

# Weird Tales



MAY, 1952

Cover by Virgil Finlay

**NOVELETTE**

- THE LAMIA IN THE PENTHOUSE** . . . . . Thorp McClusky 8  
*Can demons be summoned up or banished at will—  
 or do they sometimes get out of control?*

**SHORT STORIES**

- RHYTHMIC FORMULA** . . . . . Arthur J. Burks 21  
*The old jungle chief announced that one murderer in his family  
 was enough; but there were other families!*
- A BIT OF MOSS** . . . . . Suzanne Pickett 26  
*She heard his voice and felt his presence, yet could not see him.  
 Was he invisible or was she blind?*
- THE EIGHTH GREEN MAN** . . . . . G. G. Pendarves 36  
*The idea of any form of life not classified and labeled as belonging  
 to the animal or vegetable kingdom could only be a joke.*  
 (Copyright 1928 by Popular Fiction Publishing Company)
- SHE WORE A BLACK ROSE** . . . . . Frederick Sanders 45  
*Even in her coffin she wore it; her coffin sealed with  
 twenty-six of the ghostly blooms.*
- DARK LAUGHTER** . . . . . Garnett Radcliffe 50  
*You have only to obey the Great Masters and they will treat you with love.*
- THE FIFTH CANDLE** . . . . . Cyril Mand 57  
*The old man reached back from the grave each year to light  
 one candle in a fearsome candelabrum.*  
 (Copyright 1939 by WEIRD TALES)
- THE LITTLE TREE** . . . . . C. F. Birdsall 62  
*Did you ever hear of a dead delegate turning up at a convention?*
- THE NIGHT ROAD** . . . . . August Derleth 68  
*In Lost Hope Valley someone cut the seven of spades.*
- THE DEVIL OF MANIARA** . . . . . Douglas Leach 73  
*Too much curiosity about jungle sorcery is unwise.*  
 (Copyright 1933 by Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc.)
- FATHER'S VAMPIRE** . . . . . Alvin Taylor & Len J. Moffatt 82  
*Authorities, being politicians as they are, are naturally stupid,  
 so they didn't try to account for any missing blood.*
- DOUBLE HAUNT** . . . . . Joseph Howard Krucher 67
- VERSE** { **OUT OF SPACE** . . . . . Dorothy Quick 56  
           { **GHOST PORT** . . . . . Pauline Booker 81
- WEIRD TALES CLUB** . . . . . 6
- THE EYRIE** . . . . . 89

Published bi-monthly by WEIRD TALES, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 26, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, \$1.50. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession.

Copyright, 1952, by WEIRD TALES. Copyright in Great Britain  
 Title registered in U. S. Patent Office.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

173  
 Vol. 44, No. 4

D. McILWRAITH, Editor

# A Bit of Moss



by  
*Suzanne Pickett*

*A bit of moss—and in it the  
undeniable imprint of  
human teeth.*

Heading by Joseph Eberle

SOMETHING had happened to the moss! Every day fresh chunks of it were missing. Martha Sylvan looked around her with sudden interest. Her eyes lighted for a minute. Then they dulled and she sighed mournfully. She thought of the day she had sat beside the coffin and looked through burning eyes at her father; a little, wizened, wrinkled man.

He was so still, so insignificant. How had he managed to fill all of her life? Now he was gone she had no one, nothing. "Father?" she whispered in anguish. Almost she heard his voice. The deep tones that had ruled her life, saw the flash of his eyes. He was living again. There was his keen mind, his tenderness and his—jealous, enveloping love for her.

He had guided her all of his life. Her studies, her books, music, literature. And his taste was exquisite in everything. Fear, cold, still fear that was her constant companion edged closer to her. What would she do now? She was twenty-five. She had no friends and remoteness had grown in her until it was part of her being.

