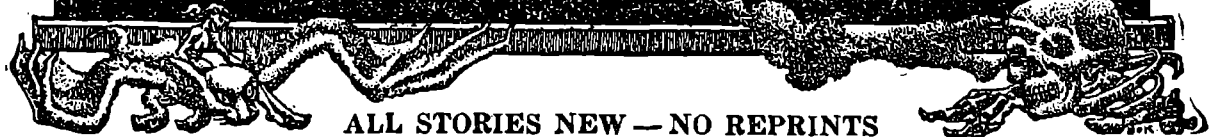


Weird Tales



JANUARY, 1951

Cover by Charles A. Kennedy

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D. McLLWRAITH, Editor



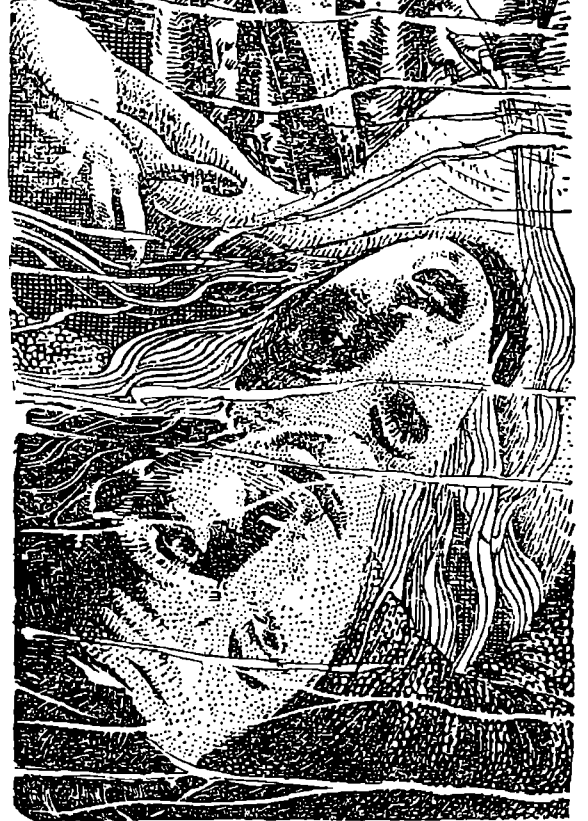
*"Some he gives up,
But the choicest he keeps. ."*

A Fisherman at Crescent Beach

BY ALLAN MASTERSON

THE SEA curved inward, sweeping toward brown dunes, rich green marsh grass and the land beyond. Out the other direction, water and sky came ultimately together; between here to there was the occasional sparkling white of sail, the trim mahogany box-shape of a single motor boat, and further, the rust brown of a plodding freighter.

The day and the scene copied the brightest postcard; but it was a Tuesday—the water was mostly alone with itself, playing with a stick, throwing seaweed idly up on



Heading by Vincent Napoli

shore as though biding time for the boat-crowded weekend to come.

As the rowboat, its outboard putt-putting it forward, came out from the bay mouth and moved into more open water, it was drawn as though magnetically to a fellow floating thing.

A cabin cruiser lay just off the beach, Crescent Beach—probably for the way it scooped itself out of the end portion of the Point. There were people diving from the craft. In the quietness of this bright, empty day their cries, their splashes, echoed clearly across the blue surface.

The whole scene was perfect, George Thornhill thought. The painted water underneath an artist's sky, the picture-book boat with its painted people, posing perfectly before they shattered the illusion with the motion and noise of swimming.

It made him put the outboard at trolling speed, its knobby nose still pointed true. He reached for his camera where it lay under some water-proofing (A photographer would rather be without his pants than his camera; wasn't it true).

He adjusted lens and speed, consulted his range-finder and other paraphernalia. Then he cut the putt-putt off and the little boat drifted; he rested his elbows on a cross seat, marveling again at the brightness of water and sky and the casual, candid human scene of young people—they were young, he could see now—before him swimming and frolicking.

