

WEIRDBOOK TWO

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Editor's prizes will be awarded on publication
of the succeeding issue: \$5.00 for best poem,
\$10.00 for best story.

Credits: Back cover by Daniel W. Preston.
The Cherubs on p. 23 are photographs of tomb-
stone rubbings taken by Miss C. James of a
design by Daniel Bonebreak. Mask on p. 26
is a photograph of a wooden carving made in
the Philippines and belonging to the editor.
The front cover and the girl on p. 26 by G.M.F.

Editorial. It will be some time before WEIRD-
BOOK is a financial success. Until the sub-
scription list blossoms, the magazine will be

published much less often than quarterly: at
least once per year and probably no more than
twice. To help us, we suggest that you urge
your friends to subscribe and review our issue
for your favorite fanzines.

The editor's prizes for WEIRDBOOK ONE are
as follows: The poetry prize to H. W. Munn,
and the story prize split between H. W. Munn
and Robert E. Howard (i.e., to Glenn Lord, his
literary executor).

This page is being reduced by 85.5% of
copy, a compromise between the rest of the
issue and the editorial page of WEIRDBOOK ONE.
If the result is pleasing, future issues will
be reproduced in the same size, giving more
wordage per issue.

Again we are pleased to present stories by
H. Warner Munn, Joseph Payne Brennan, and
Robert E. Howard. In addition, we have a
fine tale by Leo P. Kelley. Mr. Kelley,
author of *The Counterfeits*, has a second novel
due to appear from Belmont Books (perhaps it
will be available by the time this issue is
out), *Odyssey to Earthdeath*. W. Paul Ganley

IN THE ROSE GARDEN

by A. Arthur Griffin

The clock strains toward midnight.
I tremble but cannot wake.
My soul dances through witch dreams,
Knowing the new hour must begin.
Quick as thought, I am standing again in a garden.
To the rear are shadows, chased by the dim light of jack o'lanterns.
I tremble but cannot wake.
I put out my hand, caress a rose bush by a marble wall.
In place of rose buds I fondle the faces of cherubs.
In place of the bright blossoms I brush the heads of men and maidens.
Littered on the turf beneath are skulls,
Grinning black skulls with eyes a-gape.
They crunch delicately beneath the wet soles of my sandalled feet.
I tremble but cannot wake.
Some one prunes this garden,
chooses dainty blooms for the breakfast table.
I glimpse a shaggy form at the garden's edge
Is it a scythe that the watcher bears?
His heavy glance falls upon me.
I tremble but cannot wake.

The Entity, by George T. Wetzel, is reprinted by the permission of the author from *The Gothic Horror and Other Stories*. *The Spell of Night*, by Andrew Duane, and *Variations on a Theme by Heine*, by Walt Klein, are reprinted from the Nov., 1950, and March/May, 1952, issues of *Fan-Fare* by permission of the editor. The latter also appeared in *Ghuvna*, edited by Joseph M. Fillinger, Jr. All are in the public domain.

City of the Seven Winds

by Joseph Payne Brennan

Don't ask me to be exact as to time and place. I was quite often drunk in those days and I always was vague as to points of the compass. I know it was a few years after World War II and that I had been traveling most of the day through a desert area somewhere near Syria. Actually, we may have crossed the border. I'm not sure.

Anyway, my guide quit as early evening approached. Just sat there in the sand, muttering, and refused to go a step further. Goluk, the camel-tender, couldn't seem to make up his mind whether to throw in his lot with the guide or to continue with me. I argued and swore and finally struck out alone on my own camel. I was determined not to spend the night in the desert. I had seen lights ahead and vowed to reach them by nightfall. I told those two sand rats I'd meet them the next day and off I went.

As I pushed on, the wind increased in strength. Soon it was howling past like some kind of Arabian banshee - if there is such a thing. It howled and moaned and sobbed and never stopped. And the closer I got to the lights up ahead, the worse it became. There was one odd thing, though. In spite of the wind, there was very little sand flying about. I couldn't understand that.

I was just beginning to congratulate myself - the lights ahead loomed close now - when the camel quit. It suddenly hunkered down in the sand and refused to get up. I cursed and kicked and coaxed but it wouldn't move. Just squatted there like the ugly heathen beast that it was and wouldn't budge.

Swearing, I removed my pack, slung it across my shoulders and pushed on. I was absolutely determined to spend the night in the town up ahead.

I slogged on while that rampaging wind tore at me as if I were a rag doll. I slued around in the sand and nearly fell flat several times but I kept on going.

I had the weird feeling that the lights were advancing to meet me and there, unexpectedly, was the town.

I've never seen such a place, before

or since - crooked stone houses with sloping tile roofs leaning crazily over narrow streets about half of which consisted of steps, outlandishly carved gables, queer little lattice windows set with sparkling discs of colored glass, and squat, square-cut chimney pots which looked like obsidian. It all reminded me of the cover illustration on a book of fairy tales which I had treasured at the age of five or thereabouts.

And I had the insane notion that the damnable wind originated somewhere in that strange town. Anyway, it reigned supreme. It absolutely scoured the angular streets, shook the glittering window lattices and wailed around the shining black chimney pots. It was up and down and in and out and it never stopped. It was as if the whole town had been dropped into a pool of the winds.

At first I didn't see a soul; finally as my eyes adjusted somewhat, I noticed several dim figures hurrying around corners, or up and down the ever-present steps. I walked on slowly, frowning, hunched up against the wind, but nobody paid any attention to me. I couldn't hear a scrap of sound except the scuffle and dirge of the wind.

I wanted to ask someone where I might find an inn, or whatever they called lodgings in that place, but I couldn't seem to get close enough to anyone to speak. I tried once, as a shadowy figure glided nearby, but my voice was snatched away by the wind.

I had wandered along, up and down steps, for seven blocks or so, when I saw lights shining through the thick, violet-tinted glass of a small window. Outside, over the door, an indecipherable sign creaked as it swung in the wind. I decided to take a chance.

Lifting the latch, I shoved open a massive door and stepped inside. As the door shut behind me, I was plunged into what seemed like absolute silence and darkness. Groping ahead, I ran into a curtain and pushed it aside. I blinked in the sudden light.

I appeared to be standing in an antiquated low-roofed tap room of some sort. Several old men in conical hats sat at small oval tables, sipping drinks. What I would call the bar was situated in the center of the room, sunk well below the

general floor level. Five or six steps led down to it. It was nothing but a big square table with a circular opening in the center for the server of drinks. He sat on a stool surrounded by green, blue and black bottles, and a few small silver cups.

The old men looked up as I entered; the bartender didn't stir. As I approached the bar and started down the steps, I saw that he was slumped on his stool, fast asleep.

The clink of a gold piece woke him up quickly enough. I took one of the green bottles and a silver cup and made my way to a table.

I'm not sure to this day what I drank, but a sip out of the silver cup and I felt like a new man. The liquor was fiery but smooth, if you know what I mean. It didn't jolt; instead, it set up a warm glow which accelerated and fed on itself.

I'd got halfway through the bottle when one of the old men who had been sitting alone arose and came over. He tapped me on the shoulder and nodded questioningly toward the empty chair opposite my own.

I welcomed him effusively enough and offered him a drink out of my green bottle. He accepted with alacrity, having brought his own silver cup.

As he sat quaffing, I was reminded of a gnome, or a dwarf, out of legend. He appeared to be withered and shrunken with extreme old age, but his eyes were more alive than any I'd ever seen. An off shade of green, they simply danced. I felt that he could look right into my cranium and read every thought.

In no time at all we were engaged in an abstruse philosophical discussion. I couldn't repeat it now, if my life depended on it, but I was carried away with it at the time.

My drinking companion - who, incidentally, never actually introduced himself - seemed to carry an encyclopaedia in that brown wrinkled head of his. His conversation was fascinating; the only thing that occasionally puzzled and annoyed me was his confusion --actual or feigned--regarding the flow of Time. He spoke as if Atlantis had gone under the sea the previous year, as if Carthage had fallen a few months before, as if Attila and his sub-human hordes had thundered past only yesterday.

When the green bottle was empty, I ordered another, and then another. My elfish companion matched me drink for drink and seemed

none the worse for it. I knew perfectly well that I was drinking far too much, but I didn't care.

The hours flew. Our conversation roved time and space. I listened, enthralled, as the little man in the conical hat talked on. He spoke as if he were an eye-witness to events which had occurred a thousand years ago.

Finally a gong sounded, the violet lights dimmed and my companion arose. He bowed.

"Permit me, sir, to conduct you to my modest abode. It is at least shelter against the night."

I stood up, reeling. "Thanks," I replied, "but I thought this was an inn."

He smiled enigmatically. "By no means, sir. The chambers above have regular occupants. This man dispenses usquebaugh only."

As I left with my diminutive companion, I felt that the eyes of the others followed us out.

Once outside, the wind seized us. If I had thought it wild before, it was frenzied now. It boomed and blasted through those narrow alleys like the start of a desert hurricane. I feared that I would be swept off my feet, but my little friend bounded ahead of me, up and down steps, as nimble as a mountain goat. Conversation was not possible. I followed him wordlessly.

Presently he seemed to disappear into a wall which ran along one side of the twisting street. As I grew close, I saw that he had slipped into an aperture so small that I had to enter sideways. A few yards down he held open a wattle-work door. I followed him inside and he dropped a huge wooden bolt.

The relatively frail door and the big wooden bolt puzzled me. I suppose I smiled at the incongruity.

He sensed my thoughts. "The bolt is only to keep it closed, my friend. We do not fear what may enter *here!*"

I shrugged and followed him up stone steps which soon began to seem endless. They twisted and coiled and circled back upon themselves. The adjacent walls were solid stone; once or twice we passed a flaring faggot torch held by a wall bracket.

I was thoroughly winded when the stairs ended and my host led me down a dark stone

corridor.

He opened another door--a thick timbered one reinforced with protruding iron rivets--and bowed me inside.

The room was like the laboratory of a medieval alchemist or the den of a wizard. Rows of incunabula lined the shelves; tables were strewn with ancient maps, compasses, vials of colored liquids, beakers and retorts, small carved stone figures, rolls of yellowed parchment and some other items for which I did not even have a name. From a niche cut in the top of an alcove a human skull grinned down at me.

Shutting the door, my friend waved me to a bench, disappeared into the curtained-off alcove and presently reappeared bearing a dark colored squarish bottle and two silver mugs.

He poured an amber-colored liquid into the mugs. "A final drop to insure a good night's sleep, my friend!" He held out one of the mugs.

Just as I accepted it, a sound from somewhere outside made him turn his head. In that instant I dashed the contents of the mug onto the stone floor behind the bench.

But when he turned back, I lifted the mug in a mock toast, brought it to my lips and made as if to drink.

He lifted his own mug, but I got the impression that he barely sipped the contents.

He nodded, looking at me owlishly. "We have had a fine conversation. You have a keen interest in all things seen and unseen! I have told you much, but I have scarcely touched the surface. Come, my friend, follow me! A last gesture of hospitality before you fall asleep!"

Setting down his mug, he started toward a distant corner of the room. Mystified, I followed.

A great door, thicker even than the other, and strengthened with iron hoops, lay hidden in shadows in one corner. He swung it open to reveal a short flight of steps leading upward. The chamber thus disclosed was small and circular. I immediately understood that his laboratory was on the top of the building and that this small room was a sort of turret extending above one corner of the roof.

In the large outer room I had heard nothing, but here in the turret the mad moaning of the wind again became audible. I looked up, seeing nothing but a faint glim-

mer of light.

My dwarf host urged me up the steps. "Give your eyes time to adjust to the changed light," he instructed me. "You will then see much!"

A sizable square of curved glass was set into one wall of the turret. It looked smoky at first and I could see nothing, but gradually it began to clear and then I imagined that I saw shadows moving against the outside of the glass.

Shadows! If only they had remained shadows! But the glass cleared quickly enough and then there was revealed to me a glimpse into such a hell as I never hope to see again.

Seemingly suspended in the outside air, floating, writhing and squirming, was a vast host. There are no words in the limited language in which I write to encompass them. I think of human abortions which have somehow been imbued with hideous half-liquid life, of monstrous elementals from some infinitely distant end of the universe, of the half-conceived hallucinations of some unspeakable god of savagery and chaos, brought to being in a devil's broth which boiled and seethed outside there in the night, borne up by the wings of that wailing wind. They were the foul, demon host of outer darkness, mercifully shut off from ordinary human sight.

They gibbered and gasped, rolling with the waves of wind, their dead-white eyes pressed close against the glass. I thought of corpses, long dead, lashed and flung in the troughs of an angry sea. Mouths ugly and grey as the belly of a moccasin mewed and moped. Slimy stumps which appeared to be some kind of appendages poked at the glass. At one point a mottled horror which seemed to be devouring its own viscera loomed and was gone.

