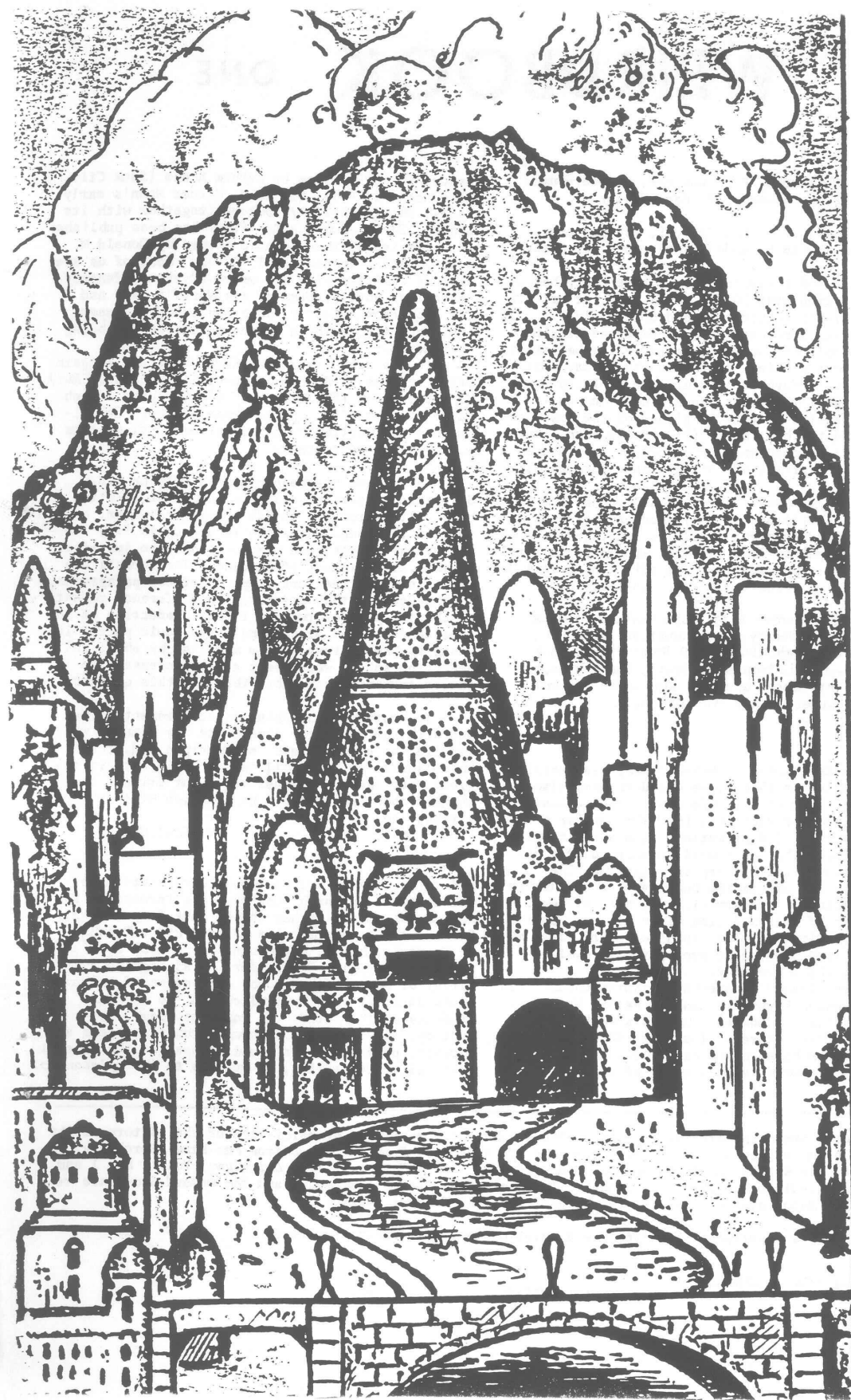


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WEIRDBOOK ONE

Address: *Weirdbook*, P.O. Box 601, Chambersburg, Penna. 17201. Editor: W. Paul Ganley.

Subscriptions: 4/\$2.00, 8/\$3.75, 75¢ per copy. All checks should be made payable to W. P. Ganley.

Information for Contributors: Please query before sending fiction over 10,000 words long, or artwork. All manuscripts should be typed on one side, double spaced, using good bond paper. Return-addressed stamped envelopes should accompany all submissions (contributors outside the United States may omit the postage). Payment is a minimum of \$1.00 per printed page for stories and artwork, on publication. An editor's prize is given for the best poem (\$5.00) and the best story (\$10.00) in each issue; awards will be made when announced in the succeeding issue. Reprints are not eligible for awards.

Weirdbook Supplement. Advertisements and letters from readers will not be published in *Weirdbook*. A mimeographed supplement will be published, starting with *Weirdbook Two*, in which such material will appear. The supplement will be edited by Joseph M. Fillinger, Jr. Please query for information.

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Editorial.

Since the demise of *Weird Tales*, availability of new stories in this genre has decreased almost to the vanishing point. One is reduced to hunting through issues of magazines like *Playboy* for them (with some risk of distraction), and awaiting with lolling tongue the occasional appearance of a new story in that excellent reprint magazine, *The Magazine of Horror*, or the bonanza of a new Arkham House anthology. A starvation regimen, at best. The purpose of this magazine is to act as a sort of literary vitamin pill: to offer weird tales at the professional and near-professional level to supplement the above diet.

We are pleased to present hitherto unpublished tales by Joseph Payne Brennan, H. Warner Munn, and the late Robert E. Howard. Howard's work is familiar to everyone, surely; I wonder, though how many of our readers have Joseph Payne Brennan's *Nine Horrors and a Dream*, a collection of weird tales

issued in hard covers by Arkham House (Sauk City, Wisconsin, \$3.00). One of H. Warner Munn's early tales, *The Werewolf of Ponkert* (together with its sequel, *The Werewolf's Daughter*) has been published in a limited edition in hard covers by Donald M. Grant, West Kingston, R. I. 02892. Most of us are already familiar with his weird-adventure-fantasy-historical novels, *King of the World's Edge* and *The Ship From Atlantis*, both published in paperback from Ace; a third in the series is now being considered.

In the next issue of *Weirdbook* we shall again offer stories by Robert E. Howard (*The Haunted Hut*), H. Warner Munn (*The Return of the Spy*), and Joseph Payne Brennan (*City of the Seven Winds*). Contributions are invited by other professional writers and by talented amateurs.

This issue has been prepared with an I.B.M. Selectric typewriter using an *Adjutant* 12-pitch ball. It is reduced to 92% of original size, except on this page where the reduction is 77%. We regret that right hand margins cannot be justified at this time because of expense. Two formats are used; in one, lines are skipped between paragraphs, in the second, they are not. The difference amounts to about a page or two per issue. Reduction of the type to about 85% of original size would permit increasing the content of the magazine by about 20%. Reduction to 77% would mean a 45% increase. We invite comments from subscribers on this question.

To continue publishing in our present format and with the quarterly appearance now planned will require two commodities: manuscripts and money. The majority of both will have to originate in the great "out there." Please tell your friends and enemies about *Weirdbook*. We hope you will subscribe, too.

W. Paul Ganley

P.S.: We wish to acquaint our readers with two publications in which they may be interested: *The Arkham Collector* (Arkham House, Sauk City., Wisc., 50¢ per copy), and *Macabre* (Joseph Payne Brennan, 91 Westerleigh Rd., New Haven, Conn. 06515, 40¢ per copy, 2/75¢). The former is (as implied by the title) of major interest to collectors of Arkham House material and, by implication, to serious students of the weird. It contains poems, non-fiction, and fragments. *Macabre* contains poems and fiction, primarily, and should appeal to the general lover of weird stories, as well as to the aficionado.

The following poems and stories, in the public domain, were reprinted by permission of the editors of the fanzines in which they appeared: *Dread Huntress* and *Aftermath From Angle Two* from *Fan-Fare*, March/May, 1952 (edited by W. Paul Ganley), and *Sea Encounter* and *From a Runestone* from *Cataclysm*, Vol. 1 No. 1 and Vol. 2 No. 1 (edited by Robert E. Briney). The poems *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* and *The Wizard Stone* are reprinted from *Snowflakes in the Sun*, copyright, 1953, by W. Paul Ganley.

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THE COBRA IN THE DREAM

by Robert E. Howard

"I dare not sleep!"

I gazed at the speaker in amazement. I had known John Murken for years, and knew that he was a man of steely nerves. An explorer and adventurer, he had travelled all over the world, had faced all manner of perils in the waste places of the earth; and while I could not condone many of his acts, I had always admired his ruthless courage.

But now, as he stood in my apartments, I read real terror in his eyes. He was a tall rangy fellow, athletic and hard as steel and whalebone, but now he seemed trembling on the verge of a mental and physical collapse. His face seemed wasted away, and his sunken eyes gleamed unnaturally. His fingers worked incessantly as he talked.

"Yes, I am threatened with danger - terrible danger! But not from without! *It is in my own brain!*"

"Murken, what do you mean? Are you insane?"

He laughed jerkily and almost fiercely. "I don't know. I will be if this keeps on. I have walked the streets for the past two nights, keeping myself awake by the force of motion. Yesterday I had to shoot myself full of dope to keep from going to sleep, and tonight that's failing me. I am in a terrible predicament. If I don't get some sleep, I'll die; and if I do sleep - " he broke off with a shudder.

I gazed at him in a kind of horror. It is an eery thing to be awakened at two o'clock in the morning and listen to a tale like

that. My gaze wandered to his jerking fingers. They were bloody, and I saw innumerable small cuts on them. His gaze followed mine.

"When I have had to stop and rest a few moments, I've fastened my pen knife beneath my hands so that when I began to sink into sleep against my will, my relaxing hands would be cut by the blade and so spur my drugged senses into wakefulness."

"For the love of heaven, Murken," I exclaimed, "give me some idea of what this is all about! Are you being haunted by some crime you have committed, are you afraid of being murdered in your sleep, or what?"

He sank down in a chair. For the moment he seemed wakeful enough, but the lids drooped wearily over his eyes in the manner of a man who is swiftly approaching nervous exhaustion.

"I'll tell you the whole story, and if it sounds like the ravings of a maniac, remember there are many dark regions of the brain which are unexplored, and anything may be possible! The Dark Continent! Not Africa, but the brain of man!" he laughed wildly, and then continued more calmly:

"Several years ago I was in a portion of India which is little frequented by white men. My reason for being there has nothing to do with my story. But while there I learned of a treasure which the great bandit Alam Singh was purported to have concealed in a cavern in the foothills. A Hindu renegade swore that he had been one of the outlaw's men, and that he knew the cavern wherein the treasure had been hidden some twenty years before. As events proved, he was not lying. I think he intended getting the treasure with my aid and then murdering me and taking all of it himself.

"At any rate, the two of us went up into the low, densely-treed hills where the gayly-plumed birds flew

through the intertwining branches, and the monkeys kept up an incessant chatter; and after considerable searching we came upon the cavern which my companion swore was the one we sought. It was a large affair, opening out of the hillside, but the entrance was partly screened by vines. The Hindu did not think that anyone knew of it but himself, for most of Alam Singh's men had been hung long ago, and the chief himself killed in a border raid; so we went boldly in.

"Instantly we found we had made a mistake. As we pushed through the clinging vines, dark forms leaped on us from every side. There was no opportunity for resistance. The Hindu they stabbed to death instantly, and me they bound hand and foot; and they carried me back into the cave, where they lit an oil lamp. Its light flung eery shadows on the bare walls and dusty floor of the cave, and on the bearded faces leering over me.

"'We are the sons of the men that rode with Alam Singh,' they said. 'We have watched this treasure for twenty years, and will guard it for twenty more years, if necessary. We hold it for Alam's sister's son, who will take his great uncle's place some day and free us from the English swine.'

"'You will be hanged like Alam Singh's men if you kill me,' I answered.

"'No one will know,' they replied. 'Many men have vanished in these hills, and even their bones are never found. You came at a good time, sahib; we had already decided to move the treasure elsewhere. You can have the cave to yourself!' They laughed meaningly.