She stared at the moss again. Puzzled at its disappearance. Interest lighted her eyes again. The fear receded and with its leaving came a doubtful relief. A queer sense of freedom. Other girls loved and married. Perhaps she could live too. But whom *could* she love? Was there anyone, anywhere—

A piece of moss hit her on the foot! She picked it up and scanned the woods. "I wonder who did that?" she whispered. It was suddenly cold. She pulled her wrap around her and hurried home.

The maid had kindled a fire in the library. Martha held out a chilled hand and looked at the moss. She opened her mouth to call the girl, then closed it. "She might

leave, too," Martha whispered. "They can't all leave me."

There was only the gardener now, a colored woman who came to cook and clean by day and one maid who stayed in the house. Other servants stayed a day, perhaps two or three with frightened faces, then left. This girl had been with her a month.

"She *mustn't* leave me!" Martha said. "Anyhow, it's pure imagination. No one **COULD** have walked with me from the woods! I would have seen him!" She fingered the moss, hastily thrust it into her pocket. "Perhaps I'm going mad and don't know it," she whispered. "I must talk to someone!" Her voice rose. But whom did she know? She stared at the fire a minute, then smiled. Doctor Glengarry, of course. He was very nice. Father had always liked him.

Her fingers trembled eagerly as she dialed his number. She thought she heard a sigh, and whirled. There was no one there.

"Something upset you?" the doctor asked curiously when he came in.

"Well—I was scared for a minute."

"Yes?" He waited until she sat down, then sat beside her. "Tell me," he said. "What did you see?"

"You'll laugh at me."

"I won't laugh." He had reddish, brown hair, and blue eyes in a thin, narrow face. He regarded her a minute. "I have heard of your ghosts," he said abruptly. "Tell me. What did you see?"

"It was just a piece of moss." Her hand rubbed the moss in her pocket.

"A piece of moss? Queer thing to frighten you."

"But who would eat moss?" She handed it to him.

He examined it, a doubtful look on his face. "Open your mouth," he told her. He inspected her small, white teeth. "Your mouth is too small," he said and looked again at the clear, round imprint of human teeth in the moss. "A beautiful bite," he remarked and handed it back to her.

He chatted a few minutes then arose to go. "Take these if you can't sleep." He gave her a small envelope.

"You—you think I'm crazy?" she whispered.

His eyes were tense, eager. "No," he said. "There's something—odd—around here. I have felt it myself. If—if anything happens—Well, let me know."

After he left, Martha locked and barred the door. She washed her face, brushed her teeth and slipped into bed. But she was not sleepy! She waited expectantly for something, for someone. Finally, she grew drowsy, then suddenly was wide awake. Someone was in the room. Someone kind, gentle, good.

"What is it?" she whispered. "Who are you? Speak please." The night was utterly dark, the moon was not up and clouds hid the stars. "What do you want?" she asked, and wondered that she was not afraid.

Two lips were pressed to hers.

Her lips tingled and a great stillness and wonder and joy swept through her. "You?" she breathed. "Who are you?"

A voice spoke to her. Strange, wonderful, vibrant. An accent she couldn't recognize. A sound like nothing on earth. "I will not hurt you," the voice said.

She was amazed that she still felt no fear. That her joy increased. I'm asleep of course, she thought. But she heard herself ask, "Who are you?"

"I am Maris."

"Maris?" she wondered. "How did you get in?" He did not answer and she was silent awhile. Then doubt and grief entered her. "I'm dreaming of course." She began to weep.

Again the lips were pressed to hers. "Is that a dream?" the voice asked, close to her ear. A cheek brushed hers and she reached to feel his head and rub his smooth hair. She had never felt any like it. Soft and velvety rough like—she caught her breath. Like woods moss!

Her fingers moved to his neck and shoulders. The muscles were powerful under her touch. She felt a garment of some sort. A vest perhaps, like satin, or like fur. Yet soft as neither of these was soft.

"Let me see you." She was not afraid, but eager as she reached for the light.

"Please." Strong fingers held her hand.

"But I want to see you."

"Trust me," the voice pleaded. "Don't turn on the light."

