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# Brevizine

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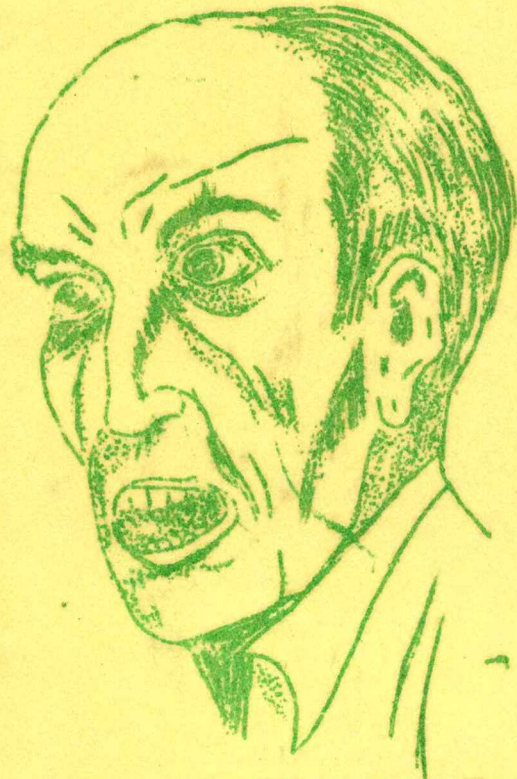
*Adventure*

MY WOMAN FOR SALE  
By George Brown

THE UGLY BEAST  
By Elmer R. Kirk

MOON MAIDEN  
By Johnny Fury

PRONOUN: CONFUSED  
By James Lewis



Illustrator: W. K. Kerns.



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VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2

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# WOMAN FOR SALE

BY GEORGE BROWN

There's a song currently popular which concludes with the logic, that whatever a woman is, she's necessary. Now we don't intend to argue such findings, we'll leave that to Dr. Kinsey, instead we'll let George Brown tell you a sensitive little tale about two nice men and a rather different young woman. We think you'll remember this one for some time! . . . . - E.J.H.

HANK FULLER FINISHED skinning two fine gelts. He stretched their smooth silk-like skins on a board and took them into his cabin to dry. He was disappointed at only catching two gelts. After all, trudging almost five miles through the snow didn't make it a very profitable task. Even if the gelt hides were worth a hundred credit notes apiece, it was hardly worth the long bone-weary task of getting them.

He took off his heavy Talfa bearskin coat and hung it on a wooden peg. His eye caught the date on the calendar. There was a circle around the 25th. That was tomorrow, he thought. He put away the gelt hides and walked to the fireplace. The circle was to remind him that he must go into Talfa City for supplies before the heavy snows. He scratched his blond beard. Besides his usual supplies, he thought, he would get some reading matter to pass the long, cold, lonely Talfa winter hours. He grimaced through his beard. He might even get a young girl to cook for him.

He sat in his crude wooden chair and lit a cigarette. He was sure that the freight-

er, which brought the young she-beasts from the Earth's prisons and streets, would be in Talfa. They usually stayed till the snows came. His huge frame shook with silent laughter. You could always buy a girl, at your own risk. What could a skinny little thing with milky skin possibly do to him? He wasn't afraid. Besides Talfa winters are ten months long and it gets very cold.

Hank pushed the big iron pot over the fire and sat back in his chair, puffing on his cigarette. He looked casually about the one-room cabin. It could be a nice cozy little place if it was fixed up. It would be nice to have a woman around, someone to fix his meals, mend his clothes, someone to talk to and to love. The stew began to boil and he took the long-handled poker and pulled it off the fire. He dipped some hot stew onto a plate and took a spoon and scooped some into his mouth. "Damn," he swore, as the hot stew burnt his mouth.

THE NEXT DAY Hank woke early. He shivered as his feet touched the cold floor. He poked the fire to life and hurriedly

got into his clothes. After a quick breakfast of hot stew and hard bread, Hank put on his heavy coat and gathered up his hides and packed them tightly in two bundles. He picked up his gun and went out. The wind was beginning to bend the straight trees. He looked up at the sun which was coming over the hill; it looked cold and lifeless. The snows weren't far off.

He went into the stable and tied the two bundles of furs onto the pack animal and led the long-haired beast out into the two-foot snow. It stamped its webbed feet and Hank paused to make sure he had everything. Then he closed the door and led the animal toward Talfa City.

Several times the beast got out in front of him and he had to run to keep up with it. "Slow down, ya damn animal," he shouted at it, but it always managed to keep a little in front of him. Almost exhausted, Hank pulled the beast toward a stop on top of a small snow covered hill overlooking Talfa City. He gave the animal a swat behind its long ear which stood straight up. "Ya like to run so much, I'll give ya a good run. I'll get me one of those riding snow horses and we'll run all the way back to the cabin."

Hank descended the hill slowly, looking down the main street of the small settlement, at the huge space freighter sitting superior to its surroundings of small crude dwellings. This ship, which came only two times a year, brought supplies to Talfa, and took the main export of hides back to Earth to be made into coats to drape the backs of the beautiful Earth women.

Hank tied the beast to the porch pole of Nick's store and went in. The store was warm, too warm. He opened his coat and strode over to Nick who was counting up some numbers on his little adding machine. Hank stood in front of him and waited for him to finish.

Nick pulled the lever, then wrote the total in a big book. He looked over the top of his glasses at Hank, and smiled an almost toothless smile. "Well Hank, getting ready for the hibernating season?"

"Yeah," said Hank, fingering a plastic

carton of cigarettes.

"That's about the latest thing. They say it'll keep the smokes fresher longer."

"These scientists, they're always thinking of something," said Hank, digging into his pocket for his list. "Here this is a list of things I'll need to tide me over the heavy snow season."

Nick took the list and mumbled over several items as he walked out from behind the counter. "Okay, I'll get them for ya. How soon are ya going to leave?"

Hank picked up a big red apple and took a bite. "Oh, I'll be here about four hours or less."

Nick nodded and began to set the items on the counter. Shortly he stopped and looked out toward the front of the store. "How was the catch?"

"Better than usual," Hank said, looking for a place to throw the apple core. "The hides are out front on the Yak."

"Good, good," said Nick rubbing his hands together.

"Say, did there happen to be any of those women this trip?"

NICK TURNED AND faced Hank, his face twisted into a grin, and he pulled at his ear lobe. "Yeah," he said with a chuckle.



Illustrator: Lane Martin.

"There was a few this trip, but from what I heard yesterday, there was only one left! He looked at Hank over the top of his glasses again, then said, "Ya planning to take a wife?"

"Nawww, I need someone to do my cooking and other small chores around the cabin."

Nick chuckled again. "Yep, it gets mighty cold."

Hank grunted and walked toward the door. "I'll be back," he said.

He walked rapidly toward the space freighter. "Damn Nick, it's none of his business what I do," he thought. He walked up the ramp and stopped in front of the huge door. It swung open and he walked in.