"I knew my doom was sealed. But the consummation of my fate was more horrible than I imagined- " a shudder shook my friend's powerful frame.

"They bound me hand and foot to pegs driven in the floor. I could not move, I could not stir; I could only turn my head. They then brought in the largest cobra I have ever seen in my

life, handling him with prongs - you know how snake tamers use them, so the snakes cannot strike the men.

"They fastened a thin noose of uncured hide about the hideous hood of the thing, and made the other end of the thong fast to a niche in the wall. Of course the reptile began striking at me instantly, but I was several inches out of reach. They hung a jar over the thong which held the snake, and the jar was filled with water. A small hole in the bottom allowed the water to escape, a drop at a time. Each drop fell on the stiff hide. As you know, when uncured hide is dry, it is hard and inflexible, but when it is wet, it will stretch a great deal. Dry, the thong was too short to allow the cobra to reach me, but as the water dropped on it, it slowly became saturated with moisture, and each time the snake struck at me, he stretched it slightly. There they left me, bearing with them a heavy chest - the treasure, no doubt.

"How long I lay there, I have no idea. Seconds melted into minutes, minutes into hours, hours into Eternities. The entire Universe faded, narrowed, and centered to a pinpoint which was the cave wherein I lay. I gazed in terrible fascination at the long sinuous body which rippled toward me and receded in almost rhythmic regularity - at the evil head with its burning eyes, and the broad, marked hood just below. I struggled, I screamed. But my bonds held me firm, and my cries echoed emptily through the cavern. It was hot, but cold sweat stood out on my brow. In my agony I cursed the dead Hindu and my torturers alike; cursed my own avariciousness, and in a burst of senseless frenzy cursed all things and all men.

"Then I lay exhausted and silent, watching the captive snake with eyes as unwinking as his own. I sought to turn my head, to refuse to look at my fate, but always my gaze was drawn back and held there. I decided upon the exact place where he would strike me when he finally reached me; my left

wrist was nearest to him, and he would strike there, on the outer side, just above the hand.

"Time passed; the great snake kept striking on with a persistence and endurance that amazed me. He did not strike so often now, but he struck regularly. Little by little, very slowly but very surely, the hide thong was stretching. Now he was within a few inches of my wrist. My flesh crawled and shrank, my blood seemed to freeze at the nearness of my approaching doom. A violent nausea seized me. Suddenly the oil lamp guttered and went out.

"A new horror took hold of me; death in the dark is worse than death in the light, even in the light of an oil lamp. I screamed again and again, until my voice failed me. Now I could hear the creaking of the thong as it stretched - stretched - now I could feel the loathsome fetid breath against my wrist. Yet he still could not reach me! A few more strokes - then suddenly the cavern was flooded with light, men shouted, a pistol cracked, and I sank into a dead faint.

"I lay raving in delirium for days afterward, living over again my hideous experience. My hair had turned white at the temples. My escape was so narrow that I could not believe it, and during my delirium I thought that I was going through the hallucinations which sometimes accompany death.

"A party of tiger hunters - white men, whom I did not even know were in the country - had heard my last burst of screaming and had arrived just in time. They swept the cave with electric torches, and one of them shot the cobra which I verily believe would have reached me with one more stroke.

"I left India as soon as I could, and even today the sight of a snake nauseates me. But it was not over. After several months I began to dream at irregular intervals, several months apart, and always the dream would be vague and chaotic. I would awake in a cold sweat and often be unable to sleep

for the rest of the night.

"Then the dreams began to grow in clarity. They became extraordinarily vivid; they began to recur more often. They shadowed my whole life. In each dream, every small detail stood out amazingly clear.

"Since that time, I have dreamed that same dream hundreds of times, and each time it is the same. The dream starts abruptly; once more I am lying alone on the dusty floor of Alam Singh's cave, with the oil lamp flickering and guttering above me, and that scaly fiend darting his frightful length at me again and again. Until recently, however, the dream breaks abruptly just before the oil lamp goes out. But I can see the thong stretching - and I tell you, it stretches more with each dream! The first few times I dreamed it, the snake was fairly good distance from me; the thong had not stretched at all. Then it began to give slowly, but it took thirty or forty dreams for the serpent to get an inch nearer me. But of late it has been stretching with fearful speed.

"The other night I dreamed it last - and for the first time I felt, as I felt in reality, the cold fetid breath of the monster against my wrist. The lamp on the wall flickered - I awoke with a scream and a realization of my doom. Costigan, in my dream that snake will strike me, and I will die in reality!"

I shuddered in spite of myself.

"Murken, this is insanity! You were rescued in reality, in the event of which you dream - why should you not dream of your rescue?"

"I don't know. I'm no psychologist. But I've never dreamed of either the events leading up to the point of my being struck at, nor the events which really follow. Always it is the snake and I, alone. I believe that the affair was grooved so deeply into my brain that it struck into some of those dark corners of which I told you, im-

planting in my subconscious mind or whatever it is, the cognizance of impending doom. They say - some of the psychologists say - that certain parts of your brain work out thoughts transmitted them by the higher brain. All except fear and the certainty of death was crowded out of my mind. When the hunters burst in and saved me, I was delirious; I do not believe that my lower brain even recognized the rescue, for it was filled with the thoughts of my coming death. That explanation is hazy and vague; I cannot explain why I know it, but I know that if I dream that dream again, I'll die! That dark subconscious mind which works only when the higher mind is at rest will work out that terrible drama as it would have worked out in reality had not those men chanced along, and the culmination of it will blot out my physical life!"

"On the other hand," said I, "I believe that if you will dream the dream through, you will rid yourself forever of the hallucination. The hunters will rush in, the dream snake will die, and you will find yourself again."

He shook his head, letting his hands drop in a hopeless manner.

"I am marked by death," he said, and I could not move him from his fatalistic mood.

"Telling this tale has resigned me somewhat," he said. "I will sleep; if you are right, I will awake myself again, freed of this curse. But if I am right, I will not awake in this world."

He then bid me leave the light burning, and lay down on my couch. He did not fall instantly into slumber. He seemed unconsciously to fight against sleeping, but at last his lids sank and he lay still. His face in the light looked horribly like a skull, with its sunken cheeks and sallow parchment-like skin. The nightmare had evidently taken a terrific toll of mind and body. Time dragged on. I, too, grew sleepy. I found it almost impossible to hold my

eyes open and wondered at the endurance which had kept John Murken awake for nearly three days and nights.

Murken muttered in his sleep, and moved restlessly. The light shone full in his eyes, and I decided that it was disturbing his slumber. I glanced at the clock on the mantel. The hands stood at five. I turned the light off and took a single step toward my bed.

There in the darkness, I do not know whether or not John Murken's eyes opened in his last moment, but he gave one ghastly cry: "Oh God, the lamp has gone out!" And there followed a scream which froze the blood in my veins.

Cold sweat standing on each trembling limb, I turned on the light. John Murken lay dead, and the distortion on his face was hideous to see. There was no wound on him, but his right hand was clenched in a desperate death-grip about his left wrist.

The Dark Ones

by A. Arthur Griffin

Pluck at the edge of complacent Earth
 Pull your soul to the precipice and peer
 beyond.
 There lies the vast gulf of mystery and
 stars.
 There lurks the sullen doom of man and
 sun.
 Beyond the firmament, beyond mind,
 Beyond the boundaries of Euclidean Earth,
 accessible only to imagination, they
 abide.
 In our dreams we rove those tenuous years,
 We skip past the scurrying skalds of chaos,
 Blazing the two-way trail from bliss to
 blasphemy.
 In those innocent dreams the deadly road-
 way beckons,
 the Dark Ones sense our presence; they
 come to us.
 They engulf us, treading the path to fair
 Earth.
 They roamed these lands once, far beyond
 all mortal memory,
 And here shall rule again.

THE DUNES OF DEATH

by Joseph Payne Brennan

help either.

After checking his travel kit--food packs, water and a few medical items--he strode out of the shelter, took a last hateful look at the stalled shuttle ship and started down the rocks toward the sea of blue sand. Acting on an after-thought, he went back, picked up his flame pistol and tucked it into his belt. Silly, probably, since there was nothing on Argana to use it against, but long habit had made him feel somehow vulnerable and undressed without it.

Kurt Larton, Galactic Guard for Sun System M, stood by his sputtering shuttle ship and swore luridly. He was alone on the little upthrust island of rock where his portable shelter shields were erected. On every side, as far as he could see in any direction, Argana's blue sand dunes stretched away to a bleak horizon. Overhead Argana's clouded sun shone dully in a copper-colored sky.

In a few minutes he was trekking across the sands in the direction of Rotary Base. It was a good twenty miles away, but with any luck at all he ought to reach it in time. He was in good physical shape and there was nothing to impede his progress.

With a scowl of exasperation, Larton left the shuttle ship, stepped into the shelter and began packing a travel kit. With luck, he might make it back to Rotary Base before the mother ship of Sun System M took off after leaving his relief.

If it hadn't been for the idiotic Guard Station Rule, he reflected, there would be no problem. But Galactic Guard Headquarters had established an order that guards were not to remain in station at rotary bases. On most planets they had to set up station several hundred miles away. On Argana, which nobody seemed to care about, they modified the order but still would not abolish it.

He knew from long experience that the mother ship would not wait. The Guard Dispersal Detail had to maintain a rigid schedule. With twenty-odd planets to police in M's gigantic system, they had no time to wait around for a Galactic Guard who failed to show up at the relief rendezvous. Especially not on an unimportant planet like Argana which was known to be totally devoid of life forms.

At first glance, the order perhaps seemed foolish, and yet there was good sense in it. Too often in the past, space pirates had swooped down on rotary bases, destroying installations and killing the guard with a single blast of fire. If the guard was stationed at a distance, he might manage to intercept the outlaw craft with his shuttle ship. Even if he failed to burn it down, he might be able to provide Galactic Headquarters with a useful description of the type of ship encountered and of its probable blasting power.

It would be the responsibility of Larton's guard relief to investigate and report on the reason for his absence from Rotary Base.

Larton was not so much worried as exasperated. If he missed the mother ship, he'd have to spend another guard hitch, four weeks, on Argana. Of course he'd have the other guard for company, but that was small compensation. And the guard would probably be Kenner, whom he didn't like anyway.

In his present predicament however, Kurt Larton considered the Guard Station Rule both arbitrary and unreasonable. If he were stationed at Rotary Base, there would be no problem. The fact that his shuttle ship had broken down would not interfere with his being relieved by another guard.

Argana's empty blue sand dunes and its unchanging copper sky had begun to unravel his nerves. After awhile, the monotony and the unnatural color scheme became downright depressing. And those howling, hissing winds which skirled up out of nowhere every now and then didn't

Grumbling to himself, he trudged up and down the rolling blue sand dunes which constituted nine-tenths of Argana's inhospitable surface. The other tenth, up-thrust islands of bare rock, was no more hospitable. So far as anyone had ascertained, the planet did not support life of any type. Except for its thin atmosphere and relatively temperate climate, it offered little more than the wastes usually encountered on the smaller moons.

Larton swore to himself as the winds suddenly struck up across the alien desert. Argana's moaning winds were another reason, apart from the planet's desolation, why Galactic Guards dreaded assignment on the sphere. Gathering somewhere amid the empty dunes, the winds raced up across the blue sands, howling and keening for hours or even days at a time.

Their constant wailing clamor, Larton decided, was enough to drive a man mad. Muttering, he dropped the visor on his helmet and tramped on.

Sand swirled up on all sides, circling in swift funnels or scudding across the dunes like waves approaching a shore. The wind gained intensity until it became a wild screaming racket which seemed to roar inside Larton's head. It began blowing directly against him; every step forward required three times the energy that he had expended before.

Although his wrist compass kept him moving in the right direction toward Rotary Base, he began to realize that unless his speed was increased he would never arrive in time. Complaining savagely to himself, he bent his head and lunged on.

Argana's howling winds had bothered him often in the past; but at worst, except for brief intervals, he had always had the shelter shields between himself and the blast. Never before had he been trapped in the wild winds out of the dunes.