It was then that Thornhill became aware of something else. He became aware of it because it disrupted the composition of his picture. Another boat. It lay shoreward of the young people and their cruiser; it was small, dark-sided, blending into the darker mass of the background shore. Nothing more than an antiquated launch he saw. Its lone occupant hunched over, fishing.

Thornhill frowned. It somehow spoiled the picture. By itself, fine. But the cruiser, looming its high old-fashioned bulk above him as he drifted closer, was another shot. He liked his pictures the way he liked them.

He put his camera down carefully and fussed the motor into life again. Annoyance, he told himself, was out of place on a day as lovely as this. But it was there. Now he would have to jockey to a new position, for he *wanted* that shot, the cruiser against the shore—nothing else.

Don't get so damn intense about it! This is a holiday, time off . . . remember? It was true. The whole thing, the stiffly priced,

creaky beach cottage rented for a month, the promise that he'd lay off. And here he was getting as annoyed as if he were doing this on one of his usual assignments for the big weeklies. Trouble was, he should have gone to the mountains. You know what they say about not listening to your best friends. Thornhill was *that way* about seascapes. He'd photographed the sea from Silver Bank Passage and Fox Channel to Formosa Strait and the Sea of Azov. Some men collect stamps or hunt big game; Thornhill's hobby was photographing the sea.

HE CIRCLED the pleasure boat. The four young people aboard were in bathing suits—two boys and two girls, having fun with that indefatigable energy of the young. They smiled and waved to him with the friendliness of people in boats to one another. Thornhill chugged slowly beyond them toward the fisherman. The man was intent on what he was doing. His boat was a low-slung launch, its long, low hull dark with age. Sternwards, an ungainly housing stood up, ugly and old-fashioned like the rest of the thing.

The occupant was swathed in the clothes of a person, certainly, who knew the water. A black, broad-brimmed slouch hat, a jacket of dark material, only the hands on the heavy pole held unmovingly over the water's side showed flesh. The rest of the man was covered against the sun which then, before noon, was already warm.

It was a strange contrast with the young people. They, the girls in their scant bathing suits and the boys in their brief trunks, courted the rays of the sun. The fisherman, on the other hand, wise to the ways of sun and salt water, covered himself up. To the vacationer the sun is something to be sought out; to the native of the water, something to be avoided.

Thornhill turned his outboard-powered rowboat around in a great circle, careful not to come too close to the fisherman, for that was courtesy of the water.

As he swung around the bow of the other vessel, he looked over curiously. The hat and other garments so completely covered the man that it was hard to see that he was

a creature of flesh, except for the big, gnarled hands that gripped the pole. The fisherman seemed intent only on that. For a moment in his circuitous course, though, Thornhill saw the other's face. It was a thing of leather, seamy as he had known it would be. It was a face that had been scalded by the sea-sun, lined by flying spray, roughened by the salt and ruddied by the wind's fury. George had a fleeting thought that he had seen this fisherman and his drab, ancient boat before, but that was impossible for his vacation month had just commenced and he'd not been out until today.

He felt rather than saw eyes follow him for a short radius of the boat's arc. Then a gull cried above and there was a happy whoop from the pleasure boat and Thornhill looked away.

George got some casual shots of the sea and shore. He found himself then, drifting near the cabin boat. The happy young people were still diving and fooling in the water.

"Mind if I take some pictures?" he called on sudden impulse. They stopped their fun, looked at him for a minute. One of the girls giggled self-consciously and the two boys mugged and burlesqued mightily.

"Send some to us?" they asked. Thornhill agreed smilingly and fussed with his camera.

The giggling girl called to him, "Junie takes a wonderful picture, Mister. Just like a movie star!" With that, she pushed her companion forward over protests.

Junie, the girl so accused, was striking in face and figure, Thornhill noted. But when she smiled at him, he saw there was no conceit in it and he liked that. Junie dove gracefully into the water then, her young man, a big broad-shouldered, nice-looking fellow, plunging after her.