"Are you—" she hesitated, perhaps he had been a soldier—"are you disfigured?"

He chuckled. She smiled at the sound. Like a woodland brook after rain, "Feel of my face," he said.

She hesitated and grief and fear swept over her again. Let me go on dreaming, she thought. Don't let me wake. Yet how could this be a dream. There was his voice and he was beside her. She felt the warmth of his body, and the joy his presence gave her was real.

SHE touched a broad forehead. Slid her fingers over a thin, firm nose. His lips were soft and strong, his eyes long, with thick, long lashes. The lashes moved, the corners of his eyes wrinkled and she knew he was smiling. Her hand traced his lips and moved to his chin. It was firm and strong with the hint of a dimple. "Why can't I see you then?" she asked.

"Trust me," he said again, his voice gentle, soothing, sweet; yet deep with wonderful beauty. "I will not harm you."

"Are you real?"

"How can I prove it?"

She sat up in bed and he sat beside her. "If I could only see you," she pleaded.

"Are you afraid of me?"

"No," she said with wonder. "Of course not."

"Then trust me," he said the third time. "There is a reason."

"But who are you?"

"If I told you wouldn't believe. Humans are full of doubt."

"Humans?" she asked. "You sound as if—" Then suddenly, in alarm, "But ghosts don't have flesh and muscles, and angels have wings, or I thought they did. Surely you're not an angel."

He laughed. "No. An angel wouldn't kiss you. I am Maris, I am here, and God help me, I love you."

"You know God then?"

"Of course." He was silent awhile.

"Surely I'll wake in the morning and find this a dream," she sighed. "But I wish it were real and the waking a dream."

"It is real," the tender, wonderful voice said.

"Are you in truth alive?"

"As surely as you live, I do."

"Where is your home?"

"My home," he sighed. "I was banished from home."

"Tell me about it."

"It is not permitted."

"But you were banished. What can they do?"

"One obeys."

"How can they make you? Do they have spies? Will they harm you?"

"Of course not. They never harm any."

"Then you're certainly not of this earth. I wonder." She touched his face, put her hand to his chest, felt the steady beating of his heart. "They tell us there is life on Mars. Do you come from Mars?"

"Oh no!"

"You know the Martians then?"

"We," he paused. "We have nothing to do with them. And earth would do well to forget them."

"But where are you from?"

He was silent.

"A star?"

"Hardly."

"One of the planets?"

"Perhaps."

"Which?"

Again he was silent.

"Venus?" she felt him stiffen, then slowly relax. "I wonder," he remarked softly.

"That they do not guess."

"Then it is Venus?"

"If I told, would it profit you?"

"Whom do you obey?"

"The powers that be."

"And everyone obeys?"

"Yes."

"Then why were you banished?"

"I sinned."

"How could you?"

He paused. "I was one of those who studied your planet. You were such interesting beings. I desired to come to earth."

"Was that a sin?"

"I must go," he cried suddenly. "I will return."

"No! No Maris. Do not leave me. I will have no one." But he was no longer there. Martha lay a minute, wondering. A glimmer of moonlight came through the window. She searched the room as the light became stronger. He was nowhere in sight.

"I was asleep," she told herself. "And

dreaming. I must have been." She looked at the bed where he had been sitting. There was the print. She touched the place, it was still warm.

"Maris!" she cried. "Maris, where are you?"

Her cry echoed through the night. She wept herself to sleep. But the next morning it was a new world. All of the sadness, all of the emptiness gone. It WAS a dream, of course. But tonight—perhaps he would come again.

She walked to the village for mail, then hurried home. What if he should come in the daytime? But the house was empty, warm and friendly. There was no need of a fire.

The long day finally ended and night came on. Martha sat in the dark and waited for Maris. Just the memory of his voice sent joy all through her. She was mad of course.

The years of living in a different world, and now the loneliness, she knew, had affected her mind. Yet she was happy. She had never imagined such happiness. What was there about his voice, his touch, that made her love and trust him as she had never loved any, not even her father?