Sick, shaken with horror and abhorrence, I tried to turn away from the glass; yet I stared on, motionless, like a forest bird frozen into immobility by the swaying head of a serpent.

A sly chuckling sounded behind me. My diminutive friend spoke up. "You are fascinated, sir! And justifiably! Few outside this city have seen what you see now--and I can assure you none have lived to describe the spectacle!"

His dry laughter grated out again. "But now it is my duty to inform you that

within seconds you will be completely helpless! You will be entirely unable to move--you recall our little toast, eh?--but you will retain all your senses--sight, hearing, etc. I shall leave you alone in the tower room, but do not despair, my good friend! Very shortly you will have visitors! The window will slide back. You will be positively overwhelmed! The children of the wind will make sport with you. It may be their playful way to pluck out all your hairs and pull off a bit of flesh before they finish. They will bear you away on the wind, my friend! Perhaps a few red bones may be scattered on the sands some hours hence!"

He paused and his voice took on a note of mock apology. "You understand the justice of all this? You have been permitted to enter our city and you have been well entertained. You must pay the price. In any case you should consider it an honor to be given over to the children of the wind! Unless they are furnished with an occasional offering, they become restless. It is our policy to keep them above the roofs! You can imagine the confusion if they descended to our very streets! Farewell, dear friend!"

Throughout all this monologue, I remained perfectly still, scarcely breathing. But the instant I heard my treacherous host move toward the turret door, I leaped into life.

Whirling around, I sprang down the steps, landing squarely on top of him. He fell heavily, taken completely by surprise, but in the next instant he was fighting back like a cornered badger. He bit and clawed and kicked, but I knew the strength of near madness. A kind of berserker fury overwhelmed me. I pounded that gnome-like face until it was pulp, until I thought his skull would split against the stone steps.

I wasted no time, however, once he stopped struggling. After a final upward glance at that ghastly window into hell, I hurried from the turret room, slammed the thick door and dropped a huge outside bolt.

As I leaned there, panting, I noticed a sort of lever protruding from the wall adjacent to the door. I understood at once that it permitted the turret window to be withdrawn or closed. As the lever was moved one way or the other, the curved window probably slid in and out of a grooved recess cut into the turret wall.

As I contemplated it, I detected a scabbling, scratching noise within the turret. Evidently, in spite of the hammering I had given him, my lethal host was reviving. Judging by the sound, he was fumbling with the door.

Instantly I was beset by fresh fears--fears that he might somehow open the door and confront me with a new kind of horror which my flesh-and-blood fists could not subdue, fears, also, that he might summon aid.

I acted on impulse, without giving myself time to think about possible consequences. Rushing to the wall, I pulled the lever back as far as it would go.

For a moment there was absolute silence; then I heard a subdued roaring sound. Immediately afterwards a cry broke forth which stirred the hairs on my head. It reminded me of the despairing, high-pitched, prolonged squeal of a great rat hopelessly pinned in the jaws of a steel trap. It went on and on, an agonized indescribable shriek of utter anguish.

And then I heard the other sounds, snufflings, fumbings, titters, floppings, mewings--all intermingled with the rising roar of the wind.

Thesquealing quickly mounted in crescendo; it became so shrill, so piercing, that I imagined it could be heard miles away.

Abruptly it grew fainter. It seemed, first, to come from just outside the turret window; then it retreated into the night, until gradually it was lost in the ever-present skirl and howl of the wind.

Had that wild shriek of despair been heard throughout the town? As the thought occurred to me, I dashed from the room, down the dark corridor to the twisting stairs. In spite of their convolutions, I almost flew. Flinging up the bolt on the wattle-work door, I hurled myself into the night and ran for my life. I ran as I had never run before, nor have since. Up and down the accursed alley steps, down long streets of utter darkness where the walls were only feet apart, across dim, deserted cobblestone courts which seemed to have existed since the beginning of recorded time.

More than once I sprawled headlong, but I was up in an instant and running again. I was sure that a pursuit was in progress and that my only chance was to reach the

outskirts of the town and race away over the desert sands.

When the buildings finally thinned out, my breath was coming in great broken sobs and my legs trembled. Yet I pushed on until I felt the sands underfoot and glimpsed stars overhead. Even then I did not stop. I ran on and on until darkness spun about me and my legs buckled.

When I opened my eyes, the sun was coming up. Goluk, the camel-tender, squatted nearby.

When I related my adventures of the night, he stared at me as if I were a corpse come back to life. Finally--making a sign to ward off demons--he shook his head.

"You have escaped alive from the City of the Seven Winds!" he exclaimed. "Honored sir, you are one in ten thousand!"

I looked around. On every side, stretching to the distant horizon, there was nothing but level sand dunes. "But Goluk, I could not have run this far. Did you carry me here on your camel?"

"I found you where you now lie!"

It was my turn to stare at him. "Where, then, is this city you mention, this city of seven winds?"

He waved vaguely toward the horizon. "Out there--somewhere. They can make it invisible if they wish. It has been there since time began!"

"And who are 'they', Goluk?"

He looked at me as if he pitied my ignorance. "The sorcerers, honored sir. They have held the City of the Seven Winds for as long as the sands have drifted! Sometimes it is known as the City of the Sorcerers!"

"Which are the seven winds? I know only of four."

Goluk got up. "The four winds of earth and the three winds of hell!" He walked toward his camel and would say no more.

He brought me to the first border town and left hurriedly. It was evident that he had no further desire to travel in my company.

There the matter rests. A grizzled old trader I met in a Tunis bazaar later intimated that the City of the Seven Winds existed on another level of the time continuum. But no one really wanted to talk about the place.

Some of my friends say the whole business was a nightmare brought on by too much drink. Goluk, the camel-tender, thought otherwise.

THE SPELL OF NIGHT

by Andrew Duane

The shores of night, on which the cloud-waves break,
 Extend for leagues before me as I stand,
 A-tremble at the sight. That wondrous land,
 Serene beyond the spume-tipped waves that make
 The dark a glory of translucent mist,
 Has caught my soul; and from its subtle hold
 No more may I adventure as of old
 Until the very stars cease to exist.

The edge of night has touched me with its spell,
 Has drawn me from the normal haunts of men.
 In stellar paths above the hazy ken
 Of those whose lives are bound by Heaven and Hell,
 I'll wander, lonely like a vagrant Mars,
 And listen to the thunder of the stars.

RETURN OF THE SPY

by *H. Warner Mann*

All day the outcome of the battle had remained doubtful. Just before twilight the Knights of Roszny broke through the staggering Teutonic center and wheeling in columns right and left, enveloped both wings. The Muscovian irregulars broke and fled across the Hungarian plain. The rest was massacre.

When dusk was almost fallen and all was quiet near him, the observer came down from his tree. He was a short wiry man, with bandy legs which made him look even shorter as he ran, crouching, from one point of concealment to another. His face was flat and broad and as brown as the leather which clothed him. Utterly devoid of expression, it did not disclose that he had that day looked upon slaughter most terrible.

One might have thought that such scenes were a part of his normal life.

He ran on toward a distant copse, where the undergrowth lay thick, leaping over corpses which lay in windrows as they had stood. Once a wounded man struck out blindly at the sound of his padding feet, but he easily evaded the weak blow.

For a hundred yards there was nothing to hide him and here death struck from the air. His first warning was a thin whistling sound, almost a musical thrumming, and then a rushing shadow swept across the grass. He looked up to see a glider diving at him and falling from it a shower of glittering splinters. He knew well what to expect and threw himself into a little hollow, covering the back of his neck with his hands, but one of the barbed steel needles went through his biceps, nailing him to the ground. A second drove deep into his thigh and the glider swept almost noiselessly on.

Another man might have screamed or cursed. This one grunted, tore out the painful spikes and, bleeding profusely, hobbled toward the shelter at his best speed.

The glider banked, wheeled, and rapidly losing altitude, slid back for the kill. The observer could see the goggled head of

the man inside and the outstretched fist which clutched another bunch of the deadly missiles. He braced himself for the impact, stumbling sidelong like the scurrying mouse under the shade of the hawk.

However, as the glider veered once more, a stray gust of wind lifted one wingtip and sent it careening into the trees. Spars cracked, fabric tore, and the attacker crashed from branch to limb to earth and lay broken and helpless there.

Cautiously, the wounded man approached him, but he was no longer a menace. He was feebly trying to cock a spring gun, but the observer kicked it, almost casually, from his hand and tore off his enemy's coarse shirt, making bandages for his own wounds.

He lay there and panted, his beady black eyes sweeping the littered plain. Here and there a riderless horse was grazing, but he saw no other sign of life. Apparently the incident had attracted no attention, or there was no one there to see.

The dying pilot groaned, but the observer wasted no time upon him. Impassively he watched the passing, in the gathering darkness, until all was still and he knew himself alone.

When he stood up, he felt weak but fought the sensation as he stumbled, with stiffening muscles, toward the nearest horse. It raised its head, smelling the blood upon him as he came, but the man approached cautiously, step by halting step. The horse moved away a few feet and began to feed again. He waited, then came a little closer. The charger lifted his head again, but this time he did not move away. Here the grass was lush and good and he was loath to leave it.

The observer approached, speaking softly. The animal found the words strange, but he recognized an affinity between himself and the human. This man knew horses well. The odor of horse was strong in his leathers. Here was a man to be trusted.

He waited until the man was settled upon his back and the vitality of the strong hand was transmitted to him through the tight rein. Then, obeying the indicated urge, he imperceptibly increased his speed. The man, swaying in the saddle, was carried eastward into the dark.

Through the quiet country they went on

until the stars paled, seeing no other light. All night they had passed by houses which were no more than empty shells, blackened, jagged and untenanted. Once the hoofs woke echoes in a deserted village street. No one looked out of the fanged and splintered windows to see them go by and when they entered the open country again there was no distant aura upon the horizon to reveal the presence of a populated city beneath it. War had trodden heavily upon this land.

Almost unconscious, the observer clung with a death grip. His stiffened fingers were twined deeply into the knots he had earlier tied in the tangled mane. His bowed legs fitted naturally to the curve of the horses sides and were clamped there as though a symbiosis had taken place between man and steed.

Long since the horse had sensed a lessening of the man's powers and slackened his pace. Now he plodded on, and the reins no longer guiding him while he continued in the proper direction, he moved heavily, without pride, like an old cart-horse, head down, hoofs dragging, half asleep. But if he turned aside --. Ah! Then the hand grew firm once more, twisting the bit cruelly, and so they went on toward the rising sun.

With the light, the man revived and looked about him. He recognized his surroundings and knew he still had far to go. In sudden panic he estimated his waning strength. His arm was numb and gave him no more pain, but the wound in his leg, kept open by the motion of the jogging horse, had filled his half-boot with blood. The stirrup dripped and all that side was wet.

Now indeed his imperturbability was shaken. They were moving across fields which had once been tilled, but which had long lain fallow. He recognized wild carrots and onions which had gone to seed but did not dare dismount, for he knew he could not get up into the saddle again. Once he bent far down and snatched a bundle of wheat straw some gleaner had lost or forgotten.

The effort made him reel and he did not dare try again, but rode on through a wildly rocking world, until it ceased to race around him and he began to pluck and munch the moldy kernels. The food gave him a little strength and when it was gone,

he made himself a cud of the straw and continued chewing it for a while. Then, with the point of his dagger, he nicked a vein in the horse's neck. The horse flung up his head at the sudden prick, although it was almost painless, and danced for a few paces, but he was so weary he soon settled back into his drowsy gait.

The Observer set his lips to the punctured vein and drank deeply until he was satisfied, then pinched the edges of the wound together. Now he felt much stronger. He searched his pockets and found some crumbs remaining of the cheese which had sustained him while he was watching the battle between the last two organized armies in Europe. He ate them thankfully.

His wounds throbbed, but he did not dare loosen and adjust the bandages again. He held his numb hand tightly against his leg. He thought the flow lessened. The horse dragged on into the east.

Shortly before mid-day, he knew his false strength was going. When the horse turned aside to a little brook and drank, he knew that it was foundering itself, but he could not tug hard enough at the bridle to make it stop drinking. He wanted the water. The sound of the purling stream was agony, but he could only look on as the horse continued to drink until swollen and satisfied.

Finally it curved its great neck and with a long sigh, gazed at the man sitting helplessly in the saddle. They looked at one another with a strange and sad understanding, then the horse began to crop the rich grasses which fringed the brook.

The man waited. At last, without urging and choosing its own pace, his mount once more took up the road to the east.