"I'll get pictures of you all," Thornhill promised. He waited until they had forgotten him and were once again going about the vigorous business of having a good time. All four were nice-looking youngsters, George noted, just out of their teens at most. He found himself focusing more

often on the girl they'd called Junie. Youth by itself is attractive, but she had a natural grace that was noticeable. Her tanned, youthful body was perfectly proportioned; Thornhill had seen many girls in the professional photographic world with much less natural beauty than Junie.

Finally his rolls of film were done. Settling himself down comfortably, though they frolicked on, he looked dreamily off across the blue water, lost completely in its romantic expanse. His little rowboat rode evenly at anchor, and the quiet weekday time went by with the moving sun in the sky as clock.

ONCE they called across to him asking about the pictures. He told them how he could be reached; he said his name, wondering mildly if they would recognize it, or were they too young still, too full as are the young with their exuberance and self-concern to know much of the outside world or that part of it in which he had made a considerable name.

A shimmering heat haze grew out of the water, shrouding distances, lending a new intimacy to the scene. By the light, Thornhill knew it must be early afternoon. After thinking about it for some lazy minutes, he hoisted himself up and tugged at the anchor line. There were other places to go before this precious day was gone, one day from his precious month. The anchor was reluctant; George pulled for some time and from different angles. He thought for an annoyed moment that he'd be unable to raise it from where it had snagged on something, and as the boat and equipment, like his beach cottage, was rented for the month, it would be vexatious to show up ashore minus the anchor. How like a vacationer! But he was finally able to jerk the thing loose, and it came away caked with mud and other underwater debris.

A plane buzzed above as he secured the line, careful not to wet his camera equipment. With the slight motion of the tide, he had drifted nearer the fisherman and he struggled to start the motor lest he come too close and incur the angler's wrath for scaring away his livelihood.

Once, and not long before, the dark-shrouded angler had turned and looked long at the pleasure cruiser. Thornhill and the silent fisherman were on either side of the cabin boat then but in a direct line. As George had lolled in the gunwales after his picture-taking, he had watched. It was the first time the angler had given any indication he was aware of anyone but himself. And from the direction of the slouch-hatted head, its angle; and the way it abruptly swiveled away after she dove, George knew the boatman had been watching Junie as she poised prettily at the bow before jack-knifing off. It amused him to think that even this dour-looking native had finally been impressed by the common denominator of a young girl's beauty.

Now the outboard finally fired, but he was closer than he would have liked to come to the fisherman. George looked over, ready with a word of apology, but the boatman was hunched characteristically, his heavy pole held rigidly. The drab dirtiness of the boat was more noticeable here, the vessel looking as though it had been raised from a previous sinking. The funny, high cabin in back made the whole effect one of topheaviness; Thornhill noted a huge, rusty padlock hanging from the staples and wondered curiously what such a person could possess worthy of locking up.

He circled the pleasure boat, and the young people lined the rail, taking time from their incessant skylarking to wave. Someone had broken out sandwiches and they were eating; the broad-shouldered boy gestured at him, then the food in invitation and George, smiling, shook his head. They called about the pictures and Thornhill nodded. It was then that the cranky outboard, throttled too low probably, coughed and died to the laughs and jeers of the young people.

He bent over sheepishly to work the motor into life again, and the four on the cruiser decided to swim over to him. The girl, Junie, was the last to dive in. She had been high up on the superstructure, on the cabin top. Thornhill admiringly watched her lithe body knife gracefully into the water, and then he had turned back to the

recalcitrant outboard. Soon wet hands gripped his gunwales.

"Hi!" he yelled out in mock anger. "Don't soak my camera and stuff!" The hands popped away, but the giggling and advice kept up as the swimmers circled his motorless outboard.

Thornhill, his face red from pulling the starter cord and with unpleasant premonitions of rowing the long way home, finally got the motor going again to accompanying cheers.

Then the big boy, his hair plastered to his head in a wet bang, looked around suddenly and said, "Where's Junie?"