It was dark, very dark and he had not come. Every sound in the night made her tremble. The sighing of the wind, the creak of the great house as the heat of the day left its walls. "I'm not crazy," she said. "He DID come. Maris! Where are you?"

"I am here." His hand touched her cheek and he was behind her.

"Oh," she whispered. "I thought you were a dream."

**H**E LAUGHED. The music of his voice filled the room. "I am no dream," he told her positively. He came around the couch and sat beside her.

"Why can't I see you then?"

"You wouldn't believe if I told you."

"You think I won't?" her voice was low. "Try me."

"Perhaps," he promised. "Sometimes."

With this she was content. Quietly, she sat beside him. "Are you really from another world?" she asked.

"Really," he answered sadly.

"What is it like?"

"Wonderful."

"Describe it. I would like to know."

"I will tell what I can. There are trees and water and soft clouds. The light is a pink haze, the color of your cheeks," he touched them. "There is a feeling of gladness and joy, and there is no fear."

"But the cities, the people, what about them?"

"The cities are clean and beautiful. No crowds, as you have, but wide and roomy. The people; my mother and father—" he choked. "But I cannot tell you more."

"You would tell if you could? You are sincere?"

"I am sincere. We do not lie."

"No?" she asked.

"No," he replied gravely.

"Will you return?"

"If I may."

"It is so much better than earth then?"

"It is so much better than earth."

"Could I go with you?"

"Perhaps they would not let you."

"Why?"

"We hoped," he stopped as if weighing his words carefully. "We hoped to communicate with you when you split the atom, then you made the bomb."

"What difference did that make?"

"You might have learned to reach us, and—there are no wars on—our planet. Perhaps—if you would cease your fightings—" he stopped suddenly. "I must go."

A minute later the moonlight flooded the room.

**T**HE next night he took her in his arms when he came. "Martha," his voice was low, throbbing, sweet. "I love you so. Do you love me?"

"Yes," she said. "Oh yes."

"And you trust me?"

"Of course."

"I want you," he said tenderly. "Always, for my own."

"But who would marry us?"

"Is that necessary?"

"For me it is."

He was silent awhile. "Do they not marry in your home?" she asked at last.

"As the swans of earth marry."

"The swans," she mused. "They mate for life. You mean—"

"So," he said. "Even so." Again he was silent, then, "We could make our vows."

"Before whom?"

"Before God."

"Would that suffice?"

"With me even that is not necessary. You know your own heart."

She put her hand to his heart, felt its beating. "I had rather," she whispered gently. "It would seem holy then."

Together they knelt, his arm was around her. She felt that he looked towards heaven. "You first," she whispered.

"In Thy presence, High and Holy one," he began, his voice solemn, grave, beautiful. "And before Thy throne. I take this woman as my own. I promise Thee and her that I will ever love and cherish her. Keep myself for her only, and strive to please her in all things as long as it is pleasing to Thee." He paused awhile, then whispered "Amen." It seemed that an unseen choir swelled, "Amen, and amen."

Martha listened a minute, then returned to earth. "You forgot," she reminded him gently. "You forgot one thing."

"What?"

"Until death, do us part."

"Until death—" she felt him shiver and his voice lowered, took on a mourning note, "do us part." It strengthened, became joyful.

He paused a moment. "Now you," he said. "You darling."

As best she could remember, and with a glory in her face, Martha repeated the words of Maris.

The moon rose later each night and Martha's happiness grew. It couldn't be true. She was mad, or else she was the only sane person on earth and he DID exist. But a girl could not imagine such perfect happiness, nor could she have imagined or dreamed his voice. There was no earthly sound like it to remember in dreams. Maris WAS. He did exist. He loved her and he was all of life to Martha.

A night came when there was no moon!

Martha woke just before dawn. There was a glimmer of light in the room. Maris slept beside her. She listened a minute to his soft breathing, then, I will see him! she thought, and looked at the pillow beside her where his head lay.

