

The Modern Magazine of Weird Tales

Witchcraft &

60c

SORCERY

NUMBER 7



THIRST by Gerald W. Page

PRICE OF A DEMON by Gary Brandner

HOPES OF DREAMS A Poem by Robert E. Howard

HOPES OF DREAMS

Sunfire caught in a windy mesh,
Feet that fail on a barren plain,
The slow worms gnaw through gristle and flesh,
And my brain goes back to dust again.

Vultures roost on my reeking ribs,
Gorging their fill of heart and thigh;
My pelvis, spider and scorpion cribs;
Dust of my fingers the breezes strew.

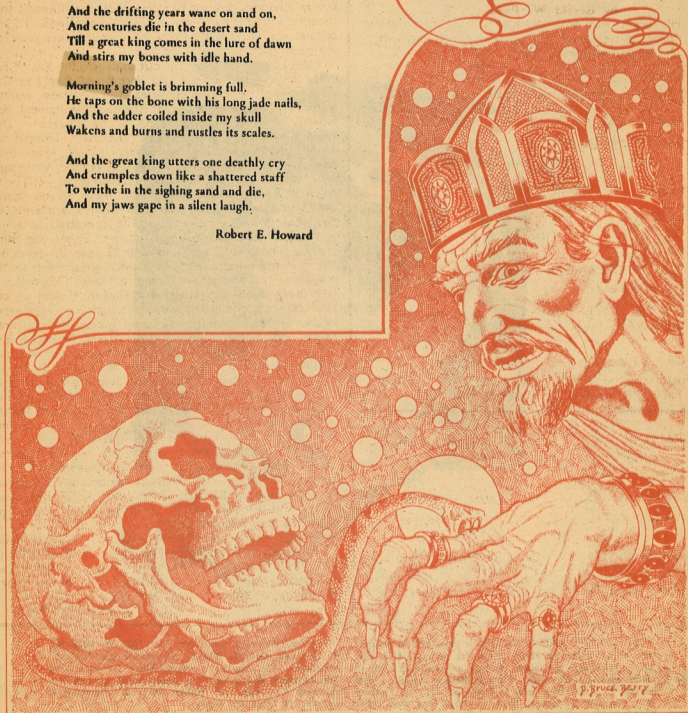
And the drifting years wane on and on,
And centuries die in the desert sand
Till a great king comes in the lure of dawn
And stirs my bones with idle hand.

Morning's goblet is brimming full.
He taps on the bone with his long jade nails,
And the adder coiled inside my skull
Wakens and burns and rustles its scales.

And the great king utters one deathly cry
And crumples down like a shattered staff
To writhe in the sighing sand and die,
And my jaws gape in a silent laugh.

Robert E. Howard

HOPES of DREAMS



Drawing by D. Bruce Berry

Witchcraft &

SORCERY

THE MODERN MAGAZINE OF WEIRD TALES
(formerly COVEN 13)

NUMBER 7

CONTENTS

novelet:

THIRST

by Gerald W. Page 4

His home was now strange to him, his lifetime friends bitter enemies. For the *thirst* drove him and it was all-consuming.

short stories

PRICE OF A DEMON by Gary Brandner 22
Claire meddled and now something was collecting its fee—a strip of flesh at a time.

department of pointed tales

1. IN THE SORCERER'S GARDEN
by Susan M. Patrick 30
2. APPOINTMENT IN SAMARKAND
by Glen Cook 30
3. THE DANCING GIRL OF ISPHATAM
by Leo Tifton 31

verse

HOPES OF DREAMS by Robert E. Howard 2

features

FROM THE COVEN by the Editor 3
WITCHWAYS by R. Edwards Jennings 28

art

Cover: Bob Maurus and Burge (Thirst)
Illustrations by D. Bruce Berry, Jeff Jones, Stephen E. Fabian, R. Edward Jennings and Tim Kirk.

GERALD W. PAGE
editor

JERRY BURGE
art director

SUSAN PATRICK
assistant editor

WM. L. CRAWFORD
publisher

Editorial Address:
P. O. Box 1331,
Atlanta, Ga. 30301

Publisher's Address:
1855 W. Main St.,
Alhambra, Ca. 91801

FROM THE COVEN

We haven't made a practice in the past of boring our readers with details of our business operation and despite what follows, we aren't going to. But this issue represents several changes designed to cope with the illnesses that recently killed off six other fantasy magazines. To our regular readers it will be obvious that the cure required major surgery.

Most of the changes—the cut in pages, the loss of full color covers—are obvious and were made purely to stay alive while our contemporaries (all of them owned, ironically, by financially much stronger companies) collapsed. One important change is not apparent. This issue is not being nationally distributed. Instead we are handling our own distribution. If you know of a newsstand whose manager would like to carry the magazine, drop a card to Fantasy Publishing Co., 1855 W. Main St., Alhambra, Calif. 91801. Also, if you should desire to purchase copies for your friends, discounts are available on five or more copies. If interested, write us.

We will not plead for your support. Either you think there is a need for a magazine like *Sorcery*, or you don't. We feel the important thing is what we publish in the magazine and on that we remain positive. Our policy is to present the finest supernatural horror fiction we can find and occasionally (providing it's gothic enough) good heroic fantasy. Our loss of pages means lost features. Letter and reviews are gone, the editorial limited to this column. E. Hoffmann Price's *Jade Pagoda* will continue and is missing from this issue only because of the length of the feature novelet. Poetry and features will continue to be used, but probably not on a regular basis. Fiction must come first. This means we won't be able to feature art so prominently in the future, but we will continue to use some artwork by the best illustrators in the field.

On the question of art, we do have two small posters made from paintings done for *FPCI* magazines—one for a never published issue of *Spaceway* and one for an upcoming issue of *Sorcery*. Both are full color by Jerry Burge and printed without lettering. \$1.00 each from our Alhambra address.

Next issue our lead story is by E. C. Tubb, called "Death God's Doom," the first of a series. We'll also have Emil Petaja's "Gola's Hell." This story will be accompanied by a never-before-printed cover by the master fantasy artist Hannes Bok. A superb issue.

—Gerald W. Page

WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY is published bi-monthly by Fantasy Publishing Company, Inc., 1855 W. Main St., Alhambra, California 91801. Editorial address: P.O. Box 1331, Atlanta, Georgia 30301. All stories are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons or events is entirely coincidental. We assume no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or art work. All submissions should be sent to the Atlanta address and be accompanied by sufficient postage to insure their return. Copyright 1972 by Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc. All rights reserved. Subscription rate: one year (6 issues) \$3.00 in U.S.A. and most other countries. 60 cents per copy. This periodical is sold only by authorized dealers and it may not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover removed, nor in a mutilated condition.



THIRST

by Gerald W Page

Illustrated by Jeff Jones and Berni Wrightson

Now his home was strange to him, his lifetime friends now enemies.

For the Thirst drove him and it was all-consuming.



WRIGHTSON

Sam Coleman hated to argue with his wife. He loved Grace and he loved the three boys; but Grace didn't seem to understand his feelings and problems. The latest argument stemmed from the fact that six months ago Coleman had been fired from his job at Custis' Garage in Celina—the only good job he'd held since his discharge from the Army. Since then, arguments between Coleman and Grace seemed more and more commonplace. This latest one drove him out of the house on a Friday night and because he had enough money for only five beers, Coleman returned earlier than he wanted to.

He sat in the car, parked by a grove of trees in the back yard and watched the house. In front he could see a light on and after a few minutes the back light came on. Grace did not come out. Coleman knew she was probably at one of the windows, staring out, wondering if it was late enough for Coleman to need help getting into the house. He felt some relief at the fact she did not come out. He didn't want to continue the argument. After a minutes, he got out of the car and walked off into the dark woods.

Coleman's problem was that he was a mechanic, not a farmer. The house he owned stood on farmland which he also owned: he inherited both from his mother. He didn't farm the land. Why should he? Some of the timber might bring a small price as pulp wood, but as a whole the land wasn't much good for raising anything—and there wasn't enough to make a steady profit of pulpwood. Cumberland County just didn't have much good farm land. And Grace couldn't understand that not even a good farmer could make a living from poor land. Coleman was far from being a good farmer.

Coleman was too preoccupied to notice the direction he was walking. He did not realize he was on Overhill Mountain until he came to the clearing and saw the gaunt wood skeleton that once had been a cabin. It was years since the cabin's burning but the clearing was only weed grown, not yet taken over by brush and forest. Although the farm was only a couple of miles from the foot of the mountain, and although it was an easy mountain to climb—you could walk up the easy slopes, hindered only by the thick overgrowth—Coleman had never set foot on Overhill before.

He had not meant to walk so far—or for so long. His thoughts were jarred not only by the realization that it was late and he had come far, but by the cut of the bitterly cold wind. A storm seemed to be brewing. Coleman wore only grey slacks and a blue and white checked sports shirt. It was summer and normally warm but Coleman knew how quickly a storm could develop in this region. It was time to get back down the mountain—back home, to face his wife and maybe work something out: at least a truce. His head was cleared now and as he started home, he shivered against the wind.

There was no moon now—the sky was overcast. The darkness of the woods was oppressive and in spite of himself he recalled the stories he had heard of Overhill Mountain. Coleman did not think of himself as a superstitious man and he would have been the first to deny that those stories were the reason he had never before set foot on the mountain. But the stories were strangely unsettling, all the same. He couldn't find the path he came by but he was fairly certain that he could get down the mountain and find the main road.

Tree limbs and brambles slapped and slashed at him in the darkness. More than once he had to pause and worry thorns

loose from his clothing. He heard the cloth of his shirt tear and felt it tug at his back in a way that assured him that the shirt was ruined. Wryly, he thought, Grace will love that.

A few minutes later, Coleman admitted to himself that he was lost. Angrily, he tried to make his way through woods thicker than he remembered. The wind was biting even here where closely set trees and bushes should afford protection. After another fifteen minutes, it began to rain. It rained hard and Coleman was soon soaked.

The rain hit his face stingingly as rivulets of water poured from his brow and into his eyes, blinding him. He slipped and fell and picked himself up muttering savagely under his breath. There seemed to be no shelter close at hand and the rain seemed to ignore the fact that the trees should afford some protection for Coleman. And then, as suddenly as it began, the rain subsided and became lighter.

But the rain continued, a light, uninsistent thing that offered only slight annoyance. Coleman discovered that his left trouser leg was torn and it flopped heavily, encrusted with a weight of mud.

Abruptly, Coleman slipped in a patch of mud and went sprawling on his back, sliding feet first down the mountain as the thick brush gave way to bare ground. He came to a sudden and painful stop against a lightning blasted tree and for a long moment lay breathless in the mud. He felt an urge to go to sleep but the faint splattering of rain on his face was still too much to permit restful sleep. He struggled to his feet, almost losing his balance in the slippery mud and found, somewhat surprisingly, that he was at the foot of the mountain.

It was the first really pleasant surprise Coleman could recall in several weeks. There was still a nice long walk in the rain ahead of him but he at least knew where he was now. He was down from Overhill Mountain and the trip home was just a formality.

Then Coleman saw something.

A shadow, darkly etched among the pitch black foliage seemed to be moving toward him. It looked like a man but Coleman could not imagine anyone else out on a night like this. He could not make out the features of the person; could distinguish neither sex nor race. The sudden appearance of whoever it was actually startled Coleman and as he realized this, he laughed. But he laughed nervously.

"Who is it?" Coleman asked, trying to sound pleasant to hide his embarrassment. "You must be as crazy as I am to be out on a night like this."

The dark figure was silent. The storm made a sound like a tongueless man trying to scream. Coleman felt his nerve slipping further. It occurred to him that the man might be a moonshiner guarding a still, but no still was in sight and the storm would drive even moonshiners to seek safety and shelter. There was, Coleman realized, a limit to the number of good reasons a person could have for being out on a night like this. Coleman's own words came back to him: "*You must be as crazy as I am . . .*"

The fear that gripped him was no less real for being irrational. Coleman saw the shadowy person come forward. The man carried something in his hand and Coleman had the sudden clear knowledge that it was a sharpened stick. Before he could move, the man was on him, the point of the stick gouging at his throat, ripping, tearing flesh. He fought, trying

to shove the man away. But his attacker had the strength of a madman. Coleman screamed into the night but the wind whipped at the sound and tore it into near silence. Heavy drops of water splattered into Coleman's wide open mouth and his fear multiplied beyond mere fear into utter shock as he realized what his attacker was doing . . .

The man was drinking the blood that flowed from Coleman's torn neck—

Coleman must have passed out. When he came to, he felt weak. His attacker was gone but there was a numbness in his neck where the stick had gouged. Coleman got to his feet but he was too weak to walk to the road . . .

He found a hollowed-out place in the mountain, somehow—a shallow cave that had been dug out years ago. Its mouth was covered with brush and that he found it at all was only luck. He stumbled into the cave and collapsed, his strength ebbing at a prolific rate. The dirt over the mouth of the cave was loosened by the rain and as Coleman fell, certain that he was dying, mud jarred loose from the cave roof to cascade down on him.

When the rain ceased and morning finally came, he was almost completely buried in the dirt.

2.

Sheriff Alvin McDonald did not get the chance to go by the Coleman home to see Grace until after nine o'clock although Grace had called his office at seven. It was McDonald's habit to be at work by seven and to stay until six or seven at night. He liked to keep abreast of happenings in his jurisdiction and he was aware of Grace's trouble with her husband. Grace wanted to talk directly to McDonald and he didn't mind. Grace's father had been one of his best friends and since the death of both of the girl's parents in an automobile accident about a year after her marriage to Coleman, McDonald had felt as if he were her only true relative, other than Coleman himself.

So as soon as he could clear the important papers from his desk, McDonald drove to the Coleman farm and sat across the kitchen table from Grace as she served coffee and told him about Sam Coleman's failure to come home. The boys were playing outside and to all appearances things were normal. But McDonald could guess the strain Grace was living under.

"I wouldn't worry," he told her. "Sam was in the Army. He's been taking care of himself a pretty long time, Grace. He'll come back today or maybe tomorrow. But you shouldn't let yourself worry too much."

"I can't help it," she said. "You sure he's not in jail?"

McDonald couldn't suppress the smile. "I'm pretty sure he's not."