"Hi there," said a little man with no hair. He extended his hand and Hank took it and pumped it several times.

"I'd like to purchase one of those women," he said, reaching into his back pocket for his bag containing the money.

Before the little man could speak, a rough voice boomed behind Hank.

"Yere too late. I'm gonna buy 'er!"

HANK WHEELED AROUND and saw Ben Dodge coming through the door. His big ape-like body stopped short of Hank. His yellow teeth shown through his heavy black beard and he was puffing furiously.

"Ben, ya ol' buck," snarled Hank, "what are ya doin' in this neck of the sticks? I heard ya was over in the Dolfa section! Hank paused. "Or did they run ya out?"

"Yere lookin' for a fight, Hank."

"But yere not the man to give it to me."

Ben grunted and backed away from Hank. Hank laughed to himself. Ben probably remembered the time a few years ago when Hank beat the pants off him.

"Oh dear," said the little man. "Well, the only thing I know what we can do, is let the two of you bid for her and she'll go to the highest bidder."

Ben grunted and before long a steel door slid open and two hefty men came in leading a woman. And what a woman! Her skin was as white as the snow, and her long blond hair hung down to her waist. Hank heard Ben wheeze and he was determined that

Ben wouldn't get his cruddy paws on her. She was even too nice a looking woman for Hank, but he couldn't let Ben get at her.

"A hundred credit note," shouted Ben, almost frightening the poor girl right out of her skin.

"One fifty," said Hank.

Tears filled the girl's eyes and she looked at the two men who were bidding for her. "Why do I have to be sold here like a common slave?" she said.

Ben laughed. "Because that's what ya are," and continued to laugh at his grim humor.

"You were told hundreds of times," the little man said. "You were nothing but a street wanderer. And on Earth we don't allow it."

"Two hundred," bellowed Ben.

"And fifty," said Hank and Ben showed his teeth.

THE GIRL LOOKED at Hank, and then back at the little man. "I-I told you I was looking for an aunt," she looked at Hank, her eyes pleading. "I have an aunt."

Hank looked at the little man. He was about to say something when the little man said, "Her aunt couldn't be found. We spent hundreds of credits trying to locate her, but to no avail." He laughed. "She doesn't even have any idea where she is. A cock-and-bull story."

"T-three hundred," said Ben looking the little man in the face, hoping that he would close the bidding.

"And fifty," said Hank.

"Damn ya, ya ain't got that much."

Hank pulled three hundred and fifty in credit notes out of his bag. He smiled as he watched Ben's face grow red with hatred. Ben turned and stormed through the door. "Damn ya," he said as the door slid shut behind him.

"Alright, Mr---"

"Fuller," said Hank.

"Alright, Mr. Fuller," the little man said, then motioned for the girl to leave as he handed Hank a piece of paper. "Sign on the bottom line; it's her release papers. By the way, her name is Irma

Wills.\*

Hank signed the paper. "Ahhh," said the little man, "she may cause you a bit of trouble. She can't seem to understand why all the bad women and streetwalkers are sent here to become wives of the Talfa men. We tried to tell her that it was to stamp out crime. Personally, I think she's a good woman, but I don't make up the laws and the lawmakers were too busy having fun to hear her case. It's too bad, but---"

The door slid open and she came out carrying her few belongings in a small suitcase. Hank gave the little man the money. Then Hank took hold of her arm.

She spun around and grabbed his beard; pulling with all her might.

"Damn!" said Hank, throwing up his hand. He caught her wrists and forced them to her sides. He felt sick. "Don't be like that. I won't be mean to ya."

SHE SOBBED BITTERLY and walked down the ramp. "I'm not bad," she said, "I'm not bad." Something twisted Hank's guts; he was sorry he had bought her, but glad that Ben wouldn't get his hands on her. "I know yere not, Irma," Hank said, "and believe me, I won't be mean to ya."

She looked back at him and wiped her cheek, then turned and walked away, keeping a few paces in front of him. Hank noticed her shivering. It wasn't any wonder, with just a thin jacket and her legs bare from almost the knees down.

Hank busied himself getting her two warm dresses and a heavy Talfa bear coat. He checked the supplies and took them out and loaded them on the yak. He reentered the store and helped Irma into her heavy coat. She didn't utter any objection, but put it on and pulled it tight around her.

"We're ready," Hank said. Irma opened the door and went out.

"Got yourself a beauty," Nick said.

Hank smiled and looked at her standing beside the Yak. He snapped his finger. "Ya got a snow horse I can buy?" Hank asked Nick.

"Got one."

"I'll take it."

Nick went around the building and retur-

ned shortly with a fine black one. Hank pulled out his bag of money. "How much?"

"Hundred."

Hank handed him a hundred and helped Irma onto the horse. He got up behind her. Jerking the horse's head he turned toward home.

Hank felt Irma shivering through her heavy coat. He felt worried and spurred the horse. "Ya cold?" he asked.

"No," was her blunt answer.

When they arrived at the cabin it was dark. The wind was bending the trees almost over and he felt the snow hitting his face. The snows were here.

He lifted Irma from the horse and she stiffened; her eyes were shut and she fell against him in a dead faint. He frantically took his glove off and touched her face. It was hot, hot as the top of a stove.

He carried her into the cabin and set her gently in a chair. Then he hurriedly made up the bunk, neatly spreading the blankets. He then picked her up and laid her gently in the bunk. Firewood was gathered and a fire made. Water was heated to bathe her.

HE REMOVED HER heavy coat; his fingers moved nervously as he undressed her. He stopped, staring at the white loveliness, the curve of her body. Its softness made him draw his big rough hand away, afraid that it might mar its loveliness. God, he had never seen anything so beautiful!

This was something a man could feast his eyes on forever, without ever tiring. He knew that she had to be his; he would coax her to come to him willingly. He must have her.

Carefully he bathed her and clad her in one of the fine new dresses which he had bought her. He then made a broth and fed it to her slowly.

The heavy snow was upon them. Hank sealed all the cracks and busied himself around the cabin. The girl lay without moving in the bunk for two days. Then on the third she pushed back the heavy covers and looked at Hank, who was sitting

next to the bed. He smiled. "How do you feel?" She looked at him for a moment and then looked down at the new dress which covered her body. She ran her white hands over the front of the dress and looked at Hank. His eyes met hers. "I've got some nice beeve meat on the fire. It'll be good for ya." He got up and went to the fireplace. He set the meat on the table and watched as she slowly walked toward it, looking at the food.

"Beeve? What kind of meat is that?" she asked sitting at the table.

Hank scratched his heavy beard. "Well, it's like the meat of the deer back on Earth."

Irma took a small piece and put it to her lips, then proceeded to fill her plate.

Hank smiled and walked toward the window. He looked outside at the snow, which was heaping up, and clicked his tongue. "Looks like it'll be a month even before I'll be able to go and look at the traps!"

"Traps?"