He labored forward doggedly, stopping at intervals to catch his breath. Once he thought the winds were subsiding,

but almost immediately they rushed up again, shrilling with renewed fury.

For hours he toiled on, while the wind tore and beat at him. Once he was thrown completely off his feet; before he got back up he was half covered with a sheet of blue sand.

He began to imagine that the wind was somehow alive, that it was filled with alien invisible forms which were bent on his imminent destruction. He began to believe that its howls and screams issued from a living throat, or legion of throats, which were keeping up a frantic chorus of destruction.

He stopped finally, feeling feverish and utterly exhausted, and looked hopelessly across the wind-driven dunes in the direction of Rotary Base. Unless the winds died away at once, he would never arrive in time.

Wearily he wiped his visor and prepared to make one final effort, even though it seemed useless. He was just about to slog on when he straightened up and stared.

Were his eyes playing him tricks?-- or had an uplifted plume of sand suddenly swirled itself into a wild prancing shape, a fearful form like a two-legged nightmare horse with flowing hooves and a flattened whippet-like head?

He closed his eyes and then quickly opened them again and the thing was still there, not ten yards away on the dunes, rushing and leaping like some obscenely animated satyr spawned by the winds and the sand.

Larton experienced a swift rush of terror. Vainly, he tried to reason with himself. He was delirious, he assured himself. What he saw was an hallucination, a figment of his fatigue and his overwrought nerves.

But it was no use. Although the thing out there on the dunes dissolved momentarily, it swirled up again a short distance away. And presently it was joined by another.

Larton was sure they were all around him. Their shrill whinnying howls filled the air.

He broke and ran, overcome with stark stampeding panic, hearing his own screams ring out above the piercing howls of the horrors which his mind tried vainly to reject.

They came after him, stamping him with their unspeakable feathery hooves, jostling him, rushing him until he fell.

He fought his way up, in the grip of frantic fear, and the rushing wind shapes reared over him again. Although only a few of them became visible at any one time as they swirled up a contour of sand, he suddenly realized that the dunes must contain hundreds of them.

Their howls grew in volume. He staggered on, striking out viciously but to no effect. They hurled themselves against him until he reeled drunkenly, until the breath was shocked out of him.

Too late he realized Argana's grim secret. The planet was *not* totally without life - as the earlier explorers and scientists had reported. It was totally devoid of *visible* life, but not of *invisible*. The savage wind shapes ruled the planet. Probably they had long since stamped out all other forms of existence. They roved the blue sand dunes endlessly, howling and humming, ever alert to surround and destroy any creature rash or ignorant enough to venture out of the desolate wastes. No wonder the shrilling of Argana's sudden "winds" made the first explorers and the later Galactic Guards shudder and lie awake in their shelters at night! And it was not surprising that one guard had gone mad after three months when his relief had not been furnished. Argana - world of the living winds!

Even as the planet's riddle was made clear to him, Larton stumbled and fell again. The wind shapes churned above him; and the blue sand began blowing over him.

On a sudden desperate resolve, he drew his flame pistol. If he were not insane and the lunging winds *were* alive, then perhaps ... He drew back the blast release.

A great rush of purple flame spouted out of the muzzle, over the dunes.

There was a sudden shrill agonized screech followed immediately by a high-pitched moaning howl and at once the winds raced away on all sides, leaving him in an eerie vacuum-like silence.

He got up, suddenly hopeful again, and stared out over the dunes.

But his incipient optimism was short-lived. Far away over the dunes a vast howling roar, like trumpeting from a thousand throats, boomed out. Great swirling pillars of sand, twisting like tornadoes, lifted into the copper sky. From the four horizons they converged, sweeping across the dunes with hurricane force.

Even before they struck, he knew there could be no withstanding them. He waited until they were almost upon him and then pulled back the blast release of his flame pistol and held it there.

The purple fire flamed for a brave instant. Then it disappeared and the puny shape which had released it was snatched by the monstrous spirals of converging wind and flung far up in the copper bowl of sky.

The shape hung suspended there for a second, as if it were a wriggling puppet supported by strings, and then plummeted back down to the dunes.

In less than a minute it was completely covered with blue sand. When the howling winds finally raced away, there was nothing to mark the spot where it had struck except a small almost indistinguishable blue mound.

THE GATES

by Walter Quednau

When I was a lad, I often woke shuddering from a nightmare induced by nothing more than a tale - one of the many told to me and my cousins by our old grandfather, my mother's father. He had come to this country as a young man, scarcely sixteen, fleeing from some small island that was a part of Greece; fleeing from what, I had never known, whether it be bandits, ghosts, or simply poverty.

For years, after we moved away from Baltimore and I grew up, I remembered vividly how he would recount such tales, there in his tiny wretched parlor, the center of a white-faced gang of boys. Often through the years I have dreamed of it at night. Even today, sometimes, I have an old nightmare, have it over again, like re-reading a book, and wake up sweating with fear.

My father was a practical man, matter-of-fact and devoted to the task of bettering his lot by the only way he knew - amassing money. He had a German peasant's respect for learning, though he possessed little of his own, and he was wonderfully happy when I showed interest in becoming a lawyer. Here were learning and money-making combined! As for the weird tales of his father-in-law, he only laughed when mother objected to my presence in the old man's house, scoffed at the nightmares. It was all *Quatsch*, he would exclaim and laugh.

But he had superstitions of his own, and deep down I think his laughter was a little too exuberant. For instance, there was his silver coin - a 1912 American dollar. How he acquired it I do not remember, but it had been in his breast pocket one day when, as a German soldier, he was struck by a stray bullet from across the French lines. The bullet hit the coin, and did not penetrate. As a result, father acquired a lucky piece, America eventually acquired a new citizen,

and finally I acquired a father. I never stopped kidding him about it as long as he lived. It had been super-lucky, once anyway, I would say. How much more could anybody ask of it? But he carried it nevertheless, and when he died he willed it to me. And I myself have carried it ever since, in a special compartment at the back of my wallet. Why? I don't know. Certainly not for any luck it might hold. Maybe because that way a little bit of my father was always with me.

Mother was dead, also, and so were my two sisters, the result of a bad car accident. I was the only one of the family left, and as my maiden aunt, my mother's sister, was fond of telling me, I was thirty six years old and still a bachelor, and I had better hurry or I would be the only one ever. Was it because I was an epileptic? Perhaps I didn't want to marry. I wasn't certain. It didn't seem quite fair to any children I might have. Still, the modern experimental drugs I took for the disease had entirely obliterated any sign of it; I was no longer subject to fits.

I shake my head now as I write and think about those old stories, those horror tales of witches and werewolves and ghosts. Who today is frightened, really frightened, of ghosts? Today a cemetery is only a place that you visit with Mommy and Daddy on holidays like the Fourth of July to scatter flowers on your grandparents' graves.

How many of us, at least us grown-ups, have those stories ever really frightened in this sophisticated twentieth century of ours? In Europe a few stray spirits may linger, I don't really know, but in America? Big, bright, chrome-plated America? You know there aren't any.

You wouldn't even be frightened at the thought of spending the night alone in a cemetery, would you? No. Well, I can't dare you to try it. All the fancy new cemeteries have big iron fences and big iron gates to keep you out when the guards go off duty, at night. Some-places, they don't go off duty at all.

Of course, if you did happen to be inside at closing time, the gates would keep you inside, wouldn't they. A pleasant thought.

I had been visiting my aunt in Patonville, near Baltimore, for a couple of days. I had forgotten to bring along my medicine, but I hadn't had a fainting spell in two years, and had grown complacent. I kept telling myself I would pick up a supply of the pills later. For three days, now, I had put it off, and I made up my mind to pick some up on my way home from the cemetery.

My aunt had wanted me to visit the graves of my parents while I was in town, and I was persuaded to go, though these trips always upset me. To me, my parents were not in that iron-gated park, under those brass markers kept polished by the attendants who cut the grass and plant the flowers. They were in my memory.

However, I did not go with her. In fact, I did not even admit to her that I planned to go. I hopped a cab into town, where the main office of an insurance company, North State, is located. I had a matter of a few depositions to discuss with them. After that, I took another cab out to the cemetery. I hadn't been there for years, but it still looked the same. Not at all forbidding; more like a playground or a park. The cab dropped me at the gate and I began the hike to my family plot, which was located in about the middle of the "Patonville Memorial Park."

I took a couple of short cuts that I remembered. It was when I had nearly arrived, and was traversing a little grove of pine trees, that I suddenly felt the symptoms of a fainting spell coming on. I cursed myself heartily for having put off getting my medicine, and sprawled on the pine needles hoping the feeling would pass. But that hope was vain. As consciousness was leaving me, I thought I heard a voice. But before I could be sure, total blackness descended.

I must have been unconscious for hours. My awakening was gradual. At first I did not realize I had been sense-

less for long, for I still heard that voice. I recognized it, I thought in my muddled condition, but could not really decide who it was. The voice said over and over again, "Wake up. Wake up. Wake up. Look in your wallet. Look for the coin. Look for the silver coin." Over and over again it said this.

I opened my eyes. My clothes were damp. My hair was full of pine needles. I lay upon a bed of them, rotted pine cones crumbled under my back and neck. I gasped for breath, and listened to the voice.

Darkness covered everything. A cold mist seemed to permeate the air. My head ached.

I found myself repeating the old ritual under my breath, as I had become accustomed to doing in former days. It always had helped a little to keep my sanity. "My name is Jerry Bowman. Jerry Bowman. How old am I? How old? I'm... I'm... I'm..." My memory began to creak into motion, very gently.

I began to feel better. I began to think again consciously, not automatically. I damned myself, again, for not having picked up a supply of my pills. But I knew I was safe from another attack for a little while, unless my physical reactions had altered after my two years on that medicine. Indeed, I had never been unconscious for such a long period before.

The air was still. I listened, and heard faint rustling sounds. Not the trees. Animals? Yes, squirrels and birds who wrung a thriving existence from this park-like region. Suddenly the truth flooded over my mind. I was in the cemetery, and it was night, and I was alone. The wind seemed suddenly cold, and I felt the damp of my sport-shirt against my back. I shivered.

Then I listened to the voice, again. It had been intoning continuously, very softly, "Find the silver dollar." And I recognized it at last! But I saw nothing; it came from the very wind.

Instinctively, I knew that it was important to be as still as possible. Cautiously I drew out my wallet from my hip pocket, fumbled for the battered coin. What was its significance?

Then I saw them.

They were all around me. One moment, blackness impenetrable; and then there they were. I saw them without the light of moon or stars, which were clouded in the mist. Saw them by a light they themselves seemed to exude. How many were wandering about? A dozen? Thirty? I could not count. I trembled in my efforts to remain motionless. I tried to imagine myself a corpse among corpses. For that is what they were, those pale forms that swayed about me with the wind. Corpses. I saw them clearly enough to know. Some were nothing but bare bones, oscillating randomly in the darkness like cartoon skeletons. Others seemed but recently interred, and wore their Sunday best with spurious dignity. But the rest.. .. ah, the rest were half-decomposed, their clothes in tatters and their bodies worse. Those were the ones that made me want to scream and retch.

Yet they did not come near me. They did not touch me, or even give a sign that they knew I was there.

Then came the other. As he approached I saw that he was tall and cadaverous, and dressed entirely in black. I could see him only in the reflected phosphorescence of the others. I wanted to flee with all my heart, but my palsied limbs would not obey the frantic commands of my crazed brain. I lay there, helpless, watching him approach. The others scattered as he came nearer, as jackals would scatter before the advance of the lion.

I trembled uncontrollably as I suddenly recognized his distorted features. I gasped.

Once more I heard the familiar voice. I heard it say, "The coin. The coin. Jerry. The coin." I think it was the frantic hopelessness in its tone that broke my paralysis.

As the foul creature came toward me, stretched out a hairy hand to touch me, I thrust out the silver coin. It brushed his flesh, and he cried out. I smelled the odor of corruption. I smelled how the coin seared his flesh, that monstrosity from the grave. He backed away, staring at me, making no sound other than a low mewling, from the hurt I had given him. His eyes were hypnotic, but the touch of the coin in my palm seemed to give me the strength to oppose that baleful glare.

