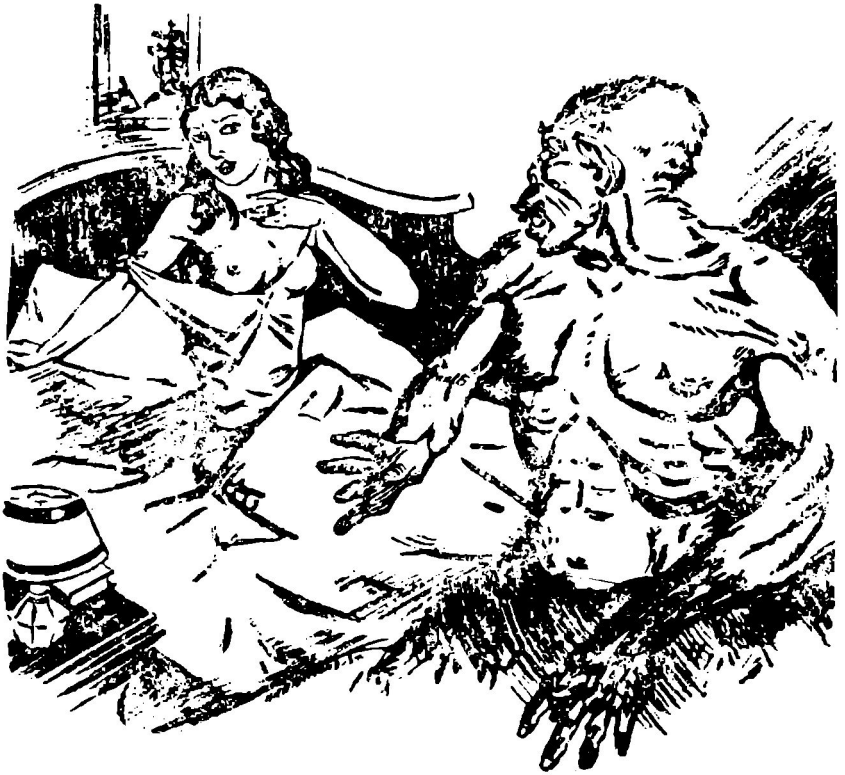
Roelocke, in a dressing-gown of Chinese silk worked with dragons, was lounging on a divan, puffing quickly at a cigarette. He sat up, overturning a wine-glass which stood with a half-filled bottle at his elbow.

Before Kirowan could speak, I burst out with our news. "James Gordon has been shot!"

He sprang to his feet. "Shot? When? When did she kill him?"

"*She?*" I glared in bewilderment, "How did you know—"

With a steely hand Kirowan thrust me aside, and as the men faced each other, I saw recognition flare up in Roelocke's face. They made a strong contrast: Kirowan, tall, pale with some white-hot passion; Roelocke, slim, darkly handsome, with the saracenic arch of his slim brows



(illustration by Hammond)

above his black eyes. I realized that whatever else occurred, it lay between those two men. They were not strangers; I could sense like a tangible thing the hate that lay between them.

"John Kirowan!" softly whispered Roelocke.

"You remember me, Yosef Vrolok!" Only an iron control kept Kirowan's voice steady. The other merely stared at him without speaking.

"Years ago," said Kirowan more deliberately, "when we delved in the dark mysteries together in Budapest, I saw whither you were drifting. I drew back; I would not descend to the foul depths of forbidden occultism and diabolism to which you sank. And because I would not, you despised me, and you robbed me of the only woman I ever loved; you turned her against me by means of your vile arts, and then you degraded and

debauched her, sank her into your own foul slime. I had killed you with my hands then, Yosef Vrolok—vampire by nature as well by name that you are—but your arts protected you from physical vengeance. But you have trapped yourself at last!"

Kirowan's voice rose in fierce exultation. All his cultured restraint had been swept away from him, leaving a primitive, elemental man, raging and gloating over a hatred foe.

"You sought the destruction of James Gordon and his wife, because she unwittingly escaped your snare; you—"

Roelocke shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "You are mad. I have not seen the Gordons for weeks. Why blame me for their family troubles?"

Kirowan snarled. "Liar as always. What did you say just now when O'Donnell told you Gordon had been shot? 'When did *she* kill him?' You were expecting to hear that the girl had killed her husband. Your psychic powers had told you that a climax was close at hand. You were nervously awaiting news of the success of your devilish scheme.

"But I did not need a slip of your tongue to recognize your handiwork. I knew as soon as I saw the ring on Evelyn Gordon's finger; the ring she could not remove; the ancient and accursed ring of Thothamon, handed down by foul cults of sorcerers since the days of forgotten Stygia. I knew that ring was yours, and I knew by what ghastly rites you came to possess it. And I knew its power. Once she put it on her finger, in her innocence and ignorance, she was in your power. By your black magic you summoned the black elemental spirit, *the haunter of the ring,* out of the gulfs of Night and the ages. Here in your accursed chamber you performed unspeakable rituals to drive Evelyn Gordon's soul from her body, and to cause that body to be possessed by that godless spirit from *outside* the human universe.

"She was too clean and wholesome, her love for her husband too strong, for the fiend to gain complete and permanent possession of her body; only for brief instants could it drive her own spirit into the void and animate her form. But that was enough for your purpose. But you have brought ruin upon yourself by your vengeance!"

Kirowan's voice rose to a feline screech. "What was the price demanded by the fiend you drew from the Pits? Ha, you blench! Yosef Vrolok is not the only man to have learned forbidden secrets! After I left Hungary, a broken man, I took up again the study of the black arts, to trap you, you cringing serpent! I explored the ruins of Zimbabwe, the lost mountains of inner Mongolia, and the forgotten jungle

islands of the southern seas. I learned what sickened my soul so that I forswore occultism for ever—but I learned of the black spirit that deals death by the hand of a beloved one, and is controlled by a master of magic.

"But, Yosef Vrolok, you are not an adept! You have not the power to control the fiend you have invoked. And you have sold your soul!"

The Hungarian tore at his collar as if it were a strangling noose. His face had changed, as if a mask had dropped away; he looked much older.

"You lie!" he panted. "I did not promise him *my* soul—"

"I do not lie!" Kirowan's shriek was shocking in its wild exultation. "I know the price a man must pay for calling forth the nameless shape the roams the gulfs of Darkness. Look! There in the corner behind you! A nameless, sightless thing is laughing—is mocking you! It has fulfilled its bargain, and it has come for you, Yosef Vrolok!"

"No!" shrieked Vrolok, tearing his limp collar away from his sweating throat. His composure had crumpled, and his demoralization was sickening to see. "I tell you it was not *my* soul—I promised it a soul, but not *my soul*—he must take the soul of the girl, or of James Gordon—"

"Fool!" roared Kirowan. "Do you think *he* could take the souls of innocence? That he would not know they were beyond his reach? The girl and the youth he could kill; their souls were not his to take or yours to give. But *your* black soul is not beyond his reach, and he will have his wage. *Look!* He is materializing behind you! He is growing out of thin air!"

Was it the hypnosis inspired by Kirowan's burning words that caused me to shudder and grow cold, to feel an icy chill that was not of earth pervade the room? Was it a trick of light and shadow that seemed to produce the effect of a black anthropomorphic shadow on the wall behind the Hungarian? No, by heaven! It grew, it swelled—Vrolok had not turned. He stared at Kirowan with eyes starting from his head, hair standing stiffly on his scalp, sweat dripping from his livid face.

Kirowan's cry started shudders down my spine. "Look behind you, fool! He is here! His grisly mouth gapes in awful laughter! His misshapen paws reach for you!"

And then at last Vrolok wheeled, with an awful shriek, throwing his arms above his head in a gesture of wild despair. And for one brain-shattering instant he was *blotted out* by a great black shadow—Kirowan

grasped my arm and we fled from that accursed chamber, blind with horror.

The same paper which bore a brief item telling of James Gordon having suffered a slight scalp-wound by the accidental discharge of a pistol in his home, headlined the sudden death of Joseph Roelocke, wealthy and eccentric clubman, in his sumptuous apartments—apparently from heart-failure.

I read it at breakfast, while I drank cup after cup of black coffee, from a hand that was not too steady, even after the lapse of a night. Across the table from Kirowan likewise seemed to lack appetite. He brooded, as if he roamed again through by gone years.

"Gordon's fantastic theory of reincarnation was wild enough," I said at last. "But the actual facts were still more incredible. Tell me, Kirowan, was that last scene the result of hypnosis? Was it the power of your words that made me seem to see a black horror grow out of the air and rip Yosef Vrolok's soul from his living body?"

He shook his head. "No human hypnotism would strike that black-hearted devil dead on the floor. No; there are beings outside the ken of common humanity, foul shapes of transcosmic evil. Such a one it was with which Vrolok dealt."

"But how could it claim his soul?" I persisted. "If indeed such an awful bargain had been struck, it had not fulfilled its part; for James Gordon was not dead, but merely knocked senseless."

"Vrolok did not know it," answered Kirowan. "He thought that Gordon was dead, and I convinced him that he himself had been trapped, and was doomed. In his demoralization he fell easy prey to the thing he had called forth. *It,* of course, was always watching for a moment of weakness on his part. The powers of Darkness never deal fairly with human beings; he who traffics with them is always cheated in the end."

"It's a mad nightmare," I muttered. "But it seems to me, that you as much as anything else brought about Vrolok's death."

"It is gratifying to think so," Kirowan answered. "Evelyn Gordon is safe now; and it is a small repayment for what he did to another girl, years ago, and in a far country."

The Vengeance Of India

by Seabury Quinn

(author of *The Isle of Missing Ships, The White Lady of the Orphanage,* etc.)

ALL DAY THE MARCH WIND had been muttering and growling like a peevish giant with the toothache. As darkness fell it began to raise its voice; by 9 o'clock it was shrieking and screaming like a billion banshees suffering with cholera morbus. I huddled over the coke fire burning in my study grate and tried to concentrate on my book, to forget the wailing of the wind and the misfortunes of the day, but made very poor work of it.

Mingling with the wind's skirling there suddenly sounded the raucous bellow of an automobile siren, followed, a moment later, by a hammering and clattering at the front door as if whoever stood outside would beat the panels in by main force.

> "Do you not know the only truthful certificate a physician ever gives for the cause of death is when he writes down 'unknown'?"

"If ye plaze, sor," Nora, my maid of all work, announced, poking her nose around the half-opened study door, "there's a gintilman ter see ye—an Eyetalian man, I think he is." Nora disapproves strongly of "furriners" in general and Italians in particular; and when they come, as they frequently do, to summon me from the house on a stormy night, her disapproval is hidden neither from my callers nor me.

Tonight, however, I greeted the interruption with something like relief. Action of any sort, even traveling a dozen miles to set an Italian laborer's broken limb without much hope of compensation, would provide a welcome distraction from the pall of gloom which enveloped me. "Bring him in," I ordered.

"Parbleu!" exclaimed a voice behind her. "He is already in! Did you think, my friend, that I would travel all this way on such a night to have your servant debate entrance with me?"

I leaped from my chair with a whoop of delight and seized both my visitor's slender hands in mine. "De Grandin!" I exclaimed delightedly. "Jules de Grandin! What in the world are you doing here! I thought you'd be in your laboratory at the Sorbonne by now."

"But no," he denied, handing his sopping cap and raincoat to Nora and seating himself across the fire from me, "there is little rest for the wicked in this world, my friend, and for Jules de Grandin there is none at all. Hardly had we finished with that villainous Goonong Besar than I was dispatched, post-haste, to Brazil, and when my work was finished there I must needs be called to tell of my experiments before your association of physicians in New York. *Eh bien,* but I fear me I shall not see my peaceful laboratory for some time, my friend."

"Oh, so you were in Brazil?" I answered thoughtfully.

"Trowbridge, my friend!" he put out both hands impulsively. "The mention of that country distresses you. Tell me, can I be of help?"

"H'm, I'm afraid not," I replied sadly. "It's an odd coincidence, your coming from there today, though. You see, a patient of mine, a Brazilian lady, died today, and I've no more idea what killed her than an African Bushman has about the nebular hypothesis."

"Oh, la, la!" he chuckled. "Friend Trowbridge, to see you is worth traveling twice around the world. Forty years a physician, and he worries over a faulty diagnosis! My dear fellow, do you not know the only truthful certificate a physician ever gives for the cause of death is when he writes down 'unknown'?"

"I suppose so," I agreed, "but this case is out of the ordinary, de Grandin. These people, the Drigos, have lived here only a few weeks,

and virtually nothing is known of them, except that they seem to have plenty of money. This morning, about 11 o'clock, I was called to attend their only child, a daughter about eighteen years of age, and found her in a sort of stupor. Not a faint, nor yet a condition of profound depression, simply sleepy, like any young woman who was up late the previous night. There was no history of unusual activity on her part; she had gone to bed at her usual hour the night before, and was apparently in good health within an hour of the time I was called. I could see no reason for my services, to tell you the truth, for her condition did not appear at all serious, yet, before I could reassure her parents and leave the house, she went to sleep *and slept her life away.* Died in what appeared a healthy, natural sleep in less than ten minutes!"

"A-a-ah?" he answered on a rising note. "You interest me, my friend. It is, perhaps, some new, acute form of sleeping sickness we have here. Come, can you make some excuse to go the people's house? I would make inquiries from them. Perchance we shall learn something for the benefit of science."

I was about to demur when the tinkle of my telephone cut in. "Dr. Trowbridge," called the party at the other end, "this is Johnston, the undertaker, speaking. Can you come over to Drigo's to sign the death certificate, or shall I bring it to your house tomorrow? I can't get any information from these folks. They don't even know what she died of."

"Neither do I," I muttered to myself, but aloud I said, "Why, yes, Mr. Johnston, I'll come right over. There's a friend of mine, another doctor, here; I'll bring him along."

"Good enough," he responded. "If I have to argue with these people much longer I'll need you and your friend, too, to patch up my nerves."

Robed in a gown of priceless old lace, a white net mantilla drawn over her smoothly parted black hair, Ramalha Drigo lay at rest in an elaborate open-couch casket of mahogany, her slender, oleander-white hands piously crossed upon her virginal bosom, a rosary of carved ebony, terminating in a silver crucifix, intertwined in her waxen fingers.

"Bon Dieu," de Grandin breathed as he bent over the girl's composed oval face, "she was beautiful, this poor one! *Helas* that she should die thus early!"

I murmured an assent as I took the form Mr. Johnston proffered me and wrote "unknown" in the space reserved for cause of death and "about one-half hour" in the place allotted for duration of last illness.

"Gosh, Doc, he's a queer one, that foreign friend of yours," the undertaker commented, attracting my attention with a nudge and nodding to-

ward de Grandin. The little Frenchman was bending over the casket, his blond, waxed mustache twitching like the whiskers of an alert tom-cat, his slender, womanish hands patting the girl's arms and breast questingly, as though they sought the clue to her mysterious death beneath the folds of her robe.

"He's queer, all right," I agreed, "but I've never seen him do anything without good reason. Why—"

A faltering step in the hall cut short my remark as Mr. Drigo, entered the parlor. "Good evening, Dr. Trowbridge," he greeted with a courteous bow. "Dr. de Grandin"—as I presented the Frenchman—"I am honored to make your acquaintance."

De Grandin nodded an absent-minded acknowledgment of the courtesy and turned away, addressing Mr. Johnston in a whisper. "You are an embalmer, my friend?" he asked, almost eagerly, it seemed to me.

"Yes," answered the other, wonderingly. "I've had a license to practise for ten years."

"And it is customary that you embalm the dead in this country, yes?" de Grandin insisted.

"Yes sir; but sometimes—"

"And when embalmment is not made, it is the exception, rather than the rule?"

"Decidedly, but—"

"You would embalm as a matter of course, unless expressly ordered to the contrary, then?"

"Yes," Johnston admitted.

"Ah, then, was it Monsieur Drigo who forbade that you embalm his daughter?"

The undertaker started as though pricked with a needle. "How did you know?" he demanded.

The ghost of one of his impish smiles flickered across de Grandin's face, to be replaced instantly with a look more suited to the occasion. "In France, my friend," he confided, "the science of embalming, as pratised in America, is still a rarity. But in Paris we have a young man, a Canadian, who preserves the dead even as you do here, and from him I have learn many things. I have, for example, learned that you inject the preserving fluids in either the brachial, the corotid, the axillary or the femoral artery. *Tres bien,* if you have embalmed this poor child here, you have used one of those arteries, *n'estce-pas?* The chances are that an American embalmer would not utilize the femoral artery to embalm a woman's body, so I feel to see if you have bandaged the

arm or breast of that poor dead child where you have inserted your fluid-tube in one of those other arteries. I find no bandage; I feel her cheeks, they are firm as life; therefore, I decide embalmment have not been done, and, knowing your custom here, I ask to know who have ordered the contrary. *Voila,* it are not magic which make me know; but the ordinary sense of the horse."

He linked his arm in mine. "Come, Friend Trowbridge," he announced, "there is no more we can do here. Let us leave this sad house to its sorrow. Tomorrow, or the next day, perhaps, you will have more of these so mysterious cases, and we can study them together. Meanwhile, let us leave what we can not help."

The three of us, Johnston, de Grandin and I, were about to pass from the house when the Frenchman paused, gazing intently at a life-sized half-length portrait in oils hanging on the hall wall. "Monsieur Drigo," he asked, "forgive my unseemly curiosity, but that gentleman, who was he?"

Something like terror appeared in the other's face as he answered, "My grandfather, sir."

"Ah, but *Monsieur,*" de Grandin objected, "that gentleman, he wears the British uniform, is it not so?"

"Yes," Drigo replied. "My mother's father was a British officer, her mother was a Portuguese lady."

"Thank you," de Grandin replied with a bow as he followed me through the front door.

They buried Ramalha Drigo in the little graveyard of the Catholic chapel the followimg day. It was a dreary ceremony, no one but the old priest, the Drigo family, de Grandin and I were in attendance, and the wailing March wind seemed echoing our own somber thoughts as it soughed through the branches of the leafless Lombardy poplars.

"It is old, that cemetery?" de Grandin hazarded as we drove from the church to my house following the brief committal service.

"Very old," I assented. "St. Benedict's is one of the earliest Roman Catholic parishes in New Jersey, and the cemetery is one of the few in this neighborhood dating back to Colonial days."

"And have you noticed any strange colored men in the neighborhood lately?" he asked irrelevantly.

"Strange colored men?" I echoed. "What in the world are you driving at, de Grandin? First you ask me if the cemetery is old, then you go off at a tangent, and want to know if there are any strange Negroes in the neighborhood. You—"

"Tell me, my friend," he interrupted, "how did the poor dead lady spend her time? Did she walk much in the country, or go from home much in the night?"

"For heaven's sake!" I looked at him in wonderment, and almost ran the car into the roadside ditch. "Have you lost your senses completely, or are you trying to see how foolish you can be? I never heard such rambling questions!"

"Nor have you ever heard that the longest way round is usually the shortest way home, apparently," he added. "Believe me, my friend, I do not ask aimless questions. But no, that is not my method. Come, if you will set me down I shall walk through the village and attempt to collect some information. My regards to your amiable cook, if you please, and request that she will prepare some of her so excellent apple pie for dinner. I shall be home by meal time, never fear."

He was as good as his word. It lacked twenty minutes of the dinner hour when he hurried into the house, his cheeks reddened from brisk walking in the chilly March air. But something in his manner, his nervously quick movements, his air of suppressed excitement, told me he was on the track of some fresh mystery.

"Well, what is it?" I asked as we adjourned to the library after dinner. "Have you heard anything of the strange colored men you were so anxious about this afternoon?" I could not forbear a malicious grim as I reminded him of his senseless question.

"But of course," he returned evenly as he lighted a French cigarette and blew a cloud of acrid smoke toward the ceiling. "Am I not Jules de Grandin, and does not Jules de Grandin get the information he seeks? At all times? Most certainly."

He laughed outright at the amazed look with which I greeted his egotistical sally. "*La, la* Friend Trowbridge," he exclaimed, "you are so droll! Always you Americans and English would have the world believe you have yourselves in perfect control, yet I can play upon you as a harpist plays upon his strings. When will you learn that my honest, well-merited self-respect is not empty boastfulness?"