There was the indentation. There was his soft breathing. There was even the strange sweetness of his breath, like woods in the springtime. And there beside her, under the sheet that followed the outlines of his body was nothing that she could see. She put her hand to his face and felt his eyes when they opened.

"Maris," she whispered. "Maris, I'm blind!"

The covers beside her moved before she realized that she COULD see them, and his hand covered her eyes.

"No my sweet, no Martha," he said, then cried in despair. "My God, why did I go to sleep?"

"What is it Maris? Why can't I see you?"

"I am invisible to humans," he told her simply.

But that is impossible! You are here, you are alive, I feel you!"

"Can you feel electricity?"

"Yes, but—"

"Can the invisible atom destroy cities?"

"Yes, but—"

"I am as real as you are!" he told her fiercely. "And I love you."

"Can you see me?"

"Of course."

She felt his face again. "Bind my eyes," she said hastily.

"No," he told her. "No."

"I can't bear to look at you and not see you."

"You must get used to it darling. Now we can be together always."

SUDDENLY, she was happy again. "I could love you if I were blind," she said. "So what does it matter?"

"What about the servants?" he asked. "They will think it queer if they hear us talking."

"We must get rid of them."

"But you are not used to work."

"You can help me," she teased, then sobered. "There's very little work really, if we only used part of the house. Everything in the kitchen is electric. All you have to do is put the dishes in the washer."

"What do you eat?" Martha asked Maris one day. "You never eat with me."

"It would seem strange to you."

"Nothing is strange any more unless it be earth and its inhabitants."

Her hand was on his face and she felt him smile, felt his eyes under his lids as he looked at her. "Moss," he said. "Woods moss. I have concentrated food with me of course, but it does not always satisfy. Our foods do not grow here, but moss is like."

"How was it when you first came to earth?" she asked another time.

He was silent awhile, then his voice low, the deep tones mournful, he tried to tell her. "I was lonely and lost," he said. "Earth was a vast emptiness, and heaven far off. I was friendly at first, I wanted to talk to everyone—"

"How did you know the language?" Martha interrupted.

"I know all languages," he told her simply, then went on. "When I discovered I was invisible—my punishment seemed greater than I could bear. Then you came with your father."

"You were here then?"

"Yes. I landed first in your wood. It began to seem like home. I took several trips away, but always returned." He leaned over to kiss her. "If you could know the loneliness. I followed crowds, but learned it was not good to speak."

"You could have had fun," she smiled impishly.

"And scare people half to death?" His voice swelled a minute, then softened. "That is not my idea of fun."

"When did you first see me?"

"The day you returned from Europe. I was under the big tree in the front yard. There was something different about your face, as if you were not quite of this earth, as if you too were lost and homeless."

"I was," Martha said. "I was."

"I wanted to speak then." She leaned against him, felt the steady pounding of his heart. "I didn't know if I would ever dare," he went on, "then your father died and you were so alone. Well—I One night I could bear it no longer. I kissed you. If you had been afraid I would have let you think it a dream."

"So glad," she whispered. "So glad that you didn't."

Once, as they listened to the radio he

began to sing. Martha turned the dial. She knew that his speaking voice was the most beautiful sound on earth, she had thought of the "Tongues of men and angels," Now she wondered if angel voices were as sweet as the song of Maris.

When he knew her delight, he sang often. "Sing one of your songs," she told him one day. And he sang.

She wept and asked him to stop.

"Why?" he asked.

"It is too beautiful," she said. "I cannot bear it."

"Nor can I," his voice choked.

She asked about his religion. "It is not of earth," he evaded. "We are not related to Adam."

"You believe in Christ though?"

"Believe? I know that He is. When the earth was created, He was there. When the morning stars sang together with joy. He IS the morning star."

Another time as she wrote some letters he picked up a pencil and idly sketched her profile. It was exactly like her. Martha exploded in excitement. "Maris!" she cried. "Maris. Can you see yourself in the mirror?"