Again and again he essayed to reach me; again and again I held him at bay with the threat of the coin. The very nearness of the coin seemed to hold veritable agony for the creature. Yet he tried again and again to reach me.

With the passage of time, my fear was not concentrated upon the preternatural horror of the vryolakas, the vampire, or of his origin. Familiarity had done it, and utter weariness. No, the horror that now began to permeate my soul was the simple one that my fit might come on again. Should it happen, I would be doomed; I could not lift my hand, hold the coin before the maddened fiend to ward him off.

All night the vryolakas made an effort to overcome my resistance, and all night I fought back. Just before dawn, then, I felt again that dizziness that generally precedes an attack. I frantically made every effort to remain conscious, I grasped the silver coin tightly in my right hand, but to no avail. I felt myself slowly slumping back. My awareness dwindled.

Dimly I heard the voice again, the one I had recognized. It said, "Back. Back. This mortal is not for you, cursed one."

Something or someone wrenched the silver coin from my fist, and I heard two horrible cries of agony and hatred. Then I fainted.

When I awoke again the sun was streaming through the branches of the

trees, and I heard the friendly sound of approaching voices. I recognized the voice of my aunt, and cried out, feebly.

She had finally realized where I must be, and what my predicament was, and had come to seek me out.

When they found me, the doctor who was with them gave me a dose of the drug I should have been taking, and then explained that he wished to give me a sedative and take me to the hospital for a careful examination. I complied with his request, swallowed the drug, and soon was deeply asleep.

Three days later, physically recovered, I returned to the cemetery. I was alone, because I had to be. I had told my story to no one. Who could believe it? Who could believe the ravings of an epileptic obviously in the throes of his horrid disease?

I went back for one reason and one alone - I no longer had the silver coin in my possession.

I searched the area under the pine trees, searched thoroughly, but it was not there.

Then with trepidation I approached the grave of my grandfather, oldest in our family plot.

There was the coin, lying upon the slightly tarnished nameplate of his grave. It glittered in the sunshine like a beacon. I stooped and picked it up. Idly I tossed it up and down in the palm of my hand, watching it glint in the sunlight. It looked no different from the way it had always looked. Funny, there at the back, how the indentation from that old bullet, if you looked at it in just the right way, took on the broad shape of an "X," or a cross. I smiled, grimly.

How had the coin come to be there? I had never reached the graves of my family on the night of my earlier excursion.

I asked myself these questions,

trying to avoid thinking of the truth; but I knew only too well how it had gotten there.

The voice, the voice in my dreams, the voice that first had roused me from my torpor. That voice I had recognized. It was the voice, I know it, of my dead father. And it was he, I knew, who had stood over my prone form as I lay there helpless and unconscious. He it was who had taken the coin from my hand, and used it to defend me.

They cannot stand the touch of silver, these creatures, and they fear the ancient symbol of the cross. I am certain that even my defender was burnt by it as he took it from my fist. I remember hearing *two* screams of agony.

It had rained heavily the night before and the ground was soft. No one was watching. With the aid of a broken tree branch, I scooped a six inch deep cavity in the ground next to the brass marker directly over the coffin where grandfather lay. Now at last I knew from what he had fled on that island in Greece; but what he fled was in his own blood. I tamped the soil firmly down over the coin and returnd it. I knew it would be a lock as eternal as the seal of Solomon.

When I finished I rubbed the grit from my fingers and let my gaze rove about the cemetery. It looked peaceful and beautiful, with the blooming flowers of late summer and the wonderful pines and maples. A veritable paradise, but one to which I would never return again. I knew what the cold iron gates were for, now, though no one admitted it. They were not there to keep out marauders and stray tramps, or to spoil the fun of young lovers searching for a quiet nook. They weren't there to keep anything out.

They were there to keep something in!

Out of the Night

by H. Warner Munn

He had already learned that it was quite impossible to free himself from the wreckage, so he lay in the mud and thought about what had happened.

Without turning his head he could see that the glow in the sky, beyond the hills, was dying down. The fire must be almost out. He felt relieved.

It was fortunate, he mused, that the rearview mirror was slanted just so, otherwise it would have cost him much pain from his crushed shoulder to turn and watch the light. It seemed very important that he should know when it finally faded.

He wondered idly how long he had been lying thus.

It had been about two in the morning when he drank the beer. It could hardly be three yet. Less than an hour, and yet so much had happened. He knew now that the drink should have been coffee.

The swamp fog drifted in through the broken cab window and he closed his eyes. It looked so much like smoke!

His frantic thoughts raced on.

After wasting that time in Hawkstown, (though he scarcely regretted it, a man must have a little relaxation) it was necessary to hurry on.

A gypsy trucker, not because he was one of the Rom, but so called because he had no regular itinerary or hours, must sometimes drive himself with little rest or care for his machine. Now he realized that he had tempted Fortune once too often.

He had believed that the downhill run from Hawkstown into Bethel would make up the time, but he had not reckoned on the fog. Yes, it was the fog that was responsible. His conscience was plaguing him without reason.

His eyes opened. Was that a step? No, only the drip, drip of acid from the split battery.

He had been listening to the small sound for some little while, wondering when his one remaining headlight would go out. The beam was still angling into the sky like a beckoning beacon, not appreciably dimmed.

He was glad that the dripping liquid was not gasoline.

God had been kinder to him than -- those others.

Again he tried to reach the light switch, fighting off the waves of pain which were blacking off his vision, but he was too tightly pinned. The finger tips would not quite reach. His arm dropped.

It would probably have been a futile effort anyway, if he had been able to flash a signal. Travelers on this mountain back road, at this hour, were very few.

That was why it had surprised him so, when the small sedan had suddenly loomed up before him, rushing at him through the mist.

Well, he had tried! No one could say he had not done his best. Even his conscience did not urge that point.

He had swung far out, clearing the road entirely and applied the brakes.

Too hard! That had been the mistake. If he had not been so sleepy and the fog so thick. It was not the beer, after all.

He had been passing fairly. There had really been no need for braking, but his faculties were dulled. The brakes locked. At his speed, this was fatal. The big ten-wheeler buckled and suddenly he was fighting the wheel. The trailer slewed across the smooth, wet blacktop, cuffing the light antiquated car into the ditch, - overturning it, crumpling it like a kicked can.

So far it had been only an accident, avoidable it is true, but still an accident. He saw with awful clarity that it was what had followed that had been the crime.

Flames were spouting out of the hood louvres in the little car as he ran back and someone inside was screaming.

There were three people. He could see them plainly. A man, a woman and a small child. They were swarthy, dressed in fantastic clothing, brilliant-hued, very dirty. Real gypsies!

He tried to open the door, but it was jammed. A rill of burning gasoline ran out from under the car toward his feet and the heat drove him back.

The man was trying to break the windshield with his hands, jabbering vicious-

ly at him, "Camposedro fix! Camposedro fix!"

There was little doubt of what he meant to do.

Meanwhile, the woman was trying to push the child out through the side window, but it was dead or stunned and could not help itself. He could not bring himself to face the danger and reach for the child.

He was suddenly afraid that the man would get out. Then the gasoline tank exploded and a wave of white fire bathed the whole interior of the car.

Now nothing moved, but the thin high screaming went on for a little while. Without waiting for it to stop, he obeyed the promptings of his fear.

In the brilliant light, he hurriedly inspected his truck. It had not been damaged and there were no marks upon it. Only upon a few of the pieces of lumber were stains where the paint of the sedan had scraped off.

With brush and grass he obliterated the marks and rubbed out the traces where his tires had dragged along the edge of the road. He wiped away a clear tread mark on the soft shoulder.

Waves of sickening, oily smoke surged over him as he worked. He retched, but persisted. He scoured away his footmarks near the sedan, plain in the light of burning gasoline.

Nothing could have been alive there, when he was ready to leave. It was quite impossible, and yet - once in the cab of the truck, his coolness left him and panic came.

Suppose someone were lurking in the fog and watching him! Suppose someone were coming even now around the next bend!

The gears clashed hurriedly and he sped away.

It was cold here, lying in the black swamp ooze, though the fog seemed a little thinner now. It eddied and swirled over the swamp lands.

Really, it was the fog which had done the rest.

Odd, what faces and creatures a man with a little imagination can see in a whirl of fog. It could hardly have been anything else, but imagination - and fog.

He had roared down grade. Down, around the steep curves, down from the high summits, down toward the mist-

drowned lowlands, boring into the fog through a tunnel of deceptive luminescence.

Then, it seemed (though of course it had been imagination) that standing directly in front of him, not forty feet away, was a woman with a child in her arms. She made no effort to save herself. She stood there and raised the child, offering it pleadingly to him - as he had seen her before.

He jerked savagely at the brake handle. His foot stamped down hard. The smooth tires screamed and for the second time that night the ten-wheeler jackknifed. He saw the mud and the reeds at the edge of the road and the marsh beyond, but not in time.

He was in it before he knew. Steel snapped like brittle glass. Truck and trailer went over into the marsh and the lumber load came crashing through, end on, into the cab.

During it all, he had not lost consciousness. He felt a savage pride in that. He was tough - hard to kill - hard to beat.

His pain was excruciating and he still fought it, though he knew he had weakened considerably. He would get out of this yet!

The splashing beneath him, he suspected might not be acid alone, though he could smell it, strong and pungent. Very likely, he was losing blood. That, of course, was the cause of his light-headedness. Thinking now, for example, that he heard something moving behind him, deep in the marsh where nothing could walk and live!

Oh, with a little luck he would last out till morning when someone would surely pass.

It was hard, sometimes, not to groan, but he did not allow himself to do it - not while his mind still ruled his crushed and unruly nerves.

Unmistakable sounds were coming from the marsh, sounds indescribably stealthy and sinister, as though something was trying clumsily to avoid detection. A large awkward creature *was* pushing through the mire, wallowing there, coming closer.

He tried, in the mirror, to catch a glimpse of whatever it might be. There was no longer even a glimmer of light beyond the ridge. Then he shuddered,

realizing dreadfully that *it* was coming across the marsh toward him, from the direction of the accident. Straight as an arrow flies, disregarding the smooth highway, proceeding direct, over - not around - all obstacles. With painful, crawling slowness, it was coming, coming. Had been coming for how long?

His thought raced. He had come far? No. Two miles, perhaps three. No more. It had seemed farther, but there had been a great bend in the highway to avoid this swampland. It might be no more than a mile across the swamp in a direct line and he had lain here an hour.

Plenty of time for *it* to come!

His one headlamp beam was red now, not white, but there was still enough light reflected behind him from the mist, so that he could see in his mirror a shape struggling in the mud.

He could not tell if it were beast or human. It fell many times, though it progressed on all fours and seemed to be a quadruped. It came closer, but in the mirror he could not see if it were the tattered horror he suspected it to be.

His mind still held reason, and denied, but his body *knew*. On his back he felt the little hairs rise and a chill shook him. Not all the old stories then were fables. There were dark ways of retribution and the secrets of Night were not to be held lightly. The Furies did still pursue!

Something glittered in the paw of the crawling thing. He forced himself to look away from the mirror.

The light was very dim and when he turned his eyes back, he could not see the miry creature, but it was out of the marsh, for he heard it padding near the rear of the trailer.

Lurching, falling, it shambled closer.

He began to quiver uncontrollably, for now his body ruled his mind and his body dreaded what had come out of the abyss and could no longer be deceived!

All his senses were quickened and sharpened and he recognized instantly the dreadful sweet-smell of something wet and charred, which came drifting closer. With a last effort he turned his head and glared out through the window.

It was erect and facing him, though it had no eyes. The fingers were like dead sticks, baked and brittle, but they held

firmly a long sliver of glass that might have come from a broken windshield.

Then, as it lumbered closer to the cab, the headlight flickered once and there was no more light to show the way to this awful visitor to whom light had not been needed.

He heard the scratching, harsh fumbling at the cab door above him and suddenly through his deep terror, his wavering mind seized irrelevantly upon a remembered sentence from his Driver's Manual.

It had suddenly taken on an ominous and sinister meaning. "Drive cautiously!" it had advised. "Proceed with care in darkness and fog - for something may come out of the night to stop you!"

