

26

XENON

Number Two



★
July
1944
★

EDITOR'S CORNER

x enon

Published in the interests of fantasy and science-fiction at 1217 Broadway, Imperial, Nebraska by Gordon Houze who does all mimeographing and printing and who would appreciate 25c for the next three issues. † † † Vol. 1 No. 2

HERE IS the 2nd XENON, brought to you in new size. You'll have to excuse all the errors as I ran out of correction fluid and didn't have time to get any. XENON will strive to be bi-monthly, but I won't make any promises - one cannot promise anything when using a borrowed typewriter and a hand fed mimeograph. I am very badly in need of material for future issue. How about sending me an article, story, poetry or art work of some sort. ### "The Impossible" by Donald Wollheim was taken from the February 1937 American Amateur Journalist and I'm sure you'll want to read it. "Lovecraft and Ben Street" was taken from the recent issue of W. Paul Cook's The Ghost magazine which he published for the National Amateur Press Association. It is a superbly printed, 48 page 8½x11 issue and only 150 copies were printed. Cook is a Lovecraft fan and has issued several items on HPL.

WHILE IN Denver a while back, I looked around for some fantasy books. After going to about a dozen second hand book shops without any luck, I finally gave it up and concluded that the boys at the Denvention must have cleaned them all up. I did get two new books, collections of weird and fantasy stories. One was "Creeps By Night", 21 stories selected by Dashell Hammett, author of "The Maltese Falcon" and other books. The other was "25 Modern Stories of Mystery and Imagination" selected with a fine introduction by Phil Strong. Both books are very good and contain some of the best of Lovecraft, Quinn, Wellman, Collier, Wandrei, Faulkner, Derleth, Kuttner and many others.

A FRIEND of mine who is also a fan, had the very interesting experience of meeting the pro writer, Nelson S. Bond, when he was stationed at Camp Peary, Va. He writes in brief of the meeting: "He had invited us sometime back to stop in and see him, and so here we were--frankly, rather awed at meeting a real author. But we were put at ease immediatley by his

(continued on page 11)

The Curse of Bankarr

BY JAMES R. GRAY

THE governor's annual ball was in full swing. Everyone of any consequence on Titan was present.

Alicia Creighton paused at the head of the stairway that led to the ballroom. Beneath her air of slightly amused boredom she was acutely conscious of the admiring glances which the men were casting her way.

The cool, mocking voice of her fiance, Henry Cambell, broke in on Alicia's pleasant thoughts. "All right, sweetheart, you've posed long enough. Shall we go on down and dance a bit?"

Alicia flushed slightly, as Menir Azk's all-Martian orchestra came to the end of the number they were playing and the dancers applauded enthusiastically.

"You've been sulking all evening," she charged. "What I simply will not be rushed into marriage at a moment's notice this way."

"I'm not rushing you," Campbell protested. "We've been engaged two years. Besides, you keep putting me off; you play with my emotions as a cat with a mouse. You've turned the heads of so many men that it has gone to your head."

"Nonsense, dear!" Alicia murmured sweetly. "Though I will admit that I can turn any man's head if I wish."

Campbell's eyes gleamed with some hidden emotion. "You'll meet a man some day who'll completely ignore your charms," he growled.

Alicia touched a languid hand to her elaborate blonde coiffure. "When that happens, darling, I'll marry you without the least murmur of argument," she told him.

"That's a bet," Campbell said promptly. "And I'll take you up on it right now. I'll pick out a man; you try your wiles on him. If you win I'll never say another word about marriage; but if you lose, then we get married tomorrow."

"Darling!" Alicia exclaimed. "You sound angry. Such a wager is silly, of course. Besides, why are you in such a hurry to get married?"

"You know perfectly well that I am to be sent on that expedition to Andromeda in a month," Campbell reminded her. "No telling when I'll return; not for four or five years, anyway. I won't let you back out of your bet. Though I know, of course, that you're scared you'll lose."

"All right, man of much wisdom," Alicia said. "Pick out your woman hater; I'll show you!"

Campbell's glance wandered over the crowd. Suddenly he caught her arm. "See that man on the balcony? There, just above the orchestra! I suppose he's as good a choice as any. He looks grouchy, at least. And, darling, I hope you have all sorts of bad luck."