Hank turned and looked at Irma. She sat in front of the fireplace with a plate of food. "Traps?" she repeated.

"Yes," Hank said, walking toward her. "That's what I do for a living on this cold planet. I trap the wild animals for their hides so the women of the Earth have something to keep them warm."

"Is that all this -- planet is good for?"

"Yes ma'am."

She looked about the cabin, her creamy white features twisted into dislike. "So this is where you have brought me?"

"Well," she said, sniffing back a sob, "I'll just have to make the best of it." Her eyes met Hank's and she drew them away. "If it's alright with you, I'll start to earn my keep now. Where's the broom, and dust pan?" She rose and looked at the bewildered Hank.

"No need for that now. Wait till you're stronger." He put his hands on her shoulders; she yielded to him like something dead. He let her go, and she turned her back to him. "Don't be like that, Irma. I wish that ya would come ta like me. I ain't such a bad fellow."

"I did come to you, bearded one. I'll

do all your chores and answer all your whims, but don't ask me to love you. Do not worry, you will get your three hundred and fifty credits' worth from me."

Something snapped inside of Hank. It boiled over; and he pointed toward the corner of the cabin. "Alright then, damn, there's the broom over there in the corner. Get busy." Irma picked up the broom and began to clean the room. Hank felt sick. "Please Irma," he said, "don't. Put the broom back. Yere not strong enough to work yet." Irma looked at him. "Please," Hank whispered.

She put the broom back and walked over to the bunk. She sat looking at her fingers in her lap. "I-I'm sorry. You're only trying to be nice, and I won't let you -- I'm sorry."

"Forget it," Hank said.

HANK WOKE LATE the next morning. He was surprised to see that Irma was already up. The aroma of coffee filled his nose and the crisp smell of meat frying. He pushed the blankets aside, and for the first time in years, the floor wasn't cold. He smiled as he pulled on his heavy boots. "Morning," he said.

"Morning," Irma answered, not looking around at him as she went about fixing breakfast.

"Smells mighty good," Hank said, sniffing the food on the table as he sat down. Irma sat at the other end of the table, resting her arms on the end. "Hadn't you better wash, bearded one?" she said a bit sarcastically.

Hank's eyes grew large. That was the first time anyone had ever told him to do that, especially at his own table. And for some reason or other he didn't mind one bit. He pushed back his chair and walked to the washstand. As he washed his hands he glanced into the mirror. "Bearded one," he thought to himself. He rubbed his blond beard and dried his hands.

After breakfast Hank pulled down some of his new hides and scraped the flesh off them, pausing several times to feel his beard. He grumbled to himself as he put the hides back in their place and went to the washstand, pulling out his



straight razor. As much as he hated to, he slowly removed his thick beard. After he had washed the soap from his face, he looked into the mirror. He looked at himself in bewilderment, not sure that this mirror-face was his.

Irma was making up the bunks when he walked over to her and placed his big hands on her soft shoulders.

She straightened slowly and turned to face him. "Yes, bearded o--" She paused and looked at him in amazement. "Why, you've shaved," she said, raising her hand to his cheek. The softness of her hand sent goose flesh up Hank's back. He tried to think of something to say but he was at a complete loss of words. She smiled warmly and quickly dropped her hand to her side. "I never did hear your name," she said.

"Just call me Hank."

She walked to the fireplace and picked up a piece of wood and placed it on the fire, then turned to face him. She smiled "Alright, --- Hank."

THE NEXT FEW days were pleasant. Hank went about his work treating his hides and Irma did her chores. In the evenings and odd moments they talked, mostly about the man called Hank. Hank told her about this newly discovered planet Talfa, and how he came to settle here. About its many furbearing animals, and why it was so backward in such a modern and fast universe.

"But it's hard to understand," Irma asked with interest. "Can't something be done to bring Talfa out of this wilderness?"

"Well, I suppose it could but then if they did something about its cold atmosphere, there wouldn't be all these animals to trap, then the whole universe would be at a loss. My guess is that they'll keep Talfa like it is."

"Yes, it would be nice to have some place that is almost completely untouched." Irma looked out of the window, her eyes in a dream. "I'll bet this virgin land is really beautiful."

"Yes, it sure is," Hank said sitting closer. He slipped his arm around her waist. He felt her body press next to his and then saw her fists clutched tightly in her lap, so tight that her knuckles grew whi-

te. She was coming to him like she said she would. "Why not," he thought to himself he had bought her. She began to tremble and Hank released her and stood up. He looked down at her; he wanted to take her in his arms and kiss her but something kept him back. Irma sat very quietly looking at the floor. Now Hank wasn't sure if she had come to him because she had to or because she wanted to. He pulled her to her feet and crushed her small body to his. "I love ya, Irma," he said. "Do ya love me?" Hank watched her eyes become glassy. She pulled herself free. "Please, Hank. I told you never to ask me that," she sobbed as she threw herself on her bunk.

"I'm sorry," Hank said, walking toward the window. He was sure that she was falling for him. He rubbed his naked chin. He thought she was.

Suddenly Hank's attention was attracted by a noise in the stable. He looked out at the building, then walked over and put on his heavy coat. "Sounds like that damn Yak has broken loose," he said, picking up the lantern. He felt a tug on his shoulder. "I'll take the lantern. You'll need both hands free for the door." Her eyes looked like small pools.

"It's pretty cold out there."

"I'll be alright."

Hank shoveled the heavy snow away from the door and pulled it open. He entered the dark stable and Irma followed him. She held up the lantern -- suddenly a piercing scream filled the stable. Just inside the door was the ape-like form of Ben Dodge, his yellow teeth drooling saliva, and in his hand was a gun.

The gun roared before Hank had a chance to protect himself. A large hand grabbed the blood-smeared shirt and Hank fell to the stable floor.

"No, -- no," screamed Irma as she ran to his side. She fell on the limp form, starting to cry.

Ben walked over to her. He laughed and shot his heavy boot out, striking her in the face. She went sprawling back and hit her head on a post. "Ya like the crum, huh," Ben said, picking up the lantern and holding it over Hank. He lifted his gun and fired. There was a sickening thud

and Ben stood laughing insanely. He picked up Irma and carried her back to the cabin.

There was a steady pounding in Hank's ears. He lifted himself slowly and with almost unbearable pain he dragged himself up to a post and leaned heavily against it. His eyes caught the webbed feet of the Yak, which continued to thump the ground. He felt the warm flow of blood which was pouring down his neck. He ground his teeth together to ease the throbbing pain in his chest. He felt like screaming, then he saw Ben's big ugly form in the window of the cabin. He thought of Irma; then climbing to his feet, he walked slowly toward the cabin. Hatred burned his brain and the pain seemed to leave him. He thought of what Ben might do to her.

HE REACHED THE cabin and threw open the door. Irma lay on the floor, her dress almost completely off and her hands tied in front of her, as Ben dragged her across the floor. Ben swung around to face Hank when the door banged against the side of the cabin.

