

THRILLING MYSTERY

Vol. II, No. 1

February, 1936

Price, 10c

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THRILLING MYSTERY, published monthly by Beacon Magazines, Inc., at 22 W. 48th St., New York, N. Y. N. L. Pines, President. Subscription yearly, \$1.20; single copies, 10c. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. Entered as second-class matter July 12, 1935, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1936, by Beacon Magazines, Inc. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes, and are submitted at the author's risk.

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A Vast Secret—A Freight of Doom—



By

SUBWAY to HELL

A Complete Novelette of Grisly Terror

By **ARTHUR LEO ZAGAT**

Author of "Madman's Ride," "Death's Grey Dwarfs," etc.

CHAPTER I

Underground

MARIAN ROLPH shrugged closer into the corner of the subway car. The train hurtled through the long black cav-

ern visible beyond grimed glass, and noise battered at its steel as though by noise alone the violated earth could avenge man's desecration. The girl's small hands convulsively tightened on the pocketbook in her lap, while an unaccountable dread flowed,

A Horde of Fiery Fiends Pursue

Was in the Mysterious Message of Evil



The tentacles grasped her, jerked her quivering arms up over her head

like a dark, sullen flood, in her veins.

The echoing damp reaches of the station, the train's roaring arrival, the magical sliding open and shut of its door, accustomed as they were, somehow tonight had seemed in-

vested with a strange, baleful omen.

Even here, under the brighter lights, a vague threat pervaded the car's musty, close air that queerly was difficult to breathe. She should have stayed overnight at Ellen's instead of

Marion Rolph in the Stygian Darkness!

going home so late and all alone. Alone—ridiculous!

Who was going to harm her? Not the bearded old fellow asleep back there where the tunnel roared away, closing in on itself in the swallowing darkness. Not that tousled youth nor the drowsy-eyed girl holding his hand in their midcar cubicle.

THE clean-limbed, strong-jawed young man opposite—Marian gasped as car-sway pulled hat-brim shadow from his eyes and she looked deep into them.

Terror stared out at her, livid and awful. Such ghastly, searing terror as not even imminent death could inspire. Those dark eyes were veiled again as the girl's covert glance flickered away, but in that single, revealing instant they had mirrored a soul in torment.

Marian's skin was a tight, icy sheath for her body. She knew now that her apprehension, the brooding pall of impending catastrophe overhanging her spirit, were not causeless. Some psychic tocsin had been ringing indecipherable alarm within her soul, but he knew what black peril it was to which the pounding conveyance carried them all. Dreadfully he knew what was coming and horribly he was helpless to warn of it or to avert it.

"Harry," the other girl's clear voice pierced the clamor. "Seems like we been runnin' an awful long time since the last station. I wunner—"

The frightened man was pushing against the straw edge of his seat. He was on his feet, he was coming across to Marian. Momentary panic flared in her, faded. Thought pulsed in her brain; He's read my eyes as I did his. He's going to tell me what . . .

He staggered to a sudden stagger of the car, snatched at a white enameled stanchion. The world was split by the shriek of clamped brakes, by a seismic pounding under the floor. Darkness smashed in through the windows. The stoppage threw Marian forward.

Strong hands closed on her shoul-

ders, shoved her back into her seat. A hurried, fumbling touch slid down her arm, found her wrist.

A whisper hissed, "Hide this. Quick!" Paper crackled in her palm and her fingers were closed down on it. "In the name of all that's good and holy, don't let them get it."

In instinctive obedience Marian thrust that which she had been given through the opening of her waist.

"If you get a chance memorize what it says and destroy it," the imperative, agonized whisper continued, and then the feel of another presence was gone.

The train was motionless in the sightless dark. Running footfalls pounded along the aisle. There was the sound of a scuffle, muted, somehow fierce. It was over almost as it began, ended in a burbling moan out of the impenetrable gloom.

Silence shut in, thick, funereal, pregnant with almost tangible horror.

A shrill, quavering scream knifed the muggy, breathless heat. It crescendoed, higher, higher, in a wailing ascent of mind-shattering terror.