The other girl chided him mercilessly. "Oh, Ralphie, can't you be without her for a *second*? Honestly!" The other boy sank to rise again, spraying water. "Look, I'm a seal!" he whooped.

But big Ralph was back-pedaling in the water, looking around.

"Junie," he called.

Thornhill put his now-running motor into neutral, rose up on his knees and counted heads. Three.

"oh, you stupe, Ralphie! She's aboard, probably went below for something . . . didn't want to swim anymore. *Honestly!*"

George looked again, said suddenly now, "No, I saw her dive off; she was behind the rest of you. But I saw her dive. Right off the cabin top."

The girl stopped chattering then, and the three swimmers looked at one another.

"Aww," the other boy said. "She's hiding on the other side of the *Scimitar*, I'll bet."

Ralph, his face more serious than the others, filled his big chest and bellowed.

"JUN-NIE!" Then he was swimming away as fast as he could.

By then, Thornhill was underway, the putt of his outboard reaching a racketty crescendo. He beat Ralph to the other side of the cabin boat by some seconds. There was nothing, just the quiet water lapping at the white and red painted waterline. He looked in every direction. Nothing. There was open water on all sides but one—where the beach sloped down, and that was

too far away. Besides, it was empty. Only the fisherman, hunched and silent, unmoving. Not looking, unnoticed.

Ralph let out a yell. He had come with his powerful strokes, churning around the prow of the *Scimitar*. "Hey," he yelled. "Where is she? JUN-NIE!"

The other girl and boy had, by now, made the ladder on the pleasure craft and they were running about the vessel, searching, calling.

They stayed like that for a moment—it seemed like an eternity—while for seconds Thornhill and Ralph looked at one another, and the other two on the *Scimitar* hung on the rail with every now and then a look around the smooth expanse of water, unbroken, unruffled.

It was no game now, and even the silly girl had put aside her grin. The big boy in the water, urgency and fear in his voice now, churned back towards the cabin cruiser, as though he would see for himself.

"JUN-N-N-NIE!" The call echoed from the empty sea, only a circling seagull answered. George thundered his motor up to full and zipped to the side of the *Scimitar*. Even before he had tied up, Ralph was diving into the water, going down into the depths as though never to come up, and then when it seemed he too had disappeared in the lagoon, he would rear up, puffing and gasping, to gain air for another dive.

GEORGE and the other boy also dove, but neither was a good swimmer. Thornhill went down six or seven times, and the

underwater dimension seemed immense. The minutes passed, more rapidly for all the activity. George was afraid for Ralph; a man could keep diving, forcing himself down just so long. Finally the boy lay exhausted on the deck, his big chest heaving, his head hanging forward. Even then, the others almost had to use physical force to keep him from dragging himself into the water again and again.

Ralph was almost out of his head; the other girl, tears in her own eyes, tried to quiet him. Thornhill resolved the situation by offering to go ashore to the Point and get help. He thundered off in the outboard. Again he noticed—and resented—the fisherman still sitting silently and immovable through this tragedy. The man could not have failed to hear the excitement, see their desperate efforts. But he made no sign, no offer to help. George suddenly hated the indifferent, black-clothed figure as he sped by on his way shoreward.

There was more wind now. The water was blowing up, and with the rowboat going full speed, George automatically slipped the carrying strap of his camera around his neck for safe keeping. The camera was an expensive one; he didn't want it to suffer a soaking as the boat lurched over the heightening water.

Thornhill made shore, beached the boat and ran as fast as he could. He finally found a house and a phone. He was back in the boat, heading well away from land before he missed his precious camera. It had, despite all precautions, slipped from his neck; probably back somewhere on the

beach when he had been running. But there was not time for that. He kept resolutely ahead until he tied up again at the *Scimitar*.

Ralph was diving again with the other boy helping as well as he could. They looked at him as he came aboard as though he could have some word from the shore that might change this dreadful thing that was growing in their minds and hearts.