(more on page three)

* * THE CURSE OF BANKARR * continued

Without a word Alicia turned and walked back the way they had come. She found a stairway and ascended to the floor above. Then, gracefully as a blown leaf, she strolled out on the balcony that circled the ballroom.

She came up behind the man. "I beg your pardon," she said softly. Her voice was low and throaty. "Isn't your name Friend?"

The man whirled so swiftly that Alicia took an alarmed step backward. His expression was a mixture of surprise--and something else. Alicia found herself thinking, "Why, the fellow seems actually afraid of me!"

"My name is Terence Palmer," the man said shortly. "I bid you good evening." He turned and strode away.

Alicia laid a vicious glare on his departing back. Her temper, always quick to explode, surged dangerously. Then she remembered her wager with Campbell. Clenching her teeth, she followed Palmer's disappearing form.

A few moments later she saw him enter a room. She stopped to smooth down her evening gown and catch her breath. Then she followed him.

Inside the room, Palmer stood, hands on hips, regarding her. Alicia thought she had never seen a more handsome man. He was tall and dark, and he fairly radiated personality.

Alicia blushed prettily. "Won't you give me a cigarette? I must say you are very rude to a poor, lonely girl."

"There are cigarettes on the table beside you," Palmer said boldly. "Look, lady! You're very beautiful, and all that. Now suppose you run along."

Alicia puckered her red lips in a pout. "But I don't want to run along. I want to talk to you. I think you're nice."

Palmer groaned. He looked at his wrist watch, and began pacing back and forth. "I'm living under a curse," he said.

Alicia gave him her famous smile, the smile that had never failed to melt all male resistance. "Don't tell me you're superstitious," she scoffed. "In this day and age!"

Palmer sank into a chair. "I'm not superstitious," he denied. "I'm living under a curse. It happened on Bankarr."

"I've heard of the place," Alicia said. "It's a planet in the system of Sirius, isn't it?"

Palmer looked at his watch again. He moistened his lips with his tongue. "Sirius, yes. I was there sixty years ago."

"But--but I don't understand," Alicia protested. "You don't look over twenty-five."

"That's part of the curse," Palmer said wearily. "I never grow any older. You see, I was a green pilot in those days. I went to Sirius with the first-Earth-expedition. And I crashed the spaceship in the gardens behind the Emperor's Palace. The ship wasn't injured, and neither was anyone in our party. But the Emperor's wife was badly burned by the rocket exhaust. She died later. The Emperor of Bankarr was a big, fierce-looking

(more on page 4)

** THE CURSE OF BANKARR ** continued **

man; he cried like a baby when his wife was buried. He told me he'd see to it that I never had a woman to love. Then he got his priests to put a curse on me. Now do you understand?"

"No, I don't," said Alicia. "What is this curse?"

Palmer looked at his watch again. "I can't have a wife or sweetheart. I can't be with a woman more than ten minutes without something terrible happening."

Alicia tossed her head. "I don't believe it. Why don't you ever grow old? And how can the old Bankarr priests make the curse work?"

Palmer looked tense, worried; he had the air of a man sitting on a time bomb. "The Bankarr civilization is thousands of years old," he explained. "Their science is much superior to ours. And their religion is connected with their science. They explained the curse to me in detail. They built an enormous machine that was to my personal atomic pattern. No matter where I go, even if I could reach another galaxy, this machine followed my every movement. Energy from the machine keeps me always young; they want me to live so I can suffer. The Emperor's hate is a terrible thing. Operators tend the machine in shifts; someone watches it every moment, day and night!" His voice rose almost to a shriek. "The picture of this room, and everything in it, is on a screen in Bankarr right now!" he cried. "Somehow their devilish machine gives them the power to influence people and objects around me. Something terrible is due to happen!"

"If what you tell me is true, you're in no actual danger," Alicia argued reasonably. "They want to torture you in a psychological fashion, but they won't actually injure you."

Palmer looked at his watch again. He put his fingers to his lips and whistled shrilly. Three grim-looking robots appeared in the room. Alicia was never able to figure where they came from: they just seemed to step out of the wall.

"Quickly!" Palmer cried. "It's almost time!"

Two of the robots approached Palmer and put their arms around him. "They won't kill me, no, he admitted. "But they will cripple me if they can. They like to see me suffer. I've been in the hospital three hundred times in the last sixty years." He added grimly, "The woman who happens to be with me at the time is nearly always killed."