He cast aside his bantering manner and leaned forward very suddenly. "What do you know of St. Benedict's cemetery?" he demanded.

"Eh, St. Benedict's—?" I countered, at a loss to answer.

"Precisely, exactly," he affirmed. "Do you, for example, know that the entire ground near the old chapel is underlaid with ancient tombs—vaulted, brick-lined passageways?"

"No," I replied. "Never heard such a thing."

"Ah, so?" he answered sarcastically. "All your life you have lived here, yet you know naught of this curiosity. Truly, I have said not half enough in praise of Jules de Grandin, I fear. And, since you know nothing of the tombs, I take it you did not know that when the Drigo family became affiliated with St. Benedict's congregation they bought the freehold to a pew, and, along with it, the license to bury their dead in one of the old tombs. Eh, you did not know that?"

"Of course not," I returned. "I'm a physician, not a detective, de Grandin. Why should I pry into my patients' private affairs?"

"U'm, why, indeed?" he replied. Then, with an abrupt change of subject: "Have you heard Beinhauer's new hypothesis concerning catabolism? No?" And with that he launched on a long and highly technical explanation of the Austrian's theory of destructive metabolism, nor could all my efforts drag him back to a single word concerning his discoveries of the afternoon.

"Pretty bad business, down to th' graveyard, ain't it, Doc?" asked the postman as I passed him on my way to my morning calls the following day.

"What's that?" I asked, startled. "What's happened?"

He smiled with the conscious superiority of one who has interesting gossip to retail. "That Driggo girl"—he jerked an indicative thumb in the general direction of the Drigo home—" th' one that died th' other day. Some grave robbers musta dug her up last night, 'cause th' sexton of St. Benedict's found her veil layin' on th' ground this mornin'. They're goin' to open her grave this afternoon to see if her body's still there, I hear. 'Tain't likely they'll find nothin', though; them body-snatchers don't usually leave nothin' layin' around when they get through."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed. "Grave robbery?"

"Yep, that's what they say."

I hurried on my way, my thoughts racing faster than the wheels of my motor. It was all too likely. Gossip of the mysterious cause of the girl's death was bound to have got about, and her lovely body would have proved an irresistibly attractive bait for some anatomist with a passion for morbid research. At my first stop I called the house and told de Grandin.

"*Cordieu!* It is so!" he shouted in answer. "I have won my bet, then!"

"You—what?" I replied incredulously.

"Last night, when I had learned what I had learned, I wagered with myself that she would not remain grave-bound," he replied. "Now I

have won. This afternoon I go to witness the exhumation; but it is little more than a waste of time. She will not be there. On that I bet myself ten francs."

"What the devil—" I began, but a sharp click told me he had hung up. Three minutes later, when I reestablished communication with the office, Nora told me that the "furrin gintilman" had gone down th' road as if th' Little Good Paypul wuz afther 'im."

By 4 o'clock that afternoon the entire villiage was buzzing with the gruesome news of the rifling of Ramalha Drigo's grave. Father Lamphier, the aged parish priest of St. Benedict's, wrung his hands in an agony of vicarious suffering for the girl's distracted parents; Arthur Lesterton, the county prosecutor, vowed legal vengenace on the miscreants; Duffey, the police chief, gave an interview to a reporter from our one and only evening paper declaring that the police had several suspects under surveillance and expected to make an early arrest. Indignation was at fever heat; everybody made endless impracticable suggestions, nobody did anything. In all the town there seemed only two calm people: Ricardo Drigo, Ramalha's father; and Jules de Grandin.

Drigo thanked me courteously when I expressed sympathy for his misfortune, and said quietly, "It is fate, Doctor. It can not be escaped." De Grandin nodded his head sapiently once or twice, and said nothing at all. But the glitter of his little blue eyes and the occasional nervous twitiching of his slender white hands told me he was seething inwardly.

We ate dinner in silence, I with no appetitie at all, de Grandin with a gusto which seemed to me, in the circumstances, hardly decent.

Each of us took a book in the library after dinner, and several hours passed in gloomy quiet.

Suddenly: "The time approaches, Trowbridge, my friend," de Grandin exclaimed, shutting his book with a snap and rising from his chair.

"Eh?" I answered wonderingly.

"We go; we observe; perhaps we find the answer to this *sacre* riddle tonight," he replied.

"Go? Observe?" I echoed stupidly.

"But certainly. Have I been going hither and elsewhere all this time to sit idly by when the opportunity to act has come? Your coat, my friend, and your hat! We go to that St. Benedict's cemetery. Right away, at once, immediately. This night, perhaps, I show you that which you have never seen before."

St. Benedict's churchyard lay stark and ghastly in the night-light as

I parked my car beside the dilapidated fence separating the little God's Acre from the road. Discolored tombstones reared themselves from the dead winter grass like bones long dried upon some ancient battlefield, patches of hoar-frost showed leprous against the sod, and, mingling with the moaning of the night wind in the poplar boughs, the shrill, eerie cry of a screech-owl came to us like the lament of an earth-bound spirit.

"Have a care, my friend," de Grandin warned in a low breath as he clambered over the fence and made his way between the graves, "the ground is treacherous here. One false step, and *pouf!* your leg is broken against some of these mementoes of mortality."

I followed him as quickly as I could till his upraised hand signaled a halt. "It is here we shall see what we shall see, if, indeed, we see it at all," he pomised, sinking to the moss at the foot of a great pine tree. "Observe that monument yonder? *Bien,* it is to it we must give our particular attention this night."

I recognized the gravestone he indicated as standing in the Drigos' burial plot. It was one of the cemetery's oldest monuments, a low, table-like box of stone consisting of a flat horizontal slab about the size of a grave's ground dimensions, supported by four upright pieces of marble, the name and vital dates of the family which first owned the plot being engraved on the tomb's top. I recalled having heard the grave space originally beonged to the Bouvier family, but the last of the line had gone to his eternal rest long before I was born.

Fixing my eyes steadily on the old monument, I wondered what my companion meant by his assertion, wondered again, and turned to look over my shoulder toward the road where the clatter of a passing vehicle sounded on the macadam.

Somewhere in the town a tower clock began telling midnight. *Bong, bong, bong,* the sixteen-note chime sounded the full hour, followed by the deep resonant *boom* of the bell as it began its twelve strokes. One—two—three—

"*Regardez!*" de Grandin's slim fingers bit into my arm as he hissed the command. A shiver, not due to the raw March air, raced up my spine and through my scalp, raising the short hairs above my greatcoat collar as a current of electricity might have done.

Beyond the Bouvier tomb, like a column of mist, too strong to be dissipated by the wind, yet almost too impalpable to be seen, a slender white form was rising, taking shape—*coming toward us.*

"Good God!" I cried in a choking voice, shrinking against de Grand-

in with the involuntary, unreasoning fear of the living for the dead. "What is it?"

"*Zut!*" he shook off my restraining clutch as an adult might brush aside a child in time of emergency. "*Attendez, mon ami!*" With a cat-like leap he cleared the intervening graves and planted himself squarely in the path of the advancing wraith. *Click!* His pocket electric flash shot a beam of dazzling light straight into the specter's face. I went sick with horror as I recognized the drawn features and staring, death-glazed eyes of—

"Ramalha Drigo, look at me,—I command it!" De Grandin's voice sounded shrill and rasping with the intensity of purpose which was behind it. Coming abreast of him, I saw his little blue eyes were fairly starting from his face as he bent an unwinking stare on the dead face before him. The waxed ends of his small, bond mustache started upward, like the horns of an inverted crescent, as his lips drew themselves about his words. "Look—at—me—Ramalha Drigo—I—command—it!"

Something like a tremor passed through the dead girl's flaccid cheeks. For an instant her film-coated eyes flickered with a look of lifelike intelligence. Then the face went limp with the flaccidity of death once more, the lids half dropped before the staring eyes, and her whole body crumpled like a wax figure suddenly exposed to a blast of heat.

"Catch her, Trowbridge, my friend!" de Grandin ordered excitedly. "Bear her to her father's house and put her to bed. I come as soon as possible; meantime I have work to do."

Thrusting the flashlight into his pocket he jerked out a small whistle and blew three quick, shrilling blasts. "*A moi, sergent; a moi, mes enfants!*" he called as the whistle fell clinking and bouncing to the gravestone beneath his feet.

As I carried the light, crumpled body of Ramalha Drigo toward the cemetery gate I heard the crash of booted feet against the graveyard shrubs mingling with hoarsely shouted commands and the savage, eager baying of police dogs straining at the leash. A hulking shape brushed past me at a run, and I made out the form of a state trooper rushing toward de Grandin, swinging a riot stick as he ran.

Something cold as clay touched my face. It was one of Ramalha's little hands lying aginst my cheek as her arm had bent between her body and my shoulder when I caught her as she fell. Shifting her weight to one arm I took the poor dead hand in my free hand and lowered it to her side, then froze like a statue in my tracks. Faint, so faint it could

scarcely be recognized, but perceptible, nevertheless, a feeble pulse was beating in her wrist.

"Good Lord!" I almost shouted to the unheeding night. "Merciful heaven, the child is *alive!*"

Rushing as I had not rushed since my cub days as an ambulance surgeon, I carried her to my waiting car, bundled the motor rug about her and drove to her father's house at a pace which took account of no speed limit save my engine's greatest capacity.

Kicking at the door, I roused the Drigo family from their beds, carried the senseless girl upstairs and placed her between woolen blankets with every available water-bottle and hot-pack in the house at her feet and spine.

Ten, fifteen minutes I watched beside her, administering a hypodermic injection of strychnin each five minutes. Gradually, like the shadow of the dawn breaking against a winter horizon, the faint flush of circulating blood appeared in her pallid lips and cheeks.

Standing at my elbow, Ricardo Drigo watched first apathetically, then wonderingly, finally in a fever of incredulous hope and fear. As a faint respiration fluttered the girl's breast, he fell to his knees beside the bed, burying his face in his hands and sobbing aloud in hysterical joy. "Oh, Lord of heaven," he prayed between sobs, "reward, I beseech you, this Dr. de Grandin, for surely he is not as other men!"

"*Tiens,* my friend, you do speak truth!" agreed a complacent voice from the doorway behind us. "Of a certainty Jules de Grandin is a very remarkable fellow; but if you seek some necromancer, you would better look elsewhere. This de Grandin, he is a scientist; no more. *Cordieu!* Is that not enough?"

"*Par la barbe d'un corbeau, Monsieur,* but this port is exquisite!" De Grandin assured Drigo three hours later as he passed his tumbler across the table for replenishment. "And these so divine cigars"—he raised both hands in mute admiration,—"*parbleu,* I could smoke three of them at once and mourn because my mouth would not accommodate a fourth!

"But I see our good friend Trowbridge grows restless. He would have the whole story, from the beginning. Very well, then, to begin:

"As I told Friend Trowbridge, I had but come from Rio when I arrived in New York the other day. While I was in that so superb city of Brazil I became acquainted with more than one *delegado* of police, and from them I heard many strange things. For example"—he fixed

his penetrating gaze on Drigo for a moment—"I heard the mystery of a Portuguese gentleman who came to Brazil from East Africa and took a beautiful house in the Praia Botafogo, only to relinquish it before his furniture was fairly settled in it. Before this gentleman lived in Africa he had dwelt in India. He was born there, in fact.

"Why he left that so beautiful city of Rio the police did not know; but they had a story from one of their detectives that that gentleman came suddenly face to face with a Hindoo sailor from one of the ships in the harbor while he and his daughter were shopping in the Ouvidor. The Hindoo, it was said, had but looked at the daughter and laughed in the father's face; but it was enough. He departed from Rio next day, that gentleman; both he and his family and all his servants. To the United States he went, though none knew to what part, or why.

"*Eh bien,* it was one of the fragments of mystery which we of the Service de Surete do constantly encounter—a little incident of life without beginning or end, without ancestry or posterity. Never mind, I stored it in my brain for future reference. Sooner or later all things we remember come to have a use, *n'est-ce-pas?*

"When next I see my dear friend Trowbridge he is looking very long in the face. One of his patients, a Brazilian lady, have died that very day, and he can not account for her death. But his story sounds interesting, and I think, perhaps-maybe, I find out something of some new disease, so I ask him to let me investigate.

"When we come to the house where this dead lady lay I am struck with—with *something* about her look, and I remember most American dead are embalmed almost instantly for their burial. I touch her face, it has not the hardness of flesh preserved with formaldehyde. Then I feel for the wounds where the embalmer would have cut; but I find none. One thing more I find. While her face were cold, it were not cold as the surrounding air. 'How does this come?' asks Jules de Grandin of Jules de Grandin; but answer there was none at all.

"As my dear Trowbridge and I leave that house of death I see the portrait of a gentleman who much resembled our host, but who wore a uniform such as the British army once wore. Yet not quite. There was a difference there, but what it was I can not say then.

"I ask Monsieur Drigo who the painted gentleman was, and he say, 'He are my grandfather.'

"That night I do much thinking; finally I believe I have the thread of this mystery in my hands. I put together my knowledge and this is what I have:

"The uniform that painted gentleman wore are not of the British army, but of the British India Company. So. Now, he was a man in early middle life, this painted gentleman who wear the insignia of an artilleryman on his uniform, and, judging by his grandson's apparent age, he should have lived about the time of the American Civil War. Very good, what was happening in India, where this painted gentleman lived, then? I think some more; then, 'Ah,' Jules de Grandin tell Jules de Grandin. 'Jules de Grandin, you are one great stupid head; it was in 1857 that the Sepoy troops revolted against the English in India.'

"Yes? And what then? For once in history those English did act with sense. They meted to those Indian rebels with such measure as the rebels gave to them. For the atrocities of Nana Sahib they took logical vengenace by trying those rebels to the mouths of cannon—pouf! it was soon over when the cannoneers fired their guns.

"So far, so good. What then? Those Indians are a vengeful race. They harbor hatred through many generations. This much I know. Something else I know too. In India they sometimes, for money, will hypnotize a man—or, perchance, a woman—and bury him, to all appearances dead, in the earth for so long a time that corn planted above his grave will take root and grow several inches high. I have seen that with my own two eyes. Also I remember how one Colonel Ainsworth, an English gentleman who commanded some of the cannon from which those mutineers were blown to death, had apparently died in his English home in 1875, *but came to life in the family vault ten days later.*

"Almost he went crazy from that experience, though he was at length rescued. Two years later he suffered the same terrible fate. He was buried for dead, and came back to life again. And each time, before he had his seeming death, he had encountered a Hindoo in the road. At last he could stand the strain no more; but shot himself really dead rather than face the terror of a third living burial.

"Now, the people who wrote down the strange case of Colonel Ainsworth did but note that he had met Hindoo before he seemingly died; but, apparently, they attached no importance to these meetings. I do otherwise; for when I search my memory I find that of the officers who commanded the British guns at the Sepoys' executions, nearly all died violent or sudden deaths. How do we know how many of them were buried alive, but not rescued as Colonel Ainsworth was? Eh? Also I remember from the records that many of the descendants of those officers had died mysteriously or suddenly, sometimes both.

"'*Morbleu,*' I tell myself, 'Jules de Grandin, I think maybe-perhaps we have discover something!'

"I bet with myself, therefore, that this poor dead lady will not rest easy in her grave. Dead she may be, *cher* Trowbridge has so certified; but if she were not first dead in fact—the Brazilians do not believe in embalming their dead, and the embalmer's instruments not therefore have made certain that she is dead altogether. Very well, then; wait and see.

"Next day my friend Trowbridge tell me her grave was robbed. I go to watch them open it, and find the tombs in that cemetery are old passages underground. She is not in her grave, I see that; but she might be somewhere in the cemetery, nevertheless. I learn, by asking what my friend Trowbridge would call silly questions, that the grave space where this lady was buried once belonged to a family called Bouvier. Old Monsieur Bouvier, who live and die many years ago, had a morbid fear of being buried alive, so he had a special tomb constructed in such manner that if he come to life underground he can slide back a panel of stone as you would open a door, and walk home to his family. This old tomb is still standing above the spot where this unfortunate dead lady have been buried. 'Maybe', I tell myself, 'maybe something have happened in that cemetery while no one was watching.'

"Already I have made inquiries and find that two strange Negroes have been in town since some days before this poor lady died. But though they lived in the Negro quarter they had nothing to do with the other colored people. Query: were they Negroes or were they not Negroes, and if not, what were they? Hindoo, perhaps? I think yes.

"What then? The girl's mantilla has been found above ground; her body has not been found below. Perhaps they play cat-and-mouse with her, sending her forth from her grave at night like a very vampire, perhaps to injure her father or others whom she had loved in life. I decide I will see.

"I seek out that Monsieur Lesterton, who is the *juge d'instruction*—how do you say? county prosecutor?—and tell him all.

"He is a lawyer in a million, that one. Instead of saying, 'Talk to the Marines about it,' he nod his head tell me I may have as many gendarmes as I wish to help me with my plan.

"Tonight I go with friend Trowbridge and watch beside that old Monsieur Bouvier's tomb. Presently that poor girl who is found fast in the death which is not death comes forth, walking over her own grave.

"Jules de Grandin is no fool. He, too, can hypnotize, and what a man can do he can undo, likewise, if he be clever. I order her to wake up.

I flash my light in her eyes and I bring her to consciousness, then to natural sleep, as she was before the Hindoos' power make her appear dead. I turn her over to Friend Trowbridge to make all well while I and the gendarmes search for those men who are the masters of death.

"We find them hidden in an old tomb, far underground. One of them I have the felicity of killing when he would resist arrest. The other is shot by a trooper when he would fly, but ere his life ran out with his blood he tells me he and his companion have followed Monsieur Drigo from India to Africa and from Africa to America. Two days before she 'died' Mademoiselle Ramalha is met by these men as she walks in the country. They hypnotize her and order her to 'die' in forty-eight hours—to die and be buried, then come forth from her grave each night at midnight and visit her father's house, *Voila,* that fellow, he too, died; but not before I had the truth."

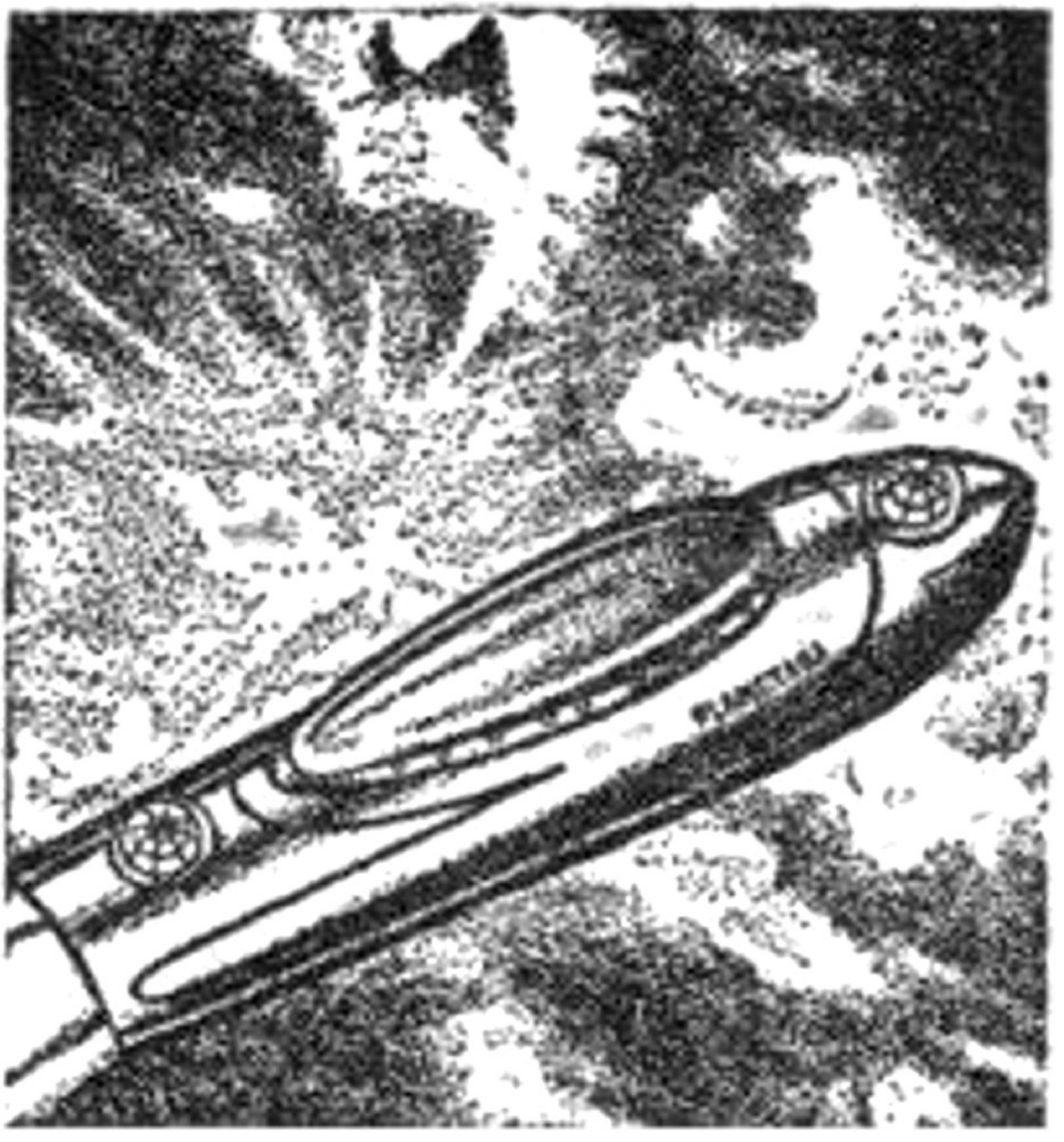
"But how did you make him confess, de Grandin?" I asked. "Surely his conscience did not trouble him, and if he knew he was dying he had nothing to fear from you."