Then the groping fingers found him and he felt an edge of broken glass fall icily across his throat.

Eine Kleine Nachtmusik

by Walt Klein

Through the midnight marching
Down the slanting steps of mossy
Stone with moonlight, moonlight, moonlight
All around. The wine grows
Warm within, the wind grows cold with-
Out, and my love, my love, my love
Wanders wanton eyed, wild
Waving haired, loose girdled with a
Demon madness, madness, madness---
(O never ask who sleeps within
The brass bound, marbled tomb, for all
The locks are shattered, and the moon
Shines cold upon the tumbled stones.)
Never ask who sleeps with
Her the long night through when a moon of
Frost gold watches, watches, watches,
Limning lovers, wreathed in
Soft perfume, with light. He sleeps with
One who wanders, wanders, wanders
Down the moon's dim lanes. O
Never ask who sleeps with her! For
He sleeps no more - no more - no more ---

AFTERMATH FROM ANGLE TWO

by Allan C. Leverentz

The shores were green and fragrant with the life that was their Greenness, basking in the warmth of the sun, and breathing up the windborne essence of the blue Aegean that lay like a mantle against them. For millennia they had been thus, serene and placid, content beneath the eye of their god and yielding themselves up to the light and flippant tread of generations of the children of that god. They had so long been imbued with divinity, for such uncounted kalpas of time served as a great, unchanging shrine, that the memory of what the first days had been, and what had been ere those long days were born, lay forgotten within their vibrant, living depths.

They had stirred for centuries only to the great hymn of their god and the joyous obeisance of his native children, and they had drunken long and deeply of all the beauty and all the sweetness of the universe. And this was to be their last day; the climax of their eternity.

It was like a great darkening of the sun, and the voice was brought on a wind that was cold with a coolness not of the sea or of sonorous evening, but with the iron chill of death. It was a voice that had no sound, and yet it burst in unison upon the ears of all the children of the great god, halting them, numbing them, crying out in its silence the fate that had at last overtaken them.

"Great Pan," sighed the wind, wrapt in its melancholy and breathing its despair, "is dead."

Silence descended upon all those green precincts. The cry of a syrinx, piping somewhere in a hidden copse, ceased, and the last note halted for a moment, as if beseeching, and then slid in amidst the green of the leaves and the purple shadows of the glades, and was gone forever. The eternal hymn had ceased, and the temple of life sighed its emptiness and its loss.

The Dryads, sad always, though they lay in the bosom of all content, were suddenly sad as they had never been before. The

tears that formed in their soft eyes were salt and sharp, biting against the fragile lids they touched. And their trees, their dear trees, wept with them.

"Great Pan is dead," the wind murmured, and the leaves shrank back from it, fearing it, hating it, knowing it brought them death as well.

Far away the image was born, but it formed before all their eyes. The saddened fauns, the tear-masked eyes of the tree-maidens, the nymph who had been caught at the edge of an iridescent pool, and on whose cheek the flush of innocent, unthinking happiness faded away--all saw it, taking shape in sombre, oppressive tones, the tyrannical, hated symbol which would gather up their freedom and crush the life and the joy out of them.

It was the brand that would seal their tomb. It was the end of life and the true meaning of life; the new metamorphosis of faith, the dominion of a sepulchre, the reign of blood.

The vision was a hill, such as once had been theirs, as all of living earth had been theirs, but was now torn from them, to rear high against the sky the colophon that was their destruction.

It was sorrow alone, deep aching sorrow, and the bitter sweetness of a thousand joys that had become only a memory--this alone was their homage before the black image of the cross.

From A Runestone

by Michael De Angelis

The frozen river of Time is still
As the silent plains of the moon;
And the hearts of men are dead and chill,
When they hark to the wizard's rune--
Hark to the wizard's rune.

For the mage now sits on an ivory throne,
In a tower of burnished brass;
And dark demons serve as he sits alone
Watching the sea-nymphs pass---
Watching the sea-nymphs pass.

I Am Human

by Oliver Ward

My mind sang to the soft strokes of the snare drum. The combo was good, the atmosphere was pleasantly smoky, and the Dortmund in my mug was foamy and cool. But my fingers twitched nervously. Where was Helen?

Across the table, Paul and Jan ostensibly watched the four couples who were trying to dance on the tiny roped-in dance-floor. It was surrounded by tables and topped by a miniature skylight that was open to the evening. The light level inside was so low that you could actually see two or three of the brighter stars.

Helen had been due at about seven, and it was now nine. I had called her home three times but there was no answer. I saw Paul and Jan look at each other meaningfully as I pushed back my chair and drained my beer. My lips tightened.

"Bill," said Jan, "let me try, this time. I'll call Sally, too. Maybe she knows where Helen could be."

I stood uncertainly, my chair half-tilted back, as she rose and started toward the entrance where the telephone booths were located, clutching her black purse tightly in her left hand while she rummaged for a dime.

"Sit down and have another beer, Bill," said Paul, signaling our waitress.

I sat in silence as the brew was poured and the girl left. Somewhere in my brain, my blood followed the rhythm of the combo, and my thoughts came in silly snatches.

"Where's Helen -- boom, ba da. Helen's lost -- zwam, ba zam. Why why - ba da."

Jan came back and sat down. I raised my eyebrows. She shook her head.

"Bill, old buddy," said Paul in a fatherly tone, "Helen's a big girl, now. She's what, twenty three? She's lived by herself for three years. She doesn't need a keeper. What's really got you so worried anyway?"

Now, that was a good question, Paul, old buddy. What exactly did have me so worried? I took a slow sip at my Dortmund, watching the gyrating couples on the dance floor (there were six now), and thought

back over the events of the past few days.

Today was Friday, June the 16th. On Monday I had made arrangements at the University Accelerator Laboratory to be absent for the rest of the summer. Tuesday morning at 8:30 I bounced into my M.G., which was laden with baggage, and left Philadelphia. Up the Northeast Extension of the turnpike, up interstate 81 to Syracuse, then west to Buffalo; with a short stop for lunch, it was about an eight hour trip. I arrived at Paul and Jan's house at 4:45. Paul had left work early, and his crimson TR-4 was glistening in the driveway. I pulled my green M.G. up beside the Triumph, and clambered out.

I had a pleasant surprise. Helen met me in the entranceway. She offered me a bottle of Schmidt's, which slopped over a bit when I grabbed her and hugged as hard as I could hug with a bottle of cold beer sticking in my navel.

Jan had originally introduced us. I had been a graduate student in nuclear physics, Helen had been a junior majoring in history. In a school as large as the state university at Buffalo, we might never have met otherwise. Our professional interests were quite disparate; but in everything else we were compatible. We were both shy in crowds, both interested in music and art, both only children with deceased parents. Everything in the world seemed to shatter and re-form itself with Helen at the focal position.

We had become engaged last July. I had already accepted the job in Philadelphia, research associate at the university accelerator; she had committed herself to teach history at St. Mary's, a preparatory school for girls in Buffalo.

We had seen each other once or twice a month, and had spent the holidays together. Little enough time together, we thought. But now the year was over. The wedding was to be on Saturday.

We partied that Tuesday evening until well past midnight, and I took Helen back to the large, empty house on Ferry Street which had belonged to her parents and where she still lived, alone. For an hour or more we sat side by side in the huge parlor, talking a little nervously, and then said good-night.

Wednesday, Helen had a few things to attend to in the morning, so we met for lunch at the Colonial House across from

the campus (how many misty memories associate themselves with that mundane establishment); then we went to the zoo. Odd? We had spent our very first date at the zoo, and had not been back since. Nothing was wrong that afternoon; our minds were immersed in reminiscences. We had dinner at Eduardo's--pizza and chianti--and spent the evening first at the movies and subsequently at a cocktail lounge on Delaware Avenue. A satisfying day, simple though it was; wrung from our friends' opportunity by ruthlessness. We paid on Thursday, though--visits to relatives, parties with friends and with the bridesmaids and ushers (Paul was to be best man), all packed in together.

Friday afternoon--this afternoon--we had the wedding rehearsal. It went off smoothly, and by three o'clock the formal garb was doffed and I suggested we all head back for home base, Paul and Jan's. But Helen demurred. She explained that she had an important person to see, and would meet the three of us for dinner at the Sheridan Club at seven. She refused to divulge her errand. I could not understand the expression on her face. She was blushing a little.

"Secrets?" I said rather coolly.

"Probably a whole raft of secret lovers," said Paul.

In the wake of the pleasant-sounding banter, she departed. I put on a smile and we went back to Paul and Jan's for a few drinks. Suddenly I needed them more than ever.

Now it was nine--and Helen was gone. I was badly worried; and I still didn't really understand why. Was it age-old instinct, brought to consciousness by the desperate need of which I was totally unaware? Who can say?

I turned from my reverie to Paul, and spoke in a determined voice.

"I don't understand why, but I'm still worried. Look. You and Jan stay here, in case she does come. I'm going to her place. I'll call you in an hour or so, here, to check with you. Okay?"

"If you think it's necessary."

I rose from the table.

"Nothing could possibly be wrong, Bill," said Jan reassuringly. "She probably just had a flat tire, or something."

I said nothing, managed a ghastly grin, and headed for the door. It closed with a

click, abruptly slicing off the wailing rhythm of the combo.

In the car, as I made my way through the late evening traffic, I became more and more tense, without realizing why. The girl I loved was in some kind of trouble, or danger, and I had to do something. Only I didn't know what to do, or how to do it. The possibility that I was imagining the whole thing just made matters that much worse.

The house on Ferry Street was dark. I pulled into the narrow driveway, and slipped out onto the wet grass, hunting through my key ring for the front door key that had been mine for nearly a year and a half. I mounted the steps to the porch, tiptoed to the door, and quietly unlocked it and pushed it open. My groping hand found the light switch and I blinked into the flood of illumination until my irises contracted and I could see.

The room was empty. The whole house felt empty. I pushed the door shut behind me and stood staring about. It was just a room, a rather shabby one, but it was populated with poignant memories. I stared at the large, faded couch regarding it abstractly. It had been the scene of our first kiss, one warm humid autumnal evening. Much later in the same year, on that same outmoded item of furniture, two inexperienced people had nervously accepted each other's virginity. Yes, I loved Helen. And as these thoughts blazed through my mind, there came to me almost an image, a vision, of sight and sound combined. Helen--crying out in her need for me.

The moment of clairvoyance passed. I suddenly realized I was standing by the door, still clutching the knob and drenched in sweat. The worst thing of all was my realization of my own utter helplessness.

But was I really helpless? I shook myself, literally, from my reverie and set about the unlikely task of finding a clue to Helen's whereabouts. There was a telephone in the kitchen. I looked there first, but saw no sign of a notebook or a note. I looked briefly in on the study, which was a seething mass of papers, smiled grimly, and decided to leave it for last. I headed for Helen's bedroom, recalling that there was a

telephone extension on her night table. It was there that the letters lay. Three letters. They were dated about one year ago, two months ago, and two or three days ago, respectively.

There is no need to reproduce all three letters here, although they are before me, now, as I write. All were from a man whose name I had never heard before. Ron Elder. The first was written upon the occasion of our engagement, and although generally incoherent, seemed to be a diatribe against Helen for having been faithless to his pure love, for having (I quote) "played with my poor heart like a football." It was unanswerable, and had apparently remained unanswered. In the second, written two months ago, the melody changed from the plaintive to the protective. Elder was still incoherent, and apparently was still deeply unhappy concerning the loss of his great and one-and-only love. Now, he seemed to feel that Helen was no longer a faithless bitch but a wronged woman. There were several innuendos about me--in one place the phrase *Don Juan* was indiscriminately tossed around. This letter was just as unanswerable as the first, and apparently Helen had thought so too, for it was roughly crumpled up as though it had been thrown out, although later retrieved and filed away.

The third letter was a complete reversal of form. It was short, sweet, and to the point. I give it here, verbatim.

R.D. 4
Bucksville, N.Y.
June 14th

Dear Helen,

No doubt you are astonished to hear from me again, and so soon. I am very much ashamed of those other letters I have written to you, and I want to apologize. I must have lost my mind, there, for awhile, but I feel like a new person now.