"Pretty damn hard to kill, ain't ya?" he sneered as he pulled out a long-bladed knife. "This time I'll do a better job. I'll cut ya in little bits and hang ya up for bait." He laughed and made for Hank.

THE TWO MEN hit the floor with a hard thud, with Ben on top. Ben hauled back the knife and plunged it toward Hank. Hank jerked his head to one side just in time. He struck at him again. The knife stuck solidly in the floor. Hank's arms entwined Ben's neck with the huge giant tearing at Hank's wound. The blond figure let out a yell, then forced his feet under Ben and with a mighty push he sent Ben crashing against the far wall.

Ben rose to his feet. He arched his back like a mean bear and came charging at Hank in bull fashion. Quickly Hank pulled the knife from the floor and hurled it at him. Ben stopped in his tracks. He gasped

and tried to pull the knife out, which had planted itself solidly in his neck. He screamed and fell face down on the floor.

"Hank, Hank," cried Irma, running to him. She lifted his head onto her lap and kissed his forehead.

"Are you alright?"

"Yeah," he gasped.

Hank laid in the bunk his wounds treated and Irma at his side. She ran her fingers through his hair.

"You asked me if I loved you, Hank." She smiled. "Well, I do -- very much."

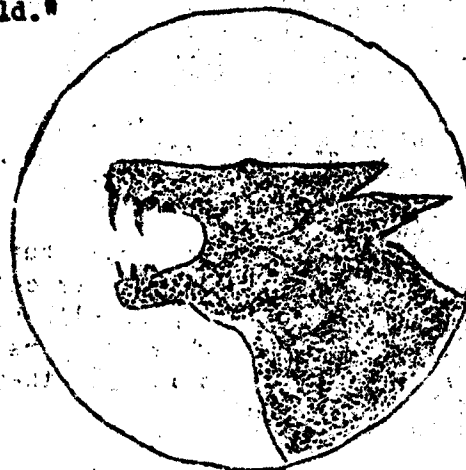
"Ya mean you'll be my wife?" he asked, raising up.

"Yes."

Hank took her into his arms and kissed her. Irma shivered, and Hank held her tighter.

"It does get cold on this planet, doesn't it?" Irma said.

Hank kissed her again and said in her ear, "Yes, honey, it does. It gets real real cold."

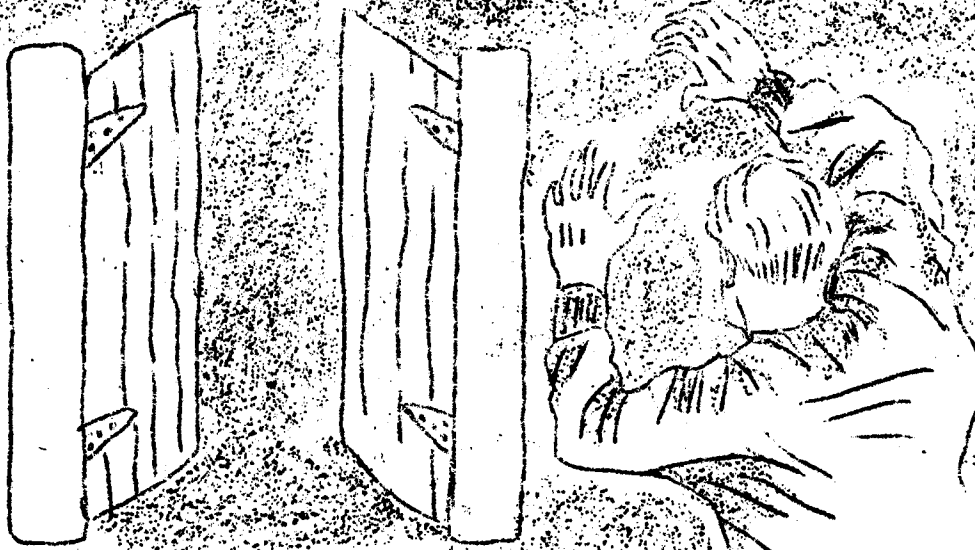


Illustrator: Cimbali.

Illustrator:  
W. H. Kerns.

# UGLY BEAST

BY ELMER R. KIRK



We've always wondered about the mysterious "quality" of being stubborn. Take this Grant fellow that Elmer Kirk so capably relates about. Stubborn as they come. Seems he wanted to satisfy his curiosity concerning a rusty gate, and some very bizarre people. He did, too. That's what makes this such an interesting little tale! . . . . . - E.J.H.

"I WOULDN'T GO out to that old deserted log cabin in the hills if I were you, Mr. Grant," Charlie Davis advised. "You're just asking for trouble."

"Why?" I asked lifting an eyebrow questioningly. "Spooks--or something?"

"No one seems to know," he explained. But there is something, well -er, supernatural about the old Nathan Bloodstone place. The old log cabin is a shambles overgrown with briars and wild vines. The fences have disappeared years ago--all except the old iron gate. It stands solid between two upright posts. But it won't stay closed. Some--some unseen hand opens the blamed thing."

Now I happen to be one of those obstinate fellows who likes to tempt Fate then bellyache about my plight afterwards. Just as sure as someone tells me not to do something I do it anyway, then holler like hell because I'm always in some kind of trouble.

And, so it happened to me again in this case.

I had moved into the Ozark mountains only the year before, seeking the peace and quiet scenes of the hills. Old Charlie Davis, my nearest neighbor, knew all the folklore of the hills and put me right with the clannish neighbors.

I had heard faint rumor before about the mysterious old gate out on the Bloodstone place and had made it a point now to inquire of Charlie about it. As I said before, I am always sticking my nose into things I shouldn't.

"You mean to say, Charlie," I asked, "that someone goes in and out that gate and never closes it, when it isn't necessary to use the gate at all because of no fences?"

"Yep, that's the size of it exactly," he said.

"Of course," I said haltingly, "there must be some explanation to such weird circumstances -- the wind probably blows it open."

"Impossible. I'm telling you, Mr. Grant

I wouldn't go out there if I were you..."

That did it. I squinted at the sun, hillman fashion, and reckoned the time of evening at four o'clock. A chill autumn wind foretold a cold evening ahead.

I bid old Charlie goodbye, resolving to drive back into the hills to the haunted cabin, against Charlie's advice and my own better judgment.

I STOPPED IN at my own cabin, picked up my automatic pistol, a ragged quilt, two tallow tapers, a short length of iron chain, and a heavy padlock. I put these items into my car and headed back into the hills. I was going to solve the mystery of that iron gate or know the reason why.

The setting sun was a red-blood ball of fire in the sky when I finally located the deserted log cabin. What light there was at my back, cast my long dim shadow in front of me as I approached the rusty gate. It was open. I put down my quilt that I had bundled my things into, opened it and took out the iron chain and the heavy padlock. I tried to close the gate with one hand but it wouldn't budge. It stayed open in one position as if some giant hand was holding it fast.