"Well—You know how he is and it was Friday night and all. I just figured he might have gotten into a fight somewhere."

"Well, he's not in jail. There was a report about him going to that tent meeting out by John Edgar's place and telling the preacher he couldn't preach worth a damn. But he was thrown out without getting into any real fight."

Grace smiled at that. "That's just like Sam."

"He's just sleeping off last night somewhere. Holed up in a barn or at a friend's house. He might have helped the friend kill off a bottle after he left here."

Grace nodded absently, one finger pushing the handle of her coffee cup so that the cup turned on its saucer. "Thank you, Alvin," she said. "I guess I'm pretty silly, but I get so upset. I feel awful about that fight with Sam . . ." Her voice trailed off.

"I guess things are pretty rough. Maybe Sam could go back to school and learn a new kind of work or something."

"Sam likes garage work. He calls it his trade." She looked at McDonald with those so-clear, older-than-they-should-be eyes of hers. "Sam is a good mechanic. He can do almost anything with a car. He'd be valuable to any service station or the bus company or anything like that. But he always has to get into those arguments and he's funny about the way he takes things people say . . . You know what he's like, Alvin."

"I guess I do," McDonald said. He finished his coffee and



got up to go. "I've got to be running, Grace. If I see Sam I'll run him home. I'll tell my boys to look out for him. I'll be back fairly soon and see if maybe I can't have a talk with him. Maybe I can do something to help him out."

"I'd appreciate that. You don't know how much your help has meant to Sam and me in the past. You just don't know."

As McDonald got into his car he could see the looming hulk of Overhill Mountain through the trees surrounding the yard. He waved to Grace and the boys who stopped playing long enough to see him off. He drove away. He had said nothing that might worry Grace, but the truth was he did not like the thought of her living so close to that mountain. In the two years he had served as sheriff there was no real trouble with the mountain. But he knew the stories—and the record—and before becoming sheriff he saw plenty of evidence that

something about the mountain seemed to attract every form of evil, no matter how unnatural. As soon as he was on the highway, he called in and told Brice Sherman, his chief deputy, to get in touch with old Isaac Smith. Smith was a black man who lived on the other side of Overhill. If anyone could be said to know this region and that mountain, it was Smith.

McDonald was in his office when Sherman called in at eleven. With two deputies, McDonald drove back to the mountain where Sherman met him on the main road. It was necessary to walk to where the body was.

It was a small cave, actually a place someone had scooped out of the mountain side. Mud had fallen from the cave roof and covered the corpse almost completely.

"I figure Coleman crawled in here to get out of the rain," Sherman said. "He fell asleep and this mud fell on him. He must have smothered in his sleep."

"His wife said he went out to get drunk," McDonald said. "That rhubarb in the tent meeting sounds like he was drunk. I guess he just didn't come to when the mud fell."

"Damnedest thing," Sherman said. "Shouldn't take much to dig out of that."

McDonald talked to Isaac Smith while they were waiting for the ambulance. Smith added nothing to what McDonald already knew. Smith had discovered the body because he figured that if Coleman were in the area, he would have tried to get out of the rain. So Smith checked the places where a man might find shelter and found the body. It did seem to Smith that the ground was torn up as if by someone struggling or crawling. It was possible Coleman had been taken sick before reaching the cave. McDonald thanked Smith and let him leave. Moments later the ambulance boys arrived, somewhat piqued that the ambulance had to be left so far from the body.

McDonald watched sourly as Coleman was dug from the mud and rolled onto the stretcher. One of the attendants seemed to notice something on Coleman's neck and brushed mud from it. He called McDonald over. "Looks like he was gouged or cut on the neck, Sheriff."

McDonald squinted at the mud caked wounds which could have been made with a stick or perhaps a sliver of glass. "Looks like this wasn't an accident, after all," he said.

He made them wait while Gus Trimble took additional photographs of the body and especially of the wound. While the photographs were being taken, McDonald asked one of the attendants, "How soon can we get an autopsy?"

"It's Saturday," the man said with a sour look. "I can get a doctor in to examine that wound, but we couldn't get a coroner's jury before Monday morning. For that matter, the coroner himself is out of town."

"Then find some place to keep the body until then," McDonald said.

As the body was carried off to the ambulance, McDonald turned to his deputies. "Gus, I want those pictures right away, Saturday or not."

"I can have them by tonight," Trimble said.

"Good. You go back in Brice's car. Brice, you stay here. I'll get some more men out and you can give the place the usual search."

"Where'll you be if we need to reach you?" Sherman asked.

McDonald let his features harden as he glanced at the ground. "Somebody has to let Grace know what's happened," he said.

3.

Coleman came to in darkness.

He was lying on something hard—hard and cold—and something lightly pressed against his face and naked body... starched cloth. A sheet. There was a moment of confusion and startled, conflicting memories. And behind the memories and confusion was an awareness of cold. And of thirst.

With something like panic, he threw the sheet off and jumped to a sitting position. His breathing was a heavy sound in the darkness of the room. There was another sound; a loud mechanical sound he could not readily identify. The thirst was a constant burning in his throat and the coldness—which was not as bad as it seemed at first—still made a numbing assault on his sensibilities.

In spite of the darkness, Coleman could see. His eyes seemed to react to the darkness as they had never reacted before. He was in a small room, lined with low cabinets and without windows. There was a heavy air conditioning unit that was responsible both for the mechanical sound he had been unable to identify and for the cold. Coleman sat on a table and the sheet he threw off was crumpled on the floor. He wore no clothes. He tried to remember how he got here, but he could not. He could remember only the rain and how it pelted him as he tried to climb down Overhill Mountain in the middle of the night... Something persisted at the edge of his memory; and after a moment he realized what it was. He was attacked. His throat—He put his hand up and felt the raw wounds where his throat had been gouged open by the stick. He recalled the way his attacker leaned over him and put his face close to the wound. And—

He shuddered more with memory than with cold and asked himself how he got where he was—and for that matter, where he was. He had no ready answer for himself.

He began searching for his clothes. The cabinets that lined the room were filled with instruments, suggestive of a hospital. But despite the room's overall surgical appearance, it did not seem to be a hospital room. He would not be left on an operating table unattended. But what was this place, if not a hospital?

He did not find his clothes. The room was windowless and there was only one door. He opened it, a heavy, well-balanced door of metal covered with wood veneer, and went into the next room. There it was warmer and there was more light. There were two windows in one wall and the grey haze of night filtered through them. The room was medium size and unfurnished except for cabinets and a table—no, a closer look told Coleman that it was a crudely made workbench—along one wall.

But in the center of the room, resting on special frames, were three coffins.

Coleman realized where he was.

It was no wonder his clothes weren't in the room. He was in a funeral parlor probably awaiting embalment. Coleman gave a small, nervous laugh.

Across the room he saw light streaming under a double

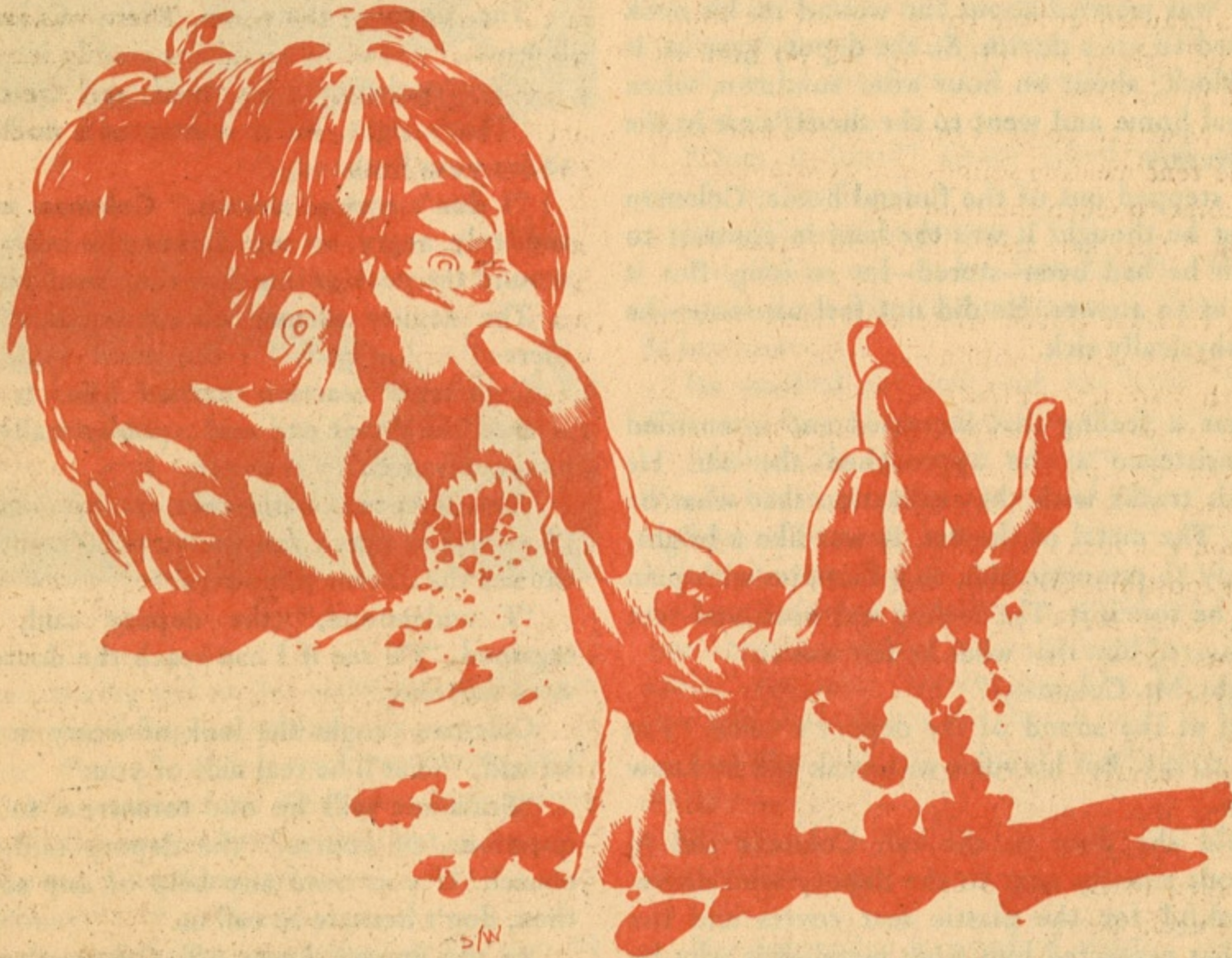
door. He hesitated—might there be mourners on the other side of the doors? He could imagine the uproar if he just walked in on them. But he couldn't stay here, even though it was certain someone would come. He just couldn't take that. He went back into the cold room and wrapped the discarded sheet around himself, then went back and opened the double doors cautiously. But beyond he found only a narrow hall leading to the front of the building. There was a light on in a small room down the hallway from where he stood. His bare feet making an indecisive padding sound on the cold tile floor, Coleman walked to the open door of the small room and said to the man seated at a small desk, "I think there's been some kind of mistake."

The attendant was dialing a number on the phone. A cigaret lay forgotten in the ashtray, its smoke curling lazily up to a brownish stain on the ceiling. "I don't really know what happened," Coleman said.

The attendant said, "The sheriff found you out by Overhill this morning. You're lucky. If today wasn't Saturday we'd have had a doctor in to look at you and—unless he could tell you were alive—you'd be embalmed and out front by now."

"What about my clothes?" Coleman asked.

The man started to answer, then hesitated as if someone were picking up the phone on the other end. "Hello? Clete? This is Asa West, down at Fyfe's. Look, there's been a mistake on that Sam Coleman case . . ."



The man glanced up, his face set in an odd but mildly surprised look. Abruptly the man's features contorted into a look of surprise that was anything but mild. "What the hell—Good God!" he said, with a start that sent his desk chair against the wall of the closet-sized room.

"I'm looking for my clothes," Coleman said, his voice weak. "There's been a mistake. I'd like to go now."

The man let air out of his lungs with a heavy sigh. "God, I've never had a scare like that before," he said rising to his feet. He reached out and grabbed Coleman's forearm, his fingers digging in with too much pressure as if to reassure himself the arm was real. "You better sit down here, buddy. A man can't be too well if people mistake him for dead."

Coleman managed an enthusiastic laugh as he seated himself in the desk chair. It was an old chair; wooden, with swivel socket and castors that made it easy to navigate between the desk and filing cabinet in the small office. And it was very comfortable.

A moment later Asa West hung up the phone. "A deputy's coming over," he said.

"Can I have my clothes now?" Coleman said meekly.

"Oh, yeah," West said. He turned and left, to return several minutes later with a pair of overalls which he handed Coleman. "These ain't yours," he said, "but they'll have to do. Your clothes are over at the Sheriff's. These belong to one of the guys who works here. They should fit. You get dressed and I'll get you something to eat."

A few minutes later, Coleman was dressed and West returned with a ham and lettuce sandwich and a cup of dark hot coffee. Coleman didn't feel like eating. He just sat, staring blankly while West stood nervously in the corner of the room. Moments later, the deputy arrived. But the events of the attack were hazy in Coleman's mind and he couldn't answer the question with much authority.

Finally, the deputy closed his notebook and slipped it and his pen into his shirt pocket. "I'm sorry about these questions,

Mr. Coleman. I should have waited until you feel better, but we're pretty anxious to find this person who attacked you. You finish your sandwich and I'll get a doctor."

"I don't need a doctor," Coleman said. He could tell that both the deputy and the attendant were a little embarrassed that they had been too flustered to call one right off, but he didn't want one. "I - I want to go home. Has Grace called?"

The deputy looked sheepish. "No," he admitted. "I didn't know what West was talking about until I got here. I'll call her now."

Moments later, the deputy had Grace on the phone. He handed the phone to Coleman, but all Coleman could manage to say was, "I'm all right, Grace. I'll come straight home."

The sandwich forgotten, Coleman insisted on the ride home. The deputy was worried about the wound on his neck but Coleman refused to see a doctor. So the deputy gave in. It was only eight o'clock, about an hour after sundown, when they left the funeral home and went to the sheriff's car in the hedge-sheltered driveway.

The instant he stepped out of the funeral home, Coleman felt uneasy. At first he thought it was the heat in contrast to the room in which he had been—stored—for so long. But it didn't satisfy him as an answer. He did not feel nauseous—he did not at all feel physically sick.