There was a sharp click, and a dull glow surrounded Palmer and the two robots. Alicia recognized the peculiar tingling sensation that always accompanied an atomic force field. The third robot lifted her in its arms; there was another click, and a force field appeared around them also.

Suddenly there was a terrific explosion. The building rocked on its foundations. Huge steel girders fell into the room. Dust rose in dense, choking clouds.

After what seemed hours the dust began to settle. Alicia

(more on page five)

The Impossible

BY DONALD WOLLHEIM

I stood in the midst of the crowd listening to the ovation being given the great Central European dictator.

Bands blaring, his own anthem being sung, people cheering, his stalwart Purple Shirts standing erect and heroic--all was highly inspiring and filled with interest, especially to a humble everyday American like me.

The bands ceased, the crowd silenced and all stood waiting. The great man cleared his throat, his piercing brown eyes glared out over the crowd, his face set in a firm, powerful scowl. Now he spoke, sharply, staccato, beating in his words with smashing blows of his fist upon the rostrum. The crowd stood spell-bound, motionless, listening with bated breath as its hero extolled his might and powers.

"With the help of the party, I, your Leader, can do anything; ANYTHING! Do you hear me? I have been granted powers above all men and, I repeat, if there is anything to be done, I am the man to do it!" He hammered with his fists and the crowd stood silent as the paralyzed, with beating hearts and awed breath. "I can do ANYTHING!" he bellowed again.

I stood like the rest, spellbound, then suddenly the little inp of perversity got into me. My Yankee nature slipped from his bounds of oratory and before I knew what I was doing, I shouted out:

"Can you scratch your right elbow with your right hand?"

In the confusion, I slipped away without being caught.

THE END



* * THE CURSE OF BANKARR * continued * *

realized that the robot was no longer holding her. She looked around; all the robots were gone, So was Palmer.

People came crowding about her, Henry Campbell rushed to her side. "Are you all right, dear?" he asked anxiously.

She laughed a bit shakily. "I seem to be."

Campbell put his arms around her and drew her to him.

"We'll get married first thing in the morning," he said dreamily.

"You knew all the time about this Palmer and his curse," Alicia accused. However, she did not draw away from him.

"What in cosmos happened, anyway?"

A spectator spoke up importantly. "One of our patrol ships accidentally dropped a space-bomb. I just got the news-flash on my wrist radio. Such a thing has never happened before in the history of space navigation. I don't understand it."

Cave Man Stuff

BY JOHN BLACKSTONE

"What you reading?" asked the Non-Fan from next door.

"Sciencefiction," I answered brightly.

"Why, that aint science-fiction," the NF objected, "that's a story about a cave man." He went off mumbling, "I declare if fans aint the silliest people....!"

Well, maybe he was right. About the cave man story not being science-fiction, I mean. I wouldn't know.

However, I do know that such stories are sometimes published in magazines that are supposed to cater exclusively to science-fiction. Offhand, I can think of about six such stories that have appeared in Amazing. And please remember that it is a sign of a noble mind to be tolerant of other people's shortcomings.

Personally, I like stories about cave men. I am not a very critical person; if a story offers me sufficient entertainment I can overlook any number of faults. But that's beside the point. The point, if any, is this: Is it correct to classify a story about a cave man as science-fiction?

Of course, there are any number of stories that are based on the lives and loves of cave men that are science-fiction tales without question, since they contain time machines and such props of the trade. I remember a serial in Argosy a few years back. I can't give much definite information about it, since I am unable to locate the issues in question; my wife's relations must have borrowed them. But I think the title was "The Dawn Seekers." And it was about two men from the future--out future--who went thousands of years into the past to gather historical data. A time machine dissolved their bodies into the component atoms and projected the atoms into the past where they were reassembled. Man was very low in the scale of civilization then; lived in caves, wore skin clothing. Priests tended fire which they had taken from a volcano, and the cave people, outside of the priesthood, worshipped the fire and did not understand it. The young chief of the cave dwellers had an inventive turn of mind, and he discovered fire for himself when a wooden wheeled vehicle he made caught fire at the axle. I got a nice kick out of the tale.