Now it seemed to the man that, though the sun still shone, great waves of darkness were sweeping across the land. Shaken into consciousness when the horse stumbled, his eyelids would lift, but he saw nothing but the changes in the quality of the gathering shadows. The light came and went, but the gloom remained longer and each time it was harder to push away. His knees were still clenched tight against the saddle.

Then there was no more light. There was only a difference between thick blackness and a tenebrous haze and a feeling of drifting and of peace.

At the post-house which the Kha Khan had ordered set up to mark the boundary between Asia and Europe the guard on duty watched the horse come weaving on, pausing to nibble the dusty herbage by the roadside, ambling a few more steps, stopping for moments at a time. As it approached, casting a huge shadow before it, the guard looking into the setting sun did not at first discern the rider lying flat upon the broad back. Even then he did not realize that this was the man for whom they had been told to watch.

It was only when the staggering horse came close enough so that he could see that the leather clothing of the man matched that which he himself wore that he beat upon the gong and roused the others.

Then they pried the cramped legs away from the foreign saddle and cut the mane away from the dead fingers and gently lifted their companion down.

The Ung-khan thrust his hand into the sheepskin jerkin and drew out the bamboo tube he found there. Opening it, he

quickly read the painted characters on the scroll.

"It is true!" he cried. "This is what we have awaited. Let the horses die under you till this reaches the Khan with all speed. That which was stronger than the lightning and louder than the thunder is forgotten.

They fight now with axe and arrow and with spear! Their machines are rotted away and we shall see our campfires stretch across the earth as the ancient Genghis predicted!"

He thrust the scroll back into the tube and gave it into the hand of the impatient dispatch rider.

Long they watched him go, dwindling into dusty distance, riding hard and fast and far, until he could hand it to the next waiting man, relay after relay hurling it on into the hidden fastnesses where three thousand miles away a million Mongols waited to ride again with fire and sword.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY HEINE

by Walt Klein

the dance is done. musicians pack
their instruments, and, grinning, blend
into the silent night. the dream
inducing phrensies end - the trance
is lifted from the red rheumed eyes:
those red rimmed holes of emptiness
within a gap lipped, sun bleached skull.
the dancers stare amazed upon
their partners, seeing snout of pig,
fox, hyena, ape or vulture,
who, staring back, perceive the same ...

pan, in a phrensy laughing, strolls
among the statued populace,
shrilly piping, piping, piping,
his goat hooves, clicking on the flat,
the lifeless, barren granite ground,
which stretches mile on mile on mile.

and over all the cynic moon,
stripped of its pearl and diamond shine
leers mocking down out of the pocked
and leprous landscape of its face.

TERROR FROM THE AGES

by Ray Jones

T-thank you for the drink--I think I can talk now. I'm sorry for waking you at this hour, but I've got to talk to somebody...

Before I begin, I must ask--*BEG*--you not to question my sanity; I couldn't stand that, not *NOW!* The slightest question now and I could very well *GO* mad!

Doctor Phillip Black is dead--murdered; *NO!* Don't interrupt! I may not be able to get it out coherently again!

You don't know Phillip. He was head of the department of paleontology at the University, and he was my friend.

His specialty was the Class Trilobita, a group of prehistoric creatures living from the Cambrian, 500 million years ago, to the Permian, 190 million years ago. They were arthropods and related to insects; flattish and spiny, like crushed sow bugs, some of them floated on the water, but most crawled along the sea floor. In their heyday, they were the dominant life form on this planet--they diversified into species and numbers beyond counting.

Phillip was completely absorbed by them. In college, he began to collect fossil trilobites, and by the time we graduated, he had thousands of specimens and hundreds of species. He was like a bee with honey when he found or bought a new specimen--examining it, showing it to everyone who would look, and identifying it a dozen times before carefully filing it away in the special room which he arranged for his collection.

One day he came to my apartment, carrying a large box, and appearing very agitated.

"Jim! I've examined this thing for weeks and--and-- I think it's a *LAND* species!!"

"I thought you said that they were strictly aquatic," I replied.

He went on to say that that was what everyone else thought, and he gave me a whole list of reasons, which I've forgotten, about why he thought it was land based, and raved on and on about how important it was.

About two weeks later, I was visiting him while he cleaned the extraneous stone from a new specimen from Arizona.

We were laughing and joking and having a good time, not suspecting what lurked

under the obscuring layers of that awful rock.

After a few moments, I noticed that he wasn't paying any attention to me, but was instead concentrating on the rock and sporting a puzzled look.

He chiseled away the afternoon, with only moderate responses to my jokes and questions, and then called me to his side to examine his find.

Five trilobites were in evidence--they looked crushed, as though caught in a small rockslide. Intermixed with the ancient corpses were large splinters and slabs of woody material.

Phillip had a funny look in his eye. "Woody tissue," he said, "from *Lepidodendrons* and tree ferns *SHAPED* into sheets! For what purpose? Dwellings, of course? By *WHAT?* Nothing else present but trilobites. How? With those sharpened rocks that are lying about?"

The man was in a state verging on religious ecstasy. A sign that his beloved trilobites might have possessed a rudimentary intelligence. I thought he was getting ahead of himself. The slabs of petrified wood *MIGHT* have been from some new, unknown species of plant, but he would have none of that.

I soon learned that he had made plans to fly to the area in Arizona where the rock was found, to hunt for more evidence.

I received my first letter from him a week after he arrived. He was camped near some place called Rabbit Rock, and got his mail through a tiny nearby town.

The very first letter told of the discovery of more samples of those land trilobites and their 'dwellings.'

In his later writings he told of how the samples he was uncovering were turning out to be stranger and stranger; the 'structures' were becoming more elaborate and complex with the passage of time--but that his work was being impaired by the fact that some great geological upheaval, eons ago, had scrambled the sedimentary layers, making accurate dating and the finding of intact specimens difficult.

Early one morning, I was awakened by a delivery boy with a special delivery letter.

In part, it went "...and after re-examining the deposits in some of the specimen dwellings, I can come to no other conclusion than, dear God, *THEY HAD FIRE!!*"

This set off in my mind a series of

reactions, primarily that my friend was cracking under the strain and the heat. I could not, in my weirdest fantasies, give credit to his statement--in spite of the vast diversity of this particular form of life, the mastery of fire suggested a mental power that simply could not be accredited to an invertebrate, or to any terrestrial life except man.

His next letters told a strange story of a race of trilobites trapped in a great salt lake when the inland sea retreated from the southwestern area of the Northern Hemisphere. How with the passage of time they developed intelligence in the combat against extinction. He told how they discovered metal-working, and even a crude form of writing which he was endeavoring to translate. They were spurred on to develop at great speed by the rapid shrinking of their once vast lake. They were still amphibious, needing water for their young, and with the desert on the heels of the retreating waters, they were forced to herculean labors. He went on to say how the written records and pictographs described their hollowing out of great caverns under the earth into which they drained the diminishing waters to conserve them against evaporation. Carlsbad Cavern, he said, was only a small part of one of these systems which failed--the water leaked out of the rock over geological ages, leaving the constructors to dry to dust. Other vaster cavern systems still exist far beneath the surface...the engineering problems in maintaining such systems must have been cyclopean, trilobites must have died by the billions as their caverns slowly dried out. But perhaps, in the deeper parts, where the rock was less porous, where it was cooler...

The next week, I missed his accustomed letter. I put it down to his being so caught up in his work that he had forgotten me. The next week--no letter. Two months passed, and to say that I was growing apprehensive was an under statement.

Myriad things can befall a lone man of the desert--heatstroke, spider-bite, snakes, disease, and those rocks; he might be dying at this very moment, after severely hurting himself from a tumble from one of those high rocks...or an avalanche!!

Last night, Phillip came to my house. I will always remember the haggard and worn look on his face; he was deathly pale and he had lost a great deal of weight. His eyes were strangest, though; they had a

sort of.. a 'stunned ox' look--as if they had seen too much.

The voice that issued from his mouth was scarcely that of the Phillip I remembered...dull and unemotional it was, with a tired sound and no inflection...

His words still ring in my ears.. "Jim ...I looked too far...down there...in the desert... I've found things, seen things that the world mustn't know...horrible... down there in the earth... I've got to destroy all traces of my work for mankind... hammered my specimens to dust, burnt my notes...only my letters to you left...got to destroy them for all our sakes...the things I've seen..."

I could clearly see that he was in no shape to be argued with, and, too, I thought that the destruction of those letters might help snap him out of his delusions, so I fired up the fireplace and we burned his letters.

Then Phillip did the one thing that I never expected... he pulled a gun on me.

"Please forgive me Jim, after this I'll kill myself; no one must ever know...as long as either of us live, we might let a word slip...if the world ever found out..."

Then I knew that my friend Phillip Black was totally insane.

I reacted more quickly than I ever had before... I hated to harm my friend, but he was going to kill us both. I quickly bent down, picked up an iron poker, swung it and struck him across the head!

Oh abysmal horror!! How can I say what I felt in that nightmare instant!! His head neatly opened at the scalpline and the top of his head flew off!!! *HIS BRAIN HAD BEEN REMOVED!!! DEAR GOD, the cavity was filled with the chitinous bulk of a flattish, many legged roach-like monstrosity!!! The thing spilled out and CAME SCUTTLING TOWARD ME!!! BY ALL THE SAINTS, THE THING TOUCHED ME!!! IT TOUCHED ME WITH ITS OBSCENE BRISTLE-LEGS AND IT TOUCHED ME!!! It crawled up my leg!! I CRUSHED MY OTHER FOOT ONTO IT AND BRUSHED IT OFF! I BROUGHT MY FOOT DOWN ON IT AND IT CRUSHED LIKE A GIANT ROACH AND ICHOROUS JUICES RAN ACROSS THE FLOOR AND I CRUSHED AND CRUSHED AND CRUSHED AND I TURNED AND I RAN AND RAN AND RA-AN...*

LIKE FATHER

by Leo P. Kelley

"Come in, missus! Tell you something good. Fifty cents." Odalie half rose from her chair in front of the grimy store window but the woman passing by gave her barely a glance before hurrying on.

Yesterday the store had been empty. Today Odalie occupied it. It was located in the forties on Manhattan's West Side. A crudely lettered sign proclaimed: *Palms read by expert. All questions answered by Madame Odalie.* 50¢.

"Come inside, lady," Odalie cried, beckoning, as another woman approached. "Tell you many good things. Only fifty cents!"

Again she was ignored. She petulantly retied her kerchief and shifted position on her hard wooden chair. She allowed her glance to wander up and down the street. In the distance, a boy of nine loped gracefully toward her. Distaste mingled with alarm flickered across her features. It was Geraldo. Her son.

He darted inside the dim store. No word of greeting had been exchanged. Odalie made the two-fingered sign to ward off the evil eye. She crossed herself. No use taking chances. Not with Geraldo. His father had been a voodoo priest. Geraldo was a warlock.

Back in the hills in Haiti her son would have brought her status. Here he was only trouble. Remembering the long nights under the ivory moon around the leaping flames, Odalie thought of Ephraim and his devilish magnificence. He knew more of voodoo than anyone in their village. More even than Mama Marie, the old one, who was said to have lived more than one hundred years. Ephraim had looked on Odalie who was then fifteen with pleasure. He taught her to assist him in the midnight sending of the living dead. She learned to prepare the powders under his tutelage and she it was who held high the heads of the great-eyed goats as the thin blade of Ephraim's knife slid cleanly across their throats during the sensuous worship of Asmodeus, the Dark One. Even Mama Marie had nodded her approval. Odalie bore Ephraim a son. She

called him Geraldo, but that was not his name in the hidden hill rites. Later Ephraim wasted away and finally strangled in airless agony. No one ever found the voodoo doll someone had used to kill him. Odalie fled Haiti, taking Geraldo with her.

Now the old days were gone. But not completely, for Geraldo remained. He had proved to be his father's son. Odalie never told anyone, not even Harry, her current protector, about the mice and how Geraldo had thought the change on them. She never mentioned the incident of the *calling*. It had left a neighbor's baby something less than human; something to be locked away in a dark room and forgotten about except for the awful times it howled its hunger.

Odalie sighed and went inside, past the flowered curtains disguising the entrance to the rear of the store, past the ten cent vases filled with orchid and orange feathers, through the narrow cubicle where she told her client's fortunes and into the small back room where she and Geraldo slept and ate their meals. Geraldo was sitting on the floor, his dark head bent, his slim fingers flying as he manipulated pieces of colored glass, turning them now this way, now that, so that they seized the light and sparkled, blazed and glimmered, rippled and pulsed with colored life. He looked up as she entered and smiled. White teeth flashed and ebony eyes gleamed. Behind the smile, Odalie could feel him thinking at her. She silently repeated the ageless phrases taught her by Ephraim, forcing Geraldo's thoughts to waver, weaken. His smile remained as she made tea. They drank it in a silence broken only by the ticking of a battered alarm clock and Geraldo's sinuous, probing thoughts.