"Annie," a man's voice shouted. Harry's. "Annie! Annie! What—what's the matter? Where are you?"

Then a crackling scrape spluttered into a yellow flicker and grotesque shadows fled from the minute flowering of a match flame. Harry's face was a blanched, big-eyed oval in the dancing light he had lit. He was staring down—at a limp, pitiful heap on the floor. It was the girl whose hand he had held. His legs buckled and he went down on his knees to her.

She was faceless, her features obscured by a scarlet, glistening mask. Shadows danced through the long, closed tunnel of the car's interior, revealed desolate emptiness. They three were alone! Where were the others?

The match went out and darkness blanketed horror. There was a dull thud against the side of the car, from outside, and a fear-thickened yell, "Let me go! Let me go, you devils! I haven't got it. I tell you I haven't

got it and you'll never find out what I did with it."

"Hell," Harry mouthed, seemingly oblivious. "That was my last."

A greenish glow outlined the window in front of Marian, a glow that was not quite light, that revealed nothing and yet mysteriously was radiant with a macabre, unholy threat.

"Annie," the kneeling boy implored. "Speak to me." His gulping, shocked gasp changed swiftly to a thin squeal. "Blood! Holy saints, she's all over blood! *Annie!*"

But that cry was drowned by another, a piercing high wail of unutterable agony. The smash of glass pulled Marian's aghast look back to the illuminated oblong.

She saw that it was now framed by jagged shards. The iridescence was blotted by a black globe thrusting through—it was a human head—by naked shoulders ripped and shredded and clothed with gushing gore.

She could not see its face but she knew that the doom the frightened man had foreseen had overtaken him; that, reckless of the tearing glass points, he was struggling to escape it.

His forward movement stopped. He jerked back—was jerked back by some antagonist outside. But not far! Suddenly the head lolled as no living head could loll. It rolled gruesomely, slashed by knifelike glass. A cascade of carmine fluid pumped down, swamping the woven straw of a seat beneath.

An abortive, soundless scream ripped Marian's throat and she was lunging down the invisible aisle toward the forward cars. The guard, the motorman, up ahead—she must get them. She must get help. Light. They would turn on lights, dispel this awful darkness, this sudden terror that gibbered in the dark.

She slammed against glass, realized it was steel, the door partitioning this rear car from the next. Her flailing hand found the cold brass of a latch, tugged at it.

Marian plunged through.

Her foot found nothingness. She fell headlong into a dark and bottomless abyss. She pounded down on

gashing stones, on ballast whose sharp edges struck fiercely through her thin clothing. Her head crashed against a rail . . .

Marian retched, moaned. Her body was a bundle of compact, excruciating pain. But worse than the physical agony was the realization that the help she sought was beyond reach, that by some incredible fatality the rest of the train was gone, that the car out of which she had fallen was left behind, lightless and solitary in the Stygian tunnel with its freight of horror.

Lightless! A new, poignant apprehension pronged the reeling chaos within her skull. There was nothing to mark the obstruction, to warn a following train. In minutes, in seconds perhaps, it would catapult out of the gloom, would thunderbolt unheeding into destruction awaiting it. There would be a rending crash, screams of mangled, smashed men, women, little children. But the signals would stop it.

The signals! *There weren't any signals!* There weren't any red lights, or green, ahead. There weren't even the sparks of blue bulbs that should be spaced along the bore's roof!

CHAPTER II

Hell-bound

SOMEHOW she must stave off the disaster. Marian managed to get her knees under her, to scrabble somehow erect. She swayed, with weakness, with the agony tearing at her flesh. Back!

Marian twisted to the right. Halted. *The third rail!* The naked carrier of electric death was on one side or other of the tracks. If she struck it in the dark she was finished. A low, metallic hum hung about her. It was the train. It was the train, and though still distant it was coming fast! Hurtling fast to inevitable destruction!

Marian stumbled in frenzied haste along a concave, slimy gutter that

twisted her ankles, that threw her once, twice, and again against the head-high bottom edge of the car-body. Then she was past it, had leaped to the rocky but firmer footing of the ballast-bed, was running through inky murk, toward the increasing thunder of the train she had to stop.