"Eh, did he not?" de Grandin answered with an elfish grin. "Ah, but he did! The pig is unclean to those people. If they do but so much as touch a *porc* they do lose their caste. I did promise that fellow that if he did not tell me all, and tell the truth, right away, immediately, at once, I would see he was buried in the same coffin with a pig's carcass and that his grave should be wet with the blood of a slaughtered swine every full moon. *Pardieu,* you should have seen him make haste to tell me all before he died!"

He turned toward Drigo: "Mademoiselle Ramalha has little to fear in the future, *Monsieur,*" he promised. "The agents of vengeance have failed, and I do not think they will make another attempt upon her.

"Meanwhile, Friend Trowbridge, the morning breaks and the shadows flee away. Let us bid Monsieur Drigo good-night and hasten home."

"*Cordieu!*" he chuckled as we climbed into my waiting motor, "had I stayed beside Monsieur Drigo's wine a half-hour longer I should not have been able to leave at all. As it is, Trowbridge, my friend, I see two of you sitting beside me!"



After Sunset

by Philip Hazleton

The well-read lover of weird and strange tales will not find the particular angle of this story novel, but so far as I have been able to discover this is the first time it was used in one of the regular weird magazines. And even though authors who became better known later reworked the theme better, this prototype still retains some of its original power, enough so that you should be able to see why it was so impressive in 1931.

THE GREAT ROOMS OF THE GILLETT MANSION on Fifth Avenue were crowded with wedding guests. Flowers banked the walls, overflowing into the hall and pouring in a fragrant cascade down the stairs. From the concealed organ drifted the first rumbling strains of the wedding march into the night outside.

I moved uneasily; a strange sensation of impending evil swept over me. I felt that eyes were upon me—intense eyes in which dwelt a growing suspicion. A tiny, ice-cold shudder touched my spine. And yet what was there about me that anyone could suspect? My gown was perfection; my hair was arranged as only the deft fingers of Marie could arrange

There was something I had to see the night that Anita Gillett was buried. And someone else had come to watch, too . . .

(illustrated by de Soto)

it, and since I had entered the room a hundred eyes had paid tribute to my beauty. Yet the feeling of danger, vague as a smoke-wreath, persisted. I could stand it no longer. I turned. Jaffee, the old Gillett butler,

was standing in the doorway, his eyes fastened upon my face as if he could bore through it and read my very soul.

I almost laughed in my relief. Old Jaffee, courteous, deferential, a perfect servant—what harm could old Jaffee do to me? And yet the clinging sensation of danger persisted even after Jaffee had lowered his strangely intent eyes and turned away.

"My dear," said an old lady, one of the wedding guests, laying a thin, heavily jeweled hand on my arm, "did you ever see a handsomer man?"

My eyes swerved to the bower of bridal roses and lilies where stood the waiting groom. My breath caught in my throat. Who was this man standing there, so tall, so handsome, so commanding, waiting for little Anita Gillett to come in her bridal veil and marry him? I had never seen him before, yet I felt I had known him for all eternity. What was there about him that called to me, compelled me?

It had been four hundred years since anyone had called to me as this strange man was calling—four hundred years since I had lain, throbbing with warm human life, in the arms of Prince Feodore Stalitz. But Prince Feodore was dead, though not dead as I was dead—I who roved the world from sunset to sunrise, leaving in my wake a trail of blood and horror.

The wedding march rose and swelled. Down the stairs, through the waiting hush, came Anita Gillett, lovely and sweet and smiling. But I didn't even turn to glance at her; my eyes, my heart, every atom of my being were absorbed in the man waiting underneath the roses. And suddenly he smiled—smiled at his oncoming bride. A shiver went through me, a hot thrill of jealousy! Suddenly I hated Anita for arousing that smile.

The marriage ceremony was one of these modern, almost completely secular ones; that was why I could be here. At last it was ended. Smiling and happy the little bride came tripping down the long room on the arm of her tall and brilliantly handsome new husband. Nearer he was coming, and nearer. My blood pounded in my temples. My throat grew hot. That man belonged to me; strangers though we were, there was a bond between us. I could feel it like a flow of electric current. He must not belong to Anita.

Suddenly he raised his eyes straight to mine. For a long moment our gaze met and clung. Over me swept the sure sense of my power: I would hypnotize him—bind him with my spell. It seemed an eternity that I gazed at him, compelling his mind to my will.

The couple passed me, and I saw Anita's profile as she smiled adoringly up into Merle Crossley's face. I set my teeth against the swift surge of jealousy that shook me. Slowly, carefully, I began laying my plans . . .

The wedding reception dragged to a close. I could hardly wait for the moment when little Anita Gillett would excuse herself and run upstairs to exchange her bridal gown for her traveling frock. It seemed to me hours that she stood there, rosy and sweet and smiling, receiving the congratulations of her guests. But at last it was over. At last she turned to her new husband with that same smile, so filled with love. I watched the little scene—but this time without jealousy.

Trembling with eagerness I followed the young bride up the stairs and along the broad hallway to her room. And no one spoke to me, no one stopped me, for no one could see me. I had become a gray and almost invisible shadow!

Anita entered her room, and close at her heels I followed. She sat down at her dressing table, smiling at her reflection as she removed the orange blossoms and lace of her bridal veil. I shuddered; how I loathed and detested the sight of a mirror! I tore my eyes from the revolting sight and gazed at little Anita herself, her hair ruffled around her happily flushed face, her cheeks scarlet with excitement, her lips red with good young blood.

From the misty figure that was I, I materialized my two eyes, hungry, gleaming, and threw my power toward the slim and lovely figure of the little bride. She felt my power and turned. Her eyes grew wide with terror; her throat contracted in a scream: but no scream came. My eye went through her like a freezing flame. She grew livid; her eyes glazed with the deep unconsciousness of hypnotism.

In a flash I became myself, beautiful, alluring, seductive, only my devouring eyes and my mouth betraying me. But what difference did that make? There was now no one there to see.

The moment had come for which I existed—that moment which was the climax of all my efforts, all my schemings. I swooped down on the limp form of the unconscious girl. My sharp teeth pierced the tender flesh of her throat.

I was rejuvenated. My beauty was made warmer, more glowing, by my feast. Without a glance at my victim I turned and left the room. There was now but one thought in my mind—Merle Crossley. Would the brief spell I had cast on him be sufficient? Had, he, even now, for-

gotten his bride? Was mine the only face in his mind? As I went downstairs a chuckle of triumph rose to my smiling lips.

Dancing was going on. Across the heads of the dancers I could see his splendidly handsome face, his fine broad shoulders. My eyes rested on him. He turned, and my eyes grew intent, magnetic: whatever his will they would draw him to me: I stood still and waited while he threaded his way through the crowd and came to me. Without a word I gave myself into his arms and we danced. At his touch I felt again that strange compelling power that made me want to throw myself at his feet.

I was still dancing with Merle when the servants began circulating quietly among the guests. I watched them with a little half smile behind my eyes. Long before their words reached my ears I knew what message they brought. Anita had been found. Some mysterious malady had stricken her. How I chuckled, deep in my soul.

But suddenly my chuckle died. I shivered with that premonition of danger I had felt once before that evening. Swiftly I raised my eyes. From his post near the doorway Jaffee was staring at me, and in his gaze I read suspicion and a dreadful fear.

But instantly I had forgotten Jaffee, forgotten my foreboding of danger, forgotten everything in the swift, warm glory of Merle's smile. Ah!—my triumph was complete; my spell had conquered utterly! This handsome man at my side listened to the news of his bride—and smiled at me!

He leaned toward me. "Possibly," he whispered, "it is my duty to stay here—but all my soul belongs to you."

"We will go somewhere and dance," I said, raising my eyes to his, and my heart leaped with triumph at the light of love I saw there.

So, without another word, we turned and left that house.

It was five o'clock in the morning before he left me in the foyer of the hotel where I had my suite. For five hours I had swayed to lilting music in his arms. I had thrilled to his whispered words of adoration, I had watched the light of love deepening in his eyes.

But I could not linger. Already the first chill of approaching dawn was in the air. I must hurry, hurry; the age-old instinct of my kind urged me to speed. Suppose I delayed too long; suppose the first rays of the rising sun found me walking the earth! A shudder of terror swept over me. My fear of death when I was a human being was as nothing compared to my frozen horror now. I must hurry, hurry. Not even for the delight of Merle Crossley's love would I delay an instant!

"When may I see you again?" he implored. "I must leave you now, but when next may I see you?"

"I don't know," I muttered. "Please don't delay me—" My mind was becoming confused, blurred. I couldn't think. All I knew was that I must get to my room: I clamped my teeth shut to keep them from chattering with fear.

"I will phone you," he said quickly: "and perhaps we will have another evening of dancing—?"

I nodded hastily, hardly aware of what he was saying. Dimly I was glad that he had mentioned the evening.

"Good night!" I gasped the words breathlessly, and turned and ran.

Never did an elevator rise so slowly. Oh, why had I been such a fool as to take a suite on the twentieth floor? Why hadn't I foreseen that dawn might catch me in the elevator? One finger of the sun's rays touching the horizon, one gleam of true daylight and I would be no more! Vera Gregosk—the beautiful Vera Gregosk—would be a heap of mouldy bones and rotting flesh!

The elevator door clanged open. I ran down the corridor and burst into my rooms. Ah—safe at last! Marie, my faithful Marie, had prepared everything for me. Marie, too, was a creature of the night. There were the boxes of earth, prepared and waiting.

In my eagerness and rising terror I ripped the clothes from my body. Every instant was precious. Even now, even as close to security as I was, I might be a second too late. My clothes lay in torn heaps on the floor. Frantically I wrapped a winding-sheet around my body. I leaped into my coffin; the heavy, musty odor of earth rose to my quivering nostrils, and with a gasp of relief I pulled the coffin lid over me. My heavy eyelids dropped halfway over my eyes, my supple limbs were warm with Anita's blood. The chill of dawn could never harm me now.

A slow languor crept over me—Death. But not for long! Half unconscious as I was, a gurgle of laughter rose to my lips. For a few hours Death might hold me in his cold arms—and then I would rise stronger than before!...

When I came to it was dusk, the safe dusk that meant the sun had gone down. Marie was already up and about.

"Anita Gillett is dead," said Marie, and I could see her eyes gleaming red in the shadowy room.

I smiled and stretched. I had known she would die, but it was good to hear it.

"The funeral is this evening," went on Marie. "They believe there

is something strange about the death and they are not waiting the customary three days."

I joined her in her ghoulish laughter. Our shadow and dusk-filled room rang with our merriment. Then, suddenly, a thought struck me. Was there danger to me in the fact that they considered Anita's a strange death? What made them think it was strange? Were there people here in New York wise enough to deal with such as I? The thought sent a chill through me. Was it actually possible that danger to me lurked in the big Gillett mansion? I remembered my foreboding of the evening before.

I bathed and dressed slowly. If there were danger I must know it. One of my most compelling instincts was a burning curiosity. More than once it had almost been the means of trapping me, and now it drew me to Anita Gillett's funeral as a magnet would draw a steel shaving. I must know why they would not wait the customary time for the funeral. I must know why they thought the death "strange." Even though I shook with fear, even though my instinct told me that with every step I was going into danger, my unquenchable curiosity spurred me on.

The cars were parked for two blocks on either side of the big Gillett house on Fifth Avenue. The same brilliant gathering that had assembled the night before for the Gillett-Crossley wedding had returned the day following for little Anita's funeral. Slowly I walked up the wide stone steps and through the heavy door. Small knots of people were talking in the hallway. The funeral had not begun. Was it my scent of danger, or did they actually stop talking and turn to stare at me as I entered? I trembled with terror. But there was no turning back now. If I left the house my departure would be noted. If I disguised myself in any of the hundred shapes within my power they would know instantly that I was not human. And possibly I was wrong; possibly there were other reasons for having the funeral at once: I tried to cheer myself with all the arguments I could think of as I walked slowly down the hall and into the long room where the services were to be held. It was the same room where, just twenty-four hours before, Anita and Merle had been married. I suppressed a chuckle. Even my rising terror could not take away from me my sense of triumph. Come what may, Anita was dead and Merle was mine!

But throughout the brief funeral service, again without any religious trappings that would be dangerous to me, my instincts bristled just the same. Something was wrong. Some power was there before which my

own power trembled. Even the sight of Merle could not quench my shivers of fear.

My one thought was to get away, but there was nothing I could do that would not draw further attention to myself and throw me into greater danger. Even after the service was ended I was forced to stay, to mingle with the guests who were slowly filing past the coffin to look their last on what they called "the tragic young bride."

Merle Crossley stood at my side as I looked in the coffin.

"Take me to dance," I whispered. "I want gayety, music, and the love in your eyes!"

Instantly he turned from the waxen face in the coffin; without a backward look we left the house. And not till the heavy door had closed behind us, not till we were out in the thick, clinging shadows of the night, did I lose that terrible sense of impending danger. Someone in that house was a menace to me. Someone—but who?

But still my curiosity spurred me on. Anita was dead; Anita was buried; but I must yet be sure I had done my job well; that little Anita would never be able to rest in her grave.

That was my one thought as I opened my eyes the following evening just as the sun fell like a red ball below the horizon. I must rush to the cemetery and set my watch above the newly sodded grave of Anita Gillett. I was so eager, and my curiosity burned so high, and at first I was tempted to take the form of a night wind and blow myself directly to the grave. But then that same sense of impending danger swept over me. Suppose someone did suspect me? Suppose I were watched? Wouldn't it be safer, wiser, to ride to the cemetery as an earthbound human being would ride? So, holding my eagerness in leash, I dressed quietly in a dark suit and had a taxi called for me.

But I dared not tell the man to drive to the cemetery. I gave him the address of an apartment house on the street that ran along one side of the graveyard. Then I settled myself for the long drive with a feeling of satisfaction. Surely I could tell this way if I were being followed, if I were being watched.

It was a long drive and, to me, who had the power of traveling like the wind, an intolerably slow one. But at last the tall, dim monuments came into view; the black shadows of the banked trees; the ghostly gleaming marble of the mausoleums. I paid the driver and watched him drive away. No one had followed me. I was alone. Almost running in my eagerness, I crossed the street and slipped between the great gates of the cemetery.

Every vestige of afterglow had faded from the sky. It was pitch dark. A storm was rising and dark clouds scudded before a cold wet wind. But I didn't feel the cold, and my eyes must have gleamed in the dark like a wild beast's. For a long moment I crouched in the black shadow of a cluster of cedar trees. Was I safe? Was I actually alone? Or was someone, some power, waiting to trap me? I could not rid myself of that horrible sensation of living, walking danger.

But though I watched and waited there was no least sign of life. The ghostly monuments gleamed palely through the darkness; the trees whipped and tossed in the rising wind. I was alone in that City of the Dead. I was safe. Spreading my arms. I whispered the mystical incantations I knew so well. My body shrank and grew furry; my arms became wings, great webbed wings, black and menacing. Only my eyes remained the same—glittering in the dark, human and evil. With a prolonged bat-squeak of satisfaction I rose from the ground and flew across the cemetery, straight for the grave of Anita Gillett.

And now that my safety was assured only one thought fretted my mind. Was I in time?

I found the grave. The heavy odor of the fresh flowers, sickened me.

I hung my bat-body on a branch of a tree over the head of the grave and waited.

Suddenly my eye was caught by a dark shadow of movement. Who was there in the cemetery with me? My glowing eyes burned through the darkness—and stared into other glowing eyes! On a branch of a neighboring tree hung another bat! In the black shadow I could see the spread of its webbed wings, the furry shape of its mouse-like body. Who was it? Or was this creature just an ordinary bat? A tremor of fury swept over me. Anita was *my* victim! By what right did another come her to watch?

Then, swiftly, I forgot everything else but the grave below me. Anita was coming! My triumph was complete!

Above the grave there was gathering a white mist, a dimly phosphorescent glow that beat and pulsated with the promise of life. It rose and sank, and rose and sank again, as if loth to leave its earth-bound coffin. I knew that feeling. I knew well with what reluctance the virgin soul of Anita Gillett was giving itself over to the powers of that I called down upon it. But the powers of evil would win. I watched and laughed to think how futile were the efforts of that soul to escape. There was no escape!

Now the mist above the grave was gathering, was assuming shape, was becoming Anita—a pale, wan, delicate shadow of the girl herself. I chuckled. Did she know why she was pale and weak? Did her instinct tell her what she needed? Did she know for what she hungered?

She began drifting toward the gates of the cemetery. Half walking, half floating she went, and I dropped from the tree and flew slowly after her. But as I flew I was conscious that again I was not alone.

At the stone gates of the cemetery she paused. I attached myself to the branch of a tree and watched. Up the opposite side of the street, half a block away, came a small boy whistling. It was late for small boys to be about, but that was Anita's good luck.

That small boy was near now. What would Anita do? From the shelter of my tree I watched. She was staring at the boy, her eyes growing strong and luminous in the darkness. She was moving toward him. Suddenly he saw her—saw her floating, phosphorescent toward him—saw her huge, blazing eyes, glittering with their evil, malignant power. He tried to scream. He tried to run. Terror made his face livi in the darkness; his hair stood up like a sandy brush. She swooped toward him, her incandescent eyes robbing him of all power, all consciousness. She raised his limp body in her arms, and bent her head to the tender flesh of his neck.

Well I knew the hot thrill that was sweeping over her. Even after four hundred years I could taste, in memory, my first drink of human blood. I leaned from my branch, watching her hungrily. The sight was giving me an appetite. But that would have to wait. I had promised Merle to be ready for him at ten and the hour was approaching.

Anita tossed away the boy's limp body. I laughed to see the glorious change in her. She was strong now, and walked the earth with firm tread and lithe, free grace. My work was done. A gurgle of laughter rose to my lips but I choked it back.

That other bat was watching me with gleaming eyes.

Again a tremor of fury shook me. What right had another to come here and watch Anita? Back into the black shadow of the tree I shrank. I would become a wind! I would rise high and mingle with the night wind screeching among the treetops; I would blow myself back to my hotel. No one, not even a glowing-eyed bat, should follow me!

Two hours later Merle, tall, handsome and distinguished, came to meet me at my hotel. Stronger than ever before I felt the urge of his personality. What was his power? What was there about him that com-

pelled me, that fascinated me so? During the past four hundred years I had known thousands of men, but none had drawn me as Merle did. From Merle I wanted—what? I was capable of no warm human emotions such as love, passion. Then what could Merle mean to me?