I'm writing you to tell you that I have just gotten engaged. Susan is a grand girl, and I know we are going to be very happy. She knows all about you, and I want very much to have you meet her, and her, you. I heard you were going to Europe for your honeymoon, so I hoped you might

be able to stop and see us before the wedding. I'm living at the farm, now (you remember how to get there, don't you.... the old dirt road off the Belldon Creek Drive?), and Sue and I will be here Thursday and Friday.

If you get the chance, please come. Please, please. Bring your fiance, too, if you want to; but come.

Your friend,
Ron.

The telephone book was open, on the bed, to the E's. Elder was listed there, all right, with a town address and a phone number at which I guessed there would be no answer. I was right--I tried dialling it and got a recorded message; the number had been discontinued.

It looked very much as though Helen had gone to Elder's farm. I had some vague ideas about what might have followed, melodramatic ideas that you can probably guess at. How could I have begun to imagine the ghastly truth? But my surmises, wrong as they were, spurred me to action. I picked up the telephone, dialled the Sheridan Club, and asked for Paul. He was a local sports car club officer, and knew the countryside around Buffalo intimately. After an interminable time, Paul came to the telephone.

"Helen's not home," I said.

"She hasn't shown up here, either," Paul said.

"I think she may have gone to visit someone who lives in a place called Bucksville. Off a road called the Belldon Creek Drive. Know it?"

"Are you still at Helen's place?"

I told him yes. He then proceeded to draw me a verbal map. I jotted down every instruction, using the back of Elder's last letter. I refused his offer of further assistance, but told him to expect to hear from me at home within a few hours.

After turning out the lights and locking the door behind me, I got into the car and rummaged about for my local map. By the map-light I tried to draw out my route according to Paul's instructions; but some of the roads he told me about weren't even on the map. So I put it away for future reference and unlocked

the glove compartment and drew out the .32 caliber automatic pistol that I have always carried on long trips since being held up once, six years ago. I made sure it was loaded, then slipped it into my jacket pocket. It was not too conspicuous. After that, I started the engine and swung the little car out into Ferry Street.

You might think it incredible that within thirty miles of a large eastern city like Buffalo there could be wilderness, deserted hills, forest lands, fields choked with ragged weeds. Perhaps in the shadows that sprang from the yellow beams of my headlamps, the wildness and loneliness of the terrain were exaggerated. I got lost three times, and there were six or seven other instances when I thought I was lost. The black top roads became narrower and narrower, and more and more winding. My fuel gage began to get uncomfortably low--I had not thought to stop and fill the tank. And my normally-mild hay fever was beginning to make its presence felt.

Finally, well past eleven o'clock, I made it to Bucksville. The town was hardly more than an accident, several people having chosen to build near one another. It boasted one gasoline station, dark and deserted. Then, as I passed the town and slowed up, wondering what to do next, I espied a shabby figure moving furtively into the bushes at the side of the road. I stopped, and backed up. No one was in sight.

"Hey!" I called. "Can you help me?"

There was a rustle in the undergrowth, and then a man appeared. He looked about sixty or seventy, was dressed in an old but serviceable army coat, and carried a bundle in his left hand. He approached my car cautiously.

"What's your trouble, mister," he cackled.

"I'm a little lost," I said. "Is this anywhere near the Belldon Creek Drive?"

"Got near a mile t'go, yet," he grunted. Then he said thoughtfully, "I could use a lift to the creek, m'self."

I looked closely at him. His package was carelessly wrapped in newspaper and looked slightly stained with red, but the man seemed presentable, just barely.. Chicken-poaching, successfully, I guessed; hid out till he saw I wasn't a local man. "Sure, get in," I said.

We drove in silence till he pointed out

a shack dimly visible off to the side of the road, and asked me to stop. I pulled up in front of it. He said:

"The creek road's a coupla hundred feet further on down. Y'can't miss't."

He started to get out. I said, "The Elder Place. You know it? It's a farm, I guess."

He finished clambering out, then leaned back into the car and said, in a different tone, "Yeah, I know it. Left, and down th' creek a mite. Dirt road, to the left. What you want to go there for? I wouldn't if I was you."

"I've got to go there," I said. "What's wrong, there? Do you know Ron Elder?"

He grunted. "Ronny's folks died two, three months back. Ronny's a funny one." He paused. "Funnier than ever, since a few days ago. Since the meter fell."

"What do you mean. Meter" You mean meteor?"

"Yeah, like the whole world was on fire. Landed somewheres near the Elder place. Sky was bright, like daylight. An' smoke? We thought there's be a fire, sure. But there weren't."

"What did you mean, Ronny's funnier than ever?"

The old man spat. "Sheriff went out next mornin' to check. Don't usually talk to me; me an' him, we don't get along too good. But he tol' Slim, at the fillin' station, an' Slim tol' me. Ronny wouldn't let him in, an' ordered him off the property. He allus was queer, that Ronny, but never done nothing like that before. You know anythin' about meters, mister? Might be that meter, it'd be pure gold, or suthin'? Might be that's how come you're down here, eh?"

"Rot!" I said. "Meteors are usually rock or nickel-iron, not gold or precious metals. It's impossible. Complete rot. But thanks for the directions."

He nodded, grunted, spat, and slammed the door. I put the car in gear and moved forward, looking for the creek road. It crossed just in front of a single lane bridge. I turned left, as the old man had told me to, and drove slowly ahead, looking for the dirt road. Twice I thought I saw it, but I was mistaken each time; then I spotted it ahead. A sign by the road said, ELDER FARM -- PRIVATE PROPERTY. I turned down the road, switching off my lights and drove forward in the faint

glow from the cloud-covered moon.

After a while I reached a gate, and nearly ran into Helen's Volkswagon when I tried to avoid smashing into the fence. I turned off the ignition and in one quick movement tumbled out of the M.G. and onto the road, where I crouched, listening and staring about.

Far ahead, beyond the fenced meadow, was a house with two or three lighted windows. Helen's car was deserted, its engine cold. There was no one around. A faint odor of scorched earth pervaded the atmosphere, a smell so subtle that at first I could not place it.

Satisfied that I was unobserved, I vaulted the fence and, still crouching, proceeded slowly toward the farmhouse. I had never been in combat, but I had stalked deer and bear, and now went as quietly and carefully as I could. I got to the farmhouse without incident, and cautiously peered into one of the windows.

Immediately I felt like a fool--the prize ass of the age. Bill Gall, superhero. Bah! Helen and a young fellow, presumably this Ronny Elder, were seated in two of the chairs in an unpretentious living room; ostensibly they were simply conversing quietly. Disgusted with myself, I half-turned to flee, but something stopped me. Cursing myself for a fool under my breath, I strode to the door and knocked loudly. For a moment there was silence--then came the muffled sound of footsteps, and the door was unlocked and swung open.

Ronny was a blond fellow with rather long hair and a minute mustache. He was slight of build and perhaps four or five inches below my six feet-two. He looked at me with a strange, measuring glance, like a housewife looking over a steak in the meat market.

"Sorry to disturb you, but I've come to talk to Helen," I said gruffly.

"Come in," he replied with a high-voiced laugh. "Come right in, Mr. Bill Gall."

He stepped backward, and I followed.

Then the oddest feeling I had ever experienced washed over me. It was fear. Not ordinary fear--stark, raving, mad, unthinking, primitive fear. It halted me in my tracks for a terrible instant. Then I mastered myself and strode shakily on past Elder, toward the door to the room where I had seen Helen.

From behind me came the sound of a metallic click. I started to turn, but I never finished the action. A black cloud suddenly enveloped my senses. The last thing I remember is the floor coming up to meet me. Then nothing.

II

I lay on a hard surface, face up. Noise reached me--clicking sounds, the hum of a dynamo. Odors, too--the scent of ozone, tart and oily, and another scent: a scent not human! I let my eyelids quiver open just slightly. The room was dimly lit, and the wall in front of me was bare and metallic, studded with buttons like a huge control panel.

I knew that I was no longer in the farmhouse. But where was I?

Cautiously I tried to move, and discovered I was manacled to the table on which I was sprawled. Apparently my slight movements were audible, for a panel slid open behind me, and a voice said, "Awake, Gall?"

I fought down panic and said, somewhat unsteadily, "What's this all about. Elder? Is that you? What is this?"

"Soon, now, you will learn everything. More than you wish." Elder walked around in front of me and stood looking down at me.

"Where's Helen? What have you done with her, you bastard."

He was unruffled.

"Helen is driving your car around to the back of the house where it cannot be seen from the road. Already she has telephoned your friends that she was delayed by an automobile accident, nothing serious. No one will come in search of you this night."

I grasped the words, but the meanings eluded me. Was he saying that Helen--*Helen*--was helping him to do... to do...

"Just what in hell are you trying to do?" I asked, desperately. My thoughts whirled.

"I shall explain briefly. Why not? I am not really Ron Elder; Helen is not Helen. Their personalities have been destroyed, as you shall be, and replaced by ours."

This sounded like absolute gibberish to me. The old man had sure hit the nail on the head when he told me Ronny was "funny."

"We are of the Yoth-Sugoth, a race as old as the universe. Our minds are as far in advance of yours as yours are beyond the minds of vermin. Our native world is a planet of Aldebaran. You are in the main laboratory aboard the small space-time vessel which has carried three of our race to this world. Do you understand these concepts?"

I remained silent.

"Our purpose is simple. Regrettably, our sun is about to become a nova. Our world will be destroyed. Because we are not adaptable biologically to other worlds, our civilization is doomed. But we ourselves shall survive. Through eons of study, we have learned how to project the soul, or ego, of one individual into the body of another. The exchange can be performed singly, with the assistance of the machinery in this laboratory. And our minds, once in the bodies of humans, will serve as prime foci through which, with the aid of the receptors in this vessel, the minds of all the individuals of our race can migrate through space-time to human bodies."

The man was mad, of course. Hopelessly mad. Yet as he spoke, waves of utter fear rippled over me, lapping at my frantic soul. *My soul knew!*

"We are, of course, nothing at all in appearance or biological structure like humans. But in all intelligent life, there is one similarity, one common constituent. That is the mind, or, as you often say, the *psyche*, the *soul*. It is the greatest achievement of our race--to be able to transfer the mind of one individual to the body of another. And we have developed the technique just in time to save ourselves from annihilation." He paused for emphasis. "Now you shall meet the last of our group of three, whose mind will be transferred into your human form."

So saying, the madman turned and threw open a sliding panel that I had not previously observed. Then he stood back, waiting deferentially.

God. Oh, God! If that man was mad, then what was I? Mad--both of us were mad. How else but as a madman could I gaze upon that nightmarish creature without losing consciousness?

Describe it? Describe the hydra; or Medusa. Know what song the Sirens sang, or catch that falling star. Nonetheless--

picture a giant amoeba, colored colossally grey and covering two or three square yards of space, with a height commensurate. But not a fleshy amoeba, not entirely--a creature of some solidity, surely, but also with a wispieness about it as if it did not entirely conform to the laws of our physical universe. It *wavered*.

I vomited. The remnants of half-digested Dortmunder and bread spilled down my shirt front and dripped from my chin. My stomach heaved again and again, disgust being my chief reaction, even superior to that of sheer horror.

But finally the icy needle of stark fear penetrated to the nethermost pit of my being. The thing *spoke*. Between the extraneous sibilances, the whispered clicks, the whistlings, as if the sounds emanated from a defective organ pipe, I could discern words in my own tongue. *English words, from that mouthless monstrosity!*

"The creature knowss ittss ffate, now. Iss all in readinesssss?"

"It is, oh captain," spoke Elder. He followed the slugly abomination to a position behind me. By squirming and tugging on my manacles, I could just glimpse a table similar to mine. The creature was *flowing* up onto it.

Elder made a few adjustments, then came to stand before me again.

"My own conversion was so difficult. I think the host mind was strange even for one of your kind. It required nearly a day before I could think coherently. With Helen, the exchange was much smoother. Already, after two or three hours, she is in full control of herself. I had anticipated that my letter would bring you and her together, but it has worked out much better this way. Within a few hours, our invasion of your entire human race will become an accomplished fact."