Thornhill dove himself again a few times, this time weighted with a spare anchor off the *Scimitar*. Enabled to go deeper, George touched and saw the uneven, treacherous bottom through stinging eyes. Finally he came up and joined the others. Nobody said that it was nearly an hour since Junie had dove from the cabin top.

The County boat came from the Bay at last. The three-man crew listened silently to the details. It is hard for terrified people, telling of such a thing, to realize that it has happened, and happens again and again. The County boat and its laconic hands moved away and started to move in eccentric circles, ominously dragging a line.

"There's nothing any of you can do here, really." Thornhill, as the older man, was in charge now. The others were very quiet. George was worried about Ralph. All of them were deeply affected but the boy was, he thought, in a state bordering on extreme shock.

The cruiser came from a town further down the coast. Thornhill took the other boy aside and told him, insisting there was nothing more to be done.

The *Scimitar* got under way at last. By then the sun was as though following pretty Junie into the sea. Thornhill felt comradesly with these friends of the day; they were joined in the bond of what had happened. They said good-byes sadly; he assured them he would stay here for a while. He told them where he could be reached, after all, he said, knowing it was a lie, it *may be* she swam ashore . . . you can't tell for sure.

GLOOM crept across the water from the last gold of the sinking sun, the hills and promontories cast their fingered shadows across the deepening blue. The County

boat, its crew matter of fact, kept trolling around in widening circles. Finally they said there was no more use now and departed.

Thornhill waited a bit until even the gulls had left the sky and there was nothing else. Nothing but the solitary figure of the boatman, still fishing. A dark figure as though carved from wood, distasteful to Thornhill for its indifference to the nearby tragedy.

After a while the photographer headed for home, in him a sense of deep depression growing with the gathering gloom. And there was something else. A nagging thought that was not quite identifiable yet.

That night he was going over some of his pictures. It was relaxation for Thornhill, forgetfulness when he wanted to forget because he could still see her sunny smile, her youthful, so-alive body. Abruptly he remembered again his lost camera. It was then he knew how deeply the day's events had affected him for he was not one to easily overlook the loss of a several-hundred-dollar piece of equipment.

A few moments later he was in his coupe heading out to the Point. It was a dark overcast night, but he had a flashlight. Thornhill was certain he had not lost the camera overboard; it must have dropped somewhere on the beach when he ran for a phone.

It was lonely here. The houses were few, dark now, it seemed. Only the blinker at the Point was alive. George found the beach and began to work his way down towards the waterline. The tide had fled away into the darkness, exposing below the sand dunes mud flats, and eel grass rustling gently with the offshore winds. The tiny lapping of water at the shoreline was the only other sound here under the night. From landward a cricket made a small noise but the reassuring sound was lost in his own thoughts.

Out there beyond the veil of blackness where the deep water lay young people had come for a day of fun, and it had become a day of death. This black, so black mark, on the calendar waiting for all of them . . . these things had always made Thornhill

wonder. He had followed the last war with his camera, and these imponderables had always sobered him and made him wonder where others just shrugged and said, "Ah, what the hell . . . you never know."

No, it was true, you never do know. Junie, so young, so alive, so bursting with the good years left to live; Junie diving and swimming. And now she was out there, out there somewhere, so near to life, so near to all of them in time still, but going, going so fast in the opposite direction to where no man can follow.

It was maudlin sentimentality, he knew, but that was not all wrong. This same sentimentality sometimes was called imagination. Certainly it had helped him in many ways with his work, with the composition of his pictures; critics said so often, "Thornhill, as usual, shows a depth of perception. . . ."

George stopped. Stopped his walking and his thinking on this. His light, sweeping back and forth across the beach, had come upon something. Not his camera.

It was the fisherman's boat. It lay mostly in the water, only its nose precariously holding to land. Empty. George Thornhill came closer. Where was the fisherman? He cast his light around almost apprehensively as if the grim, dark-shrouded figure might loom up suddenly near him. But there was no one as far as his light could reach. Yet this was not a likely berth for the night. The tide came and went with considerable vigor along this coast. It was now low, and flood water would carry the vessel away.