Its crashing roar was all about her, was battering her. The train was close upon her, but she could not see it, could see no light, no glimmer of any light. Marian flailed frantic arms above her head, screaming, "Stop! Stop!" and within her something else screamed: "You're blind! The stones cut your eyes when you fell, and you're blind. You'll never see any more. Even if the train does not kill you, you'll never see again!"

She was caught up in a deafening noise, in insupportable clangor. And then it was lessening. Unbelievably it was rushing away behind her. It diminished to a long peal of thunder, to a rolling roar, to a mutter of far-off sound. . . .

Marian stood still, trembling, aghast. The train had rushed over her and she had not felt it. It had hurtled along the tracks toward the stalled car, past the stalled car, and there had been no rending crash, no explosion of disaster. It was a ghostly train running on ghostly tracks. It was a spectral conveyance that had no real existence. . . .

Or was this all unreal, a nightmare? Oh, God! Why couldn't she wake and get rid of the pain that racked her, of the horror that crawled in her brain?

The flat surface of her pocketbook pressed against her chest! Her pocketbook! Marian's mouth twisted in a bitter smile and hysterical laughter rattled in her chest. Through all the terror that had encompassed her she had instinctively clung to that futile bag.

Futile! She remembered—what would she have been spared had this realization come to her when she knew not which way to turn to avoid the third rail's terrible blast!—she remembered the cigarettes in it and the matches.

Her trembling fingers broke open the clasp, searched through an exasperating conglomeration of small articles for the saving folder.

She found it, and bitter laughter spewed from between her icy lips. What was the good? She was blind, blind, blind!

Try, anyway. Try. Tear off a match, so . . .

THANKFULNESS surged through her as the tiny fire caught, was steady. She could see!

She looked about her and was prey again to staggering amazement. For the tracks between which she stood were rusted, unused, and incredibly they jutted out of a stark and solid wall. Out of a whitewashed wall through which the phantom train had come and gone. Out of a wall—and this was once more the stuff of nightmares—through which she herself had ridden in the fated car!

There was no mistake. To left and right were the damp-smeared sides of the tunnel, black-wet and glistening. To left and right were the sides, and in front of her the bore was shut off by another vertical barrier, a barrier through which it was inconceivable even an ant could pass.

Marian whimpered. She flicked her match into the darkness as it burned her finger-tips. This was a monstrous fairytale in which she was immersed, a nerve-crawling, scalp-bristling myth from out the pages of a dim, unholy past. This was a terror-dream—or she was stark, staring mad.

There was a sudden, threatening movement in the tunnel. From behind, from the direction of the stalled car, came padding footfalls, the click of a disturbed stone. Marian whirled to the sounds. A faint, greenish glow was drifting toward her. As she glimpsed it, it grew brighter, nearer.

"Don't let them get it," the dead man had whispered. Were these the enemies who had slain him, from whom he had bidden her hide the paper? "If you get a chance, memorize and destroy it!"

Marian snatched the note from its cover, struck another match. She

read with puzzled, staring eyes:

I will be dead if you read this. To save thousands of human souls from hell get this message to Warner Thor, Hotel Walward, Penn D 429. TO NO ONE ELSE.

"Thor," Marian repeated to herself, "Walward, Penn D 429." She was tearing the paper into small bits, was stuffing them into her mouth. "Thor, Walward, Penn D 429." Her teeth pulped the stuff, ground it into what she hoped was an indecipherable mass. And all the time the green light came on.

SHE could see now that the near-ing glow came from the very substance of two flowing robes that cloaked, head and body, twin creatures hurrying toward her over the rock-covered ties.

She backed away from their approach, backed till the incredible wall stopped her and she could back no farther. She cringed against it.

They were upon her. The green light was brilliant now, dazzling, but no heat came from it. The weird robes grew tentacles that reached out for her. Nightmare paralysis held Marian rigid, quenched the shriek fighting to her throat for utterance. The creatures had hold of her arms, her legs, and their touch was gelid with the frigid clamminess of dead flesh.