I let go the gate, put the chain and padlock on the ground at my feet, in order to give the horrid thing a quick jerk with both hands. I rested my fingers lightly, at first, on the rusty iron, bracing myself for the final effort. The gate felt cold like some slithering serpent that had just crawled from a chill-damp cavern. The gate closed without further effort on my part as if in obedience to the wailing chant of a Hindu snake charmer. I shuddered.

I could see now why the wind could not blow it open. The hook was one of those heavy affairs with a spring safety catch that snapped closed over the fastener on the gate post. It took the pressure of fingers to release the snap hook in order to open the gate. I wondered how "unearthly" fingers managed such maneuvers.

I snapped the fastener shut, wrapped the iron chain through the gate and back around the post, twice, then snapped the heavy padlock through the ends of the chain links. Now, I thought, just let anything try to open that old gate, be it human or ...or supernatural. Then I made my way to-

ward the sagging log house. Daylight had vanished.

A FULL MOON had started her celestial ark in the eastern sky, casting eerie shadows about the desolate house. A tangle of briars and blackberry bushes had overgrown the path. Wild grapevines swayed from the branches of a chinkapin tree like the tentacles of a huge black octopus searching for its next victim.

The dreary adobe was like most old-time log houses, a heavy thong protruded through a small hole in the slab door, used to lift the wooden latch inside. After careful effort, the latch-bar lifted and I slowly pushed the creaking door inward. The odor of old empty houses filled my nostrils as I lay my bundle down and lit a taper.

The place was a one-room affair with a native stone fireplace at one end. The most amazing incongruity was the sight of battered old furniture still remaining as if someone had left it in a hurry, never to return.

Fine powdered dust covered the place like a mist. An old oaken bucket stood on a wash stand and an antiquated weight-driven clock rested on the mantel over the fireplace, its face faded and covered with dusty spiderwebs, silent for years.

I could see narrow slits of moonlight through the rough-hewn walls where the mud chinking had released its aged hold falling to the floor in little heaps like ant-hills. The wind, whistling through the walls, made the place as dreary and cold as a tomb. I decided that a fire in the fireplace would do no harm and might possibly bolster my ebbing courage.

I had taken only a couple of steps toward the door, which was left partly open, when the faint clanking sound of a chain drifted to my ears from the gate outside. I patted my belt to be sure that my automatic was there and crept silently toward the opening. I peeked very cautiously around the edge of the door. Nothing was there. The gate was still chained and locked as I had left it.

Thinking that my ears had deceived me, I slipped outside in the search of wood for the fire. After much looking around

and many scratches from briars, I finally brought in an arm load of dead wood and dropped it beside the fireplace. I kindled the fire carefully but it only smoldered and went out leaving a thick haze of smoke to dim the flickering candle. I felt like ripping the planks from the one and only boarded-up window but thought better of it because of the chill night air. I presumed that the chimney was stopped with many birds' nests and let it go at that.

Then I spread my quilt back of the partly opened door and prepared for my watchful vigil of silent listening.

THE MINUTES DRAGGED by like prolonged time at a death-watch. My ears were cocked for the least bit of noise from the outside. An old owl screeched his eerie wail from the uppermost branches of a tree outside and his cry of gloom died into faint echoes among the distant hills.

Now, at this juncture let me assure you that I am not one bit superstitious. -- well, ah, maybe about as little as the average. The instinct of fear and superstition is inherent to a varied degree in all human beings. Since medieval time, man has fought this innate beast of the mind--try bending over a sleeping baby and suddenly screaming, boo. What does a tiny baby know about fear and superstition, unless it is inherent? And, I suppose, for that reason my subconscious had me tuck that automatic under my belt.

It was then, while pondering on these frailties of man's prime instincts, that I nodded my head in half-sleep... I stood up, however, by the sudden "bong" of a clock. The deep vibration reverberated in the darkness like the crash of a meteor. The taper had gone out. I gazed in awe toward the old silent clock on the stone mantel-piece. The antiquated clock was quiet and dead in its web graveyard.

Nerves, I said to myself, just plain nerves and nothing more.

I started to sit down again when I heard it. It came from the old iron gate outside. I clutched my gun in my hand and sprang for the door. The gate was wide open.

A shadowy figure of a man was coming toward me, his arms swinging like a gorilla's. "Stop where you are, you son of a bitch, or I'll drill you full of holes,"

I demanded.

He kept right on coming toward me. I squeezed the trigger and the report deafened me. Nothing happened.

"Wait," he said. "Don't do that. My name is Nathan Bloodstone, the owner of this property. What do you mean by this intrusion?"

"Stay where you are," I ordered. "How did you open that gate?"

"That," He said, "is exactly none of your damned business." He lunged and knocked the gun sailing from my hand before I could recover from the surprise.

I braced myself for the attack but none came. Then I saw his face in the moonlight. It was almost too horrid to describe. Every feature about him was repulsive. His eyes were bestial, set back in his head like those of a mummy's, his skin was stretched like dry brown paper and his mouth was screwed sidewise to his face; with two tiny tusks protruding through his thin lips. The hair was shoulder-length, black and matted.

"Look," I tried again. "You tell me how you came through that gate -- or one of us is going to be damned sorry."

He continued to stare at me. I had seen those eyes among the local natives, someplace. Were they mutant? I thought.

I let go a solid right to his jaw. It connected with a thud. But he only cackled a shrill squeaking sound like the chatter of an excited monkey. He unloaded on me--and the lights went out...

WHEN I CAME to, it was raining a regular downpour. I was stiff and sore all over. One eye was swelled shut and a dozen buzz-saws were whirling around inside my head. This should teach me, I thought, not to stick my damn nose into other people's business.

The rain, I suppose, had brought me around. I got up and looked about. A pale aura of gray hung in the early morning sky. I looked with my one good eye toward the gate. It was gone. Nothing but empty post holes remained where it had stood the night before.

I searched among the brambles for my automatic, found it and then went into the log cabin for my quilt. It was behind the

door where I had left it. My car was a 1911 right when I got into it and the motor responded with a happy tune to the starter button. I turned around and headed straight for old Charlie Davis' cabin.

Smoke was rolling from the chimney of his fireplace and I could smell an early breakfast of home-cured bacon cooking, as I approached his door.

"Come in, ride up a chair and sit," he said in response to my knock.

The warmth of the fireplace was comforting. I was chilled and still soaking wet.

"That is a beauty," old Charlie said pointing to my closed, and puffed, eye... "Where'd you get it?"

I paid little attention to his remark. I was looking one-eyed at an old motto hanging on the rough-hewn wall. It read: "They came to the iron gate that leadeth to the city, which of itself opened to them. Acts xii. 10"

"I said," Charlie repeated, "Where did you get that black eye?"

"Oh, that," I answered reluctantly. "I got clipped while I was snooping around the Nathan Bloodstone place last night."

"I warned you," said through his toothless mouth. "But you wouldn't take my advice."

"Look," I said. "Tell me about Nathan Bloodstone, will you?"