Harry came. As usual he made more noise than was necessary. He shouted his adenoidal greeting, managed to bump into the kitchen table causing the tea cups to rattle and blew his nose vehemently. Geraldo's smile faded. He returned to his bits of colored glass.

"Ya makin' any money, honey?" Harry asked, sitting down at the table.

"Do you want tea, Harry?" Odalie inquired.

He shook his head. "Brought a bottle." He opened the paper bag he carried and extracted a pint of port wine. "Gotta

glass?"

She gave him a glass and he poured a drink and downed it. He gestured at her with the bottle but she shook her head. Geraldo began to glue his bits of colored glass to a piece of cardboard cut in the shape of a six-pointed star. On the cardboard he had painstakingly outlined strange symbols with a red crayon.

"Can't the kid go outside?" Harry poured another drink.

"Geraldo, go outside and play," Odalie said. It sounded like a plea rather than a command.

Geraldo smiled up at his mother. "I am playing," he said, studying her.

Odalie glanced helplessly at Harry and fear darkened her eyes.

"Well, take that junk outside and play with it!" Harry snarled.

Odalie went rigid.

Geraldo smiled but he thought insects at Harry and Harry cursed. "Something bit me on the neck!" he declared angrily, rubbing the spot. "You oughta spray this place. Get rid of the mosquitos and things."

Odalie shuddered, avoiding Geraldo's glance. Nothing more was said until Geraldo left the room carrying his cardboard and pieces of glass. As soon as they were alone, Harry rose and seized Odalie. He kissed her and she, forgetting Geraldo momentarily, responded ardently.

"That kid of yours," Harry said after a moment, "is a pain in the neck. The way he goes pussy footin' around the place. And he looks kinda funny sometimes."

"He's just a child," Odalie put in hastily.

"Maybe so, but he gets on my nerves. You know, I been meanin' to bring this up. I been thinkin' we shouldn't have to have a kid like that tyin' us down, spoilin' our fun." He winked at her.

Odalie looked anxiously toward the curt curtained doorway, putting a finger to her lips. "Sshhh," she warned. "He'll hear you."

"So what if he does?" Harry barked.

In the front of the store, Geraldo listened as he finished gluing the fragmented glass to the cardboard. He no longer smiled. He held up the finished project. It resembled a pinwheel. He fastened it to a stick with a single nail and then spun it on its axis. It whirled, flashing fire. Geraldo stopped its motion and a satisfied

grin spread across his face. He ignored the smothered laughter coming from the rear of the store and went outside. It was growing dark and the street was nearly empty. He walked around the corner and entered the hallway of a four-story tenement. He ran his finger down the bells and pressed the second from the bottom. A moment later a buzzer sounded and he opened the door.

"Who's there? Who is it?" a woman's voice called down from the darkness above.

"Can the twins come out to play" Geraldo called back.

"No, it's late and--."

Geraldo frowned. His fingers formed fists. He concentrated.

"All right!" the voice called. They're coming. Just a minute."

Geraldo walked between them. Concetta, a girl with stringy brown hair skipped beside him on his left and Angelo, possessed of darker hair but the same gray eyes, was on his right.

"I've a pinwheel," Geraldo said. "Want to see?"

"What's a pinwheel?" Concetta chirped.

"I'll show you," Geraldo promised.

They entered the store. Geraldo's gaze rested momentarily on the curtained doorway. All was quiet behind it. He switched on the fly-stained overhead light and picked up his pinwheel from the table where he had left it. He held it in front of him, facing the twins.

"What does it do?" Angelo asked.

"It's pretty," Concetta squealed delightedly.

The three children sat on the floor.

"Watch," Geraldo commanded and touched the wheel. It turned slowly, spreading shards of reflected light throughout the room. He touched it again and it revolved more rapidly. The two children watched, fascinated, as it spun. Scarlet flames glowed in the wheel. Glittering green chips of color ricocheted off amber rays of deadly intensity. Geraldo sat motionless, holding the wheel, only his lips moving, summoning the voices. They came whispering secret words that were old when Ra reigned. The wheel whirled wildly. The children watched the colors glow and blend, creating in the blending a new color, one they had never seen before and one for which they knew no name.

Angelo screamed. Concetta's wide eyes grew suddenly wider and then she screamed too, a thin desolate wail. Neither child could look away from the spinning kaleidoscope of color.

Geraldo stopped the wheel. His voices faded.

Only then were both children able to struggle to their feet, screeching, clawing at their eyes. They stumbled about the room blindly, still screaming, still tearing at their eyes with frantic fingers. Geraldo sprang to his feet and shoved first Angelo and then Concetta toward the door. He pulled it open and pushed them through it.

Odalie burst into the room, a pink satin housecoat loosely draped about her, followed by a bare-footed Harry.

Her face was contorted with terror. "What happened?" she cried in a stricken voice.

Geraldo turned and stared at her. She stepped backward, groping for Harry. "We were playing," Geraldo stated flatly. "They've gone" he added.

An hour later, two detectives and a policeman arrived at the store. Odalie, with Geraldo and Harry watching, admitted them.

"You know the Lucino twins?" the burlier of the detectives asked Odalie with deceptive nonchalance.

Odalie nodded as Geraldo placed his cold hand in hers.

"They were here tonight?"

"Yes," she answered. It was all she could manage.

"Somebody or something blinded those kids not more'n an hour ago," the second detective muttered. "The doctors can't find nothing wrong with them. But they're blind. It's mighty funny," he concluded.

Geraldo smiled his smile.

"They're still hysterical," the policeman volunteered. "We can't get a sensible word out of either of them."

"What were they doing here?" the second detective asked.

"We were playing," Geraldo offered in a soft voice.

"They were all right when they left?"

Harry opened his mouth to speak.

"Oh, yes," Odalie declared quickly, feeling the pressure of Geraldo's small hand.

Geraldo was still smiling when the

detective left.

"Like father, like son," Odalie whimpered. She sat with Harry in the rear room and she was crying.

"That kid!" Harry exclaimed.

Odalie, in the grip of growing fear, reached out and took Harry's hand. She ached to tell him about Ephraim. She longed to tell him about Geraldo. She said nothing as the tears freed themselves from her eyelids.

In an attempt to console Odalie, Harry went out the next day and bought her violets and a portable radio in a silver case. When he presented them to her she smiled a wan smile and kissed him half-heartedly.

Later, over a cup of coffee, Harry declared, "We gotta do something about that kid! Once and for all!"

"Hello," said Geraldo, suddenly appearing in the doorway, flicking his gaze from his mother to Harry and back again.

"See what Harry brought us," Odalie cried, with a feeble attempt at gaiety, indicating the radio.

Geraldo crossed the room to examine it. He turned it on and listened to a popular song. He changed stations. He turned up the volume.

"Oh, not so loud, Geraldo," Odalie pleaded. "Please," she added plaintively.

Geraldo listened to the radio all that afternoon while his mother solicited customers, read an occasional palm and sweated in the heat of a ninety degree day.

Tiring at last of the weather forecasts and news reports, the monotonous repetition of the same songs over and over again, he proceeded to remove the rear panel from the radio. He peered inside at the glowing tubes and the colored wires. After a moment he called silently and his voices answered. With them guiding him, he pulled the plug, disconnecting the radio, after which he made a few major alterations in the wiring. Then he replaced the panel, put the plug in the socket and idly picked up a magazine and began to read.

That night after dinner Harry turned on the radio. Geraldo went outside to wait.

"Turn it down, Harry, it's too loud!" Odalie complained.

"You said it!" he agreed.

He fiddled with the dials but the sound increased, flooding the room. It rose rapidly in intensity until it reached an agonizing crescendo. Harry twisted the dials in a state approaching panic. He banged his hairy fist on the top of the silver case. Odalie, in pain, tried to shut out the hateful sound by covering her ears. She called weakly to Harry. He failed to hear her. The sound became a living *presence* in the room. Odalie tried to rise but the sound immobilized her where she sat. She felt it within her, pressing outward, straining. It burst the confining wall of her body. It shattered Harry seconds later.

Geraldo returned, rapidly snapping off the radio and fastidiously avoiding the red mess littering the floor. He paid no attention to the spattered walls and furniture. He lifted a loose floorboard in a corner of the room. The long-fanged mice escaped and scurried about the room, pausing only to feed. Geraldo removed the pinwheel and the tiny wax doll from beneath the floorboard and went outside again into the starless night. The doll bore the letters E P H R A I M stitched in black thread on its tunic. Swinging the doll by the blue cord tightly tied around its neck, Geraldo strolled down the quiet street. Just for fun he thought at a man crossing the street and watched him stumble and fall in front of an automobile that swerved too late.

THE WANDERER

by H. Warner Munn

Rough are the roads that web the world
Rough the wanderer's way
And I have trod them all, it seems,
Many a weary day.

My iron shoes are wearing thin.
Plovers above me wheel.
The torment that sorely plagues me
No other man can feel.

I know until that Judgment Day
When all the seas go dry
There will never be another
Lonelier than I --

If you know why the sea birds cry
On the shores of Galilee
You will know why I wander
And thank God you are not me.

For over me the dark cloud hangs
And lightning bolts are hurled
And driving me ever onward
Is the wind that tramps the world.

COURTS OF THE MOURNING

by Michael F. Knight

There is a certain castle in eastern Rumania which has seen many strange things in its days. Very strange things. Vampires have cackled in its upper chambers; werewolves have howled in the hills outside the castle; and ghouls have frolicked in its cemetery. An old Count inhabits the sombre rooms of the right wing, staying inside during the sunny hours. He sits with his keepsakes, drinking his dark wine and ruminating on days gone by. Things have changed in the Old Country, and the Count longs for his youth. Soon he, too, will be gone; the house will be empty and the hearth cold. Only an owl or two will give life to the solemn setting; only a whip-poor-will shall give voice to its mourning song. An era will have passed.

THE SON OF TIME

by Walter Quednau

The room was small and square, and was illuminated only by the yellow, flickering glow of a half-shaded oil lamp. On a round cot lay a young man whose presence seemed to dominate the room in spite of the fact that his limbs were manacled to four heavy wooden beams. He was magnificently muscled, and shaped like a god. Naked to the waist, he showed on his dark brown flesh the pale scars of a dozen sword slashes. Several times he had exerted his utmost strength to wrench himself loose, but although the giant beams creaked with the strain they held firm. Now he stirred uneasily as the only door to the room opened softly.

The person who entered was a woman. She was blonde of hair and sweet of face, with a fair complexion and a trace of seduction in the way she walked. She seemed of an age with the youth--twenty or twenty one, perhaps--and indeed they could have been brother and sister.

"Ah, my pet," said he, forcing a smile. "Is it supper you've brought me?"

"Aye, and more," replied Enora. "And more," she repeated meaningfully, with a slow smile. "Rondomir, you need but decide to do my bidding, and swear on the soul of King Zylar, your ancient ancestor, that you will do it, and I shall myself remove your chains and ease your hurts. I will care for you as a slave cares for a king. Your answer?"

"You always were a liar, Enora, dear," the young man responded evenly, "and my answer is no, the same as it was before, the same as it will ever be."

"You will do it anyway," was her calm rejoinder. "You will do it whether you wish to or not." She bent over Rondomir and caressed his mighty thighs. He shuddered at her touch, as though a reptile had brushed against him, an uncontrollable reflex; and she stepped back a trifle vexed.

"But I would effect a compromise between us," she went on. "You know that my greatest desire in the world, greater now even than my vast affection toward you and my hatred of your little harlot, that bitch Gini, is to have the Jewels of Reven. Get

me those baubles and you are free to slink back to the arms of that whey-faced tart you dote on so."

"Baubles!" The harsh exclamation was wrung from the captive's lips. Those handsome lips twisted into a cynical laugh. "I know not how to employ them myself, or even if they still exist. But I know that in your hands their power would make you unconquerable. No, I shall not do it."

Enora smiled a saintly smile, and said sweetly, "I am already unconquerable. As you shall soon see."

Swiftly she quitted the room, returning with incense and tapers and a large casket of mysterious talismans which she arranged at various positions within the room. Rondomir, the youth, ignored her ostentatiously. At last she seemed to have completed her arcane preparations.

"Do you wonder at my purpose?" He said nothing. "Since you will not obey my behest, I shall summon one who will. Do you call upon the spirit of your heroic ancestor, Zylar the Mighty, to aid you in this dire hour? Do so! For that is what I do, also."

"What do you mean?" Rondomir asked reluctantly.