She was off the ground. She was slung, face downward, by her stretched limbs. She was being carried back toward the stalled car and the crackling ballast stones beneath her were ghastly with the emerald reflection.

What were they? In the name of heaven, what were these beings whose captive she was? What were these creatures that had snatched a great subway car from a running train and prisoned it within a cave?

Their shapelessness, their green aura, were terror-inspiring; but more horrible was their silence and the peculiar unanimity with which they moved. The precision with which they had seized her, the dexterity with which they handled her, demanded

some communication between them. But there had been no words, no audible or visible signal of any sort.

Marian found strength to force her head up, to look ahead. The green radiance fell on a gaping coupling, on airline pipes and severed cables writhing from under the worn end of the subway car from which she had fallen. The emerald ogres rose to the steel platform, and she rose with them. She was again in that steel-walled enclosure where terror had begun.

Marian was up-ended, so that she swayed on her own feet, though she was still clamped helpless by the icy grip of her captors. Then one of them lifted her again and the other jerked her quivering arms up over her head, thrust them through the metal loops of straphangers' hand-holds and brought them down to her sides again.

A rope passed around her wrists, her quivering body, tightened, was knotted. The cruel nooses dug into her armpits, into her ribs. Excruciating agony belted her, wrung a moan from her pallid lips.

A moan answered her. Her bulging, burning eyes sought its source. She was not alone in her torture. The youth, Harry, hung next to her, trussed in the same way, and beyond him was his Annie. They must have been hanging like this for a long time. Pain had drained all color from their countenances and their eyelids were tight-pressed, waxen, their lips bluish black in the green radiance.

Past them—no—the murdered man was no longer there! And the bearded oldster? Not here either! He had been so fragile, so palsied with age even in sleep, it was queer that of them all he should have been the only one to escape.

Her own weight was a torture instrument racking her armbones to the breaking point. Through a haze of pain she saw the weird entities move along the wavering length of the car.

They are going away, Marian thought. They are going away and leaving us here like this.

Hope died within her. Metal clanked, up there at the end of the car the creatures were, and Marian's

burning gaze saw that they were pulling open something like a closet door, that behind it were levers, gages.

Green tentacles passed purposefully among the gadgets. Escaped air hissed suddenly, virulently, somewhere beneath. A jar pounded the great structure of steel, another, and they darted white-hot arrows of new torments through her.

The car lurched into motion.

The slanting of her body told Marian that the car was going downward. It rocked. It careened from side to side. Faster, faster became its wild descent, and more steeply it dropped, always more steeply.

The bottom went out from under the conveyance so that it catapulted down, straight down. The awful acceleration of the fall blasted her brain, blasted her into momentary, merciful unconsciousness.

CHAPTER III

Flame Spurting from Livid Flesh

MARIAN ROLPH floated on a lapping red sea of suffering. Molten heat surged about her, lifted her on its lurid swell, dropped her into a yawning pit. She flailed out. Barbs of excruciating flame struck through her.

Through a coruscating veil of tiny, sulphurous sparks she could see dimly a vast reach of vaulted, slime-filmed arches fading away into infinity. She could see vague figures lashed to rough-hewn pillars supporting the arches, realized through her anguish that she too was so lashed.

She was no longer in the subway car. It was gone, vanished. But the green creatures were still here.

They danced before her. They made no sound, but somehow she knew they were laughing with demoniac glee, jubilant with the suffering they caused her.

The sparks cut off, suddenly. Marian had an impression that one of the emerald fiends had moved, just as that happened, had pushed a lever she now saw jutted out of a quadrant before

it. But she could not be sure. She could be sure only that raw, flayed as her body was, the contrast with what had gone before was a blessed, cooling relief.

Those other figures she had seen were her companions in distress, the couple she knew only as Annie and Henry. The girl's face was scummed with dried blood. Both were stripped naked, their flesh peppered over with a sprinkling of black dots as though they were victims of some loathsome disease. Their faces were lined masks of anguish.