He felt fear.

Or dread. It was a feeling that increased and intensified with malignant insistence as he approached the car. He stopped dead in his tracks with the realization that what he feared *was* the car. The metal of the car. It was like a bright, burning flame; ready to consume him, to inflict him with pain and injury should he touch it. The feeling was irrational—yet the strength of it assured him that what he felt was so.

"You feel all right, Mr. Coleman?"

Coleman started at the sound of the deputy's voice. "I'm fine," he managed to say. But his voice was weak and he knew it lacked conviction.

The deputy held the door to the car. Coleman slid in squeamishly and rode silently next to the deputy who drove. Coleman was thankful for the plastic seat covers and the rubber floor mat that protected him from metal—but why he needed protection, he couldn't say. Finally, the car pulled from the highway onto the gravel drive that led toward the small house where Coleman and his family lived. It was set well back from the highway. The truth was, it was built just shortly before the highway was put in by the state. Coleman was always glad the highway had not been closer to the house. Noises from it seldom reached the small house and there was little need to worry about the children playing too close to the traffic.

Coleman wanted out of the car as soon as it came to a stop but he dared not touch the metal doorhandle. The deputy came around and opened the door for him and he got out of the car with an embarrassed smile. Perhaps he was sicker than he thought—perhaps he should see a doctor. Eventually he would. The police and the insurance people would see to it. But within him, something deep and dark whispered that under no circumstances must he permit himself to be medically examined. It was painful not to know why.

The back light came on and the door slammed once and then twice more. Coleman heard the overjoyed cries of his two

oldest boys but the sounds seemed somehow alien and frightful. But he wanted to see them—and he went to meet them, kneeling down so that little Sam, the oldest, could jump into his arms while his younger brother Reece was running so fast he kept falling down. The baby, Duane, wasn't old enough to walk yet and Grace stood holding him while Coleman stood, holding the two older boys.

With a boy in each arm, Coleman walked to where Grace stood waiting. He managed a little smile that was intended to say more than any smile could. "Ain't it past their bedtime?" he asked.

Grace returned the smile but there was evidence of strain in her version. "I guess it won't hurt them none," she said.

The deputy came up behind Coleman and introduced himself.

"You're the one who called me?" Grace asked.

"That's right. We've contacted a doctor who's coming out to see your husband—"

"I don't want a doctor," Coleman said furiously. He was suddenly angry; so angry that the boys grabbed him tightly around the neck as if in fear they would be dropped.

The deputy seemed almost upset. "That's a bad wound, there—"

Coleman's reaction baffled him. It wasn't sensible. He cleared his throat and said, apologetically, "I didn't mean that like it sounded."

No one spoke. With some embarrassment, Coleman added, "I mean I'm fine. I just want a good night's sleep. I need rest. I can see the doctor tomorrow."

"I understand," the deputy said, his self possession regained. "I'll see if I can reach the doctor and have him wait until morning."

Coleman caught the look of worry in Grace's taut face but he said, "That'll be real nice of you."

"Someone will be out tomorrow to ask you some more questions, of course," the deputy said. "Probably be after church. If you need any help of any sort between now and then, don't hesitate to call us."

As the deputy drove off, Coleman and his family entered the house. There were two women in the kitchen—neighbor women whose names Coleman couldn't recall, although he had known them all his life: stout farmer's wives with shrill, masculinely nasal voices. Whenever anyone was sick or died in the neighborhood it seemed that these two women would come in to cook and clean house and ostensibly to comfort the bereaved. And it seemed to Coleman that their ideas of comforting the bereaved did not include cheering or taking a person's mind from the tragedy. He knew he should be grateful to them for coming but he could not find it in himself to be grateful; only polite. He remembered that their husbands were small, seemingly always worried men, hopelessly lost and inexplicably frightened.

Those thoughts gave Coleman an impalpable feeling of guilt. The ladies had come to help at a time when help was needed. The guilt produced the truant gratitude and as the ladies departed, Coleman was almost ebullient in thanking them. By that time Grace had the boys in bed, although the night's excitement insured that the children would be wide awake. Grace went into the kitchen while Coleman stood at



the living room door, staring out at the night. He could hear her stirring around, quietly fixing something.

When Grace came into the living room moments later, Coleman was seated in a corner chair. The lights were turned off. Just for a moment, Grace stood in the doorway.

"Sam?" she said in her quiet, haunted voice.

"I'm over here, Honey."

She came over to the chair and seated herself on the arm. "I was worried," she said, trying to make it a joke. "With all the lights off, I thought you might have gone outside again."

"I'm right here, Grace."

"I know. I just didn't know what to think, at first." She reached for a lamp but Coleman grabbed her arm before she could turn the switch.

"Sam!"

Coleman released the pressure. "I'm—I'm sorry. But the light hurts my eyes, Grace. I'd rather not have any light..."

Her laugh was nervous. Her arm went around his neck and she bent forward to hug him. "I'm so glad you're back," she said. "When I thought you were—well, it was awful. The news that you were all right was like a miracle straight from Heaven."

"I'm fine now," he said. "I'll take a few days rest and then go out and find a good job when this neck is healed up."

She kissed his forehead. "You'll find work," she said. "I know you will. Good work where you get good treatment and you won't have to quit like you did before."

He looked up at her. Even in the dark he could see her easily. He had married a young, beautiful woman and she was still young and beautiful. But her face was beginning to reflect tension that should not show up for years yet—if ever; and her hair was only combed—not fixed up the way she used to fix it up when he and she were first married. Stray wisps of hair just seemed to hang down over her forehead. Her hair was still pretty, but not nearly so pretty as it was when they had married. In just years—

She smiled and regarded him closely, squinting as if to force light into her eyes that she might see him better. "Sam," she said, "You're looking at me so funny..."

Coleman continued to stare, saying nothing. He let his gaze drop from her hair, to her face, to her throat. Her throat was still smooth and firm—a beautiful throat. He could see the tracing of the vein at the side of the neck and—

His hand involuntarily touched his own neck, where the wound was.

"Does it hurt?" Grace asked with sudden concern. "It should be bandaged."

"No," he said in protest. "I—"

But Grace was on her feet, saying, "Let me do something for you, Sam. I'll get some gauze." There was a pleading tone in her voice.

He reached out and took her hand. "It doesn't hurt me. Anyway, there'll be a doctor in the morning."

"Well," she said with a frown. "If you really want it like that." For a moment she stood before him, her hand in his, looking down at him, her frown showing deep concern although she could not see his features plainly in the darkness—despite the fact he could see hers. Then the frown was replaced slowly by a half smile. "There's soup on the table," she said. "Minestrone. Mrs. Flint brought it with her. She said the ladies at the church made it. Wasn't that nice?"

Coleman nodded. "I hope you thanked her... I'm not very hungry..."

"Sam, don't be silly. Of course you're hungry. Did you eat anything in town?"

"No."

Her expression was one of alarm. "Then you haven't eaten since yesterday! You've just got to eat. That place on your neck must be making you feel bad. It's costing you your appetite."

"It doesn't hurt—you're just being silly," Coleman said. He didn't really know what he should say. He couldn't explain to her that the thought of food was actually repulsive to him. He couldn't explain it to himself. "It's close and stuffy in here," he said. "I'm going outside for some air."

"Doesn't your neck hurt at all?"

"I said it doesn't," he said snappishly. "I just need air. I can't breathe in—"

"Your windpipe could be hurt," Grace said. Coleman was on his feet now and he pushed past her to the door. He threw it open, avoiding touching the screen or spring. Outside it was dark and still. There were no sounds, even of night birds.

"I'll drive you to town," Grace said. "To the doctor."

"There's no one to leave the kids with."

"Mrs. Flint won't mind. You've got to see a doctor now, Sam."

Coleman turned to face her. "I just needed a breath of fresh air. Calm down, Grace. Don't worry about me . . ." He reached out and caressed her throat softly.

"Sam," she pleaded. "Sam, for my sake."

But Coleman said nothing. He was feeling the round smoothness of her neck against his palm, his fingers. He was staring at the tracing of vein that he should not be able to see in this darkness. There was a strange alien stirring inside of him and he realized that, without reason, sweat had broken out on his forehead and face. Maybe he should see a doctor. No, he answered himself quickly. Let it wait until morning—

Morning?

Oh, God, no! He was gripped in fear at the thought of morning.

But why? Even as he experienced the sensation it seemed to him to be completely irrational. Why should he fear anything?

Why should he fear his thoughts and feelings as he stared at his wife's throat?

He cried out. His cry alarmed Grace and she jumped back, pressing against the doorway. Coleman could hear Duane crying, inside. His gaze was fixed on his wife's throat and his feelings were strange and overpowering. He turned and ran from the house as if he were pursued by a demon. He was sobbing as he reached the woods, huge, dry, quivering sobs. He tore through thick underbrush with neither heed nor coherent thought. Only his own fearful, unworded emotions drove him on. And they drove relentlessly.



He ran like that until his body screamed for air and his lungs burned and his whole body shook with the exertion. He ran into trees and bushes and when he fell or was knocked down, he picked himself up and continued running. He ran until he should have dropped. But still he ran and continued to run, long after that.

And all that time a thirst was in him, holding furiously to his senses, driving him and causing him to remember his wife's soft, curving throat; and the blood that ran beneath the skin of that throat.

As abruptly as he began, he ceased running.

The word blood reformed in his mind. Blood? What was it about blood? He thought back to the previous night and the attack and what the man who attacked him had done—. The thirst was growing and Coleman was incapable of concentration except on the thirst. It was unbearable. It seemed as if it could kill him.

He sat on the ground and tried to think. He had to do something about the thirst. It must be quenched—drowned like a fire. A voice spoke within him, warning him to cunning and stealth. He would have to be cunning to satisfy this thirst of his . . .

For that matter, the word "cunning" itself seemed to relieve the thirst some. He began careful thought. There was game in these woods. He would find some of this game—a rabbit or raccoon or opossum. That would satisfy his thirst.

And something seemed to tell him exactly where to look . . .

It was like a sixth sense or perhaps like being possessed by something or someone. Coleman knew where to find what he was looking for. He crept through the underbrush until he knew he was at the right spot. He waited motionlessly.

And presently his waiting was rewarded: a rabbit moved cautiously into view, quite close; then stopped. It did not move as he approached it. The rabbit waited absolutely still, probably hoping that it would not be seen. But it was wrong. And Coleman was cunning and driven by the thirst.

It was too late for the rabbit to realize it had made an error. Coleman's hands closed around the soft, furry body. The rabbit squealed and squirmed and tried to bite, but Coleman would not let it escape.

He opened a vein with a small sharply pointed rock because his teeth would never tear the skin. The rabbit squealed but blood flowed.

Coleman drank.

He drank until his thirst was satisfied and then he left the rabbit and went to find the cave where he had lain after the attack on him. Night was almost finished. Soon the sun would rise and Coleman felt a fear of the sun. The sun would sap his strength, make him weak as it had the day before.

But minutes later when the sun started to rise, Coleman was protected: in the cave, safely with the dirt in which he had been buried.

4.

He did not think of himself as changed in any way. He awoke and the thirst was burning in his throat, governing his thoughts and emotions. He was what he was and did not seem ever to have been anything else. He dug himself out of the dirt that protected him and began the night's prowling.

He was searching for something and his only thought was that he had to find it. The object of his search bore no labels, no identity other than as that which would satisfy the thirst. The obsession was complete; the impulse for survival, overwhelming. Coleman had at last achieved completeness.

The forest was silent with night—too silent. There should be sounds: insects, nightbirds, small animals, the barking of dogs at shadows and each other. Coleman recalled that there was someone else abroad in these woods who was also obsessed with the thirst. The one who had attacked him. But that person meant nothing to Coleman. He was not a source of satisfaction to the thirst and therefore had no place in Coleman's schemes.

Coleman still wore the overalls which had been loaned him at the funeral parlor and his own shoes, which the deputy had brought from the sheriff's office. He had no socks, but if the shoes rubbed against his heels they did not cause blisters or pain. Briars and brambles tugged at the coarse cloth of the overalls and one leg was already torn from last night. Coleman was oblivious to all this. Suddenly he sensed the presence of something—a small animal of some kind. He dropped to his knees and peered ahead. Yes, he could see it. Another rabbit. These woods were full of rabbits.

He leaned forward, placing his palms flat on the ground. A lancet of pain tore through his right hand, causing him to cry out. He tried to stifle the sound but he could not prevent it from frightening the rabbit. Coleman held the offended hand tightly until the pain subsided. It was like a burn. He looked down where the hand had touched the ground and there he saw a nail. An ordinary, iron nail.

He felt fear as he stared at it.

Fear and memory. Memory of how uneasy he felt in the sheriff's car and of his care not to touch the metal screen of the door in his house. The deputy had given Coleman an envelope, which he had not opened, containing his watch and wallet. At the time Coleman thought nothing of that; now he knew why.

Metal was an enemy. Not all metal but two metals specifically: iron and silver. The iron in the nail that burned him and the silver in his watchcase. These were metals of the sun and the sun was his enemy as well. His fear of the metals in the car was based on this. Chromium could not harm him but it was not a pleasant thing to touch. Steel was a form of iron. It was not the serious threat to him that iron was but it was an enemy and he felt a revulsion to it—he felt revulsion at the very thought of it.

But only cold iron and silver could harm him: silver and cold iron that burned like the sun.

Coleman backed away and circled the nail, giving it much room; and then he started hunting again.

He hunted for two hours before he finally located and caught a rabbit. He sat on the ground where he caught the animal. He had to tear the vein with his fingernails and teeth because he could find no sharp stick or stone at hand. He finished the rabbit but was dissatisfied by the knowledge that soon the thirst would return, would demand again; and that never would a mere rabbit be able to satisfy it for long.

He heard a noise—merely the rustling of foliage. But Coleman knew that another source of blood was at hand, moving through the woods. He became a hunter again,

assuming automatically the wiles and cunning that were now so much a part of his being. He got silently to his feet, the rabbit forgotten, and moved toward the sound.

He moved more silently than his prey. The noise it made told him how large it was: large enough to be a deer, perhaps. Desire grew into anxiety and it was with some effort that he restrained himself from rushing forward to see what he pursued. But noise would frighten it, he told himself. He must wait until he could be certain of success . . .