There was a short story in Astounding last year by Cleve Cartmill called "The Link." This was about a mutant who sprang from parents who were little better than apes. But the mutant had a better brain; he accidentally discovered that a club could be used as a weapon, and he killed a lion or something and began the long road upward toward the human race. "Sure," says the hardened fan, "it's science-fiction. A mutant story, aint

(Page seven, more)

* * CAVE MAN STUFF * con't

it?"

The other story that I remember reading in Astounding was by Fredric Brown. It was about the death of the last big dinosaur. The entire plot can be summed up something like this: The big lizard was so big it couldn't run fast enough to catch anything to eat, so it died. The story was beautifully written. But was it science-fiction? Of course it was; it was published by Astounding, wasn't it?

Robert Moore Williams had a story called "The Lost Warship" in Amazing; this was the January 1943 issue. A United States warship is in the Pacific fighting the Japs, and along comes a space-time-warp and snatches the whole battlegon back to the cave man days. The Americans team up with the real cave dwellers to fight a race of monster people. The cave folk stampede a herd of dinosaurs through the village of the monsters, and everyone (except the monsters) live happily ever after.

Now I've worked up to a story that has no science-fiction props; no time machine, no mutants. It, too, was published in Amazing. Yes, I know; many fans are pretty contemptuous of Amazing. Some of them insist they wouldn't be caught dead reading the magazine. Personally, I'd hate to be caught dead under any circumstances. But let's get back to our muttons. This story was "Warrior of the Dawn," written by Howard Browne, one of the editors of the magazine. The tale was obviously fashioned with one eye on Edgar Rice Burroughs and his works. But the author admitted that fact freely. And it was an excellent story, if you like cave man stories--and I do. I didn't like the ending. It was too inconclusive; the author so evidently planned a sequel.

Speaking of Burroughs, I note a number of fans have gone on record as not caring for his writings. I'm not as fond of his stuff now as I was when I was younger. But I'd like to point out that Burroughs has done much for science-fiction. When he started writing science-fiction it wasn't as popular as it is today. He helped make it popular. For instance, take the novel "Gods of Mars." You can think of dozens of SF stories that you like better, probably. But when were they written? The Burroughs novel was published in the old All Story Magazine in 1913. See what I mean?

In my opinion, the best story ever written about cave men was turned out by Jack London. Maybe that will surprise some of you; I hope so. The chances of your being surprised are much better if you're under sixteen. Anyway, Jack did write a book about cave men, and it was called "Before Adam." It was a dilly, a smackeroo, a knockout. And the reason I hope you are surprised--you have all that fun to look forward to.

Well, here I've eandered along, and now I've come to the end of this article, pretty nigh. Are stories about cave men really STF? Sorry if this seems like anticlimax--but, well, I don't know. I like 'em, and that's enough for me.

Lovecraft and Benefit Street —

Benefit Street is one of the quaintly named older thoroughfares in Providence, Rhode Island, lying half way up College Hill between the campus of Brown University and the lower lying and parallel stretch of South and North Main Streets which used to form the business center in early days of the city.

In the fall and winter of 1942-3 this quiet street came in for a great deal of newspaper mention when David Cornel deJong, a young Hollander with several previous novels in English to his credit, used it as a setting for a new novel, and its name for the title of his book.

Reviews both commentary and otherwise brought "Benefit Street" to attention. Local sales mounted high and continued to be brisk for a long time, for Rhode Island reading public enjoyed finding a novel set in scenes intimately known and ably described. However, the staid citizens of Providence found it disconcerting that many characters in the book were indecorous, and hastened to write letters in protest to the Providence Journal about how much they disliked the neighbors Mr. deJong had given them on Benefit Street, and how unfair they felt it to be to defame a whole street, and that an interesting and beautiful one, by giving its name to an account of the unpleasant goings-on of one boarding house full of fictional queer people. Other words were written by ones in reminiscent vein, contrasting with Mr. deJong's characters those who had given the historical and literary flavor to the street--Washington, Abigail Adams, Poe, Mrs. Whitman and others who had graced the street with their presence in times past.

Just when the discussion of what kind of people one could expect to find there was quieting down, the Federal Bureau of Investigation gave it an added and ironic fillip by carrying the campaign against law-breakers to Benefit Street, raiding a "vice palace" and bringing to justice its operators, who had been carrying on their bad business elegantly and quietly under the noses of the high percentage of reputable citizens whose minds were on more seemly affairs.