Youth, humanity itself, were stricken from them by the martyrdom through which they had passed. In deep-sunk sockets their eyes were dark, living pools of incredible torment.

She herself was naked, and she could see that the black dots sprinkled her own skin. Wires snaked away from her wrists, her ankles, joined wires coming from the others, wandered off into obscurity. Her skull was a charred, aching shell enclosing horror and despair.

A green demon was moving toward the lashed trio, his progress a horrible slither. He came close, stopped.

"That was only a foretaste of what is in store for you." His voice was a shrill, eerie filament of sound. "But one of you can purchase release for all. One of you possesses a secret we seek. This is the payment we demand."

A secret! It trembled on Marian's lips. "Penn D 429." It demanded utterance. "Penn D 429." Whatever its meaning it was the reason for the outre adventure, the murder, the torture.

"Is it you?" the monstrous inquisitor queried Harry. "You?"

"I don't—know—what you're talking about," the youth croaked.

"He lies!" It was the other one who spoke. "He lies!"

"Perhaps. We shall soon know." Marian's heart constricted with the grim pressage of that laconic statement. The faceless monster twisted, slithered to Annie.

"If he has anything to say he will

talk when he sees—this—” The boneless tentacle that served the monster for an arm lifted, its knobbed end touched the girl’s skin.

Jets of purple flame spurted. In their light Marian could see Annie’s muscles writhe, squirm. From her mouth, from her nostrils, the orchid flame dripped, luminous blood of her agony. And then her screams began.

Through them a maddened bellow sounded, a bestial roar of crazed rage. It pulled Marian’s seared sight back to Harry. His face was a contorted, awful mask of insensate wrath. His body was arched against the obduracy of the stone pillar to which he was lashed.

His biceps, his thigh-muscles, were swollen with the gigantic effort he made to tear himself free. The thongs binding him were gory, cutting knife-like into his flesh.

There was movement in the dimness behind him, movement so stealthy Marian was not sure she saw it. There was a sudden splintering of green and purple light on slashing steel. Multiple twang of snapped cords shocked the clamor. Harry hurtled away from the prisoning pillar, miraculously freed. He was a berserk vengeance catapulting down upon the emerald fiend.

The monster whirled to meet the maddened charge. The youth’s clawing fingers tangled in the green luminescence of his garment. There was a hissing rasp of ripped fabric and an incredible countenance was suddenly limned to Marian’s staring eyes.

It was a visage of supernal horror. It was a doughy lump of granulated red flesh out of which a single scarlet orb glared; a formless mass of lurid putrescence gashed by a blank, writhing aperture that might have been a mouth.

It vanished in a maelstrom of ferocious combat. The second of the creatures surged to join the battle, abandoning his torture lever. Marian saw Harry’s nude arms rise out of the emerald whirlpool, heard the meaty thud of landing fists.

A shuddersome snarling, a shriek of sudden agony, quivered in her ears.

The youth went down, overwhelmed under a tumbling, heaving mass of emerald glow—and her own bonds fell away from her!

“HURRY,” a low, excited voice yammered in her ears. “Hurry. He has no chance, but you can get away!”

Fingers gripped her wrist, pulling her around the pillar, pulling her into darkness. The wires jerked away from her, and black against black in the shadows someone was running alongside her, was guiding her by quick, furtive stabs of an agitated hand.

She was running, was leaping in great, vaulting bounds away from the torture and the horror, and always with her was the dim, obscure, almost invisible shape of her savior.

Her bare feet made no sound on the rocky floor. The other was as silent. But from behind came a high, tenuous wail of alarm that told her her evasion was discovered, and a swift slither of pursuit. The sounds redoubled her efforts.

Despite weariness, despite the drain pain had made on her vitality, she fairly flew through the gloom. Black bulks loomed out of the sightlessness into which she fled. She dodged them, or he who had released her swung her around them, and eternally they ran on into the unrevealing murk.

Unseen fingers clamped about her elbow, suddenly, jerked her sidewise. She was off her feet, was falling, pounded down on harshness that cushioned her fall. It was alive, it rolled out from under her.