HIS resentment towards the imperturbable fisherman joined hands with a new thought. His unreasoning dislike of the man lent credence. But he *hadn't* seen his camera anywhere on the beach; this man had landed since Thornton had been on the beach. He *could* have found and appropriated the instrument.

George looked into the boat. Dirty, smelling of the sea, of fish and seaweed and mud. The boat bottom was a hodge-podge of rope and shells, sand and pieces of fish, rusty hooks and other odds and ends. He couldn't see his camera but still . . .

Thornton stepped resolutely into the boat for a better look. "Excuses formed in his head. He would say:

"Well, I remembered you from this afternoon" (an accusing note), "and I thought maybe you came upon it, no way of knowing whose it was, but it's mine, I can prove it easily enough. . . ."

Justification. It took him into the boat poke. There was a lot to look at and, bent over, he did. Junk; rusted things of the sea, the nippers of crabs, a part of a lobster, and the smell that made him turn his nose up in disgust. He moved the length of the boat, looking, and it was the rocking that brought him upright finally. George cursed. He was adrift. His weight had touched it loose.

The flashlight showed ever-widening yards between the shore and the old boat, being gently pushed from land by the offshore breeze. His predicament struck him. What would he say—and he hadn't even found his camera. He looked quickly around. There were some oars lying along the bottom. But no oarlocks. The boat slid sideways and seemed to drift away faster as the wind caught it broadside.

Flashlight still on, resting on the deck, he tried paddling with one oar, canoe-style, but the heaviness of the old boat and the steady offshore wind made this ineffective. He looked sternward toward the high locker. Certainly the fisherman would have oarlocks aboard somewhere; usually these natives have several pairs, knowing how easily one can be lost.

Thornton considered the possibilities. He could call, but in this stygian darkness, at this hour, who would be abroad but the fisherman himself, and George entertained hopes of being able to get the old boat back to its original resting place before its loss was discovered. Flashing with his hand torch would avail nothing; a pinprick in all that great night darkness with no one to see.

No, he would have to work this out by himself. George worked his way back toward the cabin locker in back. There was a huge padlock in place at the door, and his flashlight picked up other locks on the floor, all old, huge and rusty. He tried the

one on the locker with his hands. He could not budge it.

Thornhill reached for one of the heavy oars, using its round, thick end as a hammer. To do so, he placed his flashlight again on the boat bottom. The roll of the boat caused the switch to go off, but he worked in the dark, feeling the position of the great rusty padlock with his hands.

It gave abruptly; with a snap it unclasped and fell from the staples. He was taken by surprise by the locker doors; relieved of the restricting lock they burst forward. George put his arms up instinctively against them, so forcibly did they open. And then against him, into his arms, so suddenly, so unexpectedly that it was only instinct that made him hold on, fell a body.

Cold as deepest night, cold as the sea itself, it was. He felt smooth flesh, contours, and as reason took the place of shocked surprise, a terrible thought came to him. For the contours were of a girl, a girl in swimming suit; the face, as it had lolled for an instant against his, had made known icy lips, and long hair billowed softly against him.

In the darkness he could not know. George laid the figure down gently and groped in the all but impenetrable darkness for his flashlight. But still a moment! That new rocking . . . was not alone his motion. He looked quickly sternward, and the boat as suddenly lurched to one side . . . unmistakably now, for this was no action of the sea but was as though . . . as though *someone*, or *something* was getting in over the sides, into the boat. From the sea it had come, whatever it was. And now, yes, there *was* a dark something hulking back there, his straining eyes told him. Fear lent urgency to his groping fingers. Finally they closed on the metal casing of the torch. His gloom-accustomed eyes saw that the black thing in the boat had shifted position . . . was coming . . . coming towards him.

His fumbling fingers found the switch and the flashlight beamed out. Thornhill spoke then too, a rattle of words that he somehow hoped would ally themselves with the light in his defense.