Then the trees and bushes thinned out and Coleman saw that it was not a deer he followed but a man.

It was sobering. Coleman came to a stop and crouched down in the bushes, checking the ground carefully for stray nails or other pieces of metal. For a full minute he hesitated. That there was a relationship between himself and other men he knew, as he had always known. But there was a difference, now. That man was a source of blood—a source of that which would satisfy the thirst. That was important. More important than anything else in the world.

Coleman got to his feet and moved with as much speed as he could muster without making noise.

But when he finally got close to his prey, Coleman found that the man had been joined by another. He knew better than to attack two men at once. The thirst raged within him, demanding satisfaction. But it was not subordinate to the cautioning of Coleman's new-found animal cunning. He followed after them, curious as to what reason two men might have for being in these woods so late at night and so close to Overhill Mountain.

Suddenly he saw more men coming from the woods and converging on the path the other two were following. They carried torches and Coleman panicked. He threw himself to the ground without regard for what nail might be lying there. He hated the light; he wanted to flee, to get away from these people. But something told him to stay, to watch, to learn. When he was certain he would not be seen, he got to his feet and moved around to a place where he could watch them and enjoy maximum protection.

The men were blacks. They were converging on a road . . . No—not merely a road. A crossroads. The sight of it filled Coleman with fear and revulsion; feelings allied with those he felt at the thought of iron and silver.

A group of five or six men seemed to be forcing another man toward the crossroads. The man fought but was outnumbered despite his obvious strength. He was black too, with a beard that was unkempt and matted. Even from that distance Coleman could see the length and sharpness of the man's fingernails. He was clawing at his tormentors and one nail was already broken. His struggles were futile and he snarled like an animal.

Near the crossroads stood a man Coleman recognized as Isaac Smith. At Smith's feet were pieces of wood, whittled into long, sharpened stakes. There was a sledge hammer next to the stakes. Smith was grim-faced and his voice was loud enough to reach Coleman's ears when he said, "It's almost time."

The group fell silent except for the captive who continued his animal snarling. For a moment everyone stood as if frozen and the captive ceased his snarls. He glanced nervously around. A look of absolute terror on his face.

"It's almost midnight," Smith said.

The captive screamed out in agonized fear as he was shoved toward the crossroads. He was forced down and held to the ground in the center of the crossroads. Smith picked up one of the stakes and the hammer and approached the man. The man was held tightly by each arm and leg and by the head so that he could not move. But he tried and almost succeeded in twisting away from the point of the stake as it was placed against his breast. A man held the stake for Smith and Smith stood up, the hammer held in both hands.

"Tell me the minute and second," Smith said.

A small frightened man came forward, an old pocket watch held in one hand so that the time could be read in the flickering torch light. For a moment no one spoke and not even the captive moved. The man with the watch said, "It's about . . . just about . . . now!"

Smith's muscles flexed and knotted as he raised the hammer over his head. Before Coleman quite caught the significance of it, the hammer came down. Coleman saw the stake dig into flesh; saw the spurt of dark blood—heard the unearthly death scream. Smith raised the hammer and struck again, driving it until the corpse was pinned to the ground.

Smith stood back, throwing the hammer aside. The men who held the corpse let go. A low murmur ran through the crowd.

"We ain't through," Smith said. His voice was deep and filled with a grim trembling. "There's more yet. Don't nobody go till it's done with."

A man stepped forward and torchlight reflected brightly from the blade of a steel knife the man held. Without hesitation, the man lifted the knife above the body and brought it down heavily on the neck. There was a sound like a young sapling being cut and the head rolled free. The headsman stepped back and Coleman could see that the man was trembling. Smith lifted the head with both hands and placed it between the feet of the corpse. "Who's got the kerosene?" he asked.

"I have," said the man who had wielded the knife. He came forward, carrying a gallon can. He doused the body and as he stepped back, Smith motioned to one of the men with a torch. Carefully the man tossed the torch on the corpse. It caught fire with the swiftness of ignited kerosene. The fire was like the sun. Instinctively Coleman knew that one of his own kind was being consumed by that fire; and while he felt no feeling of kinship he recognized the inherent threat of such a happening.

Somehow he fought down the urge to run. He made himself stay, to watch the fire die down. When it was dead and only smoke curled up from the ashes, Smith came forward and poked the ashes with a stick. Bright sparks glowed among ashes but no flames leaped up.

"It's done," Smith said. "Scatter the ashes."

People came forward and raked the ashes into sacks which they carried off, going in pairs. Coleman watched Smith who stood silently watching. He seemed tired, now. And perhaps scared as Coleman was scared. Coleman heard Smith tell someone, "We're lucky. Suppose he drunk the blood of some white person. We couldn't make no white person bury their dead with no stake through their heart."

"We ain't lucky at all," said the other man. "If we was lucky this wouldn't have happened to us at all."

Coleman waited until most of the crowd left before moving away himself. Fear was heavy in him. Fear and hatred. He wanted to find one of the mob and kill him but he was afraid. Here at the base of Overhill Mountain wise men did not travel alone.

Coleman moved aimlessly through the woods until suddenly he stepped out of the trees and found himself standing next to a highway. For a long time he stood in the shadow of the trees and stared at the ribbon of asphalt. A car sped by but there was no other traffic. Coleman turned and started walking along the highway not sure what his reason was. Fear was forgotten; the thirst was great. But something kept him from going into the woods where he might find game—he realized that his instinct told him prey was close. He felt new excitement charge through him and he moved faster.

Then he saw the car pulled to the side of the road. A man was bent next to a tire, apparently trying to fix a flat. Coleman watched as the man finished and lowered the jack. While the man was putting the tools back in the trunk, Coleman came up behind him. Coleman made a sound and the man turned, staring blankly at him.

"Trouble?" Coleman asked.

The man laughed. "Boy, you gave me a scare. I had a flat. Fixed it though. You live around here or looking for a ride?" He wiped his hands busily on a rag.

"I live back there," Coleman said. "Sure I can't help you?"

"Everything's all right," the man said. "Awfully late to be out, though, isn't it?" Coleman moved toward him. The man was suddenly obviously scared. He tried to back away.

The man screamed once and Coleman hit him as hard as he could on the side of the head. The man went limp. Coleman found a rock and gouged at the man's neck until the flesh tore and blood began flowing.

Coleman satisfied his thirst as he had never satisfied any thirst before.

5.

McDonald rose at six, quietly so as not to wake his wife. The call came at six ten. A dead man found on the Savannah Road with wounds so similar to those found on Coleman that the deputy in charge decided McDonald should be informed at once. The corpse was on the shoulder of the road, just as he had been found, when McDonald arrived. The throat was ripped and the jugular severed. Yet there was not much blood. "I don't like it," the attending doctor told McDonald. "That man there died of loss of blood but there's no more than a few scattered drops on the ground around him. I never saw anyone lose blood that way before."

"Are you trying to say he wasn't killed around here?"

"He couldn't have been. I don't like the looks of it."

"I like it even less than you do," McDonald said. "I've got to find whoever did it."

The doctor only scowled.

McDonald bent down and lifted the sheet that covered the body. "Except for the fact the body has been moved, I'd say an animal did this."

"No animal," the doctor said. "That wound wasn't made by teeth or claws—not sharp ones like you'd find on an animal that could kill a man."

"What did do it, then?"

"A rock."

McDonald let the sheet back down. He got to his feet and faced the doctor. "Now, what makes you say that?"

"For one thing, we found the rock. A nice pointy one with blood stains. You deputy has it. He says it won't give any fingerprints but he figured a lab test would be nice."

"Looks like we got a madman to find," McDonald said. "Coleman said it was a man who attacked him with a stick or knife. I was hoping he was suffering from delusions."

"If Coleman lived through it, you better question him," the doctor said.

"Coleman's missing. Ran right into the woods. His wife ain't seen him since."

The doctor got into his car and scowled at McDonald. "Don't expect me to solve your case for you, Alvin. I got my own problems. I'll get the autopsy out of the way soon as the body's in town."

"Just one thing about that," the sheriff said. "We thought Coleman was dead but he wasn't. Check this one out real good before you cut him open, hear?"

"Don't worry about that," the doctor said. "If that fellow's anything, he's dead."

As the doctor drove off, McDonald turned to Brice Sherman and said, "We got ourselves a live one this time."

Sherman gave him an odd look.

"I mean the killer, not the victim," McDonald said snappishly.

Sherman nodded. "Maybe liver than you think. We found footprints and signs of struggle. Also, there's a flat tire in the trunk of the car and a new one that doesn't look as if it's been driven on, right there." He pointed. "I think he stopped to fix a flat and was attacked before he could get back into the car."

"That would mean he'd have to be killed here."

"It'd take a damned clever man to fake all these signs, Sheriff."

"Then what happened to the blood?" McDonald asked.

Sherman shrugged.

"I guess we're looking for a madman, sure enough," McDonald said. "Like that Gein fellow up North who used to make clothes out of his victims' skin and use the skulls for cups. Don't guess our killer's ever been under treatment but put a call out to all the institutions in the region. Maybe someone's escaped. I've already called in state investigators. We'll need their crime lab on this one."

Sherman glanced at the body. "None of this makes sense, Sheriff."

"You're right. We have a pattern but I'd be happier if we didn't have this one."

"We've had patterns like this before," the deputy said. He pointed at Overhill, which loomed just a couple of miles away. "We never had murders like this before but I think it's the old trouble stirring up again. Overhill attracts all kinds of things like this—unnatural things."

"Overhill's just a mountain," McDonald said. "There's not a ghost on it."

"You've read the records and heard the stories," Sherman

said. "There's always been people who claimed they worshipped devils in that mountain and things do happen around it. All I'm saying is that some crazy man could be killing and taking the blood for some purpose he thinks he has. Like one of those witch groups."

McDonald scowled. "Maybe. A cult murder's possible. It's hard to say."

"Should we take a look around up on the mountain?"

"I guess it won't hurt," McDonald said.

McDonald waited for the arrival of the state investigators and for a long time he watched them putter around, asking questions, making photographs and plaster casts and taking samples of the soil and the rock that was supposed to be the



murder weapon. The investigators were the cynical, professional men McDonald had expected and they had only contempt for the killer. They impressed McDonald with their certainty that there was enough evidence to reveal the killer's name by noon and his whereabouts by evening. McDonald wished he could be so certain. After the investigators drove off and the body was loaded in the wagon and on its way to Celine, McDonald got into his car and drove to Grace Coleman's.

Grace fixed him strong coffee and talked about her argument with Sam and about the strangeness of Sam's actions. McDonald had heard it before but he wanted to hear it again—to give her a chance to say it not as a distraught wife talking to an officer of the law but as a girl talking to the man

who was almost a father to her. But Grace added nothing new to the story. Before lunch McDonald looked around in the woods and found a place where some brush was trampled—but nothing else.

Back in town he had a large lunch and spent the rest of the day on paper work. The identification of the corpse came through shortly after three: a farm equipment salesman from Atlanta, returning from a business trip in Daytona. Word came through that a fingerprint found on the dead man's throat had been identified at five. McDonald was impressed that the state lab could identify the fingerprint at all. But the identification itself was even more impressive. It was the fingerprint of Sam Coleman.

For five minutes, McDonald just sat and stared at the report. That didn't seem to make much sense. What kind of case is it where your victim becomes your killer? There had been plenty of times when McDonald had been glad to jump at the first opportunity to arrest someone, just to get a case closed. This wasn't such a case—even if he knew where to find Coleman to arrest him. The fact that Coleman was a killer didn't explain who tore his throat. The implication that there were two madmen at large was one that McDonald didn't care to face. But he had to face it.

He had to face it and he had to find and apprehend both of them before there could be another attack.

He called Brice Sherman and told him to alert the rest of the deputies. "I'm going out to Isaac Smith's," he said. "Maybe we can get up a posse."

"While you're out there," Sherman said, "there was something going on out his way last night."

"I didn't hear about it."

"Well, nothing official. I just heard talk. Seems all over the county yesterday, the blacks quit work early. Last night there was a bonfire back near the mountain. Near the old dirt road that used to circle Overhill."

"Sounds funny," McDonald said. "Could be trouble, I guess. I'll ask old Isaac."

Isaac Smith's place was a mile from the road, along a path that was little more than a rabbit path. The house was surprisingly well cared for; a two-story clapboard house, painted grey with brown trimming. The dirt yard was hard-packed and recently swept. Beyond the yard was a hen coop, not nearly so well cared for, and a small corn patch, the stalks tall and brown and dried. Isaac Smith sat on the front porch in a straight-backed kitchen chair. He wore a faded brown shirt, the sleeves rolled up on his huge, corded arms; and faded blue denim overalls of the sort that always seem two sizes too large for the man wearing them. There was a sad-faced hound curled up by the chair and as McDonald climbed onto the porch, the dog looked up at him. A small girl of about two years of age stared at him from behind the screen door, her eyes large and brown and sadder than the dog's. From inside the house came the sounds of other children playing and the odors of supper cooking.

Smith rose and indicated a chair next to his own. "Sit a spell, Sheriff," he said. "Ain't often you gets up this way."

"Ain't staying long," McDonald said. "I have to get up a search party."

"Search party, this late? It's getting on to be dark."

"There's a killer around here, Isaac. We've got to find him,

even if it is getting late. You know the region better than anyone else. I need your help to find him."

"You won't have much of a search party," Smith said. "Not to look for no killer at night. Not around Overhill Mountain."

"There's no choice. This killer has to be stopped."

"What makes you think he'll kill again tonight?"

"I can't take the chance he won't," McDonald said.

Smith was silent for a moment. Then, slowly, he said, "I don't think he'll kill tonight, Sheriff."

"I want him in jail whether he kills tonight or not. I want him before he kills again."

"No one's going out after him at night," Smith said.

"Now what's so different about tonight and last night?" the Sheriff asked. Smith did a double take.

"What do you mean?" Smith asked.

"You people were out near Overhill last night. Lit a big bonfire."

"You heard about that?"

"I did," McDonald answered. "You weren't up to anything I should know about, were you?"

Smith rubbed his palms against the faded overalls. "Maybe," he said, "maybe you don't have to worry about no killer. Maybe—somebody else might have got him."