"Of course."

Tears filled her eyes and ran down her cheeks, but she smiled. "You can make a picture for me. I know every line of your face but I want to see it."

With a few, rapid strokes he sketched a smooth, broad forehead, a thin nose, firm lips and rather sharp chin. Martha leaned against his shoulder. With her finger she traced his nose and lips. "You're beautiful," she whispered. "I'm so happy. Now I want a portrait. You never told me the color of your hair and eyes. I want to see you as you are."

She walked to the village for canvas and paints. Coming out of a store she met Dr. Glengarry. "Going in for art?" he smiled.

"Yes," she returned his smile, then her face sobered. "I—Doctor, would you call again in a few days?"

"More ghosts?" he asked. "I have wondered, you know."

"Yes," her eyes were strange. "Yes."

"DO NOT watch me, please," Maris said as he squeezed some green paint on the palette.

A few hours later Martha looked up to see spots of color coming through the air. "Maris?" she was breathless.

"Yes?" the color reached towards her.

"You have paint on your hands?"

"Yes," he seemed excited.

For three days he worked on the picture. When he rested, he sat with Martha, his voice happy, gayer than it had ever been. Finally, he led Martha into the bedroom with the large mirror. She walked slowly up to the picture. "Maris?" she whispered. "Maris? Is this you?"

"Do I please you?" he asked fearfully.

"It's impossible!"

"Then I am too strange?"

"No. Too beautiful."

His hair was thick and green as the richest moss. His brows and lashes a darker, richer green. His skin the exact, translucent pink of the inside of a seashell.

The large, sad eyes were a deep gray. His fingernails a rich pink, his lips bright coral. He wore a vest-like, sleeveless garment of a glossy, dark green, and tight, kneelength breeches of the same material. Brown, suede-like sandals were on his feet. He was perfectly proportioned and incredibly, fantastically beautiful.

"Are there other beings like you?"

"Many."

"Have you a sweetheart?"

"You," he kissed her.

Doctor Glengarry came that night. He was smiling and happy when he arrived. "Well?" he looked at Martha.

"Doctor—" in spite of herself, her face crimsoned. "I—Will you keep a secret?"

"What do you mean?" His eyes stilled.

Martha looked courageously at him. "I am with child," she said.

The doctor's face slowly became expressionless. "I—see," he said. But his voice was bewildered, as if he didn't see at all.

Martha looked at him with proud eyes. "Who is he?" the doctor asked at last, and his voice shook. "I wouldn't have believed it," he muttered.

"It's not what you think. We made our vows before higher than earthly courts."

"So have other foolish girls." His voice was harsh.

"I've no one but you, and you must not tell." Martha held out her hand.

"That's asking a lot."

"It's not what you think. Believe me," Martha's voice trembled.

He regarded her a long time. The tenseness in his face eased. "I believe you," he said.

"This house is inhabited," Martha told him then. "With a being from another world. No priest or preacher would marry us. Maris is his name."

"You mean another virgin birth?" The doctor looked at her as if he feared for her reason.

"Oh no." Martha blushed. "Maris is real, only—he is invisible."

"Martha," he said gently, "you are mad."

"I'll handle this darling," Maris said. Then, "I am he. I am Maris."

"Where are you?" The doctor whirled.

"Here," Maris said. "Touch me. I do exist."

THE doctor reached his hands. Outlined a face, nose and chin, then dropped them to his side. "Now I am crazy," he said.

"No!" Maris said. "Believe me, no."

"But it's impossible!"

"Nothing's impossible," Maris told him.

"You see," Martha was crying softly. "You see."

"Yes," slowly. "It is impossible but true. Tell me."

They even showed him the picture.

He grew excited. "Let's tell the world," he said. "It will be a wonderful discovery."

"No!" Maris' voice rang through the room.

"Why?"

"The world is not ready yet."

"I think I shall tell anyhow."

"I cannot permit that."