“Quiet,” a voice enjoined. “Quiet.” Marian lay bundled on rock, her mouth open so that her panting breath should be soundless, her pounding heart battering against its caging ribs.

She could see nothing, but somehow she sensed she was in some sort of pit, sensed the other’s presence close alongside her.

They were coming, the hunters. A green glow, barely perceptible, hung over her. Silence clamped down, falling like a pall out of the appalling blackness, but welcome as nothing

ever before had been welcome in her life. For it meant that the green monsters were foiled, that she had escaped!

Marian feared to move, even to breathe, lest they should return. She lay trembling, nausea throbbing within her, the impenetrable darkness a giddy swirl about her. Horror, despair, still clung to her. Annie's shrieks still rang in her ears. They were done for, the two lovers. For them she could only hope that they were dead.

They were done for, but she had escaped. Who was it that had rescued her? Who was it that had come out of darkness to snatch her from the green creatures of nightmare? Who could it be?

A low chuckle sounded, close by. "That fooled them," someone murmured. "Only way I could get you away. They forgot about you when the fellow jumped them. At that he put up a pretty fight before he went down."

"Who are you?" Marian husked. "Who are you?"

"Name's Gant. Lathrop Gant." A white beam cut the darkness, beam of a flashlight, and in its radiance a face sprang into being. A face—the face of the young man who had been opposite her in the doomed subway car! The young man—Then it wasn't he who had hung!

"Oh," Marian whimpered. "I thought you—"

"Not me." He was smiling, actually smiling. "Not Lathrop Gant. Those devils aren't smart enough to catch me. I pulled up one of the straw seats and snuggled in among the pipes and the dirt under it. Not the most comfortable place in the world, but a hell of a lot better than what you went through. But look here, you haven't anything on. Here—"

His flash went out. Marian heard the rustle of fabric, then something, a coat, fell across her.

"Put that on. Best I can do till we get out of here."

She fumbled into it. "The top of me's covered, at least," she said, trying to match the light banter of his

tone, "and that's something." It didn't make much difference. After what she had gone through, after what had happened to the other girl, her nakedness, modesty itself, were so trivial. "But getting out of here sounds good to me. Do you know how?"

"Sure do. But we'd better wait awhile. They'll still be looking for you. They won't come here."

It was comforting to have someone to talk to, to have the burden of fruitless struggle taken off her shoulders. Everything was all right now, Marian was sure everything would be all right.

"They're horrible," she shuddered. "And this place is horrible—"

"Not pleasant." He had a gift for understatement. "But a swell hide-away. It's going to be a car-yard, some day, when the whole city subway system is finished, but just now the only track leading into it is the one they managed to switch our car onto after uncoupling it while the train was running."

A light dawned on Marian. "Oh, then it wasn't—it wasn't—" She couldn't tell him that she had thought it the entrance to Hell itself. "But," she finished lamely, "it seemed to be blocked off."

"Oh, that was because the contractor put a sliding door across where the spur comes off from the main line. Those devils opened it to let the car through and shut it again after they had accomplished that."

"I suppose they used some electrical devices to torture us. Who are they? What do they plan?"

"Never mind that now." Gant spoke crisply, as if he had come to some decision. "It's safe enough now, I think, to make a try at getting out." The spray of his torch showed Marian that he was rising. "Come on!"

She pushed herself to her feet. Gant's jacket flapped ludicrously about her. "That can't be soon enough for me. Which way?" He was hesitating, curiously. "What are you waiting for?"

"Oh," he answered blandly. "I just thought—something might happen. We might get separated, one of us

might not get away. Hadn't you better tell me what was in that note so that if you don't—"

Marian didn't hear the rest. Dismay, renewed terror, boiled in her veins, pronged her reeling brain. Gant didn't know the message! It was not Gant who had pressed it into her hand. He had rescued her only to obtain it, only to surprise it out of her. He was in league with the green-luminous fiends and was trapping her!

What then? It must have been the old man who entrusted her with the secret. The old— But the head so gruesomely torn from its body had been the head of a young man. Its hair had been black, not white. It had worn no beard.