"Sure. What little I know," he stroked his beard. "Nathan was the ugliest human God ever put guts in. When he first moved to these hills people shunned him. A store keeper over in Northwood took pity on him and let him clerk in his store, but Nathan's horrid looks lost business for the man so the store-keeper fired him."

"Don't ask me how he did it, but not long after that, Nathan Bloodstone fell in love with a woman. She, too, was ugly as the very devil himself. She was a sloppy-breasted woman, broad bottomed and---and no arms. She was born without arms. She could pull a latch-string with her teeth but couldn't open gates hooked from the inside..."

The old man stopped for breath, I looked into his eyes---eyes that I had looked into before. He was stroking his long wh-

white whiskers and looking at me with the hypnotic and unblinking stare of a reptile.

"Go on," I encouraged.

"THERE'S LITTLE MORE to tell," he continued. "Maggie Ware---that was the wench's name--- vanished from the hills and hasn't been heard from since. Nathan Bloodstone left his gate open for her ever after that, hoping that someday she would return to him. Some people thought she went insane looking at him..."

He stopped again and started that ungodly snake-eye stare. I looked about that cabin wildly and for the first time realized that the furnishings here were an exact duplicate of those out at the haunted Bloodstone cabin. I wondered what the old man would look like with the beard gone from his face and fangs stuck in his crooked toothless mouth.

No, I thought, it can't be; he's too old. He's - - "

Then I looked straight into those sunken, beady, unblinking eyes again and said: "Where is Nathan Bloodstone now?"

"I don't know," he chattered, trying to make a joke of it. "He died fifteen years ago. Funny thing," he stroked his beard again-- "happened last night. Somebody left Nathan Bloodstone's old rusty gate at the back of my cabin. It was chained and padlocked shut..."

I looked over toward the stone mantelpiece at the weight-powered clock and fully expected it to go "bong." Then I headed for the door.

"Look," the old man begged. "Why don't you move out to that Bloodstone place. It won't cost you a cent rent. I bought it from an heir not long ago."

"No thanks," I replied, my old bullheadedness coming to the fore again. I closed Charlie's door without saying goodbye.

As I said before, I'm contrary as hell about taking other people's advice - - especially, especially old Charlie's.

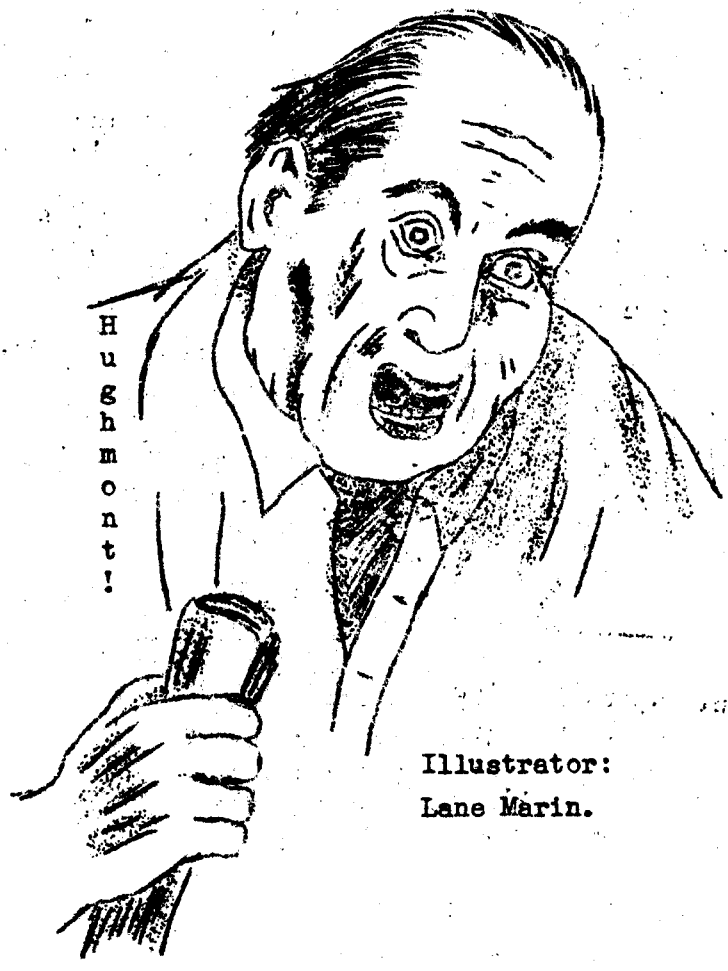
I moved to Detroit the next day.

# Pronoun:

# Confused

BY JAMES LEWIS

For many years the rumor that an editor has the easiest job in the world, has been circulating. This is not true. It is the writer that has the enviable position! Nevertheless, contrary to rumor, this editor has more work than anything else! Rewrites, proofreading, titles, stubborn authors, etc. By the way, our editorial friend in this story by James Lewis has a few problems, also. . . . . - E.J.H.



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Illustrator:  
Lane Marin.

YOU'RE WALKING DOWN the street right now. Hello. You're also wondering who I am. Right? Well, that is a question that isn't very easily answered. Let's just accept the fact that I'm me. Okay?

First, in order to prove that I know what I'm talking about, let's look back over your life.

No, we don't have to go that far back. Let's just wander back about twenty years ago. You were an editor, then. Yes, you had Graveyard Tales under you for about a year. And Graveyard Tales was failing. Slowly and completely you felt yourself being sucked under the tide of red ink. Remember that day when the copy boy walked in and said:

"Mr. Kane wants to see you in his office."

"Thanks," you told him. "Go help yourself to some water out of the watercooler."

Then you walked up the long hall until you bypassed his secretary with a curt 'he's expecting me', and walked into his office.

Do you remember how he waved you into that chair by the right side of his desk

and said: "I guess you know why I called you in."

Your throat was dragged-out but you managed to say: "Yes, I think so. And I'm not going to offer any excuse. The magazine has failed."

He nodded.

"Naturally," you went on, "I hate to give it up, but I understand that you're in the business for money. But I might point out, just to brag a little, that my detectives and westerns are doing very well."

"Yes, I know that," he said slowly, "it's one of the reasons why I'm giving you and the magazine another chance. That chance will last exactly six months. Two issues."

"Same format?"

"Yes. I'm just cutting you from bi-monthly to quarterly. But if there isn't any improvement in six months... Snick!" He made cutting motions in the air."

You thanked him and hustled downstairs.

Everyone was gathered around you when you came in. Mary, your assistant, voiced everyone's question.

"The End?"

"No, we've got six months."

That very morning you received my first story. To be quoting you as liking it would be putting it mildly.

That story really improved things didn't it? The fans raved over it. Called it very realistic, tough, scary and wonderful. Not to mention great, terrific, etc. Besides that I wrote gobs of stuff. That Spring issue of 1954 paved the way for the Summer issue. The Summer was a complete sellout. Mr. Kane was surprised. You were surprised. Everybody was surprised. And I continued grinding out stories by the coffin full. To say that I wrote quite a bit would be another understatement.