"How can you help it?" then the doctor's face paled. "But of course. I cannot see you. You could kill me."

"We do not kill," Maris' voice was sad but gentle. "I would harm no one."

"Then how? Without violence, how?"

"There are other ways."

"I never knew them."

"No one would believe you."

"Some might."

Maris' voice had been gentle, now it swelled, was filled with awful, compelling power. "You—must—not!" he said. And



Martha knew, the doctor wouldn't. He **COULDN'T!**

**M**ARIS suddenly grew interested in cosmetics. He fingered Martha's lipstick, powder-base, mascara.

As Martha rested alone one afternoon, she heard a noise, looked up and caught her breath. A tall, queer-looking stranger stood in the door. He wore a blue silk turban, a thin, gray sweater, brown pants, very short ones, above blue socks. Dark glasses hid his eyes. His skin glowed, a pale, almost transparent rose.

It was not human flesh. She had never seen any like it, but the muscles that bulged under the sweater were like—the picture—of Maris! The turban was her own blue scarf, the sweater had belonged to her father!

"Maris!" Martha was laughing and crying in his arms. "Why didn't I think of it?"

"So glad." She touched his odd skin. "How did you manage your teeth?" She looked at the pale, transparent pink of them as he smiled.

"Mercurochrome." He continued to smile.

"I could ask for nothing more now."

"I could." His lips drooped slightly.

"What?"

"That you might go with me when I return."

"When?" Martha caught her breath.

"If I return." He pulled her head against his chest.

**O**NE bright, November day she went hunting. Maris took her gun, examined it, but asked no questions. The fields were bright and cold, gaudy with color.

Maris' walk was like music. He never stumbled, but sped through the fields. His muscles rippled under the sweater, his chest rose gently and fell. "Everything is beautiful," he said once.

"As beautiful as your home?" Martha asked.

"Oh no!" His lips were sad.

They stumbled on a covey of birds. Martha, excited, shot three before they escaped.

Before she picked them up she knew

Maris' anger. It shot from his body, bulged in his muscles, his nose seemed thinner, sharper, his lips straight, stern. He snatched the gun from her. She watched horrified as he bent the barrel.

Gently he picked up the slain birds. "Poor beauties," he said. "Poor sacrifice for man's pleasure." He turned to Martha. "Did you enjoy that?" His voice could not sound harsh. It did not possess those tones, but it swelled like thunder.

"I—I thought I did, but I won't any more," she whispered.

"Of course not, darling." He was all tenderness again. "For a minute I forgot that you were human."

Martha studied over his remark all the way home. In the library she turned to him abruptly. "Being human," she said, "we need help. You have knowledge, power. Your world is good and strong. Why don't you help us, save us from this—this—" She motioned to the headlines of the morning paper.

"That is not for us to do." His voice was as near harshness as was possible with him. "Man—man must save himself or he is doomed. Headed arrow straight for perdition."

"Tell me," Martha shivered fearfully. "What will he do?"

"Prophecy," his voice was still strained, "is not in my line. But look around you. Read your papers—Oh God!" he choked. "Why will they do it? You have given them this planet, this beautiful place, Given them feeling, beauty, intellect. Gave them soft, mortal bodies. Bodies that know hunger and pain. Love and fear. They could live and yet—they destroy each other."

"Maris! What can we do?"

"Nothing," he said. "I can do nothing. But if I were a man—"

"Then what?"

"The earth is hungry."

"But how? We are one country only. Could we grow food for the whole earth? Where is there room?"

"Look at your deserts."

"There's no water."

"You have rivers. The Mississippi alone—think of her floods."

"A thousand miles from the deserts."

"Why do you have engineers?"

"But the cost. It would take billions."

"What do wars cost? What price destruction?"

"I—I know. But what can I do?"

"Nothing," he became gentle. "You can do nothing." He was silent awhile, brooding. Then abruptly he said, "I am forgiven Martha. I may return home."

Martha felt that death entered her room and took her in his arms. She was silent.