"What was the message?" Gant's voice was no longer suave. The good humor was stripped from it. It was urgent. Demanding. Threatening. "You little fool!" he snarled. "If you want to get away tell me what it is."

"I—I don't know what you mean," Marian faltered, her lips cold with a terrible fear. "What message?"

"Damn you!" Though he kept his voice low the exclamation was almost a shriek. "You lie and I know you lie. I saw him bend over you. I was right there. I would have had it then if that little tramp hadn't got in my way so that I had to slough her." His fingers dug into her arm.

"I won't tell you! You can kill me, but I won't tell you."

"Kill you, hell! I'll call them back. I'd rather share than lose it. Tell me what it is or I'll call them back."

"Never!"

His shout was a blast of doom in her ears.

"Here," he yelled. "Here she is. Come and get her!"

Marian jerked away from the clenching, torturing grip. Her curved hands flailed out. Her nails found flesh, ripped it sickeningly. She whirled away, blundered into a slanting wall. Somehow she mounted it, found level footing.

Ahead, not far ahead, a green radiance blossomed, deepened even as she glimpsed it. She whirled, dashed into damp and clinging darkness.

CHAPTER IV

Final Surrender

IN the blind maze of this underground labyrinth there was no chance of final escape, no chance at all. They would hunt her down. They would hunt her down relentlessly, implacably.

She was weakening. The crashing against obstructing stone, the searing pain of the rough footing on which she ran, were slowing her down. How die? How kill herself when she had no time to stop, no weapon to take her life even if she could stop.

A far-off rolling rumble came to Marian. Was that thunder? Was it—no! She remembered the roaring of the ghost train that had passed over her. That had not passed over her, but had rushed unknowingly just beyond the wall that was a sliding door. And she remembered the third rail that had threatened her with death.

Threatened her! She was searching for it now. She was searching for it, guided by that distant mutter that grew louder and died away.

The arched roof echoed, speeding the sound of the green Things, of the renegade Gant, after her. Multiplying those sounds so that they seemed on all sides of her, seemed to be closing in on her, an inescapable ring of gruesome menace. Surrounding her with fear . . .

Where were they? Were they still behind? Were they coming at her from right, from left? Was she throwing herself straight into their waiting arms?

She dared a single, terrified glance over her shoulder. There they were, the plunging, wraithlike figures of green flame, the dark frame of Lathrop Gant silhouetted against them. In that single frantic second the emerald monsters caught up with Gant. Passed him.

No! He was between them. They shouldered close against him on either side.

And suddenly a wild, unearthly shriek echoed after Marian, running

again in that hopeless flight of hers. A shriek, and then silence. She did not have to look back again to know what that meant. She did not have to look back to know that only two pursued her now, not three. Retribution had overtaken the renegade.

Even in her wrath against him she found space for compassion at the awful shape that retribution had assumed.

But the deed had delayed the hunters only an instant, and they were hot again on her trail. The hissing, grotesque sibilance of their pursuit continued and gradually it grew till she knew that they must be close behind, knew that in seconds they must have her, must drag her down.

Where were those tracks? Where were the two rusty tracks and the third that meant surcease?

Her toes stubbed against steel, crumpling with a last terrible spasm of agony. She fell forward, pounded down on the rocky ballast that once before had left its mark on her lacerated body. Her out-thrown hand found the other track. Beyond it must be the electric rail.

But had she time to reach it?

The demons were still yards away, but they were coming fast. She pushed torn palms deep into the cutting stones, straightened her arms, inched forward. Dropped. Pushed again.

But she couldn't make it. She couldn't. . . .

Shouts echoed over her head. The demon was no longer pulling at her ankle. Pounding blasts exploded into a rolling pandemonium. Shadows blotted the white radiance, the shadows of many men.

"There they go," a hoarse, excited voice shouted. "Get them! Don't let them get away!"

Gun barks swallowed the shout. Marian rolled over. The cavern was filled with a multitude of running figures, ahead of them the duo of hell-dogs, fleeing now. Orange sparks flashed, were pistols spouting death-hail. Their reports impacted on her. Bullets—she thought wearily—bullets will never bring them down.