And yet the attraction was there, strong, undeniable, compelling. The sight of him brought to mind the thrill of forgotten things, the touch of his hand opened up closed doors of delight.

It was nearly midnight when we left my hotel to seek a place to dance. Fifth Avenue was dark and deserted, but Broadway was at the height of its glory. Theater crowds packed the street; shop windows blazed with light to catch the late shopper, warmed by good food and drink, who spends liberally.

The night club Merle was taking me to was next door to a famous jewelry shop. As I stepped out of the taxi the glittering display of priceless jewels flashed into my eyes. How I loved them! I thrilled to their glitter, their color, their brilliant sparkle and life! No matter how many I might own—and I was always flashing with them—I could never esist the sight of more. So, with a little cry of delight, I ran across the sidewalk and feasted my eyes on the dazzling display.

"You will allow me to buy you jewels?" whispered Merle's voice in my ear. "Nothing would give me greater pleasure."

I raised my eyes to answer, but the words died in my throat. I stared in horror. I was trapped! Before my eyes was a mirror, hideous, evil; it seemed to my terrorized eyes that the smooth glass laughed at me, mocked me—me, a creature of the night, who cast no reflection! With a frightened gasp I sprang out of the angle of vision. But my eyes, as if fascinated by the horror, remained fastened on the glass. It was blank! Merle, unconscious of the mirror, was standing directly in front of it—and all that was reflected were the people passing in the street!

Light burst upon me. What a fool I had been not to guess! Merle was—even as I! Merle—Feodore! I dashed forward, snatched his arm and pointed at the mirror. His face grew livid, his eyes distended with terror, he curled his fist as if he would smash the glass. Then he stared, and stared again. His eyes, in which light was slowly dawning, swerved from the blank mirror to me, standing there close beside him.

"You!" he gasped. "My Vera!"

"Yours, Feodore!" I whispered.

We turned from the mirror to enter the night club. Betwen us there flowed a new understanding, a deeper sympathy. Incapable as I was of

warm emotion I thrilled to the knowledge that Feodore was again mine. But suddenly I was struck by a thought.

"Then you," I said coldly, "were the other bat at Anita's grave tonight?"

He turned suddenly, scowling. "You?" he said. "Were you there?"

"Of course I was there. Anita was mine."

"You are mistaken." His words were courteous but his voice shook with anger. "Anita was mine!"

I shook my head. I wanted to laugh in my triumph. His? Why even at this moment it was her blood that coursed through my veins!

"It is you who are mistaken." I told him. "I was the one that killed her. It was I who sucked her life blood into my body."

For a moment I thought he was going to attack me. His face turned livid; his eyes blazed in the darkness like the blood-red eyes of a wolf, and he bared his long fangs. A thrill of fear shot down my spine. He could not harm me. My powers were as great as his. But, safe though I was, I shuddered at the hideous picture he made. Then as swiftly as it had come his fury died. Once more he was poised, handsome, adoring.

"I was first—that is why I was not surprised at Anita's sudden attack. I willed her to—Never mind, dear," he said gently, "we will not quarrel. There is nothing you could do, not even that, that would make me angry with you."

But we had almost quarreled. And the next evening, after sunset, as I lay in the warm bath that Marie had prepared for me, I thought of the incident again. Another instant, if it hadn't been for his flash of self-control, he would have been at my throat. Of course, he could not harm me to any great extent, but he could wound me: pull my hair, scratch my face, bite with his sharp teeth. And such marks would never heal; they would be permanent, and I would have to use my hypnotic powers to keep anyone from seeing them.

It was the same old story, I thought as I lay in the tub. The same bitter fight for sustenance that had forced me to leave Europe and seek more virgin fields in America. Long ago I had found that I must carry on my existence alone. But what of Feodore? We who had loved each other so much in life—was this coming between us now? I tried to believe it wasn't. I tried to tell myself that, after all, we had not quarreled the night before. But in the back of my mind still clung the memory of my hate as I had seen that *other* bat hanging to its tree.

As I rose from the tub I suddenly realized I was faint with weakness.

My finger-tips were numb, my lips colorless, my flesh flabby, my eyes no longer brilliant but dull. With a start I realized that two days had passed since I had fed. All thought of Feodore, of our quarrels and problems, faded from my mind. I must get hourishment for my failing body; I must bring back life and color to my gray and flaccid flesh.

Into my mind flashed the picture of Anita's younger sister. Lovely she was, and young, and sweet, her mouth scarlet with the rich blood of youth, her cheeks glowing with health. But it was in the Gillett mansion that I had scented danger! Possibly it would be safer to seek my victim somewhere else? But the delicious picture of little Gloria Gillett persisted in my mind. My brain was aflame with the vision. I wanted the blood of Goria Gillett, and nothing else would do!

"Open the window," I said to Marie: "I am going as a shred of mist. The danger may still be there, but a shred of mist is safe."

A moment later a bit of wind-blown mist was being tossed toward the Gillett mansion. I knew where Gloria's room was. It would be a simple thing for this bit of mist which was I to seep through a crack of the window.

I blew against the window pane of her bedroom. There was a crack where the window was dropped at the top! A shiver of delight swept over me. If only she were there. I could not endure the agony of waiting. I drifted through the window and stood, a puff of mist, in the middle of her bedroom floor. The room was empty. But from the bathroom beyond came the sound of voices. Voices I recognized! Feodore! Feodore and Anita! A surge of furious rage swept over me. Instantly I was standing at the bathroom door, a shred of mist no longer, but a venomous enraged woman. They should not have Gloria! Gloria was mine!

But at the doorway of the bathroom I stopped aghast. On the rose-colored tiles of the bathroom floor Gloria lay limp and white, while over her, in a frenzy of bestial rage, Feodore and Anita fought like tigers for their victim.

"You can't have her!" snarled Anita. "She is mine—my own sister! Her blood is my blood!"

For answer Feodore flung her back, away from the fainting form of Gloria. His eyes were warm with delight as they rested on the beautiful body of the young girl, his lips drooped with desire. Into Anita's face flashed a gleam of jealous hatred. She hurled herself forward, kicking, scratching.

"You shan't have her blood! You had mine!"

A red haze throbbed before my eyes. So Feodore had told the truth!

I trembled with rage. I threw myself on them in an insane fury. In the first instant of their surprise at my attack they fell gack before me. Instantly I dropped beside the body; my sharp fangs sank into the tender flesh.

Rough hands like cruel talons dragged me back; Anita wound her fingers in my hair. Feodore bent to the wound. Anita and I fell upon him in a frenzy. Our teeth dug into the flesh of his neck; our fingers groped for his eyes.

A sudden alien noise made me look up. I sprang to my feet, terror gripping my heart. There in the doorway stood Mrs. Gillett and Jaffee. I felt as though my mind burst with fright. Blind instinct was all that saved me. I vanished; and an instant later a little wind, a cold little wind that shuddered with fear, blew gustily down Fifth Avenue.

The whole experience had unnerved me, shaken me to the roots of my being. But I had managed to get enough of Gloria's blood to bring my strength. After I had returned to my suite I lay quietly. But there was more in my veins than blood. There was a throbbing living hate!

Every time I thought of Anita and Feodore I shook with malignant, venomous fury. All the love I had felt for Feodore in life, all the attraction I had known in the past days for Merle, was dead—and from its grave rose a possessive, all-absorbing hate. My fingers curled into claws as I thought of him. How I would love to tear his face, gouge out his glittering eyes, rip his smiling mouth! I hated him! In the darkness of my room I knew my eyes were gleaming like those of a hungry wolf.

All that night I fed my fury, nourished my hate. And I did more: I determined to get Gloria at all costs. Those fiends should never know the sweet freshness of her young blood. She was mine! Her blood was for me!

No sooner had the shadows of dusk begun to settle on the following afternoon than I was out of my earth-filled coffin. One thought filled my mind; one desire pulsed through my body: I must get back to the Gillett mansion before Feodore and Anita got there. I must get Gloria's body before they reached it! My brain was afire with the vision of her; my veins burned with longing for her blood. I waited for nothing. Throb-with eagerness I turned myself again into a little breeze and sped up Fifth Avenue.

But at the window of Gloria's room I stopped in dismay. On the window sill there hopped and strutted a pigeon—a pigeon with the eyes of Feodore! Such a gust of fury swept over me that I could scarcely control myself. But I had to control myself. I had to yet outwit Feodore

and get Gloria for my own. The window was open a crack. I chuckled. The first advantage was mine. The crack was wide enough for a breeze to filter through—but not large enough for a proudly strutting pigeon!

I blew into the room—Gloria's bedroom; it was empty. But across the room, close to the bathroom door, I spied a tiny mouse. Anita! She was here too, waiting! It seemed that I would go mad with rage.

Outside in the hallway I heard a soft step. She was coming! The door opened; lovely and sweet and young, she came into the room. My avid eyes were on her face, on her fair, soft throat, her rosy cheeks, her scarlet lips. One thought only filled my mind, I failed to notice that she left the door carefully open behind her; that her movements were strained and nervous; that she glanced around the room with something close to terror. I didn't realize, until it was too late, that she almost jumped at the sight of the small mouse and at the pigeon pecking at her window. At any other time I would have seen these things, have smelled the danger in the air, and taken warning. But not that time. I was blind to all else but my ravenous craving for Gloria's blood.

Slowly, deliberately she came into the room, crossed it and opened the bedroom window wide so that the pigeon might hop, unrestrained, across the sill. Then, her face suddenly white with terror, she ran across the bedroom and almost plunged into the bathroom beyond. The pigeon and I followed her, but Anita was there before us. With a cry of fury I materialized and flung myself on Gloria. Gone was all caution: gone was every instinct save that of greed, of thirst for blood, of jealous fury for my victim. *My* victim, who I would have at all costs! Behind me I could feel Feodore's hot, fetid breath—Anita's claws that dug and scratched. Then there was something else; a soft whispered word—a word that turned my blood cold and made my flesh creep—a word sacred to the Church!

I whirled. There, standing in the bathroom doorway, was a Holy Father, his fingers raised in canonical blessing! I shrank back, and my strength oozed out from my suddenly flaccid muscles. Dimly I was aware that Feodore and Anita had dropped back quivering with terror. We were trapped! Over the shoulder of the Holy Father I saw the white, horror-stricken eyes of Jaffee. Jaffee! My mind cleared. I saw it all. Jaffee had suspected me; his suspicions had grown to a certainty with Anita's death. It was Jaffee who had seen us fighting for Gloria the night before! It was Jaffee who had called in the Church!

My face twisted with the rage and agony of a trapped beast. I took

a furious step toward him, and, protected as he was by the priest, he cringed before my hideous snarl.

"How did you know?" I shrieked at him. "What made you guess?"

His teeth chattered with terror; his eyes glazed; he cowered close to the Holy Father. "Y-you c-cast no sh-shadow!" he gasped. "I saw you, and I knew!"

We had been deliberately trapped! In that instant of frantic terror I realized everything. Gloria had been set as a bait. Now, too late, I remembered her leaving the hall door open; I remembered her opening the window to allow the pigeon to come in; and then her swift run into the bathroom, where we had followed her—straight into a trap!

But was it a trap? Did Jaffee and the priest know the full extent of our powers? Did they know all that was necessary to conquer us? A sudden, faint hope swept over me. Perhaps, even now, I could outwit them!

Feodore was now a large bat, wildly seeking a means of egress from the room. I became a breeze, invisible, fast—but I was beaten back; the bathroom window sill was smeared with garlic! In a frenzy I became a fly, and rose to the ceiling—but the priest in the doorway penetrated my disguise and I dropped back powerless. Anita, once more a tiny gray mouse, was running around the bathroom floor squeaking with terror.

Weakened by the odor of garlic and the terrible holiness of the man in the doorway I felt my power slipping from me. I could no longer control myself. Without my will I was slipping back into the form of a woman. Feodore, too, shadowy and weak, was rising from the bat's body.

The priest advanced. For an instant I stared in unbelieving horror; then I covered my face with my hands and cowered before him. From his extended finger-tips were falling crystal drops of Holy Water. They fell on my flesh, searing through to the bone. They fell on my hair, scorching, burning, I sank to the floor; the Holy Water took the last vestige of my power; I rocked with the agony of those terrible burns; tortured moans tore through my clenched teeth . . . The pain was unbearable, and in vain I longed for unconsciousness.

The priest and Jaffee brought in our coffins, heavy with the earth in which we had slept for centuries, except that Anita's earth was freshly dug and light. They drove us into them, weak and powerless as we were. My nostrils were filled with the odor of garlic, my brain heavy with the

terrible stench of sanctity. Through it all I knew the horror that was in store for me, and tried to fight, tried to ward off that last hideous moment. But my arms were like lead, my powers gone . . .

The priest was standing over me—in his hands a stake! My face twisted in agony, my eyes filled with venomous hatred—but I was powerless! I writhed and moaned; words of tortured promises fell from my lips—promises I would never have kept. But the priest was relentless. He placed the point of the stake above my heart. My terrified eyes saw him raise a mallet . . . A blaze of agony shot through my body . . . I writhed and twisted with the hideous torture. A shriek, straight from the throats of all the fiends of hell tore from my lips—a shriek that, mingled with those of Feodore and Anita, ripped through that house with all the wailing fury and despair of a lost soul.

My body crumbled to rot: I could see it go. My flesh was dust, gray, clinging; my bones were thick with mould. The stench of the grave filled the room.

My agony was gone—gone with the dust of my evil flesh—gone with the malignant spirit which had lived for so many centuries in my beautiful body—that hideous spirit which the priest had exorcised forever. I could now forsake earthly scenes or linger as I desired. And I felt the desire to stay for awhile, to watch until all was finished.

First Anita, then Feodore, writhed and moaned under the stake, then they too had been released as I was released. There would be debts to pay, but no longer were the three of us helpless pawns of evil. And I knew that I could linger here on earth long enough to accomplish the new desire I felt right now—to influence some living author to tell my story.

For a little while, the three of us watched, unseen, as Gloria came to, and the priest and Jaffee led her slowly from that room of putrefaction. Her wounds would heal, the spell of evil I had cast over her was broken.

Then Anita moved away from us and for an instant Feodore and I looked at each other. Had there ever been anything of real love between us? He smiled and shook his head gently, and I saw him no more.

The Ship Of Silent Men

by Philip M. Fisher

THE STEAMSHIP *LANOA* Carden Line of San Francisco, with nine thousand tons of raw sugar in her holds and a deck load of bananas and pines, was two days out from Honolulu when the electric storm broke upon us. We were still in the warm belt and would not expect bad weather or cold for at least another forty-eight hours. That was the rule—and even when this nature's rule was transgressed, the weather was only moderate, the temperature simply low enough to suggest the possibility of donning one's light coat. Neither heat nor cold came in extreme.

Yet suddenly, on this second day out in 1919, at about ten-twenty in the morning and without barometric warning, a blanketing chill dropped over the ship, enveloped us with searching aggressiveness, and literally froze our tropic-acclimated selves, body and soul.

> Over and over again, the officers and crew of the *Karnak* repeated their actions, oblivious of their rescuers.

Every man on board piled into his coast underwear and war-time sweater and socks—but it did no good. Every man's nose and cheeks were hard-looking and purple gray—every man's breath exhaled in a cloud of fog. And we three passengers, half-hid in coats and rugs, were yet forced to the engine room for comfort.

This was the first symptom of the strange meteorological condition that was to harry us for the next two days. And it was, in the annals of marine history, unlogged, unprecedented.

The next indication of extraordinary weather conditons was the sudden failure of the radio. This started perhaps an hour after the falling of the mercury. The apparatus worked intermittently—one moment normally registering the Press Association News, the next moment, tune it as the operator would, he could send, or receive, nothing. The transmitter hashed its spark—the receivers were absolutely dead.

Then, without warning, the code would come singing in the puzzled man's ears once more—as though nothing at all had occurred; as though—paradoxically—the wires had been cut, held apart for some minutes, then put in contact again. Then the whole thing would be repeated again—and again. This went on for the next two days—along with that deathly chill—went on until there came, as a climax, that final beautiful yet awe-inspiring occurrence which brought us to that thing which will, I fear, for all time haunt my dreams, the thing that is the seaman's nightmare, of all seas, the seaman's ghost.

The electric lights worked badly, too, dimming unaccountably at times, then flaring up until one expected momentarily that the filament would go to pieces. The engine crew and the firemen did not like it at all—especially with the triple expansion Corliss turning over her usual eighty-seven, and the generator turbine steady as a clock.

They were a superstitious lot, too—Belgians and Swedes and Welsh—and I found myself colder yet as I listened to the yarns they told. At sea, with the illimitable waste about one, and the loneliness of it all, stories of the strange and unexplainable always thrill more than they do on land. And when they are told when the actual conditions then existent are strange and unexplainable too, and the nearest land is a mere speck seven hundred miles back, the thrill changes into something more like a spine-prickling uneasiness. The crew were that way—and the passengers three.

The cold became more penetrating. The bridge officer—wool-wrapped—paced stumblingly. The radio had lapses of an hour long—the wireless

operator was frantic. The shadows below decks became as of the dead alive, and the black gang forgot its tales, and cursed softly.

Then came darkness, and with it a doubled phosphorescence in our wake. The air was permeated with that weird sea feel, hardly to be called an odor, or ozone. And at about seven bells of the first watch, just before midnight, the steel rigging was alive with bluish flickering—electric streamlets, running, pausing, dancing, now quiescent and dying dim—now pulsingly alive, now peacefully aglow—now madly, enthusiastically, and at times almost malevolently, rampant.

The deck watch shivered a bit from more than the cold—the below-decks crew, about to come on watch and up for a breath of air, stared thoughtfully and stowed back their half-filled pipes, and felt their way down to the comfort of their still steady engines.

Eight bells, and midnight came. The chill reached the marrow of our bones. The electricity on the rigging silently threatened. The shadows blacked and grayed with a hundred shifting, shapeless things that stared and kept one's chin on one's shoulder in breathless moments when the lights went nearly out.

On my way to my cabin I stopped at the wireless-room.

"Lights still out," growled the operator, "since four bells not a snitch or a buzz. Two hours—"

He adjusted and readjusted his headgear.

"But what *is* the matter?" I whispered, half to myself.

"How the hell do I know!" the man snapped.

I shrugged my shoulders and went on.

Grahame and Stevenot, the two other passengers, grinned weakly as the globes in our room slowly came to life.

"Queer combination," grunted Grahame, as he crawled into the double lower berth, and I followed.

"Humph!" came from Stevenot above our heads. "Turn out that footlight."

I crawled out again.

"What's the use?" muttered Grahame, then: "Damn peculiar—cursed if it ain't!"

"Shut up," said Stevenot. "Shut up—and go to sleep."

"An' the stars," Grahame doggedly continued. "I'd swear I saw the masthead knock one off an' it ran down the forestay there, an'—"

"Drowned itself in the sea," shouted Stevenot. "Go to sleep."

The next morning things were the same. And the crew was getting itchy—and silent. One of the wipers, when I went below for warmth, whispered

to me that he'd seen something in the starboard alley that beckoned to him. He'd thrown a monkey wrench at it, and then climbed around the steering engine and felt his way for'ard along the port alley. And when he'd gone below again, there was his wrench in its regular place in the rack under the revolution indicator. What did I think of that?

Then came the first breath of real trouble.

At three in the afternoon, one of the men came below and told us that the wireless had worked for a few minutes, and the operator had picked up an S.O.S. The gang eyed each other silently.

I climbed top side.

Grahame and Stevenot were in the radio office. The mate was there, too. The operator was penciling on his tablet—a bit white in the face.

"God!" muttered the mate. "If the damn thing will only hold out—hold out—"

He peered at the operator's pencil point as the letters slowly, spasmodically, jerked out.

Grahame pressed my arm, and pointed.

I read the message so far written.

"S.O.S.—S.O.S."—the letters were just scrawled—"S.O.S.—" Then a word, evidently the name of the ship in distress—"*Karnak.*" Then again: "S.O.S., Lat. 52—19—" Then there was a break—then the same thing repeated.