"King Zylar was one less scrupulous than you and even more brave. Though he died a hundred centuries ago, in the dawn of our civilization, his soul lives on. By my arts I have learned the method for calling him back. I shall call him back now, and he will live again in your body. As for your soul, Rondomir," she laughed, "I dare say it will still survive--somewhere."

She blew out the flame of the lamp and lit the tapers. Slowly, in a majestic voice, she began to intone an ancient and blasphemous ritual, known to the witch women of antiquity but forgotten in the present day by all but a few scholars... and by Enora. Though he struggled against the monstrous spell, its hypnotic fever began to creep into Rondomir's brain. Slowly, oh so slowly, consciousness faded, and all that he could hear was the thumping of his own heart.

* * * * *

Zylar the Mighty stirred in his ancient sleep and listened to the tom-tom beat of his own blood. Blood. Had he slept ten thousand years till that mortal drumming had awakened him? Or had it been an hour?

He opened his eyes.

He lay upon a wooden bunk in a small dark room. The odor of incense hung heavily upon the air. Before him knelt a woman fair of form and blonde of mane, murmuring a prayer in a voice too low for him to comprehend it. She was dressed in a simple, revealing garment of laced gold. He drew a mighty breath of the stench-ridden air and felt his youthful chest expand. His thoughts whirled. But yesterday, it seemed, he had been ancient, a veritable ghost of a warrior, breathing his last. Now he was young and mighty. Was this a dream? Or was his past life but a dream, a night's imagining; and this, reality?

He rose abruptly to a sitting position, and the woman rose with him, staring him directly in the eye.

"Who are ye?" asked Zylar, with an oath.

"I am Enora," was the low-voiced response. "I have loved you for ten thousand years, it seems, and at last I have found the key to the opening of the ages, and I have brought you hither, to live again in another dawn."

"Witch!" he accused. "I seem to know ye, and yet I cannot remember."

"No, King Zylar. You have never beheld me. But you are right. I am a witch. And it is my witch's arts that have riven your soul from tartarus, and brought it again to the clean earth to live a second life. My arts and my love for you."

Zylar shook his head, as if to clear it. "Wine," he demanded, "my mouth and brain require it. Both are cobwebbed in the dust of centuries."

The wine was at once forthcoming, brought by a dark-haired maiden who appeared as if from nowhere, and vanished as mysteriously. It was the finest vintage of the modern age, and the king quaffed a huge draught, and sighed.

"Whether ten or ten thousand years have passed, yet it seems I do live."

"For the moment, at least," concurred the woman.

"What mean ye?" the man growled at her, after taking another long swallow of the wine. "Shall I die ere I have scarce begun to live again?"

Enora moved swiftly to seat herself beside him. She touched his shoulder, and he felt his flesh tingle pleasantly at the cool contact.

"The spell by which I have brought you hither cannot outlast the night. By the

rising of the sun will it wither and decay, nor can I call you back again."

"Then have ye brought me to life only to snatch it from me again?" He turned and roughly grasped her slender, voluptuous body in his mighty hands. "Is there no way that I may remain?"

"Do you wish to remain, mighty Zylar? Do you wish to love me and to carve out an empire from this future world greater than your old kingdom that has been lost a hundred centuries in the dim past?"

"Aye, either, or both!"

"Then love me first, Zylar, now, and quickly. Then will I tell you the one means to your salvation. There is little safety in it, but then I think that safety is a word that you have never known. And your life is the stake."

With a shout of glee, Zylar thrust his arms about Enora and drew her soft, pliant body down to him in a long and lustful embrace.

The full moon was rising over the range of hills to the east when Zylar, clothed in steel mail shirt and longsword strapped to his belt, galloped forth from the black castle of Enora. The taste of new life tingled on his lips, and the beginning of love--or lust--blossomed in his breast. Nevertheless, his mind was wholly occupied with the details of his quest.

In order to consolidate and confirm the unholy spell that had dragged his spirit back from the nether regions, a mighty amulet was required. The only one capable of such powers known to mankind was the aluminum crown in which were set the nine fabled Jewels of Reven. Few indeed knew the simple secret of their whereabouts, but everyone knew that fearsome guardians stood in the path of him who would steal them from Reven's tomb. The most persistent tale would have it that the man who entered that place of concealment would die by the hands of his most terrible foe; a cryptic statement commonly thought to mean that ancient devil out of mythical hell, Satan, himself.

The tomb lay almost forgotten in the catacombs below the crypt in the grey castle of Rondomir. Rondomir! Zylar thought the name had a familiar ring to it, yet he knew it not, though he puzzled over it as he rode. Although Enora had drawn him a crude map, it was almost unnecessary.

He seemed to know the way by instinct, as if he were being guided by gods or demons. He growled under his breath. His instincts were but little removed from savagery, this hero out of the dawn of civilization.

As he rode, he pondered. Enora had given him a steel sword, a sword forged from the nickel-iron core of a meteorite that had plummeted to earth a thousand years ago. It was heavy and clumsy, but honed to a fine edge, and the hilt seemed to fit the contours of his hand as though it had been made for him. The sword would be partial protection against the ancient spells that defended the crypt. He grinned as he thought of the desirable body of Enora and the promise of the future she had held out to his imagination, though his thoughts balked at contemplation of the witchcraft at which she was adept. He had always detested witchcraft. He had swept his old savage empire clear of wizardry by the main strength of arms, cleanly killing the greatest wizard of all, Manzanium, by a single sword thrust. Yet, he admitted ruefully, it was thanks to witchery that he lived again, lived in a body as fine and young as his own former one. Even the very features of his new body resembled his old ones.

The gigantic moon rose slowly above the hills, mocking him with the passage of precious time. How long would it take to retrieve the jewels of Reven? Would he regret the moments lost in amorous dalliance with the seductive Enora? Could he trust his new light o' love? Would he live again for but a night, or for a whole lifetime? He hastened his mount, which galloped sure-footed over the trail toward the grey castle of Rondonmir.

At the drawbridge to the grey castle, two armed men were posted. He raised his right arm, as Enora had instructed him to do, and shouted "*Rondonmir*."

He had doubted they would let him pass, despite Enora's assurances. But they drew aside respectfully, saluting him, and his horse cantered freely through the gate and over the drawbridge into the castle grounds.

Those whom he encountered were few, for the hour was late; but those few stepped aside deferentially, bowing, as he went by, almost as if they knew him.

Rondonmir! Almost--- almost---- he recognized the name. His mind groped for the tantalizing memory, nearly had it... then lost it utterly.

The crypt was located in the dingiest, darkest portion of the keep. Here, few men ventured. Underground passages began at the entrance, and circled aimlessly as they dipped downward. Zylar followed the passage that Enora had indicated, but soon his sense of direction was confused, and he knew not whether he still kept to the correct path, or had wandered away. Deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth he went, and as he did, the air grew musty and wet, and he heard the slow steady dripping of water from the slick walls. In the light of the torches he had brought with him, he could see small stalactites forming on the ceiling of the passageway, a clear indication that the tunnel was very very old.

Obviously the crypt of Rondonmir had been built over the ancient entrance to antique passages, in order to protect what lay within.

Hours, it seemed, sped by. His last torch was lit and half burnt when the passageway abruptly debouched onto an immense amphitheater. The wavering torchlight was scarcely enough to permit him to discern its farthest reaches.

In the center of the natural auditorium was placed a raised platform, richly adorned with gold and with lustrous cloths of velvet and silk. He did not stop to wonder how such perishable tapestries could have endured through the ages in that damp cavern. He merely stared hungrily at the casket mounted atop the dais. There was the resting place of the jewels of Reven. There was his goal. Could he obtain them, Enora had told him, he would be enabled to return magically to the black castle in time to be saved from extinction.

Zylar took a single bold step out of the passageway into the huge cave, and suddenly stopped. He had heard a sound, a slow groan. He looked about him.

Words came to him, words spoken from beyond the glimmering circle of his torchlight.

Something was moving toward him from the extreme opposite edge of the encircling darkness. He waited, superstitious horror freezing his limbs.

The words came again, garbled words from a throat that had been silent for millenia. Yet he could make them out.

"King Zylar, the Mighty. We meet once more after a century of centuries."

The speaker dragged itself into the edge of the feeble illumination.

"This time our encounter will end differently."

Zylar stared in unbelief. The figure was emaciated, as befitted one long dead, but it was recognizable.

"Manzanium!" It was the dreaded wizard of old, or his mummy, whose powers Zylar had once defeated by the simple expedient of slicing off his head in the midst of battle, undaunted by his terrible powers of wizardry.

"This time I shall be the victor. You cannot fight the dead."

Suddenly Zylar took heart, and croaked out a feeble laugh, himself.

"I, too, am a dead man," he boomed, and drew his iron sword as he bounded across the rough floor toward the magician. Even as Manzanium began to intone a spell, the sword slashed downward and for the second time in ten thousand years Manzanium's head went rolling off his shoulders and spun away on the floor, bouncing like a grotesque basketball.

But the incantation did not cease. The lips of the severed head continued to move, laughing, though the head lay rocking on the cold cave floor.

Zylar swore and raised the sword again, smiting the shriveled head a dozen times. Finally, mangled, tongue riven to shreds, it could only groan and mutter like the wind in dry leaves.

Was this the terrible guardian? Was this his ultimate foe? Had he conquered? Suddenly the room seemed filled with warriors cloaked in armor and bearing axes and long-swords. The spell of Manzanium had been completed in the last croaking rattle of death from that mangled throat. A hundred warriors, resurrected from the savage age of Zylar, stood facing him. With a start he realized that he recognized some of the white faces before him. All were warriors whom he had killed during his first lifetime, and all lived again, as he had known them, except that they still bore the death-wounds he had given them. And they lived, nonetheless; or at least they moved. A few lacked heads, arms or legs were severed from others. Grotesquely, with satanic shouts of glee, they stumbled forward, intent upon revenge, a dozen different battle cries on their dead lips.

Zylar leapt backwards, stuffing the half-burnt torch in a wall holder, and set his

shoulders against the wall of the dais. His own challenging battle cry boomed forth over the din.

"By Juss the God of War," he shouted, "Ye shall have death a second time if ye wish it!"

They strove to rend him, and he slew them as they came.

Dirk in his left hand, iron sword in his right, he met them, scattering their charge before it was fairly begun. To his horror he noticed that while those slain by the iron sword seemed truly dead once again, those impaled by the dirk of bronze were uninjured, and fought on.

Shuddering, he used the dirk defensively, ripping at bellies and throats with the iron sword. Once they almost dragged him down, and he went berserk, scattering them left and right with his hands alone, having lost the sword on the bloody floor. For a moment they fell back silently at this fierce counterattack, and he quickly looked around for the sword but could not find it. Then, as they charged again, he saw it, thrust through the belly of the corpse of an ancient prince, and recovered it just in time.

He had fought for twenty minutes against the horde of dead men, and had stilled the wizard-gotten life in perhaps a fifth of them. He bled from dozens of nicks, and had one bad wound, a shoulder wound from which the loss of blood would eventually weaken him if the fight continued.

He saw reluctantly that he might kill another score or more of his unearthly foes, and yet go down before the others to his own death. And a second fear began to creep into his mind: the torch was burning low in the wall bracket where he had put it, and he knew that his case would be hopeless if that torch were extinguished.

He renewed his attack with vigor, driving his enemies back a few feet from the dais, then turned and leaped, springing to the top as his foes charged down upon him once again. From this vantage point he slew three, four, five of them with impunity, then stepped back quickly and reached out toward the casket. At the last moment he hesitated, halted by the queer feeling that there would be danger in mere contact with that ornate box.

At a slight noise from behind, he turned in a flash, and confronted two of

his attackers. The iron sword slashed one of them to ribbons while the other inflicted another bad wound in Zylar's hurt shoulder. He clenched his teeth at the pain and dropped the dirk. With a mighty thrust, he severed the other's sword hand at the wrist, grasped him about the waist, and threw him one-handed over his shoulder in the direction of the jewel box.

The hurtling body struck the casket with a great flash of light and a loud clap of thunder. As Zylar watched, astounded, the casket fell to the floor of the dais and the body of his attacker sprawled beside it. It was burnt and blackened as though by lightning, though the box was unmarked.

Gingerly he prodded the casket with his sword, but there seemed to be no further danger. He bent and lifted it, astonished at its weight. The rest of his foes, startled by the pyrotechnical display on the dais, recovered and struggled to clamber up to do battle with him, but Zylar ignored them and tore open the casket and grasped the jeweled crown. The Jewels of Reven glistened in the dim light of the sputtering torch. What were they? Though a savage by nature, Zylar was familiar with all the splendid gems and precious metals of the ancient world, but neither these jewels nor their aluminum setting resembled any he had ever seen. Indeed, the gems looked like glass, but they possessed an inner glow that was not a mere reflection of the torch fire.