It being obvious that people of many sorts may be found even on rather short streets, it is not the purpose of these pages to discuss the truth or falsity of the characters assembled by Mr. deJong in Penny McGuire's boarding house on Benefit Street. Rather it is their purpose, with this preamble, to call attention to another Providence writer who made Benefit Street and its immediate neighborhood the setting for a number of short stories, peopling the region with denizens even more surprising than those created by Mr. deJong or unearthed by the F.B.I.

Howard Phillips Lovecraft, late of Providence, lived most of his not very long life in his native city, and the last few years of it in a house set a little back from College Street, almost under the eaves of the John Hay Library. He was a writer by profession, doing hack work for others and original work--essays, poems and tales. A life rather slowed down and shut in by ill health gave him time to read enormously, and as he seems never to have forgotten anything he read, he amassed a surprising fund of miscellaneous information on which he drew in his literary work. History and antiquarian lore attracted him, particularly the lore of witchcraft. Scientific concepts, evolution, relativity and the fourth dimension, and the long, long thoughts of astronomy interested him also and

(continued on page 9)

* * LOVECRAFT AND BENEFIT STREET * continued * *

started his mind off on strange journeys of speculation in time and space. All this contributed to the realistically narrated but fantastically weird tales which it was his pleasure to write.

Mr. Lovecraft dearly loved "the ancient hill," as he called the neighborhood of his home, and in his night rambles, like Poe at an earlier day, he

"Prowled such sweet
Ways as Benevolent
And Benefit Street,*

alone or with friends, exploring every curve, highways or byway, learning by heart all the nooks and crannies, even to the graveyard back of St. John's Church, packing his mind with the details of graceful spires and interesting public buildings, but dwelling with peculiar pleasure on the Georgian architecture of the older homesteads. The eighteenth century was his favorite era, and so great was his love of old times in Rhode Island that he even liked to fancy himself an elderly gentleman of Providence, living back in the less populous, more leisurely days before the colonies had broken with the Mother Country.

Returning from such rambles in space and time to his desk in his slightly study from which he overlooked the treetops of Benefit Street, dark against the sky-glow of downtown Providence, he spent night after night, which was his working time, using the familiar localities, the characteristic family and Christian names of Rhode Island, and factual details of the present and past of the life and business of Providence to furnish a setting for tales of tales of doings that were strange indeed. For the most part his plots deal with the struggles, not always victorious, of individuals and sometimes of whole families against malign influences and ghoulish visitations of nameless and horrible creatures from the sea, or monsters from ancient aeons, or even inhabitants of other planets, remote and dim, beings visualized by him as entirely different from humankind in anatomy, abilities, and methods of communications, whose disturbing, mysterious, and baffling behaviour puzzled and bedeviled the characters in the stories.

He did not always make Providence his setting, for every excursion elsewhere gave him new landscapes to use as backgrounds, new local superstitions to weave into his plots. Thus a stay in a New England inland valley that was soon to be flooded for the reservoir of a city water supply gave him material both factual and imaginative for a particularly creepy story of the disintegration of a family and its farm ("The Colour Out of Space"). Moreover, he often swung off into other worlds and other ages in his writing, sometimes very successfully. But mostly he wrote of the "arkham region," an imaginary bit of New England coastline above Boston and near enough to Salem and the scenes of the witchcraft executions to lend support to the weirdness of his plots, or else about places closer at hand in Rhode Island.

In the making of imaginative tales of the sort that Mr. Lovecraft wrote there cannot help being a great deal of claptrap and mumbo-jumbo. His stories suffer, if too many are read in quick succession, from similarity in the method of producing a weird atmosphere. It is easy to

* The quotation is from "Irony," a poem in the volume *White Christmas* by Margaret Emerson Bailey.