McDonald was silent for a moment. When he spoke, he had to force his words. "You mean last night there was a lynching?"

Smith said nothing.

"Who did it?" McDonald asked.

"Don't ask me to say."

"I've got to, Isaac. You know I got to tell the grand jury about this. It's against the law. I can't let mobs do their own killing, white or black."

"I can't name no names," Smith said. "I don't know nothing."

"Who'd they lynch?"

"All I heard was talk."

"Was it a white man?" McDonald said. "Sam Coleman?"

"Who?" Smith asked. He seemed astonished.

"The man you dug out of that cave at the foot of Overhill. His throat was torn open and he apparently went mad. He killed a man about three o'clock this morning."

"Three o'clock—are you sure?"

"I'm reasonably sure. What's wrong, Isaac?"

Smith seemed shaken for the first time the Sheriff could recall. "There ain't many people around tonight, Sheriff. After last night most of them want to get drunk. I couldn't get no searching party up tonight, not any more than I could if it was Friday or Saturday night."

"I see. Okay, Isaac. I'll be back out tomorrow morning and I'll be asking you questions. Maybe we can work something out. If I can work it out, there won't be any big hearing. Nothing official. But I'm not promising anything. If I think it's necessary, I'll have the biggest hearing ever held in these parts."

"You're welcome anytime, Sheriff. Official or not."

McDonald nodded grimly and left.

#

Isaac Smith watched the figure of the sheriff vanish among the trees and shadows of the forest and inside he felt as if he



were trembling. A victim had been buried without a stake through the heart. Sam Coleman—he'd been buried in that cave.

And there was neither time nor men available. Smith couldn't get enough men together to make it safe to go after Coleman—not enough to track him down and force him to the crossroads. Coleman had to be kept in one place until Smith could get whatever number of men he could together.

There was a way to do that.

The shadows were beginning to fill the forest and soon the sun would be down. There was barely enough time.

6.

Coleman awoke with an awareness of agony.

Pain gripped him, causing him to twist and writhe beneath his covering of dirt. It was as if he had awakened before the setting of the sun and the rays of the sun were falling full upon him. He moaned and thrust up one hand, out of the dirt that covered him.

The hand encountered nothing but air. Coleman sat up, letting the dirt fall in small cascades from his head and body. It was night but the agony of sunlight was still present. But there was no sunlight; the sun was gone. It was night. Now Coleman was afraid. He climbed to his feet and as he was trying to stand, he saw the cross.

His eyes burned with stabbing agony and he cried out,

falling back against the wall of the cave. It was only a crude wooden cross, set in the mouth of the cave, but it was within four feet of him and it burned like the sun itself. Coleman turned so that his back was to it. His fists hammered against the clay but the clay was unyielding. The fire seemed to be eating into him, robbing him of strength and mind.

He sank to his knees and rocked weakly. He tried to think, but couldn't. Shielding his eyes, he turned and slumped forward limply, breathing heavily, weakness and the thirst wracking his body and mind.

He saw a rock that lay not a foot from his face. It was about the size of both his fists, closed and pressed together. His left hand moved to it, closed upon it. He felt the rough, reassuring hardness of it as he struggled to his knees and gathered his strength. He would need all his strength . . . he would have only one good throw.

He managed to throw the rock with tremendous force and it hit the cross dead center. As the cross fell backward, Coleman laughed with delight and scooped dirt into both hands. He threw the dirt at the cross and continued throwing the dirt until the cross was covered and no longer blinded and weakened him. He felt his strength return like a wave that soaked the sand of the beach with its wetness. He laughed again and got to his feet, almost falling as he did, and ran past the place where the cross was buried and into the trees.

Suddenly he realized what the cross meant. He stopped and turned to stare at the cave. The entrance was still sheltered by the bushes that hid it from the highway, which was not very close anyway. But the cave was not sheltered from the woods. Nor was it safe any longer. The site of his grave had been discovered and someone had placed the cross there to hold him prisoner until—until what? He dared not consider what it might mean. Merely that it meant danger, perhaps disaster. The cross failed but the threat was still there. Someone knew about him and the cave.

Someone knew.

Coleman remembered last night and the stake driven into the heart, the severed head, the eager flames . . . He turned slowly and walked into the forest, much more slowly than before. He was thinking of the huge dark-skinned man who had wielded the knife and how the torches had hurt his eyes—the way the cross did. Coleman remembered the man called Isaac Smith who led the crowd and who drove the stake. Smith was an enemy and not an ordinary one. Smith knew much. He knew enough to know about crosses. He would know about crosses just as he knew how to kill Coleman.

Coleman wanted to cry out his frustrations but he feared who might hear the sound. He didn't want to be hurt; or killed. He wanted to be left alone. It wasn't him, anyway. It was the thirst. There had to be a way out, but what? He couldn't move his grave: the need to be buried where he had originally been covered with dirt was as vital as the need to quench the thirst or avoid the sun. But to stay meant to be discovered, to be dug up. To be taken to the crossroads at midnight and there to—

He couldn't bring himself to think the rest of it. Besides, the thirst was growing and becoming the driving obsession it always became.

Coleman stopped at the edge of an empty clearing. It was

merely a place where an old tree had died and rotted so that only weeds were there. The thirst demanded, but he saw no way to answer its demand right now.

He paused only for a moment before plunging on, almost oblivious of direction and time. He was now searching and finding nothing that he wanted. Game had seemingly fled. Once he came to a dead stop and stared in utter horror at a length of barbed wire not ten feet ahead of him. It was part of an old fence, the fenceposts rotted and bushes grown up around had become entangled in the wire. But the wire was metal beneath the rust and Coleman chose to avoid it.

He had learned caution. It was implanted in him by something that seemed more than himself. He moved cautiously letting his senses guide him. He knew from them where to seek prey and where to step to avoid touching such pieces of iron as might be lying on the ground. These new senses were more reliable than those he had known before the attack.

Yet now they seemed to fail him.

They were active and actually increased in sensitivity. Yet he found no game and the panic caused by his recent experience with the cross was still in him. Perhaps, he thought, he should abandon the woods and go among the houses and streets where men lived.

But the thought that he would find metal and fire and light—and even crosses—near those houses, stopped him. He continued searching the woods until he abruptly found himself at the edge of a swamp.

He had not remembered that a swamp was close to these woods. Here the water lay still and stagnant. He waded into it, vaguely occupied with thoughts of finding a nesting bird, or snake or turtle. He found none. He returned to the shore and walked along the edge of the swamp, sometimes sinking to his ankles in the bogs and marshes. He found nothing and his senses told him of no source of blood until he came to a shallow, running stream.

It was not a strong impression but he could feel his strange new sense telling him that game was plentiful across the stream. The thirst burned in his throat. He approached the stream anxiously, intent on crossing it. But something stopped him.

It was strange. He was walking carefully, one hand out to catch himself in case he slipped on the smooth grass as he made his way down the sloping bank. Then his feet just stopped moving. He tried to move them by an effort of will but they would not be moved. He did not understand. He looked down at his immobile feet, then up at the water just scant yards away. The water was rushing, running silently over the gravelly creek bed.

And the sight of it filled him with fear.

He breathed with difficulty as he looked at the water. He backed from it slowly. He had gone into the water of the swamp until it was to his waist but that water was stagnant and unclear. Stagnant and still. This was running water and he could not cross.

He turned and ran from the creek back into the woods.

When he reached the woods he moved more slowly, becoming alert. He sensed the presence of a rabbit and his cunning came forth. He caught it with ease and satisfied his thirst as best he could with so little. But the thirst was at least

calmed—for a while. Realizing that he was lucky to find even this rabbit, he decided to go back to the highway. It was not yet late—it wasn't even midnight. He finished the rabbit and started toward the highway remembering the man he had killed last night and how his thirst had been satisfied then.

Since he was convinced the woods were empty of prey, he did not waste time looking as he headed for the highway. The thought of another man and the blood one would hold was almost overpowering and as he pushed his way through the undergrowth he could not suppress a small, nearly hysterical laugh.

He came to a stop the instant he spied the house.

He moved more silently, realizing this was the place he wanted. Man lived in houses. This house . . .

This house was familiar—disturbingly familiar. He had an almost subliminal awareness that he knew the house well and that he was known there. It scared him.

But thirst conquered unrest. Coleman slipped from the line of trees and crossed the yard toward the weak yellowish light that came through one window. He stared in at the window but the room beyond was empty. With shuffling uncertain steps, he approached the door and touched the frame, assiduously avoiding contact with the screen itself. The latched door moved slightly, making a small noise.

He realized that he could not get in through the latched door. He remembered that once he had gotten in. He forced himself to remember. There was a time when he could get people to come open a door for him. Perhaps they still would. He decided to try. He slapped the door with the flat of his hand and made a muted thumping sound. It wasn't right. He balled his hand and tried again, this time rapping his knuckles against the wood.

No one came. He knocked again, louder. From somewhere in back he could hear noises and a woman's voice called out, "I'll be there in a minute."

But she was there, opening the door for him, before the minute was up. She stared at him and he stared dumbly back at her. He knew that she was someone he had known for some time. She had a name. It came to him that her name was Grace. Once she had been the most important thing in the world to him but that seemed long ago.

"Sam?" she said in a stunned voice. "Sam? Is that—! Oh God, Sam. Come in!"

She threw the door open wider and Coleman entered the house. Grace was crying.

"Grace," he said without looking at her. "Grace."

She looked up at him, wiping tears from her face with the back of her left hand. Sam stood watching her, his own feelings oddly mixed. Her expression changed and the look of relief hardened into one of anger. "Why did you do that?" she asked. "Where have you been?"

Her anger puzzled Coleman. He pointed toward the woods and said, "Out there."

She turned away from him, crying again. "You don't know how worried I've been. So have the children. You don't have the right to leave us like that, Sam, and then come back looking like you've been . . . I don't know where!"

Without knowing why he did so, Coleman touched her shoulder. She turned and looked into his face as if seeing it for the first time.

"Oh, Sam," she said, pressing him, squeezing him tightly, oblivious of the filth that clung to him. "I'm sorry if I was a nagging wife. It's been bad, that's all." She stood back and frowned as she looked at him. There was dirt on her face where she'd pressed her cheek against his chest. "Sam, you're filthy. Those clothes are torn and your wound has dirt on it. There's dirt all over you and you haven't had a bath in a month. You've got to clean up and see a doctor."

"No doctor," Coleman said.

"Don't argue with me. The pain must be more than you can bear." She lightly brushed something away from his mouth with her fingertips. "You got some kind of dirt on your face around your mouth. You look like one of the boys trying to eat chocolate candy. It doesn't look like ordinary dirt at all."

She held her hand up and looked closely at it. "It isn't dirt," she said. "It isn't dirt at all."

She held her head up and Coleman saw the soft curvature of her throat. Of her plump, bare upper arms. His hand moved as if by itself and touched her neck. It seemed to him that his sensitive fingers could feel the blood coursing through the jugular. So much blood. So very accessible.

"This isn't dirt," Grace said, with a weak voice. "Sam, it's blood!"

Coleman grabbed her shoulders tightly and shoved her to the floor. She screamed and struggled but he held her down, his hands going to her throat, pressing against it. She screamed his name and from another part of the house Coleman could hear a child crying—no, more than one. Two. Three . . .

Coleman was shaking uncontrollably. He looked down at Grace's face, contorted in fear and astonishment. He made a small animal noise as he realized he could not bring himself to tear open her throat. He got clumsily to his feet and stood, unable to move. Grace was crying in fear as she stood up and backed away from him.

The thirst was great. Part of Coleman's mind demanded, begged him to tear her throat to satisfy the thirst. But another part rebelled against the idea. Coleman cried out and turned to flee from the house and into the woods, hearing her calling after him as he ran.

He found a place near the highway a good distance from the house and stopped running. He sat down shaking with reaction he did not understand. For a moment he forgot the thirst. He had tried to hurt Grace. What could have come over him?

But presently the thirst returned and burned raw in his throat. He forgot about Grace. It was still early as he edged toward the highway.

It was an unfrequented road at best. The Claxton road was better and held more traffic, but too much traffic would hamper Coleman. He stood by the side of the road and waited for a long time before a car came past. Its lights caught him full as it rounded a bend ahead and he reeled, falling into the ditch.

He heard the car braking and the door open. Someone ran up to him and he heard a voice call but he couldn't understand the words. The voice called again and this time he heard: "Sam Coleman! Don't move!"

It occurred to Coleman that this might be the same person who placed the cross before the cave mouth but there was no



sun-agony except from the car. Coleman picked himself up and jumped for the shadowy protection of the trees.

"Hold up, Coleman, or I'll shoot!"

He was safely in the trees, now. He moved away from the road until he was certain he had found a place where the shadows would hide him from normal sight. He heard heavy movements among the weeds and fallen leaves and pine needles as the man came into the woods after him. Coleman waited until his pursuer was quite close and then he stepped out from the shadows.

"I see you, Coleman," the man said. "Stand still! I don't want to hurt you." Coleman knew the voice. It was someone he knew from before. It was Sheriff McDonald.

"McDonald," Coleman said perhaps too quietly to be heard.

"We've been looking for you, Coleman," McDonald said. "I won't hurt you if you come along."

"Come . . . where?"

"We found a man this morning, Sam. A dead man. I've got to arrest you."

McDonald's left hand went to the leather pouch where he carried his handcuffs. Coleman said, "I killed the man," and stepped forward.

McDonald yelled something about not coming any closer. Coleman ignored him. McDonald fired.

The bullet ripped through Coleman's midsection and the impact threw him off his feet. But there was no pain, no

lessening of strength. He picked himself up and moved toward the sheriff again. The sheriff fired again and the bullets tore through Coleman. This time he was braced for them. When he was close enough he lashed out and knocked the gun from McDonald's grasp with his fist.

Coleman grabbed the sheriff's neck with both hands and dug the fingernails in deep. The nails had grown since he was attacked and before Coleman knew what was happening, the jugular was opened and blood flowed freely. He knelt over his victim to drink. McDonald groaned and struggled weakly for a moment then stopped moving.

Coleman gorged himself but before he had quite satisfied himself he heard men running. Four or five of them. Someone shouted, "The shots came from over here!" It was a voice Coleman had heard before—at the crossroads.