Zylar would never have understood the concept of nuclear radiations, nor realized why the box which had housed the gems was lined with lead.

As the attackers bore down upon him with an unrelenting hatred, he placed the crown on his head and recited the simple but terrible litany that Enora had taught him. At the last instant his foemen recoiled as the power of the jewels became manifest.

Zylar vanished.

Simultaneously he reappeared in the dark room in the black castle of Enora, where he had first returned to consciousness in his new life.

* * *

Gore dripped from the sword onto the spotless floor. Heedless of his many wounds, Zylar stood there, astounded. He had not really believed the spell would return him, as Enora had promised. But obviously it had.

He stared worriedly at the door. It was

locked. He gasped out, "Enora!"

The door sprang open and the witch stood in the doorway, smiling.

"It is done," said Zylar.

"I have waited for so long," she said. "Come, give me the Jewels and let me bathe your wounds."

He removed the crown from his head with shaking hands, and held it out to her. "I want no more of this sorcerer's amulet," he declared. "Use it, as ye promised me, to prolong my existence in this new life, if there is yet time."

"There are still two hours till morning," replied Enora. "First let me bind your wounds and give you to sup. We must prepare for the spell."

She clasped the jeweled crown to her bosom, lovingly, and her smile was like that of an angel.

Enora stamped her foot loudly and two dark-haired slave-girls appeared with medicines which they applied with the skill of experienced nurses. For a while Zylar succumbed to these attentions, growing slightly drowsy as his exhaustion and loss of blood caught up with him. Then he stiffened in sudden suspicion.

The witch was still examining the crown, and cooing over its beauty.

"How long till the morn?" he asked abruptly in a low voice.

One of his nurses turned to him with surprise, and before Enora could forbid her to speak, said, "But, it is nearly dawn, now, mighty warrior. Indeed, the sky was beginning to lighten as we were summoned hither."

Enora spat an epithet and clamped the crown of jewels upon her brow.

Zylar arose, thrusting his two nurses to one side. His hand rested on the blood-caked hilt of his iron sword.

"So ye lied, Enora. Ye do not intend to keep your word."

She smiled sweetly.

"I no longer have need of your services, Zylar. And it will be such delicious pleasure to taunt Rondonir with the tale of your exploits in his body. He is such a prudish do-gooder!"

"Rondonir? His body?"

"Why yes, mighty Zylar," said the voice, tinged with sarcasm. "Think you bodies grow on trees? My enemy, foolish Rondonir, your descendant through three thousand generations. He whose body you

wear and those castle crypt you have burgled, all for me." She laughed venomously. "Besides, I am Enora, the daughter of Manzanium, and I have not lived ten thousand years merely to reward my father's murderer with a new life!"

He advanced a step toward Enora, drawing the sword.

"Beware!" shrieked the witch. "I bear the power of the jewels, and can blast you where you stand. But wait a few more moments, and at least your body will survive, if not your mind."

Zylar muttered to himself, "I have fought blackest sorcery the night through. Twice have I killed the father. Now it is the daughter's turn," and hurled himself upon her with upraised sword.

She screamed out a sharp incantation, and the jewels of Reven gleamed upon the crown. Zylar felt a coldness, like the icy coldness of death, penetrate his every muscle, his every fibre, even his brain. But the momentum of his charge kept his body lurching forward, and the frigidity in his muscles and his brain did not seem quite absolute. He found that he was able to move with the utmost of concentration, to thrust with the great iron sword that Enora herself had given him, and plunge it deeply into her soft breast.

Then he swooned atop her.

* * * *

Myrrha and Pelara, the slave girls who had nursed him, brought him slowly back to consciousness by the liberal application of hot cloths and brandy.

He fought for breath, his battered body still numb from that outre coldness that had nearly been his bane.

At last he struggled to his feet, partly supported by the girls; and then he gasped an oath aloud.

The body which lay with his sword through it was the corpse of a crone. A wisp of hair, a face so shrunken it might have been a mummy's: was that thing--was that thing the body of Enora? The treacherous young body he had kissed and loved six hours ago, and a few moments ago alive and luscious? It looked as old as the animated corpse of Manzanium had seemed to be.

He choked back the desire to vomit in disgust.

"It is as I thought," he muttered to himself.

"Yes," said one of the girls.

"The crown of Reven, the fabled jewels. They were incredibly ancient, a legend even in my time, the dawn of the present age. I doubted that the power in them could have lasted for so many years. I was surprised that the crown brought me here from the crypt when I intoned the ritual. The jewels must have possessed one last charge of power, full power, and when she used them against me, later, they were almost exhausted. Thus I prevailed, after all."

"Yes, Rondonir," said the other girl.

Though Zylar knew naught of nuclear radiations, or the concept of half-life, his instinct had proved aright. The Jewels of Reven now possessed but a shade of their former potency. Yet the crown might still have been strong enough to give Enora ultimate sway over the world.

"Ye," he said to the girls. "Are ye as she? -- crones from the past, kept alive and young by witchcraft?"

"No, Rondonir," said Myrrha with sorrow. "We are your own sisters. We were enslaved by Enora as we rode on an outing, and had to serve her under a geas of obedience. We are freed by her death. Can you not remember even yet?"

"It is morning, now," added Pelara. "Did Enora not say the spell would end with morning?"

"Enora never spake truth when she could lie," muttered Zylar.

Their brother rose, shaking his head slowly like a wounded lion. "Though, my mind seems to know the name, Rondonir, and strange memories crowd in among my own."

He limped back to the shrivelled corpse of Enora. He picked up the crown of Reven, with a grimace of distaste, and settled it upon his own head. A warm tingle went through him, easing the numbness of his muscles, renewing his strength.

The ancient talisman of power was not entirely dormant.

Then he put off the crown and stood holding it lightly in his left hand.

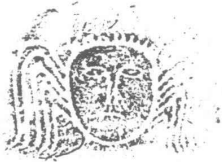
"Sisters, now I do remember a little," he said to them. "With the help of the Jewels of Reven, I may remember more. But now already I remember somewhat of Rondonir, master of the Grey Castle, although the memories are faint and imperfect."

"We shall help you and guide you, as will Kagina, your betrothed," said Myrrha. Her sister nodded, sorrowfully; yet their sorrow was overlain with hope and joy that their brother had regained at least a part of his memory through the medium of the crown, the Jewels of Reven.

Zylar slowly followed them from the black castle toward the castle of Rondonmir,

listening carefully to their idle chatter.

He had lied. The memories of Rondonmir had not returned to him under the influence of the crown. But with or without Enora, he still planned to rule this decadent world of his far future, and it was in his mind to rule it not as King Zylar the witch-born, but as Prince Rondonmir of the Grey Castle.



NO STONE UNTURNUED

by Charlene James



It had been a perfectly respectable research project, a study of Pennsylvania German folk art. By chance, the motifs under investigation were on tombstones in out of the way cemeteries and family plots throughout the south central portion of the state. Again by chance, no, perhaps as a lark, we had begun our research in the February cold, moon night. We needed atmosphere.

The months we had put into the study were uneventful. Horrifying incidents never marred data collection. The graveyard excursions had yielded little more than beautiful design specimens; rubbings which sold in boutiques, were given as wedding presents, and had become just one more element added to the realm of commercialized Americana.

Our informants had been anonymous. Now, only withered dames of the Thursday afternoon tea variety remembered some names of renown and these only for familial reasons. Except for Daniel Bonebreak, the master stonecutter our study had uncovered, the old German lives were buried in antiquated documents in the Office of the Clerk of Records. Even Bonebreak had been forgotten with the funeral practices of the past.

Thinking of Daniel and the nature of his

trade, I prepared for bed. The final rubbings would be finished tomorrow and I was preparing to call an end to tombstoning.

As usual, the watchman had circled regularly, keying up at the Detex Watch-clock Station outside my window. The trains from the catsup factory switched every hour on schedule. I knew the sound which had long ceased to frighten me.

The building was large, a deserted dormitory, and I was no more than a solitary pea in a stone and mortar pod. I had been alone before, many times, in houses with pasts and legends so the newness and sterility of Southall did not inspire fright.

My room of blue was peaceful. Only the calendar that said June 10, 1968, and the four shocking pink reminder notes pasted next to it on the wall disturbed the calm; write the World Futurist Society, frame poverty picture, help Nina with her problem, send for East African Wildlife Society Christmas cards. Planning for the future was so much a part of this room, as much a part as the pink-red Japanese parasol mounted from a paste-on hook.

There was no reason to fear looking into the bathroom mirror as I brushed my teeth, but still this feeling. Had I

transgressed spirits as I had traversed graves during the course of my research? Were the Germanic ancestors angry at the commercial use I had made of their memorials? Had Bonebreak's masterpieces been desecrated, or was it my mind merely hoaxing my reality?

I remembered back to that first night. Armed with a borrowed 1,000 candle power flashlight, we set out. Thoughts of equipping ourselves with silver stakes, crucifixes or holy water were farthest from our minds. It was a lark, it was a project, it was a study of artistic motifs, not ghoulis or spirits.

The moon was full moving past its midnight position. The road, unpaved and winding, led us to a small country church yard. The historical marker read: "First Reform Church, Founded 1750, Paster George Loutzenheiser."

I began to babble incessantly, trying to prove to my two young companions that there was nothing extraordinary in our activities. Climbing the short grassy knoll, I assured them that we were anthropologists, of a different sort, looking for a life style which had been obscured by history.

The flashlight proved ineffective in the dark for it cast eerie shadows on the trees and stones perched on the low incline. The remnants of snowdrifts blew over bodies stretched out on grave sites as they tried to decipher dates and names of persons long passed away. Bonebreak was there, frozen in the winter cold. His presence was sparked only by the beauty of the stone, tall and artful with its flowing "art nouveau" tulips forming the tree of life.

I was brought back from the burial ground by a sound coming from behind me. In the reflection from my mirror I saw a green figure. He leered at me. Fungus as thick as fur tufted on his otherwise quaint attire. His skin and even his eyeballs showed signs of the mossy coating.

He was a stocky man and yet I saw his bones as though they were imprinted on his flesh. In his skeletal fist he grasped a large mallet encrusted with mildew, on his back a brown garniferous burden. I felt fear and the blue of my surroundings turned to a scream of purple as his greenness glow-ed out at me.

Dropping my toothbrush, I splashed the

soapy water and nylon stockings which had been soaking in the basin at the Bonebreak-being. Stunned, he bent over and I pushed the it-him aside and ran from the bathroom, locking the door as I fled. What a foolish move, I thought, it locks from both sides and he'll be out to plague me in a matter of seconds.

My legs tensed by bewilderment were immobile. I dare not run out into the unknown of night. All I could count on to save me from this shadow of Daniel Bonebreak was the Polish featherthick which my family had bequeathed to me last holiday. They knew that this talisman alone added a feeling of security and sense of well-being to my unprotected way of life. I must retrieve it, now, immediately, before he found the latch of the door bolted in fear.

I reached the couch, grabbed the coverlet and threw it over me. The eyes of my unwilling, ill-consulted informant caught sight of my camouflage. The penetration of his gaze burned through the duck feather stuffing, leaving me unclad and chilled. I lay there in trembling, waiting for the moment of oblivion. I feared the words which began to form in his exposed, translucent larynx.

With difficulty he spoke, "You," "My stones." He choked, "I have come." His words stuck and my heart stopped. I wished for death so that we would be on an even footing. "I have come," he said, then with a spurt of energy his vocal chords rang out, "To thank you. You like my work, no?" With a squeak his jaw tilted and his lips extended into a grin.

Relieved I responded, "Yes, you're quite welcome Herr Bonebrecht." Then recovering my composure I exclaimed, "But please, when you come the next time, *please*, come before dark." He found humor in my words and his grin broadened.

My fright was retreating but before my last sigh had time to fall, I noticed Bonebreak setting to the task which had prompted his visit. His back now free of its stony weight, his mallet cleaned, his chisel poised, Bonebreak worked at my reward. The tape let loose of the four wall notes next to the calendar. They fell to the floor as he completed the inscription:

"30 Sept 1942

10 June 1968

Hier Ruhen Der Leib"

TO FADE IN SILENCE

by Timothy R. Allison

"I have not been well of late," said the friend with whom I and a horde had broken worlds and howled upon the heights. It was a black night, black and slick as the obsidian castle he'd built for himself upon this highest promontory. There was no sign of rain, but from far down ragged mists swept up and across the citadel, troubling even the great and recently glutted hunting cats where they lay glittering in darkness below the citadel and above the flange of masonry beneath which the catacombs might be pierced from outside the cellars.