He wasn't sure what he said. Excuses,

how he came to be here, drifting away from shore, he hadn't *meant* to . . . excuses. The sound of his voice, alone there on the dark water with nothing but night on all sides, was desolate. For the other did not answer him back. And somehow this was no more a surprise than that the sea had not answered.

The fisherman came forward slowly, his dark-shrouded figure huge now that he was not sitting; huge and bent all at once. The slouch hat, water-soaked like the rest of the man—why, he must've been swimming, what in the world would a man be swimming for in the middle of the night, and with all his clothes on?—the great, knobby hands hanging.

George said no more but kept his light full on the fisherman. As the black figure came nearer, Thornhill saw the eyes; red they were, red and inflamed, not like those of a human who walks beneath the sun. And the face—the whole visage almost hypnotized George of his remaining strength—was monstrous, now so close upon him.

He looked into it, its salt-streaked lumpiness, its swollen, profane features, its satanic immobility, its changeless expression of purpose withal . . . and then in the fisherman's overwhelming attack the flashlight fell and smashed on the boat bottom and night came down around them again.

The huge arms of the boatman wrapped themselves around Thornhill, the sea-soaked clothes flapped against him, and the monstrous, cruel weight bore him to the boat floor. George fought back desperately, but his efforts were puny against the creature who opposed him. His head smashing against the boat's clinker sides sent his senses reeling. He was aware that the fisherman now was forcing him over the rail, but he could offer little resistance. The two struggling on the boat's side caused the old vessel to list in that direction. The gunwales were awash as the boatman, with incredible strength, forced Thornhill's head and shoulders out, over and down into the cold, black water.

Gasping and blowing now, his head out of water only when the pendulum-sway of the boat carried the gunwale clear of the

water, George felt that his neck was being broken. And inexorably, he was being forced out of the boat into the water. Giant hands had fastened on his throat, were twisting him, taking his air away, giving him sea water instead, giving him excruciating pain instead. With what George knew to be the last of consciousness, his nose caught up the smell of the man—the sea, fish, mud—it was overpowering, sickening. Or was this dying? He had not breathed for hours, it seemed. His neck had been seemingly broken long ago and cold salt water ran in and out of his mouth and nose. He lay, he knew, limp like a lifeless thing.

AND then the weight shifted suddenly. The hands were away from his throat. Sometime while they had been struggling the moon had impatiently shaken off the clouds that had obscured it earlier in the night. George could make out the great, terrible head turning and looking sternward. The fisherman's attention was no longer on him.

Without moving, George's eyes swiveled, slit-lidded, his strength returned slowly. During the battle *she* had moved. Her body had rolled across the slanted deck, had touched perhaps the boatman's foot, taking his attention away from the task of destruction.

The overpowering weight was wholly gone from Thornhill now. The fisherman had moved away; George could follow the scene as he lay. The moonlight could do little to disperse the aura of shadow and gloom that surrounded the dark-shrouded fisherman but it lit up the limp, lovely form of the girl as the creature bent over her. The bathing cap was gone and long hay-colored hair fell around her pretty face, a prettiness forever frozen there. But it was the same girl, it was Junie, the flowered bathing suit, the brightly colored bra over her proud, high breasts.

The fisherman took her in his arms with a sudden movement that was at once both brutal and possessive. He seemed to look into her eyes, his own salt-encrusted features but inches from her face, mask-like

wax in the moonlight, still lovely. It was as though they enacted a strange love scene here in the softly rocking boat to the silent witness of the sea and night, for he held her for a long time, her flaxen hair blowing against his face, her arms hanging limply, submissively in the embrace. It was as though the monstrous fisherman-creature was entranced by what he saw, and George felt it too. Then the tableau ended.

Slowly, carefully, methodically he stowed her back into the locker from whence she had come. He picked up one huge padlock from the deck, fitted it carefully to the staples, snapped it into place, locking his beautiful prize away there from the night. And then he turned to complete his interrupted task.