"Do you wish me to go?" Maris asked at last.

"I—I wish your happiness."

"You are my happiness. I stay with you."

"But I can't let you. If we perish, then you too—"

"You doubt my love then?"

"Oh no!"

"Never say that again! I will never leave you. Never!"

"But your home. You love it."

"You will not be there." His voice was almost fierce, then gentled again. "Darling," his lips were tender, smiling. "If I had wings to return, I would tear them from my shoulders before I would leave you."

ONE cold, rainy day in late January Martha called Doctor Glengarry. "I need you," she said.

Soon he was in the room, his face damp from the rain. Maris was with them, gentle and kind. The doctor was kind, and nature, too. Swift, business-like pains that in a little while ceased and there was the gentle wail of a child.

"This is impossible!" The doctor's voice was stunned. "The child is part human!"

"She is like me," Maris said. "Exactly." His voice lamented as it had over the slain birds.

"What is it?" Martha asked. "What is wrong Maris?"

He laid it in her arms. A surge of great love overwhelmed her as she felt the soft flesh. It nuzzled her face, then turned from her and began its soft wailing again.

"She must die," Maris said. The music of his voice muted and sad.

"Why?" Martha was horrified.

"There is no earthly food for babies. And the air will not do for an infant." He

was holding the child, crooning to it. "But it is best," he said. "What life could it have on earth?"

"Then the earth—Then you know—" Martha choked. She listened as the wails grew weaker. "It shall not die!" she said suddenly. Her voice strong.

"What do you mean?"

"You must take it home." She hesitated. "But will they receive it?"

"It's paternity is there," he said gently. "But I can't leave you, Martha!" His voice was agonized. "I had rather die."

"Our child must live."

"I can't leave you. I will have nothing."

"You can, Maris." She touched his face, smiled. "You must."

"I—know," he agreed at last. "I must, but can I?" He was silent awhile. The infant's cries grew weaker.

"Is she dying?" Martha asked, her hands touching a little cheek, then feeling weak, baby fingers curling over her thumb.

"Yes," Maris admitted.

"As you love me," Martha closed her eyes, her hand tight over a small hand. My baby, she thought. Oh God! my baby! She opened her eyes then. "You must go!" she said.

"As I love you," Maris groaned. Then he was conversing with someone in strange, wonderful language. "They will come soon," he said to Martha.

At the last she clung to him. "I will see you again?" she whispered. But one hand still held the small hand beside her.

"If God wills."

THERE was a swift, bright light outside. "I will love you through eternity," Maris kissed her. She released the little hand, and he was gone.

"Let me die," Martha whispered then. "Doctor, please let me die."

Gently, he gave her a hypodermic, and sat by her bed until she fell asleep.

Perhaps she dreamed it. But a few hours later she felt a presence and opened her eyes. There was Maris in all of his beauty. No cold picture now. No thin, transparent make-up, but living tissues. There were his sweet lips, his teeth and most of all, his eyes. His eyes full of love and joy. His living, breathing, physical being.

"How?" She was bewildered. "I can see you, Maris, am I dreaming?"

"No, darling." It was his voice. His very presence.

"But why are you here?"

"I have come for you."

"You mean—?"

"They found you worthy."

"How?" she wanted to know. "How is that I see you?"

"There are rays that humans wear," he said. "We have now created those rays."

"Then you mean—to help earth?" She was all human again. "You could save us," she pleaded. "You alone, Maris, with your knowledge, your power—"

"Man," he told her gently, "man rules his own destiny."

"Then earth must perish?"

"Man has ever conquered," he smiled. "He is only lower than the angels you know. Always there has been someone."

"Then even now?"

"Do you wish to go with me?" His smile was wonderful, understanding. "This is your home. I know."

"With you is my home," she said. "With you and my baby."

His face lighted. "Shall we go?"

"I am ready."

He took her in his arms, ran with her across the yard and placed her in a glittering object.

There was a bright, swift light. A roar, and then they were moving through space.