But they did. First one, then the other of the fleeing monsters collapsed, were pools of green luminance on the rocky floor of the cave.

Flashlight beams concentrated on the fallen monsters. Someone bent, pulled at one of the green-glowing robes. It tore with the sound of ripping silk, fell apart, revealed lurid, blood-chilling corruption.

A man in white struck at the arm of him who tore the mask.

"Drop it!" the ambulance interne squealed. "Drop it. It's soaked in radium salts. It will rot the skin from your hands."

Flashlight glare invested Marian. "Hey, Cap," the policeman who held it yelled. "Here's one o' the passengers. A dame without no clothes on."

The knot around the dead ogre broke, streamed toward Marian. As they came the young doctor was saying, puzzled:

"It looks like cancer, but it isn't. I'll lay my hope of a successful practice that it isn't."

"Warner Thor," Marian said, thick-tongued. "Warner Thor. Hotel Walward . . ." And then there wasn't anything any more . . .

UNTIL she came awake between the white, crisp coolness of sheets— She stared up at the soft-shining greyness of a hospital ceiling, trying to remember. There was something she had to do. Something terribly important.

What was it?

A nurse was opening a door.

"She's come to, Dr. Thor. Do you want to see her now?" She went out.

Doctor Thor! Doctor Warner Thor!

Marian knew now what was troubling her. He was in the room, was bending over her. He was a dapper little man, clean-shaven. There was a strange olive tint to his complexion and the shape of his keen, ferretlike eyes was somehow exotic, unfamiliar.

There was sharp eagerness in his voice, but there was gentleness too, and compassion.

"I am Warner Thor," he said. "You asked for me. What was it you wanted?" His English was precise,

cultured. Too precise. It was the English of an educated foreigner.

"Penn," Marian mumbled. "Penn D 429."

Warner's brow crinkled. "Penn D 429," he repeated. "I do not know what you mean." He was not very old, Marian decided, but the fine wrinkles criss-crossing his face made him look very tired. "Are you sure that is what you want to say?"

He ought to know, Marian thought, wearily. "To save souls," she tried again. "Penn D 429."

"To save—Wait! I've got it! Penn Station!" He was excited now. "D 429." His long fingers on the counterpane were trembling. "The ten cent automatic lockers they have all over the station are numbered. Paul left the vial in the one marked D 429. Even in his disguise they trailed him, but he fooled them. He left it in the locker and he got you to bring me word of where he had hidden it even after they killed him."

"What?" Marian asked. "What vial? What are you talking about?"

Thor shrugged. "We've tried to keep it a secret, but you've earned the right to know. My country," his hand made a vague gesture to the south, "is a small one, but it is rich in natural resources. Two Americans obtained concessions, opened cinnabar mines. Quicksilver. The workers succumbed

to some strange disease—the Americans also. Something very like cancer.

"Radium salts, impregnated in silk worn as a robe, controlled the rotting of their flesh, but that did not cure the disease. The government canceled the concessions, drove out the Americans. I came up here to try to find a cure, found one by sheer accident. I hadn't had time to analyze the compound when it was stolen from me.

"Paul, my assistant, discovered that the American concessionaires were the thieves. They meant first to cure themselves and then sell the secret for a return of their privileges. Thus they would enslave our land. Another group got wind of the situation, sent a man named Lathrop Gant after the compound. Paul managed to get it back, was on his way to me with it when he realized that both outfits were hot after him. He phoned me that he would do his best to outwit them. He did—at the cost of his life"

"They were human," Marian murmured. "The green monsters were human, then?" Somehow the thought was comforting. "They weren't—fiends from hell?"

Thor was very grave. "They were human — perhaps. But they were fiends. Hell—if there is a hell—can hold no worse."

**Next Month: BLACK MOONLIGHT, a Horror Novelette
by G. T. Fleming-Roberts—and Many Other Stories of
Eerie, Spine-Chilling Thrills by Popular Authors**