By now you're beginning to get an idea who I am. Yep, I'm Leonard Varson, Dwight Mooney, Hal Yates, Roger Hicks, Karl Black, George Butts, Saul Peters, Wayne Wright and a dozen others. Probably a couple of dozen others.

But who is the real me?

You tried to find that out too. But whenever you got too nosy I quit writing and you decided that I knew best.

After several issues you went monthly, digest, slick and with color illos, just about every name author in the business was brimming over to write for you. You were made.

That was twenty years ago.

Now, do you still want to know who I am? Then follow these directions. Turn right at the next corner and walk two blocks down. Then turn right and walk three blocks down.

You're following the directions nicely. I'll just sit back and wait.

Puzzled?

You're right back where we started from. But you're no fool. Get this: A circle never ends. That's right. You're me. I'm you.

You see, it seems that being dead isn't like anything known to man. I--we can travel in time. Even borrow a typewriter and type stories.

Now you want to know why I'm telling you all this. The truth is that you're about to die.

Startling isn't it? Seeing your body hitting the walk that way. You didn't know you had heart trouble? You did!

Well, come along. You're-I'm-me-you-us-, anyway the editor of Graveyard Tales in the year 1954 is in trouble. You-we-me have to get back there and help him out.

Coming along?

Can't help yourself, eh?

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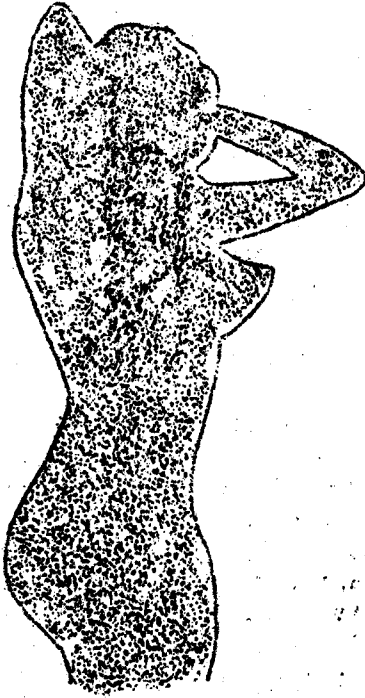
"Fantasy is present only where you find it. Too often it's found in a psychiatrist's mind."

- Bette Norris.



# Moonmaiden

BY JOHN FURY



This is a fantasy. However, we think that term has becoming quite confused, as of late. It seems so many things can fit under that general category. But you take this tale in just a few words it gives one of the clearest definitions of pure fantasy we've ever run across.

Oh yes, for our literary-detective friends: This 'John Fury' is not a pen-name! - EJH.

PUTTING MY GLASS down on the bar, I turned to the fat man on the next stool and muttered, "I came out here for a little quiet. I left the office behind and came here for a good rest."

The fat man's jowls flapped as he stated with authority, "Well, this is the right place for it. Nothing at all doing. Not even another building in twenty miles 'cept for the grocery across the street and the old farm on the next hill."

"Hot. Hot and quiet. Too quiet. Nothing ever happens. And too hot!" I wiped the sweat off my face with my shirtsleeve.

"Gets hotter," the fat man sighed. Drops ran down his cheek.

"It is not too bad in a month or so," the barkeeper interrupted. He polished a glass with a dirty cloth as he spoke. His broken nose contrasted with the innocent wideness of his eyes as he added, "First you see the old creek over the hill fill up; not dry like it is now, but like a real river. And then the cool weather comes. It comes from the hills; up in the mountains you can see out that window," he pointed to the blue shadows against the sky, "where it rains. That's where the water comes from to fill the dry creek and that's just where the cool wind comes from." He looked longingly upward.

"Rest of the time it's dry?" the fat man asked shifting his bulk around on his small stool.

"Yup," the barkeeper said as he put one glass down and picked up another. Polishing as he talked he declared, "The sun does it."

"Sun?" I murmured.

"Yup."

"Sure feels hot without my hat," the fat man mumbled rubbing his jowls with the palm of his hand.

I reached for my glass, drained it, then asked, "Without your hat?"

"I forgot it somewhere."

"Get another one," the barkeeper directed. "That sun will cook your brains like an egg."

Like an egg! came the exclamation.

"Sure will," the barkeeper stated, obviously pleased with the impression of his words. "Scramble them, too." Jerking his thumb toward a corner of the barroom he added, "See that little guy, all by himself, at that table.....?"

"Sure," I said with a shrug. "What about him?"

"Go talk to him."

"Why?"

"Ask him about what he saw out in dry creek."

"What did he see?"

"Ask him. Go on, he won't bite."

"I'll offer him a drink," the fat man grunted, shoving himself back off his stool and staggering across the room to

the little man's table where their voices murmured for a few seconds. Then the fat man waved me over.

The little man did not look crazy or unusual. He was a pale, slight person with horn-rimmed glasses and a sensitive frightened expression. His vague stare and smile seemed to include the fat man and myself. He fingered an old straw hat cradled in his lap.

"Now, how about those drinks," he grinned. "Then I'll tell my story."

The barkeeper arrived almost before the little man began, and put the glasses on the table.

"My story began three months ago today. I remember the date vividly for reason which I shall explain later."

"Why not tell us now?" the fat man inquired.

"Later. I shall explain later."

The fat man shrugged his shoulders.

The other continued his story. "I'm a writer, mostly articles, and I find that walks in the evening when the desert is cool helps me to think. Three months ago tonight, I was walking through the dusk when the strangest event of my life came to pass."

"The strangest?" The fat man was cynical.

"I met a woman. She was beautiful in a way impossible for all other women. When I looked at her it was as if I plunged into water and could not get my breath. Her hair was like silk spun out of the material of the night, and her eyes were like stars. When she spoke it was like music tinkling in a glass."

"Hmmm. I've met all types of women," the fat man interrupted.

The little man's fingers strayed along the brim of his straw hat. "This woman was out of hell or heaven. I wish I could be sure which," he sighed.

"What happened?" I murmured while raising my glass to my lips.

"I was walking over the hill when I saw this creekbed. It was aglow with moonlight and the mirror-like water reflected the sky."

The fat one spit. "That creek ain't got no water!"

"I did not think so until I saw it. In the light of the moon, the surface of the creek reflected the sky like a second heaven. As I watched, the surface of the water broke and this beautiful girl waded

up out of the creek onto the land. I was so surprised that all I could do was stand there and stare."

The fat man grinned.

"She saw me and gazed at me." As if he was tired, the little man rubbed his eyes with his fingers before continuing, "Although she didn't speak, I sensed that she wanted me to return when she left."

"She didn't speak?" the fat man asked.

"Not that time. She merely turned and waded back into the stream."

"Just went away?"

"Waded back into the stream."

"You went back?" the fat man humored him right along.