Thornhill used that last moment to save his life. The spell was ended. With what returning strength he had, he forced himself suddenly over the side into the water, evading the lumbering thing that had turned from its loathsome, worshipful contemplation to the task of killing. For the first several yards he sank beneath the surface and stroked along as far as he could below water. Luck was with him, for when he rose to the surface, bunched clouds had again taken the moon away from the sky.

George swam as he never had before. The water sounds were in his ears, his pounding arms and churning legs and thumping heart. A hundred times he thought there were other sounds but there was no time, no strength to look, to think beyond that terrible, frantic flight through black water. In the darkness as he swam on, he could not be sure if the sounds were his own or if there were noises of pursuit. For the first few agonizing minutes he half-expected to see suddenly beside him that sinister old boat, its shrouded figure and its stern locker with cargo of death. Or the fisherman, himself, would rise up from hidden places of the sea.

But after a while Thornhill gave more attention to his whereabouts. There were no sounds when he floated quietly but the bell buoy at the Point; nothing to see but the blinker there. They told him direction, and finally he made the shore, collapsing

into his coupe still parked in the bushes at beachside.

IT WAS hard to manufacture a story for the authorities, and yet he wanted a search made for the fisherman. He told the truth about his camera—that much would be believed—and then added that he thought he had seen a body picked up by a fisherman offshore just as night came on. The authorities were politely skeptical, but they would check. Some days later they reported that no such boat or fisherman as described was in that vicinity. And no report of a body either. And surely there *would've* been a report. No one finding a dead body keeps it a secret, one official snorted.

Junie was never found. It reminded Thornhill of a poem he had learned as a youngster; two lines he remembered well:

*Some he gives up;
But the choicest he keeps.*

Ralph came to see Thornhill one day. They talked, and the boy was pathetically grateful for the pictures of that last swimming party. There were some good ones of Junie, and though the youngster had to turn away for a moment, his big hands clenched for control, he was evidently pleased to have the snapshots. There was much that Thornhill didn't talk about. The scarf around his neck he blamed on sunburn; why go into what had happened? Some things you just don't talk about. He said he'd had a fall, to explain his battered appearance, let it go at that.

Strange, but sometimes even now that *smell* assailed his nostrils. Of the sea and of things from the sea. He hoped it would go, and in the going, take with it recollections he did not care to live with the rest of his days. Recollections of that evil night: he recalled how he had found a piece of a huge crab-pincers in his neck, unnoticed in the escape, but hurting when he got home, soon festering. And how he had kept finding seaweed and other things of the sea in his clothes.

The pictures were the strangest. Oh, not the ones taken on that fateful day. But others, others taken around the world the way he'd been doing for years. You won't *believe* it in the telling but you could *see* it. In some of his best pictures too. His prize ones, framed, among his collection of best seascapes and scenes. The *same* battered old longboat; with the funny cabin-locker at back. And the *same* dark-shrouded figure fishing always fishing the same.

As he looked at the pictures—oh the comparison was unmistakable—his memory needed him. Each of these pictures *had* a memory . . . and each came, as tragedy does, reluctantly from out of the past . . . the white-toothed grinning diver at Pearl for instance, jumping for tourist coins—he'd not come up; and see, there's the *fisherman* in the background. Then the little girl who'd fallen off the excursion boat on the Thames. And yes, the same *fisherman* in his sinister boat. The long-ago accident in the Norwegian fjord, the grim "man overboard" excitement (he'd been taking pictures of the beautiful scenery when it happened). And look here, see? There were others, many others. But memories can be tricky, Thornhill knew. Only *pictures* don't lie.

He had a fine one of the fisherman at Crescent Beach. From the first time he'd come the closest, circled, shooting with his camera. You could see the evil face, the black-shrouded figure, the old boat, it's looming locker. Caught, imprisoned on his film. A fine picture, you would say. Worthy for inclusion in his collection.

It came back to him again, the childhood poem; about a mythical creature of the deep.

*Some he gives up;
But the choicest he keeps.*

Oh, he would remember this time. Perhaps there would be another Junie somewhere some day; remembering would help. He would title his picture:

"DAVEY JONES' LOCKER."