He I had known for a warrior sat lit by the steady optically sharp moonlight that globes of some magicked and exotic minerals cast from their heights among the upper shelves. There the faces of them I had known looked down, stretched upon their skulls or fashioned into wine-urns or the spine-covers for such broad and thick books as this that lay yellow and angle-scripted in my lap. I studied that volume intently, lost in thoughts of summer forests deep and cool while the plains burned with armies; of fire glare like blood upon the northern ices. We had loved her then, my host and I, loved her whose features, flattened, expressionless, rasped beneath the touch of my scarred fingertips.

He was even leaner than I remembered him, worse, paler and frail. I looked on an old man and knew the knotting of a fear that, though faint, stayed ever with me now. All such whom I had marched with in youth were becoming thus. We who were supposed immortals, vincible only in battle, who had tamed the stars so the skies were ever black now, who had come to our citadels there to ponder old magics and look on the worlds like gods, had begun to die. Not with the swiftness of sword or the crackle of fire upon a young-chief's mound. Lingeringly, terribly. We who had made ourselves masters of the universe were waning, and in our weakness we were more susceptible to those legends at which once we would have laughed. Ghosts waited at every corner. There were depths of my winding caves into which I could not now descend without great effort

of will, with the weapon, ludicrous weapon there among the nitred dead, heavy in my sweating hand. All things seemed aware of our going, waited for us to die. Even our beloved hunting cats looked at us now with an added, dreadful glittering intelligence, adjudging when would be the time to forget the bond of the chase, the sting of the whip. To stalk the wolves that led them. Perhaps it was not entirely the scented mists off secret-laden, immeasurably ancient seas that made them prance and cry and hiss so tonight. Was it fancy of mine? Even to the point of imagining my own fears reflected in other faces. More and more we seemed to have withdrawn within our castles, ourselves, waiting.... What end can come to a god...

"Days ago," said my comrade, "I found myself more unnaturally bored than usual. My wines held no more flavor. The books of my shelves held no knowledge worth pursuing. Even walks in the cool cellars or among my cats brought no surcease. At last, driven with desperation, I ventured into sections of the castle where I had not been in years, areas where shadows have fermented and bred and the rats grown bold and preysome-eyed. There, among rotting tomes whose titles themselves cast back my memory and caused me faint disturbance, I found a book lent me by our extinct and common mentor, him who taught us to slay, to hunt and master even the hunter. Leafing through it, the feeling of uneasiness grew upon me. The book was alive with worms. Its pages were phosphorescent in the half-light of the candle with which I had chosen to go roaming. Heavy with decay, it weighted my arms, and suddenly was near falling when I managed to preserve it, but upset the light.

The darkness nor the rats bothered me at all, but when I restructured the light, I saw my fumbings had disturbed my place among the pages. I was back to the first, to the fly-leaf on whose mildewed, parting fibers I could barely discern the faded ink of my old teacher's signature.

Standing there I was shaken suddenly by the great age that separated that inscription from the present, and unaccountably was struck with such a fear that I abandoned all, candle and book, and left them for the darkness and dust to stifle while I fled back to higher regions and the

rats peered out from crannies or scabbled upon the broken, littered tiles.

"Since then," said he, "I have not been able to explain away the fear, nor has it left me. My illness seems slight, but persistent, and I grow tired. I fear our hunt this twilight was our last together."

For a moment a curtain of fog boiled across the high window, obscuring all the

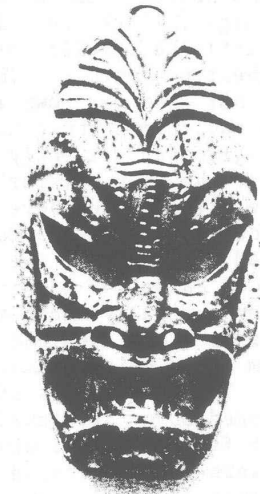
black and ill-defined world outside. We sat in silence in the whitish effulgence of globes robbed from some nether and alien necropolis, and I felt again the smoothened, discolored features of her I had known beneath my fingers. Fingers burned so long ago before we knew or cared that even masters of death may die.

WEIRD TALES

by Walter Shedlofsky

Who recalls or knows it once existed?--
Exciting panoramas of strange realms
Inhabited by ghosts and demons grim
Robust Conan and De Grandin fought and
killed--
Dark odysseys whose horrors thrilled and
chilled.

Time palls the outre spells of Ashton Smith,
Arkham and Cthulhu have become a myth.
Lost in this world of hate which overwhelms,
Eagerly, in your pages old and dim,
Seek I your worlds, rare and sapphire-misted.



IN THE MASK SHOP

by Janet Fox

Faces hang on all the walls,
Look down with empty eyes,
Slack mouths, sunken cheeks,
such sad expressions.

I could try a face or two,
Be an Egyptian king, a harlot,
A man who suffered much,
Forgave, and died.

I have tried each new mask on
One by one and have discarded
Each. The one I would have chosen
was my own face, if I'd have found it,
but it was gone.



THE SPACESHIP GAME

by *Larry Dworin*

It wasn't just an ordinary spaceship. It had lights that really lit up, and indicators that actually indicated things. Little Johnny Cooper and his friends were building it. Of course, to the casual observer it looked like a miscellaneous pile of old packing crates, pieces of plastic and tin, and bits of chicken wire and old pie plates, but it was actually a spaceship. It all depended upon how one looked at it.

Every day, after school, Johnny's friends flocked to the vacant lot behind his house to work on the spaceship. He always had at least five or six eager but clumsy pairs of hands to help him assemble strange looking devices out of pieces of metal and plastic, scrap pipes and bits of rock, to be incorporated in larger, even stranger looking mechanisms which supposedly had esoteric functions far beyond the comprehension of the average human being. In other words, only Johnny knew what they were supposed to do.

The neighborhood children were amazed to see the really nifty looking things that Johnny could make out of rubbish. They could see that he had an absolute genius for that sort of thing, so they followed his instructions to the letter and never quibbled about who got to do what.

The adults of the neighborhood thought the entire idea was rather cute. It kept the kids out of mischief, and no one could see how a pile of spaceship-rubbish was any worse than a pile of ordinary rubbish, though why the children would want to play with junk was beyond them. They lived in a fairly well-to-do neighborhood and the children had plenty of toys. The parents did not realize, however, that most children have a strong creative instinct, and often enjoy making things of their own more than playing with something someone else has made.

In children's circles, the spaceship was the talk of the town. Children from blocks around came to see this mechanical marvel. It was purported to have all different-colored-countdown lights, a genuine imitation working Zap gun, and a real live atomic

power plant (grown from seed, no less).

Johnny took this all very seriously. He was very scientific in his methods. He kept all his unstable atoms in lead containers, as he had learned to do from the kiddie science programs, and took great pains to keep his equipment clean. He even went so far as to wash his hands before working on it, which as all parents know, is an extremely drastic measure.

Finally, after what, to the children, was centuries of arduous labor, the spaceship was completed. A blockhouse had been built, all the fuel had been placed in the atomic power plant, the Zap gun had been tested and had been found to be fully operational, and all systems were green.

This was the event of the season. Children came from all over the neighborhood to see the launching of the newly completed spaceship. Long before the countdown approached zero, the ship had a complete crew and a full complement of passengers.

The adults of the neighborhood viewed this event with amusement. They mused to themselves on the fantastic imaginations of small children. Naturally, none of them took any of this seriously, until Johnny used his Zap gun to level three city blocks. By then, of course, it was too late.

As the spaceship passed through the stratosphere, Johnny began to change into something other than human. Of course, this was not the original Johnny. The last of the original Johnny had been ingested quite some time ago. It looked briefly at the children, who by now were in the last stages of anoxia, due to some rather large air leaks in the hull of the ship, and then turned to stare out a port-hole. Going home at last, it thought. It's going to be a long trip, and there's a lot of work ahead for me, but I'll make it. I've found a fundamentally sound ship, adequate instruments, and most important of all, it glanced again at the children, a good supply of provisions.

THE ENTITY

by George T. Wetzel

Superstition, like fungi, needs decay in which to be born and grow. The supernatural of a modern city must be, then, vastly different from the supernatural of classic and Medieval mythologies. The classic ghost, demon, and magic beliefs were fertilized in the ruin of ancient and Gothic architecture—ruin which took centuries of erosion and crumbling for its culmination. But the decay of modern architecture is vested not in any such dark grandeur but in mean, dull, dirty slums which totter into debris in short decades; and the supernatural of the slums, like the immature humus—the rotting tenements—from which it grows, is a grimy, soot-smudged, unfinished thing.

The old symbols of evil and the supernatural—Winter, Night, the Sea—are gone in a modern city; electric lights and furnaces have exorcised them. But a nourishing soil—decayed architecture—of the supernatural still remains in a modern city; and whatever roots in it must be a new fear-symbol, born of a modern city's peculiar atmosphere.

Bedlam—the blatant fanfare of auto horns, the chattering speech of countless people, radios with unending commercials and noxious jive music; all this envelopes the inhabitants in sonic tentacles, rolls over and drowns them in an ocean of sound that towers above cloud piercing buildings where discordant aircraft roar. They work and slave in this noisy chaos, unaware of the amount, for it has become their life element. But remove the noise, and like a fish out of water, they can not adjust to such a radical environment, for silence is to them a dreadful thing.

I am prompted to record here these metaphysical reflections by an eldritch mystery I witnessed recently. Accursed insomnia frequently drives me to walk the city streets in the dead of night, often up to false dawn, before sheer physical exhaustion wearies me near death, when I collapse into longed for sleep. During one such fatigue-wracked night when I was possessed with such an abnormal cerebration, in the furnace heat of June, I had paced the streets

of New York for long hours of torture; and turning a corner by the elevated near Columbia University, I glimpsed the man's unusual face. Beneath his eyes were countless wrinkles and a blackened color shadowed such hollows. There was a wild, frantic, appealing expression in his eyes; he looked in the throes of a hopeless despair and wished to cry out to passers-by to save him, help him from a horror which only he knew of. In a moment he had passed me, yet in the brief interval I read a history in my scrutiny.

He would have been forgotten by me entirely if I had not obeyed an impulse to travel in the direction of the 8th Avenue subway. The racket from a train pulling into the station welled up from a subway grating; and there was my past stranger of the harassed expression, standing on the grating. With the diminution of the subway racket, he hurried with a mad energy to the next street where a crowd moved. I followed cautiously so as not to be noticed by him. His manner grew more extraordinary; he retraced his steps many times, as if he hated to be alone anywhere on the street. When the mob thinned out, he transferred his interminable promenade to another street where raucous automobile traffic and a stream of pedestrians abounded. This time he trod the length of that busy thoroughfare and turned into another side street where a jam session was in progress in a late dive. Tiring of that—or was it fear it might suddenly stop, leaving him on a silent street—he resumed his wanderings.

There was a deep mystery about the man; his abhorance of solitude puzzled me. The strange idea that he might be some accursed wanderer, forced to roam the world through the ages, suggested itself; and I tried to recall what I knew of the stories of Vander Dekken, Melmoth, and Le Chasseur Maudit, doomed to a fearful immortality and seeking an unknown object.

A familiarity about this situation caused me to jetsam this idea. In a flash I saw the parallel to Poe's "Man of the Crowd" that autobiographic fragment where the master of the ratiocinative method was confronted with a haunter of the street mob; and being unable to solve the mystery, remarked that "There are some secrets which do not permit them-

selvesto be told." For the merest fraction of a second I thought maybe my mysterious companion and Poe's man of the crowd were one and the same; an accursed, immortal wanderer.

Though the accursed wanderer theory was untenable, I could not ignore the sameness in circumstances to the man of the crowd trailed by Poe; and a senseless reluctance to fathom out the mystery made me waver in my desire to follow the man. But mystery compels many against their judgement to ferret it and I continued.

For hours more we walked amid the peopled streets of the city, tracing our escape (from what?) in its Cnossian maze of skyscrapers by the thread of noise. The metaphor startled me by its unusual aptness and I brooded on what Minotaur-like entity lurked in this maze, which the wanderer sought to elude. A dim premonition filled me.

The eastern sky brightened and the ominous quiet descended everywhere, and the man ahead was visibly on the verge of panic. But the discovery of another noisy street seemed to hearten him. By now I was commencing to tire; the morning sun glinted off the highest buildings.

He entered Morningside Park; and pausing near a water fountain, he took from his pocket a piece of torn newspaper which he stared at, then threw away. He walked beyond to a bench, incredibly weary by his night long wanderings and sat down. Sur-repitiuously, I picked up the paper he had thrown away, having an idea a clue to his strange behavior might be in whatever he read therein and saved up till now. Only on one side of it was there a complete news-story, part of the top remaining showing it to be the "Bronx Home News," for June 15, 1931:-

"When Policeman Talbot went into Mt. Morris Park, at 10 A.M. yesterday, to awaken a man apparently asleep on a bench near the 124th. St. gate, he found the man dead. Dr. Patterson, of Harlem Hospital, said that death had probably been caused by heart failure. Later it was found that another dead man was on a nearby bench co-incidentally enough."