"One month later, I returned. I sensed she wanted me to return at that time. Call it anything you like, but I was right. I found her waiting for me at the edge of the stream."

"That was when you heard her voice."

"Yes," the little man murmured while tracing the brim of his hat with his fingers. "Her voice was like -- like music tinkling in a glass."

"You told us that before," the fat man uttered as he reached for his glass.

"She told me to meet her tonight."

"Tonight?"

"Yes. This evening. She said that if I met her tonight we would walk to places I never dreamed existed. She told me of things which can never be described. And when the dawn began to destroy the night she waded back into the stream."

"And?" the fat man yawned.

"That's all."

"Didn't she come out again?"

"No."

"But you expect to meet her tonight?"

"Yes."

"If she went under water and stayed under, she drowned. Dead women don't keep many meetings."

The little man shrugged his shoulders as he calmly stated, "But as far as I know, there is no real water in the creek."

"Then there isn't any water. No water, no woman."

"Nothing real," the little man agreed, "in any state that you would understand. But real in the same sense as the existence of time and wind." He reached for his glass. "In fact, I don't think I can

explain it even to myself."

"But you are going out there tonight."

"I am going to meet a woman from heaven or hell."

The fat man shrugged his shoulders. Then leaned back while staring at the little man.

"It is getting late," the small man murmured. "If you will excuse me, I shall go and get ready for my meeting with...I wish I knew." He rose from his seat, placing his straw-hat on his head, and walked across the room.

After he was gone, I smiled, "The sun sure did a job on him."

"Well..." the fat man shifted around to stare at the exit.

"It must have been the sun."

"What do you think of his story?" he asked me.

"Crazy."

"Well...."

"You don't believe that line?" I asked suddenly.

"Of course not, but..."

"But what?"

"Oh nothing that you could point to..."

"You mean that you're not sure?"

"HOW COULD WE be sure of anything like that. The only way to be sure is to follow him."

"Are you going to?"

"To follow him? Not me. After hauling myself around all day all I'm interested in this evening is a bed." The fat man stared at me for a moment before adding,

"How about you?"

"Me?"

"Yes. You follow him. Might be fun. In the morning you can tell me all about it!"

"I don't know. I might."

LATER WHEN I followed the little man out of the building, a full moon made the night like day. He climbed up the hill and paused at the crest, a shadow against a new-born sky.

I could not see whether he was staring at the sky, the other side of the hill, or anything. There was a startling contrast between the small man in the barroom and this shadow against the sky.

As I watched a strange sound -- much like music tinkling in a glass -- came through the night. It rode the wind like a n

echo.

The shadow slowly lowered against the heavens as the little man went down the other side of the hill. Finally the shadow disappeared.

Climbing the slope my feet slipped in the sand, but gradually the curve of the hill revealed the creek bed on the other side.

As I climbed, the strange musical sound continued but went mute just as I crested the hill.

The creek bed lay clear in the moonlight. There was no sign of the little guy. But in the center of the dry bed a miniature tornado spun sand for an instant, then vanished as if it sank in the earth.

\*\*\*\*\*

WHEN I REACHED the spot no sign remained of the wind storm. Yet the little man's tracks were clear in the sand. They led to a gash in the soil as if someone had waded into the earth.

They seemed to lead into furrows of sand and disappear. At the end of the torn portion of the stream bed the straw hat floated on the soil in the manner which a hat will float on water after a head goes beneath the surface depths.

Beside the little man's tracks, strange footprints, remotely like those of a woman led down into the gash in the center of the dry stream bed.

A full half-hour passed while I stood there. Nothing happened, I knew nothing would. But ... it would be a nice story for my fat friend.

Undoubtedly there would be no belief from him . . .

and unfortunately I don't think any evidence will appear to back me up.

Just then the wind began to slowly shift the sands and the hat rolled along with it to a certain rhythm.

I didn't bother to chase it.

\*\*\*\*\*

# The Bone of CONTENTION

## ...AND THE FAN RAVED ON!

Sirs:

"The Story-Telling Organism" was fine (which is one of the things that saves Brevizine from total annihilation--the stories I mean.) But I'd hardly be so pretentious as to call it a sequel to "The Tell-Tale Heart." And if this Rothlands is so hot, why isn't he selling?

The general format of the magazine is better. However, here is a suggestion: Get somebody else to do your artwork. This Reins is no artist. I suggest you try to get Naaman Peterson to do stuff for you.

And now---What in the ever-loving blue-eyed world happened to Hank Moskowitz's column? This you gotta keep--it was always the best feature in the magazine, being the only tie with fandom which you seemed to want to acknowledge.

Raymond Thompson

Norfolk, Nebraska.

## OVER ENTHUSIASTIC!

Sirs:

You have undoubtedly never heard of me. Yet I am going to give you one of the best criticisms you have received in a long time.

I think your magazine is great.

It was great from the first issue.

Both the beginning format and the large full-size one that you changed too are great.

In Brevizine I have found one of the best magazines in the U.S.

The stories, as a whole, are great. Together with the bad one, or two, that every editor goofs in.

Peter J. Vorzimer

W. Hollywood, Calif.

## HOW TO PUBLISH A MAGAZINE

Sirs:

In the beginning maybe a magazine should use blurbs, such as those you use. Most magazines need something to make a person read the miserable fiction they print. And a lot of ballyhoo will go over among less intelligent readers. But now, your magazine publishes really good fiction. Now, your stories alone can stand on their own merits. They do not need anyone to brag for them, because the stories are naturally fine.

Hollywood-type publicity isn't necessary for good things. Notice that Hollywood gives much more extravagant publicity for their worst productions, while such avant-garde pictures as "Streetcar Named Desire", etc., were publicized by people who saw them.

Right now, I'm trying to write something which will be good enough for your magazine. I don't know how well I'm succeeding.

Neal Clark Reynolds

Fullerton, Calif.

THE ANNALS OF THE  
ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON  
AND THE LONDON AND EDINBURGH MEDICAL SOCIETY  
FOR THE YEAR 1881

EDITED BY  
W. G. LADD, M.D., F.R.S.  
AND  
J. H. COOPER, M.D., F.R.S.

# ANNALS

OF THE  
ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON  
AND THE LONDON AND EDINBURGH MEDICAL SOCIETY  
FOR THE YEAR 1881



It is a pleasure to announce that the  
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the proceedings of the Society during  
the year 1880-81.

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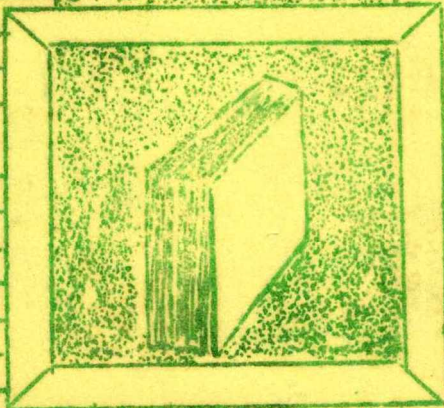
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