"Must have been sending that for an hour," Grahame whispered. "Been several breaks, you know—each time got as far as the latitude the poor devil's in. But no longitude—an' how can they tell where to go? The mate says the old man'll order the ship about if he can tell where to head her, but he'll be cursed it he'll play hide and seek on the forty-second parallel with the bit of frozen mystery we're in now. If they can only get the longitude, they'll be fixed, but so far—"

He stopped abruptly. The pencil had begun to move. Every man of us grew tense. The operator's corded hand was white despite the blue chill of his office.

"S.O.S.—S.O.S. S.O.S.—*Karnak*—Lat. 52—19—" Here the operator hunched suddenly, and a wild oath escaped his tight lips. His hand jerked. "Long.," he wrote—and a sign came from the mate—from all of us—"152—37—"

The mate, jaw set, elbowed out. He had the pleading vessel's location at last.

Stevenot grinned. "Gee!" he said thickly. "I'm glad we picked it all up at last. Got on my nerves."

Grahame pulled his mustache. "Blame queer, I'd say," he murmured.

The wireless operator still hunched, one hand on his tuning lever, the other repeating on paper the same call for aid.

"Let's get out in the air," said Stevenot.

2

THE HELMSMAN ALREADY HAD WHEEL ORDERS for an approximate course, and the ship's head was swinging. The three of us, lone passengers, had been given access to all parts of the *Lanoa,* so stayed now on the bridge—still wrapped, even though the sun was blindingly on high, in all our sweaters and robes.

The skipper, pulling violently on the Manila man-killer he chewed, and quite oblivious to the fact that it was unlit, waved his arms and clapped his mittened hands before and behind him as he paced. In the wheelhouse the steersman showed a pale and thoughtful countenance.

The mate was bending over a chart, and the second was wildly turning the pages of his Bowditch. For several minutes they figured—then checked their work. Then the mate brought out the chart and the figures to the skipper, who nodded with a glance about the awning, at the sun; the mate nodded to the second and the latter stood beside the wheelsman and gave the exact course which would bring the *Lanoa* to the ship that, out of all this mysterious and unprecedented weather, on a smooth sea, and beneath a bright sun, cried so persistently for help.

The *Lanoa* straightened out on the northerly course that should bring her to the *Karnak*—and a half-dozen revolutions were added to the turn of the screw.

Again that night did the blue flame flicker ghostily in the rigging. Still did the shadows below decks rise and fall as spasmodically, as slowly, as terribly in their awful hesitation, as the breath of a dying man. Still was the wireless a practically useless thing and our ship cut off from all the world in all this sea of mystery. Still the chill of the cold crept into our hearts, and chilled our very souls.

Once, just after nine o'clock, out of the crystal starred blackness of the night came the same cry for help from the *Karnak.* "S.O.S." it called—"*Karnak*—Lat. 52—19—Long. 152—37—" Then repeated the same.

But when our operator sent our word that rescue was coming—there came again no answer except the same repeated plea.

The mate and skipper, when they heard this, stared at each other. Then the mate shook his head. And Stevenot evidently voiced the officer's

thought—for he started and stared again when Stevenot said:

"And here a whole day has passed and they send the same latitude and the same longitude. Even with engines broken down, I should think they'd drift a good many minutes just in the Japan current. Yet here—the same—"

And that's when the mate seized the skipper's arm and abruptly dragged him from the radio office.

Grahame grunted. "Blame peculiar," he muttered.

And Stevenot, without a word, led us out to the open deck. The stars were a comfort—one had but to stand on tiptoe and he might pluck the brightest out, one by one. But that weirdly running blue flame on ratlines and stays and cargo booms—we didn't like.

Yet we stayed on deck—and smoked a bit—and said nothing—only thought and stared—and wondered what was yet to come—and shivered in the cold.

Then suddenly—deep away in the sparkling blue-black bowl that capped the oily sea—appeared a moving glow. It grew in size; it flashed across the zenith in northerly flight. It changed in color from ghostly white to yellow flame. It changed in form from nebulous shapelessness to clear cut crystal.

Even though its flight was over us, and away, toward the north, it grew to a vastness that colored all the sea—and gleamed on the faces and eyes of my two companions as they stared.

A great humming filled the air—changed slowly to an ear-straining hissing sound—then to a vast droning roar as it fell away toward the line where the starry heavens, dimmed to almost nothingness now, met the sea.

Then even as the shape itself rushed beyond our sight, there came a blinding flash of yellow light—and as we stiffly leaned against the rail, a thunderlike detonation that rattled everything on board the ship and all but threw us off our feet.

Stevenot seized my arm, and clung there like a frightened child. Grahame, mouth open, pointed tensely northward.

"The *Karnak,*" he cried hoarsely. "The *Karnak*—it fell—toward the *Karnak.*"

Then suddenly rang a cry from the bridge—and the mate came running down the gangway to the maindeck. "The cold!" And he sped by us into the radio room.

Stevenot's grasp relaxed. "By Heaven!" he gasped, tearing off his

blanket—"it's warm as—as toast"—ending with most innocuous comparison.

"And the blue flame—gone!" I cried as my senses returned. "Gone—"

"And the lights," gasped Stevenot.

I peeled my coat, for the cold, even as the great electric mass seemed to burst, was lifted from us, and the gentle warmth of the semi-tropic sea dropped in its place. And the air smelled clean again. And the dancing electricity on the rigging had vanished—the lights glowed steady white—and even as we stood in wonder the motor of the radio turned up its crescendo hum, and the regulated yet intermittent crashing of the spark told us that once again the wireless was in commission.

In that flash, things were back to normal—and we breathed. The strangeness was gone—the tenseness was gone—and we breathed.

Then even as our pulse became regular, our breathing even, the mate came out of the radio office.

"All right again," he said stiffly. "And the machine is working all right. But—well," he nodded toward the office—"he can't seem to connect."

Stevenot jumped. "That meteor—or electric bolt—whatever it was," he jerked out, "toward the north toward the *Karnak*—"

The mate nodded silently. There was a solemn pause.

Then the officer muttered. "And the instruments are O.K., too. But the *Karnak*—"

"No answer?" cried Stevenot.

The mate shook his head: "Not a jot," he said briefly, and with a tenseness I well remember, a tenseness that brought to me a reminiscence of the chill which had gripped us for the past two days. And then he left and climbed up the ladder to the bridge deck.

I called after him. "But you're not going to—"

He turned. "We're going on to—to find the *Karnak*," he said.

My heart jolted once—and I felt a great relief. We were going to help—if help were yet of any avail. I wondered if it would be.

And Grahame, as he felt in the dark for the single sheet beneath which we now tried to sleep, gave vent to his feelings, too.

"Peculiar," he muttered. "Blamed peculiar, I'd say."

3

SO ON WE STEAMED. Our wireless continued to stay in proper order—but we could get no word from the *Karnak*. For all we

knew she had vanished from the surface of the seas—and Heaven knew in what manner, and Heaven knew where.

And when we spoke with other ships, none had received her call. Nor were there other vessels now nearer to the location the *Karnak* had given to render her, did she yet need it, a quicker assistance then would be ours. So on we steamed.

The sea was smooth—conditions were normal. Peace and tranquillity were over all, even as had been that blanketing chill before and the fearsome uneasiness it laid upon us. And as the sun beamed down upon us with all its old genial warmth, and the blue sea sparkled so happily about, we nearly forgot that we were hundreds of miles off our course—nearly forgot the strange, the sad errand that might yet be ours.

The nights, too, were calm and full of gentle comfort. Slightly cooler, of course, for we were northing, and the Japan current had but little warming effect as yet. Yet the rigging was untouched by even a hint of dancing blue—the electric globes pulsed steadily under the dynamos humming below decks—the radio operators were at peace with the world.

Yet still no news of the *Karnak*—no answer from the stricken ship.

Then came the mate—next morning. "We ought to sight her around eleven o'clock," he said quietly.

He accepted my cigar—then added: "Yes—we ought to."

Stevenot—we three passengers were as one, ever together, and had been companions in travel and adventure since long before the war—we and one other, the dear fellow who had been number four—Stevenot, ever quick to sense a thing out of order, asked: "Then you do not expect—"

The mate, match rising under his palm as he held it to his cigar, shook his head vehemently.

"I didn't say that—no! I simply said we *ought* to sight her about eleven. Maybe we will—maybe not. But I know where we are—and the point where she said she was. Ought to—that's all."

This was at eight-thirty.

And yet not ten minutes had passed before the bridge lookout sighted a smudge of smoke to the northward.

We wirelessed at once—and received no answer. And we knew that all steamers must carry wireless—yet here, a steamer, and no answer to our call. Perhaps its apparatus was out of order—perhaps not. We conjectured as to possibilities—could it be the *Karnak*—this early?

Gradually we drew upon it—and finally the ship's hull came up. With glasses we made her out to be a vessel of perhaps seventy-five hundred tons, high-pooped, and high-bowed, with bridge deck midships,

and two black funnels. And that to a "T" was the Ship's Register description of the *Karnak*—the vessel that had called for help. We had sighted her some three hours before expected.

And she had way on her, too, heading as near as we could make out, southeast.

We wirelessed again—no answer.

So, knowing they could see us as plainly as we could see them, we broke out the International Code pennant, and ran up a line of flags.

The mate and skipper, glasses glued to their eyes, cursed softly. The *Karnak* did not answer our visual signal.

Visions of mutiny aboard arose before me. I pictured a crew of grim fellows doing away with their officers, determined on making one rich haul, and then a quick getaway. Here they signaled for help in order to get some vessel to come to them—faked trouble—and when the rescuer came close enough, with some war-time gun mounted behind falling bulwarks, they'd hold it up and practice a bit of modern piracy.

The *Karnak* continued silent. We headed in to cross her close stern—and made ready the little signal gun on the observation deck above the bridge.

The gun boomed—if the *Karnak* had for some inexplicable cause not seen us, this would speedily wake her up.

We waited tensely—for hours it seemed. The *Karnak* did not answer. She did not answer wireless. She did not answer our flag hoist. She did not answer the roar of our signal gun.

The mate and skipper stared. The wheelsman's eyes popped. "What in hell's the matter?" growled the old man. "Look at the dodgin' she's doing."

We stared at the vessel, now not a quarter mile away.

"Steers most peculiar I ever saw," muttered Grahame. "Zigzaggin' for subs—looks like."

We shot the gun again.

With glasses—without glasses—we could see movement—the crew on board—working on the decks.

Yet the *Karnak* did not answer.

The captain cursed—broke out the United States ensign—ordered the second mate to take the wheel. "Get her close, and stick by her," he ordered. Then he took the megaphone.

"Ahoy there, *Karnak!*" he roared across the fifty-fathom stretch of blue that now separated us. He roared again. Visible members of the crew did not even look up. An officer pacing the bridge above did

not alter his step, nor move a hand. The skipper bellowed once more—still the *Karnak* did not answer.

"By gosh!" cried the captain, "I'm going aboard to wake 'em up. Get out the motor launch," he ordered. "Six men and rifles! Run up the rags for her to heave to; and load that damn pea shooter with a bit of solid iron. I'll stand for no monkey business. The sea's goin' to the dogs these days, anyhow!"

Grahame and Stevenot and I, ever one when adventure was in the air, looked at each other with the same question in our eyes. Then, as one, we nodded. I, as usual, was the spokesman.

I turned to the skipper, who had just come out of his cabin buckling a forty-five automatic about his bulgy waist.

"Captain—" I started.

"Yes, yes, yes!" he cried explosively. "Get your guns and come along. My cursed crew are seein' yellow as it is—don't know a bowline from a binnacle! Jump!"

We jumped. There were times during the next few days when I dearly wished we had not. But we did—and I don't regret it now. Yet in my dreams—

Stevenot remarked casually—he was generally casual when real concrete danger was at hand, or when we thought it was at hand: "Old man seems a bit excited—wot?"

"Blame, peculiar, I'd say," muttered Grahame.

I said nothing, though in my heart I felt both to be right.

The *Lanoa* had slowed down a bit so we might get off safely. The *Karnak* was forging ahead. We climbed into the fast motor launch which was ready to be swung out. The new signal was up—the *Karnak* still held her erratic course—still was silent.

"Yellow looking gang," said the skipper quietly to me, as I sat on the thwart beside him. "And wearing sweaters and heavy rags, too. Ain't cold today, is it?"

I shook my head. It was not cold now—it was warm.

I stared across at a couple of the *Karnak's* crew muffled in sweaters, wiping her starboard rail. Their appearance, even from the distance, was decidedly peculiar. Faces and hands were pasty yellow—sickly yellow—of a yellow that was ghastly and sickening to see.

A sudden though came to me. "Disease?" I whispered to the old man. "Yellow fever—or some—"

"Don't get that at sea, man," the captain replied. "And they ain't too sick to work, are they?"

They certainly were not. Yet as I watched the two it seemed that they worked strangely, mechanically, spasmodically—as if each move were not that of a smoothly regulated and continuous thought, but prompted each by a single jerky impulse.

We dropped to the smooth running water to the squeal of seldom used blocks—the after falls were released, the motor started, then—I remember the delightful thrill of being cut off from the great ship—we released the forward falls and cut across to the silent *Karnak.*

A small grapnel was brought along so that we might get a line over the rail and board her. But as we rounded the stern and came up on the *Karnak's* lee, what should we find there but the two dangling blocks from a pair of davits on the high deck midships!

The skipper growled something under his breath.

Stevenot whispered to me. "Why should a boat have left that ship? And the rest of the crew left her lines a-dangling? That's not seamanship."

We ran alongside.

The skipper, with jaw set, seized the after falls himself and bent the painter about its four parts. Then, with a growl: "You four aft stand by the launch—and your guns. Rest of you—come on—" He climbed hand over hand up the standing part of the fall, swung himself over the davit head, and slid to the *Karnak's* deck—crouched, gun in hand.

Stevenot, crowding ahead of the mate, was at his side in a moment—and watchful, too—and ready.

The mate followed with three rifles slung over his shoulder; and he hauled up the rope ladder and hooked it over the rail. Up this I climbed, and the others followed.

4

EVEN AS I DREW MY GUN and stood leaning expectantly forward beside the rest, an officer came aft along the deck. Every one of us was instantly stiffly tense—wondering, and ready.

The man's face was of the same awful yellow as those of the two seamen on the starboard side. I wondered, too, at this officer, pacing so smartly toward us, that he should be so unshaven—and so thickly muffed in clothes. And then—this all happened in ten seconds, you must know—the man, eyes straight ahead, passed by us without a look or a word. Passed as though we, strangers on board his ship, were not even there.

I gasped—the man's cap had the device "Second Mate" upon it, and

on board ship a second mate is supposed to be all eyes. Yet the man had not even noticed us. A sighed breathed from my companions.

The skipper sprang into life. "Mate!" he cried after the man. "Just a moment!"

The officer did not turn a fraction of an inch, or falter a second in his quick, jerky step. Then he wheeled to the left and entered an open passage.

The old man gasped again—hunched forward with automatic raised.

Grahame, coming to my side—on tiptoe—nodded toward the passage into which the man had disappeared.

"Notice his shoes?" he whispered.

I shook my head.

"One black—one tan." Grahame's voice trembled a bit with excitement. "And wore a sweater under his coat. And he didn't take a rap of notice of us, either. Blame peculiar, I'd say."

The skipper shook himself savagely. Then turned to us. "Keep together and follow me. Don't shoot unless I give the order." He leaned against the davit a moment and called down to those in the motor launch. "Keep the engine turning," he cried, "and be ready to cast off." Then to us: "Come on!" And he started forward. "We'll make a round of the decks first."

The captain led. On his left stepped the eager mate—but warily, gun in hand. At his right Stevenot had pushed in—ever quick-scented when on a trail, despite the apprehension he so often voiced. Grahame and I held the flanks, and behind us were four of the crew—tiptoeing softly and quick-eyed.

The other two members of the gang were the two oilers who stayed with the boat. Our party thus was nine, all armed, all mystified, all a bit scared deep within our secret selves—but all eager and all ready.

We stepped as though over a mined field.

We watched for a sudden descent upon us of a piratical, knife-slinging crew of mutinied cut-throats. We expected every moment for some silent yellow-skinned something to spring upon our backs out of the silent nothingness about us and claw, and rip, and rend, and tear.

The silence continued. We peered into passageways and cabin ports—and saw nothing—heard nothing. My skin began to prickle slightly. The four men behind us stepped upon our heels. The old man cursed softly as he peered about.

Grahame spoke—startling us. "A man aloft polishing the flute," he said briefly.

We looked up at the forward funnel.

A seaman in dungarees, with one leg hooked over the rungs of the iron ladder that ran up to the lip of the funnel, was industriously scrubbing the great brass whistle. In his left hand he held a glass bottle, of polish I suppose, and his body was twisted to the left as he reached with his right hand about the big tube of the thing.

Suddenly he lost his balance, grabbed at the rungs—and the glass bottle crashed on the deck below. He righted himself carefully—and went right on polishing.

He acted strangely, it seemed to me. Made peculiar motions.

Grahame spoke again. "Why, he's mad! Look—he makes the same motion with his left hand as though he still had that bottle of polish in it. Shakes it up—and pours it on his rag—*and nothing there!*

We stared.

The captain, after a pause, shouted. His voice seemed a trifle high to me. "Aloft there! You at the flute!"

The man continued to shake and polish—he made no sign of hearing or answer.

After a moment the skipper cursed again. "Crazy—or deaf!"

Stevento shook his head. "But they ought to *see us*, even if they can't hear—or if they are mad."

The captain and mate both grunted. "Come on," jerked the old man then.

We followed him to the bridge—where from our ship we had seen an officer pacing. That officer was still there, still pacing.

The skipper went up to him—met him as he wheeled at the starboard end of the bridge and stood directly in his path—holding out his right hand, gun in left behind his back.

We held our breaths—I know not why.

The yellow-faced officer, jerky-stepped, head turned slightly toward the bows and eyes there, too, without the slightest pause or notice of the captain's presence, ignored the proffered hand. And before the skipper could sidestep, the man walked straight into him, knocked down by sheer mechanical momentum, staggered a bit, then continued on his way to the port end of the bridge.

As they collided the skipper's gun went off with a bang—from nervousness, or accident, or in what he thought was self-defense, I know not. But it startled us all—the captain himself, too. And Stevenot whispered: "Now we get it—ready!"

But naught followed that ringing shot.

The captain leaped to his feet—pale and shaky. "Walked right over me," he sputtered. "As if I wasn't there—into me—knocked me down—what in hell's the matter—" He shivered a bit—the officer had wheeled at the bridge end and was jerkily pacing back, face turned toward the bows, now on his left, eyes cast ahead as well. "By Heaven!" the captain swore. "I'll show him—"

And he seized the officer by his right hand and neck—and instantly with a startled cry jerked his hands away and rubbed them on his trousers.

"What's the matter?" cried the mate.

"Cold!" muttered the skipper, rubbing his hands still on his trouser legs, and staring at the retreating figure. "Cold—his hand—his neck—cold as ice."

"Cold!" cried Stevenot.

And he ran forward and touched the officer's hand—and dropped it with a cry. "It *is*—*cold* as ice!" he whispered tensely.

The officer himself took no notice of either the skipper's touch or Stevenot's. He swayed lightly as each touched him, but kept on pacing.

Stevenot and the captain stared at each other. "Let him alone," the skipper then ordered huskily. "Try the wheelhouse."

He glanced again at the pacing officer, and shivered slightly once more.

As we entered, the man at the wheel was spinning her for a left rudder.

"What's he doin' that for?" demanded the captain. "What's his course?"

A clipped paper hung near the binnacle. On it was the course—172°.

I leaned over the binnacle—the man at the wheel took no notice of me. The lubber's line of the compass showed that the ship was swinging toward 215°. The course should have been, according to the navigator's slip hanging in sight, a few degrees each of south. And yet here was the man at the wheel holding the *Karnak* almost southwest—43° off her course.

I showed the skipper. Even as I did so, the wheelsman spun the gear for a right rudder and straightened her out on 215°.

For some minutes we watched.