Why should such a tragedy concern the wanderer? As I stood thus musing, a pre-ternatural hush fell upon everything. The only silence comparable to it is that total dead quiet at dawn when, night having ended

nocturnal creatures cease their activity to fall asleep, and diurnal animals still slumber, not yet having drained the glass of repose — a time truly when all the world is closest to absolute stillness. The sudden silence was exactly like that, except the time was near 9 P.M. and downtown traffic noise had been increasing, though far away, in a muffled crescendo. Now that traffic roar had been effaced and a hush hung over the air.

The uncanny quiet induced the relaxation I had hoped for the night long, so giving up my shadowing of the wanderer, I returned home while in this somniferous state and sank into an oblivious sleep. The next day the normal cycle of living regulated me and I was in cheerful spirits until I read that harrowing datum in the paper. Then the enigma of the wanderer rushed back and I began collating my experiences and an appalling truth dawned on me.

Something frightened that man, pursued him, drove him into vagrancy. Probably he had a sense of localization as to benches, going to the same one each morning in Mt. Morris Park. But on the morning of June 14 because of intuitive fear or suspicion, he stayed away — That someone else sat on his particular bench there and something happened to this unwary person and to another man sitting on a nearby bench—That two days later the trail of the intended victim was picked up.

"Bronx Home News," June 17, 1931—in Morningside Park, a cop noticed a man seemingly asleep on a bench. And when he tried to shake the vagrant awake, he found the man dead, heart failure. The description of him was—the wanderer, the man of the crowd whom I had trailed trying to unravel his mystery; and the morning I left him was when he died. I know now what he fled and fear lest I too must be pursued unto death.

THE HAUNTED HUT

by Robert E. Howard

Aunt Sukie reached out a skinny black hand and stirred the pot which simmered before her over the open fire. Her withered body swayed rhythmically to the even strokes of her arm.

"Old Matapha' done dead and gone," she droned. "Look out for old Matapha', children. Lawd! Yes. Dead man do you harm, children."

"Ladle out the stew and don't talk so much," Ez admonished irritably. "Dead man ain't gonna hurt nobody."

"You been up de river and you been down de river," the hag droned. "You seen de cities and you know white man's way. White man ain't gonna help you none when old Matapha' come to your window and look at you with his red eyes."

The timid listeners stirred uneasily. Ez laughed sarcastically, glanced at the serious black faces outlined by the light of the fire, and jeered. He drew a bottle from his trousers and took a long swig. The others watched enviously, but he replaced it without offering anyone a drink.

"How this Matapha' gonna hurt people when he done and gone, Aunt Sukie?"

"You can't kill a dead man," the old black woman monotoned. "Shoot at him with a pistol gun or carve him with a razor. Make no difference to old Matapha'. Go down to de haunted hut in de Hoodoo Swamp does you crave to meet him. Old Matapha' live there, long time before de war. Old Matapha' come from de old country when my grandmammy a little girl. Yes, lawd! Old Matapha' never be a slave; he conjure and make hoodoo charm. Old Matapha' die and sleep in de deep swamp. His people eat men in de old country, and old Matapha', he eat children when he alive.

"Old Matapha' roam de night until yet, hunting man-meat. No man know where old Matapha's bones lie, but go down in de Hoodoo Swamp and hear him—you hear his feet go swish, swish through de hummock grass. You hear him smackin' his lips in de dark—you see his red eyes. And then you don't see nothing nor don't hear nothing. But de wild hogs hear. De swamp moccasins hear—de

crunch-crunch of your bones in de dark. Old Matapha' gnawing your bones in de dark."

Ez laughed boisterously and returned to his bottle. The savory stew was ladled steaming from the pot and passed around. Ez ate and increased his imbibations. He leaned back and listened idly to the mellow drone of conversation. To the tales of the negroes who gathered at the Swamp Cross-roads to feast and converse, unhampered by any white company. He drank and listened until the drone gradually died away and the face blurred and merged into a warm drifting fog.

Ez came to himself slowly. He sat up and rubbed his eyes. His brain was in the vague and chaotic state following intoxication, and the fumes of the alcohol had not all left him.

"God, how I ever found my way here. Must be somebody brought me."

He was sitting in a cabin, the interior of which was too dark for him to make out objects. The door was evidently closed since he could make out no such opening in the black mass that was the wall, but a faint starlight came through the two windows.

"What's that?"

A moment of breathless silence, then a sigh of relief.

"Just the old wind a-wailin' through the trees. Lemme see — seems like I remember getting up and starting for town. All kind of dim, like. I must've walked a long time clean out on my feet." He rose uncertainly and blundered into some article of furniture.

"Blast it all, whose house is I in, anyhow?"

He raised his voice, "Hey, there!"

The walls re-echoed his shout emptily. He shrank, shivering.

"Lawd, how still everything sounds." He shuddered involuntarily. "I don't like to hear my whoop come back like that. Sounds like somebody mockin' me. Where is I, anyhow?"

He weaved toward the window nearest. Looked out. Blank darkness met his gaze. Above, a few stars glimmered far away. Close at hand, tall trees towered, hung heavily with a shapeless mass that was Spanish moss. Black indistinct giants in the gloom. Through their vaguely waving branches glimmered the stars, red and evil. Seeming to vibrate with a life all

their own.

"Like cats winkin' at me," muttered Ez. "Red eyes—" He started violently. "I don't like to think about them red eyes. Old Aunt Sukie always talkin' about Matapha'. Man alive, he alive. Man dead, he dead. Where is I at?"

He rubbed his chin thoughtfully and his brow corrugated with deep thought.

"Must be toward morning. Take me that long to get here, if this is somewhere at the edge of town. Take me an hour to sleep off that drunk--maybe more. She must be getting long towards morning. Where is I?"

He strained his eyes out of the window.

"Reckon I ain't drunk no more. Reckon I'm kind of leery, too. Don't like it. This thing's kind of drove the whiskey out of me."

The wind wailed through the tree tops and he was aware of a faint but pungent smell.

"Rotten wood and scummy water! Lawd god, I took the left hand road 'stead of the right hand fork. This is the Hoodoo Swamp!"

He sank back, trembling. Sweat began to form on his brow.

"Two roads cross where we built the fire. One goes to town, the other goes deeper into the swamp where nobody goes but white men hunting. How come they let me start to town drunk? Too much whiskey in me to know which road to take. And I took the wrong one."

He glanced about, his eyes becoming accustomed to the vague light. Spider webs clustered wall and ceiling and dust was deep on the floor and on the bench over which he had stumbled.

"The Haunted Hut," he whispered.

He backed slowly away from the window and his eyes sought and found the closed door.

"No way to bar the door, but what use to try and lock out a—" a violent shuddering shook him.

"Aunt Sukie, I reckon, tell the truth. Old Matapha', a cannibal when he alive, so I reckon he be a man-eater yet. I've heard the old people talk about the walkin' dead men in the old country--what's that?"

Was it the wind that wailed through the swamp trees?

"And I reckon," he wiped the cold sweat from his brow, "man die but his body don't rot, does he know the hoodoo charm."

Was it the wind, that swish-swish through

the hummock grass, or the stealthy foot-falls that marked the coming of the vampire?

"Lawd god, have mercy on my soul," Ez' dry whisper sounded unreal and strained. "Something swishin' through the hummock grass. Feet on the hard earth now. Stay dead, old Matapha', get back to hell where you belong!"

Outside in the stark blackness the wind wailed through the moss-covered branches. Fear was stealing like ice through Ez' veins, numbing him.

"Stay dead, old Matapha', go back from me!" Ez felt a slow cold growing over him. Already he had lost the use of his hands and feet, and the numbness grew and grew. His eyeballs seemed bursting. Cold sweat sprang out in streams.

Outside the hut, stark horror; inside the hut, stark fear.

"Stay dead, old Matapha', stay dead!"

Two great red eyes glimmered at the window. Ez tried to scream, but his blood was freezing, and his mouth gaped silently.

* * * * *

"Killed over a crap game, maybe. Drank himself to death, maybe."

Two white men stood over a shapeless heap in a deserted hut.

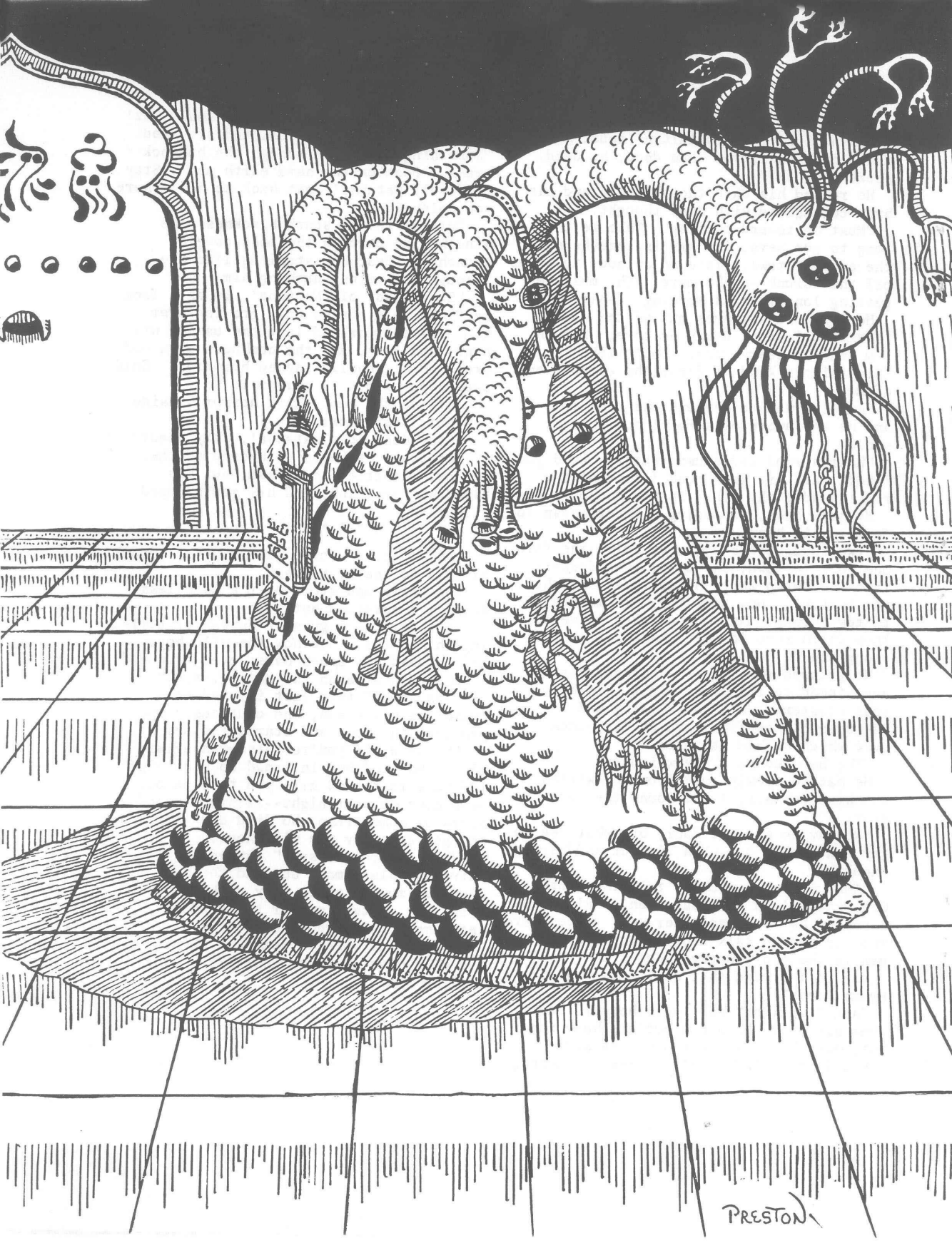
"Yes, negro, I guess. No way of telling who he was. See how the wild hogs have gnawed his bones bare; even crunched them open and eaten the marrow, too."

"Yes--hey!" this last shouted to a trembling black man, who cautiously approached the door and stared inside.

"My lord, if you're this much afraid of the Haunted Hut in broad open daylight, I'd hate to try to hire you to pack our guns down here at night--it's just the bones of some tramp who died down here and got eaten by the wild hogs."

"Yes, suh, yes suh!" agreed the shivering black man, but had the two listened more closely they might have heard him, later, mutter to himself fearsomely and sardonically:

"Door shut when we come up. Guess the wild hogs shut the door after they eat the man."



PRESTON