Coleman lifted the sheriff and carried him toward the road. His idea was to hide the sheriff until he could return to finish what he had started. Greed was heavy in him and told him that there were five sources of blood in the woods tonight. But caution warned him that the five were sources of danger as well.

He suddenly realized he was no longer in the forest but on the shoulder of the road. He could hear the men coming closer. He could not run with the burden of the sheriff's weight and expect to escape the others. He dropped the sheriff's limp body and it rolled into the ditch. Someone burst out of the trees and Coleman whirled to face him, his foot slipping on the edge of the ditch. The ground gave way and Coleman sprawled. He scurried to his feet and tried to avoid the grasp of his attacker. But the man had both arms around Coleman's neck and was calling for help. Coleman managed to get his hands on the man's throat and he forced him down. But someone was suddenly on top of him then, pulling him from the first man.

Coleman was being overpowered. There were too many of them and though he fought like a demon, he could not escape. Suddenly a cross was being held in front of him. It was like the sun, hot and scorching. Coleman cried out and tried to escape the grasp that held him. But his strength was ebbing.

"Hurry," Isaac Smith said. "There's not much time left before midnight."

Coleman was forced through the woods, no longer strong enough to defend himself or escape. At the stroke of midnight he was lying in the crossroads and against his breast was the point of the stake. The hammer in the hands of Isaac Smith was raised and for one brief, vivid moment, Coleman could see it poised above him.

Then midnight came and Coleman knew the agony of the crossroads.

7.

When Isaac Smith returned home the sheriff was there waiting for him.

"We looked for you," Smith said. "You must've come to and moved on. We couldn't find you."

"You saved my life," McDonald said. "I'm grateful. But I got to know what you saved it from."

"Let's go over there," Smith said, pointing toward the

hen-coop. McDonald followed him and stood morosely watching as Smith seated himself on a box. "I don't want to wake up my family," Smith said. "I'd as soon they didn't know about all this. Sheriff—you believe in devils?"

"What do you mean, devils?"

"Plain old blood-drinking devils," Smith said. "That's what Sam Coleman was. A blood-drinking demon. He needed it to keep alive."

"You mean he was a vampire?"

"That's the other word for it. But devil or vampire, that's what Coleman was."

"I can't swallow any Frankenstein movie story," McDonald said. "Now I know Coleman wasn't . . . right, like you and me. But why should he suddenly become a vampire?"

"I got a story you better know first," said Smith. "We had us a man die in one of the shanties off yonder about two-three weeks back. Nobody from here knows who he was. He's just a tramp man passing through this part of the country looking for work, I reckon and he died. Well, we didn't know his kin so we got him a coffin and arranged a funeral for him and found a place to bury him. My guess is somebody's old cat got in the house with the coffin before it was put in the ground and that cat jumped over him. A cat jumping over a corpse will make it rise up at night to find blood to drink."

"Did a cat jump over Sam Coleman?"

"No. This other one—the one that was the stranger—he must have jumped Sam and that's how Sam got his neck tore. It's like sickness that you can catch. When a man's killed by one of these blood-drinking devils and he gets buried without something being done, he comes out of the grave at night and looks for somebody to be his own victim. What you can do if you know a man's been killed like that is pin him in his grave with an oak stake or bury him with a cross. There's some kinds of plants you can put in his coffin with him to keep him dead but I don't know what they is."

"Then Sam Coleman needed blood to stay alive?"

"Sort of," Smith said. "Maybe he needed it to stay un-dead. Course, it ain't easy for them. They can't come around silver or iron and a lot of other metals seem to make them nervous. The cross is a thing they don't like. And running water. Once we lost that first devil in the swamp so apparently if the water is still or stagnant it's no trouble to them. Running water they can't cross. You can pin one on an island if you can find a way to get him there."

"That doesn't sound easy."

"It ain't. To kill a vampire you really should find its grave. It's got to come back to that grave. You can pin him up there until midnight when he can be killed. You got to kill him at the stroke of twelve. You got to drive a stake through his heart and it's got to be done at a crossroad. The head has to be cut off and put between the feet and you got to burn the whole thing."

"I saw the fire," McDonald said. "I guess that means Coleman is dead."

"He's dead," Smith said. "You taking me to jail?"

"No," McDonald said. "The Coleman case is closed. Forever."

Smith nodded gravely. "Telling about it won't do no one no good, anyway."

continued on page 27

MAGIC-OCCULT-SPIRITUAL SUPPLIES

Over 1,000 unique items — huge 64 page illustrated catalog 25¢

- ZODIAC Essential Oils — 1 full fluid ounce\$2.50
 ASTRAL CANDLE — with personalized horoscope,
 lucky numbers, and lucky days\$1.25
 ASTROLOGICAL INCENSE — 4 oz. Apothecary jar\$1.25
 (To order above state birthdate or zodiac sign)
 VODOO-WITCHCRAFT Handbook. Black Art Secrets .\$.100
 VODOO Love/Hate Doll with ritual, pins & tag\$2.00
 ESP TEST CARD SET — complete, self-scoring\$1.00
 (FREE 64 page illustrated catalog with order from this ad)

INTERNATIONAL IMPORTS

Box 2010

Toluca Lake, Ca. 91602

The Count Dracula Society

DEVOTED TO SERIOUS STUDY OF HORROR FILMS & GOTHIC LITERATURE

For Complete Information Write to:



DONALD A. REED,
 National President
 334 West 54th Street
 Los Angeles, Ca. 90037

PUBLICATIONS NOW AVAILABLE

WITCHCRAFT, MAGIC and OCCULTISM, a fascinating survey of the influence on both ape-men and men of magic, witchcraft and occultism. Covers voodoo, shamanism, elementals, satyrs, the Black Mass, magical fraternities, etc. Excellent for reference. Paper, \$2.

WITCHCRAFT THE SIXTH SENSE—another book for the reader seriously interested in this subject. Paper, \$2

THE TAROT AND THE BOHEMIANS. For the reader who is interested in the Tarot and the Tarot Cards. Paper, \$2.

DARKNESS WEAVES—a novel by Karl Edward Wagner in the Robert E. Howard tradition. Kane is superhuman, centuries old, part hero and part ageless monster. Thrill to his adventures as he battles the forces of darkness... Pocketbook, \$1 pp.

GODMAN by John Bloodstone. A novel in the Burroughs-Merritt school. Godman is myth, fantasy and science in a spellbinding adventure by the man who wrote the unpublished—and apparently, not to be published—story dealing with the Burroughs character Tarzan and his adventures on Mars. Paperback, \$1 pp.

English publications available:

Booklets: STOWAWAY TO MARS, MAN IN DUPLICATE, THE DYNO-DEPRESSANT, BLACK-WING OF MARS, ZERO HOUR, MOONS FOR SALE, BLACK AVENGERS. NEW WORLDS No. 21. 50 cents each.

F. P. C. I., Book Dept., 1855 W. Main St. Alhambra, Ca. 91801

BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM FPCI

- RETURN OF TARZAN, E.R. Burroughs .. \$2.50
 TARZAN & THE ANT MEN, Burroughs .. 2.00
 TARZAN & THE GOLDEN LION, " 2.00
 MIND CAGE, A. E. van Vogt 3.50
 WORLD OF NULL A by A.E. van Vogt.. 2.50
 THE BEAST, A. E. van Vogt 2.50
 FAMOUS GHOST STORIES, ed. Cerf .. 1.00
 GREAT GHOST STORIES, 27 Tales ... 1.50
 CREEPS BY NIGHT, Dashiell Hammett .. 2.00
 GOLDEN SCORPION, Sax Rohmer 2.00
 DAY THE WORLD ENDED, Sax Rohmer . 1.50
 RETURN OF DR. FU MANCHU, Rohmer 1.50
 NOT IN SOLITUDE, Gantz 1.50
 FIND THE FEATHERED SERPENT 3.00
 WEST OF THE SUN, Pangborn 1.50
 HELLFLOWER, George O. Smith 2.50
 DELPHIC ECHO, Livingston 3.00
 CHILDREN OF WONDER, Tenn 1.50
 DELUGE, S. Fowler Wright 2.00
 WINDS OF TIME, Oliver 1.50
 WORLD OUT OF MIND, McIntosh 1.50
 BORN LEADER, McIntosh 1.50
 NECROMANCER, Dickson 1.00
 TIME BOMB, Tucker 2.00
 UTMOST ISLAND, Myers 2.00
 SECRET MOUNTAIN, Morris 4.00
 MISTRESS MASHAM'S REPOSE, White .. 2.00
 SWORD IN THE STONE, White 2.00
 TEODORA THE SAGE, Lucatelli 1.50
 MISTS OF DAWN, Oliver 2.50
 THE VICARION, Hunting 2.00
 FLYING SAUCER, Newman 2.50
 SON OF THE STARS, Jones 2.00
 TIMELINER, Maine 1.50
 POINT ULTIMATE, Sohl 1.50
 EYE OF ZEITON, Talbot Mundy 1.50
 IVORY TRAIL, Talbot Mundy 2.00
 AFTER WORLDS COLLIDE, Wylie 2.00
 One Copy Only of:
 CASTLE OF IRON, deCamp & Pratt no d/j \$5.
 UNDESIRE PRINCESS, deCamp cloth 5.00
 " " " " paper bound 3.00
 PLANETS OF ADVENTURE, Wells cloth 5.00
 TRITON, L. Ron Hubbard....cloth.... 7.00

We Have 100's of Other Books; Also Pulp and Digest Magazines. Order From Us.

F.P.C.I., 1855 W. Main St., Alhambra, Calif. 91801

Claire meddled and now something was collecting its fee—a strip of flesh at a time.

price of a demon

by Gary Brandner

Illustrated by Stephen E. Fabian

Paul Fielding pushed open the door of his Encino home, then stood for a moment listening to the undulating drone of strange syllables. Smiling privately, he walked through the comfortable house to the patio-pool area out in back. There, kneeling on the bricks in a loose-fitting white and gold dress was his wife, Claire. She was reading in her clear contralto from a slim green book that lay open before her. The words, if they were words, made no sense to Paul. He scuffled his feet so that Claire glanced up and saw him. She flashed him a quick smile and held up one hand without breaking the rhythm of her chant. Paul waited with folded arms until she finished and closed the book. Claire stayed where she was for a moment with her head bowed. Paul smiled at how like a little girl she looked with her fine hair floating in a yellow cloud around her head.

Abruptly, she jumped to her feet and ran over to him. "Hi, love, I've just had the most marvelous psychic experience."

"That's nice. I don't suppose we could experience some dinner, I'm starved."

Claire rolled her wide blue eyes to the sky. "Oh, Lord, I've done it again. I completely forgot to take the roast out of the freezer. Please don't beat me."

Paul patted her fluffy hair. "Never mind, we can have it tomorrow. How about some macaroni and cheese or something like that?"

Tucking her head under Paul's chin, Claire hugged him tightly. "Darling, you're so understanding with your poor scatter-brained wife." She pirouetted back to where she had left the book lying on the bricks. "You wouldn't believe, you simply wouldn't believe the astonishing book I found today in the quaintest little bookstore just off Ventura Boulevard."

"If that's where you got that gibberish you were reciting a minute ago, you're right—I don't believe it."

He took the book from her hand. The stained cloth binding was frayed at the corners. Black roman lettering stamped into the cover read: *Daemonic Spelles*. Paul riffled the pages. "I suppose this is part of that witchcraft class you're taking."

"No, no my sweet. Oh, Aurelia Cord, our teacher, has shown us some absolutely precious things: she is a real witch, you know—but this book was purely your own little wife's

personal discovery. I can't wait to tell the class about it next week. The others will be so jealous."

Paul flipped back to the flyleaf. "I see it was printed in 1931. Does that qualify it as the wisdom of the ancients?"

"Darling, what possible difference can it make when the book was printed?"

"None, I guess. What is it you were doing with it, anyway?"

"Listen to this—I was calling up a demon."

"Why?"

"Why? Why?! For heaven's sake, why do people climb mountains? Why do you spend your days chasing those little electrons around?"

Paul grinned and hooked an arm around his wife's supple waist. "Don't get mad, honey, I wouldn't want you to put a curse on me." He nodded toward a series of crooked figures scrawled on the patio floor. "I suppose that graffiti is required."

"Oh, yes, those are ancient Druid symbols, or as near as I could come to them. Don't worry, it's only chalk and will wash right off. The demon I was calling was one the Druids used to summon to save their crops or kill their enemies or something like that."

Paul squinted his eyes and peered around. "Looks like he didn't show up. Maybe demons don't like macaroni and cheese."

A tiny frown shadowed Claire's brow. "I might not have done everything just exactly right. But you know, for just a moment there I had a feeling that something was here . . . that something had answered."

A shiver went through her body and Paul gave her a playful spank. "Something was here. Me." He led her back inside by the hand, tossing the book onto the square coffee table. "Come on, I'll see if I can summon up a martini to whet our appetites for that macaroni roast."

The scream jolted Paul awake. The glowing dial of the alarm clock read three a.m. He fumbled for the lamp button and snapped on the light. Claire was sitting upright rubbing her shoulder.

"Really, darling," she said, "what a strange time for you to get passionate. And so fiercely."



Paul knuckled his eyelids. "What are you talking about? What's the matter?"

Claire pushed up the lacy sleeve of her shortie nightgown. "When did you start biting, anyway? Who's been giving you lessons?"

"You've been dreaming. Go back to sleep, will you, I have to get up in three more hours."

"Dreaming, hell! Take a look at this."

Paul sat up and focused on his wife's pale shoulder. Two curving indentations marked the skin like broken red parentheses. "Hey, that looks sore. The skin isn't broken, though."

"It hurts," Claire sniffed.

"If I did it, it must have been in my sleep. But I apologize anyway." Paul pulled his wife close to him and looked at the marks on her shoulder. "My mouth isn't that big."

Claire began to cry softly, and Paul reached back to douse the light. "Go to sleep now, honey," he said. "It'll be all right in the morning."

Lying in her husband's arms, Claire's sobs quieted and deepened into the regular breathing of sleep. Paul still lay awake staring at the darkened ceiling. Did he hear a soft sliding sound along the far wall? Was it only the shrubbery outside moving in the wind? He fell into a shallow sleep.