Then the mate burst out:

"He's crazy—he's holding her against yawing when she's not yawing an inch! And he lets her go when she swings clear off. Look at him spin her there—he's off, I tell you. Here—"

He seized the man's hand started to tear it from the spokes—then

snatched his own hand away and looked at us with sudden consternation in his eyes.

5

THE SKIPPER AND STEVENOT AND HE exchanged glances. "Cold—as ice—that man—cold!" muttered the mate. Stevenot nodded.

"Like the officer outside," he said.

Grahame leaned forward and touched the wheelsman's hand. "Ugh!" he exclaimed. "Blamed peculiar, I'd say. Let's see somethin' else."

At that moment came a rush of feet outside—and loud cries.

"Good!" cried the skipper, relief in his voice. "Now they're coming. Wait till I give—"

Then he stopped. It was not an attacking party. It was the four men we'd left in the launch.

"We heard a shot," one of the oilers started. "We thought—" Then he stared at the wheelsman, yellow-faced, besweatered. Then to the old man: "If you say, sir, we'll—we'll go back."

The captain tapped his teeth thoughtfully. Then nodded. Then turned to the four men with rifles. "You, too—if you wish."

Without a word the whole eight of them, huddled closely, left the house. Outside the door they stepped slowly at first, on tiptoe, and with chins upon their shoulders. Then as a flock of sheep they broke and ran—and in a moment slid out of sight overside.

The skipper, watching, grunted, Stevenot, with a wry smile, muttered something I did not get.

"Let's get on," Grahame suggested.

It seemed that we all were open to suggestion—the captain started for the door and had one foot over the raised sill when he stooped and backed in again, one hand up for silence.

The same officer we had seen when we first climbed aboard stepped high over the sill, and entered. He went straight for the chart table on the starboard and opened a case and took out a sextant. This he wiped perfunctorily—then left, as oblivious to our presence as though we had not been there.

The captain's eyes followed him. "A sight?" he questioned us all. "Is he going to take a sight at this hour in the morning—at sea? What time is it?"

I looked at my watch. "Almost ten-thirty, captain," I said.

"Why in hell at ten-thirty?" he complained. "Didn't he get his morning shot at eight—it's clear enough! Your watch right?"

I nodded—and Grahame and the mate examining theirs, confirmed the accuracy of mine. "Ten-thirty," they said as one.

The captain wheeled to the chart table. On it was pinned a Mercator chart. A series of courses was drawn from a point in Alaska to San Francisco Bay, and several lightly penciled marks showed where the navigator had marked each day's progress. And between the marks were the dates for each run. We huddled about the table—for the captain had stared at the chart as though half hypnotized.

After a minute or more the old man pointed pudgily at the last run marked. "What's the date today?" he asked.

"August 24," the mate replied.

"Humph!" grunted the captain. "Look at the date that was written down there."

With wonder we looked. The date for the last run made was that of three days before—August 21.

Stevenot bent close. Then straightened and his eye shifted about to each of us. He shook his head. "I don't quite get all this," he said quietly. "The last date there is August 21, and if you'll look closely you'll see it's been repeated, almost over the first date, twice. As if it had been gone over to make it clearer, though Heaven knows it's never done.

"And there"—he put his finger where the last criss-cross marked the end of the August 21 run—"that's been crossed twice again, too. It's just as if—" He hesitated. Then shrugged.

"As if what?" snapped the captain, his eye piercing Stevenot's.

"Well," said Stevenot, "I don't know exactly myself. But these men are all—all—oh, but that's utter nonsense. Let's see more first."

The old man glared. "But I want to know just what you mean," he demanded.

Stevenot stared. "I'm not quite sure myself," he answered stiffly. "I can't quite—"

He stopped short. "Back!" he cried curtly. "Back!" And he spread his arms wide and pushed us from the table.

The officer, yellow-faced, sweater clad, and with the odd-colored shoes upon his feet, returned with the sextant. He held it carefully in hand, adjusted the reading glass and held it beneath the electric globe so that the light shown upon the vernier. He examined this closely—pulled a sheet of coordinate paper froma pigeonhole on the bulkhead, and

set down the sextant reading—the altitude of the sun above the horizon.

The mate leaned forward and read it. Then bent down and picked up a similar piece of paper which lay on the floor near the littered waste-basket. He looked at the figures on this, and grunted. I peered over his shoulder. The first figures on it were those of the same sextant altitude as the officer had just put down. Identical.

The man had sat down in the chair before the desk, and was now working out his latitude from a form he had taken from another pigeon-hole.

The mate leaned across and picked up the instrument—adjusted the focus of the eyepiece—and then drew a long, sharp whistle.

"What's a matter!" snapped the skipper.

"Read the thing," said the mate. "Then see what this fellow's put down."

The captain read—then seized the paper from the mate's hand. He stared at the reading set down there, then at the one the officer had just jotted down—then again glued his eye to the glass over the vernier of the sextant. Then he said under his breath:

"Well, I'll be damned!"

The mate nodded. "So will I," he said quietly.

"What—" I started.

The captain turned quickly—he always did when I started to question. I don't know why.

"The man just put down a reading that's several full degrees off what the sextant here indicates. Look for yourself." He thrust the sextant at me, and I, having tried the thing on the *Lanoa's* bridge before, read, and saw for myself.

The captain ran on: "And that other paper, that old one—it must be yesterday's or 'twould have been swept out—the same handwriting has put down the same reading there—the same identical reading to a quarter of a minute. And yet the sextant reads—you saw yourself."

I nodded dumbly. Vague thoughts began to run through my mind. Theories. And conjectures. And I began at last to associate more and more the strange meteorological conditions of the past few days, the coldness and all, with this ship and the strange men who ran her—or, second thought prompted this, who appeared to run her—who went through all the motions, but—

And there I had to stop. As I stopped I felt a sudden thrill crawl from my toes to my head and creep chillily over my skin—for I thought

I glimpsed what the captain had tried to get Stevenot to say. And to tell the truth. I liked it not. No man would. It was just a bit too gruesome. And too uncannily close.

I watched, with the others, that yellow and overwarmly clad man at the table as he plied his pencil.

The mate, eyes alternately on the paper he held, and that on which the man was working, followed every figure with an intentness that was almost hypnotic. I had got half-way down—the figures were identical—even one error that was made on each and crossed out and the figuring redone.

And then a thing happened that was small in itself, but so fearsome in all that it might indicate, that I cannot help but set it down with all the rest I saw and heard and felt on board that awful ship.

As the officer wrote—his pencil point suddenedly snapped, and flew against the bulkhead. But he, apparently unaware that what he now figured with made not a mark or jot, continued to work on. The thrill I'd felt before came now again—and left me cold.

And when the man reached for his log book, and opened up at a mark ready placed, and began to put down, with a pencil that made no mark, figures identical with those we now could see had been already retraced twice before, my confidence in what I believed possible and impossible gave way.

This was too much. I shivered, and seized Stevenot's arm. He started violently, and I noticed that his forehad showed damp in the yellow glow of the bulb.

"Let's get out on deck," I suggested.

Stevenot nodded. We left. And as one, the rest followed—the captain, the mate, and Grahame—into the open, beneath the warming sun, where we could breathe.

"The same figures—same mistakes," ejaculated Grahame, "the same. Darned peculiar, I'd say."

The mate nodded. "And the wrong reading at that," he added.

"Humph!" grunted the skipper, as he stared back into the wheelhouse at the steersman who again was spinning for rudder to counteract a yawning that was not there.

"And it's so warm here, yet they—sweaters and all—" started Stevenot. Then he shuddered a bit.

Then he looked at his hand, and rubbed it on his sleeve. When he glanced up I caught his eye. He reddened slightly. It was the hand with which he had seized that of the silent, yellow, heavily-clad officer who even

yet was pacing the bridge. The officer who had so callously, so coldly, so mechanically, walked into, knocked down, and stepped upon our own captain. The officer who, like these others of the *Karnak's* crew, was so uncanny in appearance, so icy to the touch.

There was a long silence. Instinctively the captain and the mate drew together and slightly apart from us. And as instinctively too—or was it from the gravitation of mutual interest?—Grahame and Stevenot and I had grouped, too.

Apart from the officers, Stevenot spoke: "I've my notions of this," he said. "But I'd like to see more—first."

Grahame nodded and looked at me. I met his questioning eye.

Stevenot went on, whisperng. "Something's dead wrong—with ship and crew," he declared. "And the old man has sense. It's scary—and he's scared himself though Lord knows he's been to sea long enough to know that it's never done with mystery, and probably never will be.

"But he's got sense—and a nose for finance. And he'll dope it out as salvage—the situation I mean. He's scared—but not scared of money. And if he can get this ship to port it'll mean—" Stevenot broke off abruptly. Then, with a vague glance inside where the officer still vainly penciled, he muttered: "I wonder what the cargo is—from Alaska."

He started for the door.

The captain wheeled "Hey! Where you going?" His voice a bit high-pitched. He was not as calm as a captain should be.

Stevenot's chin went up a moment. Then with a slight smile he answered. "To get the log-book."

"Oh, answered the skipper, and fell back to talking to his mate again.

6

STEVENOT WAS IN THE HOUSE for some minutes. I glanced after him, naturally, and saw him reach for the log and take it from under the officer's hands. Then he pulled open a little drawer under the pigeonholes, puttered in it. Then another—and from this he drew something I could not make out.

Then he bent over the officer and gingerly picked up the latter's right hand. A full minute thus—then he took up the book, and came out rubbing his hands as before, alternately, on his trousers.

His face was very sober now.

Yet he opened the book at once, and fingered for the first page of the *Karnak's* trip. There, as our own officers listened, he read the date the

vessel had cleared, various other routine remarks, then: "With a cargo of ore,'" he said, and stopped.

The captain's eyes and the mate's met for a second.

"Ore," repeated Stevenot—with a glance at Grahame and me.

The old man coughed slightly. "She's savlage," he jerked out. "We'll take her in to port—salvage."

Stevenot eyed him. "But the crew's still running her," he said with a slight upward intonation in his voice—and a nod at the wheelsman.

The captain shook his head. "Dead men can't run a ship," he grunted, watching Stevenot's face.

"Dead men!" cried Stevenot.

"You said it," grunted the skipper again. "An' it's salvage. We'll put a gang on board, an' take her in. These—*things*—now on ship—they'll have to be—I'll—"

Stevenot held him with his eye. "Dead men?" he qustioned again. "And you'll—"

The skipper flushed up.

"Well maybe they are—maybe not. But we'll fix 'em up some way. And I'll get a gang aboard, and take her in."

The mate nodded with him.

"I've seen enough to be satisfied," said the skipper, as he ld us to the davits below which was the launch. "The ship's out of gear—and the crew's—it ain't worth a cent. It's salvage. I'll send a gang—"

He stopped short, and his breath wheezed.

"By the Lord!" cried the mate. "The launch is gone!"

It was indeed. On a ship that was as near a tomb as a ship might be, and with a crew of men who might as well be dead, we five were marooned. My heart gave a great jolt as two seamen with mops and buckets stepped mechanically up the gangway from the after-waist of the ship, and started to swab about the decks.

They, too, were yellow, and muffled up in sweaters though the sun was hot above them, gleaming hot. They, too, looked cold and lifeless. Yet they, too, went at once to work—and swabbed, and squeezed, and wiped. I shuddered—how like men from the grave they looked! Did the captain really think—

We ran across the decks to the starboard side. The launch was just coming under the *Lanoa's* lee. A moment more, even as we frantically waved, the launch was hove up, and we saw the crew move in a body up decks to the bridge.

They disappeared in chart house and cabins—and a few moments more came out again.

Then the *Lanoa's* propeller churned white under the stern, and slowly she drew away.

What had happened? Had our own officers, those left on board, deserted us? A chill ran through me, as I glanced back at the yellow, frigid-looking seamen at their labors, twenty feet away, Then hot anger, as the *Lanoa* still forged ahead.

The Captain, with a curse, ran to the wheelhouse, and immediately afterward the *Karnak's* whistle gave four feeble toots. This was answered by four mocking blasts from the *Lanoa's* deep bass; and on the *Lanoa* steamed.

We were dumfounded. The skipper was white. The mate was biting his lower lip. But Stevenot grinned with gusto, and cried: "With a ship of dead men—this is sport!"

"Sport, hell!" snapped the skipper, apparently ignoring Stevenot's insinuation regarding the *Karnak's* crew. "Wait'll you're with this gang a week. Ugh! What will we do now?"

"You're the boss," hinted Stevenot.

The captain flushed.

"Why not use the wireless, and get help?" Grahame suggested.

The officer was at the after end of the bridge deck—I imagine so that the varying currents used might not interfere with the compass. The captain threw open the door with an oath—and stared once more.

Over his shoulder I could see the operator sitting at his instrument—yellow, and muffled as from cold. Silent he was—and but for his right hand, motionless. But the hand upon the key was moving—and, from what knowledge I had gleaned while serving in our war-time navy, I caught one familiar grouping of sound among all the rest.

Three shorts, three longs, three shorts—three dots, three dashes, three dots—*S.O.S.* of the International Code. Then came more I could not make out—then breaking in again: *S.O.S—S.O.S.*

Thus the key clicked on—and on—and on—as we watched in frozen silence.

The captain gasped. "The machine isn't working! It's not working! But he—he—"

"You're right—it's useless—dead!" affirmed Stevenot in a whisper.

And he was right. The spark of the old-fashioned apparatus was not working. The machine was quite dead. And yet the opeator, apparently

quite oblivious to the fact that it was vain labor, was steadily tapping his key, still sending out his call for help.

"Machine's dead, I tell you," cried the skipper. "Machine's dead—and by Heaven, so's the man." He peered wildly about him, then backed away. "And here we're stuck," he cursed soulfully. "And my ship—gone. And these dead—"

"Nonsense!" muttered Stevenot. "Dead? And yet working the ship?"

The skipper turned on him. "What did you say?" he demanded. "It's salvage, I tell you!"

The mate seized him by the shoulder.

"Come on, cap," he exclaimed bruskly, but with a certain quaver in his voice. "We're all a bit nervous now. Let's run through below decks, and see what we can see. We're stuck—let's make the most of it."

The captain frowned a moment at Stevenot. Then turned and stared at the *Lanoa,* now fast dropping the swells about us, Then with a short grunt he started for the gangway leading to the after waist.

We followed, closely bunched.

And of what we saw below decks, and forward later in the fo'c's'le, a book might well be written. Suffice it here to say that the crew was at its regular routine. The firemen—the *Karnak* burned oil—were watching by the boilers—yellow and cold, they too.

In the engine room the second assistant engineer was on watch, and his wipers and oilers were about their tasks, caring for the ponderously moving iron and steel that was their charge—all yellow, and chilled, and silent, too.

And none took notice of us.

Yet to watch them, the mechanical manner in which each moved about; the strange errors they made; how they would wipe where no wiping was needed; how they would oil where the oil already overflowed; how they would pick up bits of stuff where no stuff was, and carry them over to the waste can and there deposit them—nothing—solemnly, with painstaking care—that would make the book.

7

KEEPING CLOSE TOGETHER we climbed the slippery ladders to the open air, again, and went forward. In the fo'c's'le were three seamen lying in their tiered bunks, shoes off, arms flung about their heads—apparently asleep, or resting—yellow, cold-looking, as were all.

And on a bench before the door of his tiny quarters sat the bosun,

pipe—long since dead, in hand, staring before him at the fo'c's'le's high-silled entrance. And he, too, was yellow and hard-skinned, and muffled up in woolen stuffs.

We retreated to the bridge-deck, and held a conference.

And we decided to stick by the ship. The captain himself was vehement for it. It meant money—good money to him. And we were even more enthusiastic—whole-souledly so. This was adventure—and adventure was our life.

It was Stevenot who showed us the way. "All that is needed," he declared, "is for us to take turn about at the wheel. The captain here can dope out a course to Seattle, say, and we can follow it. If these —*men*—continue to fire ship and tend the engines, that's enough. We'll steer and get the *Karnak* in."

And so it was decided.

We wondered how we could relieve the man now at the wheel—but that turned out to be easy enough. We simply took his hands off the thing, and led him to one of the cabins, and laid him on the bunk, and locked the door upon him.

I drew first watch—and was glad it came in daylight.

Grahame drew the next. Then Stevenot. Then the mate. Then the skipper.

We decided at first on two-hour shifts—thus each man had two on, and eight off. No one on the bridge.

But the skipper objected to this. He was in command now, he said, and he demanded a bridge lookout, as well as a man at the wheel. I had my own opinion why, and Stevenot's eyes showed that he had one, too. So we had to shift things so as to have two go on at a time, and changed over thuswise: We kept the order of watches as we had drawn, but when each of us first went on he was to take the wheel two hours, then the bridge for another two, while the next man in order took the wheel. This made four hours on, and only six off—but the man at the wheel would always be fairly fresh, and six hours rest a couple times out of each twenty-four would not be bad.

Then we chose cabins.

The skipper and mate naturally fell together—and commenced a great cleaning up.

And the rest of us found one, on the port side, that would take in three—it was the engineer officers' cabin, but we carried the chief and the first assistant to one of the others, laid them out, and locked them in as we had the steersman.

We went below and washed mightily. Then invaded the galley, where the cooks puttered mechanically, and took up enough of tinned stuff and fruit and bread to withstand a siege.

At noon we started our routine—I on the bridge for only two hours, Grahame at the wheel.

I believe the captain and mate sat in their cabin most of the time. Stevenot went exploring about ship.

Then Grahame took the deck, and Stevenot the wheel. Then Stevenot the deck, and the mate the wheel. Then the mate had the deck, and the old man steered. And so on it went.

We had no difficulty with the men of the *Karnak's* crew when dutifully, and wrapped in their warmest togs, and yellow and cold and tight-skinned, they came to relieve the watch. We simply treated them as we had the others—steered them to a cabin and locked them in. The below decks force, of course, we did not touch—as long as they made steam and did not blow up the boilers we worried not. We simply wanted no interference with our steering.

The *Lanoa* slowly sank out of sight.

Night came down, and a great loneliness seized us. At eight I came on again, the skipper on deck.

Five men we were—on a great ship. Five men—and some forty others who were men and yet not men, alive and yet—I hesitate to say—not alive. I felt as the blackness grew that my nerves were getting a bit on edge, too—like those of the captain. And I wondered what had happened to these men—and what might happen to us during the long days I knew must drift past before we sighted solid land.

Those hours of blackness passed slowly indeed. Ofttimes I fancied I heard footsteps about me, and would start violently and swing about. But naught occurred.

However, I felt continually a-tingle as though every nerve fiber of me were vibrating with involuntary fear. This grew and grew until finally I found myself in a sudden chill and 'twas all I could do to stand there at the wheel, or hold the lubber's line to the degree we steered. Now and again the bulky shadow of the old man crossed the glass before me, yet strange to say, the captain's presence gave me but little confidence.

He certainly had not inspired any during the day—even though at first he had so boldly led the way. Bold enough—yet when, just where he tramped so loudly now, and puffed so strenuously at the cigar he'd taken from the box in the cabin of the *Karnak's* captain—who

by the way we'd found there lying on his bunk, evidently off watch, and locked in as per usual—when, I say, in so peculiar a manner he had been trod upon by the icy mate and then felt that terrible iciness itself, that boldness had been sapped away.

Then Grahame relieved me at the wheel—and I took the deck while the captain sought the seclusion that his cabin granted.

I felt better with Grahame at the wheel—and occasionally stepped in for a chat.

Grahame could not account for the appearance and actions of the *Karnak's* crew. I hinted of my theory—and he listened, but did not commit himself.

I reminded him that the captain swore they were all dead men. He asked if I thought the captain had ever read the *Ancient Mariner*—and grinned. Ask Stevenot, he said—he'd a theory that was near right. Meanwhile go back to your job and step lively, too. I went out on the bridge again—and listened to the lap of black waters alongside, and the dash of spray ahead against the bows. Then I was relieved and went to our cabin.

And there, an hour later, I was suddenly awakened by someone trying to crawl into my bunk—I had a double lower. It was quite dark, but I figured it was one of my mates just off watch.

"Tired?" I muttered.

There was no answer.