* * LOVECRAFT AND BENEFIT STREET * continued * *

tire of gothic effects in landscape and in weather when one knows that by such artifices one is being softened up to be bowled over at the appropriate moment by the horror of the narrative. One longs for a mystery to develop in a neat, ordinary house, or for a homicide committed in brilliant sunlight. Many of the stories are too long. Cutting would have improved them. And Mr. Lovecraft leaned too heavily on a few trick words that had come to have a heightened significance for him--nameless and forbidden, for example, to mention two. He also relied much too often on references to things distasteful to himself that he aversion or fear or disgust in others--fishy odors, for instance, which he couldn't endure and used again and again as a symbol of the evil and the malevolent; the strangeness of the foreigner; and chief of all, the sensation of cold. Things clammy and frigid are not very enjoyable for anybody, it is true, but few people could experience the gooseflesh and cold shivers that Mr. Lovecraft must have induced in himself from the chilling winds that blow through his stories and the dark caverns and cellars into which he so often conducted his readers, because a few are as susceptible in their own persons to changes in heat and cold as he is known to have been. For him, as one of his friends reports, winter began at seventy degrees! He would have agreed with Dante in making hell cold.

Also one misses humor in the stories. There is a sly humor there, to be sure, but it is not of the kind integral to the story, nor is it addressed to the readers, easing them kindly along, making the characters seem like folks and the horrific events all the more effective by contrast. Instead it is a private, tongue-in-the-cheek humor that mentions ancient (and imaginary!) books of magic by title and author in a matter of matter-of-fact that readers have been known to search the libraries in search of copies; a humor that wove the names of the author's close friends into some of the magic formulas muttered here and there in the tales, and that paid new friends who lived at a distance the odd compliment of adding their hometowns to the list of habitats in which the ghouls and monsters and queer creatures from other planets that swarm the tales are alleged to have appeared.

In spite of such defects, the facts remain that Mr. Lovecraft had an imaginative mind of more than usual power and writing ability far beyond the ordinary to conceive such weird tales at all and to work them out so well. He was clever in originating his world of queer beings from "Outside;" and building some of his stories around the camera, the submarine, the telephone, and other products of scientific wizardry, he interestingly links old necromancy and new. Back in the days before Hitler, when horror stories in real life did not appear daily in the headlines, and lovers of shivers had to satisfy their cravings in fiction, these tales of "illegitimate horror" sold readily in the magazines devoted to weird narratives and had an eager reception from the readers of the mystery stories. After Mr. Lovecraft's death two of his admirers from the mid-west, August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, brought out a giant volume of his tales, "The Outsider and Others," 553 large fine-print pages, and purpose in 1943 a volume of his letters and at some future time one of his essays and poems.

But to get back to Benefit Street. The writer of this comment is not fond of weird tales; she does not easily fall under their spell, and when she does, experiences none of the peculiar pleasure that some people

(Continued on page 11)

* * LOVECRAFT AND BENEFIT STREET * continued * *

seem to derive from being scared out of their wits. But one below-zero night in northern Vermont, in search of a bedtime story, she opened the huge Lovecraft volume that a friend had loaned her. Her eye chanced on a familiar name in a story entitled "The Shunned House," and she read on just where she had opened the book, astonished to find herself in Providence, wandering along Benefit Street. It was pleasant to be transported so unexpectedly to a neighborhood well known since college days, interesting and amusing to find it as a setting for the events of a weird tale when she had always considered it seemly and sedate. She read on, absorbed in the pleasures of recollection. And before she knew it, she was getting shivers and a crinkly spine out of the hair-raising particulars of an uncanny and very believable yarn. Well, of course it was late, and a very cold night! But what more could a writer of weird fiction have asked for his efforts!

How comforting to reflect when strolling on Benefit Street that it is human beings who people it, both sides of the street, and not the ghastly monsters of Mr. Lovecraft's bizarre imaginings.

THE END

By Dorothy C. Walter
From The Ghost

** EDITOR'S CORNER * continued **

attractive wife who met us at the door. Soon after that, we were shaking hands with Mr. Bond. Taking us up into his study, we had a most fascinating talk with him for about two hours. We talked about writing and he showed us some of his manuscripts and some original drawings illustrating his stories. We did manage to get off with two of them, along with an original radio drama by him! After treating us to lunch downtown, Mr. Bond took us back to the bus station, where once more we started on our journey." If you ask us, that would be something to talk with Nelson S. Bond.

WANTED TO BUY - fanmags prior to 1940. Would like very much to complete my files of the Fantasy Amateur of which I lack all issues of Volumes 1, 2 and 5. Let me know what you have.