The irritable buzz of the alarm jerked Paul out of an uneasy dream. He reached back over his head and punched the clock into silence. It was Thursday by the calendar, but the weather outside was meant for Monday. Blasts of chill wind swashed a dismal rain against the glass of the window. With a groan, Paul swung up into a sitting position and stared glumly at his feet. When he leaned over to kiss the still-sleeping Claire he saw the ugly bruise on her shoulder and frowned.

As though she could feel his eyes on her, Claire came suddenly awake. She smiled and reached out for him, but drew back with a wince of pain. Both of them stared at the purple marks.

"Wow, whatever got into you last night?" she asked.

"I didn't--" Paul began, but he stopped in mid-sentence and shrugged. "Must have been an erotic dream, I guess."

Claire touched her shoulder gingerly. "I sure don't mind you getting sexy now and then, but that really hurts."

"It looks like it does. Why don't you call Dr. Goldman today and see if he can recommend something to put on it."

"If it keeps hurting I'll do that."

"Never mind getting up today, honey, I'll just get a donut and coffee off the catering truck at work."

"Well, if you don't mind too much. It looks like a simply horrid day out. I may just stay right here under the covers until you get home tonight."

"Fine. You just take it easy."

Paul dressed hurriedly and left for work fifteen minutes earlier than usual. He knew the freeways would be bad; they always were when it rained. Funny, he thought, that a foot of snow in the Midwest didn't foul traffic up the way a small rainstorm did in Southern California.

By ten o'clock Paul had pushed the unsettling events of the night to the back of his mind, immersing himself in the familiar routine of his work. On his desk the telephone rang.

Paul depressed the lighted button and picked up the receiver. "Hello, Fielding speaking."

"Paul, please come and help me!" Claire's voice was brittle with hysteria. "It's biting on me!"

"What is it? Claire, what's wrong?"

"Please just come home now, before . . . oh, no, it's starting again!" There was a squeal of pain and the line went dead. Paul started to dial, then changed his mind and slammed the receiver down, grabbed his plastic raincoat and dashed out of the building.

Freeway traffic had thinned by that hour and Paul never slowed down; the car sprouted wings of spray. He jammed to a stop in his driveway and ran across the mushy lawn. The slate-colored clouds brooded low over the rooftops. A steady wind now dashed the icy rain at a sharp angle.

He found Claire hugging herself with her knees drawn up in a pink, bat-winged chair. She had on a quilted robe and was moaning in a high-pitched voice. Paul ran to her and took her head in his hands. "Claire, what is it? Look at me!"

She reached out and seized the front of his coat. "Make it stop, Paul, please make it stop!"

The robe fell away from his wife's body. Paul recoiled at what he saw. On her arms, her breasts, and her stomach were a dozen angry red marks unmistakably bites. "Oh, my God," he breathed.

Claire began to sob freely. "I can't make it stop. It's going to eat me!"

With an effort, Paul made his voice calm. "Come on, Claire, let's get you dressed and we'll go and see Dr. Goldman." He led her, still whimpering, into their bedroom where he helped her dress. He had to fight off a shudder each time his fingers touched her bruised flesh.

Claire quieted in the car and sat without speaking while Paul drove through the rain to the low, modern building where Dr. Goldman had his office. The glossy receptionist pouted at their lack of an appointment, but after vanishing briefly from behind her counter, returned to announce that the doctor would see them in a few minutes.

They sat close together on the low, uncomfortable couch in the waiting room. Claire's head was down, her eyes on the floor. "I saw it, you know. Not distinctly, but it was clear enough."

"What? What did you see?"

"The demon. The one I summoned. Believe me, Paul, I didn't know what I was doing. I thought it would be just kicks, you know, like astrology. Or a Ouija board."

"You say you actually saw this . . . this demon? When was that?"

"This morning, before I called you. I had gone into the bathroom and was putting some salve on the place where it bit me last night. Then, without any warning, I felt the teeth clamp onto me here, on my breast. The pain was unbelievable. I screamed and ran into the bedroom. I must have fallen, because I was on the floor and it was biting me again and again, chewing at me. It was while I was there on the floor that I saw it. It was very faint, like a double exposure in a photograph. It left me alone then, and I ran to call you." Claire's body jerked convulsively. "Paul, it was all hair and teeth, and it was . . . it was eating me!"

"Doctor will see you now."

Paul started at the sound of the receptionist's voice. He took Claire's trembling hand and they followed the girl back to one of the examination cubicles.

Within a few minutes Dr. Goldman entered, a smiling, white-haired man with a warm voice. "Well now, what's the emergency here?"

"It's kind of hard to explain it to you, Doctor. It might be best if you just took a look at my wife."

Claire unbuttoned her blouse and slipped it down off one shoulder. The doctor bent to examine the bruises. His professional smile faded. "How were these caused?"

A tear slid down Claire's cheek. Paul said, "That's the trouble, we just don't know. There are more of them."

"Hmmm. Would you mind waiting in the reception room, Mr. Fielding?"

Paul obediently walked back out past the reception counter and perched on one of the wrought iron and vinyl chairs. He picked a magazine from the low table beside him and turned the pages one at a time without seeing them.

"Mr. Fielding."

"Yes?" Paul jumped to his feet when the girl spoke his name.

"Doctor would like to speak to you. He's in his office, that's straight down the little hall."

"Thank you."

Dr. Goldman's office was furnished in comfortable brown leather that didn't match the gleaming modernity of the other rooms. The doctor was seated behind a massive desk.

"Please sit down, Mr. Fielding."

Paul took a chair across the desk from the doctor. He searched the older man's face.

"Is there any history of epilepsy in your wife's family?"

"No, not that I know of. No, I'm sure there couldn't be."

"Has she ever been subject to any kind of seizures or fits?"

"Certainly not. What are you getting at?"

"I suspect that those wounds, those bite marks on your wife's body, are self-inflicted."

Paul sprang out of his chair. "Are you crazy? Are you telling me Claire bit herself until blood came? On the stomach?"

The doctor stood and faced Paul. "Take it easy, Mr. Fielding. Look at it this way—Did you do that to her?"

"Of course I didn't!"

"All right. Was there any other person present when the bites occurred?"

"No, no other person, but—"

"I think you see the only explanation that leaves, don't you?" The doctor walked around his desk and eased Paul through the door. "I put some ointment on the contusions and lacerations and gave her a mild sedative. Here, take this card. I've written down the name of a very good man in the psychiatric field."

"You mean you think there is something wrong with my wife's mind?"

"That isn't my field, but it couldn't do any harm for you to take her in to see this man."

Paul nodded and walked out in a daze to where Claire stood waiting for him.

The drive home was quiet. Calmed by the sedative, Claire settled into her seat, half listening to the snick-snick of the

windshield wipers and the sluice of the tires along the wet pavement. Paul switched on the headlights against the gathering gloom and tried to get some order into his thoughts. He had to admit that the doctor's explanation was the only one that made any sense. He shied from the idea that Claire might be, well, insane. True, she might not be the most stable of the neighborhood wives, but her bubbling involvement with horoscopes and seances and sensitivity groups had never been anything more than a mild eccentricity, not the self-destructive madness suggested by Dr. Goldman. Trying to imagine Claire tearing at her own flesh with her teeth made Paul shudder, and he erased the picture from his mind. Maybe the psychiatrist was the best idea. Claire might even go for it as a new kick. It could replace that class in witchcraft she was hung up with now. *That* certainly wasn't doing her any good. He spent the rest of the drive home rehearsing how he would propose it to her.

When they reached home Claire changed immediately into red mandarin lounging pajamas. Paul noted that the high collar with the long sleeves and legs hid the tooth marks. He mixed a hot toddy, heavy on the bourbon, for each of them and put Chopin on the hi-fi. When he was satisfied that Claire was comfortable and composed he began, "Dear, the doctor thinks—"

He never told her what the doctor thought, because at that moment Claire's eyes popped wide, seeming to strain at their sockets. Her jaw dropped and there was a long piercing wail from her straining throat. Paul leaped back reflexively and saw on her upper thigh a stain of darker red than the silky material spreading rapidly in an uneven circle. With numbed hands he tore the pajamas away and cried out. A piece of the skin seemed to be trying to rip itself from her leg. As he watched the flap of skin was torn loose, as though by invisible jaws, and vanished, leaving a gaping strip of raw flesh.

Claire's unearthly moan thinned to silence and she slumped to one side. Paul ran for the bathroom medicine cabinet, returning with disinfectant and bandages. Forcing his hands to steady, he cleaned and wrapped the wound. Claire regained consciousness and threw her arms about his neck, holding on with all her strength.

"Claire," he whispered, "listen to me. That woman, the one who teaches your class, the one who says she's a witch . . . Can she help you?"

Claire drew back so she could look at him. A flicker of hope showed in her pain-glazed eyes. "Aurelia Cord? I don't know . . . maybe . . . yes, maybe she can. Oh, Paul, let's go to her."

Trying to keep his mind intent on physical motions, Paul tore a woolly blanket from their bed and wrapped Claire in it completely so that only her face was visible. He picked her up like a baby and carried her to the door. On their way out, he dipped in front of the coffee table and picked up the green book.

With Claire giving directions in a tiny voice, they were at the house of Aurelia Cord in fifteen minutes. It was a small guest cottage out behind a larger, vacant-looking house. Carrying Claire again, Paul kicked his toe against the bottom panel of the door and waited while the rain lashed at him and his burden. As he drew back his foot to kick again, the door opened.



Paul's voice caught in his throat when he saw the woman who stood there. Her high-cheekboned face was framed in a cataract of burnished copper hair that fell in heavy waves past her shoulders. Immense green eyes, luminous in their depths, were tinted by unutterable sadness. She looked from Paul's face to the bundle in his arms. "Why, it's Claire. Are you her husband?"

Paul nodded.

"Come in." The small living room was a carnival of oranges, red, purples. A nubby sofa of the kind that pulls out into a bed and a wicker chair were the only recognizable pieces of furniture. Cushions of all shapes and sizes littered the floor. The woman pointed a tapering finger at the sofa. "Put her over there."

A huge orange cat was curled into a pumpkin-sized ball in the exact center of the sofa. His golden eyes glared at Paul's approach. "You'll have to move, Boris," the woman said quietly. The cat stood up deliberately, stretching out his forefeet and yawning until his eyes squinched shut. Then, as though it had been his intention all along, he thumped down from the sofa and sauntered into another room.

"What's the matter with Claire?"

Paul found his voice. "I'll tell you the truth, I feel like a damn fool coming here, but you're just about my last hope." Gently, he unwrapped the blanket. While Claire stared up at them without expression he eased her pajama coat down from one shoulder. "Look at that. And there are more of those all over her body."

Aurelia Cord bit her lip. "How did it happen?"

Paul looked down at the book he was still holding. "Miss Cord, I know that my wife has been taking a class from you in, uh, witchcraft, and . . . well . . ."

A flicker of compassion showed in the deep green eyes. "You can pass up the preliminaries, Mr. Fielding. I am indeed a witch, if that is what you are trying to get at. I have never denied it. I must assume that you do not completely disbelieve, or you would not be here asking for my help. Now, please go on."

Paul sighed, relieved. "Thanks." He handed the book to Aurelia Cord. "Yesterday when I came home from work I found Claire reading aloud from this book, words I couldn't understand. She said it was supposed to call up a demon or something. I'm afraid I didn't pay too much attention. Claire is always doing some kinky thing or other."

"Like taking a class in witchcraft?"

"Forgive me, but yes, like taking a class in witchcraft. Anyway, last night and again today something has been chewing at her skin. You saw what the marks look like. I saw one while it was happening. It was horrible . . . as though jaws that I couldn't see were taking a bite right out of her leg."

Aurelia Cord turned the book over slowly in her hands. "Where did Claire get this?"

"She said she found it in a book store somewhere off Ventura."

The woman shook her head slowly, making the dark red hair sway. "I thought all of these had been destroyed long ago." She looked up at Paul. "Mr. Fielding, as certain people do, your wife has an intense affinity for the supernatural. I sensed it when she first came here. Were she to apply herself,

she could likely function as a medium or become most proficient in one or more forms of ESP. Her interest in the subject was, however, merely superficial. There is nothing wrong with that, you understand. In fact, it is probably better that way for her peace of mind. To devote your life to the practice of the occult calls for many sacrifices. Few women are willing to make them. But my little class is quite harmless. I teach bored housewives a little bit about love philtres, a little bit about charms, and a little of the history of witchcraft. Then they can go home and call their bridge club a coven and really feel that they are doing something, well, 'kinky' was your word. This book, though, is something else again. It contains black knowledge that should never have been made available to people like your wife. It was written and printed by an unspeakably foul man. Fewer than two hundred copies were ever released, and they were hunted down and destroyed by those of my kind who knew the horror they contained. Somehow, this copy survived and your wife found it, probably not coincidentally. She may have been drawn to it."

"Then the book is for real," Paul said.

"As real as the teeth marks on her flesh. Apparently she followed the instructions given here and summoned this monster into being. That is when it stopped being a kinky game." Aurelia Cord passed a slender hand across her eyes. "What people cannot seem to realize is that there is always a price. Given the proper circumstances, it isn't terribly difficult to summon a demon. But for every demon there is a price. Your wife is paying hers now."

Paul's voice quavered. "But, is there nothing you can do?"

The woman looked at him levelly. The bottomless eyes seemed to draw him in. "Yes, there is something I can do. One thing. A demon can be defeated by another, more powerful demon. I can call one."

Paul gripped the woman's slim wrist. "Miss Cord, do it. Please do it. I can't stand to see Claire in agony any more."

"Mr. Fielding, didn't you hear what I said about there always being a price?"

"Anything! Anything at all! Name your figure. Here, I'll write you a check now."

She held up a hand. "No, Mr. Fielding, not my price. I would charge you nothing. But you *will* pay. You must understand that."

"Listen, I don't care what the price is or who comes to collect it. I can't watch my wife being eaten alive. Whatever you can do, I'm begging you to do it. Now!"

"Very well, Mr. Fielding. Will you please sit over there? This will take a little time."

Paul sat back in one corner of the room as directed, and watched Aurelia Cord, intently at first, then with a growing lassitude. The red-haired woman stacked all the cushions against one wall, baring the black tile floor underneath. On this she traced a number of designs with a trail of yellow powder. Within several of the figures she placed black candles which burned with a pale, sputtering flame. Near the center of the floor she set a small metal censer. Into this she sifted a handful of crushed leaves and dry, withered berries. She touched a flame to this and it flared, releasing a thin cloud of acrid yellow smoke.