And a second later a chill touch sent my nerves flying and my hair a-prickle. With a wild yell I dashed out of the cabin. I heard Grahame, who had evidently taken the upper as I slept, give a cry, too—and a moment later the light flashed upon the second assistant engineer, whom we had entirely forgotten, and who must have just come off watch to get a bit of rest and sleep. As if those—*men*—needed sleep!

There he lay on the lower birth—yellow, and icy cold—he'd crawled in with *me!*

Picture if you can the whiteness of my face, the condition of my nerves, the crawling of my flesh, when Grahame and I carried that awful thing to the cabin where we'd locked the others.

8

AND PICTURE AGAIN MY CONSTERNATION, when at

six o'clock I went to relieve the captain at the wheel, I could find neither the captain nor the mate anywhere about.

I aroused the others. We made search.

And on the starboard side another lifeboat was gone. Some time in the night the captain and the mate had deserted us—somewhere even now, they floated on the blackness of the heaving sea, preferring it to the terror and mystery and the yellow, icy, mechanical human *things* aboard the *Karnak*.

We held a conference—low-voiced.

We changed the method of our watch—just a man at the wheel—four hours on, four off. Our navigators were gone, but we knew the general course—anywhere east would bring us to land, and with slight knowledge of the sextant, and care in lookout, we could pilot the *Karnak* to some harbor along the coast.

Little did we know then that the *Karnak* was destined never again to see the land. Had we known that, we might have deserted her and that crew of strange and silent men even as had the old man and his first. And when we did see, did understand—the shock on our nerves of what *might* have been was a fiber-shattering thing.

I, for one, believe its effect on me will never wear off, Even when now it comes upon me, that recollection, my whole body goes a-tremble, and a coldness seizes me even as chill as that which, for those first two days of electric storm and extraordinary cold, held the *Lanoa,* and the *Karnak.*

During the day naught occurred but the now usual actions of the strange men yet about the decks.

Yet here we did note a curious thing. The man who had been polishing the whistle when first we came aboard repeated every action of the day before. He lost his blance, his hands jerked as though the bottle had fallen, he regained his equilibrium, and commenced again to use the bottle when he had none in his hands.

Every motion was almost identical with that he'd made the day before. His every move a repetition—a duplicate—of what, the day before, we had seen him do.

Another thing: The second mate had not been locked up with the rest. Around nine-thirty he took another shot at the sun. Then he came down to the chart table and read the vernier. Then, exactly as he'd done the day before that, he set down the same sextant altitude of the sun—absolutely wrong, absolutely *not* that which the sextant showed—but the same identical figures that he'd set down before. And when he figured

he made the same error as he had before. He, too, was repeating himself —every move, every act.

To test him I drew the paper from beneath the pencil—the skipper had sharpened it when he'd worked out our course—and the yellow-faced man kept penciling on the table top. He did not know the paper was not there—or knowing, heeded the omission not one whit.

Then he drew out the log-book which we had replaced—and over the old entries, at the page marked, he penciled the same figures again.

As I stared, I wondered just what he was—what had happened to him—what he *was now*.

And then, queerly enough, I wondered what Stevenot had done to him, or discovered about him, when the day before he had gone into the wheel-house to get the log-book and ascertain the *Karnak's* cargo. Why had he looked so doubly serious when he came out?

By noon that day we had made 192.7 miles—as near as I could figure from the Negus log trailing aft and the revolution indicator in the engine-room. We had yet many days of slow-steaming ahead—provided our strange crew held out. I recalled my old war-navy school work—and practical navigation.

And already our engine-room counter had dropped ten revolutions a minute.

We tried to find out why—but knowing little of the *Karnak's* machinery, our investigations came to naught. We shivered a bit, too, watching the yellow, staring-eyed men perform at their tasks.

We shivered more during the next night.

9

GRAHAME, AWAKENING ME next morning to relieve Stevenot at the wheel, mentioned it to me.

"I felt a queer tingling all last night," he complained. "My back—whole spine. Oh, it wasn't fear—although I don't like the situation at all, I admit. It was something different. I rolled over, too, in my sleep, and awoke to find my whole side atingle, as though it were asleep."

I started. "That's exactly what I felt," I said.

We mentioned it to Stevenot.

He nodded. "Me, too," he answered. "As if that part of me were asleep."

"It's blame peculiar," muttered Grahame.

Stevenot nodded quietly. "Maybe it is—maybe it isn't," he said thoughtfully.

Then I took the wheel.

The lights were acting poorly now, too—as they had on the *Lanoa* during those two eerie days.

And as I tried to keep the compass steady, the dim thought worked up within me, that perhaps the captain and mate had not been such great fools when they had deserted the *Karnak*.

This thought took hold of me, somehow, up there in the loneliness of the wheelhouse. The sea sparkled so happily about, the sun was so whitely bright outside—yet this ship—this crew! Why had I awakened the night before, even before that icy engineer had started to crawl into his old bunk by my side, and been so singularly alarmed by the persistent tingling that was upon me?

And by what strange coincidence, then, other than the preying of a subconscious fear, had each of us three felt the same sensation? And then, too, the sudden little chills that, nervelike, shot now and again through me. Surely I was not that deeply frightened.

I held my hand out. It was as steady as the chronometers in their soft racks beneath the chart table's hinged top. I was not afraid. Mystified, yes—but not afraid.

Then why that curious and softly alarming sensation—as of part of me sleep? And why those chilling waves that swept my body—when the night was warm, and I a well man?

I wondered if I were quite well.

When I went off, I searched among the captain's effects and found a clinical thermometer.

And then I was thoroughly frightened—my temperature, even though I now felt quite warm, was some *eight degrees below normal*. In a sudden anxiety, I ran out up to Grahame, now at the wheel.

His temperature had dropped, too—to 94°, and 98.5° is normal.

In palpitating fear I sought Stevenot, who as usual, fearless, curious, was prowling around below.

He nodded when I told him—but was almost precipitious in putting the thermometer under his tongue. And his temperature was even lower than mine—88°.

"Great God!" he cried softly and stared at me.

"Well?" I queried.

He stared steadily at the yellow, thick-clad man puttering about the deck. And when he saw the fellow stoop and make all the motions of

picking up something that was not there, and carry it to the rail and toss it lightly overboard, he started, and his eyes found mine.

"They—they are very cold—very cold—themselves!" he muttered half to himself. "And now—"

"I don't like it," I burst out.

He stared at me. "And do you know," he said, "that this ship rides at least two feet lower in the water than when we boarded her?"

"What?" I exclaimed.

"I've been around her more than you two," he nodded quietly. "And been investigating. And she's loaded with ore—ore won't float, you know."

"Let's tell Grahame," I whispered.

We all whispered—the silence of all these men about seemed to literally force us to.

Grahame took it calmly enough. "We haven't been using the pumps," he said, exhaling smoke from one of the *Karnak's* cigars.

Stevenot's answer chilled me. "They've been working full power ever since we've been aboard. I've been looking around, you know."

"What'll we do?" I queried.

"It might be well to provision another lifeboat." Stevenot replied quietly. "The pumps are still working—there's plenty of time. And every mile we stay with the *Karnak*—Also, we can't tell—these fellows—these cold—they may yet—" He shrugged his shoulders.

Grahame nodded, then stopped and furtively picked up his cigar. He'd bitten it through.

In half an hour No. 3 lifeboat, next to the swinging falls where had hung the whaleboat the captain and mate had taken, was ready for sea. And we were overjoyed at finding beneath her canvas cover a small portable motor. We clamped this on the stern—it made us feel nearer home. Of provisions we put in enough to last a dozen men a month.

I felt foolish as I worked at this. Then the sudden appearance of one of the yellow crew doubled my efforts.

That night the tingling was decidedly pronounced—all over me now, not simply on the side that was beneath. And alternately I was swept by great surging waves of chill and heat.

The sweat broke out on me—cold sweat, I felt sudden nausea. And then a black juggernaut of fear almost paralyzed me. I struggled against it—and, almost fainting, cried aloud to Grahame above me.

At once he answered. "Let's get out," he cried—and his voice was weak—his words sharp, spasmodic.

We seized clothes and tumbled out on the deck. And there we met Stevenot—deserted from the wheel. "The lights are out," he cried. "And the ship—the ship."

And then I noted for the first time that every bit of metal on the *Karnak* was faintly aglow—not with the blue electric flame that had danced on the *Lanoa's* rigging before the great electric bolt had fallen—but half-luminous with quiet, almost menacing, phosphorescence.

Again a wave of icy chill clutched at me—and then, with terrifying coincidence, in the moony radiance of all about me, there passed as silently as a ghost, a staring-eyed member of the crew.

As one we madly dashed for the lifeboat. And five minutes later, our motor chugging hopefully, we were floating a hundred yards away from the weirdly glowing *Karnak,* that followed us with slowly turning wheel.

We had deserted the *Karnak*, too.

And perhaps a half hour later, Stevenot, who sat in the bow facing aft, pointed and cried out: "The *Karnak*—the *Karnak!*"

We turned—and even as we turned, the great vessel, glowing as though impregnated in every part with eerie moonlight, looming like a vast ghost of the sea, dropped with all her crew, and as silently as her crew had labored, beneath the surface of the sea.

And to tell the truth, a sigh of vast relief breathed from us all.

We were free—we were safe, in a small open boat on the great northern sea. But the *Karnak*—we were not with her.

And three days later, yet some hundreds of miles from land, we were picked up by one of the salmon ships bound with her thousands of cases for San Francisco Bay. We were safe! But the *Karnak* and her fearsome crew were at the bottom of the sea—hid deep away—even as they well should be—and as are many others of ocean's mysteries and ocean's tragedies, too—even as they well should be—and safe.

10

THE FIRST NIGHT OUT, under the stars that now watched with such twingling comfort upon us. Stevenot gave us his explanation of the thing. I myself like puzzles solved, and all puzzles, it must be remembered, do have their solutions.

Stevenot's solution may be the right one, may not be. Yet does, in my estimation, untwist every thread of the *Karnak's* strange tangle. And I, for one, even out there on the deep, with the strange ship and crew

perhaps yet plunging deeper into the abysmal black beneath us, heard and was satisfied. So, with the account of the mystery itself, I offer my companion's explanation here.

"Why, you ask?" questioned Stevenot from the bows. "Why was it so—and how—and what? Simple enough, I think.

"I'd call it coincidence—and one that never yet has been brought to man's attention—and that man live. It may have happened before—ships disappear, you know—but none lived to tell the tale.

"We saw the thing start on the *Lanoa*—the *Lanoa* was loaded with sugar, not with ore. We were chilled by the same cold as was the *Karnak*. The blue flowing electricity was as rampant on our rigging as it must have been upon the *Karnak's*. Our wireless was off and on, even as was that of the unfortunate ship just gone to its destined end.

"But we were farther from the influence of the great electric masses of the north. We were far to the south of that place whence the *Karnak* pleaded for help. And we were loaded with raw sugar; we did not have a steel hull packed with metallic ore—ore that attracted electricity, ore that was imbued with electric action itself, ore that perhaps was lightly radioactive, as are many of the mineral products of the countries of the north.

"What happened, you ask? Again I say 'tis simple—again; coincidence.

"The electric storm descended, and with it, or as a consequence, the cold. With us it was a matter of temporary inconvenience. With the *Karnak,* the stuff took permanent and relentless hold. We were a simple ship laden with vegetable produce—the *Karnak* was a huge electro-magnet. The electricity soaked into her—we shed it as a duck sheds water—she soaked it up as a sponge.

"I believed her master realized this—and so called for help while his radio would allow. He himself felt the tingling and the same evil chills as we did—and realized what their portent was. He knew with what his holds were full—and how the electricity would work upon the iron plates of the hull itself, and rot, and rot, and rot, until the seams would open up, the bottom of the ship fall out beneath them all, and the *Karnak,* plummetlike, would drop from the ken of man as we just have seen it do.

"The *Karnak's* captain knew this all, I say, and called for men to help. But others felt it, too, perhaps; and thus did one boatload desert before there came that final electric blast—which on the *Lanoa* we saw and heard—which fell upon the *Karnak,* and overwhelmed it and all the crew—sapped the life out of every man. Sapped it out, sucked it out,

with terrible, unthinking, relentless malevolence—and in its place put part of its own self, its own electric mass, its own electric energizing power."

Stevenot paused a moment, his hands folded about his knees—huddled beneath the blanket he'd thrown about his shoulders.

"The *Karnak* called for help—until the bolt came that killed the wireless—and even then the radio operator stuck on the job. Why? You wonder why these men, yellow, and icy, and yet wrapped in the thick woolens they donned when the chill fell upon them all, why they continued, though dead men in every sense of the word, to go about their routine tasks?

"Simply because the electricity about them in them, impregnating every cell of their flesh and bone and blood, had crystallized, in the last day of its vast intensity, the brain fibers regulating every act they had performed—crystallized their brains—even, to put it crudely, as sound waves are crystallized on a phonographic record.

"At the same time every nerve, every cell, though the real soul, the real man, was dead, was yet alive with electricity. *Rigor mortis,* under such stimulus, could not set in. And so under the electric impulse—perhaps, too, forced on by the slight radioactivity of the thousands of tons of ore in the holds—the crystallized routine thought continued to impel—continued to operate the messages along the nerves—the muscles reacted to the electric impulse—the body performed all its functions—mechanically, automatically, regularly.

"Thus, when we landed, the mate did not see us, or hear us call. His action was simply a *motographic,* if I may use the word, reproduction, of his *thought action of the day before.* He turned in at the passage, without noticing us, because he had done the same day before, And were we there the day before?

"You see now?

"It was the same with the man polishing up the whistle—losing his balance, dropping the bottle. It was the same with the officer on the bridge—knocking the captain down—the wonder that he regained his balance and paced on.

"It was the same with the man at the wheel—who steered to avoid a yawing that affected the ship the last day when he really was alive, when his brain was actually recording thought and being crystallized by the surging electricity in him, and the cold about. So, too, with the mate taking observations—he set down what he had read when last he had read the vernier, *alive* and *thinking.*

"It was watching him that gave me my first real clue. And surreptitiously, knowing it was a test for death, I pricked his hand with a pin I found in a drawer by the chart table—no blood came forth—the man was not alive then—but dead, *dead.* Yet I didn't want to scare the captain out yet.

"So in dressing—they still clothed themselves to withstand cold. And some, groping, found odd clothing—even as did the second mate with his shoes.

"And thus with every man on board—even him who crawled, dead and icy cold, into the berth with you. All, from the captain who lay sleeping, exhausted from his watching I suppose—down to the humblest of the crew, from fire-room to fo'c's'le—all were dead men, but put in jerky action by the energizing power of the electricity in whch they had been drenched.

"And the great bolt, when it came, attracted by the metallic cargo the *Karnak* held, overwhelmed them all, struck out what real life was yet left, finally crystallized their thought action, and set them into machinelike motion—made of live men, dead—automatons.

"Then we arrived—you know the rest."

Stevenot paused again, and even in the darkness I felt his eyes on mine. Grahame at my side, the tiller of the chugging little boat under his arm, coughed slightly. I gazed deep into the unfathomable mystery of the myriad of twinkling stars above—worlds and suns, like ours, all; and with our troubles, our mysteries, our joys, too.

"You see now—you understand?" Stevenot's voice drifted quietly to us again.

Grahame's answer came with mine—softly, too, for the influence of the day before, and of this night, was on him, too.

"Yes," we answered as one, "I do understand." And, in all faith, I believe Stevenot had hit upon the truth.

It was simple after all—as most mysteries are. Simple—and yet how awful during that time the thing was mystery.

I have many times since awakened in the night in cold sweat, dreaming that that icy engineer was crawling between my sheets as I lay asleep. I have many times since felt the icy tingling run through me—an actual physical reminiscence, I do believe, of those electric chills we felt aboard the *Karnak*, chills which would have made us in time, too, even as were those unfortunate members of the *Karnak's* crew—yellow, icy, machinelike, as had been the *Karnak's* second mate, the officer of the bridge, the man at the wheel, and all the rest. And, too, walking alone in the

lonely shadow of a moonlit road — I still start with sudden fright — seeing in the shadow's rise and fall the movement of those men, the dead-alive.

I have often wondered, too, if those dead-alive — deep beneath the sea went on, and on, and on — I hope not. And I believe not.

Fate, Nature, is too kind to allow such tragedy. And the good old sea, too, has given them burial, and will give them peace. Nature, in the end, is kind. And the *Karnak,* and those silent men, are finally at rest — at peace!

The Whisperer

by Robert A. W. Lowndes

Ben Jarvison had had this room the last
Few weeks before his aged mind gave way;
The agent shook his head, and couldn't say
Why the old actor had declined so fast.
He'd seemed all right when he moved in, but then
He took to drinking hard, and often spoke
Of certain shadows and the elder folk,
And things undreamed by sane and sober men.
I heard a voice there on the second night,
That whispered names in the sepulchral gloom
Of midnight, and a shadow in the room
Was gone when I switched on the single light.
Later, I sought those whom the shadow named,
And found them vanished, their effects unclaimed.

Inquisitions

This time, we will be entirely concerned with the amateur press, or the semi-professional or non-bookstore booklet, etc., designed to appeal to collectors and fans, rather than the general public. The volume received makes anything like extended comment impossible. Reproduction and printing of items is to be considered as good unless otherwise specified.

THE MULTI-MAN, by Philip Harbottle, 27 Cheshire Gardens, Wallsend-on-Tyne, Northumberland, England; 69; $2.50.

This is a 7"x9-1/4" loose-leaf book, and equal in content to a good sized soft-cover. Subtitled, "A biographic and bibliographic study of John Russell Fearn (1908-1960)", the author has given us a long essay (34 pages) on this one-time favorite science fiction writer, who was at his peak of interest and inspiration during the "thought-variant" era in *Astounding Stories* (1934-1937), under the editorship of F. Orlin Tremaine. The rest is a thorough bibliography, broken down into the categories within which Fearn worked: science fiction & fantasy, detective & mystery, westerns, romances, and film magazines, including material run under his many pseudonyms. While everyone may not agree that this was worth doing, it is quite well done.

THE NECRONOMICON, A Study by Mark Owings, Mirage: the Anthem Series; 1967; Jack L. Chalker, 5111 Liberty Heights Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21-207; 32pp; $1.95.

For the avid Lovecraftian, this collects various writings purportedly from or about his dread *Necronomicon;* contents include "History and Chronology of the *Necronomicon*"; "Excerpts from "Cthulhu in the *Necronomicon*' by Professor Laban Shrewbury"; "The Existing Copies: A Bibliography"; "Quotations"; and "Footnotes". The bibliography of existing copies, noting every reference to a copy in published weird and horror fiction, indicates that far more copies of the horrid book, in one version or another, have been in existence than HPL's original chronology implies. And for those whose collection of the old magazines, etc., is not complete, the quotations section gather together all the important excerpts from the abominable tome that have been included in weird fiction. The letter-size book is designed as a work of art and very well done; the compleat Lovecraftian obviously must have it on his shelves.

THE ARKHAM COLLECTOR, published twice a year by August Derleth, Arkham House, Sauk City Wisconsin, 53583; 50 cents per copy;

maximum subscription accepted: two years.

The third issue (Summer 1968) runs to 88 printed pages and includes a striking new short-short horror story by a newcomer named Brian Lumley: *The Cyprus Shell*, in addition to verse, news, comment, and an article by J. Ramsey Campbell, *Cthulthu in Celluloid* which presents a case for the Hollywood type of debasement of Lovecraft, Poe, etc., on a "let's face it, this is the way things are" basis. It's needless to belabor my disagreement; besides you may find Mr. Campbell's arguments persuasive. For Arkham House fans, actual or potential.

WEIRDBOOK, published quarterly by W. Paul Ganly, PO Box 601, Chambersburg, Penna., 17201; 75 cents per copy, four for $2.00; eight for $3.75. Letter size, first issue contains 32 pages.

Fiction and poetry in the *Weird Tales* tradition. Contents include *The Cobra in the Dream*, by Robert E. Howard; *The Dunes of Death* by Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Gates*, by Walter Quednau; *Out of the Night*, by H. Warner Munn; *Aftermath From Angle Two* by Allan C. Leverentz (prose Poem); *I Am Human*, by Oliver Ward; *Dread Huntress* by Andrew Duane; and verse by A. Arthur Griffin, Walt Klein, Michael De Angelis, Edd Roberts, Andrew Duane, Joseph Payne Brennan, and H. Warner Munn. While nothing here is what I would consider really bad, only the Quednau story had any freshness, for me. None of this material has appeared in newsstand magazines, but some items have been reprinted from fan magazines.