It seemed as though, having begun the lengthy explanation, he could not stop. Or was he telling himself the story? The new mind addressing the old brain? Or had the alien mind taken on, with possession of the new body, some of its human qualities? Was he seeking my admiration of his cleverness? No matter. In any case, I no longer doubted his tale. I shuddered at the noise of restlessness from the table behind me.

Elder went on without a pause.

"Unfortunately we have had to carry out our program without proper preparation. But who, save perhaps the elder gods, could have predicted such a disaster? We shall have to learn many things about life as humans--the most urgent problems will be reproduction of our own kind, and the extension of our individual life spans. Of course, the children of our sexual unions will be entirely human; but continued use of the mind-exchange technique will enable us to maintain our existence indefinitely until those goals are achieved."

At this, my mind finally broke loose from its moorings of sanity. I strained with the strength of a madman at the fastenings which held me. I am no weakling under any circumstances, and these creatures had not quite understood how much power the muscles of a strong, desperate man could generate. My right wrist came loose with a loud snap.

They had not taken my gun away. As the startled Elder, or pseudo-Elder, stared at me comically in disbelief, I drew it and shot him. He sprawled on the floor. The bullet had ploughed through the fleshy part of his forearm and on into the wall behind him. The lights flickered.

But I was not paying any further attention to him. I had turned and without hesitation was firing again and again into the shapeless form of the monster behind me.

It palpitated and shrieked as each of the five bullets struck it. Unlike an amoeba, that wavery form contained vital organs of some kind, and I knew instinctively that I had dealt it a death wound.

Suddenly Elder flung himself at me from behind. I was hampered by my tied feet and left wrist, but I managed at last to overpower him, for he was a physical weakling compared with me, and the bullet wound had taken its toll of his strength. I had boxed and wrestled in college days, and my muscles were still in good shape. I clipped him hard on the nape of the neck, and let him drop unconscious to the floor.

I groped for my penknife and started sawing at the plastic or leather straps that held my left wrist. Then a noise came at the door. I looked up. It was

Helen.

Helen, pointing something at me. Something vaguely like a weapon.

I said, "Helen..." but I knew it was not really Helen, there in the doorway.

If I had had a bullet left in my gun, would I have shot her. Could I? I doubt it. I doubt it.

I heard that familiar metallic click! Again that black mist enveloped me. Again I dropped into endless night.

III

My second awakening was groggy: my mind was slow. I heard Helen, speaking from infinity.

"Hurry, Ron. Those bullets hurt Baa-nk-rwee'un badly. He's dying."

"I have it almost repaired now, Helen," said the other monster. Experimentally I attempted to move. But I was fastened so tightly now that I could scarcely breathe.

Helen spied the abortive motion and spoke.

"Farewell, human. Yours was a noble struggle, and your body shall be a fit abode for the noblest of the Yoth-Sugoth, my Earth husband-to-be."

"At last!" cried Elder, and depressed an invisible stud.

Blasphemous machinery whirred.

I was in two bodies at one time.

One mind, my own, was resisting the inevitable intrusion; its was inviting and welcoming. And its mind was the stronger.

This is my most vivid memory of that time.

I crouched at the tip of the present and viewed the panorama of a past that telescoped through over five hundred thousand years of stark horror. Five hundred millenia on the world of the Yoth-Sugoth; amongst the weird laboratories that spawned strange, artificial living plasmas that crawled obscenely into the sunlight and died, raging. Years, centuries without end, amidst the queer basalt structures of the huge city on that aeon-removed planet, structures without form or plan. Structures without doors that could be observed, without windows. And the great sun, the awesome sun, the tinted sun that beat upon the rooftops of basalt and marble and strange violet stone. I was budded, by a great one; and grew and

budded in turn three creatures like me; and sought and understood secrets of universes beyond my own. For I was Baa-nk-rwee'um, even as he was I.

My glimpses of that out-world culture were sufficiently horrifying to stun my senses, but far worse were the insidious half-formed fears that lurked about the edges and crevices of the creature's brain. These beings had existed for a length of time impossible to imagine, their race was in its infancy before our earth was cool enough to support its oceans, and they possessed powers and knowledge of a universe that to me were indescribably terrifying. Their knowledge seemed to have few bounds on future or past, and ranged far and wide through the known galaxies. And in that knowledge lurked the concepts, almost legendary, of the strange elder gods of the universe, grotesque and fearsome extra-dimensions, and a queer unfathomed terror of certain unaccountable creatures known only by bizarre appellations which I have since forgotten, although one of these may be sounded, in Earthly tones, as "Assa-tot" or "Ath-toth."

All this occurred in, I believe, a quantum of time, a mere moment that seemed ageless only because in some queer fashion it was not within the universe of time but *outside* it.

Then, trapped in the mortally wounded body of the monster, I died.

IV

I was awakened by screams. The room in which I found myself was dim and unfamiliar and the screams issued from a figure convulsed by terror, a figure who lay next to me in a wide, soft bed. Automatically, I gathered her in my arms, and soothed her fears while my own mounted swiftly. It was Helen.

"Helen," I whispered, holding her close. "It's all right. What's wrong?"

Yet, while I mouthed assurances, my own mind was racing madly. Where were we? Who were we? Gradually details filtered into my mind, from my memory. Details of things I was sure; even then, I had never done. But I must have done them.

We were married. We were on our honeymoon in France. I recalled the wedding ceremony, or thought I did.

Helen whimpered. I flicked on a lamp

by the bedside and stared about.

"We're in a hotel, Helen. On our honeymoon."

Inwardly I quailed, but her fright forced courage into my breast.

"Could it have been a dream? Could it? Bill, was it a dream?"

I knew what she meant. I knew.

"I don't know," I said. "But if it was, it's over now."

We did not stay in Paris. We could not. We caught the first flight home on which there was space. We were so distraught that we did not notice anything peculiar about the outside world, about people. We went about in a daze.

Paul and Jan were astonished to see us, after only two weeks, when we stopped over in Buffalo to recover my car and to arrange for the sale of Helen's old house. They seemed perfectly normal, outwardly, kidding us about the usual things, and bringing out photographs of the wedding. But every now and again I saw a flicker of something in their eyes. Was it memory?

No one could understand why we had come back so soon, but we never tried to explain. We shrugged off questions, and hurried home to the small house where I had been living in suburban Philadelphia. I burned up a lot of rubber getting us there. Neither of us was in a mood for anything but solitude.

That was not the end. It was not over. It was the beginning...the beginning of the dreams.

Because Helen is more sensitive and artistic than I am, her dreams were clearer and more detailed than mine. They resembled mine, but were more distinct. Most of the dreams, hers and mine, centered about bizarre landscapes and a grotesque metropolis, large as a world. It was sculptured of marble and basalt, and a stone that looked like ebony, without structure as structure is pictured by our Euclidean architects. Nowhere in the city did we perceive doors. Only rarely did we see it in daylight; our visions were nearly always of a shadowy monstrosity dimly lit by the stars, and the stars themselves were strangely disoriented and unfamiliar. When dreams did come of the landscape by day, we saw a blazing tinted orb of a sun, ten times as huge

as our own, yet an oddly familiar sight; its queer radiation thrilled my being, in those dreams, and at the same time raised a tinge of ultimate horror.

Once Helen woke shrieking from a dream of bizarre elder gods, gods who antedated even that antique city, and cried out those startling syllables that sounded like Ath-toth, and, once, Kulbu. Recently Helen has been doing library research on pre-historical mythologies, and she thinks she has found what might be reference to such beings in a tattered and rotting manuscript that shall here be nameless; even worse, there is some mention of them in a more recent volume, the rare *Darker Superstitions of Scotland* written by Dalyell in 1834. Why such references should exist here on Earth I cannot guess.

There is one odd thing that makes me certain our experience was real. Helen and I went to the library to look at the newspapers for the period starting on Saturday, June 17th. And there were none! There was a hiatus in all newspaper publishing for three days. Suddenly, on the twentieth, publication resumed, with no comment about the lag. Business as usual during alterations, I wondered? Or total recovery.

We developed Machievellian subterfuges to question our friends and acquaintances about that three day period. "Say, Joe, I tried to call the accelerator lab the Saturday after I went on leave, but could not get an answer. What was up? Don't tell me anybody took a day off around this think factory?" "Huh? What day? Hell, I don't remember."

My notes are voluminous, but I shall record only one other interesting detail about those three days. One evening I happened to encounter a psychiatrist affiliated with a nearby insane asylum. We were at a cocktail party, and I managed to steer the conversation around to strange dreams and hallucinations, giving a watered-down version of some of Helen's and mine. He was quite interested, since he actually remembered that some of the inmates of the asylum had had a few especially restive nights in mid-June, and even now some still had oddly similar delusions, of immense, phantasmagorical cities, inhabited by strange, blob-like creatures of fantastic mental capability. One of the inmates had even insisted he

was such a creature, Raas-hovanth of Yoth-somewhere, the doctor told me, with a slight laugh. Shock treatment took good care of that delusion, though, he added. After another Martini or two, he confided that the dreams of the patients were so queer that for a while even he himself had started to dream about antique races and aeon-old worlds, and some incredible creature called Ath-toth. He had resorted to a heavy dosage of soporifics, for a week, till the dreams ceased to intrude upon his slumber.

Helen has reached a conclusion that I shall share with you, though I must, regretfully, disagree with her views.

She believes that our experience (only half-remembered) was real. That when and if we decide to return to Ron Elder's farm, we can locate and examine the spaceship, or space-time ship. She thinks it is still there, although we have been unable to locate Ronny.

Helen thinks the attempt failed. She thinks that even the mind transference to the three of us, with the aid of the machine, was incomplete. She thinks that the overall attempt at migration failed. One factor, perhaps significant, is that the star Aldebaran has not yet given evidence of becoming a nova. Of course, the ship travelled through space-time, and when it started we cannot even guess.

In Helen's opinion, the only effect of their attempt at mental invasion was a momentary meshing of minds between the inhabitants of earth and those of Yoth-Sugoth, which has resulted in recurrent dreams in the case of the most sensitive individuals, and perhaps even in a few successful transferences, as in the case of the maniac.

I am afraid that she is wrong, however. I have another explanation that I hesitate to contemplate for long, one too mind-shattering to discuss with Helen.

I saw and heard Ronny and Helen after their exposure to the mind-transference. I cannot believe it failed. I think, instead, it was entirely successful, not only with the three of us, but with everybody ... even with you. And I do not see why or how our human egos could still survive.

But what is ego? Mind? Soul? What can happen when the ego, the personality, of one individual is replaced by that of

another, totally foreign one. The aliens believed that the memories of the invader would dominate, while those of the host faded gradually from consciousness.

But the Yoth-Sugoth had no long-term experience with their process except among themselves. Because of the onset of the terrible sun-instability that had doomed their civilization, they dared not make long-range studies with us. They had to act.

Do you begin to perceive why this is repugnant to me? I can hardly bear even to put it down on paper. I shall try very

very strongly to believe in Helen's explanation. I must believe it. I shall, I will believe, that I am William Gall, human being, born on earth and in the full prime of existence. I refuse to believe that I am really a creature from that loathsome planet of Aldebaran who has inexplicably, together with all his race, lost all memory of that world save in dreams, and is unknowingly trapped forever in the mortal identity of the host earth creature.

I am not Yoth-Sugoth! I am Bill Gall!
I am human! I am human!

SEA ENCOUNTER

by Edd Roberts

See the dark ship coming from the rim of the world!
Do ye spy the grinning skull on her carven prow?
Watch her nighted banners and sails unfurled;
Bend to your oars, men; hard away, now!

Row, men, swiftly lest she catch us! Row!
I like not the look of her, not at all!
See the black sails tauten as the devil winds blow---
She's right along side us now, and the breezes fall.

Ah! Her decks are crimson; she carries a fetid breath---
Aie, speed away, you fools, for that ship is *Death*.

The Wizard Stone

by Andrew Duane

Alone I wandered with the rising moon
Along the moors where old gods had held sway,
And in the silence of that empty way
I paused to read an Ogham-carven rune.
How long I stood, I know not, but too soon
The letters faded from the wizard stone---
I turned, and saw a shadowed, ancient crone
Who laughed and piped an eldritch-sounding tune.