WHY NOT send a quarter to Imperial, Nebraska for the next three issues of XENON.

Yours until next time,
Landon K. Houze

Mystery

Out of the shadows the woman came,
With starlight making her dark eyes gleam;
Moon elves found her and asked her name,
But she stood bewildered, as in a dream.

Will-o-the-wisp, whose faery glow
Rings her 'round with a gentle light,
Who is this woman who does not know
Her way in this dismal wood at night?

Bats that flutter about the glade
And tangle themselves in her long black hair,
From whence has this beautiful woman strayed,
And why is she standing so silent there?

Stars in the velvety sky above,
Mists that swirl on the forest floor,
Is this a maid who is crossed in love;
A mortal woman--or something more?

James Russell Gray

Black Magic

BY KENNETH KRUEGER & WILLIAM WALBESSER

The city of Buffalo, N. Y. was recently shocked to learn that the ancient art of Black Magic was being practiced in one of its residential sections. The homes of Kenneth J. Krueger and Professor William J. Walbesser were being used for these acts of sacrilege. In the professor's own words the acts of magic were described as follows:

Professor Walbesser went to the home of an aged sorcerer in New York City named Unger for six months to learn how to draw the necessary pentagon. In the meanwhile Professor Krueger ran all over the country in the attempt to find a cat that would fill his wants. It had to be a grey cat and as everyone knows this type is exceedingly scarce. He finally swiped one from his next door neighbor. Professor Walbesser came back from his travels with his mind full of the wonders that he had witnessed in the hallowed portals of the Wizard of Brooklyn and joined Professor Krueger in his search for the rarest of all objects--a knife.

The knife was necessary to the sacrifice of the cat who was to be decapitated in the backyard of Professor Walbesser's home. At last all was in order except for the actual drawing of the unholy pentagon and the deciding of who was to be the one to kill the kat and who was to chant the magic words. How to decide was the great issue for more than a month of steady argument between the two men of science. At last they hit upon the idea of tossing a coin. Again they were stopped as neither had a coin. No coin! What was to be done?

Krueger's great brain again came to the rescue and a mould was made to the exact shape and size of a fifty-cent piece. Krueger is now being held on a charge of counterfitting. But the coin was made. And at last was the issue decided.

And Krueger lost. Walbesser won the great honor of being the chanter. So Walbesser studied in his chamber in a manhole in the middle of Grider Street. And Krueger sat about summoning up his courage to meet the great ordeal and cursing the day that he was born.

The great night arrived at last. The two men of science met in the blackness of Krueger's cellar and the pentagon was drawn. Walbesser took his place on the outside of the magic circle and Krueger bravely stepped into the center space with the cat in one hand and the solid tin knife in the other. Walbesser's mighty voice shook the cellar and the tone of his words filled the man in the center of the pentagon with awe.

Then it happened--Krueger's nerve broke and the knife slipped from his unfeeling fingers. Walbesser stopped his chant and with a disdainful glance at his assistant stepped into the pentagon to carry on the sacrifice. And the cat again felt the crawly feeling that death was upon it. But Walbesser could

(more on page 14)

**BLACK MAGIC - Continued

not cut the cat's throat either.

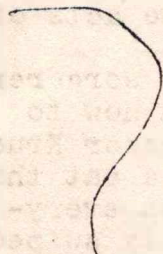
Krueger had the idea to try it with another living being and Walbesser agreed. So Krueger went into the night with a flashlight and was back in a few minutes with another to take the place of the cat.

And the rites went on but this time Krueger, with a steady hand drew the knife across the poor creature's throat and stepped from the pentagon. And Walbesser still kept up the chant.

The sacrificed creature did not stir. From its body slowly there rose a cloud of smoke. Then, in a blinding flash it materialized. Walbesser screamed and ran from the accursed building. Krueger shrank back to the wall in absolute terror -- for there in the pentagon was the thing in plain sight. Brought on by the sacrifice of a worm and the mysterious words "L S M F T" was a pack of Lucky Strikes.

Never again was the building occupied for the spirit of the cigarettis is said to still linger in the halls of Krueger's home. While he spends his time at the home for the insane, Walbesser walks the streets of Buffalo, with a haunted expression on his face and looks over his shoulder at all daring people who can still smoke the cigarette named LUCKY STRIKE.

Kitty?





James