Paul closed his eyes against the fumes and must have dozed, for when he looked again, the smoke had cleared, the cushions

were back covering the floor, and Aurelia Cord was sitting on the sofa talking to a smiling Claire.

"Darling," Claire called to him, "it's gone, it really is. My, what a simply delicious feeling to be free at last from that ghastly thing with the teeth."

Paul got to his feet and walked over to the sofa. He looked closely into the clear, untroubled eyes of his wife, then turned to the other woman. "Miss Cord, I don't know how I can ever thank you."

Aurelia Cord turned away. "Mr. Fielding, I deserve no thanks. Now, if you don't mind, I am quite tired,"

"Of course. If there is ever anything I can do . . ." Paul held out his hand, but the woman did not respond. "Come, let's go, Claire."

The rain had stopped outside but the glowering clouds remained. As they drove home Claire carried on an animated chatter in her old manner, but Paul was not listening to her. Did a cold, slippery thing touch his face just then? It had to be imagination. But no, there it was again, inside his shirt now. Paul hoped he would have time to get the car home before he had to pay.

† † † † †

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

He turned and started for his house and as he turned, McDonald bent and picked up a rock. With a quick, powerful movement he smashed the rock against Smith's head. Smith let out a faint surprised sound, then slumped to the ground. McDonald rolled him over and his hands trembled as he reached for the throat and his nails dug for the artery.

Afterward, he returned to the ditch on the Savannah Road. It was almost light. He had to be back in that ditch, covered

#####

with the dirt that had fallen on him when Coleman had slipped. Even as he pulled the dirt down on him, he realized he would be found: it was not a good place to be buried. Already he knew that he would awake that night at the morgue.

And sooner or later—

Sooner or later he would know as Coleman had known and as the tramp had known before him, the agony of the crossroads at midnight.

AT LAST! Everything You Want to Know About ATLANTIS



Plato's Atlantis

Maps — Photos

Occult Atlantis

Bibliography

Spanish Atlantis

Arctic Atlantis

Minoan Atlantis

Synopses of Over 100 Books On Atlantis

The Most Comprehensive Reference Book On Atlantis Ever Published!

FANTASY PUBLISHING CO., INC.

1855 W. Main St., Alhambra, Calif. 91801

NOW AVAILABLE

STARDRIFT—And Other Fantastic Flotsam
by EMIL PETAJA

Fantastic flotsam, wolfbane and wonder by a master story teller. Fourteen selected tales in this limited edition, with frontispiece, endsheets and jacket by noted artist Hannes Bok. Price \$4.95

THE WORKS OF M. P. SHIEL
by A. REYNOLDS MORSE

This book is a key to unknown worlds where excitement, romance, fantasy and realism are blended into adventurous reading. The author collates every known edition of M. P. Shiel's novels and presents new items of interest about Shiel's life and works. Jacket design based on a painting by Salvadore Dali. Price \$6.00

THE TOYMAKER by Raymond F. Jones \$4.00
Great collection of future fiction from *Astounding*.
DROME by John Martin Leahy \$4.00
A classic fantasy novel from the early *Weird Tales*.
THE RADIO MAN by Ralph Milne Farley \$3.50
First novel of a famous series from 1920s' *Argosy*.
THE COSMIC GEOIDS by John Taine \$4.00
Man's fate depended on decoding the Eosian plates.
THE RADIUM POOL by Ed Earl Repp \$4.00
Classic immortality story from early *Amazing*.
AFTER 12,000 YEARS by Stanton A. Coblentz \$4
Time-travel classic from early *Amazing Quarterly*.
THE SUNKEN WORLD by Stanton A. Coblentz \$4
Limited number of copies of this early Atlantis tale.
OUT OF THE UNKNOWN, van Vogt & Hull \$4.00
Fantasy collection from *Unknown*. While they last.

F.P.C.I., 1855 W. Main St., Alhambra, Calif. 91801

PRICE OF A DEMON 27



**SATAN'S
RAM -**

**THE OLD
ONE; PAN,
MORE PROPERLY,
THE SNEERING,
LOVECRAFTIAN:**

SHUB-

NIGGURATH-

**THE BLACK
THE WOODS**

**WITCH
HATES**

**OR
PRIAPUS,
LUSTFULL,**

**GOAT OF
WITH A
THOUSAND
YOUNG -**

R. EDWARDS JENNINGS '70

OCCULT SUPPLIES

LEGENDARY INCENSES & OILS
TAROT CARDS, CRYSTAL BALLS,
CANDLES, INCENSE & HERBS,
AMULETS, TALISMANS, RITUALS &
SPELLS, VODOO DOLLS, IMAGE
CANDLES.

OILS

Attraction - Patchouli - Voo-
doo - Money - Van Van -
Obeah - Witches Formula -
Crossing - Evil Eye - Jockey
Club - Black Arts - Anoint-
ing - Compelling - Control-
ing - Irresistible - King Solo-
mon - Uncrossing.

1 Dram Bottle, \$1.00
2 Dram Bottle, \$2.00

INCENSES

Money Drawing - Attraction
- Uncrossing - Success -
John the Conqueror - Fast
Luck - Love - Dragon Blood
Powder - Jinx Removing.
2 Oz. Box, \$1.25 each

AVAILABLE AT LAST!
RITUAL BOOK OF HERBAL
SPELLS by Aima. (Actual
legendary rituals and spells
using herbs).

\$3.95 per copy

50% Deposit on all C.O.D. orders
Californians please add 5% Sales Tax
We ship to Continental U.S.A. only
Free Catalog Available



House of Hermetic

Dept. 8 W
8906 MELROSE AVENUE
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90069

Store Hours: Tues. & Sat., 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
Wed., Thurs., Fri., 12 noon to 9 p.m.
Closed Sunday & Monday

astrological

GIFTS & BOOKS

"more than a shop...
it's an experience!"



375-6702

**A MOST
unusual shop!**



EXOTIC INCENSE • RITUAL CANDLES
HERBS & ROOTS • ESSENTIAL OILS
BOOKS • TAROT CARDS • ETCETERA



3855 PACIFIC COAST HWY. • TORRANCE

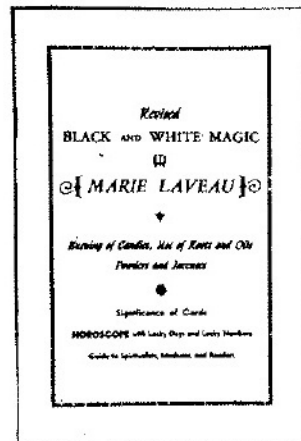
PAPA JULIUS
BOMBAY CANDLE AND INCENSE CO.
40 years at 1057 E. Vernon Ave.,
Los Angeles, California 90011

—Special Offers—



Papa Julius' famous Black and White Magic Book, a guide to spiritualists and mediums. Written by Papa Julius and his good friend Marie Laveau, this book reveals many secrets of the occult and tells in very simple language how Marie Laveau and Papa Julius solved problems such as the Lady Who Lost Her Lover; Money Drawing; the Man or Lady in the Lawsuit; Making a Lucky Hand; House Uncrossing; Gaining Spiritual Strength; includes Horoscopes and Lucky Numbers. Sold on newsstands for \$2.00. With coupon, \$1.00 plus 25 cents for postage and handling.

With this ad we also offer our Spell Candle, Jinx Removing Spray and the Sabbatic Goat — very popular talisman. It is said that the one who carries the Sabbatic Goat defies all who wish to cast an evil spell.



PAPA JULIUS Bombay Candle and Incense Co. also handle all Occult and Spiritual supplies, such as Candles, Incense, alleged Love Potions, Money Drawing Oil, Uncrossing Powders, Jinx Removing Sprays, Good Luck Sprays, Oils, Talismans for the Zodiac and all purposes. Three stores to serve you. Special discounts to Spiritualists and Mediums.

ORDER FORM

Bombay Candle and Incense Co.,
6030 Crenshaw Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90043

I enclose \$_____. Please send items I have checked.

- ☐ Black and White Magic Book \$1.25
☐ Spell Candle \$2.50
☐ Jinx Removing Spray \$2.50
☐ Sabbatic Goat Talisman \$2.50

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

department of **POINTED TALES**

In the Sorcerer's Garden

by Susan M. Patrick

Not too long ago, in a city you know of, I had occasion to visit the garden of a sorcerer. This sorcerer is a lover of nature and of things not quite natural. His garden is a collection of plants of both categories, the rarest plants of the earth. They are mixed poetically throughout the garden, but one plant, near the center, stands alone. This arrangement seems to be one the plants themselves have made, for my host assured me he had used no magic in the arrangement of his garden—only in its protection.

Be that as it may, this one plant seemed so distinctly ordinary that I could not imagine why it was in this garden at all, much less in so central a location. It looked, to my fairly well-educated eye, like an ordinary rosebush, save only that I could see no blooms on it. There were buds in various stages all over it, and dead blossoms here and there, but not one bloom. Indeed, I never saw it bloom, though I visited it every day that I remained in that city. The buds on that bush seemed to become dead blossoms over night.



Illustrations by Tim Kirk

At length I asked my host about this colorless rosebush of his, for it had fascinated me to such a point that I was certain it only waited for me to turn my back so it could bloom. My host, however, laughed at my fixation and suggested I visit the garden with him later that night.

So I went—and found out why this rosebush was the most unusual prize of the sorcerer's garden. For in the dark, as we watched from a distance, the rosebush bloomed.

Its flowers were of the purest white, untinted by any shade of yellow or pink—so white they shone, even though the rays of the moon never touched them. And the perfume of those blooms was so sweet that I moved almost unknowingly toward it, wishing only to bury my face in those wonderful flowers. But my host checked me at a single step.

A moment later an ordinary brown rabbit came hesitatingly from somewhere and approached the rosebush in a series of strangely stiff hops. It went on until it was lost from view among the inner stems of the bush. Suddenly, rapt as I was in contemplation of that magnificent bush, I saw the blossoms turn to the deepest red. The wonderful fragrance turned to a horrid charnel smell. My host led me away, smiling gently at my puzzlement, as I babbled incoherent inquiries. But I know now why that bush is unique in the sorcerer's garden. I know why the other plants grow away from it. I know why it grows in the center of the garden where passers-by cannot be lured, and where only rabbits come to dye its blooms red.

† † † †

Appointment in Samarkand

by Glen Cook

The world's oldest man sat at a table in a hovel beside the river, in the heart of the city's slums. Before him: a half-empty can of cold chili, an onion cut in slivers, an empty bottle once filled with dreams (California Port), and cloves of garlic. The old man, feeling the effects of the wine, leaned back in a rickety chair, drawing deeply on the remnants of a cheap cigar.

A knock at his door.

The old man was startled. He snorted as only an oldster can, popped a clove of garlic into his mouth, chewed as he made his way to the door. Opened, it revealed a stranger clad in black.

"Yes?" the old man snapped, his fetid mouth but inches from the stranger's face. "What is it? What is it?"

"Ah!" the dark stranger gasped, staggering back. "Never mind! I'll come back later. Remembered an appointment in Samarkand."

The oldest man cackled as the stranger fled.
For the umpteenth time.



The Dancing Girl of Isphatam

by Leo Tifton

To the ruins of Isphatam came Edros, wanderer and adventurer, searching the world for he knew not what. And Isphatam, once capital of the world, lay in ruins and heaped stone piles of rubble upon a vast track of desert. Here, where two walls still stood near what once was the famed Court of Mer, Edros made camp.

But in the night he was awakened by soft music and, looking up, he saw a girl dancing slowly in the moonlight.

Now the dancing girls of Isphatam were the most beautiful dancing girls in all the world; and the most beautiful, most graceful of them all was Shalamar who legend said had danced for kings and generals and sorcerers in the Court of Mer. So beautiful was this girl beheld of Edros that, though the day of Shalamar was past a thousand years, he knew he was watching her and no other.

Rhythmic and graceful her dancing, fluid the movement of her languid body. Edros stepped from behind the wall and she favored him with a lonely, distant smile and her grey-blue eyes were filled with longing and need. Her arm beckoned. "Come to me Edros," she said. "Come with me, come with me."

So moved by her beauty was Edros that he walked toward her. But Shalamar backed from him, her movements even then timed to the music. She stepped back into shadows that ringed what remained of the Court of Mer. "Follow me," she said.

"Where shall I follow you?" asked Edros, stopping suddenly. "Where do you lead me?"

"To a place. You will be with me."

"What manner of place? How can I trust you? It may be some trap."

"It is no trap," she said. But then she reached the shadows. They gathered around her, palpable darkness hiding all but her beckoning arm and then that. But Edros was afraid and would not follow.

Day came and Edros left the ruins. But in a village he heard the legend of how Shalamar comes beckoning to those who know it not to offer paradise to he who will take it without suspicion. But fear and suspicion have kept many from paradise. And Edros thought of the grace of Shalamar and her eyes and the musical tone of her voice. And he left the village and rode back to Isphatam.

But the legend was right. Edros waited in the ruins for her return and perhaps he waits there yet. But Shalamar comes once only to any man and must be followed then. . .



K. MEADOWS Jewelry and Novelties

928 S. Farber St.

GLENDORA, CALIFORNIA 91740

(213) 963-5753



TP - 1
Conjuration of Power



TP - 2
Win the Female



TP - 4
Discover Hidden Secrets



TP - 3
Discover Treasures



TP - 5
Power of Truth



TP - 7
Protection From Accidents



TP - 11
Helps Read Others' Thoughts



TP - 14
Gives Healing Powers



TP - 15
Protects From Animals



TP - 13
Endows Virtue and Talent



TP - 18
Brings Good Fortune



TP - 19
Repels Evil Spirits



G - 1
Solomon's Seal



G - 2
Solomon's Magic Triangle



G - 4
Magic Disc of Solomon



G - 6
Baphomet Knights Templar



G - 7
Pentagram of Solomon



G - 8
Gives Power over Others

TALISMANS, AMULETS, RINGS, OCCULT JEWELRY
WHOLESALE TO DEALERS AND RETAIL STORES

Packaged with detailed description

ALSO CUSTOM CASTINGS

Write for Catalog Sheets