Then all was gone--the witch, the ancient stone---
And I was left to shudder in the dark
Where cloudy shapes wandered with shriek and moan.
And now within my mind the wizard mark
Is lodged, in words of fire that glow and burn:
"Prepare ye, for the Old Gods shall return!"

DREAD HUNTRESS

by Andrew Duane

A cold wind from the north stirred the thick-blooded leaves of the nodding palms into sluggish life. They rustled with a low rasping sound as the stubby spikes on the edges grated against one another. An occasional forest giant stood tall and aloof, unheeding of the wind, casting a long dark shadow on the furtively moving lower growths. Scudding clouds raced across the night sky in strange patterns of silver-tipped greyness, from which a heavy film of rain dripped ceaselessly. And the huge globe of white radiance that hung in the sky behind them sent its myriad beams between their fleeting forms into the jungle darkness. It seemed to be searching, prying among the boles and swaying leaves as if in quest of something it had lost.

The moon was hunting.

Acce, of the men of Nullune, had been caught away from his party of hunters at nightfall, and knowing the swift decline in temperature and the precipitation that accompanied darkness in this section of the forests of Diktynna, he had sought the only shelter to be found--the closely grown brush at the base of one of the giant hardwoods, which would serve both to temper the force of the wind and to ward off some of the rain. Despite this shelter, he was soon wet to the skin and thoroughly chilled.

He drew the spiked leaves of the undergrowth about him for warmth, heedless of the pain that contact with them caused. But try as he would he could not escape the persistent dripping rain or the sharp chill in the air; and to add to these discomforts, he was bleeding from a dozen small but painful cuts. He cursed the luck that had led him so far from the rest of his group. He cursed the eternal rain, the chill, the thorns. He cursed whatever gods were in this land for having made so inhospitable a country. He cursed the prying moon, for which in other circumstances he would have been profoundly grateful. As he was running through his itemized anathema for the third or fourth time, he was startled by a faint cry from the forest to his right.

Looking in that direction, it seemed that

the palms were less thickly clustered, that the rays of the gibbous moon shone more brightly there. And silhouetted in those rays was an astonishing figure, a tall woman with hair of silver, striding swiftly along a path that seemed magically to be opened for her. Her cry came again--not a call for help as Acce had at first thought, but a pure vocal sound that carried no meaning at all now that he heard it more closely. The woman came closer, seemed to sense his presence there in the shadows. She stopped, breaking off her cry on a high, keening note that caused an unconscious thrill to run down Acce's spine.

Whatever his condition, no man of Nullune had ever been shown up by a woman; that this was very evidently no ordinary woman did not give pause to Acce. He emerged from his shelter in the shadow, stood before the silver-haired apparition. The rain beat upon him with new force, and he felt it as a stinging agony in the bleeding cuts that covered his body. The woman gazed searchingly at him, and he returned her regard with interest. She was slim and lithe, and her skin was as white and translucent in the moonlight as new ivory. Her features possessed an elfin cast--the small straight nose with slightly flaring nostrils, the tip-tilted grey eyes, the pale, heart shaped lips--suggesting delicacy, but not frailness. The over-all effect was increased by the preternatural paleness (or was it whiteness?) of her skin and hair. Even her lashes were like tiny silver threads, resting low upon a colorless cheek.

She smiled, but did not speak.

She looked at him out of her pale, liquid eyes with something akin to mockery. He knew it was up to him to speak first, for she appeared perfectly willing to stand there all night, just looking.

"What are you?" he managed finally, in a voice that startled him with its hoarseness.

A tinkling laugh answered him. It matched in every respect the person of the strange woman--frosty and delicate, like the last gurglings of a brook in winter just before it plunges over a waterfall to be turned to thin daggers of ice.

"You do not say 'who,'" said the woman. She said it as if it were a passing observation that deserved no other comment, but

to Acce, who had not until that minute realized what he had said, it was devastating. He lamely attempted to repair his mistake, but the woman cut him short.

"What has been spoken cannot be undone. And it is no matter."

Acce gasped. "You are not human!"

"I do not need to be human," said she.

"I am Yvoe, and I am woman!"

As she said this, it was as if a veil had been withdrawn from between them. Acce noted for the first time that the woman was completely nude. He could see the shining curves of her body, full with the promise of all that man could desire...

"It is strange to see so many men in the forests of Diktynna," purred Yvoe; and the momentary spell was broken. An invisible yet impenetrable veil, a mist of light, had fallen before his eyes. He had only the memory... from which he was startled into awareness by what Yvoe was saying: "Rarely do the men of Diktynna venture abroad after darkness. I have not seen men in this forest for many ... moons ... past, yet tonight I find a score all together."

"Where?" demanded Acce, forgetting the alternate fear and lust that Yvoe aroused in him. Perhaps the group she had seen were the men of his own hunting party. "Do you know where they are?"

Yvoe's eyes clouded. A frown disturbed slightly the perfect composure of her elf's face.

"Yes, I know... where they are. But why do you want them? I am here, and I am woman!"

Once more the veil faded, but this time the attraction was not as strong. Was a night in the rain-drenched forest with a pale woman who promised nothing except mystery to be compared with the triumphal return to his home in company with the other hunters? They would have women, then, and food and warmth besides. "Take me to them!"

Yvoe sidled closer, and her nearness was a caress. "Am I not enough? Must you seek those impotent hulks?"

Acce reasoned from this speech that Yvoe had tried her wiles on the men of Nullune and met little success. He revised his first impression of her supernormality greatly. He stepped forward and grasped her arm roughly. "Lead me to them!" he demanded again.

The allure faded from Yvoe's eyes. Her

voice took on more of a frosty quality as she said, "You shall see them, then!"

She turned away and retraced the path she had used when Acce had first seen her. Once again the way seemed to be opened magically for her, but Acce found the going arduous.

The rain lashed him vindictively, searching out the tiny smarting cuts on his body; the heavy palm leaves slapped against him time and again with blinding force; the spikes on their edges bit new slashes in his skin and aggravated the old ones. And Yvoe's cold laugh taunted him from the clear path that seemed always to be a few steps in front of him, but which he could never reach. "Frail child, stumbling child!" she taunted him. "Can you not follow the paths? Must you always fall into the way of the thorns and the vines? You are fortunate that the moon hunts no more tonight, or you would be lost!"

Her strange taunts aroused a vagrant memory in Acce's mind. He remembered what he had once heard of the people of Diktynna--that they worshipped the moon, and that they pictured it not as the pale consort of Night that the people of Nullune were taught to imagine but as a monstrous owl-eyed Hunter bending over their cities and sending rays of death from the night sky. That was why they never ventured out of doors after night fall. He recalled that Yvoe had remarked on that fact. A vague suspicion gnawed at his mind, but he was too weary to notice it, or to heed anything except the endless rain and ripping palms.

He stumbled onward until he thought that each step would be his last. He wondered that the human body could stand such torture. But ahead of him, Yvoe floated airily onward, ever and anon goading him to new lengths of effort with her mocking laugh.

At last the silver woman halted. Acce dragged himself wearily to her side, then stiffened, pain all but forgotten, at the sight that met his eyes. Before him was an open space in the forest, free of the thorned palms and twisted undergrowth. It was carpeted with sparse grass that was plastered almost flat by the force of the rain. Sprawled in the clearing lay the twenty men of Nullune. They were in various postures, looking as if they had been engaged in some bacchanalian orgy and had

thrown themselves down in drunken sleep. But they were not sleeping.

They were stone dead, and their bodies cold as ice to the touch.

They looked shriveled, and something of the vital essence of man-- an ephemeral quality that is apparent even after death-- was gone from them. Acce recoiled from the sight, revolted. In a silver mist, Yvoe floated before his eyes.

"They were weak. They could not survive the trials of Diktyinna. But you are strong. You will survive, and I will be with you, for I am woman!"

Acce crouched away from her as from a poisonous reptile. "You are not woman!" he snarled. "You are demon, kin of the blackest things that defile the clean night with their touch! Keep back from me!"

Yvoe's poise deserted her instantly. A dark shadow settled into her eyes, and her mouth slipped from its heart shaped smile. "No! No! I am woman!"

"You are witch!" shouted Acce. He stooped and picked up one of the hunting spears abandoned by his band.

"I am woman!" shrieked Yvoe. Her silver hair blazed in the moonlight, an icy inferno. "Damn you, damn you, I am woman!"

She moved toward him, and Acce threw the spear. He saw it pass through her naked breast, saw the black wound *from which no blood flowed...*

She raised her voice, a crackling of glacial masses in the night, in that weird cry which had first drawn Acce's notice to her. He turned and fled wildly into the forest.

The nightmare of pounding rain and grasping leaves was repeated, but Acce had new strength to go on, a strength born of sheer terror of what he had seen in that moonlit clearing. He ran, he crawled, he rolled, he stumbled and dragged himself through that forest, keeping always to the paths of darkness, avoiding the thin bright beams of moonlight with a desperation akin to madness. A dozen times, as he blundered momentarily into a patch of moonlight, he felt wreaths of silver mist twining about him, and heard the cold, sweet voice of Yvoe laughing in his ear. Always he managed to escape back to the darkness, but each time by a smaller margin. One time soon he would be just a second too slow...

But, even as he thought this, he saw, with an agonizing thankfulness, the first rays of dawn touch the tops of nearby trees. The sky brightened rapidly, and Acce sank to the ground sobbing in relief. The rain died to a trickle from overloaded leaves. The sun rose and drenched the land in its warm and clean light. Acce thought he had never been so grateful for anything in his life as for the cleansing rays of that sun. The terror washed out of him, leaving only a great and terrible knowledge. He had escaped, but not permanently. He knew now that the people of Diktyinna had a basis for their outre religion, but they were wrong in one particular.

The moon was not the monster Hunter they pictured. Acce knew this as surely as he knew what he had seen in that corpse-filled clearing in the forest--the witch-woman standing with that damnable unbleeding wound in her breast, *shining* with a light not human, crying her unholy commands *as the bright deadly rays of the moon moved to intercept him and make him one with the lifeless hulks that already lay there.*

The moon--that demon woman with the silver hair!

*The moon, dread Huntress!
And she would hunt again!*

COLD NOVEMBER NIGHT

by Joseph Payne Brennan

Incisive cold November Night,
stiffening trees in silver light.
Crickets falter, then grow still,
in grass like spikes upon the hill.
A roaming fox, a wraith in grey,
prowls silver fields for silver prey.

Love Philter

By H. Warner Munn

Imagine yourself looking through bushes into a small clearing in a thick forest. It is night, somewhere in Mediaeval Europe.

You are lost and all alone except for the people you see in the clearing. They are near a small smoky fire; the moon sends its light flickering through the dense and waving leaves, but without illuminating the scene clearly. A cold and violent wind is blowing.

A shaggy man is tending the fire, but is he covered with hair or does he wear garments of rough fur?

You cannot tell.

Beyond the fire a woman sits huddled in a shapeless covering which seems to lift and rise from her shoulders with a life of its own. Is it a black velvet robe or is she hidden in vast furled wings?

You do not know, but you can see that her eyes gleam yellow as a lynx's in the moonlight and the fire shows her lips to be a vivid red. All else is hidden.

The shaggy man speaks;

Here is foam from the jaws of a dog were-wolf
That was known to have the rabies.
I will add it, beneath this gibbous moon,
To the bubbling blood of babies.
Here is hair from the ear of a unicorn
And the eye of a mantichore.
I shall let them in the cauldron seethe
While the wind is snell and frore.

With hangman's rope and murderer's fat
I stoke the infernal fire --
Now as you wait, accept kisses three,
My lovely, fierce vampire!
The draught shall cool in the bleached brain pan
Of a deserted infant's skull,
Gnawed in the woods by the teeth of ghoul,
When left there by a trull.

I add thirteen sprigs of dittany
And steep seven twigs of rue --
Now slowly as the bell knells twelve,
Drink down the baleful brew.
Up, up and away and ride the wind!
Though it hurl you far and free,
Never again till the Day of Doom
Can it take you away from me!