(Turn to page 116)

Coming Next Issue

Hines picked up the envelope, felt it over, went to the window and carefully tore it open. He sniffed at it cautiously before he came back to his desk and shook it out on the blotter.

"He's got me nervous", he admitted with a wry smile. "Gas, for instance. He might have anticipated your bringing it to me."

He opened the sheet with the ends of two rulers. "I've been waiting a good set of his fingerprints," he observed, in a certain amount of apology for his caution. "The ones we got last time weren't perfectly clear."

And then he read:

To the Editor of the *Star:*

Today, at twelve fifteen o'clock, daylight saving time, I shall blanket the entire metropolitan area in darkness for five minutes.

Tomorrow, at three o'clock, I shall blanket the city in darkness for one-half hour.

Thereafter, each day, I shall blanket the city in darkness for such times as please me, at such hours as I shall select, until my terms have been met.

I will agree to leave the City of New York unmolested for one year for the sum of ten millions of dollars, to be remitted to me as I may later direct, and when Police Inspector Hines and Professor Albert Schaaf are no longer living. The news of the acceptance of my terms may be broadcast by all radio stations.

I am not concerned with the source of the ten million dollars. I do not care who shall kill Inspector Hines or Professor Schaaf. But I will pay, personally, twenty-five thousand dollars to any person who will kill either of them, or fifty thousand dollars for them both.

Other newspapers in the city are receiving copies of this letter.

THOMAS PRESTON.

Here is the thrilling sequel to The Darkness On Fifth Avenue

THE CITY OF THE BLIND

by Murray Leinster

DEEPER THAN YOU THINK, Joel Frieman, 5 Manor Drive 10A, Newark, New Jersey 07106. Single copy, one dollar; by mail one dollar and a quarter.

Subtitled, "A Review on Fantasy", this second issue has a very nicely printed cover illustration by Cartier and twenty pages of interesting letters from authors who contributed to the old WEIRD TALES, as well a letter from J.C. Henneberger, who was the founder. Although the interior is cleanly offset, the typing that was offset is not any joy to behold; and while I sympathize with the reasons for the price asked (that cover printing was very expensive), and find the contents entirely fascinating (Wallace West's account of why *The Last Man* was not a cover story on *WEIRD TALES* and how he collected from *AMAZING STORIES* is my favorite), there's still precious little of it. For the avid collector only.

THE COUNT DRACULA SOCIETY QUARTERLY, Gordon Guy, 22 Canterbury Street, East Hartford, Conn., 06118; $2.00 per year.

Of interest to society members, as well as devotees of weird and horror films. The issue I have contains information on the Count Dracula Society; and article, "The Gothic Genre: Mary Shelley & H.P. Lovecraft", by Robert Seufert; and an account of the Fifth Annual Mrs. Ann Radcliffe Awards Dinner, with photographs that did not come out too clearly (although it may just be my copy). Since my interest in reading about horror films passed the vanishing point some time back, I'll cheerfully exculpate all concerned for the very slight interest this publication holds for me, and allow that others may find it very interesting indeed. However, my interest in HPL remains, and the article dealing with him struck me as somewhat less than illuminating.

the cauldron

Few things are so hard to catch up with as misimpressions. In the last issue, we drove a stake through the rumor that there are innumerable unpublished manuscripts of Jules de Grandin stories; the fact is that there are none—and every de Grandin story that Seabury Quinn wrote was accepted and published by *WEIRD TALES*. Nonetheless, I should not be at all astonished to find the rumor popping up again.

And another such rumor has indeed returned to horrid life, namely that Jules de Grandin first appeared in a story that Mr. Quinn had in *THE THRILL BOOK*. Not so, says the author; *Dr. Trowbridge* appears briefly in the story in question, but not de Grandin. Dr. Jules de Grandin makes his debut as Professor de Grandin, connected with the Service de Surete, but whose principle work is at the University of Paris and St. Lazaire Hospital, combining the vocataion of *savant* with the avocation of criminologist, in *The Horror on the Links, WEIRD TALES,* October 1925. This story, slightly updated, and the title changed to *The Horror on the Links*, leads off the collection of de Grandin stories issued by Arkham House, under the title of *The Phantom Fighter*. You can still obtain this book from Arkham House, for $5.00, and the ten stories it contains are available nowhere else, unless you have the good fortune to happen upon the right 1925, 1926, 1928, 1929, 1930, and 1934 issues of *WEIRD TALES*.

Joseph D. Siclari writes: "This is the first time that I have written, even though I have read every issue of SMS, and I find that the quality of your reprint stories is surprisingly high. I had thought that most pulp writings were pretty bad, but *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES, MAGAZINE OF HORROR,* and *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* showed me that I was wrong. But now to what I like best. The stories in SMS that have constant characters: Jules de Grandin, Ascott Keane, and especially Simon Ark, are the best. Are there any collections of Simon Ark stories?

"After reading *The Black Mass,* in this issue, I nearly rated it outstanding. Here's hoping that there are some sequels to it.

"Another qustion: Why do some stories have a background block and others do not? I find this one of the most interesting parts of each magazine.

"Couldn't you print another Solar Pons story? *The Tottenham Werewolf* was great.

"Didn't Robert E. Howard write weird mysteries in addition to horror stories?

"Going back a couple of issues,

which I just got by order, E. Hoffmann Price's *The Bride of the Peacock* was the best story that has come along in SMS. I hope more come. If such a thing can be said, the story was realistic or, at least, the characters were much better than in the other stories."

No, there have not been any collections of Mr. Hoch's Simon Ark stories, thus far. I join you in deploring the situation, but there's naught I can do about it.

I presume that you mean by "background block", those extra blurbs that we run now and then dealing with the author or the background of a particular story. Whether I present such information depends upon whether I have such information to present. With the better known authors, I have some data; but even so, it just won't bear reiterating each and every time I use this author. I do try, though, to risk repetition once in a while, since I know that new readers are attracted with each issue of SMS.

A reader whom I cannot now identify, and who thought the cover for issue #9 was "too arty", goes on to say: "*The Sight of Roses* should have been the best story. But the seduction and murder of sexy secretary was unnecessary to plot. Besides, instant seduction and violent murder were out of character for a poisoner called 'Bunny'."

Having some of the Elephant Child's 'satiable curiosity, and being a little sadistic now and then, it's a pleasure to get a note like this, directed at an author I know — Tyler likes to drink my gin and listen to my records at times. Now some writers are unbelievably sensitive; you need blood plasma on hand for emergency application or whatever at the slightest breath of unfavorable criticism. Others are aggressively defensive; they don't faint, but they'll prove in exhausting detail how utterly right they are down to the last dot of the "i". Still others are skilled combatants; they roll with the punches, then come back and catch the attacker off guard. And yet others are masochistic and plead guilty with many moans to every charge. Those are just generalities, but I was curious as to how Tyler would take this, so I had my tape recorder running when he showed up that particular evening. Here's a transcription of a certain part of the tape.

JT: Anonymous, I see.

RAWL: No one has to sign the preference pages, though some of them do. I usually throw away the envelopes, and shouldn't — sometimes the writer's name is on the back.

JT: No matter. It doesn't look like your writing.

RAWL: So?

JT: I disagree, of course. Otherwise I'd have written it differently. (Pause) Suppose you could argue about whether that episode was necessary to the plot, if plot is all you're thinking of. I considered it very much a part of the story.

RAWL: And of course you considered it in character.

JT: Potentially. Always potentially. Morrow was awfully inhibited and his asthma was part of it. When he found that his plan had really worked, then he felt that he'd conquered his inhibitions, too. And for a short while, he had. It didn't last. Once he came out of it, when the sight of the roses triggered off his usual response, then his freedom collapsed. He was his "normal" self again—a bunny.

RAWL: I wouldn't have taken the story if I didn't agree.

JT: Well, thank the reader anyway. If there's ever a chance to get a reprint, I'll make the point a little clearer. (Pause) Oh, you got a copy of Horenstein's *Mahler 1st.* Let's hear it.

Gene D'Orsogna writes: "I cannot find superlatives enough to describe the really *horrible* cover illustration. It is by far the finest reprinted on either SMS or MOH. I felt a mingling

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Did You Miss These Issues Of

#6, Fall 1967: My Lady of the Tunnel, Arthur J. Burks; *The Glass Floor,* Stephen King; *Death From Within,* Sterling S. Cramer; *A Vision* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Aim for Perfection,* Beverly Haaf; *The Dark Castle,* Marion Brandon; *Dona Diabla,* Anna Hunger; *The Druid's Shadow,* Seabury Quinn.

#7, Winter 1967/68: The Bride of the Peacock, E. Hoffmann Price. *Nice Old House,* Dona Tolson; *Those Who Seek,* August Derleth; *John Bartine's Watch,* Ambrose Bierce; *The Pet of Mrs. Lilith,* Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Man Who Chained the Lightning,* Paul Ernst.

#8, Spring 1968: The White Lady Of The Orphanage, Seabury Quinn; *The Gray People,* John Campbell Haywood; *And Then No More,* Jay Tyler; *The Endocrine Monster,* R. Anthony; *The Return of the Sorcerer,* Clark Ashton Smith; *The Thiee From The Tomb,* Edmond Hamilton.

#9, Summer 1968: The Black Mass, Col. S. P. Meek; *The Last Archer,* Earl Peirce, Jr.; *The Sight of Roses,* Jay Tyler; *Webbed Hands,* Ferdinand Berthoud; *Acrophobia* (verse), L. Sprague de Camp; *Hollywood Horror,* Paul Ernst.

#10, Fall 1968: The House of the Living Dead, Harold Ward; *The Indoor Safari,* Nax Nugor; *The House Party at Smoky Island,* L. M. Montgomery; *Settler's Wall,* Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Isle of Missing Ships,* Seabury Quinn.

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of horror and revulsion as I studied it. This, plus the fine green backing, made for your most effective cover yet.

"I bow to you, sir, for your ever-improving editorials. They have grown from mere story summaries to interesting and diverting discussions cogent to every reader of weird fiction.

"Col. S.P. Meek always puzzles me. He always has interesting premises, which he develops logically. His imagery is strong and attention-grabbing. I find his characters, and often his dialog, stilted, childish, and stereotyped. (If Dr. Catherton remarked 'Mother of God' once more, I would not have been responsible for my actions!) No matter, the good outweighed the bad here, and when we got down to the brass tacks of the story, I was spellbound. *The Black Mass* was not in the same class as *Nasturtia,* however, the latter being a far subtler story.

"*The Last Archer* was perhaps the most engrossing tale of its kind. I have ever read . . . Could you find no background on Earl Peirce, though? I would be most interested to know if he ever wrote any other stories.

"*The Sight of Roses,* excepting the presence of The Visitor, was almost too 'straight' for your magazine. Not only that, I found it rather tired as to plot and weak as to ending. The idea of a murderer not being believed upon confessing his crimes just seems too familiar. (Doubtless now that I've committed myself, this tale will place number one!)

"In *Webbed Hands,* monumental horror always seems to be just

Tuesday the 28th. Just before sunrising, while I was yet asleep, Mr. Christian, with the master at arms, gunner's mate, and Thomas Burkitt, seaman, came into my cabin, and seizing me, tied my hands with a cord behind my back, threatening me with instant death, if I spoke or made the least noise: I, however, called as loud as I could, in hopes of assistance; but they had already secured the officers who were not of their part, by placing sentinels at their doors. There were three men at my cabin door, besides the four within; Christian had only a cutlass in his hand, the others had muskets and bayonets. I was hauled out of bed, and forced on deck in my shirt, suffering great pain from the tightness with which they had tied my hands. I demanded the reason for such violence, but received no other answer than abuse, for not holding my tongue. The master, the gunner, the surgeon, Mr. Elphinstone, master's mate, and Nelson, were kept confined below . . .

See page 125

around the corner, waiting to spring. Nothing sprang, though. There were some excellent touches, however, such as when Blaikee shoots Trundle . . . or when the webbed hands, marring our 'hero's' face, squeeze at his eyes, but all in all, nothing . . .

"What can I say of Dr. Satan? Is he literature? I doubt it. Are the characters stereotyped? Most definitely. Is the whole series little more than a prose comic strip? Indeed.

"Why then did I enjoy it so much? Perhaps it was because of the good clean sadism that abounds throughout. Perhaps because the image of a woman with a skull-head on her shoulders fascinated me. More than likely it was the beautiful escapism offered by Paul Ernst's *Hollywood Horror.*

"Dr. Satan is so utterly cruel, so wonderfully evil that he strikes a responsive note in all of us . . .

"I did miss de Grandin, but look forward to seeing more of him in future issues. I cannot say I like Price's Pierre D'Artois though."

Mike Ashley writes, from England: "*The Last Archer* was indeed a very good story. It would pass solely for the brilliantly bizarre pictures it conjured up in my mind of this strange balcony archery duel, which delighted my inner self! But on top of that it was an intriguing plot, and a deftly-woven ending; perhaps its only fault being no hint of an explanation as to how this island had this strange mirror effect. I see that this author had several stories in *WEIRD TALES* and *STRANGE STORIES* in the late 30s, so if you can get them, I'd like to see more by him.

"*The Sight of Roses*—again very intriguing, and one of the best new stories you've published, which is a joy to see. It always strikes me as a pity that the best stories always seem to be the old ones, and I wonder where today's authors are. But of course there are the Zelaznys, the Dishchs, Moorcocks, Delanys and Anthonys, which will enrich our genre, and perhaps Jay Tyler will be another, even if a "devil"-conjuring bit was involved. I wonder if a perfect murder could be committed that way. Now I'm allergic to dust (I think!) so if I get a bit of the old hypno about me, perhaps . . ."

Hypnosis is nothing to fool around with, nor again is the subconscious. One hears the old saw that no one can be commanded, under hypnosis, to do anything contrary to his moral convictions; but that, even if true—which is very doubtful—is at best misleading. Certainly a professional assassin would not resist a hypnotic command to do away with someone; nor again a professional burglar reject a command to break, enter, and steal something; and so it goes. But more than that, it is very foolish to assume that anyone really has deep moral convictions against committing any particular sort of crime or misbehavior just because he says he has high moral standards, or appears to be respectable, etc. Hypnosis might prove, for example, that this person has thus far refrained from various anti-social activities not because his moral convictions made such activities untempting, but rather because he was afraid to do what he really wanted to do. RAWL.

the editor's page

(Continued from page 5)

"Sir Arthur never wrote the story of Henry Staunton, whom Sherlock Holmes 'helped to hang'. I have, as a consequence, attempted to do so."

This volume is available in a limited edition of 500 copies, and while that might seem like a large run for amateur publications in the science fiction fan field, it doesn't seem to be over-large for the Sherlockian field. I agree with Mr. Norris that, in time, this collector's chapbook should be worth considerably more than the $3.00 that it is selling for. The immediate question, of course, is: Is it a good pastiche? My answer to that is "yes"; and for those who eagerly collect such, this tale where Holmes experiences both triumph and defeat will be worth the asking price.

An even more fascinating pastiche is *Sherlock Holmes in Tibet,* by Richard Wincor, published by Weybright and Talley, 3 East 54th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022; 1968; 137 pp; $3.95.

Mr. Richard Wincor, we are told is a lawyer and a student of Eastern philosophy, as well as being a Sherlock Holmes fan. He is a recognized authority on the subject of copyright law and is a trustee of The Copyright society of America.

" . . . The course of events in London did not run so well as I had hoped," Holmes tells the astonished Watson when he makes his sudden reappearance in *The Adventure of the Empty House,* **after having been presumed dead** for three years, "for the trial of the Moriarty gang left two of its most dangerous members, my own most vindictive enemies, at liberty. I travelled for two years in Tibet, therefore, and amused myself by visiting Lhassa and spending some days with the head Lama. You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian named Sigerson, but I am sure that it never occurred to you that you were receiving news of your friend . . . " This was in 1894, and although Watson, Holmes himself, and another not as yet identified, (although Mycroft Holmes and the latter Mrs. John Watson have both been tentatively identified as the author of *The Adventure of the Mazarin*

Stone). have given us accounts of a total of some 28 cases following the affair of the empty house, there are no further details of the Great Detective's adventures between the meeting with Moriarty in 1891 and his dramatic reappearance to Watson in 1894 in the canon (or, as it is sometimes called, the conan) of authentic accounts of the cases of Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

This is regrettable, but we had become resigned to it; imagine then Mr. Wincor's delight when he found a dusty pamphlet with torn covers bearing the title: *Notes on the Tibet Episode,* by Sherlock Holmes. The brief account of how this came about, occupies the first section of this delightful little volume.

The second section is, of course, Mr. Holmes' account, and we get Professor Moriarty's baffling last words as he hurtles over Reichenbach Falls: "You don't exist, Holmes! You don't exist at all!"

"His words seared me as none had ever done before, and I resolved to seek understanding in a land noted for subtle and occult wisdom." Surely this simple statement makes much more sense for Holmes' visit to Tibet, and the length of his stay there, than the almost frivolous explanation he gives to Watson, quoted above. And the reader can be assured that in this little volume lies the explanation not only of Moriarty's cryptic words, but of the fact that this account was, indeed, written by Sherlock Holmes. It is found in the address given by Tibet's leading metaphysician (in 1891), Lama Nordup, at a special session to which "Sigerson" was one of a select few to be invited.

Lama Nordrup's address is especially lucid, and the brief but fascinating episode which follows the text of it, winds up Holmes' account.

It does not, however conclude the volume. Holmes, and the others who attended this lecture, were given some supplementary material by the Vice Chancellor, and the rest of the volume reproduces this. Mr. Wincor notes: " . . . It is presented here to suggest, in accordance with the text, some of the sources of Lama Nordup's thinking. For convenience, the publishers are reproducing more up-to-date versions of the source material, with thanks to the respective publishers."

The material which forms the Appendix consists of (1) An excerpt from *Of The Principles of Human Knowledge,* by Bishop Berkeley; (2) the first of *Three Dialogues,* by Bishop Berkeley; (3) excerpts from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead,* translated by Walter Y. Evans-Wentz. (This is an error: Mr. Evans-Wentz is the editor and compiler of Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup's English rendering of the material.)

(1) is rather difficult reading; one must go slowly and often backtrack; the exercise, however, that this gives to the muscles between one's ears will be rewarding, whereupon (2) becomes entirely delightful; it is a sportive fantasia upon the more recondite first excerpt and clarifies the more solid material—but while it is easy, almost "light" reading *after* one has worked over the first excerpt, it will make little or no sense at all to the reader who has not done his homework; whereupon (3) falls into place, showing the Eastern views of the matter with its excerpts from the great *Bardo Thodol,* or *Tibetan Book of the Dead.*

Mr. Wincor is, as we have indicated above, a student of Eastern philosophy, and he reports that he is not at all "turned on" by the current fad of "transcendental meditations", whatever current Hindu swamis say about it. He has done a masterly job of arranging the material in this book, alternating light with heavier material, in such a way that the reader will be carried forward at all times and virtually seduced into reading what he might ordinarily be inclined to put aside as just too difficult. I might add that this led me to obtaining a complete copy of the *Bardo Thodol (Tibetan Book of the Dead),* A Galaxy Book, Oxford University Press, New York; $1.95 and Mr. Wincor proves to have given me the ideal introduction to it.

I did not know there was such a thing as an amateur publication for detective and mystery story lovers in general; but there is. It is called *THE MYSTERY LOVER'S NEWSLETTER,* and is published bimonthly by Mrs. Lianne Carlin, PO Box 107, Revere, Massachusetts 02-151, at the price of $2.00 a year. The reproduction is neat and the magazine is well laid out; it is however, concerned with the general mundane mystery fiction field, although you will find news relating to Holmes and Pons now and then, and I should imagine that only very rarely would you find anything related to the sort of mystery we deal with in *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES.*

Reader's Preference Page

(there's more space on the flip side)

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